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QUAKE II KILLERS



5

Games that'll
KICK QUAKE II's ASS!

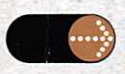
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Others that will
DIE TRYING

DAIKATANA

DUKE4EVER

KLINGON HONOR GUARD



QUAKE III: The Latest News



25 Greatest GUY GAMES



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VOLUME 01 NO. 01

SEPTEMBER 1998

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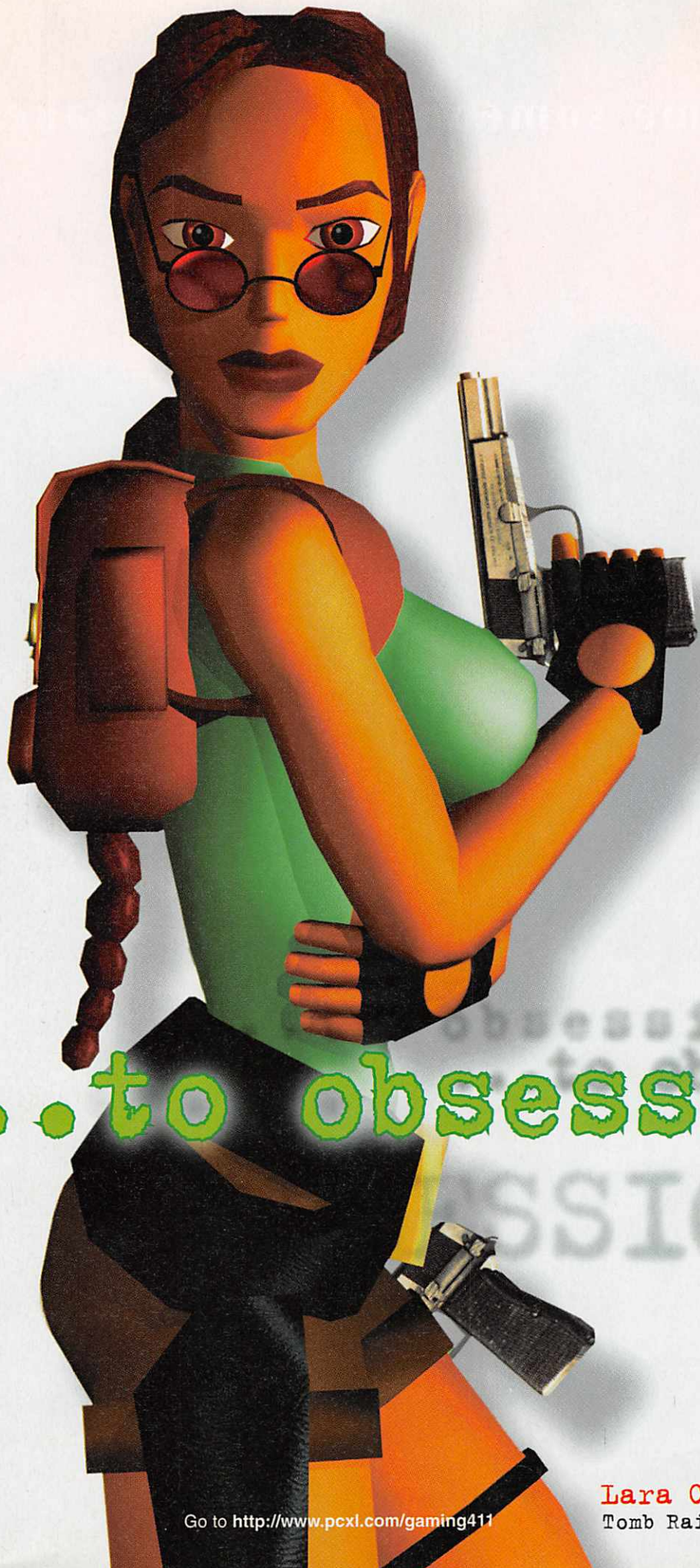
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Amoto from Daikatana

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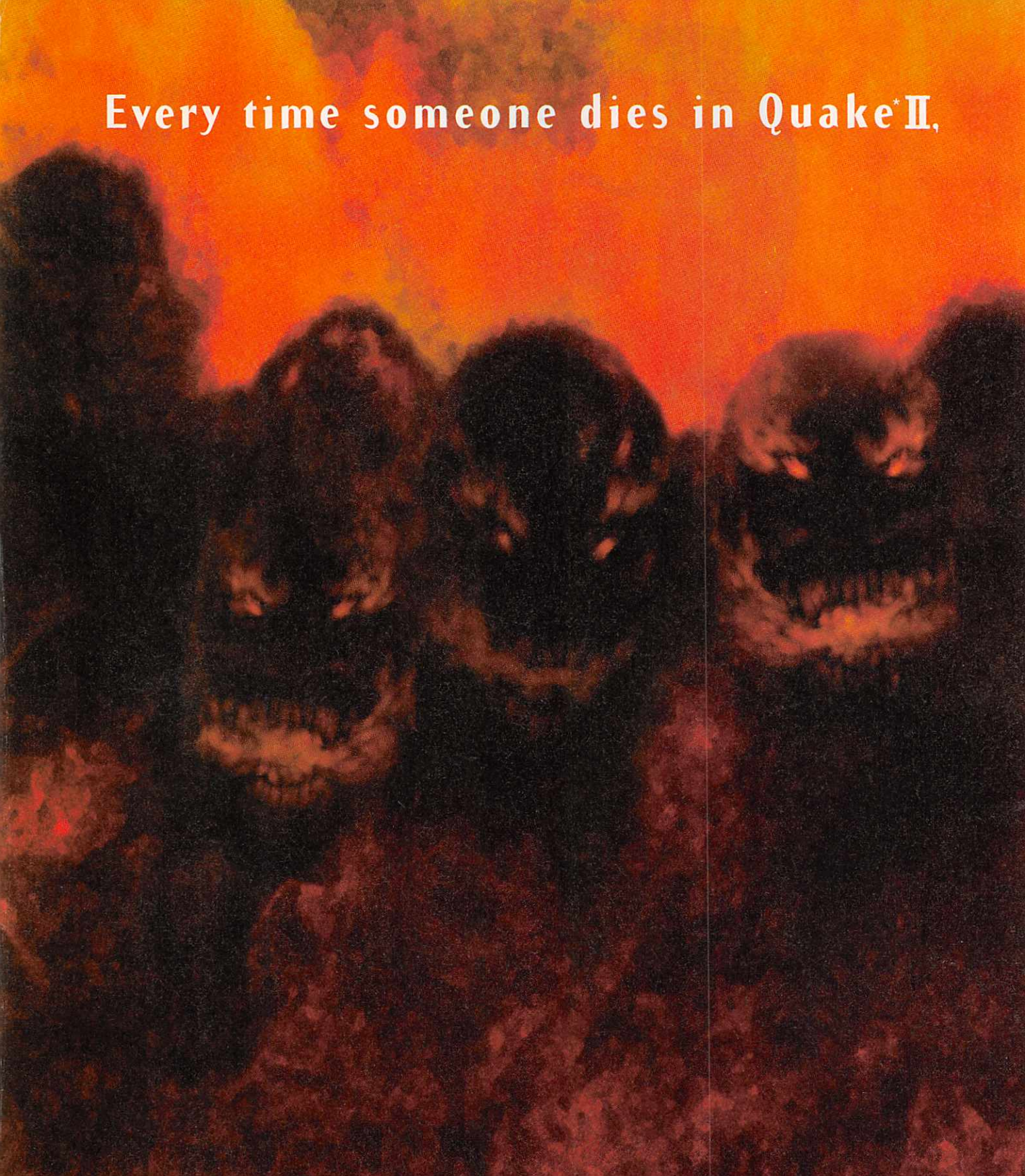
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QUAKE II KILLERS

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Morally invalid, horrifically violent, and damn fun! These are the games that stir up our testosterone and make us proud to be men



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Find the best baseball game — See the future of football — Complete standings — Beastly sporting moments



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ONLINE ARENA 118

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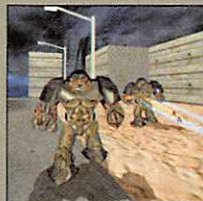
News you can trust, from people you shouldn't. Leo gets fragged — A killer new joystick — *Quake* vs. *Unreal* — Shannon Tweed — 24 brand new games — 10-second *Quake II* strategy — Developer Spotlight — Women We Love To Play — Don Knotts and a six-pack of Oly — and loads more



ON THE COVER

Of course, who would've conceptualized this *Reservoir Dog*-esque theme cover other than the demented editorial team. Digital illustrator Jim Carroll created character visuals. We then put in some handmade blood (via Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator) created by assistant art director Kyle LeBoeuf. Oh yeah, Q! composited the whole thing together amidst some intense creative debate — ahhhhh, publishing.

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THE DISC

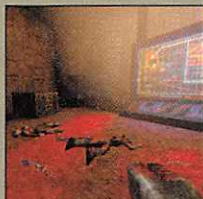


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Make games with our exclusive WorldCraft 1.6 demo, five new Unreal levels, Quake skins, patches, and everything a gamer needs in one nifty 650MB package

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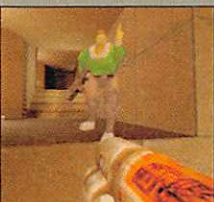
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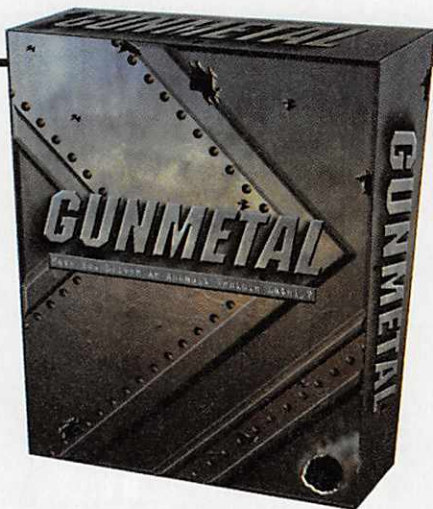
97 REDNECK RAMPAGE RIDES AGAIN
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CELEBRITY APPEARANCES

Farrah Fawcett, Don Knotts, Billy Dee Williams, Bjork, Demi Moore, Pamela Anderson, Denise Richards, Tonto, Evel Knievel, Dinky, Leonardo DiCaprio, Jeffrey Dahmer, Bill Clinton, Latrell Sprewell, Nicolas Cage, Chewbacca, Phil Hartman, Ghandi, Shannon Tweed, Joan Collins, Mary Hart, Anna Nicole Smith, Marv Albert, Kate Moss, Stephanie Seymour, Rick Springfield, Abe Lincoln, Kato, Michelle Pfeiffer, Phil Hartman's Wife, Sonny Bono, River Phoenix, Rosie O'Donnell, and more surprise guests!

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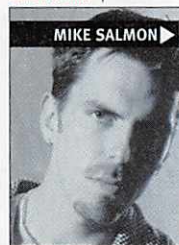
WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

Thank you and congratulations on picking up the premiere issue of a PC gaming magazine that is truly different than anything before it. The crack (and occasionally cracked) editorial staff of **PC ACCELERATOR** is set to deliver a monthly magazine that shares the passion and excitement of its readers — a companion as passionate and enthralled with the games as you are. Rather than trying to be all things to all people, we aim to be the ultimate resource for devoted gamers. In the process we're going to have a load of fun. The two keys to a truly great magazine are to **INFORM** and to **ENTERTAIN**. On both accounts I'm sure you'll agree that **PC ACCELERATOR** hits the mark like nobody else.

We're not only the creators of this magazine, we are the readers. Every man on this staff (and Carrie) loves playing PC games. Unlike some publications, we actually play the hell out of every game we put in our magazine. When we're not writing stories or discussing '80s pop culture we're online playing *Quake II*, *Unreal*, and *Battlezone*. Because we are hardcore gamers you'll notice that the tone of voice is more like an informed friend rather than a stuffy journalist.

Before you read on I must issue a warning. We insult and offend everybody (including ourselves), and it's all done in poor taste to boot. So if you are easily offended or don't enjoy raucous laughter, now would be a good time to put this magazine down. However if you're like us (a bit demented), you'll find that **PC ACCELERATOR** is a breath of fresh air in an otherwise stuffy market. Enjoy the magazine, get a subscription, tell a friend, and prepare for one hell of a ride.

EDITOR IN CHIEF



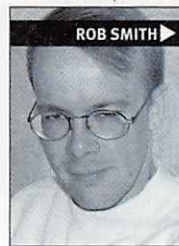
MIKE SALMON ▶

Heritage: Genus *Oncoryhynchus*
Beverage of choice: Beer (any)
Claim to fame: Reject model for Diesel
Quote: "See you guys later. I'm going to have drinks with [name of PR flak]"
Now playing: *Unreal*, *Quake II*, *NHL '98*

MIKE SALMON, *Editor in Chief*

THE TEAM

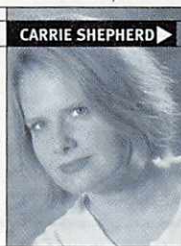
EXECUTIVE EDITOR



ROB SMITH ▶

Heritage: British
Beverage of choice: Samuel Adams Boston Lager
Claim to fame: Currently 124th in the world in *Game, Net & Match*
Quote: "Bloody Yanks"
Now playing: *Unreal*, *FIFA World Cup '98*, *Descent*, *Freespace*, *NAM*

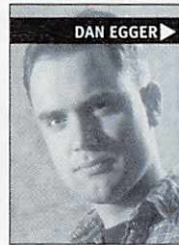
MANAGING EDITOR



CARRIE SHEPHERD ▶

Heritage: Massachusetts (Bloody Yank)
Beverage of choice: Black tea
Claim to fame: Ability to edit copy to the sounds of *Quake*
Quote: "Hey [name of editor], stop playing [name of game] and get [name of story] in!"
Now playing: *Flesh Feast*, *Redjack: Revenge of the Brethren*, *StarCraft*

ASSOCIATE EDITOR



DAN EGGER ▶

Heritage: Hick
Beverage of choice: Pepsi and only Pepsi
Claim to fame: Created Cone Of Tragedy
Quote: "If someone says I'm crazy, then I must be doing something right"
Now playing: *Unreal*, *Battlezone*, *StarCraft*

DISC/ASSISTANT EDITOR



ED "SLASH" LEE ▶

Heritage: Assimilated minority
Beverage of choice: Battery acid and/or Coke
Claim to fame: Average arrival time is 10:18
Quote: "Sorry I'm late"
Now playing: *Quake II*, *Unreal*, *NHL '98*, *RPS* (rock, paper, scissors)

ART DIRECTOR



Q! DOROQUEZ ▶

Heritage: The alphabet
Beverage of choice: Anything with zing
Claim to fame: Has unlimited access to strange and disturbing QuickTime movies
Quote: "Not that there's anything wrong with that"
Now playing: *NHL '98*, *Unreal*, *Triple Play '98*

ASSISTANT ART DIRECTOR



KYLE LeBOEUF ▶

Heritage: French Texan
Beverage of choice: Gin and tonic
Claim to fame: Created a logo for a pile of steaming crap
Quote: "Orange is a manly color, I swear"
Now playing: *Unreal*, *Turok*, *PhotoShop*

CONTACTS



Caroline Simpson-Bint publisher

EDITORIAL

Mike Salmon editor in chief
 Rob Smith executive editor
 Carrie Shepherd managing editor
 Dan Egger associate editor
 Ed "Slash" Lee disc/assistant editor

Contributing writers: Cliff Bleszinski, Chris Hudak, Bob Lindstrom, Peter Olafson, Marc Saltzman, Christian Svensson
 Pornographic consultant: Tom Russo

ART

Quintin Doroquez art director
 Kyle LeBoeuf assistant art director

Contributing photographers: Aaron Lauer, Mark Madeo
 Contributing digital illustrator: Jim Carroll

ADVERTISING

Mike Rogers national sales manager
 Debbie Burnett regional sales manager
 Erik Pillar marketing manager
 Dawnde Wallen account executive
 Jane Jarvis advertising coordinator

PRODUCTION

Richard Lesovoy production director
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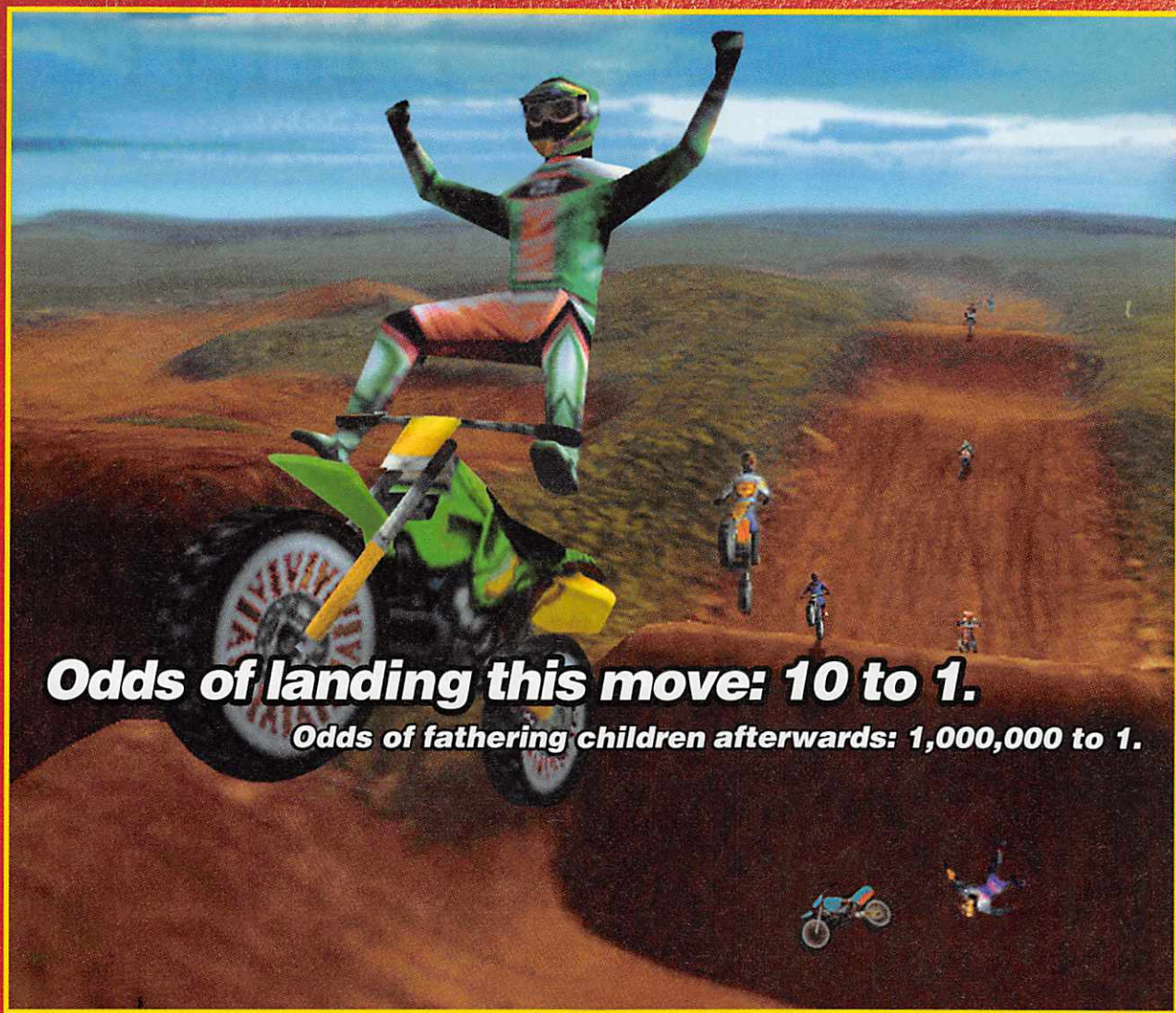
PC ACCELERATOR

Editorial	Advertising
voicemail 415-468-4684	415-468-4684, ext. 150
fax 415-468-4686	415-468-4686
email letters@pcxl.com	mrogers@pcxl.com

PC ACCELERATOR is published monthly by Imagine Media, Inc., 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005, USA. Newsstand distribution is handled by the Curtis Circulation Company. Subscriptions: One year basic rate (12 issues): US: \$30; Canada: \$44; Foreign: \$54 pre-paid, US funds only. Canadian price includes postage and GST (GST#R128220688). For customer service, call 800-333-3890; in US, 415-468-2500. For back issues, call 800-865-7240. POSTMASTER send changes of address to **PC ACCELERATOR**, PO Box 52681, Boulder, CO 80322.

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HALF-LIFE



UNREAL



QUAKE II



MOTORACER 2



DESCENT FREESPACE



X-COM: INTERCEPTOR

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The PCXL DISC is what you've been waiting for

A lot of PC game magazines have discs, and a lot of 'em have demos, but none of 'em have PCXL's unique perspective. We are dedicated to giving you — the hardcore action gamer — the best games, and the best coverage of those games. You won't find any demos for bowling games or WWII flight sims here. Combine the best, most focused content with a stunning, intuitive interface and what you have is a disc that can't be touched.

So enough hyperbole, let's get to the goods: We've rounded up 12 of the hottest games right now to give you the stuff you really want.

Note to those who didn't get the CD: The magazine is great, huh? But look at all you're missing by not getting the disc. Quit being a cheap bastard and get the disc edition!

DEMO	PATCHES	TOOLS	MAPS	A/V	INTERVIEWS		
						HALF-LIFE	World-exclusive shareware version of WorldCraft 1.6, the level design utility used in the creation of <i>Half-Life</i> . Create maps for <i>Quake</i> , <i>Quake II</i> , and <i>Heretic II</i> . Also featured: a movie of gameplay featuring the game's intense action.
						UNREAL	The next big thing? Five rockin' deathmatch maps including the world-exclusive Cone Of Tragedy and Shooting Gallery. Be the first on your block to experience these masterpieces.
						QUAKE II	The essential <i>Quake II</i> archive: 3.14 playable demo, 3.17 patch with CTF, GameSpy 2.01, EraserBot, QuickStart, JailBreak, and seven great DM maps.
						MOTORACER 2	An exclusive, early-look demo of the sequel to the best motorcycle game on the PC.
						DESCENT FREESPACE	Find out why people are calling this one of the best, if not <i>the</i> best, space combat sim out there.
						X-COM: INTERCEPTOR	Finally, you get to kill those alien bastards in first-person!
						BATTLEZONE	This updated demo has full 3D card support, so let 'er rip and check out those explosions!
						STARCRAFT	The demo. You know you want it. (With four all-new missions for <i>StarCraft</i> vets.)
						SCARS	Race futuristic heavily armed cars and blow stuff up.
						CARMAGEDDON	This is quickly becoming a classic. A Voodoo 2 patch will give it a new lease on life.
						DAIKATANA	Believing the hype yet? This trailer should tide you over until the real thing.
						INCOMING	Not just a tech demo, this game has the goods. Huge 3D board support.

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➤ A GANG OF WANNABE STARS ARE TAKING AIM AT BECOMING ...

QUAKE II KILLERS

The future of first-person shooters is upon us ...



You've heard the term "Quake Killer" used ever since *Quake* appeared and became the first-person shooter benchmark. But what does it actually mean?

With *Quake II* now some nine months old, and the upstart *Unreal* garnering the plaudits, both engines have been released to the development community. If you're into action gaming (and if you're not, why are you reading?), the next 18 months are going to supply enough fraggin' excitement to make you forget about the great outdoors (you know that bright place with lots of green that you see on the way to EB?).

We've taken all the upcoming games and rated them on their potential to top the first-person shooter pile — these are the ones that you're gonna have to play. Our ratings are based on what we've seen in demos, what we've learned from talking to the developers, and from our expert sense of what's going to make a game the one to beat. We reckon we're on the money — to the point that we gave all upcoming first-person shooters odds on being the top

DIGITAL ILLUSTRATION BY JIM CARROLL

dog. Of course, since none of the mentioned games are finished, these ratings are subject to instant and radical change (although it isn't likely). We've scoured the development community to find out which games hold promise and which have trouble holding water.

Because we are such huge fans of the genre, we're looking forward to all the games we mention,

as well as some that didn't make the list. But in the end we narrowed our picks down to five games that will definitely rise above the rest and take the genre to the next level.

Do you think we're wrong, insane, high on crack? Let us know where you stand and what you think of the upcoming first-person shooter war. Send rantings to umustbehigh@pcxl.com.



The Standard

Since *Quake II* and *Unreal* are the current kings of the genre, we've rated them in key categories to act as benchmarks for the upcoming competition. Any game that can reach this level of perfection is considered a bona fide *Quake Killer*.

CRITERIA	QUAKE II	UNREAL
Pure action	10	8
Originality	5	6
Story	3	5
Graphics	8	10
Multiplayer	10	6
Buzz	10	9
Overall	46	44

So here's our thinking ...

PURE ACTION: Nothing got in the way of the killing in *Quake II*, nothing. Epic added clever monster movement, but there wasn't the same edge to the pure visceral experience.

ORIGINALITY: *Quake II*'s technical advances were far beyond anything else at the time, but boiled down to a very linear shooter. *Unreal* surpassed this only very slightly in its level structure.

STORY: There was a story for *Quake II* and *Unreal*, but neither interfered with the merciless slaughter of all the polygons in the world.

GRAPHICS: In its time, *Quake II* ruled. But *Unreal* surpassed it with some stunning effects.

MULTIPLAYER: *Quake II* still dominates long after its release, a statement on its leading-edge position. *Unreal* is struggling, though Epic continues to work on it.

BUZZ: Nothing outstripped *Quake II* for buzz factor (aside from *Quake I*, perhaps).



The Genuine Killers

We had to make a stand. There are so many damned first-person shooters on the way between now and the end of '99 that the options for gunslingers will be almost endless.

Still, only a few are currently showing the hallmarks of quality necessary to gib *Quake II*. What bizarre thinking or mind-altering substances were we doing when the call was made? Well, pure action tops the list. We want to see the games ready to get those

adrenal glands pumping with overdoses of the natural action drug. However a solid story and deep gameplay don't hurt either.

So stand up and take a bow, *Half-Life*, *Sin*, *Daikatana*, *Prey*, and *Duke Nukem Forever*. Developers and gamers alike await your completion.

Prey

DEVELOPER → 3D Realms
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive

The skinny: Portal technology is the hot, upcoming buzzword, and *Prey* kicked that off. Incredible environment effects are shaping an intriguing immersive experience.

Why it's better than *Quake II*: Paul Schuyetma, lead designer, 3D Realms: "*Prey* and *Quake II* are trying to do different things, and in my opinion, *Quake II* did what it set out to do very well. On a pure technology side, we have the obvious advantages of truly

dynamic geometry and a more flexible and refined lighting system. There are some other things as well, but they're more subtle and esoteric. On the gameplay side of things, I'll pass on that answer, since *Quake II* is out and plays well and we're still in development — any gameplay statements we make are pure conjecture and purely educated guesses."

The PCXL take: From what we've seen, *Prey* and the technology behind it are truly the next step in 3D gaming. The realistic environments and complete interaction with them create a virtual

world unlike any other we've seen. When players can go into any building and destroy everything from the leather sofa to the roof, then we're talking about a morphing universe that catapults them into a different world each game depending on how it's played. While the technology looks great, we haven't played much of the game. However, given 3D Realms' proven track record, we feel strongly that *Prey* is likely to be the best 3D shooter released in 1999 — that is, if the game is actually finished in 1999.

CRITERIA

- 9 **Pure action:** There's no way that this portal technology is going to waste. It offers more mind-screwing ways to kill the other guy.
- 9 **Originality:** Portal technology seems amazingly open-ended in the options available to level designers.
- 7 **Story:** Talon Brave is set to become a long-term franchise. Not as cute as Lara, but he has feathers.
- 9 **Graphics:** Amazing special effects, mind-melting portal tricks, and hyper-detailed architecture.
- 8 **Multiplayer:** Innovative weapons utilizing the portals are gonna fry minds as well as bodies.
- 8 **Buzz:** Since it was conceived, it had a buzz. A challenger to *Unreal* for the next big hype machine.
- 50 **Score**



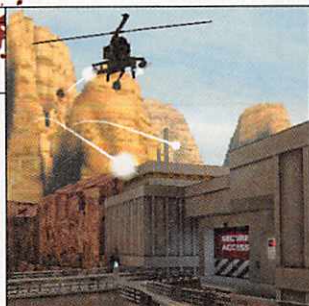


Half-Life

DEVELOPER → Valve Software
PUBLISHER → Sierra

The skinny: Take the best elements from the code of *Quake*, GL*Quake*, *QuakeWorld*, and *Quake II*, throw in a whole bunch of your own scripted events, fully featured WorldCraft level editor, multiplayer add-on courtesy of Team Fortress, and it's a hugely compelling mix.

Why it's better than *Quake II*: Gabe Newell, managing director, Valve Software: "... scripted sequences, a very sophisticated AI, and a great visual toolkit (that enables all the cool effects like decals, beam effects, and procedural textures

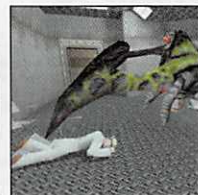
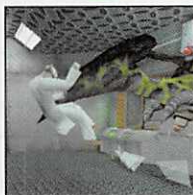


on both software and hardware) create a much richer single-player experience."

The PCXL take: A first-person shooter with brains and brawn, *Half-Life* has the entire development and gaming community waiting for a chance to play it. Team Fortress multiplayer is crucial to *Half-Life's* life, it's just too bad it doesn't come with the game.



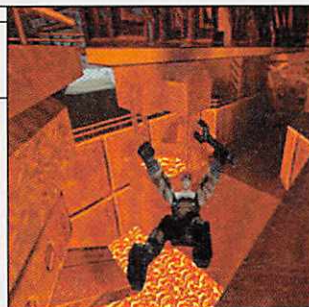
CRITERIA	7	Pure action: Thought and strategy will be vital to the killing spree. But there will be a major beast killfest.
	9	Originality: A shooter with a real brain — that's genuinely original.
	9	Story: You're trapped by the government and the beasts of hell. Sounds like a story.
	7	Graphics: The engine's not the best anymore, but the detail is exquisite.
	7	Multiplayer: Team Fortress 2 will come as an add-on. Out of box there are thoughtful touches.
	8	Buzz: It's been delayed long enough to gather momentum. Everyone seems to be excited about it.
	47	Score



Sin

DEVELOPER → Ritual Entertainment
PUBLISHER → Activision

The skinny: It's the team behind the *Scourge of Armagon* *Quake* add-on. Good creative level designers (including the self-styled Levelord) should push the *Quake II* engine to its limits. It's also likely to be the first game out.



Why it's better than *Quake II*: Joe Selinske, project manager, Ritual Entertainment: "ABOs (Action-Based Outcomes) allow you to affect other levels later on in the game. One little action can trigger big changes in later levels and could make things incredibly hard. It's a much more interactive world with lots of moving machinery, puzzles, and destroyable environments. Our character AI is beefed up. The



guys hide, attack, retreat, and think about what they are doing. We wanted to re-create a lot of real-world environments (or at least model after them). Use of audio sidekick J.C. is unique. It will help guide the player through the game with audio clues, helpful hints, witty banter, and crazy wisecracks. [Sounds like a pitch for a new sitcom!] The mood music also changes as the action changes."

CRITERIA	9	Pure action: Using the <i>Quake II</i> engine, that same action intensity is expected.
	8	Originality: ABOs make playing the single-player game more than once a plus. Design style appears to be " <i>Quake II</i> , but more so."
	7	Story: Futuristic drug lords. Big whoop. But a hot biochemist vixen is a definite plus.
	7	Graphics: Er, <i>Quake II</i> , but more so. Real-world settings are a distinct selling point.
	8	Multiplayer: Deathmatches in the real-world setting are what every shooter fan has wanted. And the ultimate sniper rifle is incredible.
	7	Buzz: Everyone who has seen it is mighty impressed. The use of vixen Elexis Sinclair will help.
	46	Score

The PCXL take: The powerful weapons, interactive backgrounds, and real-world setting are starting to make *Sin* look more and more like the real thing.

What They're Saying

THE DEVELOPERS OF THESE GAMES ARE ALSO THE BIGGEST FANS, SO WE ASKED THEM A FEW QUESTIONS TO SEE WHAT THE FUTURE MIGHT HOLD FOR THE GENRE. JUST FROM THEIR RESPONSES WE CAN TELL CLEARLY WHICH DIRECTION THE GENRE IS HEADING — AND IT'S ALL GOOD.



John Romero

What is the best 3D engine, and why?

John Romero, *Daikatana*: "Unreal, because you can make

your game bigger, prettier, and cheaper than any other engine available at this time."

WHO KNOWS MORE ABOUT THE FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER GENRE THAN THE GUYS WHO MAKE THE GAMES?

Why does story matter — or does it?

Seamus Blackley, *Trespasser*: "It's really about setting up a cool place where a bunch of interesting things can happen, and letting the player be the star. I am really against games that try to shove a lot of plot down the player's throat. It's not about that."

Glen Dahlgren, *Wheel of Time*: "It absolutely matters. I don't believe that a story has ever been effectively told in

this genre. Story gives motivation, it explains why things happen, and it can be the impetus to keep someone playing until the end. I've yet to play a FPS where I actually cared about the plot. If I finished the game, it was for totally different reasons."



Daikatana

DEVELOPER → Ion Storm
PUBLISHER → Eidos

The skinny: Game designer John Romero has a reputation to keep. The RPG/action blend provides a background of possibilities for character development.

Why it's better than Quake II: John Romero, game designer, Ion Storm: "Smoother animation, more variety, more story, character customization, better physics." Despite using the *Quake II* engine for this game, Ion Storm's out-of-house development of *Daikatana 2* has turned to *Unreal* because "you can make your game bigger, prettier, and cheaper

than any other engine available at this time."

The PCXL take: *Daikatana*'s levels and monsters look incredible, but we're still waiting to see if Romero and Ion Storm can pull off the sidekick AI as promised. It's likely this feature won't make it.



CRITERIA	9	Pure action: With all those monsters (some 80) and all those weapons (some 32) the action quotient won't be lacking, despite the RPG skew.
	8	Originality: RPG focus and the use of NPCs to help out offer a real chance for character interaction and a sense of being involved in a fierce struggle in a real (but fantastic) world.
	8	Story: Time traveling offers plenty of opportunities. As do big swords. <i>Daikatana</i> has both.
	8	Graphics: New textures within the <i>Quake II</i> engine have started to bring ancient Greece to life with impressive style.
	7	Multiplayer: Romero: "Cool, balanced weapons being used in fast, beautiful killing arenas." Perfect philosophy. Execution TBD.
7	Buzz: Has Romero still got it? Delays in shipping don't help, and everyone seems to want to knock the first industry "star."	
47	Score	

Duke Nukem Forever

DEVELOPER → 3D Realms
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive

The skinny: Duke's latest adventure turns from the *Quake II* engine to *Unreal* in order to create the levels and immersive environment interaction that was the hallmark of *Duke 3D*. The big question: When is this game going to come out?

Why it's better than Quake II: That engine change says a lot. George Broussard has been quick to answer questions about this change, most importantly over the delay it will cause. The answer "four to six weeks" is surprising. 3D Realms'



determination to create the fun and excitement that made *Duke* such a hit is already evident. And with a Las Vegas setting, it looks like the 3D Realms guys will have to do some more research at the strip joints. Hey, need any help?

The PCXL take: Running on the *Quake II* engine, *Duke Nukem Forever* already looked like a winner. With the addition of the scripting and graphic capabilities of *Unreal*, we're drooling in anticipation.

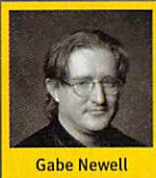
CRITERIA	10	Pure action: This is Duke. Action is all he knows how to get.
	8	Originality: Always high throughout <i>Duke</i> , and the same design philosophy carries over.
	7	Story: Duke versus the alien scum. Not astounding, but it's the way he disposes of them that counts.
	9	Graphics: The change to the <i>Unreal</i> engine is key. Expect a dynamic environment.
	7	Multiplayer: Level design has always been good at 3D Realms, but the <i>Unreal</i> engine is still unproven.
10	Buzz: News of the engine change spread like wildfire over the Internet.	
51	Score	



What makes up your mind on using licensed engines or creating your own?

Gabe Newell, *Half-Life*: "John Carmack had done some great work on render-

ing static environments that would have taken us a long time to duplicate. Instead we decided to focus on aspects of the engine like animation and AI. We have to pay license fees, but we get a



Gabe Newell

better game out to customers sooner with less risk. With 20-20 hindsight we are still completely pleased with the decision."

What is the key to great multiplayer?

Evan Margolin, *Requiem*: "Balance, balance, and more balance."

Randy Pitchford, *Prax War*: "Once someone tries the game, the designer

has to keep him interested. This is accomplished through balance (don't piss anyone off), ease of use (don't make it hard to get started), and solidity (don't piss anyone off). It is also accomplished through providing feelings that can't be received anywhere else."



Randy Pitchford

Do you see level editing utilities as a key component?

Seamus Blackley: "It's cool. However, it should not be there to make up for lack of interesting gameplay or lackluster level design. Ditto for multiplayer. Neither should be a crutch for a shitty single-player environment."

I HAVE AN ENORMOUS TANK BATTALION.

I HAVE AN ARSENAL OF WEAPONS AT MY FINGERTIPS.

I'VE DESTROYED BUILDINGS IN MY WAY.

S O W H Y

I AM ONE WITH THE CROSSHAIRS.

I AM A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH.

DMG 100

RLD 58%

EGY 11

AMR 50%

Control Fox

TERATOOLS™
Computer Graphics Solutions

Hey hot shot, you're dead because you didn't think. To save the Earth in Urban Assault™, you must manage your resources, upgrade your technologies, control your squadrons, and deploy your troops using an interactive map. All this at the same time you're shooting everything in sight.

Microsoft

I'VE TELEPORTED INTO MY SATELLITE.

I'VE DRIVEN MY VEHICLES LIKE A MANIAC.

AM I DEAD?

I HAVE THE FIERCE AIR FORCE.

I TORCHED A TAERKAST BIPLANE.

I KNOW HOW TO DEFEND MY HOST STATION.

It's the perfect blend of action and strategy that you can make even more challenging with multiplayer capabilities. So use that gray matter. Or you'll lose it. Think yourself over to www.microsoft.com/games/urbanassault

URBAN ASSAULT™



... And the rest

The accolade of being a bona fide *Quake* Killer is not something easily bestowed by the **PCXL** staff. So why didn't these make the grade? In many cases it's simply too early to really get a feel for their potential —

Amen and *Prax War*, for example. In our insatiable desire for all games action-based, the **PCXL** staff is looking forward to all of them — particularly *Trespasser* (even with no multiplayer gameplay), *Max Payne*, and *Klingon Honor Guard*.

Where story comes to the fore,

perhaps that crucial action quotient is curtailed. So the question is, what are you looking for in your first-person shooters? Now get a sense of some of those forthcoming games that are vying to be in that *Quake*-Killer category, some of which will die trying ...

Max Payne

DEVELOPER → Remedy Entertainment/
3D Realms
PUBLISHER → G.O.D.

The skinny: As framed cop Max Payne, you're taking no prisoners on an adventure through New York to avenge your family's slaughter. The story is delivered through character interaction.

Why it's better than *Quake II*: Scott Miller, president, 3D Realms: "Max is a different game in dozens of ways, such as in-game character interactions, style of gameplay, third-



son perspective, realistic locations, realistic weapons (nothing sci-fi), all characters will talk during the game's action (giving the game more of a movie feel), and of course superior technology that will be as good as any available at the time of the game's release."

Why it's not: Everything we've seen on *Max Payne* is mighty impressive, but there still hasn't been a decent third-person multiplayer game. Could this be the first? In the following months we'll find out.



CRITERIA	8	Pure action: A high action quotient working within the story-powered framework.
	8	Originality: A modern setting and adventure concept put a different spin on the straight-up shooter.
	9	Story: Max has real purpose. A murdered boss and slaughtered family provide a backbone for many twists and turns.
	8	Graphics: It's a whole new engine (with help from the <i>Prey</i> development team). And it has some of the best weapons and smoke effects we've seen.
	6	Multiplayer: No real info, but the setting is perfect for some third-person street battles.
	4	Buzz: Known mainly to the development community, expect the buzz to get louder.
	43	Score

Wheel of Time

DEVELOPER → Legend Entertainment
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive

The skinny: Robert Jordan's hugely popular fantasy novels get the gaming conversion with the backing of the *Unreal* engine.

Why it's better than *Quake II*: Glen Dahlgren, designer, Legend Entertainment: "I'd have to say that it's much different than *Quake II*; it didn't want to do many of the things that our design requires. There's a citadel editor where you can lay down traps and troops to protect

fortresses. Strategic spell combat — it's more important to make the right decisions than to be the first one to pull the trigger. Deathmatch is a much more strategic experience, while remaining just as visceral. Real-world architecture — we've gone to some lengths to create spaces that feel real. Single-



player depth — a compelling story — very much in the Jordan tradition — supported by in-game cinematics, dialogues with NPCs, scripted story events, dynamic mission objectives, and real character development derived from the plot. It has a definite beginning, middle, and end. It has a clear focus and a point. Many of the game's elements have been developed with multiplayer solely in mind."

Why it's not: To be fair, *Wheel of Time* is a much different beast than *Quake II* and should be a great game in its own right.

CRITERIA	6	Pure action: There's gonna be killin' but there's gonna be plenty of thinkin'.
	8	Originality: A combination of action and strategy within a living world framework is a compelling premise.
	9	Story: Jordan is one of the hottest fantasy authors, and Dahlgren's credits include <i>Death Gate</i> , an adventure with a thought-provoking story.
	9	Graphics: We know what the <i>Unreal</i> engine is capable of. With Legend's talented fantasy artists, the cities of Jordan's world are likely to come alive.
	5	Multiplayer: It's difficult to work out how the detail of the single-player game will cross over, but Internet problems should be fixed by ship date.
	7	Buzz: The <i>Unreal</i> engine and a positive buzz from E3 are only the start of what could be big things for Legend.
	44	Score

What They're Saying

What is your all-time favorite first-person shooter weapon?

John Romero: "The rocket launcher. Or double-barreled shotgun."

Glen Dahlgren: "I probably had the most fun with the sniper rifle in *GoldenEye* [N64]. It was a very different (and cool) experience than what I'd encountered up until then. Of course, my answer will be different after we

release our game."

Joe Selinske, *Sin*: "Going back to *Doom* and *Doom II*, the plasma rifle. It was very satisfying to lay down a spread of fire, strafe around someone, and keep hammering away at them until they died

choking in pain. Another favorite weapon I loved to hate was the rocket launcher from *Quake*. A friend of mine would always play against me on *Edge of Oblivion* and use the rocket's splash damage to blow me off the level, thus

falling to my death. Man, I hated that."
Dan Freed, *Heretic II*: "The phoenix rod from the original *Heretic*."

Gabe Newell: "The first time I started up the chainsaw in *Doom* was one of the best moments I've had playing a computer game."

John Broomhall, *X-COM Alliance*: "The chainsaw from *Doom* and *Doom II* — does that make me a bad person?" (No, it makes you a **PCXL** person)



GoldenEye's rifle



Doom's plasma rifle



Duke's shrinker



Da's rocket launcher



Duke's trip bomb

Map

I DEPLOYED MY GUYS USING THE TRANSPARENT MAP.

I TOLD MY GUYS TO ATTACK FROM BOTH FLANKS.

I KNOW WHERE THE TECH UPGRADE SECTOR IS.

I KNOW WHERE TO PLACE MY HOST STATION.

I KNOW WHERE THE POWER STATIONS ARE.

SO WHY AM I STILL DEAD?

I SAW A MYKONIAN CUBOID FORMATION.

I'M BEING SMART ABOUT MY MOVES.

I KNOW WHICH SECTORS ARE SECURE.



Use your map to deploy your troops and jump into any of 15 different types of vehicles.



Create your squadrons and set their level of aggressiveness to defend, attack, or raid.



Battle 5 unique alien and human enemy races.



Hey mastermind, you're dead because you didn't get your hands dirty. In Urban Assault™ you have to battle on the frenzied front lines at the same time you're strategizing the entire war. Of course, your years studying at military school will come in handy, but to win, you better warm up that trigger finger. Shoot your browser over to www.microsoft.com/games/urbanassault.

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Trespasser

DEVELOPER → Dreamworks Interactive
PUBLISHER → Dreamworks Interactive

The skinny: Dinosaurs. Dreamworks uses the Spielberg connection to create the game that the *Lost World* movie failed to be.

Why it's better than Quake II: Seamus Blackley, project leader, Dreamworks: "I think we are trying to do something fundamentally different than

Quake, so it's hard to say if something is 'better.' Also, *Quake* is a real work of art. It feels really good, really solid, really finished and tweaked. The five most different things, I think, are pretty clear.



First, we render the outdoors. Second, we don't special case anything, so, for instance, anything you can pick up is a weapon. Third, our player character is just a normal person. Fourth, we cop a much more realistic style, so for instance all our guns are actually licensed so they look and sound like the real thing. And finally, we have dinosaurs."

Why it's not: There isn't going to be a multiplayer version. 'Nuff said!

CRITERIA	6	Pure action: Many dinosaurs to try to make extinct again.
	8	Originality: An original engine creates incredible outdoor scenes, and a real-world physics model creates an immersive environment.
	6	Story: The story of the movie was not great. Use of the actors' voices helps.
	9	Graphics: Those dinosaurs look so damn real, with the skin texture pulsing over the skeleton.
	0	Multiplayer: Oops.
	8	Buzz: The fact that there's any hype at all shows the kind of impression this game is making on people.
	37	Score

Amen: The Awakening

DEVELOPER → Cavedog Entertainment
PUBLISHER → Cavedog Entertainment

The skinny: Greg MacMartin, lead designer, Cavedog: "You'll really feel like you're a major player in a 50-hour James Cameron movie." It's an ambitious approach. Let's just hope it doesn't sink. The Amengine looks to be capable of competing with *Unreal*.

Why it's better than Quake II: Greg MacMartin: "We are striving to give the player experiences that he has never had before, like jumping out of an airplane and exploring realistic places like a built-to-scale aircraft carrier. I think *Amen's* key difference will be the unique blend of the 3D action and adventure genres. You get the in-your-face, intense first-person action found in shooters along with the epic storyline, inventory system, characters, and overall depth of adventure games."



Why it's not: It's an impressive first foray into the first-person shooter genre by Cavedog, but the company has a bunch to prove against some wicked competition.

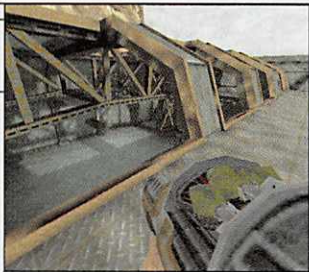
CRITERIA	7	Pure action: The adventure style in its puzzles may detract from some of the promised mayhem.
	7	Originality: Designed in full before the code was written, the Amengine should produce some memorable events.
	6	Story: You're a trained commando.
	8	Graphics: Early shots show beautifully lit, elegantly designed real-world environs created to scale.
	6	Multiplayer: Here's the philosophy: "A balance between different strategies that allow players with different play styles to still be good at the game."
	5	Buzz: It's just starting, but early screens and info look hot.
	39	Score

Prax War

DEVELOPER → Rebel Boat Rocker
PUBLISHER → Electronic Arts

The skinny: A new engine based on modular Java-script has the flexibility to deal with indoor and outdoor environs. And the Java base will help Internet play and user customization.

Why it's better than Quake II: Randy Pitchford, lead level designer, Rebel Boat



Rocker: "A real world with recognizable, dynamic areas in a consistent near future (2032) world. Four characters will be present throughout the game, helping the player and doing tons of cool stuff.

For multiplayer, Java game architecture is safe and Internet friendly. You can ride in or actually drive vehicles in the air, on land, on the water, and underwater. Interactive environments. The highest polygon budgets in a first-person shooter to date."

Why it's not: We just haven't seen enough on this game to get a fair reading. We are excited about the prospects, but cautious of bestowing too much praise.

CRITERIA	8	Pure action: Team action is promised, as is the use of vehicles.
	8	Originality: Extra characters, different playing styles, and the Java code should allow some new touches.
	6	Story: A corrupt power company holds the world hostage. Go save the world, Special Forces Dude.
	7	Graphics: It's a whole new Java-based engine, but the early shots show promise of real detail.
	7	Multiplayer: Solid design premises, with Java's Internet-friendly base, create real potential.
	4	Buzz: Little has been heard so far, but the design philosophy is certainly solid.
	40	Score

What They're Saying

Greg MacMartin, *Amen: The Awakening*: "The *Doom II* double-barreled shotgun was awesome."
Paul Butterfield, *Shogo: Mobile Armor Division*: "The plasma rifle in *Doom II*. I loved the sound, the effect, the whole thing."
Evan Margolin: "I fear that this is going to be too cliché an answer, however the rocket launcher in *Quake* probably got most of my play time, quickly followed by the chaingun in *Doom*. However, turning people to

salt in *Requiem* will change all that."
Paul Schuytema, *Prey*: "This may sound strange, but for me it was the laser trip bomb in *Duke 3D* — that weapon really allowed you to interact with the environment and become a thinking player rather than just a twitch player."



Paul Schuytema

Seamus Blackley: "Either the *Quake* axe,

or the *Duke Nukem* miniaturizer. The axe was just brilliantly tuned. But the miniaturizer was really funny."
Randy Pitchford: "*Doom II* super shotgun ... without a doubt."
Scott Miller, *Max Payne*: "I can't pick just one, because I like several for different reasons. The shotgun (from various games) is hard to beat as the best all-around weapon, but other fun weapons include the firewall blast from *Rise of the Triad*, *Duke Nukem 3D's* shrinker, and *Quake II's* rail gun (which was actu-

ally first seen in *Shadow Warrior*." Developer X, *Star Trek: Klingon Honor Guard*: "The *Quake I* rocket launcher! Simple to use yet difficult to master. Once mastered this weapon is devastating to any opponent."
David Stalker, *Alien vs. Predator*: "Rocket launcher."



Shogo: Mobile Armor Division

DEVELOPER → Monolith Productions
PUBLISHER → Monolith Productions

The skinny: Japanese anime-influenced combat in a detailed world, backed by realtime instructions from well-documented characters.

Why it's better than Quake II: Paul Butterfield,

public relations manager, Monolith Productions: "Character development and storyline: Sanjuro Makabe (the main character) experiences a range of emotion. [Through] two different modes of play (on foot and piloting a 30-foot-tall anime-inspired mecha), you'll have access to two completely separate arsenals, with each mode offering 10 unique weapons. All of our characters have motion-captured animation. Plus, we've got hit detection for our bipedal enemies, which allows limb-specific animations when you shoot enemies. So if you shoot a guy in



the head, his head snaps backwards as a result."

Why it's not: As far as we know, mechs don't bleed, and anime is just plain weird.

CRITERIA	9	Pure action: Don't expect too many taxing puzzles and Shakespearean dialogue in an anime game.
	8	Originality: Anime-style games haven't made an impact on the PC, but the setting is ripe for wild action.
	7	Story: Character interaction and direction is carefully woven into the plot.
	6	Graphics: The LithTech engine accommodates the color and flexibility the anime game style requires.
	6	Multiplayer: Development tools for user levels will help provide variation.
	4	Buzz: Anime has a devoted following. Crossing the humor style over to the mainstream might be tough.
	40	Score

Heretic II

DEVELOPER → Raven Software
PUBLISHER → Activision

The skinny: *Heretic*, the medieval fantasy using the *Doom* engine, goes third person using the *Quake II* engine. Detailed artwork and textures look incredible.

Why it's better than Quake II: Dan Freed, project administrator, Raven Software: "We are better looking than *Quake*



II, primarily due to the fact that we are using 24-bit color. We have put some real effort into improving the monster AI. Our levels are full of mood and atmosphere. We have

tons of variety. The levels range from city streets to outdoors in a swamp or a canyon. Most of the areas of the game are grouped together, and each of these groups has a set of monsters associated with them. So you really get a sense of a variety of monsters."

Why it's not: The game plays more like *Nightmare Creatures*, taking away the ability to precisely aim weapons and spells.

CRITERIA	8	Pure action: Whether spells or fantasy weapons, the concept is simple and sweet.
	6	Originality: Third-person will be different, but it's a sequel, so expect the same game style.
	6	Story: Corvus returns in a search for the cure to a deadly plague.
	7	Graphics: There's more color and detail than in <i>Quake II</i> , but still a certain drabness to the textures.
	7	Multiplayer: The combo of defensive and offensive mana for spells plus fantasy weapons holds promise.
	7	Buzz: Raven's background is solid. Expect the same buzz as <i>Heretic</i> had when coming after <i>Doom</i> .
	41	Score

X-COM Alliance

DEVELOPER → MicroProse
PUBLISHER → MicroProse

The skinny: Take the classic turn-based strategy and put it in an *Unreal* engine-based first-person system. Strategy still plays a part in moving your team members, and technology-building elements of the franchise should add a twist to this genre. The communication with team members is nice.

Why it's better than Quake II: John Broomhall, producer, MicroProse: "Control of multiple troopers, with simultaneous trooper viewpoints [you get to see what they can see in windows on your display]. Adjustable overhead maps, both on blackscreen and overlaid over the 3D view. Full squad management and strategic use of troopers — not just run and gun. Truly interactive music via live



multi-channel CD-streaming. A great unfolding storyline based in the *X-COM* universe!"

Why it's not: It'll be different, but is that good? We worry

the action could be secondary to the strategy. MicroProse still needs to prove itself in this category. However, *Starship Troopers* and *Klingon Honor Guard* both look good as well.

CRITERIA	6	Pure action: With teams to accommodate and maps to watch there will be a lot to occupy the gray matter.
	8	Originality: The tactical level of moving troopers, with the technical options provided by the <i>Unreal</i> engine.
	7	Story: More alien threats, but this time you get down and dirty with your team.
	8	Graphics: <i>Unreal</i> engine = good looks. Detailed textures in the early levels created so far look the part.
	7	Multiplayer: Communicating with team members will add a tactical element.
	6	Buzz: <i>X-COM</i> 's progression to first-person, backed by the <i>Unreal</i> engine, is definitely one to watch.
	42	Score

What is the future of the genre?

Joe Selinske: "Game design will continue to get more complex and deeper with more intricate and detailed storylines."

Dan Freed: "I think that the genre will continue to mature to the point of nearly total immersion. Heck, maybe someday 'Star Trek's' holo-deck will exist. But, in the more immediate future, I think the addition of multiple monitor support in Win98 we can expect to see this becoming a feature in the genre. I also expect

that VR goggles may make a comeback, now that the technology is finally at a point where it is feasible."

John Broomhall: "In the short-term, better storylines and more strategy to get people more involved in the games they're playing. Longer-term I guess it'll be persistent-universe games and huge online games with huge numbers of players in city-sized maps ... I'm looking forward to that."

Greg MacMartin: "I think we will see a much stronger focus on unique content

and storylines than we are seeing now. Especially when we get past the current fixation on engine features, statistics, etc."

Paul Butterfield: "By the beginning of '99, software rendering will be dead. There's almost no need to spend time developing games that don't require hardware."

Most anticipated:

We asked all these developers which five first-person shooters they were most anticipating. Here are the top five, with the number of people who mentioned them:

Half-Life	12
Sin	7
Duke Nukem Forever	6
Prey	6
Daikatana	4



Requiem

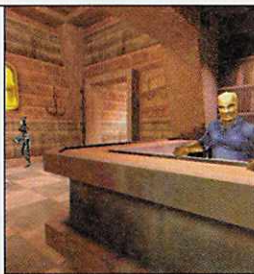
DEVELOPER → Cyclone Studios
PUBLISHER → Studio 3DO

The skinny: Battles of heavenly proportions as Malachi confronts the dark angels. Spells of divine origin and all manner of other religious paraphernalia set up a confrontation with the dark side that's bound to cause controversy.

Why it's better than Quake II: Evan Margolin,

executive producer, Cyclone Studios:

"*Requiem* is all about delivering that immersive, action-oriented combat, but it's also about interaction, realism, and one hell of a story. We've built our technology from the ground up, and we've come away with our own defined look and the ability to refine our game play. Our look feels different, and it's absolutely gor-



geous. Our artists have created some of the most unique enemies ever seen. The programmers have done an incredible job creating an Emotive Animation Technology that gives creatures and NPCs a level of animation that is unsurpassed."

Why it's not: Brilliant ideas, solid engine, but can it stand up to the big boys?

CRITERIA	7	Pure action: Picking and choosing between which characters to turn to salt should still keep the action up.
	8	Originality: Involvement with NPCs is key to the gameplay.
	8	Story: Milton's <i>Paradise Lost</i> was an inspiration, as heavenly wars caused the shit to fly among the angels.
	7	Graphics: Detailed animations will make the all-important NPCs come alive.
	5	Multiplayer: One-on-one play is likely easier to accomplish, but gamers love aiming to top a pile of 16 or more.
	8	Buzz: The marketing machine will heighten the hype with this controversial subject matter.
	43	Score

Star Trek: Klingon Honor Guard

DEVELOPER → MicroProse
PUBLISHER → MicroProse

The skinny: Essentially, *Klingon Honor Guard* is a "Star Trek" total conversion for *Unreal*. New character art and weapons straight out of the series offers the Klingon perspective that "Star Trek" gamers have yet to experience. Early versions show plenty of the necessary blood.



Why it's better than Quake II: *Klingon Honor Guard* team, MicroProse: "Superior AI that uses cover to hide from

players as well as working in groups to eliminate the player. Immersive reproduction of the Klingon universe. Ten unique weapons including the D'k tagh knife and Bat' leth blade from the series. An evolving storyline delivered by actual "Star Trek: The Next Generation" personalities."

Why it's not: The limits of the "Star Trek" license and the problems with *Unreal* multiplayer code could be a problem.

CRITERIA	8	Pure action: It's Klingons, dammit. They don't know what else to do but fight.
	8	Originality: Scores points for the Klingon perspective and the prominence of melee combat.
	6	Story: Chasing the perpetrators of an assassination attempt on the Klingon boss.
	8	Graphics: It's tough to not look good with the <i>Unreal</i> engine, but the environments are looking good and the character detail is excellent.
	6	Multiplayer: The multiplayer game will suffer from <i>Unreal</i> 's current problems.
	6	Buzz: It's not receiving the attention it may deserve as the first commercial <i>Unreal</i> -based game to appear.
	42	Score

Alien vs. Predator

DEVELOPER → Fox Interactive
PUBLISHER → Fox Interactive

The skinny: It's been attempted before, but the Fox license offers the official version deal to the famous aliens. Essentially three games in one, *Alien vs. Predator's* Alien, Predator, and Marine levels are all unique in story and gameplay mechanics.

Why it's better than Quake II: David Stalker, producer, Fox Interactive: "The player is immersed in a first-person world full of Aliens and Predators. You can choose between three species, each with unique weapons, abilities, and maneuvering characteristics. Aliens can maneuver in all directions on all surfaces, including climbing on walls and ceilings, then lunging down from above to attack their prey. Weapons damage the environment; for example, flame throwers and volumetric explosions."



Why it's not: The graphics aren't up to par, and we've already seen this game on the Jaguar. Besides, the game is waaaaa late.

CRITERIA	9	Pure action: The three classes really don't like each other. Let the battle ensue.
	6	Originality: It's been done before, but we love the Alien and Predator characters.
	6	Story: In the research station Pandora, each of the three races has its own agenda.
	6	Graphics: Early looks at the levels seemed like generic space station material.
	7	Multiplayer: The multiplayer game offers real possibilities with the three distinct character sets. Its proprietary engine will have to live up to the challenge.
	7	Buzz: It has the name, but gamers are more savvy than to fall only for that. Substance is needed.
	41	Score

The Scores

	Action	Originality	Story	Graphics	Multiplayer	Buzz	Score
Quake II	10	5	3	8	10	10	46
Unreal	8	6	5	10	6	9	44
Duke Nukem Forever	10	8	7	9	7	10	51
Prey	9	9	7	9	8	8	50
Half-Life	7	9	9	7	7	8	47
Daikatana	9	8	8	8	7	7	47
Sin	9	8	7	7	8	7	46
Wheel of Time	6	8	9	9	5	7	44
Max Payne	8	8	9	8	6	4	43
Requiem	7	8	8	7	5	8	43
X-COM Alliance	6	8	7	8	7	6	42
Star Trek: Klingon Honor Guard	8	8	6	8	6	6	42
Heretic II	8	6	6	7	7	7	41
Alien vs. Predator	9	6	6	6	7	7	41
Prax War	8	8	6	7	7	4	40
Shogo: Mobile Armor Division	9	8	7	6	6	4	40
Amen: The Awakening	7	7	6	8	6	5	39
Trespasser	6	8	6	9	0	8	37

BAD DAY?



Take it out on Canada

(no hard feelings, eh?)



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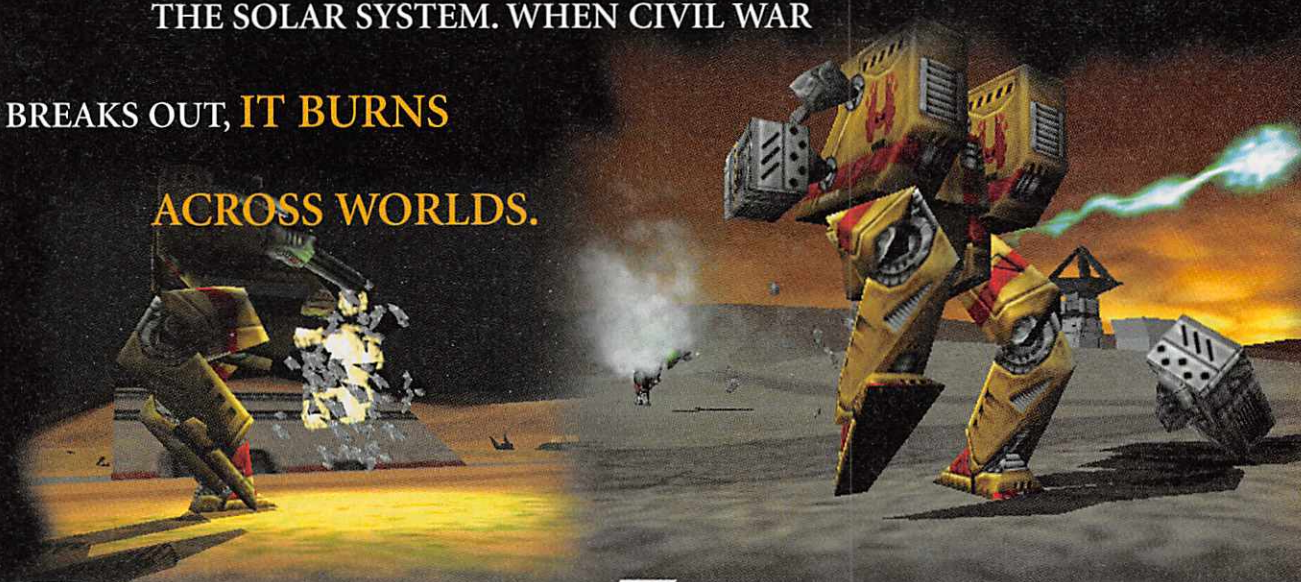
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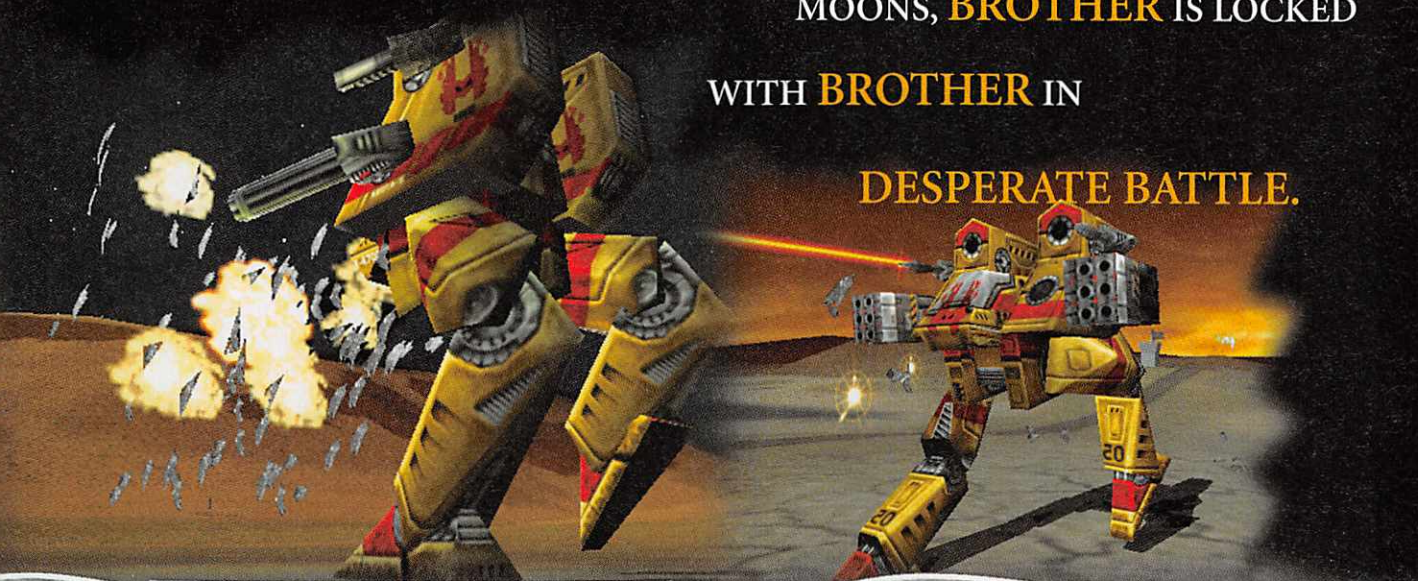
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ATI XPERT@PLAY 98	609
DIAMOND STEALTH II S220	396
CREATIVE LABS GRAPHICS BLASTER EXXTREME	377

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25 GREATEST GUY GAMES

One takes a special game to classify as a real "guy" game, and it must possess a pronounced glory all its own to be considered one of the 25 best. The formula is far from an exact science, but extreme violence, gratuitous sex, beer, or sports are critical. Of course, any game that can successfully combine all these elements into one experience is an instant classic.

Send your kid brother to get some smokes, lower the lights, get drunk on testosterone, and prepare to review the 25 games — in order of guy-ness — that make you proud to be a man.

Special note to our mothers: We aren't sexist pigs who promote violent computer games, we just play them in this magazine. Thank you.



Duke Nukem (series)

MANLY INGREDIENTS

Drinking, sex, violence, and expletive-loaded one-liners

DEFINING MOMENT

After mowing down alien scum, Duke heads into a strip club (as any self-respecting manly man would), pulls out a dollar, and the stripper gets nekkid — 'nuff said

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

A bachelor party with a load of guns and some alien intruders

BOTTOM LINE

Hail to the king baby! No game can even come close to this near-flawless combination of all things we cherish

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

10



It doesn't get more manly than *Duke Nukem*.



Note the explosion and blood — these are good.

2



Quake (I and II)

MANLY INGREDIENTS

Exploding bodies, showers of blood, huge guns, mass destruction, and lewd taunts

DEFINING MOMENT

Firing a BFG into your friend's face and watching his body parts fly all over the room

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

Vietnam

BOTTOM LINE

Quake is the ultimate bully. The pure satisfaction of driving a rail slug through a row of unsuspecting crouchers can't be touched

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

9

3



Carmageddon

MANLY INGREDIENTS

Road kill, horrified screams of anguish, and death around (and on) every corner

DEFINING MOMENT

Driving through a football stadium collecting carcasses on your fender — which scores you more points!

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

A typical commute to work on the L.A. Freeway

BOTTOM LINE

The interactive sequel to the driver's ed movie *Red Asphalt*, *Carmageddon* lets you drive the way you've always wanted

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

8

4



Tomb Raider (I and II)

MANLY INGREDIENTS

Two words — err — two things — hell, you know what we mean

DEFINING MOMENT(S)

Perverved camera manipulation to get the best angle, and pushing blocks just to hear Lara's erotic grunts

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

The laws of physics prohibit a real-life Lara, but Elizabeth Hurley is close enough

BOTTOM LINE

Lara, violence, Nude Raider websites, the return of Daisy Dukes, and plenty of two-fisted gunplay

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

9

5



Interstate 76

MANLY INGREDIENTS

Muscle cars, afros (Dan assures us this is manly), plenty of gore, and the occasional cuss word

DEFINING MOMENT

Running a copper off the road in your Pinto clone, then launching laser-guided missiles at the driver's forehead

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

An episode of "Starsky & Hutch" on acid

BOTTOM LINE

Muscle cars, an 8-track player, and a sexy sister = a ZZ Top video waiting to happen

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

9

6



Doom (series)

MANLY INGREDIENTS

Introduced the deathmatch, the most manly of all gaming pursuits

DEFINING MOMENT(S)

The first time you got your hands on the BFG, then later when you figured out what the acronym stands for

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

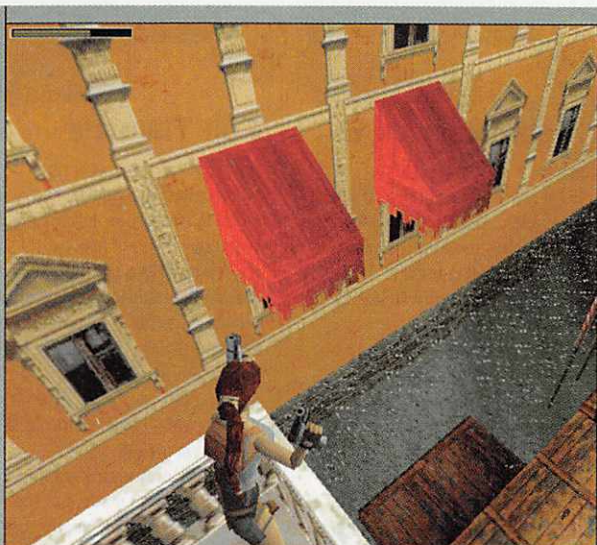
The "Jerry Springer" show — with guns

BOTTOM LINE

A solitary (albeit, psychopathic, hard-assed, and well-armed) Marine vs. the entire demonic population. It doesn't get much better than this

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

10



Feminist hero or mistress of exploitation? We don't care what you call her just as long as she keeps getting out her guns.

7



Wolfenstein 3D

MANLY INGREDIENTS

Slaughtering Nazis — what else do you need?

DEFINING MOMENT(S)

The first time you fire the chain gun and the glorious (almost demonic) laughter that always follows. These events truly changed our lives

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

The Dirty Dozen to the tenth power

BOTTOM LINE

The original 3D shooter that made it possible for all the wondrous incarnations that followed. Also opened the door for blood in games, and we all know how good that is

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

8

8



Myth

MANLY INGREDIENTS

Blood, blood, and even more blood — and let us not forget bloodstains

DEFINING MOMENT

Watching a severed head quietly roll down a blood-drenched hill into a valley strewn with random body parts

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

Braveheart

BOTTOM LINE

Realtime strategy done right: fast pace, epic battles, and a complete disregard for all forms of life. Introduced first true 3D terrain and physics, which gives us more stuff to blow the hell up

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

9

9



Jedi Knight

MANLY INGREDIENTS

It's *Star Wars*, and you get to be the bad guy

DEFINING MOMENT

Choosing between the dark and the light side of the Force (If you chose the light side, then you might prefer our list of games for girl men)

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

Choosing between the hot sleaze or the girl next door — there's no real choice, is there?

BOTTOM LINE

Absorbing *Star Wars* universe, light sabers, and the complete use of Force powers

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

9

10



NHL '98

MANLY INGREDIENTS

Body checks, toothless goons — hell, what isn't manly about hockey?

DEFINING MOMENT

Knocking a pretty-boy center through the glass and into the lap of his actress wife

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

Uh, hockey

BOTTOM LINE

Sports are the one thing (besides a few anatomical differences) that separates men from women, and *NHL '98* is quite definitely the best sports game around. It's also the best PC fighting game out there

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

9



"We've got no teeth! We've got no teeth!" Luckily teeth aren't a requirement for hockey, guy games, or beer.

11



Leisure Suit Larry (series)

MANLY INGREDIENTS

Sex, nudity, sex, nudity, ad infinitum

DEFINING MOMENT(S)

The desperate, almost painful, ongoing pursuit of any and all women in the game, and innocently asking your mother the answers to the adult test questions

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

Junior high (Oh hell, who are we kidding — our whole damn lives!)

BOTTOM LINE

Bad interface and even worse dialogue ... still, getting laid (even in a game) is always cool

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

6

12



Tapper

MANLY INGREDIENTS

Beer, bartenders, and lovely pixelated barmaids

DEFINING MOMENT

Tapper drinking games — where the real world and gaming collided for one major hangover

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

Last weekend (Oh hell, who are we kidding — our whole damn lives!)

BOTTOM LINE

You alone are responsible for saving precious beer from being spilled onto the grimy floor of a pixelated tavern, a responsibility that shouldn't be taken lightly

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

1

13



MechWarrior 2

MANLY INGREDIENTS

Giant robots beating the tar out of other giant robots, and a wide array of massively destructive weapons

DEFINING MOMENT

Actually learning how to use 12 buttons simultaneously

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

Rock 'em Sock 'em Robots

BOTTOM LINE

If you actually took the time to understand the controls, much manly action ensued (We'll just have to take Ed's word for it since the rest of us have but 10 fingers and were unwilling to grow more)

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

9

14



Full Throttle

MANLY INGREDIENTS

Motorcycles, mechanics, heavy metal music, big explosions, and sweaty overweight heroes

DEFINING MOMENT

Placing the hand icon on a woman's private parts (like you didn't try it!), and Ben saying, "Man, we're both gonna get in trouble"

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

Any bar with "Eagle" in its name

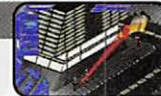
BOTTOM LINE

One of the only manly graphic adventures ever made, but the voice of Mark Hamill nearly cost this a place in the top 25

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

9

15



Syndicate Series

MANLY INGREDIENTS

Cool gadgets, cyborgs, and flame-throwers with no direct involvement yourself. Instead you rest comfortably back at headquarters plotting the demise of other innocents

DEFINING MOMENT

It's all about persuading masses of innocents to follow you around so you can use them as human shields

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

CIA or David Koresh

BOTTOM LINE

Men love power, and what's more powerful than controlling the minds and lives of others?

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

8

16



StarCraft

MANLY INGREDIENTS

Alien hordes, big-ass spaceships, and three warring races

DEFINING MOMENT

Realizing that you're surrounded by more Zergs than you have bullets for, and there is nothing you can do

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

Cinco De Mayo in Harlem during a Michael Bolton concert (think about it ...)

BOTTOM LINE

Dan stays up all night playing, and he told us it was a guy game. We still think he's a miserable loser who has nothing better to do at night

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

9

17



G-Police

MANLY INGREDIENTS

Souped-up helicopters, legalized police brutality, and the freedom to blow up pesky civilian vehicles

DEFINING MOMENT

The first time you quit following criminals and focus solely on causing mass property damage

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

LAPD

BOTTOM LINE

The right side of the law can be fun too, as long as you're armed with a futuristic helicopter and a couple 100pd bombs. No one speeds in our town!

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

7

18



Grand Theft Auto

MANLY INGREDIENTS

Car jackings, foul language, and greedy mob bosses

DEFINING MOMENT

Car jacking a school bus, ramming it through a police barricade, then hopping out and torching the fleeing survivors

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

Cosa Nostra, The Mob, The Family, Mafia, Good Fellas, Our Thing, Made Men, Crime Syndicate

BOTTOM LINE

Finally a game where you are the villain and all those do-gooders can go straight to hell!

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

8

19



Command & Conquer (series)

MANLY INGREDIENTS

World domination, armored vehicles, and vicious air strikes

DEFINING MOMENT

The collective squirt of blood when you run a mammoth tank over a squadron of infantry

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

The Middle East

BOTTOM LINE

Using men as pawns in your manly battle for world dominance is cruel — and the very reason manly men exist (or at least one of the reasons that we're allowed to print)

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

9



We think Denise Richards is a babe, so here's a picture.

20



Moto Racer GP

MANLY INGREDIENTS

Motorcycles, dirt tracks, oil (the greasy manly kind, not the sissy lotion kind) and bone-jarring accidents

DEFINING MOMENT

Losing your ride at 150 mph with only a telephone pole to stop you

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

Evel Knievel

BOTTOM LINE

The only way we wimps will ever get on a motorcycle is in this game. That alone makes it a guy game — just so we don't have to admit what sad, girly men we really are

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

9

21



Deer Hunter

MANLY INGREDIENTS

High-caliber weapons, flannel, and shooting cuddly (and poor defenseless) animals

DEFINING MOMENT

Spotting the trophy buck after hours of waiting (and drinking), and then finally getting a shot when you're too damn drunk to hit it

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

A weekend in Canada, a case of Moosehead, and your Uncle Bud

BOTTOM LINE

The box has a warning that says "Rewards injuring nonthreatening creatures" — 'nuff said

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

3

22



Custer's Revenge

MANLY INGREDIENTS

Even we manly men have to draw a line somewhere, and this game is just offensive

DEFINING MOMENT

When Custer gets an arrow in the — uhh — er ...

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

The White House intern program

BOTTOM LINE

We could get in real trouble for this one, but if you've downloaded that Atari 2600 emulator then there really isn't much else to play anyway (Actually this game sucks, but isn't it cool that we remember it?)

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

-3

23



Outlaws

MANLY INGREDIENTS

Classic spaghetti Western storyline, lots of shooting, and the occasional cigar (the absolute manliest of all smoking products)

DEFINING MOMENT

Fighting your way to the front of a moving train packed with countless members of the Bad and the Ugly

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

Outlaw Josey Wales

BOTTOM LINE

Westerns are inherently cool, but the lack of brothels nearly cost this game a slot in our top 25. What were they thinking?

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

8

24



Dungeon Keeper

MANLY INGREDIENTS

Evil plots, greed, and the ability to pimp-slap disobedient monsters

DEFINING MOMENT

Hearing the satisfied squeals of Dark Mistresses as you lock them up and proceed to perform obscene acts of torture

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

An evening with Marv Albert

BOTTOM LINE

Your turn to be the bad guy. Destroy all other Keepers, and then laugh uncontrollably at the pathetic attempts made by the Lord of the Land to thwart your domination

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

9

25



Diablo

MANLY INGREDIENTS

Scantily clad lady demons, swords, Satan, and blood

DEFINING MOMENT

Under the guise of cooperative play, you quickly stab your partner in the back for a few measly gold pieces

REAL-LIFE EQUIVALENT

"Baywatch Nights" (David Hasselhoff as Satan, scantily clad lady demons, etc.)

BOTTOM LINE

Guy's love Satan and we're no different, but come on, cooperative play? Since when were guys supposed to play nicely together?

WHAT WE WOULD HAVE SCORED IT

8

GAMES FOR GIRLY MEN

CREATURES

Nurturing cute furry, doe-eyed creatures is supposed to be fun? Give me a rail gun and I'll do some damn nurturing!

ULTIMA ONLINE

Arguably one of the most innovative games of our time — that is, if you're a huge geek who needs the company of virtual friends to enrich your sad existence. Final analysis: Swords good, conversation bad

THEME HOSPITAL

Healing? It's not bad enough that you have to be bored with financial details, but the end result is healing, and that goes against everything we stand for

FLIGHT UNLIMITED II

Maybe our game is broken, but we can't seem to find the button that releases the

bombs or even fires the guns. What a waste of good polygons

RIANA ROUGE

This had all the makings of a top 25 guy game. *Playboy* centerfold Gillian Bonner, lots of skin, and promised action. Reality: It's a game about feelings. Don't we get enough of this crap at home?

MYST

Somebody castrate me, then maybe I'll play this bore-fest they like to call a game. Anyone who bought this game or its equally unlikable sequel *Riven* need a handful of Viagra, Pamela Anderson posters, some lotion, and time alone to, uh, think

SCRABBLE

Wee dont need no stinckin speling!


"The future of gaming." PC Gamer  a completely *original* 3D engine  ruthless A.I.  hyper-realistic environmental effects



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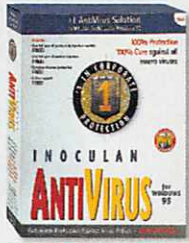
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Souping Up Your Rig

So 3D acceleration is all the rage and you're in the market for a sexy new board to drive your *Unreal* and *Quake* framerate high enough to melt your eyes from all the gaming goodness. Currently there's no single board or technology that's right for everyone, so **PC ACCELERATOR** is here to assist you in possibly the most important gaming decision you ever make.

Even more important than the company that manufactures the board is the chipset used to power it. These chipsets are what determine the performance, features, and developer support for your 3D accelerator. When shopping for a board, the first thing to read on the box is what technology the card uses. Here's a handy guide to the chips gamers need to be concerned about (if it's not here, you don't need to know about it).

3DFX VOODOO 2

PROS

AMAZING PERFORMANCE

Voodoo 2 should remain the absolute fastest 3D technology (especially in SLI mode) on the market until early 1999.

GOOD DEVELOPER SUPPORT

3Dfx has spent millions of dollars on marketing and developer support to make Glide, its proprietary API, number one in developers' minds. Because of Glide's popularity, many 3D games are programmed to take specific advantage of 3Dfx's hardware.

SCALABILITY

By connecting two Voodoo 2 cards together (in SLI mode), you'll find that your games will run almost fast enough to make you forget



that your wallet has been drained by hardware purchases.

FULL FEATURED

Voodoo 2 supports nearly every special feature under the sun: multitexturing, specular highlighting, 16-bit z-buffering, bilinear and trilinear texture filtering, quantum squirrel buffering, bump mapping in software, etc.

GOOD IMAGE QUALITY

YOUR CHOICES

CREATIVE LABS 3D BLASTER VOODOO 2 (12MB)	→ \$299
DIAMOND MONSTER 3D II (12MB)	→ \$299
DIAMOND MONSTER 3D II (8MB)	→ \$249
CANOPUS PURE 3D II (12MB)	→ \$329
Includes cooling fan and TV-out capability	
ORCHID RIGHTEOUS 3D II (12MB)	→ \$299

CONS

EXPENSIVE

Voodoo 2 cards currently start at about \$230. SLI solutions (using two boards or special two-in-one boards) cost upwards of \$500.

3D ONLY

The Voodoo 2 chipset supports only 3D acceleration, forcing you to use another video card to handle your regular word processing and Windows needs. Generally computers have enough ports so that this is not a problem, but for some, having a single 2D/3D graphics card will allow them room for other hardware additions.

POWER VR 2ND GENERATION

PROS

AMAZING PERFORMANCE

This chip should give a single Voodoo 2 card a run for its money.

INTEGRATED SOLUTION

PVRSG offers both 2D and 3D acceleration, so it's the only card you'll need for both games and that other stuff you use to justify a \$2,000 computer purchase.

FULLY FEATURED

PVRSG has four features that no other card in 1998 will have: full scene anti-aliasing, anisotropic texture filtering, VC texture compression (8:1), and hardware bump mapping. What does all that stuff mean, and how does it affect your games? Check out our handy Jargonator for full definitions of these and other important technology terms.



CHEAP

You'll get all of these features at prices starting under \$100.

GOOD POTENTIAL SUPPORT

Sega's new console Dreamcast makes use of the same 3D core as the PC versions of PVRSG. That means the best of the console's games will be ported to PC and take full advantage of PowerVR's hardware. While this will take a while, developers are already beginning to create games for this technology.

GOOD IMAGE QUALITY

YOUR CHOICES

No PowerVR second-generation boards have been announced, but plenty of first-generation boards are available for less than \$99.

CONS

WEAK DEVELOPER SUPPORT

Support for PowerVR's proprietary API PowerSGL has not caught on in the development community as well as Direct3D and 3Dfx's Glide, which means that fewer games are programmed to take full advantage of PowerVR hardware.

ON THE HORIZON

PowerVR is preparing to go head to head with 3Dfx for the high-end market with its own 3D-only part that is secretly referred to as PCX3. The chipset should cost about \$200 and use a parallel configuration of the PVRSG chipset. Look for it to show up early in fourth quarter '98.

NO TRUE AGP SUPPORT

While there are accelerated graphics port (AGP) boards that use Voodoo 2 chips, they really don't allow use of system RAM for textures, which means that they don't take full advantage of the benefits of AGP.

VERY CPU DEPENDENT

Unless you have at least a Pentium II 166, you shouldn't consider a Voodoo 2 card.

ON THE HORIZON

3Dfx is preparing the Voodoo Banshee, its first 2D/3D solution for release late in third quarter '98. From the specifications we've seen so far, its 2D performance should be excellent, and the company claims the chipset's 3D performance will be on par or even slightly faster than a single Voodoo 2. Prices for boards using this technology are expected to be around \$150.

JARGONATOR

The names used for 3D technology are often as inventive as the games that use them. Below are a few of the more confusing terms:

2D/3D ACCELERATION

Type of technology that offers support for general video processes (like running Windows, word processing, and graphics apps) as well as handling the advanced computations required for 3D graphics.

ANISOTROPIC FILTERING

Type of texture filtering that models texels (the pixels that comprise a texture map) as ellipses instead of the traditional form of circles. This process results in less "blurring" than bilinear or trilinear texture filtering, leaving textures crisp even in distances.

BILINEAR FILTERING

Filtering process that smooths polygons so they don't look chunky or blocky.

BUMP MAPPING

Process by which a surface appears to take on a more 3D aspect (for example, looking bumpy). This technique is very effective and is said to be used for the character's face model in the new Edward James Olmos 3D shooter.

ERRANT BJORK SMUGGLING

Occasionally Icelandic pixies pop up in true 3D environments. The best bet is to smuggle them into a 2D program like *Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing*.

FULL SCENE ANTI-ALIASING

Process by which all jagged lines from surfaces are interpolated and smoothed. The result is a more natural-looking image, so your *NHL 98* hockey players look more like the ugly Canadian brutes they represent.

MULTITEXTURING

Applying multiple textures on a single surface. For example, in *Quake II*, multitexturing is used to apply a texture to a surface and then apply a second transparent lighting texture on top of that to "fake" the effects of realtime lighting.

QUANTUM SQUIRREL BUFFERING

Purely hardware rendering technique that buffers most manufacturers' chipmunk textures in full 4D. ▶ p. 42

S3 SAVAGE 3D



PROS

INTEGRATED SOLUTION

The Savage 3D offers both 2D and 3D acceleration with good 2D quality, but it's not up to snuff with the potential of the Matrox G200.

GOOD PERFORMANCE

Running Direct3D games, the Savage 3D chipset stays neck and neck with Voodoo 2.

SUPPOSEDLY FREE TRILINEAR FILTERING

Trilinear filtering should provide some hit on the 3D hardware, but

early benchmarks show that enabling the feature results in no drop in framerates.

S3TC TEXTURE COMPRESSION

The same texture compression scheme Microsoft has licensed for DirectX 6.0, S3TC (6:1), is supported in hardware by the Savage 3D. This should be useful for getting more texture variation if developers support the new DX6 API in their upcoming games.

GOOD IMAGE QUALITY

CONS

NO MULTITEXTURING

Multitexturing support is a key component of Direct3D in DirectX 6.0 and is supported in most other emerging 3D technologies.

TOO EXPENSIVE

S3 has traditionally dominated low-cost video solutions. Its first viable entry to the 3D world is priced quite high (products should cost between \$150-\$200).

ON THE HORIZON

Future incarnations of the Savage 3D will include support for fea-

YOUR CHOICES

HERCULES TERMINATOR BEAST (8MB) → \$199

tures like anisotropic filtering, hardware bump mapping, shadows, full scene anti-aliasing, geometry and lighting setup, and more. Savage expects to release a new chip each year, so you won't see any of these features until the third quarter of '99.



MATROX

G200

YOUR CHOICES

MATROX MYSTIQUE G200 → \$149
MATROX MILLENNIUM G200 → \$149
Both available at end of summer '99

PROS

INTEGRATED SOLUTION

The G200 offers both 2D and 3D acceleration. Matrox has almost always provided the fastest 2D cards on the market and the G200 raises the bar once again.

GOOD PERFORMANCE

Direct3D tests we've seen put it on par with Voodoo 2. OpenGL tests remain to be seen.

DECENT PRICE

Boards should cost as little as \$150 in 8MB configurations.

EXCELLENT IMAGE QUALITY

CONS

Matrox has a rocky track record; the Mystique suffered from very poor 3D performance.

ON THE HORIZON

There is currently no information regarding Matrox's next generation of chips.

NVIDIA RIVA 128ZX

PROS

INTEGRATED SOLUTION

Solid 2D and 3D performance have made the Riva series one of the most often selected parts by hardware manufacturers when building computers.

DECENT PRICE

Riva cards now go for around \$150-\$200 depending on memory configuration and other options.

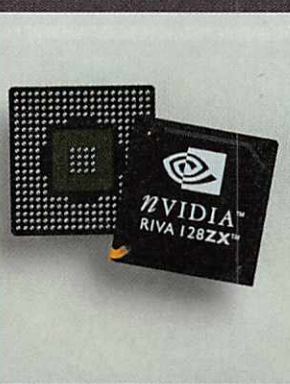
CONS

HORRIBLE IMAGE QUALITY

The Riva's performance is gained at the expense of poor color saturation, blurred edges, seaming, and dithering.

WEAK PERFORMANCE

Once the leader in Direct3D performance, nVidia's lack of new technology has forced it to play catch-up with other new technologies.



YOUR CHOICES

STB VELOCITY 128ZX → \$149

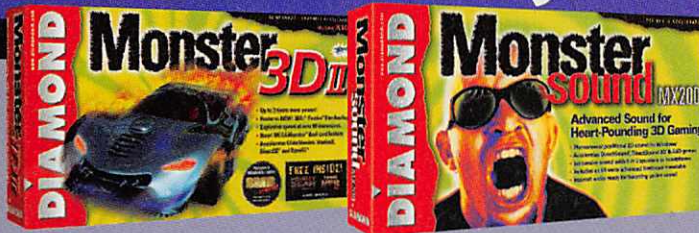
ON THE HORIZON

Developers are talking about Nvidia's next chip, the Riva TNT, which will fix image quality issues. With performance that's supposed to exceed that of Voodoo 2 in SLI mode while still providing exceptional 2D performance, Nvidia thinks it has the holy grail of 3D cards. This winter, we'll find out when the first TNT boards begin to hit shelves at prices just over \$200.



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JARGONATOR

CONTINUED ...

PROPRIETARY API

Application programming interface that is written exclusively for a piece of hardware. For example, 3Dfx's Glide API essentially allows developers to create games that take advantage of the specific strengths of the Voodoo and Voodoo 2 hardware.

RANDOM VOXEL SMOOTHING

Searches out any voxels in your favorite shooter and flattens them into a crepelike pixel.

RASTERIZATION

Process by which pixels are drawn on the screen.

RASTAFARIZATION

Process by which pixels are made to look like Bob Marley.

SLI CONFIGURATION

Two Voodoo 2 boards connected together for a powerhouse gaming setup. Some high-end setups contain two Voodoo 2 chipsets in SLI on a single board.

TRILINEAR MIP MAPPING

To enhance processing speed, developers will use several different detail levels for each texture. For instance, when you approach a wall in *Unreal*, at the furthestmost point the texture will be a very low-resolution image. As you get closer to the wall the computer then calls up a higher-resolution texture and merges the two (this keeps objects from looking pixelated up close — remember *Doom*?). Trilinear mip mapping is the use of three of these textures (a far, medium, and near texture) so you will notice a smooth transition of a texture as you approach from a distance.

TRUE AGP SUPPORT

Hardware that takes advantage of the accelerated graphics port, enabling faster transfer of information so games can utilize more textures and visual information. AGP supporting games such as *G-Police* and *Incoming* include more graphic treats like animated textures and more intense explosions.

VECTOR QUANTIZATION (VQ) TEXTURE COMPRESSION

Compression program that reduces the memory requirements for textures by about eight to one.

RENDITION CONSPIRACY

THE PERFECT SOLUTION FOR SLOWER CPUS

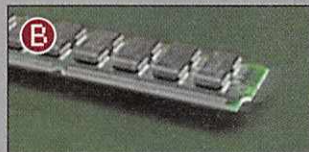
Combining the technologies of a Rendition V2200 and Fujitsu's Pinolite chipset, the Conspiracy Project boards will give just about any CPU more than decent 3D performance. The product enables gamers with Pentium or Crix machines to put off making a CPU upgrade for another year or two — at a price point of just \$150.

First-generation 3D accelerators implemented rasterization directly in hardware. Second-generation 3D technology (Voodoo 2, Rendition V2200) added more rendering effects, still leaving the geometry and lighting to be executed by the computer's main processor. The Conspiracy chipset moves these functions to a second specialized processor, resulting in significant 3D performance improvements without the use of faster processors.

If you have less than a Pentium II 233, this board could be your best option.

FACTORS THAT AFFECT PERFORMANCE

- A** CPU: Processor speed matters more than anything when it comes to framerate, so don't expect your 486/66 to run *Unreal* smoothly just because you bought a Voodoo 2 card.
- B** System RAM: All game code runs through system RAM, so make sure your machine has enough before you look into 3D accelerator cards. The minimum these days is 32MB, but like everything else on your PC, more is better.
- C** Card RAM configuration (4MB/8MB/12MB): Simple enough, the more RAM the better.
- D** Driver version/type: Drivers are crucial and some are definitely better. For instance, the Diamond Monster 3D II has the best drivers of any Voodoo 2 card, and consequently it runs games faster than all the rest.



PCX'S PICKS

BEST BUYS

- At \$249, the Diamond Monster 3D II 8MB is the best buy for the money if you're looking for dedicated 3D acceleration. (It tops the other Voodoo 2 boards because of its software drivers.)
- The Matrox Mystique G200 currently offers the best 2D performance on the market for around \$150. In addition, the card offers Direct3D and OpenGL performance that rivals a single Voodoo 2 card (from what we have seen in our reference board tests) with top-notch image quality.
- PowerVR's card offers *Unreal* and *Quake II* players native support and outstanding performance and features for under \$100. It's the best card for gamers on a tight budget.

THE BEST AT ANY PRICE

Two Diamond Monster 3D II cards in SLI configuration may be costly, but the performance of the dual Voodoo 2 boards can't be beat. Better drivers are again the reason.





DEMONSTRATION:

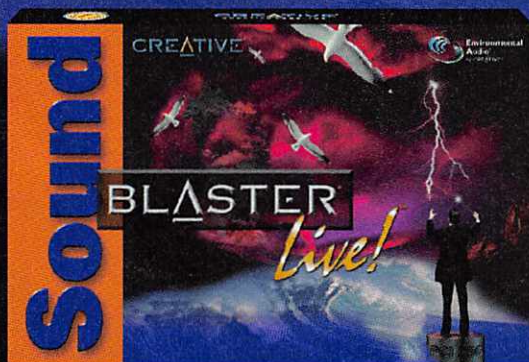
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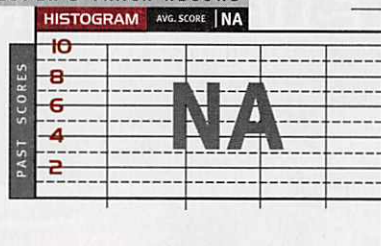
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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Half-Life

30% Quake + 70% Valve = 100% compelling

Half-Life is another in a long line of the first-person shooter brigade to miss its initial planned ship date. How did this happen? I mean, *Half-Life* uses the *Quake I* engine, which has been available for some time now — how long does it take to get it right? Well, this is where the 30% comes in. Valve's boss on the project is Gabe Newell, and he's been quick to make it clear that 70% of the game is Valve original.

"We have the source code to DOS Quake, Win Quake, GLQuake, Quake World, and *Quake II*, and all of the various patches and updates," he said. "We choose between them for whatever is most appropriate for the gameplay or functionality we are trying to achieve. But the AI, skeletal animation, GL and software renderers, DSP code are ours. At this point about 70% of the code is Valve's."

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Valve
 PUBLISHER → Sierra
 RELEASE DATE → October '98
 3D SUPPORT → 3Dfx, Direct3D, OpenGL

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

The one to watch if you want some gameplay substance in your diet of straight-up shooters.

THE HURDLE

Quake I is now old, and the competition is more fierce.

THE HIT

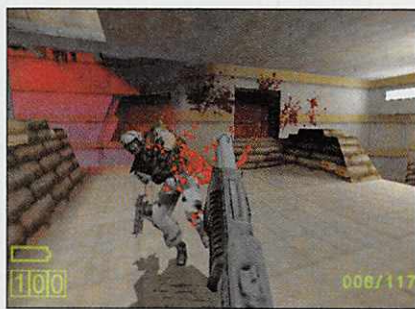
If TF2 were part of the shipping box you could pretty much bet on a huge score. WorldCraft 2.0 could make up for that.



Weapon balance is a key factor in *Half-Life's* multiplayer development. Its design is tailored to be unaffected by ping variations.

So that's cleared that up. But perhaps we're getting ahead of ourselves here. Perhaps you're not familiar with *Half-Life*. Why should you want to be? Well, amid a sea of first-person shooters *Half-Life* stands out like a beacon of gameplay principles in a choppy sea of clones. While all the coming shooters have their own story for how they're going to be top dog in the gaming kennel, *Half-Life's* is the most compelling.

It's about story-telling, and action, and plot development, and action, and special effects, and action, and monsters from another dimension, and action. In a genre where nobody cares about the storyline ("What bad-ass weapons do I get to blow monsters up with?" being the main focus of most gamers), *Half-Life* presents a different perspective. For one, there's a story that holds a cohesive thread, backed by some real revolution in the monster AI department. It concerns Gordon Freeman (you) a brilliant scientist with a penchant for the kind of quantum mechanics that



are beginning to prove that there exists a possibility of teleportation. You're going about your business when all hell breaks loose. Y'see, monsters have invaded Black Mesa Research Labs (from the inside). The outside world is making sure no one — and that means no one — gets out alive. It's a fight for survival, like all the

other shooters, but unlike all the others you're not alone. Other scientists are involved; there's still some form of community trying to stop whatever's coming in from getting in and also stop it from getting out. Making all this happen is a level scripting device capable of complex patterns of movement to create fluid, active scenes. "You could take an arbitrary animation, say a two-hour movie about a scientist playing cat-and-mouse with a bunch of monsters, and put that in the game. But things in scripted sequences like this can't interact with the world. We have a set of criteria that terminate that" ▶ p. 50



A beast from a parallel dimension? Or the NSA's latest security device?



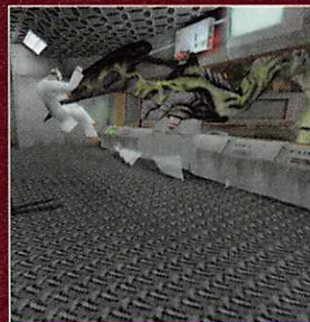
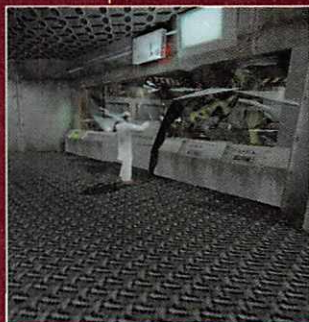
HALF-LIFE GALLERY



Secret research stations wouldn't be secret without a helping of green ooze to put off potential infiltrators.



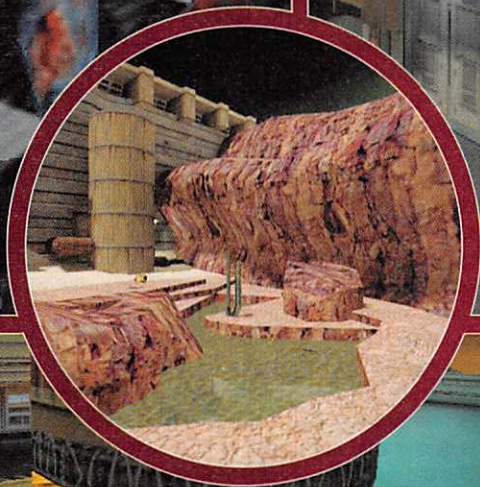
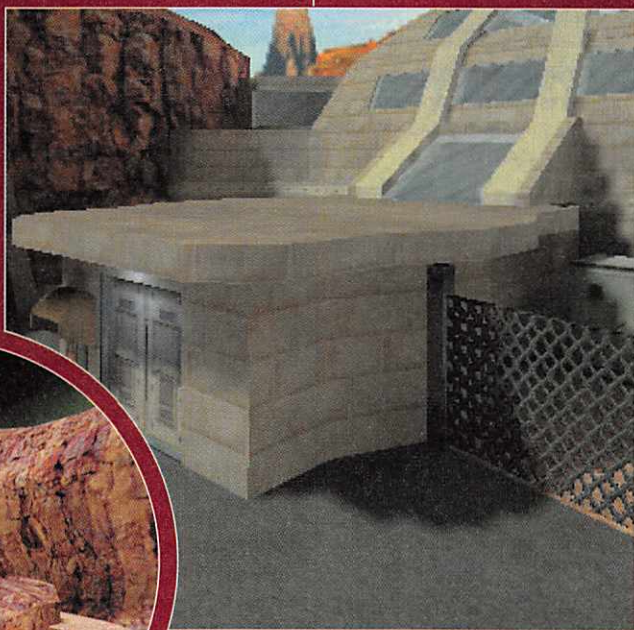
Scripted sequences bring the game world to life. Helicopters buzz overhead sending you scurrying for alien-infested cover.



It began as just another day at the office. Take your eyes off the controls for just a minute and look what happens.



The Team Fortress guys were delighted to get access to Valve's artists. You can see why. It seems that a few childhood nightmares are seeing the light of day through some grim creations. Their actions are based on a detailed AI model.



While the story is vital to Freeman's odyssey, there's no shortage of fire.

Utilizing the complex scripting language (which will be part of the WorldCraft 2.0 release) squad level actions will be possible. Enemies will work together with their own agendas, providing a greater, more cerebral threat to randomly dodging critters.





FIVE QUESTIONS

GABE NEWELL IS THE BRAINS BEHIND THE BRAINS IN PUTTING TOGETHER THE PIECES THAT WILL FINALLY MAKE HALF-LIFE A REALITY.

Q: What's the coolest AI effect in *Half-Life*?

A: I'd have to go with the conversation capability for NPCs, because it was something that utilizes just about every feature (skeletal animation, DSP technology, scripted sequences, streaming audio) in the engine.

Q: *Unreal vs. Quake II* — your call.

A: *Ultima Underworld*.

Q: Do you believe that Bill Gates is the antichrist?

A: I was at Microsoft for 13 years, and blood oaths sworn at midnight prevent me from naysaying my Dark Master.

Q: How much caffeine is consumed in the office on a daily basis?

A: Enough that the store manager for the Starbucks next to our office sent us a personal thank-you note.

Q: Who in the industry do you respect most?

A: If I have to reduce it to one, I'd have to go with a game designer, and it would be one of Warren Spector, Sid Meier, and Shigeru Miyamoto. Since Warren is the only one of the three I've met, and since he is amazingly laid-back for someone of his accomplishments, I'd have to give him the nod.



Enemies will use the environment to their advantage.

▶ sequence and lets the AI take over if you shoot or get too close to the scientist," explained Newell.

Of course, you're also fairly handy with an array of weaponry, including some top secret experimental hardware. The action quotient is certainly not to be compromised.

TEAM FORTRESS 2

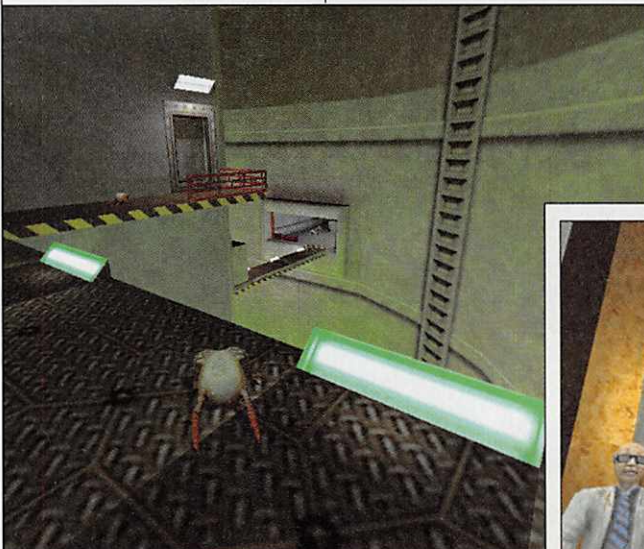
While *Half-Life*'s single-player story has been well-documented in the months surrounding its proposed and coming release dates, the multiplayer aspect was always a gray area. What would there be to make it more and better than the 18-month-old *Quake* deathmatch? Enter Valve's wallet and the purchase of Team Fortress Software, the three Australian guys behind the phenomenally popular *Quake* mod (more popular even than CTF).

What's the deal? For starters, TF2 is not going to ship as part of the

Half-Life box — the release date is set for a few weeks later. "Team Fortress 2 is going to be a much more polished product [than TF 1]," Robin Walker, one of TF Software's three directors, said. "We can capitalize on all of the resources at both Valve and Sierra. Honestly it feels a bit like being 10 years old in a candy shop with your Mom's credit card (ooh, I'll have those textures and that model, and some of Kelly's machine gun sounds, and ...)"

But what's Team Fortress 2 all about? Fundamentally it's team-based multiplayer, playing as different character classes in collaboration with colleagues on specifically designed maps (20 will ship with the TF2 expansion set). Frags count, but there are other elements to aim for in the familiar CTF/king-of-the-hill/base defense/item recovery mold. "Our goal is to make each of the classes quite distinct, and appeal to a different kind of gamer. We've added a campaign system for the clans, which are collections of maps with different game styles so that successful teams will need to master a variety of techniques," Walker continued.

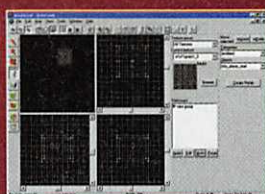
There are real details to the TF2



You're not alone in the Black Mesa Laboratory, but there are occasions when you'll wish that you were.



WORLDRAFT



It's not enough these days just to ship a first-person shooter with playable Internet code. Oh no. This rabid community demands more. And it's getting more in the shape of level editors that are really putting the creativity back into gaming by opening the talent pool to the masses of amateurs who might just have the knack to get their work noticed. (And no Dan, this does not include you ... Cone of Tragedy — good god.)

Ben Morris' WorldCraft appeared as one of the most complete *Quake* level-editing tools, and it was also bought by Valve to be used as the main level creation device for *Half-Life*. Included on the PCXL Disc is an exclusive opportunity to try out the latest, greatest version (1.6) of a software package that's incredibly flexible and fully featured.

WorldCraft 2.0 will ship in the *Half-Life* box. "The bottom line is that for game developers, *Half-Life* gives them a huge set of tools for building very rich story telling, monster behavior, and monster-to-monster interactions," Newell said. And you too can do this — with time and patience!

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gameplay that make it much more than a straight frag-fest. To incorporate certain strategies and necessitate careful team building (and thus organizational qualities) TF2 will involve a revamped weapon system.

To make the object of the game more easily understood (and therefore accessible to newbies) a compass point to the flag/base/whatever won't just point to the end location, but will offer a route to get there. Newbies seem to figure in the whole Valve plan for *Half-Life*. "For people who are new to multiplayer gaming, *Half-Life* has a one-button multiplayer feature, where you click a button, and *Half-Life* does everything else to connect the player, configure the game, select an appropriate low ping server, and put them in the game," explained Newell. And much like *Unreal* and the 3.15 *Quake II* patch, all maps, codes, and skins will download automatically.

As the TF Software guys get settled in Seattle, *Half-Life*'s life expectancy has taken a significant boost. The multiplayer arena, so crucial to continuing franchise success, was a potential weakness solved in one fell swoop.

— ROB SMITH seems to have spent half his life putting this preview together.

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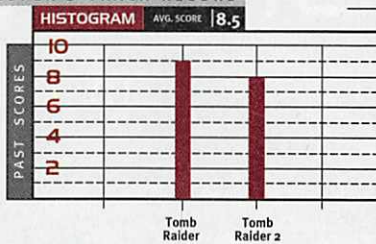
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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD

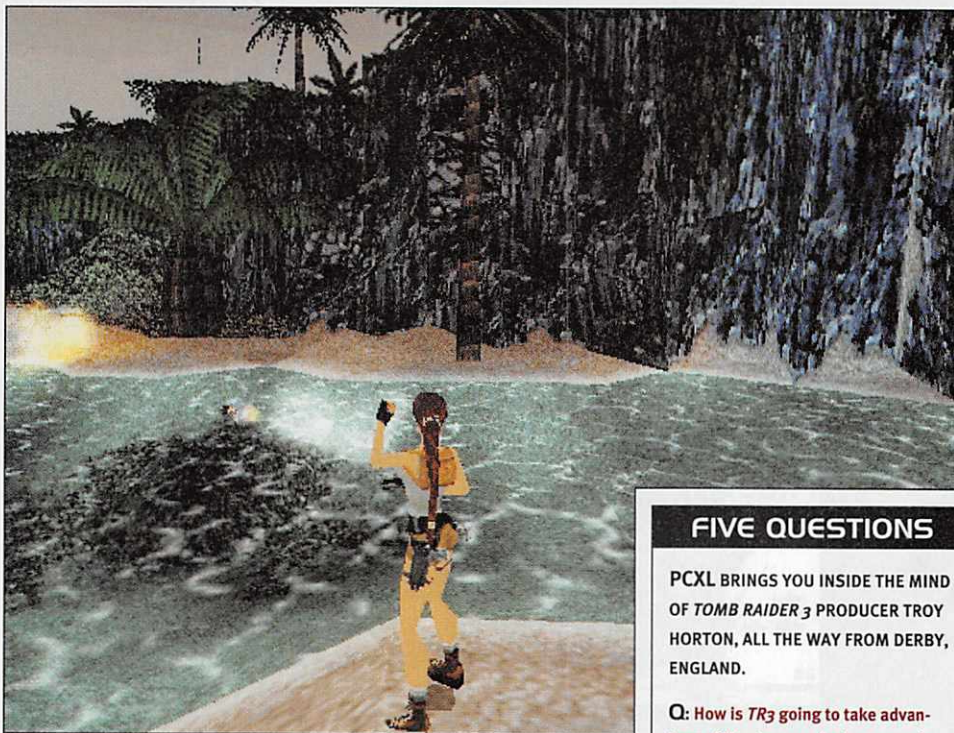


Tomb Raider 3

Is more of the same enough?

Among the glamour and glitz of an array of 3D engines showcased at E3, Lara's latest adventure didn't really stand out. The three-year-old graphics engine has been tweaked, but the effects and environments aren't even in the same league as other third-person games like *Max Payne* and *Heretic II*. However, no other game in development has *Tomb Raider 3*'s main asset: the busty adventurer we all know as Lara Croft. She is undoubtedly the biggest star in the game industry and has helped expand the market with her unreal body and adventurous gameplay.

Complaints poured in that *TR2* was way too similar to the original, but that didn't stop millions of gamers from buying and playing the hell out of the game. Many in the industry have been saying that *Tomb Raider* is tired, old, and doesn't stand a chance against



The transparency effects on the water and smoother edges lighten up the blocky look of previous games.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Core Design
 PUBLISHER → Eidos
 RELEASE DATE → November '98
 3D SUPPORT → Direct3D (patches for Glide after release)

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

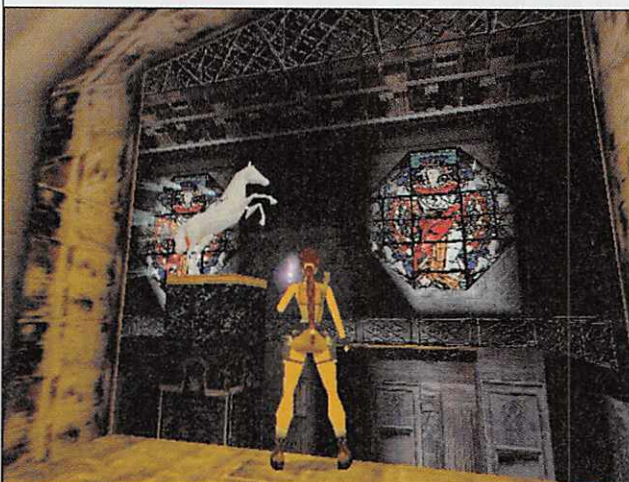
The third *Tomb Raider* adventure promises a revamped engine, better AI, new vehicles, and new moves.

THE HURDLE

Often gamers will accept sequels that are more of the same, but for a third installment they expect something special.

THE HIT

TR's technology is no longer up to par with other 3D action games on the PC, but gameplay and Lara should be enough.



New lighting effects and scripted events add to the interactive movie approach of the game.

FIVE QUESTIONS

PCXL BRINGS YOU INSIDE THE MIND OF *TOMB RAIDER 3* PRODUCER TROY HORTON, ALL THE WAY FROM DERBY, ENGLAND.

Q: How is *TR3* going to take advantage of *Voodoo 2* and other second-generation accelerators?

A: As with *TR2*, we're using Direct3D in order to support as many 3D cards as possible.

Q: Do you have any secret renders of Lara in the raw?

A: My answer depends on if you think my bosses will read this.

Q: How cool is it having a nursing school in Derby?

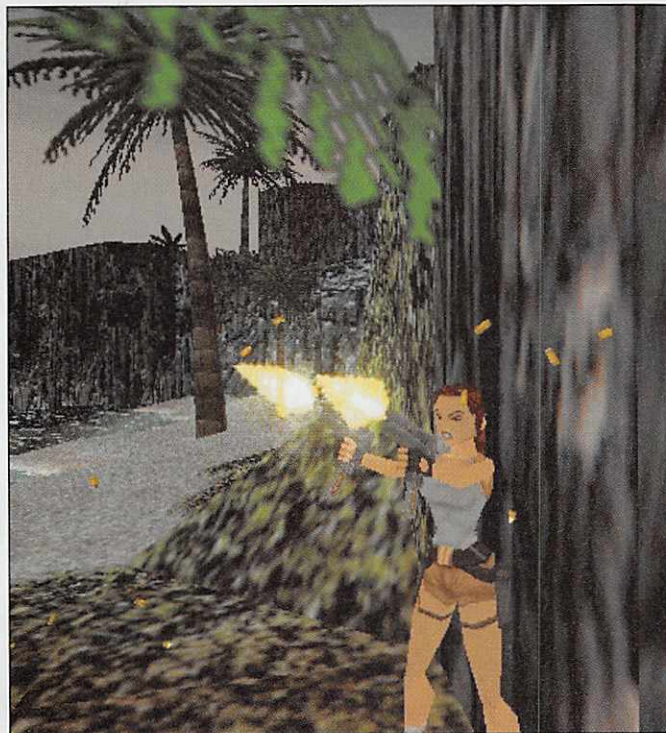
A: It's brilliant. They hook us up on the rehydration IV after a long weekend on the piss.

Q: The question we're all dying to know: How is Lara in the sack (yes, we know she isn't real but indulge us)?

A: You mean a gunny sack race? Like at a family picnic? She would probably do very well, being the athlete that she is!

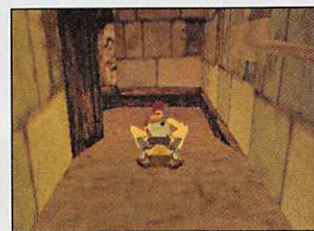
Q: Do you get to pick the Lara models? Because if you need any help ...

A: The execs lock themselves in a room for a few days while "auditions" take place.



Smooth particle effects and transparencies showcase Lara's other guns.

Mmmm ... Lara. She's so cute when she's mad.



Gravity finally caught up with Lara as she can no longer stop herself from falling forward.

► the new wave of games. One key ingredient they're forgetting is that gameplay, not graphics, is what makes a great game. Despite the many efforts to clone *Tomb Raider*, no game delivers a better cinematic feel or sprawling adventure. Sure the battle scenes in *TR* are almost laughable, but the ingenious puzzles, dramatic environments, and well-crafted levels are the real reason people love the first two incarnations.

Rather than spending a year developing a new engine, Core

has focused on creating a new, more interactive world for Lara to explore. *TR3* takes Lara to the exotic locales of Antarctica, India, a tropical rainforest, Area 51, and London. A new landscape system incorporating triangles, improved texture palettes, transparencies, and other particle effects promises to liven up the graphics. Other cosmetic enhancements such as snow, wind, rain, footsteps in the snow, blowing leaves, fog, darkness, and even some new duds for Lara are likely to alter the environment just enough so it seems like a whole new game.

What wasn't evident in the early version I saw were upgrades in gameplay. Core Design promises new moves, new vehicles, and new puzzles that, if pulled off, could once again make Lara the queen of adventure. For example, in the London level Lara slips into a tight black cat suit and has to sneak around the city, rather than charge around in her usual gun-blazing

style. The key to stealthy gameplay is in the enemies' AI, which was abysmal in previous *TR* games. Core assure us that its programmers have spent a great deal of time and energy to wise up the baddies, but we'll wait to see on that. The vehicles that debuted in *Tomb Raider 2* are now going to be a more integral part of the gameplay, with a new vehicle for each world. Vehicles thus far: a jeep, a motorboat, a motorcycle, and a water raft, which Lara rides down a maze of perilous waterfalls. New moves including knocking down doors, crawling, rope swinging, and wall jumping give Lara more tools for trekking around the titanic levels and round out the new features.

Additions aside, *Tomb Raider 3* is likely to be more of the same, which to some ain't so bad.

— MIKE SALMON *has the Nude Raider website as his startup page.*



New moves such as climbing forward should provide even better platformlike action.



A new vehicle for each world should break up the gameplay and keep things fresh.



Otherworldly beasts and their vile traps are certain to be tougher this time around.



Lara just won't give up that Banana Republic circa 1983 fashion statement.

THE REAL LARA

With Paramount starting production on *Tomb Raider: The Movie*, we thought this would be a good opportunity to test out some candidates on the casting couch.

ELIZABETH HURLEY

⊕ She's got the accent, height, and looks
⊖ Going to need a padded bra and some toughening up

DEMI MOORE

⊕ Like Lara, horny men — as opposed to genetics — created her body
⊖ The accent is key, and her face could use some more work

VANESSA DEMOUV

⊕ Already has the outfit, and we've got access to naked pictures
⊖ She's French, she can't act, and she still wears a training bra

LUCY LAWLESS

⊕ Tough as nails, accent, and strong lesbian following
⊖ A bit butch for our liking

SANDRA BULLOCK

⊕ She's got dark hair and is an actress
⊖ Too cute, flat chest, and she isn't much of an actress



Where Technology Meets Technique

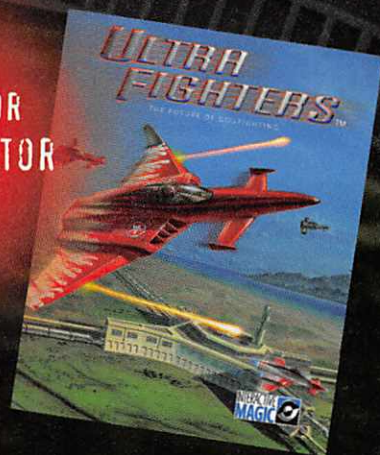
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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD

	HISTOGRAM	AVG. SCORE	NA
PAST SCORES	10		
	8		
	6		
	4		
	2		
			NA

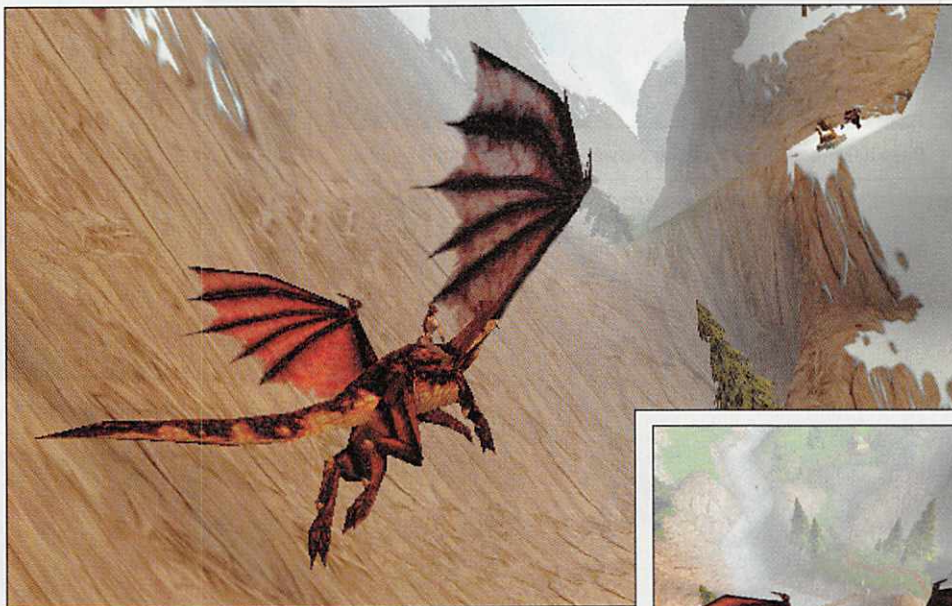
Drakan

Look out Lara, there's a new girl in town

At first glance you may think Psygnosis' *Drakan* is just another slick *Tomb Raider* knockoff. It has all the right components (a sultry heroine, exotic locales, and high adventure) to be a clone, but play it once, and you'll realize the two titles have very little in common.

While Lara Croft's adventures involved quiet exploration and the occasional moment of action, *Drakan's* lead character Rynn is more about intense combat. On the ground she will constantly face mythical creatures and surly giants in hand-to-hand combat, while in the air she fights dangerous flying creatures bent on her destruction. This mix of two gaming styles is at the very heart of *Drakan*, and the reason the game feels so original.

On foot Rynn has more than 50 different weapons at her disposal, and a unique battle system that enables her to seamlessly mix

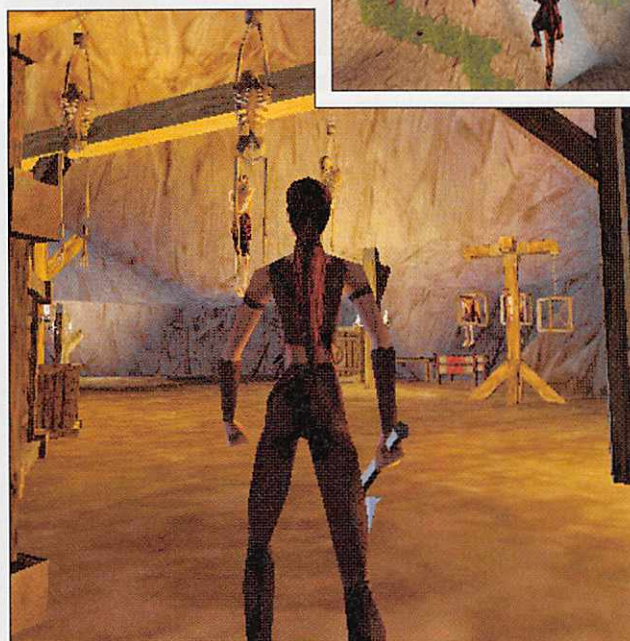


The flight model in *Drakan* is on par with, if not better than, any flight simulator we've seen.



moves. You can command her through combos like jumping, slashing, and then immediately moving to a defensive position without ever having to sit through a sequence of canned animations. For those who cannot advocate this kind of weapon-oriented violence, the game includes plenty of flashy spells that let you fry enemies to a crisp without any swordplay guilt. (But honestly, if you can't advocate videogame violence then maybe you should be reading *Family PC* instead of *PC ACCELERATOR*.)

The air combat side of the game is equally well designed, letting you take control of what is quite possibly the first fully functional dragon simulator. Thanks to tight control, this half of the title is a complete game by itself, with a completely different strategy than the ground-based segment. It also promises to make the multiplayer mode more exciting as players go beyond the usual frag-fest, ▶



If you have to look at someone's backside for an entire game, then I suppose you could do worse than this.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Surreal Software
 PUBLISHER → Psygnosis
 RELEASE DATE → Q1 '99
 3D SUPPORT → Direct3D, Glide

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

Drakan introduces a lead character that could give Lara Croft a run for her money — and it includes innovative gameplay.

THE HURDLE

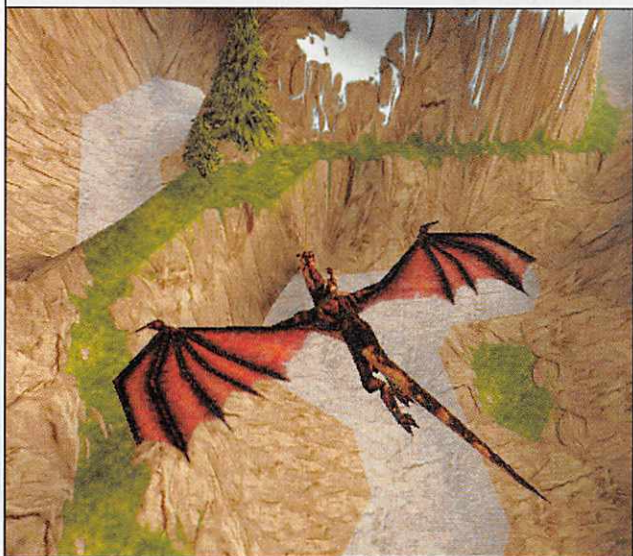
Lara-clones and games that combine styles have been notorious failures.

THE HIT

The game looks incredible, and the aggressive approach by Surreal Studios looks to have the hallmarks of success.



Does a fire-breathing monster between your legs sound good?



Drakan's incredible graphics engine produces eye-popping detail.

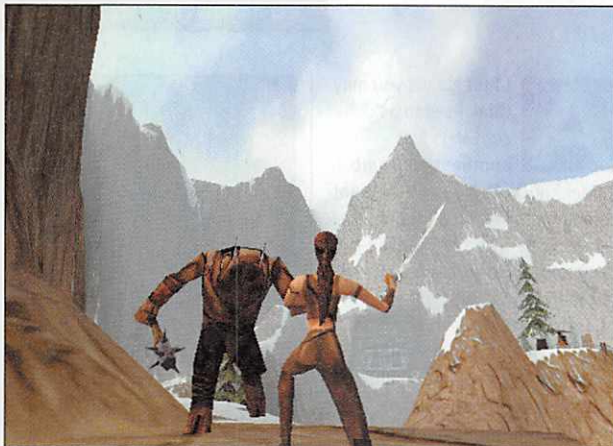
▶ fighting both on the ground and in the air. The deathmatches will also enable up to eight players to battle only on foot, battle only in air, or battle for a single dragon and the air superiority that it brings.

This two-tiered gameplay takes place over a beautifully rendered fantasy world. The graphics engine enables Rynn to walk miles on foot, and then mount a dragon

and fly over the same exact land-

scape in a mere fraction of the time, which makes the worlds feel incredibly real, despite their fantasy origins. Fourteen levels will take you through five environments that include logical choices like mountainous terrain and snowcapped hills, as well as a surreal fantasy level whose only basis in reality is the dreams of the Canadian snowboarding team.

Each of these worlds is populated with smoothly animated bad



A variety of enemies on land and air keeps you on your toes.



Adventure elements such as climbing around to find secret areas promise to add depth, not to mention the necessary ladders.



guys such as hammer-wielding trolls and nonplayer characters that make *Drakan* play like an animated storybook. In fact, many of the in-game characters will interact with Rynn to move the story along, keeping the plot and game-play together within the title's 3D engine. The game's AI promises to be equally impressive, with unique touches such as giants who will use anything at their disposal to fight (including any

unlucky bad guy who happens to get in the way during battle).

Drakan is a fresh and exciting prospect that steps beyond the safety of me-too game design. When it finally hits stores early next year, it is unlikely that any other game on the shelves will look quite like it.

— DAN EGGER has gone through three body revisions in the past year, but he still needs some work.



"Bring it on Lara! I'll take you anytime and anywhere."



Which is cooler? Flying on dragons or slaying them?

FIVE QUESTIONS

PCXL TALKS WITH SURREAL STUDIOS HEAD ALAN PATMORE ABOUT HIS NEW GAME AND THE CHARACTER RYNN.

Q: Be honest: Lara and Rynn walk into a bar and get into a brawl. Who walks out on her own power?

A: Rynn, of course! She is younger, much more athletic, and has many more moves. She can slice and dice any opponent even while shaking her booty in circles. We also can't ignore the fact that Rynn has much better cleavage!

Q: What games were the most inspirational when you set out to create *Drakan*?

A: All of the old fantasy RPGs like *Ultima* and *Wizardry*. Everything Bullfrog did, especially *Magic Carpet*.

Q: What's up with names like *Drakan*, *Dragoon*, or the like when we all know it's just a dragon?

A: Dragons in our game are still called dragons. We couldn't name the game "Dragon" due to legal issues, so we're using the name of the game universe, *Drakan*.

Q: Let's get this out of the way before we get ten thousand letters from horny readers. Is there a Nude Rider code?

A: No ... wink, wink, nudge, nudge.

Q: When you decided to make Rynn more shapely, were there any models/actresses that you patterned the design on?

A: We digitally composited the following models into an averaged vertex mesh to come up with the "perfect" female character. You can imagine who we're talking about: Elle MacPherson, Nikki Taylor, Krissy Taylor (*Gross! she's dead!!*), Linda Evangelista, Karen Mulder, Daniela Pestova.

CASTING CALL

OK, the *Tomb Raider* casting frenzy is already out of control. So to get a jump on the casting fury that could surround a *Drakan* film, we offer some early suggestions. And in case Surreal continues to change the looks of its lead character, we provide ideas for the different Rynn character models that they've already gone through.

RYNN (CURRENT MODEL)

STEPHANIE

SEYMOUR—>

She's got the look and has experience wearing bustiers

RYNN (ULTRA-THIN WAIF MODEL)

KATE MOSS—>

She has a skin-and-bones body, but she'd have to work out. Right now she can't lift a bagel, let alone a sword

RYNN (MANLY MODEL)

MARV ALBERT—>

He already has experience wearing leather, and he's probably into reptiles

AROKH (THE DRAGON)

GEORGE HAMILTON—>

His overly tanned leather face is just a beach trip away from having dragonlike scales



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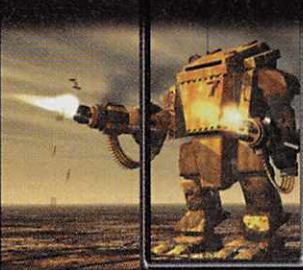
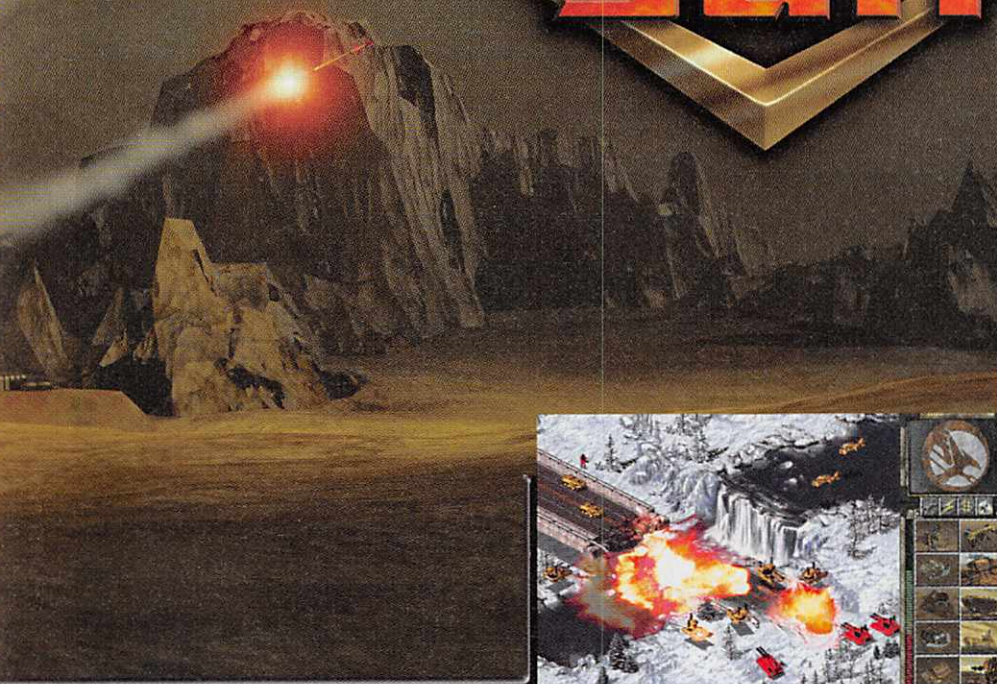


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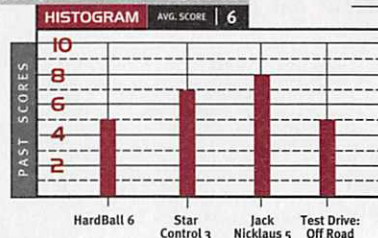
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Slave Zero

Mech action without the sim

Sixty-foot bio-mechanical entities blowing the crap out of other 60-foot bio-mechanical entities while unceremoniously trashing a sprawling city of the future — sounds like a concept right out of **PC ACCELERATOR's** Ideal Games folder.

As developer Accolade moves its corporate strategy progressively into the burgeoning market of action, action, action and 3D acceleration, *Slave Zero* is a project entirely in keeping with this

philosophy. The pitch is simple: The futuristic city of Zo (inspired by the cities of *Blade Runner*, *Judge Dredd*, and various Japanese anime) is under the evil grip of a character called Maldar. He's a bad guy (hence the evil grip). You're a good guy, in league with a rebellious faction that steals a Slave. These (60-foot tall bio-mechanical) entities are armed to the teeth (if they had teeth) and surprisingly deft.

Destroying the city's infrastructure is the plan. Upsetting



Multiplayer arenas will allow eight Slaves to battle, and the familiar mouse/keyboard combo will be fully supported.



Smaller sentinels are the main enemy to Slaves.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Accolade
 PUBLISHER → Accolade
 RELEASE DATE → Spring '99
 3D SUPPORT → All APIs

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

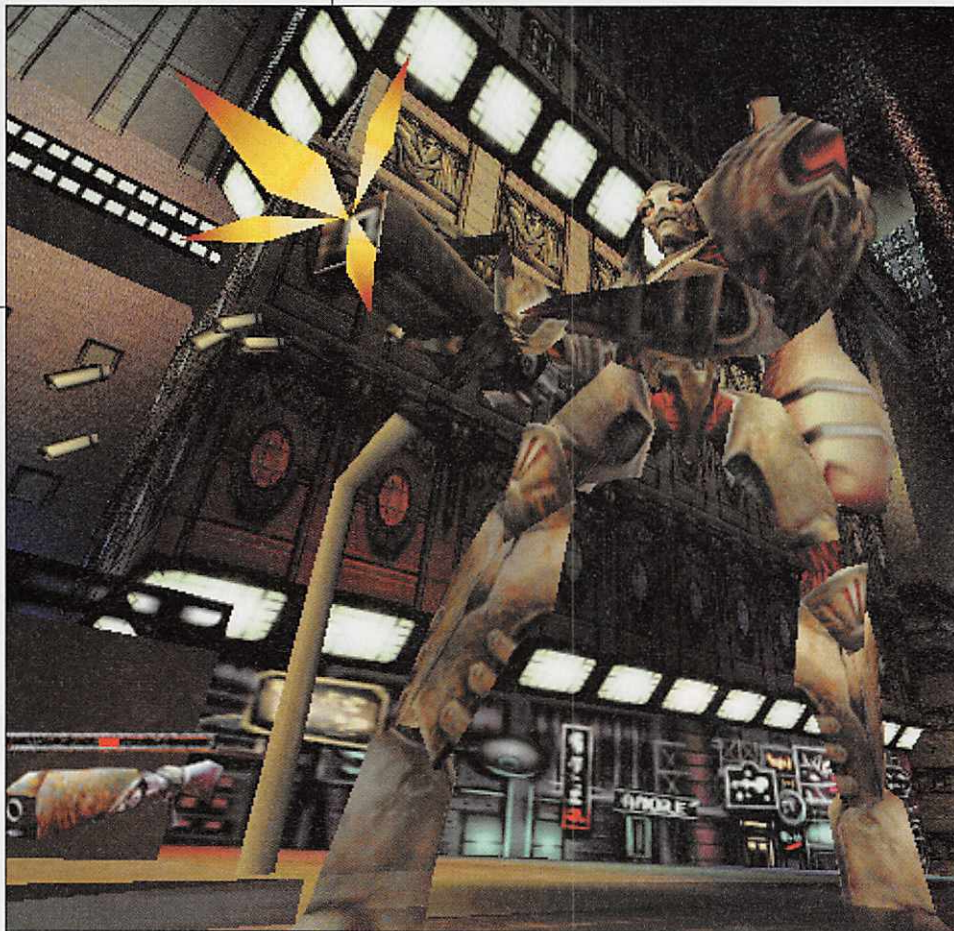
A destructible city, huge mechs, and action to fry your eyes.

THE HURDLE

It's a tough market. The Ecstasy engine has mucho competition.

THE HIT

An appreciation that the game world will have evolved between now and the proposed ship date sets *Slave Zero* up well.



The dark matter rifle creates a small gravity well that pulls any object in range into it.



FIVE QUESTIONS

SIXTY-FOOT SLAVES? PCXL JUST HAD TO GRILL SLAVE ZERO PRODUCER MATT POWERS ABOUT THIS ONE.

Q: Who would you like to be your slave?

A: Either agent Dana Scully or "7 of 9" from "Star Trek" (or both!).

Q: Do you think the U.S. should apologize for slavery?

A: Yes.

Q: Who do you most admire in the industry?

A: John Carmack. He is very talented, has shipped incredible product, no overclocking ego, shares his knowledge, continues to work hard and push the industry.

Q: Specific card API or OpenGL and D3D — which is the best way to go?

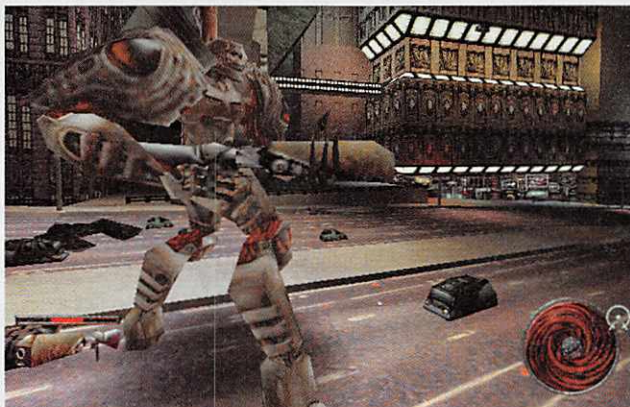
A: Each card seems to perform better when we are able to tune the code specifically for that card. Overall, D3D is a very good route to go as long as the engine allows specific code to be written for each card. The Ecstasy engine has a separate dynamic link library for each 3D card. These DLLs are tuned for maximum performance for each card.

Q: Unreal vs. Quake II — your call?

A: Unreal single player, Quake II multiplayer (no contest).



Got a problem?



Cars will react, crash into each other, and explode as they avoid being stomped.

▶ the populace with a harshly worded leaflet campaign, and yelling in the streets with a sandwich board tied around your shoulders is not the style. Jumping into this destruction-dealing beast and destroying communication arrays, power lines, and ordinance factories is more befitting.

"Everything you want to do with a 60-foot mech in a bustling metropolis, we want you to do," said *Slave Zero*'s lead designer Sean Vesce. "We're creating an environment with a lot of interactivity — a dynamic city, rather than being static (using portals etc.), where you can move and destroy stuff."

Slave Zero will use its own proprietary engine based around 3D Studio Max 2. As producer Matt Powers commented, "We knew from the start that we were creating a game to release in early '99.

We looked at the *Quake* and *Unreal* engines, as well as others, but we needed something that was going to be cutting edge when it came out. So we're going hardware-acceleration only." By using a dynamic link library (DLL) system, *Slave Zero* will include support for all the various accelerator card APIs specifically.

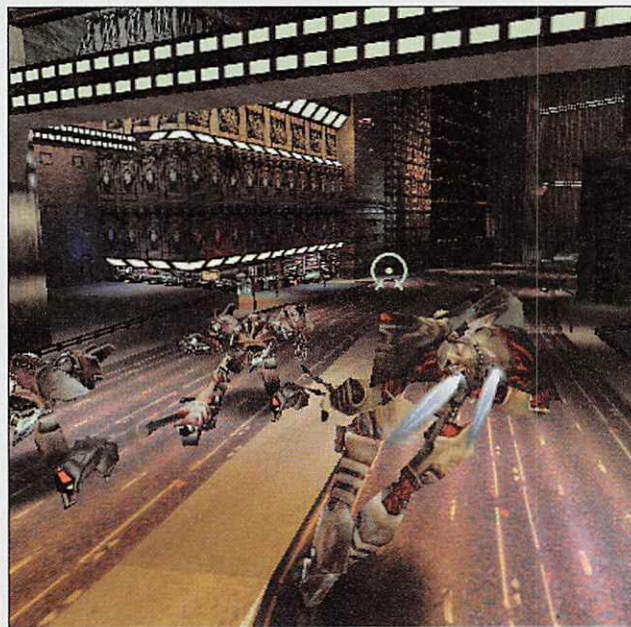
"Creating a sense of scale is very important for us," continued Powers. "We've gone with a third-person view because the detail in the *Slave* animation and the scale and scope of the city is something we want to show off and something you, as the player, will want to see." In the playable version I saw, the sense really is of controlling a behemoth mech.

"Fast action is vital," added Vesce. "We're going to throw a lot of enemies at you so there won't be much time for exploration. You know that feeling when you're playing *Quake*, when all the outside world is shut off as you're on a spree — in the zone? That's what we're after all the time in *Slave Zero*."

About 12 weapons are planned, including some that interact with the city environments. You'll be able to see shockwave effects on the city — cars will crash and bridges will collapse. There is even an electromagnetic pulse weapon that will shut down the lights of the entire city.

For a game still some five months from alpha stage when I saw it, *Slave Zero* was looking very polished. The important aspect is whether the crucial elements of scale and interactivity can be blended in to a game with purpose and action.

— ROB SMITH *isn't anybody's slave.*



Sixty-foot mechs can strafe! Jetpacks help them maneuver as well as enable them to hover.

SIZE DOES MATTER

Key to *Slave Zero* are the enormous 60-foot mechs and the destruction that ensues. Here are a few other cases in which size does matter.

SHAWN BRADLEY

This skinny white guy makes millions for being extraordinarily uncoordinated. If he was 6'4" even the Dallas Mavericks wouldn't want him



CHRIS FARLEY

The key to energetic fat-guy humor is being fat. Without that extra weight Chris Farley would still be alive, but he wouldn't be very funny



TOMMY LEE

Pamela Anderson and Heather Locklear didn't marry him for his looks, talent, or calm demeanor (a lack of these qualities is the reason they divorced him)

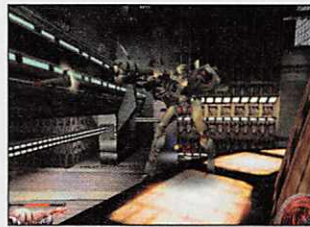


GOZZILLA

Big lizard, big budget, big piece of crap. Proof of the less fortunate man's mantra that it isn't the size, it's what you do with it



A procession of sentinels is about to fry.



There's no time for sight-seeing despite impressive levels.



Watch it! A good vantage point to snipe with rockets.

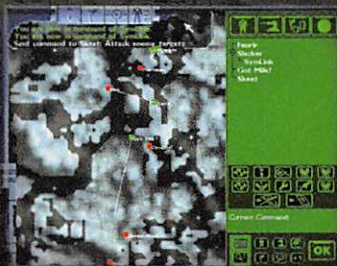


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MOTION CAPTURE ANIMATION.
SKELETAL ANIMATION? NO.
FLUID, FULL-MOTION BODY
MOVEMENTS? YEP.

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PLAYERS DASH INDOORS AND OUTDOORS WITH
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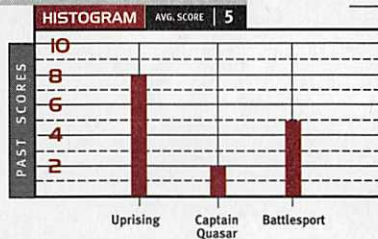
THE ULTIMATE

IN FIRST-PERSON SQUAD WARFARE





DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Requiem

Cyclone busts into the first-person shooter scene with righteous fury

Just when people were getting used to the idea of a showdown between Id and Epic for the first-person shooter cash flow, along come upstarts with their own ideas. Started more than two years ago, *Requiem* is one such upstart-in-the-making, and its developers hope their title stands out as a real player rather than an also-ran. The daunting challenge of creating strong technology that's comparable to the heavyweights' while simultaneously working on innovative design would be enough to cause most design houses to cash in and quit. Not Cyclone, however, whose last effort, *Uprising*, was a huge critical (if not commercial) success. From an early look at the game, still a few months from completion, it seems that the choir is clearing its throat for a mighty *Requiem*.

The main thing Cyclone is stressing is the story and character inter-



Don't worry, those teeth are just bitmaps.

action. The plot centers around a group of renegade angels bent on wiping out humanity, and as Malachi, an angel yourself, your mission is to crash their little party.

"The first and foremost reason I would buy *Requiem* is the story,"

said lead world designer Phil Co.

"It really plays through like a movie." Well-presented scripted events drive the story forward. For example, in one early scene, you walk in on a firing line execution of some random prisoners. The

guards ask 'em a few questions, and then shoot 'em. If you feel like being a hero, you could intervene and face the consequences. Later in the game, you must rescue a polygonal babe from some sort of torture device (unless, of course, you enjoy watching that sort of thing). After freeing her, you must carry her on your back for the remainder of the mission, resulting in a hindrance to maneuverability.

Another thing that adds to the immersion factor is the amount of interaction that you'll have with nonplayer characters. The first time you walk into a bar bustling with life, you have to suppress the urge to mow down all patrons just because they're moving polygons (I hope they give us the option, though). *Requiem* is one of the first games aiming to really take advantage of the interaction

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Cyclone Studios
 PUBLISHER → 3DO
 RELEASE DATE → Q3 '98
 3D SUPPORT → Direct3D, OpenGL, Glide

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

Requiem uses one of the few original engines to hold its own with the big boys, and has strong single-player design.

THE HURDLE

Competition between first-person shooters is intense and is only getting more vicious this summer.

THE HIT

If it gets enough marketing support, it could do some damage. Controversial subject matter may be enough.



This guy came to kick ass and chew bubblegum, and he's all out of bubblegum.



Don't make me get biblical on yer ass.

FIVE QUESTIONS

PRODUCER KERRY MOFFITT AND WORLD DESIGNER PHIL CO CHEW THE FAT WITH PC ACCELERATOR.

Q: So what right do you guys have making a first-person shooter if you're not from Texas?

PC: Well, LucasArts made one, and it's my favorite one.

Q: How many commandments do you break in an average week? If you say 10, we're getting the cops down here.

PC: Well, I think there's only four of us who are Catholic.

KM: Let's say seven.

Q: Game developer walks into a bar. What's the percentage that he walks out with a good-looking girl?

PC: 100% — cuz I'll be with my wife.

KM: I'd say 78, 79%. (We've got to find this bar for Ed!)

Q: Camping — for it or against it?

PC: Definitely against. I'll never make a spot on any of my levels where you can camp.

Q: Have you ever seen a grown man naked?

Both: Yes (while looking knowingly into each other's eyes).



Milton's Paradise Lost inspired the plot, which is decidedly dark.

► (and nonkilling) of NPCs. This important gameplay mechanic could really make a difference in competition with the slew of gore-fests on the way.

The original engine is truly a labor of love, having evolved many times before reaching its current impressive state. "It's totally competitive with *Quake II* — it has realtime lighting effects, particles, all that glitzy stuff, and a really solid animation system," producer Kerry Moffitt said. The combination rigid/soft body animation model allows for some incredibly fluid, lifelike animations that don't tax the processor too much.

In addition to a slew of big guns at your disposal, you get to kick pagan ass with some righteous angelic powers. Handled much in the same way as *JK's Force Powers*, Malachi's divine powers range from a "super jump" to turning your enemies into pillars of salt or, even more devious, resurrecting fallen

enemies to fight for you. Cool.

The *Requiem* team has its own spin on the multiplayer thing. "We think that one-on-one play and team play is gonna be where it's at," Co said. "I really like team arena and one-on-one because you can hone your skills and see who's really the better player. We're gonna have smaller maps that are really well balanced." Angelic powers will throw in an x factor — among the more cunning uses is possession, in which you can wrest control of someone's body away from him, forcing that character to attack his own teammates, waste ammo, or commit suicide.

With all its competition it'll be tough for this title to get the attention it deserves, but I wouldn't be surprised if *Requiem* emerges as a dark horse in the first-person shooter war.

— ED LEE, like R. Kelly, believes he can fly.

CHARLIE'S ANGELS



As we contemplated playing the angel Malachi in *Requiem*, we began to reminisce about some other angels ...

FARRAH FAWCETT

POSED IN PLAYBOY: Yes

TV MOVIES: 18

BEST MOVIE TITLE: *The Feminist and the Fuzz*

LAST SEEN: Showing it all in the Playboy video Farrah Fawcett: *All of Me*

KATE JACKSON

POSED IN PLAYBOY: No

TV MOVIES: 24

BEST MOVIE TITLE: *Satan's School for Girls*

LAST SEEN: Starring in CBS television movie *What Happened to Bobby Earl?*

JACLYN SMITH

POSED IN PLAYBOY: No

TV MOVIES: 26

BEST MOVIE TITLE: *Love Can Be Murder*

LAST SEEN: Hawking her line of women's clothing in a Tulsa, Oklahoma Kmart

CHERYL LADD

POSED IN PLAYBOY: No

TV MOVIES: 27

BEST MOVIE TITLE: *The Devil's Daughter* (also appeared in *Satan's School for Girls*)

LAST SEEN: Writing a children's book called *The Adventures of Little Nettie Windship*

SHELLEY HACK

POSED IN PLAYBOY: No

TV MOVIES: 14

BEST MOVIE TITLE: *Single Bars, Single Women*

LAST SEEN: Reading for audiotope of the book *Lord of Hawkfell Island*

TANYA ROBERTS

POSED IN PLAYBOY: Yes

TV MOVIES: 4

BEST MOVIE TITLE: *The Yum Yum Girls*

LAST SEEN: Starring in Access Software's *The Pandora Directive*



SEE!

Allison's wonderland in scientifically perfected eye-popping 360-degree space cam!



BLAST!

evil lagamorphs with the devastating H.A.R.E. rifle!



SWING!

JUMP! FLY!

along with Allison and her host of mutant allies!



GROOVE!

along with Allison's dancing as she hypnotizes the bunnies to do her bidding!



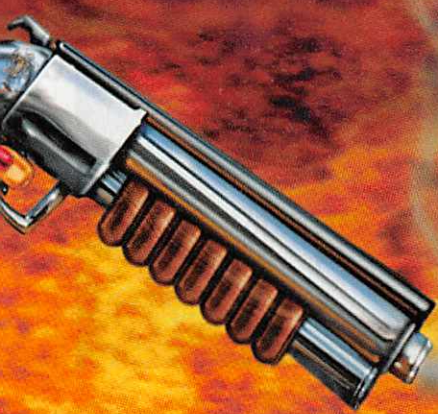


LIKE MANY
WOMEN,
ALLISON
IS LOOKING
FOR AN EFFECTIVE
HARE REMOVAL
SYSTEM.

An army of sinister mutants from beyond!!!

The shocking story of a kidnapped country starlet with a twang and a twin!!!

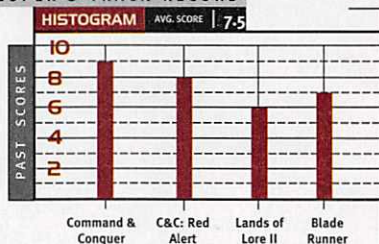
This sassy, rodeo-riding waitress is servin' up a serious side-order of slaughter!!!



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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun

Conquering the same world in incredible new detail

Well, here's to dubious honors: Westwood Studio's forthcoming realtime opus, *Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun*, is just about the ugliest strategy game I've ever seen.

OK, now before you start choking on your Screaming Yellow Zonkers or whatever you stuff your face with, perhaps I should elaborate: The graphics, the lighting, the look of this game is gorgeous. There are realtime lighted explosions, scattered debris, moodily lit

night missions, and even large, detailed urban environments that put the skimpy little scattered villages of *Red Alert* to graphic shame — but my god, is this game ugly. Nasty. Real wanna-take-a-shower-time stuff.

The time is approximately 20 years after the GDI/NOD conflict of the original *C&C*, and the whole Tiberium thing has gotten horribly out of control. Not to put too fine a point on it, the Earth is screwed; the nutrient-leeching Tiberium menace has ravaged the temperate portions of the planet, reducing once-vibrant lands to barren, craggy, poisoned wastes veined with the glowing, festering alien ore. GDI forces have relocated their operations com-



Attacking at night is sweet, but wartime courtesy forbids attack during "The Simpsons."

pletely off-world (and the majority of the civilian populations to the poles), while NOD factions, fiery-eyed with visions of a mutant, Tiberium-fueled master race, have gone underground. Welcome to post-Tiberium Earth; try not to step on the mutated corpses, and have a nice freakin' day.

One of the great things about the *Command & Conquer* universe



Detailed city architecture can be taken out or used for strategic advantage.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Westwood Studios
 PUBLISHER → Virgin
 RELEASE DATE → Q4 '98
 3D SUPPORT → None

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

It's *C&C*. Terrain and AI problems have been addressed. Walkers, mutants, jump infantry, and hovercraft are added.

THE HURDLE

Two uninspired add-on packs for *Red Alert* and a poor online-only game may have burst the *C&C* bubble.

THE HIT

As long as Westwood doesn't cheese out on the intermission FMV setups, this game looks like it'll do *C&C* proud.



This would be a good time to take out that bridge (unless, of course, you are the NOD).



FIVE QUESTIONS

ERIC YEO, THE LEAD LEVEL DESIGNER OF *TIBERIAN SUN*, GAVE PCXL THE INSIDE INFO ON LIFE INSIDE WESTWOOD STUDIOS.

Q: What are the long-range plans, if any, for the expansion of the *Command & Conquer* universe?

A: We did announce some time ago that we're going to create a 3D, third-person action game called *Commando*. There is some very cool technology involved, and we'll be able to talk about it next year.

Q: And in the RTS market?

A: We've also hinted at the fourth installment of the *C&C* strategy games, which would continue the telling of the Tiberium Wars epic.

Q: What are the most common mistakes developers make in creating realtime strategy games?

A: Now the trend seems to be making RTS games as complex as turn-based games used to be. And too often all those features just end up as another bullet point on the back of the box.

Q: Who's the sorest loser in the Westwood offices, competition-wise?

A: Me, so don't screw around. I will destroy you.

Q: Quick — you're gonna be stuck in some god-awful, pisspot, Third-World South American country for a month, and can only keep one game on your laptop (not any of Westwood's, either, buddy). Which one and why?

A: Well, if there's no one around to deathmatch with, I'd have to go with *Unreal* (with the editor so I can at least make more maps). But if the natives have a LAN set up, I'd go with *Quake II*.

has always been the integration of the story into the missions, either via FMV sequences to set the mood, or by the slight tweaking of in-mission elements — characters, convoys, vital installations, or (in one memorable case) the laws of physics themselves. *Tiberian Sun* continues in this vein, expanding its now rather dismal future-history storyline to show the awful effect Tiberium has had on the world. Huge fields of the stuff (now glowing a faint, sinister green) tentacle across the battlefield. Since you can't build on it, one new threat is the possibility an infectious hunk of it will fall from the sky and smack into your base. It's delivered either by random bombardment from space or by intentional enemy delivery (an ugly form of bio-warfare, rather like catapulting a rotting horse's head over the wall into Masada — except this horse head takes root in the ground and flourishes). Just to add to the fun, there's also a

new, less-than-stable blue variety of Tiberium that can explode when fired upon, or perhaps for no good reason at all.

New units, structures, and gameplay mechanics abound, of course. Ground-effect vehicles can hover across rivers, lakes, and patches of ice (heavy tracked units, on the other hand, can simply crack said ice and fall through, which is kind of funny to watch if it's not happening to you). Searchlights now stand sweeping watch in nighttime missions, and when they finally spot a target, they'll lock onto it, tracking it relentlessly as other defense mechanisms begin to target and fire. Defensive barriers can now be laid out with point-to-point automated construction, instead of the tile-by-tile micromanagement required in the earlier games (it still costs you the same money, but takes immensely fewer years off your life in terms of stress).

Those urban environments are one of the biggest advances. It's about time you could destroy a town during a siege. Not only does it add extra strategy to the maps (navigating down pothole riddled roads with your ravaging hordes of NOD buggies won't be quite so



The 3D terrain greatly alters the way the game plays.



Larger maps don't take away from the constant action.



Why would you wear red to a battle? It just isn't military.



Laser cannons and the ion blast make *Tiberian Sun* look much better than *Red Alert*.

easy as crossing ridged mountain terrain) but gives the playing surface character. Now there's evidence of a society on this Tiberium-polluted planet.

Environmental effects like random freak ion-storms shut down all your high-tech units for an unspecified amount of time, forcing you to change mental gears in the middle of a hectic base-defense battle. Various combinations of terrain considerations (slope, line-of-sight, ground condition, etc.) can put a serious logistical dent in — can you gimme a hallelujah — the almighty Tank Rush.

You'll notice that the interface remains pretty much untouched. Why fix what ain't broken? But the whole graphics overhaul gives a great deal more character to the browns and greens that dominated the earlier games.

I'd throw in a few downsides here just for the sake of editorial balance, but the fact is, I really didn't see any. I was a little bummed at the apparent absence of nukes, but they've got some stuff in here, like nerve gas, that's even nastier, so no worries there. Even the FMV sequences are getting due care and attention. While Westwood officials would neither confirm nor deny it, the rumor is that they're working on signing sci-fi movie star Michael Biehn for one of two key roles.

Tiberian Sun, ladies and gentlemen: I have seen the future, and I tell you with glee that it's going to be nasty. Let's hope it ships on time.

— CHRIS HUDAK's leather pants will undoubtedly protect him from Tiberium.

FMV FOLKLORE

The lovely voice of EVA inspired many an aural fantasy for desperate fans of the original *C&C*. For the sequel, Westwood is putting EVA on film. Let's just hope whoever they choose to play this role fares better than others who have taken the FMV stage. Here is the PCXL FMV Hall of Shame.

CHRISTOPHER WALKEN
APPEARED IN: *Ripper, Privateer 2: The Darkening*
CONTRIBUTION: Never, ever lowered himself to appear in an FMV game — he sent a mannequin in his place



GILLIAN BONNER
APPEARED IN: *Riana Rouge*
CONTRIBUTION: The feminist propaganda took a hit when you could make her pee — and watch



MARK HAMILL
APPEARED IN: *Wing Commander* series
CONTRIBUTION: Exemplified determination by pursuing an acting career despite complete lack of talent. It's amazing what *Star Wars* can do for you

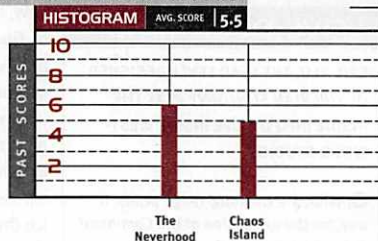


ANYRIVER ENTERTAINMENT
APPEARED IN: *A Fork in the Tale*
CONTRIBUTION: Will live long in our memory for pursuing its hopelessly flawed dream into bankruptcy. Rob Schneider, you should be ashamed





DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Trespasser

Dinosaurs live. And breath. And eat careless adventurers. Like you

First there was *Jurassic Park* and dino-mania hit. It's no surprise that the cash cow was milked again, this time coming out of the sequel udders in nonfat form with the crap flick *The Lost World*. But Dreamworks Interactive, the game arm of the SKG Corporation, has been working on the game version for quite a while, creating a world that looks so astounding it's a surprise that *Trespasser's* hype was somewhat muted at E3.

Having seen *Trespasser* in action, the real-world physics model affecting every single object, and the dinosaurs running, jumping, eating, and breathing, it now stands as the game I'm most looking forward to playing this fall.

Project leader Seamus Blackley (whose credits include *Flight Unlimited*) has a refreshing viewpoint to the question of determining the story to pursue throughout a game.



You can run but you can't hide! Kill the raptors or they will hunt you down and eat you.

"It's really about setting up a cool place where a bunch of interesting things can happen, and letting the player be the star. I am really against games that try to shove a lot of plot down the player's throat," he said. Taking up the plot where the movie left off, the lead character Anne is stuck in this fantastic location ("We decided to use a female character a couple weeks before Lara Croft was revealed to the world," Blackley revealed. ... "We were annoyed."). She's surrounded by the creations of John Hammond (the scientist played by Sir Richard Attenborough, who also supplies the voice for the game).

Her adventure through the environment is set to be, dare I say, a unique gaming experience. The developers are modeling almost every object with real-world properties. "The only things that aren't simulated are objects like palm fronds, ferns, and such," Blackley said. This has led to Dreamworks being able to create real-world puzzles, the kind you might do on one of those corporate team-building exercises: Get across this



picked up and arranged in any possible way.

And then there are the dinosaurs. How come they look so damned real? "Steven Spielberg came to see them for the first time. Imagine that — Mr. Dinosaur looking at this crazy idea I had for realtime physically animated dinos. I was out-of-my-mind nervous," Blackley remembered.

"We showed a raptor pathfinding his way around some crates. He was wagging his tail and breathing, and he was looking around while he cal-



O! Ever heard of mouthwash? You get so close to the dinos in *Trespasser* that you can see the remains of their last meal.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Dreamworks
PUBLISHER → Dreamworks
RELEASE DATE → October '98
3D SUPPORT → Direct3D

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

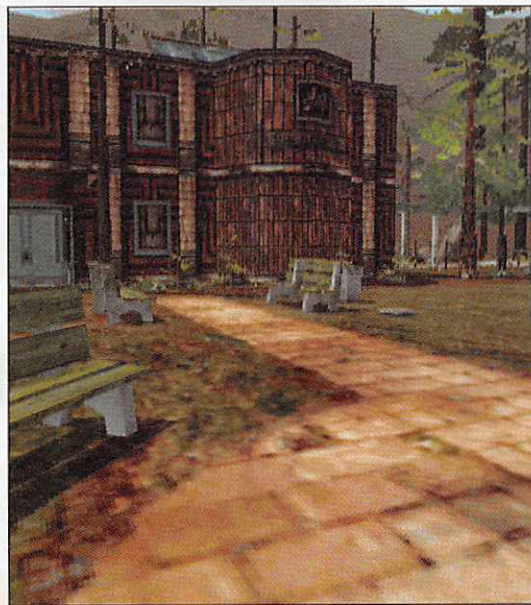
Real-world physics, fully interactive environments, and breathing, lifelike dinosaurs are the hot ticket.

THE HURDLE

The lack of both a multiplayer mode and level editing utilities puts the pressure on the single-player experience.

THE HIT

Trespasser's look is staggering and the gameplay might just hold up. Either way you get to shoot dinosaurs.

**Indoor and outdoor environments provide an arena to kill.**

culated his path. Steven thought it looked good until we invited him to move the obstacles. He did and was totally amazed that the animal just dealt with it and continued chasing him. Because it seemed alive. Because it reacted to its world.

"It's weird because [the dinosaurs] are really unique for

FIVE QUESTIONS

SEAMUS BLACKLEY, PROJECT LEADER ON TRESPASSER, TURNED HIS UNIQUE VIEWPOINT TO THE NOW LEGENDARY FIVE QUESTIONS.

Q: How much was having a female lead character a decisive factor in ensuring that you could look at yourself in first person?

A: Do you mean "Were you trying to inspire countless Midwestern teenage boys to look down at her boobs and masturbate furiously?" Well, I think we all know the answer to that.

Q: And will she ever see her feet?

A: We used to show the feet, but again there is a BIG difference between a super-detailed physical simulation and a fun game.

Q: What's the most dangerous place you've ever trespassed?

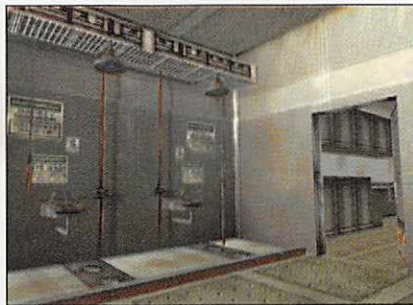
A: My ex-girlfriend's diary.

Q: Who do you most admire in the industry?

A: Dave Perry. He's soooo handsome. Have you seen his website? Seriously? I admire the consumer. This is a really exciting time to be a gamer.

Q: On a scale of 1 to 10, how good was the *Lost World* movie? Be honest.

A: That's like when your girlfriend asks you if she looks fat. It is a question with no answer.



shot. But remember, when the ammo runs out, that rifle is its own model, so can be turned around and used as a club.

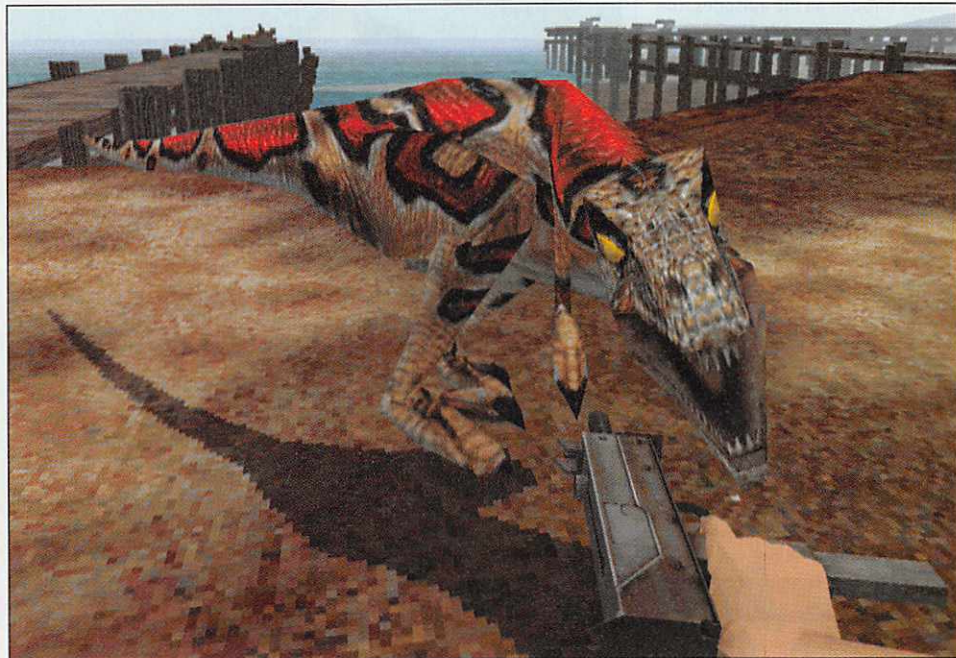
Multiplayer capability certainly won't be part of the original release, and will depend on Dreamworks' nod before work on an add-on begins. Likewise, there will be no mission editor. "We use [3D Studio] MAX, with a ton of custom plug-ins, scripts, and tools, in addition to a separate in-game editor, to put the levels together," Blackley explained. "Additionally, when we're talking tens of square kilometers, all with unique terrain textures, 50,000 trees, 10,000 plants, plus buildings, dinos, foley, rocks, sticks, water, etc., you'll have to leave level design to us, at least for a year or so."

The design philosophy is remarkably sound, the graphics and play mechanics are realistic and unique. But in the end, the real key to *Trespasser* is that shooting-up dinosaurs is all good.

—ROB SMITH *uses duct tape for disturbing and unusual tasks.*

game enemies. Because they're really not enemies. They just live on the island. You are the problem. Also, because they're not pre-animated, they are totally unpredictable. You might be getting chased and see your pursuer slip and fall to death, or you might suddenly look behind you and see that he found a better path than you and now he's in front and you're dead!" Blackley said.

About seven species of dinosaurs contain a bunch of individuals and tribes, each with their own AI, skin, and skeleton. They drink, groom, look around, and, of course, can be

**The smooth-skinned dinosaurs move so fluidly it's downright scary.**

DON'T TRESPASS HERE

Going somewhere uninvited always sounds like a good idea, but we've put together a few cases where no trespassing means no trespassing.

LULITH FAIR

THE DRAW: A gathering of single women may seem like a great place to meet chicks.

THE REALITY: After listening to 12 hours of songs about how men have done them wrong, the concert-goers are just looking for some stupid guy to say "hey baby" so they can vent their aggression through physical violence

SEX CLUBS

THE DRAW: Wild rampant sex, beautiful women, and plenty of girl-on-girl action

THE REALITY: Mostly old, toothless, perverted men crowded around a bed to watch the lone woman in the club (who, by the way, has been beaten unrecognizable by the ugly stick)

NUDIST COLONY

THE DRAW: Naked women, volleyball, and wacky college high jinks

THE REALITY: Life isn't like a USA Up All Night movie. Instead of buxom blondes you are more likely to find a 60-year-old man with a beer belly that isn't quite large enough to cover what needs to be covered, and his wife who will live in your nightmares for years to come

THE LOST WORLD

THE DRAW: It's the sequel to one of the highest grossing movies in history, and it's directed by Steven Spielberg

THE REALITY: A plot that wouldn't make the cut as a Roger Corman film, dialogue that makes "Melrose Place" look like Shakespeare, and the biggest waste of \$8 since O'Doul's introduced its 12-pack special

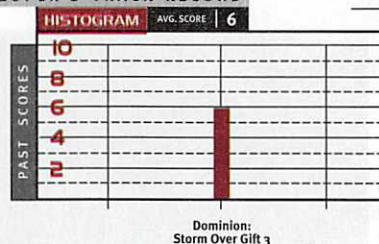
"DO YOU THINK SHE'S CUTE?"

THE DRAW: When your girlfriend asks the question, she seems calm and has already noted that the girl is pretty

THE REALITY: There is no right answer. Say no and you're a liar. Say yes and you'll be on the sofa. This is one place you don't want to go



DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Daikatana

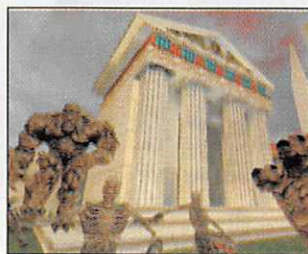
They say it's almost ready, but is it worth the wait?

What will separate *Daikatana* from the first-person competition this holiday season, according to high-profile frontman John Romero, is its sheer scope. "We've got 80 monsters, 30 weapons, 32 full-sized levels — it's more than anyone has put into a game before," he explained. "There's nothing like it out there." Whatever you want to say about Ion Storm, you can't deny that it's ambitious. The desire to innovate makes the *Daikatana* team tick, resulting in a seemingly interminable development cycle, but also one promising-looking game.

Instead of what he feels is a lack of variation in enemies and environments, Romero believes *Daikatana's* vast amount of content will impress gamers. "With *Quake* you have the same monsters through all the episodes, the same weapons — what you got

was different maps, basically," he said. "With *Daikatana* I wanted to make it so that every time you go to a new level you should be saying 'wow, look at all this new stuff.'" And once you make it out of an episode, according to Romero, everything completely changes. "The only constants are you, the *Daikatana*, and your two sidekicks — it's almost like you're playing four games."

The sidekicks in question, Mikiko and Superfly, are one of *Daikatana's* big selling points. If it works as planned, it will make the single-player experience a different kind of beast. Not just wingmen, they will actually drive the plot forward. They have their own agendas, and offer up advice and one-liners from time to time — and of course, will mow down their share of enemies. However, Ion



The number of monsters you'll fight will be balanced for three good guys, so the difficulty will get jacked up if a sidekick bites it.

Storm has not yet demonstrated the sidekicks working, and some (including the PCXL staff) worry that the advanced AI required to make this effective, rather than annoying, can't be done.

The sidekicks are just one element that Ion Storm hopes will inject some new life into the first-person shooter genre. Another is a system that assigns experience

points to attributes, so you can tailor your character to fit your style of play in multiplayer games. By boosting your character's strength, for example, you do more damage with melee weapons as well as receive more health — and your character will increase in size. You will be able to play as any monster, ranging from a quick rat to a lumbering boss, each of which has its

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Ion Storm
 PUBLISHER → Eidos
 RELEASE DATE → October
 3D SUPPORT → Direct3D, OpenGL, Glide

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

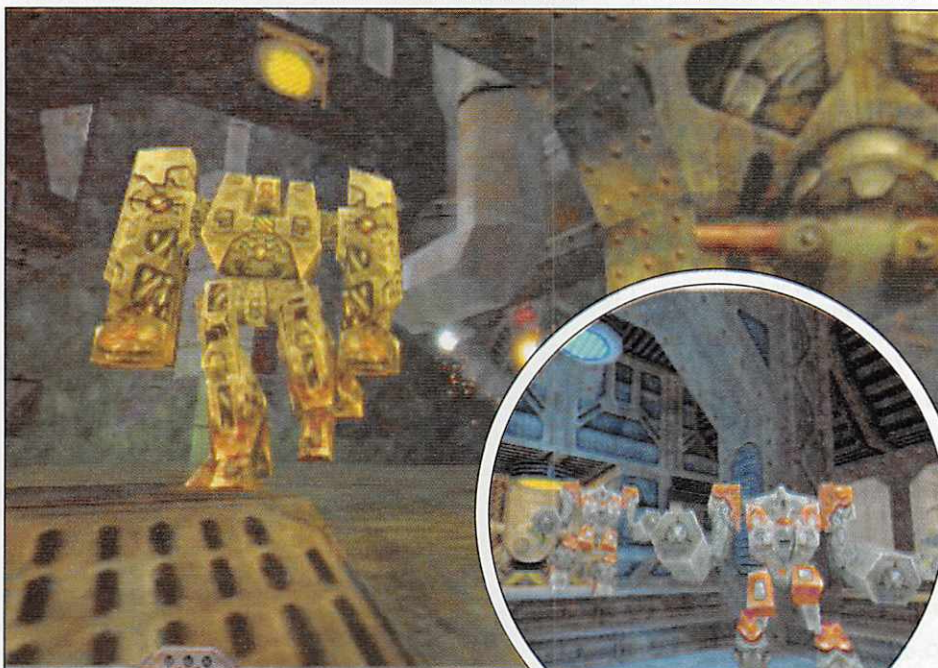
Daikatana sure has a lot going for it — great storyline, environments, character design, and new gameplay twists.

THE HURDLE

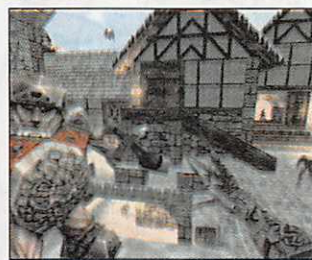
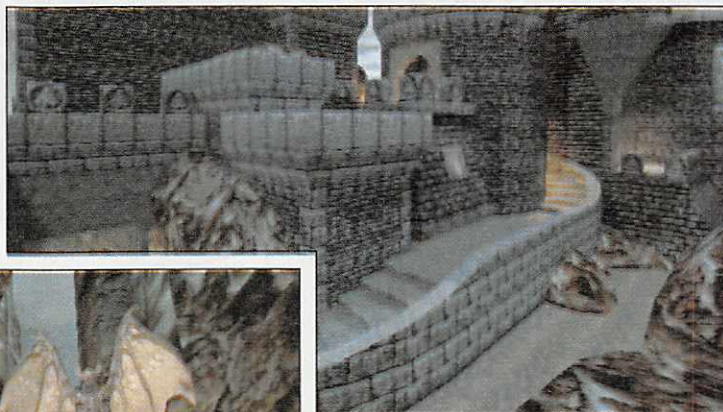
The competition is stiff, and Romero has yet to prove that he can make a great game without Id behind him.

THE HIT

Romero's understanding of the genre and the considerable resources behind the game make this a pretty safe bet.



The game starts in the far future, then moves through three other periods with a time-traveling sword, the *Daikatana*.



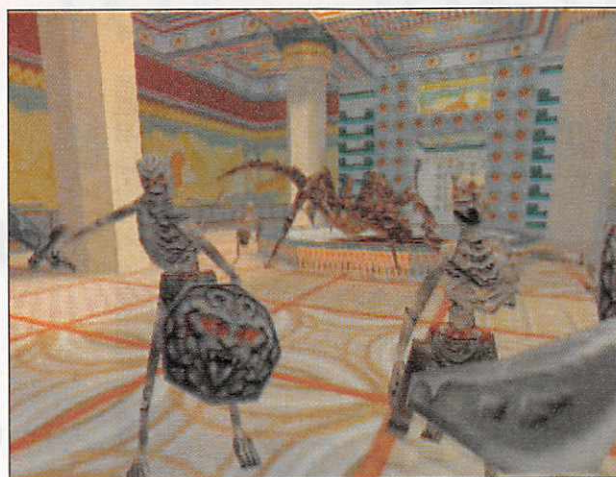
With enhancements like pre-rendered lighting, *Daikatana* hopes to blow away *Quake II*.



The team plans to implement all 80 monsters for deathmatch use.



Ancient Greece is one of four environments you'll visit.



These Ion Storm thugs aren't too happy with our *Dominion* review.

Five Questions

PCXL ATTEMPTS TO GET IN THE HEAD OF ION STORM'S LONG-HAIRED HEAD HONCHO, JOHN ROMERO.

Q: Describe *Id*'s John Carmack in three words.

A: Intense, genius, creative

Q: What cost more, *Daikatana* or the Ion Storm offices?

A: *Daikatana*. Well, maybe the offices. I'm not sure, it's really close. (Price tag on the offices: \$17 million)

Q: What's the best deathmatch game of all time?

A: *Doom II*. It was totally manic, but also stealthy. I want to make *Daikatana*'s deathmatch like that — it's gonna be the fastest deathmatch game so far.

Q: Do you consider the word "underpants" funny?

A: "Underpants" to me sounds like something the British would say. I think "tighty whities" is funny.

Q: Do you think that violent games encourage real-life violence?

A: Oh, I'm sure that they can, if whoever's playing the game is mentally unstable. You can't stop people from being weird. The thing is, people were killing other people long before videogames — I don't think videogames are causing a revolution in death. I think it's a healthy outlet.

own attacks and characteristics. Consider it built-in handicapping.

Attention to detail is this game's strength, but its window of opportunity to make the biggest impact possible could be closing. Romero, however, isn't worried. "I want people to realize that we've only been in development for 15 months. The whole thing was planned from the beginning to be this huge. There's nothing like this — the game is so huge and has so much variety. No one's doing anything like this." If gamers agree, then Ion Storm may finally have its first big hit.

— ED LEE is PCXL's official minority sidekick.

MINORITY SIDEKICKS

SUPERBLY

(sidekick to Hiro Miyamoto, *Daikatana*'s main character)

ETHNICITY: Black
SIGNIFICANCE OF NAME: A blackploutation hero
PORTRAYED AS: Violent, gruff but loyal
ATTEMPTS AT POLITICAL CORRECTNESS: None



TONTO

(sidekick to the Lone Ranger)

ETHNICITY: Native American
SIGNIFICANCE OF NAME: It means "stupid" in Spanish
PORTRAYED AS: Stoic, loyal
ATTEMPTS AT POLITICAL CORRECTNESS: None



HAID

(sidekick to the Green Hornet)

ETHNICITY: Japanese, then Filipino
SIGNIFICANCE OF NAME: Japanese, even after change of ethnicity
PORTRAYED AS: A master of martial arts, loyal
ATTEMPTS AT POLITICAL CORRECTNESS: None



CHWIRACCA

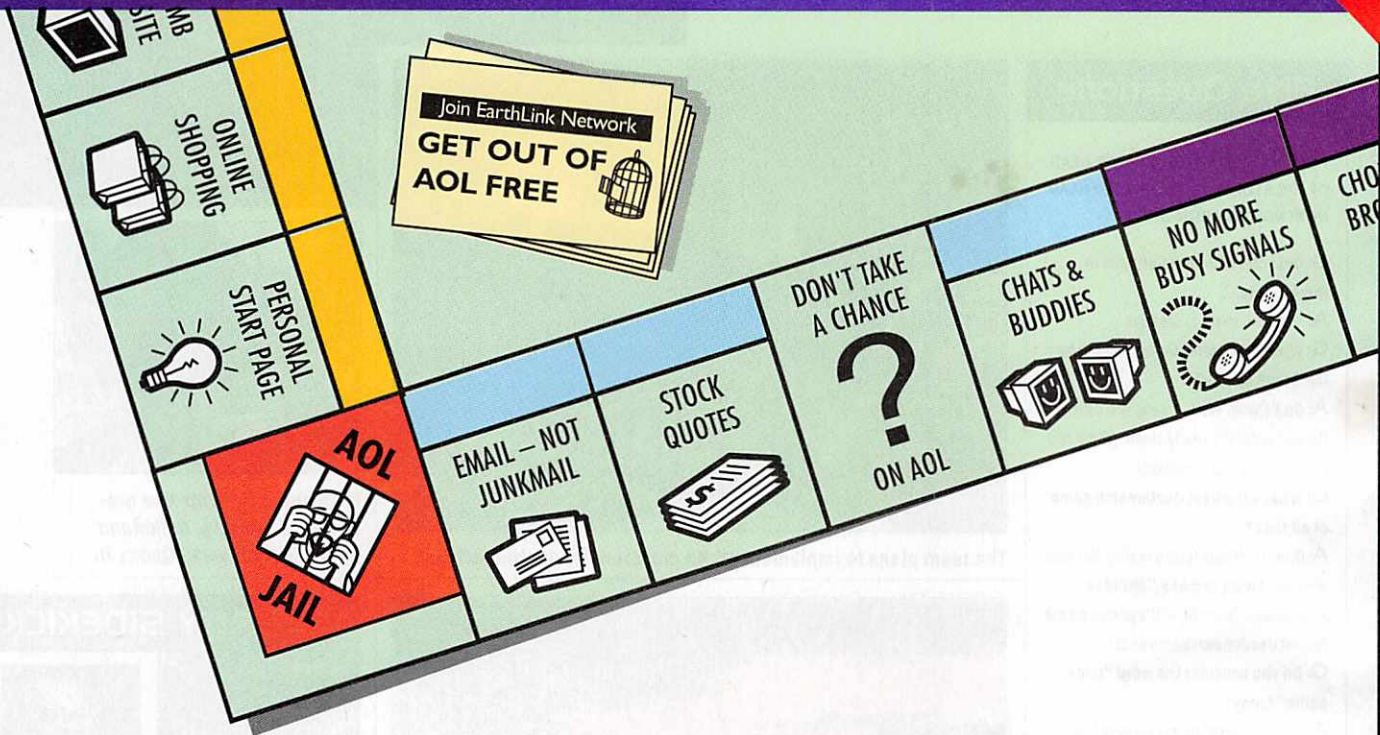
(sidekick to Han Solo)

ETHNICITY: Wookiee
SIGNIFICANCE OF NAME: It means "stupid" in Wookiee (OK, we made that up)
PORTRAYED AS: Big, hairy, ill-tempered ... and loyal
ATTEMPTS AT POLITICAL CORRECTNESS: Seen bonding with Ewoks



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Go to <http://www.pcxl.com/gaming411>

REVIEWS

Hardcore

To be honest, it was hard for anybody on the PCXL team to review other games once *Unreal* showed up in the office. Everything else just paled in comparison. Luckily, the staff had plenty of excuses to keep playing *Unreal* even after the review was done: writing the Strategy section, researching Internet play for our Online Arena section, testing the Cone of Tragedy level for the PCXL Disc ... but, hey, we hired some freelancers to help us out, so no worries.

So, in our premier issue, we've got two award winners: *Unreal* is the first recipient of our Killer Game logo, meaning you simply must buy it. Executive editor Rob Smith's review should convince you if you've been holding out. Scoring a 9, *Unreal*'s not perfect — but it's damn near close.

In sharp contrast, we also have a Suicide award winner: the unfortunate *Redneck Rampage Rides Again*. It's not the worst game ever made, but it's damn near close. Don't buy it. But read Dan Egger's review anyway, because he's a pretty funny guy.

This month's batch of reviews includes racing games, shooters, space combat, realtime strategy, and gore. None of 'em could touch *Unreal*, and we're here to tell you why.

KILLER GAME

Any game that receives a 9 or 10 from our rigorous scoring system warrants this nifty logo. If you see the PC ACCELERATOR Killer Game stamp, you know it's a game worth buying. Only the true classics deserve this elite status, so don't expect to see this symbol often.



SUICIDE

If we're going to create a stamp for the truly great, then it's only fair to label the unforgivable shit as well. It takes an abominable score of 1 or 2 to qualify for the noose around the neck. Stay away from these games at all costs.



CRITICAL ADD-ONS >>

Whenever a joystick, soundcard, or other computer accoutrement improves a game, we'll stick a corresponding logo on the review. And if there's a checkmark next to the add-on logo, the improvement is substantial. We include only those devices that make the game better; just being compatible isn't good enough. If you don't see the logo, then that particular add-on doesn't do much for the game.



TILT



3D SOUND



GAMEPAD



MULTIPLAYER



FORCE FEEDBACK



JOYSTICK

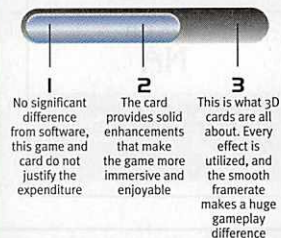
ACCELE-RATED >>

This additional rating provides specific information on how a game performs on a variety of competing 3D chipsets. We test games on up to four major 3D cards and report back with the true test for any 3D accelerator: how it affects the game. We base these ratings on graphic enhancements, framerates, and performance to give you a good idea of how a game will perform on your 3D card.

(Note: Performance may vary depending on the card and the setup of your system.)

ACCELE-RATED

CHIPSET



WHAT THE NUMBERS MEAN

Flawless. Perfect. Better than that sex dream with Pamela Anderson and Alyssa Milano



A true classic. An excellent game that is well worth the money



A great game, but may feature a few minor flaws that are easily overlooked



A good, solid game that lacks the inspiration or vision of a truly great game



A game that rises above the average due to a hook in style or gameplay



The definition of mediocrity, this game doesn't commit any major crime other than being ordinary



A game that doesn't exactly suck, but probably won't hold your interest for long



OK, maybe there's an element of redeeming value in this game, but it still sucks



Very little of interest, this game is deeply flawed and should be avoided



Utter crap — don't even accept this game for free



RATINGS >>

Our rating scale is a simple 1 to 10 — no decimal points, no obscure percentages, just a straight score that gets right to the point. Before we score games, they undergo countless hours of testing on different systems, with different 3D cards — our reviewers even play the games under the influence of various narcotics. In the end we stamp a single score on the game, which is essentially a numeric value of the game's worth. We love games and always try to look on the bright side, but when a pile of steaming crap comes in we won't hold back and won't allow our readers to waste their money on said crap. You can count on our reviews for honesty, insight, and maybe even a few laughs.

GRAPHICS

Rendering quality, framerates, and special effects all contribute to an immersive gaming experience.

SOUND

Visceral sound effects and appropriate music can help make a good game great.

DEPTH

How often you find yourself playing a game, and how long, are good indicators of its quality.

DESIGN

The backbone of a game is the overall vision behind it, from characters and weapons to levels and missions.

RATING



CUT THE CRAP

Since we focus our coverage on fast-paced games, we don't get a chance to review every PC game that comes out. But in just a few words, we can tell you everything you need to know about the games we didn't review and cut out all the crap.

GAME	INSIGHT
INDUSTRY GIANT	This is one giant we'd rather not battle
PRO BASS FISHING	If you're fishing for a fun game, don't get this
FINAL FANTASY VII	Our fantasies don't include anime guys with spiky hair
THE X-FILES	Here's the truth: We'd rather watch TV

REVIEWS

DEVELOPER	→ Epic MegaGames
PUBLISHER	→ GT Interactive
REQUIRED	→ P166, 32MB RAM, 2MB video card, 100MB hard drive space
IDEAL	→ PII 400, 64MB RAM, Voodoo 2 (SLI), 3D audio, 450MB hard drive space

Unreal killer game!

A creation fitting of the name Epic



MULTIPLAYER



3D SOUND

ACCELE-RATED

Unreal is the most graphics-intensive game so far. Voodoo 2 is definitely the way to go. Frankly, it's just not the same game without a 3D card. It's playable, but the cool effects make the investment worthwhile.

VOODOO 2



VOODOO 1



RENDITION V2200

NA

RIVA 128

NA

API SUPPORT → 3Dfx, Glide
OTHER CARDS SUPPORTED → PowerVR

Quake II vs. Unreal

This is what it all boils down to: *Quake II* vs. *Unreal*. *QII*'s biggest plus is its release time (some seven months before *Unreal*). *QII*'s weapons have a meaty resonance that *Unreal*'s don't. And multiplayer *QII* is the only option for online play. Epic still has a huge way to go in that department. In everything else, though, *Unreal* blows *QII* away.

UNREAL
QUAKE II

GRAPHICS	✓
SOUND	✓
DEPTH	✓
LEVEL DESIGN	✓
AI	✓
MULTIPLAYER	✓
WEAPONS	✓
RELEASE TIME	✓

Admit it, you weren't convinced that *Unreal* would ever come out, were you? There are lies, damn lies and release dates, as Benjamin Disraeli once commented (or was that "statistics"?). Supposed release dates have been lost in the annals of time (was it due a year ago? Two?). But finally, Epic has delivered to a marketplace ravenous for the taste of a non-*Quake* first-person shooter. And there's no doubt that *Unreal* is designed for those with an appetite for eye-shattering, ear-pounding, pulse-exploding action.

Let's start at the beginning with what passes for the story. You're a prisoner (for an unexplained reason) on a transport trip to a Prison Moon. It crashes. Everyone dies. Except you.

Emerging from the wreckage, you find yourself on a planet inhabited by the Nali, a four-armed, humanoid, and evidently peaceful race. Their little slice of utopia has been shattered by a conquering race of Skaarj. This reptilian-cum-humanoid-cum-demonic species has imprisoned the Nali (like you care). But the conquerors must have gotten to this planet somehow ... like on a ship (now you care) ... that might just get you off this hell-hole (now you really care). And thus, the story. At least it's an effort, but in the same way that people whined about *Quake*'s lack of story, and then didn't care about



Environmental effects include being thrown in the air by the Titan's stomping.

Quake II's, you'll soon forget this particular diatribe.

It does manage to serve as an unobtrusive backdrop to some of the best-looking, cohesive, and jaw-droppingly luscious levels yet committed to a first-person shooter.

Understand: *Unreal* is a very good reason to buy a Voodoo 2-based graphics card. The performance and, most importantly, gameplay experience under Voodoo 2 is excellent — all those amazingly colored environments

and textures really shine with depth. The colored lighting is impressive without going to *For-Saken*'s gaudy lengths. And the monsters have details in color and markings that make you believe they're part of a species — higher-ranking (and so more deadly) Skaarj Berserkers look subtly different than the basic Skaarj Scout.

But these supermodel looks don't come cheap (what supermodel does?). For adequate gameplay (say, 18 to 30 fps), you're



Environments mix futuristic spaceships and alien control panels with ...



... the stately, medieval Nali cultural style.



The Nali Castle in glorious Voodoo 2 running at 800 x 600.



The same, in not so glorious Riva 128-powered 640 x 480 software.

gonna need a P200 with all the trimmings. Not only is *Unreal* a videocard hog, but it'll give your brand, spanking new PII a sweat-inducing workout. That's not good. The honored (and monetarily loaded) few will smile knowingly at their less solvent buddies as the reflective textures, awesome water

rippling details, transparencies, and particle smoke trails cause jaws to drop. Johnny "my machine was cutting edge six months ago" No-Cash will need to spring for the Voodoo 2 at least to be able to play in the same company.

An "advanced" configuration option lets you tweak every set-

ting in minute detail to get the best performance. Naturally, messing around with all this stuff is a complete pain in the ass, but for the hardcore wanting to scrape every damn frame out of their ninja PC, checking the readme file in detail is worth the effort. Shipping without OpenGL and D3D support was seriously disappointing. Naturally, patches are to follow — but just one so far.

Epic also blended a carefully scripted music score and occasionally terrifying sound effects into an ear-pleasing package. The music manages to be suitably upbeat in one instance, and instill fear and foreboding the next. As doors slam and resonate around you (if 3D audio is part of your ninja PC setup), winches



Take a cable-car ride on one of the many moving machinery parts.



Getting a cache of weapons is never good, it just means you are about to encounter a vicious boss.

Multiplayer

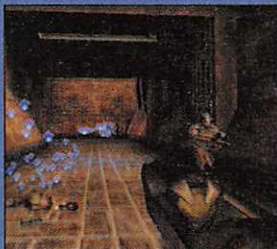
Unreal ships with 10 original multiplayer levels, supporting anything from two players (DeathFand) to about 16 in *Decks* or *Radikus*. The choice of skins and models is limited, and massively frustrating in the way that your choice defaults to the female 1 skin every new game. Transporting between levels once the time or frag limit has been hit sets each player in a holding cell — neat touch.

Favorite servers can be stored easily, with shipping options including play on Mplayer and Heat. Mplayer's lobby model is great, using a game environment to give you access to West or East Coast servers, and a simple choice of which level you want to play. Unfortunately, the gameplay on all the Internet servers was terrible. Weapons would disappear, or simply stop working, fatal crashes would halt games, and with more than a few people on screen at once, the lag was dreadful.

This gives you a chance to try out the Botmatches. After hiring the guy who created the awesome *Quake* ReaperBots, Epic has developed a pretty effective AI-powered deathmatch opponent. Four skill levels are available, and up to 10 Bots, each individually customized, can be added to any Botgame. Should give you something to do while all the Internet code is being fixed.



Try to get a lock on a target with the eightball launcher for it to home in. And never, ever stop running.



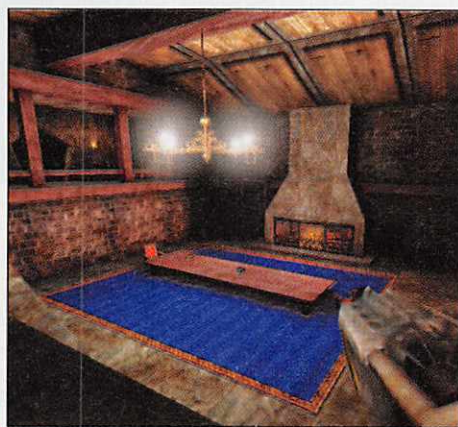
Stick with LAN and Botmatch play until the Internet play is fixed.



Of course, all comers fall in the presence of PCXL-Blade! You'll find him in an online game ... somewhere.



In later levels, Skaarj and other monsters use armor (cheaters).



Told you the level design looked good. And look for the bookcase switch ...

The Editor

So you've heard all the hubbub about Unreal's Super-Duper, Easy-to-Use Level Editor™, but up to now you've never thought about creating your own worlds, so what's the big deal? The big deal is that for the first time ever, an elegant and relatively easy-to-use game editor has been shipped with a fully 3D shooter, allowing every Tom, Dick, and John Romero to create his own level with just a little work.

To test out just how simple the editor is, we had our resident computer illiterate, Dan Egger, attempt to create a level on his own. Dan (who has difficulty figuring out how to play *Minesweeper*) was able to create several new levels within three hours, with the help of a handy tutorial found on www.creativecarnage.com. After a day of hard work he showed off such classic levels as *Box*, *BoxWithAHall*, and *BigEmptyRoomWithLotsOfGuns*, but more importantly the technologically disadvantaged editor had learned the program enough to quickly create far bigger and more impressive levels than he ever thought possible. And trust us, if he can do it, so can you.

BTW, you'll need outside advice as Epic isn't supporting the editor with any of its own docs. Thanks, guys.



Get yourself a job ... potentially. Unofficial docs are available online to get you started on your way to level design.

► screech, monsters growl, and it's oh-so easy to be dragged by your sight and sound senses into the Nali homeworld.

Creative level design merely adds to this immersion factor. Early scripted encounters with the Skaarj set the tone perfectly. But it's a real shame that this kind of event never happens through the remainder of the game. Scripted events can't be overdone — you need the sense of being in control — but since this instance works so effectively, there should have been more examples.

Although the opening levels are far too reminiscent of *Quake II* (albeit with added wide-open outdoor areas, complete with harmless indigenous rabbits gaily going about their business — until interrupted by your laser blast) things do improve. There's still a huge amount of button pushing, lever pulling, and switch flipping to be done — and it really does get repetitive — but the level style is varied and inventive enough to hold your interest. The SunSpire pinnacle offers an amazing view — and a tremendous, peaceful free fall should you step off the edge. The Nali Haven, resplendent with Tudor-style wooden buildings, is excellent (watch for waking the Skaarj from their slumber). That's just to mention two highlights among the thirty-some levels that follow a path to the getaway ship.

Caveats: The environment isn't interactive in the *Duke Nukem 3D* sense — no bullet holes on walls,

scorch marks, breakable lights (although boxes and crates can, and should, be destroyed). But there always seems to be more than one way to get around, even if passing certain points requires specific lever pulls or button presses. It offers an artificial sense of openness and nonlinearity — but a sense, nonetheless.

Then there are the monsters. Most of them are armed with both ranged and melee attack options. The Skaarj themselves are fast and nimble. And they dodge. Monsters aren't supposed to do that. And unfortunately, while this appears at first to be a quality monster AI at work, I suspect a hack. Skaarj (and others) always seem to dodge your eightball rounds as soon as they're released (not when they're on their way, and therefore visible). So the AI is, in many cases, just a reaction to your button release — it looks good, but it's a hack. That said, the monsters do follow you anywhere (and that includes underwater) and will retreat when hurt (but won't collect health packs).

Most of the monsters are also deaf. Scene: two patrolling Kraal. Shoot one in the head with the sniper rifle from a distance. The other one continues his patrol. Repeat. Monsters only come to help their friends when it appears to have been scripted, rather than in response to them being slaughtered from a distance.

Does this matter? Probably not. It's great to see Skaarj opening ►



Zoom in with the sniper rifle to take the head off an enemy with one shot. Cool.



And with a steady aim ... pop! Monster sans head! It's a chilling, but satisfying, experience.



If only Unreal played as good as it looks — wait — it does play as good as it looks!



Die Pupae scum! Die! Die! Be killed! I hate you little buggers.

▶ doors to chase you, but this can also be a failing — the AI can be used against the creatures to set traps for them.

Some of those damn creatures made me jump even more than the *Doom* monsters (oh high praise). The Pupae scuttle along the floor before leaping for your throat à la Alien's Face Huggers. God, I hate the little bastards. My first encounter was a pants-spoiling experience. It didn't get much better.

Hiding these creatures in barrels was a great touch. And in the dark you need a seventh sense to avoid their speedy jumps.

Dealing destruction to alien hordes is always fun. Epic has concocted ten weapons, each with a secondary fire function that provides plenty of options. Some of artwork for the weapons is disappointing (the flak cannon looks too similar to the minigun, for example) and overall the weapons look and, more importantly, feel like water pistols compared to the powerful effects in *Quake II*. Certain functions also work better against different creature types — learning which is which fast is a

good way to conserve ammo, although it's generally plentiful on the medium difficulty setting.

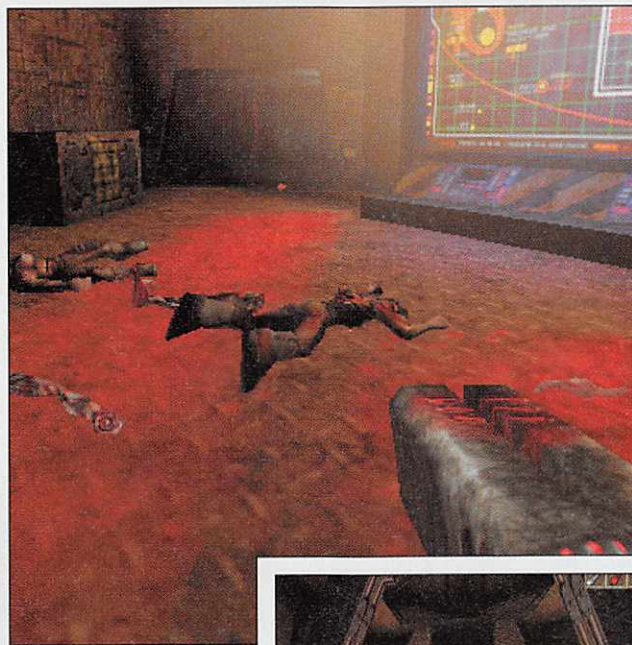
Aside from the graphics, the most notable thing about *Unreal* is its size. It's bloody huge. Early levels are relatively small, giving you a chance to learn some of the switch puzzle types that profligate the later mazes. Others can take several hours to complete (and then there's no guarantee that you'll have covered every inch). You aren't rewarded for finding

secret areas, but there are many little places to discover.

You'll be glad of the size, despite some repetitive puzzle-solving styles, as each progressive environment becomes more inventive and detailed. Finally, it boils down to one question: Is *Unreal* better than *Quake II*?

Yes, in single player. But *Quake II* multiplayer still rules. ➤

— **ROB SMITH** spends his free time looking goth in some rock group.



Dead prisoners: not a good sign. Watch out for the little secrets, like the theater ad.

Unreal vs. Real

UNREAL

REAL

VERDICT



DEMI MOORE



ROSIE O'DONNELL

Winner:
Demi Moore
We can wholeheartedly say that silicon is good



STAR WARS



WORLD WAR II

Tie:
Killing storm troopers is always good



ALIEN AUTOPSY



ILLEGAL ALIENS

Winner:
Illegal aliens
Cheap labor means lower prices, and who doesn't want that?



DIRK DIGGLER



RON JEREMY

Tie:
Both these guys get more action than we'll ever see in our lives

GRAPHICS

Best so far, and likely the best until more *Unreal*-based games appear.

SOUND

Unreal's spooky and absorbing soundtrack does the job perfectly.

DEPTH

It's a first-person shooter — what do you expect?

DESIGN

Repetitive concepts don't dilute the varied textures and environments.

RATING



+ Pluses

- Look at the screens ...
- It's long
- Challenging enemies

Minuses

- Awful Internet play
- High system specs
- Uninspired weapons

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The best-selling
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DEVELOPER → Rage

PUBLISHER → Rage

REQUIRED → P133, 16MB RAM,
3D card, 220MB hard drive space

IDEAL → P200, 32MB RAM,
3D sound system, Voodoo 2 card

Incoming

The only thing missing is Nicolas Cage



MULTIPLAYER



FORCE FEEDBACK



3D SOUND

ACCELE-RATED

Incoming was built to support nearly every conceivable 3D accelerator on the market. It even takes advantage of the individual APIs for chipsets such as 3Dfx and PowerVR. It's the computer game equivalent of an IMAX movie.

VOODOO 2



VOODOO 1



RENDITION V2200



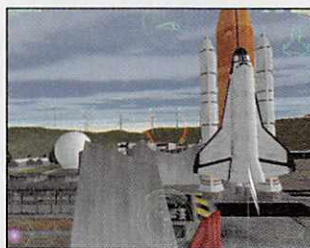
RIVA 128



API SUPPORT → Glide, DirectX 5.0
OTHER CARDS SUPPORTED → Supports almost every 3D card

Clearly, *Incoming* would be a Jerry Bruckheimer film if it were made into a movie. This prolific producer exploited a successful movie-making formula of loud music, exciting visuals, and minimal plot — which seems tailor-made for action games like *Incoming*. This title's sound is incredible, its 3D accelerated graphics amazing, and its storyline never gets in the way of things blowing up. The pure adrenaline rush in *Incoming* is as exhilarating as being the featured driver on this week's episode of "The World's Most Dangerous Police Chases," and it lasts over 65 individual missions that span six eye-popping locales.

Like the typical Bruckheimer film, *Incoming* is lacking in a few vital areas that will frustrate those wanting strategic depth in their shooters. Control, for instance, is simple and intuitive, but not as responsive as an arcade shooter should be. Almost everything a player can learn is mastered in the first 20 minutes. The game includes strategy elements, such as levels in which players control their base defenses in a realtime, top-down mode, but like romance subplots in a good action film, they mean nothing



Protect the shuttle in an AV-8 Harrier Strike Fighter or another high-speed jet.



The strategy mode is a nice break from the shooting, but adds little to the game.

ing to the overall product. The real depth is the staggering number of ground attack, station defense, and airborne vehicles that players control as the game progresses, all of which make *Incoming* feel like several action games in one.

As a throwback to classic arcade games like *Missile Command* and as a showpiece of the power of 3D accelerators, *Incoming* is right on the mark. It's about one thing and one thing alone: blowing stuff up. Anyone hoping for more is probably reading the wrong magazine.

— DAN EGGER had a small cameo in *The Rock* as the "neat" hairdresser.



In land, sea, or air vehicles you can roam through the game's gorgeous terrain and destroy everything in sight.



Coming Soon?

CON AIR (1997)

GAME CONCEPT: It's "smack the wacko" as players fight for their lives on a criminal transport aircraft full of the baddest bad guys this side of the Philadelphia 76'ers
VERDICT: Nut cases + guns = good game



DANGEROUS MINDS (1995)

GAME CONCEPT: Who gets whacked? Players must choose from a bunch of lovable but troubled teens to see which one dies, so the others can learn a valuable lesson
VERDICT: Lousy game material here, but the thought of a fully polygonal Michelle Pfeiffer is intriguing



GRAPHICS

The best explosions in the business.

SOUND

Booming special effects and an ear-pounding soundtrack.

DEPTH

Shakespeare didn't write this plot.

DESIGN

A straightforward arcade shooter, pure and simple.

RATING



+ Pluses

- Most 3D accelerators supported
- Beautiful graphics and sound
- Explosions ... lots of 'em

- Minuses

- Not much behind basic concept
- Control is a little sloppy
- Strategy mode feels underdone

DEVELOPER → Ingames Interactive
PUBLISHER → SegaSoft
REQUIRED → P133, 16MB RAM, 2MB video card, 3D card, 66MB hard drive space
IDEAL → P200, 32MB RAM, Voodoo 2 card

Flesh Feast

Exceedingly bloody, surprisingly tasty

ACCELE-RATED

Either way, this game isn't going to win any awards for its graphics or speed, but without a 3D accelerator, it's pretty unplayable.

VOODOO 2



VOODOO 1



RENDITION V2200



RIVA 128



API SUPPORT → Direct3D
OTHER CARDS SUPPORTED → Matrox Mystique, Matrox M3D

Flesh Eaters



1972 URUGUAYAN RUGBY TEAM

After their plane crashed in the Andes, survivors went weeks without food and were forced to eat their friends or starve



JEFFREY DAHMER

Convicted in the deaths of 17 young men and boys whose bodies he mutilated and cannibalized. Dahmer was beaten to death by a fellow prison inmate in 1994 and died with a mop handle sticking out of his eye socket



ALEXANDER MASLUCH

While on death row in Russia for murder, ate a fellow inmate's internal organs. He tried to make soup out of second victim's liver, but failed



MIKE TYSON

Disqualified at the end of the third round of the 1997 WBA Heavyweight Championship for biting off a chunk of Evander Holyfield's ear

Despite its pathetic graphics, *Flesh Feast* is actually a fairly fun strategic action game.

Granted, much of the game's fun comes from mercilessly slaughtering zombies with 30+ weapons ranging from human limbs to shovels to chain saws to uzis. But beyond saving your brain from becoming zombie lunch you must also use it to finish each of the fourteen levels of a zombie-infested island while keeping yourself and fellow humans alive.

In each area, you've got to figure out how to escape, which involves stuff like breaking open fences with crowbars, bombing obstacles, finding swipe cards, and fixing switches. Along the way you encounter multitudes of zombies, intent on eating you — and the other humans — alive. You can't carry an infinite number of objects, so you might need to drop a weapon or ammo to pick up an object that helps solve a puzzle, adding another level of strategy to your gathering.

Navigation is made easy with an onscreen map that helps you locate weapons and other humans. Two modes of movement allow you to either strategically



Just another typical Monday morning at LAX ...

direct up to four characters in real-time (which may well be impossible), or fully control the actions of a single character. Or you can switch back and forth, using Direct mode for your killings and Strategic mode to plan broader tactics. Unlike most action games, *Flesh Feast* is actually less fun in multiplayer mode. You can play death-match-style against up to seven others, or play one-on-one humans vs. zombies — but good luck finding someone who wants to play as the slow-moving, weaponless zombies.

In terms of gore, *Flesh Feast* is more amusing than stomach-turning, and is most graphic in animated sequences between levels. The zombies' only weapon is their ability to sink their teeth into you with a healthy chomp, but like a



So the blood looks like confetti — you get the idea.

scene from *Night of the Living Dead*, they can swarm upon you if you're not paying attention. Delightful details accompany each kill; for example, you can slice up a zombie with a chain saw and the upper torso may inch over to you on its arms to latch onto your legs. Touches like this make *Flesh Feast* more fun than a typical strategy game — as well as an entertaining action game.

— CARRIE SHEPHERD *has a perhaps-unhealthy love of morbidity.*

GRAPHICS

Lame minimal-detail terrain is balanced by gory details in the killings.

SOUND

Music gets monotonous quickly, but the nosing flesh-eating noise is cool.

DEPTH

Keeping other humans alive while plotting escape keeps it challenging.

DESIGN

It's not just about annihilating zombies — but that's the best part.

RATING



+ Pluses

- Use of severed limbs as weapons
- Intuitive interface
- Not just mindless killing

- Minuses

- Multi-character control is difficult
- Characters move slowly
- Not just mindless killing



You can trick zombies to fall in the water and drown, but it's more fun to kill them with diverse weapons.

DEVELOPER → Volition
PUBLISHER → Interplay
REQUIRED → P166, 32MB RAM, 8X CD-ROM, 210MB hard drive space
IDEAL → PII 233, 48MB RAM, 16X CD-ROM, Voodoo-based accelerator, force-feedback joystick

Descent Freespace: The Great War

A taster to get the juices flowing before *Descent 3*



FORCE FEEDBACK



MULTIPLAYER

ACCELE-RATED

No surprise that Voodoo 2 performance topped the charts. The Glide-powered visuals have that smooth quality to the explosions, and a well-detailed edge to the ships. Occasional choppy scenes during hectic dogfights were disappointing on the Riva, but the in-game software rendering gives the effects an effective pixelated look.

VOODOO 2



VOODOO 1



RENDITION V2200



RIVA 128



API SUPPORT → Direct3D, Glide
 OTHER CARDS SUPPORTED → Any 3D card



The Demon clan's cruiser is quite a sight.



Check six, pilot, and other such aeronautical jargon.

Descent without the walls. There ya go. That pretty much sums up Volition's foray outside the confines of the claustrophobic mines that have made the *Descent* franchise amazingly popular.

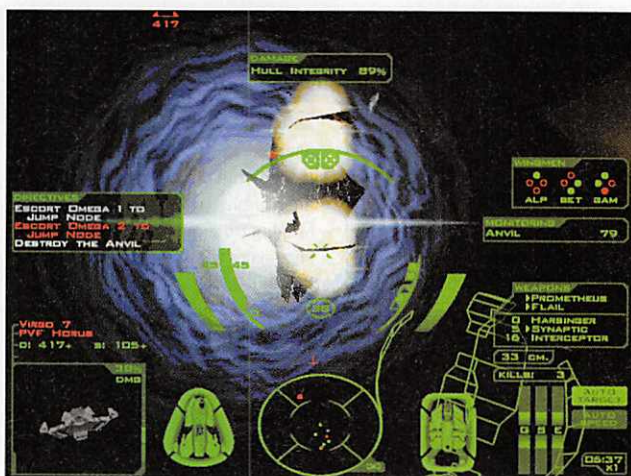
With MicroProse's franchise-extending *X-COM: Interceptor* (reviewed this issue) also hitting shelves, as well as Accolade's star-struck *StarCon*, Bethesda's so-of-delayed-it's-pathetic *Tenth Planet*, and Interplay's own Parallax-developed *Descent 3* in the offing, competition for the dark skies (with nicely colored nebulas) of space is fierce. But *Freespace* succeeds in many ways, most satisfyingly in the method in which it maintains the fun factor without seeming repetitive. Which it kinda is, if you look closely.

So you're a Terran trainee pilot, fighting in a war against the Vasudans. Then the Vasudans are attacked by a new, all-conquering race named the Shivans. The Terrans band together with the Vasudans, thus sharing technology and offering up new weapons and ships to fire and fly. Toward the end (and without spoiling things) a fourth ancient civilization comes into play before a final confrontation staves off the Shivan threat to good ol' planet Earth. The end.

This plot is played out over the two-CD set through some extremely well-animated cut scenes. The quality dips when the setting gets a bit too *2001* on you, with a bunch of touchy-feely "in the beginning things were good, and then the bad guys came and it wasn't good any more" scenes.

Piloting one of four fighters and three bombers, each with significantly different handling styles, strengths, and weaknesses, equipping your wing (of up to three other wingmen) and arming them with a selection of the lasers, subsystem disruptors, and missiles is the familiar core of this type of shooter.

Complex heads-up displays can be a turnoff, but training introduces



The detail isn't there, or the framerate, but the software version still plays pretty well.

new features, giving you time to practice. The missions themselves follow the familiar course of patrols, escort, and bombing runs, interspersed with more cerebral piloting challenges where if you fire, you're toast, but succeed and the branching mission structure takes a turn for the better. This nonlinearity is welcome, but you're likely to end up just replaying a mission until all objectives are complete, and then continuing.

All very familiar. But the graphic detail under 3D acceleration is excellent. The explosions are big and colorful, the realtime video, sound effects, and voices of wingmen and commanders are clear and instructive. A challenging AI makes it tough, so it's good that the controls, while expansive, are also quickly mastered.

Multiplayer campaigns on Parallax Online are easy to access (although lag is certainly a problematic issue). The FRED mission editor is effective, but would have been better with docs (although the online help clearly goes through all the elements of setting mission objectives, backgrounds, wing formations, and waypoints). A patch fixed problems that I didn't encounter in the first place.

Aside from that familiarity, there's nothing wrong with *Freespace* at all

and the multiplayer game is likely to keep me coming back.

— ROB SMITH wants to find out if in space, anyone can hear him scream.

GRAPHICS

Detailed capital ships and great explosions are highlights.

SOUND

Clear, crisp, and informative voices make a refreshing change.

DEPTH

Enough fun to make you want to finish, despite the repetition.

DESIGN

Space has been filled with impressive ships, but not much originality.

RATING

+ Pluses

- Action is frenetic
- Campaign-style multiplayer
- Big explosions

- Minuses

- Seen it before
- Significant lag issues
- Repetitive mission styles

DEVELOPER → Terminal Reality
PUBLISHER → Microsoft
REQUIRED → P133, 16MB RAM, 30MB hard drive space
IDEAL → P11 333, 64MB RAM, Microsoft SideWinder Force Feedback Pro, 3D card

Monster Truck Madness 2

Monster trucks without crushed metal are like a hot date — with your sister



FORCE FEEDBACK

ACCELE-RATED

In perhaps a deliberately engineered ploy, the native Glide support in this game doesn't clearly outshine the Direct3D incarnation. The 3Dfx version's colors have that low-contrast, washed-out look it's becoming known for, but it still gets a nod because of the noticeable increase in framerate.

VOODOO 2



VOODOO 1



RENDITION V2200



RIVA 128



API SUPPORT → Direct3D, Glide
OTHER CARDS SUPPORTED → PowerVR, Matrox, Intel i740, ATI

More Madness

MAD COW DISEASE

VICTIM: British Quarter Pounder eaters

CAUSE: Eating beef infected with the Mad Cow virus

SYMPTOMS: Loss of vision, nausea

CURE: None



BASKETBALL MADNESS

VICTIM: Latrell Sprewell

CAUSE: Playing for the Golden State Warriors

SYMPTOM: An uncontrollable urge to choke P.J. Carlesimo

CURE: A killer jump shot, and a good lawyer

REEFER MADNESS

VICTIM: Troubled youth

CAUSE: The evil plant, reefer
SYMPTOMS: Voracious appetite, loss of memory, virginity
CURE: Institutionalization

MIDNIGHT MADNESS

VICTIM: Those on their way back from a Monster Truck rally

CAUSE: A late-night sale at Kmart
SYMPTOM: Slack-jawed fascination with Beanie Babies

CURE: Grab victim by shoulders, shake until a nosebleed occurs

Plowing through mud and gravel, over hills and through streams, demolishing everyone and everything in your path: That's what monster trucks are all about. Unfortunately, that's not what *Monster Truck Madness 2* is all about. It seems developer Terminal Reality couldn't decide whether to make *MTM2* an arcade racer or a sim — it's not a good example of either genre. This insanely fun concept somehow resulted in a game that's just not that fun.

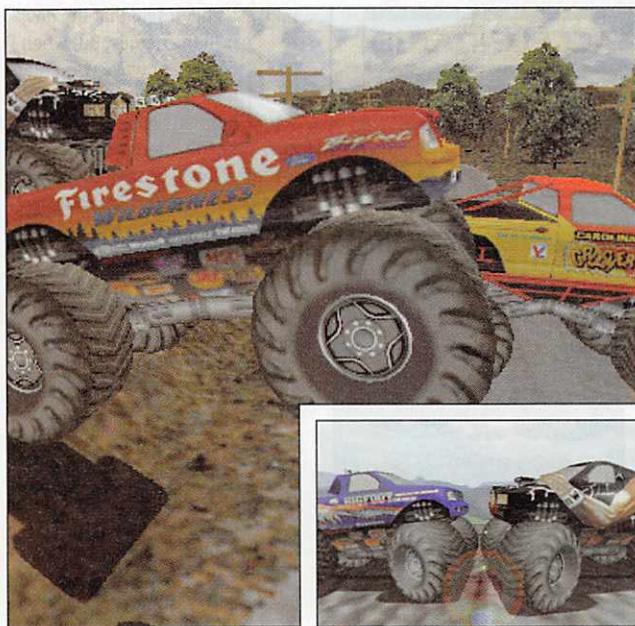
On the positive side, the graphics, particularly the trucks themselves, are solid, and there are plenty of camera angles to view the action from. The game makes things easy with a simple interface and control scheme, as well as plenty of configuration options — typical of a Microsoft product.

Unfortunately, the physics engine is just wrong. Granted, monster trucks perform differently than other vehicles due to their huge wheels and high center of gravity, but when trucks with wheels the size of Rhode Island are floating gently in the breeze, you've got a problem.

The tracking design is also a real shortcoming: The 11 generic off-road courses offer little or no excitement; there really isn't anything here uniquely suited to monster trucks. Without steep hills to climb and Honda Accords to crush under your massive wheels, the game gets old real fast. Mud and violent crashes — the two cornerstones of monster truck racing — are decidedly low-key.



A bit more madness could have saved this monstrosity.



Monster trucks and professional wrestling — someone's slapping himself on the back for this one.

Multiplayer adds its own twist to the whole racing thing, with three king of the hill arenas where points are scored by staying on top and by knocking your opponents off the edge. But even this option isn't enough to keep *MTM2* from collecting dust on your shelf before long.

Monster trucks aren't just your run-of-the-mill off-road vehicles, they're monster trucks — they're exaggerated, they're over-the-top. Terminal Reality failed to take advantage of this, and made a game that's unfocused, tame, and just not as fun as it should be.

— ED LEE *lives in his own mad, mad, mad world.*



Outta my way, there's a sale on Red Man at Wal-Mart!

GRAPHICS

Solid, but nothing spectacular — just overwhelmingly OK.

SOUND

Convincing; ambient sounds are particularly well done.

DEPTH

Lack of variety in tracks, multiplayer fails to excite.

DESIGN

Tries to be both arcade and sim racer, ends up being neither.

RATING



+ Pluses

- The trucks look pretty good
- Lots of options
- Force feedback's a winner

- Minuses

- Generic track design
- Feels too tame
- Floaty physics

DEVELOPER → FASA Interactive
PUBLISHER → MicroProse
REQUIRED → P133, 16MB RAM, 4X CD-ROM, 150MB hard drive space
IDEAL → P166, 32MB RAM, 6X CD-ROM, 550MB hard drive space

MechCommander

A stomping good time ... in realtime

ACCELE-RATED

Though it doesn't support 3D accelerator cards, *MechCommander* still manages to be a great game — in 2D!

Giant Robots

These robots from the big screen didn't need to be grouped into clans to take on the scum of the earth; they managed to do it single-handedly. Here are a few characters who didn't need no stinkin' clan, or a commander, to get the job done.

ROBOS

VENUE: *Robocop*
WEAPON OF CHOICE: Twin Gatling guns
PURPOSE: Ronnie Cox's answer to Old Detroit's crime problem
RESPONDS TO: Nothing, apparently. Shoots junior exec. (so it wasn't a total loss)

GORT

VENUE: *The Day the Earth Stood Still*
WEAPON OF CHOICE: Laser beam
PURPOSE: Sidekick to Klaatu, an alien who visits Earth with a message of friendship (and gets shot for his trouble). Melts Earth's puny weapons
RESPONDS TO: "Klaatu borada nikto" (among other things)

GIGANTOR

VENUE: Cartoon of the same name
WEAPON OF CHOICE: Er, we'll get back to you on that. (Methinks it was mainly his steel fists)
PURPOSE: "Ready to fight for right against wrong"
RESPONDS TO: Remote control (used by 12-year-old Jimmy Sparks)



MechCommander has two views for combat. The zoomed-out one has the advantage of offering The Big Picture.

It's been said that the devil is in the details. But when FASA Interactive was creating *MechCommander*, his infernal highness must have been off interviewing Phil Hartman's wife or something. The details that define this synthesis of *MechWarrior* and realtime strategy are perfectly heavenly.

MechCommander finds you taking part in a campaign to wrest the planet Port Arthur from Clan Smoke Jaguar. You're assigned to shepherd up to 12 giant mechs or support vehicles — split in as many as three squads — through 30 disparate missions set in a zoomable isometric game world.

MicroProse's first attempt at the RTS thang, the non-BattleTech *7th Legion*, had units that looked very like mechs and some similar concepts (like units gaining experience). These days, the appearance of each new 2D realtime strategy game sets off warnings of imminent projectile vomiting in my diaphragm. But, right now, I can't imagine putting *MechCommander* down.

There's no construction and none of the conventional RTS resource gathering. In truth, it feels almost like a role-playing game — a sense only reinforced by the post-mission advances in the four abilities of your surviving



Artillery is one of the nice little toys you'll get to use in *MechCommander*. Here, alas, it's being used against you to knock out a bridge.

MechWarriors and by the sensible assessment of what constitutes success. If you can't fulfill a primary goal, you'll have to play the mission over, but you can blow off the secondary ones and move on.

The interface is so intuitive that I wound up using the well-presented 192-page manual only to address specific questions.

The detail that's been lavished on *MechCommander* is extraordinary. The mission designers have built the game for strategy, and artfully avoided the trap to which so many RTSs succumb — the creation of virtual gauntlets with limited options for their resolution. The mission briefings are deep and intelligent. The graphics appear tile-based, but they're artful. (Dig the working cranes and the way trucks beneath them bounce on their suspension when loaded.) You'll find, delightfully, that your mechs leave footprints behind them — footprints spread out when said mech has been hauling ass — I just wish they'd also included a furrow behind those mechs dragging a damaged leg.

It's just a shame that the AI isn't a little better. Now, it's not bad: I found damaged units retreating (or doing a persuasive imitation thereof), and, in one mission, enemy patrols that spotted my units hightailed it back to their base and alerted their fellows. (The whole concept of units "talking" to one another is a nice touch.) But, at the same time, a smart soldier doesn't simply make

a beeline for his intended target, advance unsupported against visibly superior forces, or keep on walking through a minefield when he discovers he's in one.

Except me. This is one glorious minefield that I'm going to see all the way to the other side.

— *MechWarrior* PETER OLAFSON
doesn't even have a driver's license.

GRAPHICS

Nicely done — especially when zoomed-in.

SOUND

Solid. It tells you just what you need to know.

DEPTH

I can see playing this game all the way to the end.

DESIGN

It looks like a realtime strategy game, but, in places, plays more like an RPG.

RATING

+ Pluses

- Rich detail in the design
- Intuitive interface
- Open structure to missions

- Minuses

- AI is OK, but not brilliant
- Graphics are fine, but slightly broad
- Not enough minuses in the game

DEVELOPER →	Xatrix
PUBLISHER →	Id/Activision
REQUIRED →	Full version of <i>Quake</i> , P90, 16MB RAM, 100MB hard drive space
IDEAL →	PIII 400, 128MB RAM, Voodoo 2 card, T1 line (Rob's machine ... hmm, no wonder he always wins)

Quake II Mission Pack: The Reckoning

The best looking game on two wheels

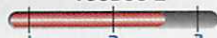


MULTIPLAYER ✓

ACCELE-RATED

Voodoo 2 running OpenGL has become the standard high-water mark for *Quake II* performance, with its sweet framerate and excellent special effects. Other cards we tested did not perform as well under this API.

VOODOO 2



VOODOO 1



RENDITION V2200



RIVA 128



API SUPPORT → OpenGL
OTHER CARDS SUPPORTED → Matrox, Intel 1740

The Arsenal

Screw everything else, where are the new guns?

THE PHALANX GUN → Best described as a double-barreled rocket launcher. Useless in close combat due to its slow rate of fire plus collateral damage, but good for medium-range engagements



THE IONRIPPER → Very similar to *Unreal*'s razorjack. Both fire small glowing projectiles that bounce off walls. Great up close; somewhat less effective at longer range



THE TRAP → Throw it down somewhere, preferably in the path of a pursuing foe, and it sucks 'em in and spits out a tasty food cube — 50 health!



It's been nine months since *Quake II* was released, and finally, the Godzilla of first-person shooters gets an expansion pack. The *Reckoning*'s arrival — on the heels of *Unreal*, the first serious threat to the *Quake* throne — is just in time to remind players that *Quake II* and Id are far from dead. Since its timing coincides with Id's 3.15 point release, which brings a whole slew of improvements, it's quite clear that this is a direct response to *Unreal* — until *Quake Arena* is ready. Those clever little marketers.

Installing this sucker automatically updates you to 3.15, if you don't have it already. The most wel-



The only truly new enemy, the acid-spitting Gekk, gets ion-ripped a new one.

come addition is autownload support, or being able to grab everything you don't have — skins, models, sounds, maps — when you connect to a server. You now have more control over your jumps when in the air, and momentum will keep you going in the direction of your jump, allowing for longer leaps and less frustration. Weapon models show what hardware your enemies are toting around — nice for those rocket launcher vs. blaster confrontations. And what do all the above have in common? They come standard on *Unreal*. Hmmm.

The 18 new single-player missions are definitely jacked up in difficulty. To make up for it, they don't waste much time giving you the big guns. Although well-designed overall, there is a fair amount of backtracking in the levels themselves, and just a huge amount of switch-pushing/door-opening puzzles that grate on the nerves. Along the way, you'll be gibbing up new enemies including the annoying Gekk, which remind me of fleas on crack.

The pack also ships with seven multiplayer maps, which are well designed if on the large and



Hidely ho, neighbor! Eat it, Flanders.

sprawling side — you won't be wanting to do any one-on-one in these. It can't be denied that *Quake II* still has a visceral, gritty satisfaction that just can't be touched by any game, and with the mission pack as well as the 3.15 point release, you'll be busy rediscovering the magic.

— ED LEE has never actually seen a flea on crack.

GRAPHICS

There are some new textures, but they're still brown.

SOUND

New weapons splitting flesh are pretty awesome.

DEPTH

There are a good number of maps, and new weapons are always good.

DESIGN

Good attention to detail that will prolong your *Quake II* experience.

RATING



Pluses

- Version 3.15's a winner
- Steep difficulty level
- Phalanx gun's a nice addition

Minuses

- Ionripper looks familiar
- Graphics a little hard on the eyes
- Some missions too confusing



The phalanx gun and God mode make a great combo.

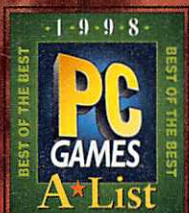
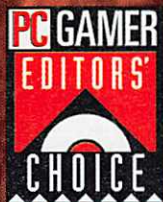
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"Sanitarium is easily the most disturbing computer game of 1998"

-PC Games



"If 'Jacob's Ladder' was reality squared, Sanitarium is reality cubed"

-J.C.Herz The New York Times

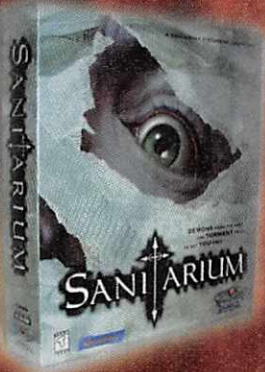
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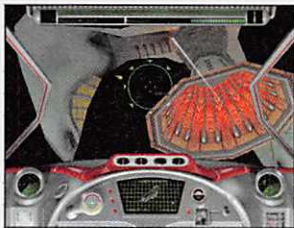
DEVELOPER → MicroProse
PUBLISHER → MicroProse
REQUIRED → P133 with 3D card OR P166 without 3D card, 16MB RAM, 85MB hard drive space, sound card
IDEAL → P200, 32MB RAM, 265MB hard drive space, Direct3D accelerator card

X-COM: Interceptor

Bookkeepers invade space. Alien greys succumb to interplanetary audit

ACCELE-RATED

Interceptor's graphics are attractive, but not overloaded with close-up lighting effects. Any reasonable accelerator should be capable of achieving a solid framerate. And putting a Voodoo 2 to this task is like hammering a thumbtack with a pneumatic drill.



Don't try to figure out what this is, just shoot that damn thing!



For a space combat game, *X-COM* could use some work on the action aspect.



I love the smell of ink-soaked ledgers in the morning. Smells like ... fiscal responsibility.

Could this be the first computer game intro to open onto a lumpy mass that looks like an overused cat box?

Nope, sorry. As the simulated microcamera zooms back, we realize we've just been shown an alien autopsy at the molecular level.

Strategy gamers loved the elegant mix of resource management and turn-based, tactical combat (not to mention the cattle mutilations and autopsies) in *X-COM: UFO Defense*. Purists gasped when the third chapter, *X-COM: Apocalypse*, punched up the turn-based play with fashionable realtime strategy.

X-COM: Interceptor drifts farther yet. Now your number-crunching bottom is plopped into the midst of realtime flight combat action. And rather than treat players to well-balanced resource management, *Interceptor's* strategic phases require you to micromanage every detail of interplanetary commerce and defense. You're like a bookkeeper who got lost on the way to the Arthur Anderson offices. *Way* lost.

But baby, oh baby! This is a ledger jockey's dream. You get to order weapons and supplies and combat vessels. Build and equip new bases. Hire, train, and transfer personnel. Request technology.



Discount your rudder by 5%, increase your ascent markup by 10%, then amortize your velocity over the next 30 clicks.

Almost every resource management activity that has ever been in a space flight sim has been wedged into *Interceptor*. Unfortunately, the slow pace and attention to every detail make the game colder than a popsicle on Pluto.

You have to ask: Do would-be bookkeepers want to fly combat? Do cockpit studs want to add numbers? Did anybody think about play consistency in this game?

The realtime flight episodes raise the energy level mightily. However, the emphasis on instrument flight (probably a reality in the expanse of space) distances combat from the intense action of *Star Wars*, which is almost every gamer's model for space combat. Space flight also feels oddly two-dimensional in this 3D universe.

Graphics and sound are adequate. The 3D acceleration adds framerate but does little to the game's textures and lighting effects, mainly because you're rarely close enough to another ship to appreciate them. Directional sound effects aid navigation, though not as much as the arrows and targets that help clutter an already messy heads-up display.

Multiplayer games are hosted by one player on a LAN (up to eight players) or the Internet (two, maybe more). We're basically talking dogfight here, though LAN players can choose to fight in teams. Internet play is fairly fluid, but the limited number of players and options make it a far inferior experience to real action games. MicroProse apparently sees the



All right. That's the end of it. Those Tribbles have to go. Look at the mess they made in the food processor.

X-COM series as epic fiction rather than a characteristic game design. And with the next title in the series falling right in the first-person shooter category, this trend is continuing. However, since it's backed by the *Unreal* engine, it may fare much better than *Interceptor*, which is strictly lost in space.

— BOB LINDSTROM finds accounting and space combat to both be based in fiction.

GRAPHICS

You're not going to get any Voodoo 2 eye burn.

SOUND

Very effective use of wingman-spoken dialogue and strong audio panning.

DEPTH

If you love ordering office supplies, you'll be a short flight from heaven.

DESIGN

A smorgasbord retrospective of the history of space game designs.

RATING

+ Pluses

- Plenty to do
- Internet/LAN play options
- Good flight physics model

- Minuses

- Orgasmic fun for spreadsheet lovers
- Schizoid action/books split
- Lacks action-game immediacy

DEVELOPER	→ Ion Storm
PUBLISHER	→ Eidos Interactive
REQUIRED	→ P166, 32MB RAM, PCI graphics card, sound card, 4X CD-ROM, 120MB hard drive space
IDEAL	→ PII 266, 64MB RAM, 21-inch monitor

Dominion: Storm Over Gift 3

Haven't we seen this somewhere before?



MULTIPLAYER

ACCELE-RATED

Dominion: Storm Over Gift 3 does not support hardware acceleration, but owning a fast video card and a Pentium II CPU will help get rid of the choppy animation experienced on slower machines.

Better Off With ...

Dominion isn't a bad RTS game, but several games that came before it are better playing, better looking, and just plain better.

TOTAL ANNIHILATION

THE HOOK: First true 3D RTS game
WHY IT'S BETTER: Good balance, great graphics, and use of 3D for gameplay

STARCRRAFT

THE HOOK: Three unique races
WHY IT'S BETTER: Blizzard's classic gameplay and a host of unique weapons

COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT

THE HOOK: Mammoth tanks, Tanyas, and dictator fantasies realized
WHY IT'S BETTER: The latest in the C&C series offers everything an RTS game should have

Let's face it — the real-time strategy genre has been completely saturated for over a year now, so any new RTS game should have something damn special if you're going to shell out 50 bucks for it. Blizzard's *StarCraft* and Bungie's *Myth: The Fallen Lords* proved that a dab of compelling gameplay and a hint of originality is still possible, but the majority of RTS games on store shelves are mere clones, determined to cash in on this prolonged craze.

So where does *Dominion: Storm Over Gift 3* fit in? Although Ion Storm's highly anticipated first release is a polished package, it doesn't bring anything unique to the table or advance the genre.

In *Dominion*, four races are competing to locate a powerful ancient artifact hidden on the third planet of the Gift system. The finder of this Messiah Device is rewarded with unlimited control over the galaxy. Good enough reason for a war?

You choose what race to play — the Humans, Darkens, Mercs, or the Scorp — but unlike in *StarCraft*, all sides play relatively the

same. Sure, Merc units are more expensive and Darkens have slower unit build times, but I failed to notice any concrete gameplay differences. All structures, personnel, and vehicles are the same for each side, too, with the exception of the Level 2 Multipeds — heavily armored personnel carriers. A handy fold-out card teaches you what is required for unit, structure, personnel, infrastructure, and vehicle production or upgrades — but we've seen this before.

When it comes to unit production, *Dominion* features a few nice touches, such as the ability to set the number of units to produce (from one to nine or infinity), and if you have the required resources, you can build units, buildings, or vehicles simultaneously, without having to wait for other construction to be completed — which we've also seen before. With a right-mouse click, each unit is capable of a number of behaviors, including kneel, crawl, retreat, scatter, guard, show range, and so forth.

The structures are neat as well, with Umbilicals to distribute power, various Telepads to send units around the map, and bridge construction (and destruction) being an essential part of gameplay.

Dominion supports up to eight players (two colors per race), playable over a LAN or over Mplayer.com for free. There is also custom-made TCP/IP client software to look for, such as StormWatcher at www.stormtroopers.com/dominion/stormwatcher. It was hard to find many *Dominion* players on either Mplayer.com or StormWatcher, but it was only the first week of the game's release. I did manage to engage in a two-player campaign over Mplayer.com, and although it proved to be easy to set up and fairly lag-free, there's just nothing spectacular about it.

Despite a few commendable features, there's not enough to warrant *Dominion's* purchase with so many other solid RTS titles out there — such as *StarCraft* and *Total Annihila-*



Dominion's high-res graphics are best on a large monitor.

Hardcore gamers may enjoy it for its level of complexity, but for a game so long in development, *Dominion* is a letdown for those looking for the next big thing.

— MARC SALTZMAN is the master of his own Dominion.

GRAPHICS

Dominion's graphics are simply mediocre.

SOUND

Sound effects are crisp and audible, but don't expect a killer soundtrack.

DEPTH

Without an interactive tutorial, forget *Dominion* if you're a newbie.

DESIGN

Despite what the box says, all four races are not unique enough.

RATING



Pluses

- Many structures, units, vehicles
- Entertaining cut-scenes
- Intuitive interface

Minuses



- Lacks anything truly unique
- Difficult, with no in-game tutorial
- Less than stellar hi-res graphics



As with most RTS games, there are multiple environments such as large grasslands, lava-filled wastelands, and barren deserts.



MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS
www.the-chosen.com

WINDOWS 95



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www.gtinteractive.com

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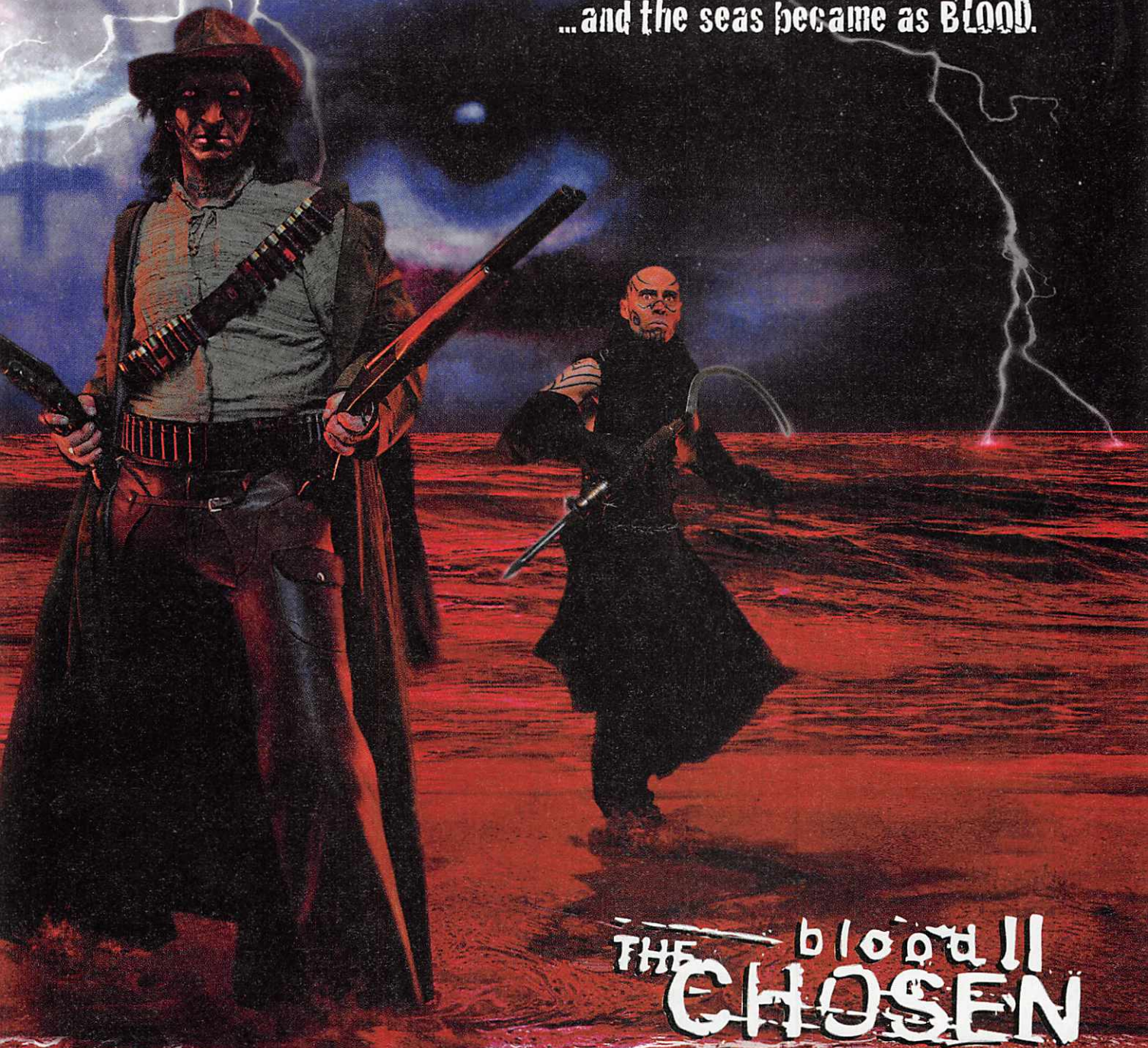


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...and the seas became as BLOOD.



THE ^{blood II} CHOSEN

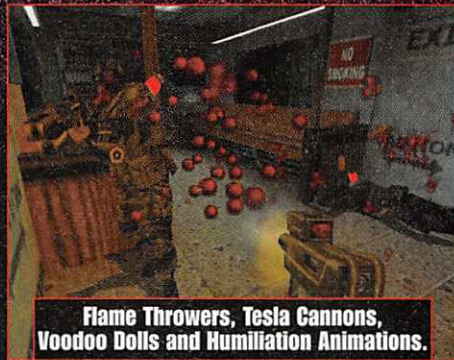
the second cut is the deepest



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DEVELOPER → Criterion Studios
PUBLISHER → Ubi Soft
REQUIRED → P133, 3Dfx card, 16MB RAM OR P166 with other 3D card, 16MB RAM, 1K hard drive space
IDEAL → P300, Voodoo 2 card, 128MB RAM, Freestyle Pro controller, 145MB hard drive space

Redline Racer

The best looking game on two wheels



MULTIPLAYER



TILT



FORCE FEEDBACK

ACCELE-RATED

Direct3D performance was a high priority for the developers and it shows, particularly with an AGP setup. Voodoo 2 still gets the nod over the Riva 128 (stellar Direct3D performance) due to a higher framerate.

VOODOO 2



VOODOO 1



RENDITION V2200



RIVA 128



API SUPPORT → Glide, Direct3D
OTHER CARDS SUPPORTED → ATI Rage Pro, Permedia 2, Intel i740, Number Nine

Motorcycles are ideally suited to racing games — they're incredibly light and fast, and have gut-wrenching acceleration and handling — not to mention insane crashes when both bike and rider go flying and explode or splatter over the pavement. It's a mystery, then, why there aren't more motorcycle racing games out there. Criterion probably wondered the same thing, decided to do something about it, and then delivered a superior game.

Redline Racer's feel is definitely on the arcade side, with each track designed around a different theme — so you've got a snow race, a beach race, and others that you wouldn't see in a sim racer. There are three tracks to start with, and seven more that you unlock by placing first in the others. You race against 15 other bikes in single-player mode (which makes for some spectacular multibike wipe-outs), or against up to seven other human opponents through LAN, Internet, or modem.

The game's even more intense played with the new Microsoft Freestyle Pro controller, which replicates a motorcycle's handlebar motion, making for the sweetest control possible.

The game's primary weakness is



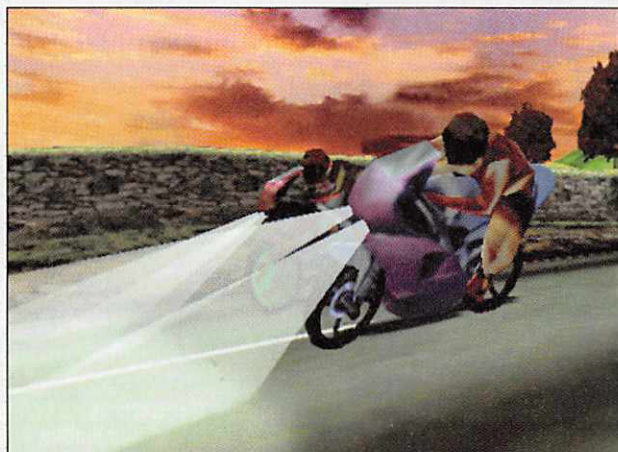
There are eight bikes to ride, each with different specs.



Is a helmet really going to help if you wipe out?



Scratching your nose at 200 mph is not recommended.



The action replay mode provides some killer visuals.

Evel Highlights



Playing *Redline Racer* made us remember the great career moments of the craziest racer of all time: Evel Knievel.

CAESAR'S PALACE, 1968

OBSTACLE: Fountains in front of Caesar's Palace, Las Vegas
RESULT: Knievel clears jump, but landing puts him in a 30-day coma

SNAKE RIVER CANYON, 1974

OBSTACLE: Snake River Canyon, Idaho
RESULT: Knievel clears quarter-mile jump, but parachute pulls him back, narrowly missing landing in torrential river

CHICAGO AMPHITHEATRE, 1976

OBSTACLE: A tank full of live sharks
RESULT: Knievel suffers a concussion and two broken arms, cameraman loses an eye. Knievel decides to retire

GRAPHICS

The engine is as smooth as silk, glass, and other very smooth objects.

SOUND

Bike sounds are unremarkable; music is mediocre.

DEPTH

Tracks lack variation, and there should be more of 'em.

DESIGN

A heavy arcade influence is especially evident in the track design.

RATING

7

+ Pluses

- Beautiful graphics
- Fun, arcade-y feel
- Action replay

- Minuses

- Not enough tracks
- Control/braking model very basic
- Often feels like a technology demo

its depth. Although three difficulty levels allow for progressively challenging races on the same tracks, the tracks don't require repeated playing to learn their intricacies and nuances. The racing model doesn't add much either — it lacks subtlety and is mastered quickly.

On the plus side, *Redline Racer's* framerate is as smooth as glass, and control is tight and responsive. I also really liked the eye-popping action replay, which shows off the flexibility of the game's engine. And gripes aside, for my money, it's still an entertaining motorcycle game.

— In real life, ED LEE drives a Civic and thinks professional motorcycle racers are insane.

DEVELOPER → Xatrix
PUBLISHER → Interplay
REQUIRED → 486 DX66, 16MB RAM, 220MB hard drive space
IDEAL → P166, 32MB RAM, beer holder

Redneck Rampage Rides Again



Hide your livestock, the redneck boys are back again



ACCELE-RATED

Who makes a 3D shooter without any 3D card support? This criminal omission alone is enough to justify the game's pitiful score.

Influential Rednecks



ANCIENT SUMERIAN ZIG ZIGURAT
EFFECT ON HISTORY: Invented beer
REDNECK TENDENCIES: After beer's invention, the Sumerian culture shifted from hunting/gathering to farming. Professional wrestling was also reportedly invented around this time
REDNECK RATING: ***** Invented beer — 'nuff said



ABE LINCOLN
EFFECT ON HISTORY: Helped end the Civil War, united America
REDNECK TENDENCIES: Born in a log cabin, wrote on a shovel, and sported unsightly facial hair
REDNECK RATING: * Not one use of the word "y'all" in the Gettysburg Address



JED CLAMPETT
EFFECT ON HISTORY: Helped integrate rednecks into modern culture with "The Beverly Hillbillies"
REDNECK TENDENCIES: Used the phrase "oh golly" quite often
REDNECK RATING: ** Sold out his true roots for a hit TV show



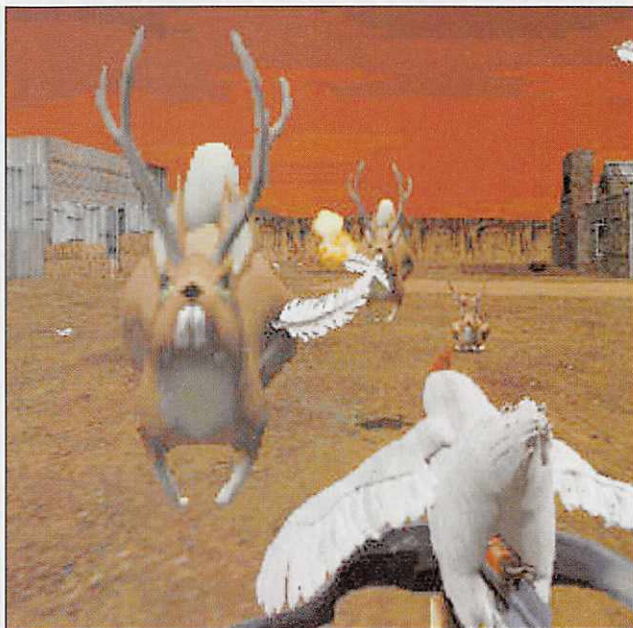
BILL CLINTON
EFFECT ON HISTORY: Helped make philanthropy acceptable in modern culture
REDNECK TENDENCIES: Fond of women with big hair
REDNECK RATING: *** Real rednecks don't jog, but they do love doughnuts

Don't get me wrong, I like a good redneck joke as much as the next guy. I was looking forward to a healthy dose of flannel wearin', beer swiggin', sister-as-wife redneck gags, but *Redneck Rampage Rides Again* was a major disappointment.

This game makes it quite apparent that the *Redneck* franchise is a one-trick pony that is well past its prime. It starts out with the two lead rednecks crash-landing a UFO, and sets them off on an adventure through 14 new but undeniably bland levels. And to make matters worse, just about every joke is a rehash of gags that were used in the first title and add-on pack.

With only the most minor of technological advancements on its Build engine graphics (the technology behind *Duke Nukem 3D* and countless other clones), this unnecessary sequel will impress no one with its story or visuals. Other Build engine games such as *Blood* and *Shadow Warrior* looked better, played better, and were funnier than this when they debuted more than a year ago. In comparison to just about any other shooter on the market, *Redneck Rampage Rides Again* looks as out-of-date as the eight-track tape deck that seems to be in every other Arkansas pickup truck.

We all know that looks aren't everything, but in addition to its substandard graphics and storyline, this title features practically the same gameplay as the previous



Fighting off jackalopes with TNT-stuffed chickens is apparently the pinnacle of humor in some parts of the country. Avoid these parts.

Redneck Rampage game. Even the newly included motorcycles and swamp buggies add little to the action and won't convince anyone to turn off "Jerry Springer" to play it.

Redneck Rampage Rides Again feels too much like a cheap cash-in and not enough like a brand-new title. If you really want some redneck action, save your money for tickets to Truckzilla, or at least wait until the next Merle Haggard concert comes to town.

— DAN EGGER can often be spotted in the flannel section of menswear at his local Wal-Mart.



If only the Harleys could drive you out of this stupid game.



Even big-breasted cheerleaders can't save *Redneck 2*.

GRAPHICS

As ugly as a Louisiana High School backup cheerleader.

SOUND

The in-game comments are repetitive and immediately annoying.

DEPTH

If you've already played *Redneck Rampage*, you've seen everything.

DESIGN

Uninspired, repetitive, old, crap ... to say the least.

RATING

+ Pluses

- Explosive chicken arrows
- The game ends, eventually

- Minuses

- Poorly executed concept
- Outdated graphics
- Doesn't end quickly enough

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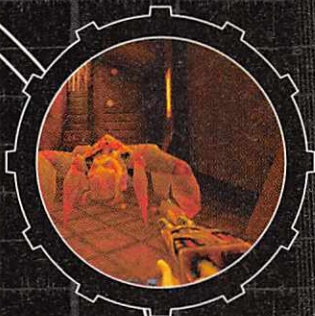
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WITH THIS HI-TECH LASER THERE'S NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT SHRAPNEL BACKFIRING ON YOU. THIS ONE REALLY GETS TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER - WHATEVER IT MAY BE.



ETF RIFLE

EXPLOSIVE TIPPED FOECHETTE RIFLE. PIERCES THROUGH ARMOR AND BODY EFFORTLESSLY, THEN GOES OFF EXPLOSIVELY. NOW YOU SEE THEM, NOW YOU DON'T.



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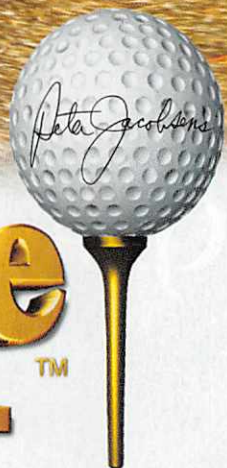
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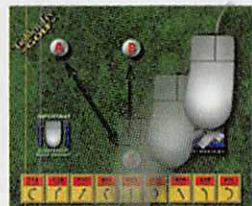
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Kicking It Up a Notch

THE STANDINGS

Sports is at its very core about pure, unadulterated competition. It doesn't matter how good you are, if someone else can beat you, you aren't the best. It's in that spirit that the editors at PCXL have rated games not only by score but also compared with other games. That way you know which title is your best bet.

	GAME TITLE	W	L	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	REALISM
FOOTBALL	FPS Football 98	1	0	1	0	0	1
	Madden 98	0	1	0	1	1	0
Forget about either of these two existing titles. A new <i>GameDay</i> , <i>Madden</i> , and even a revamped <i>Quarterback Club</i> are all headed to the PC this fall.							
BASKETBALL	NBA Live 98	1	0	1	1	0	0
	NBA Action	0	1	0	0	1	1
Electronic Arts relied on 3D acceleration and excellent presentation to win this category, but Sega's software-only version of <i>NBA Action</i> played a little better.							
HOCKEY	NHL Hockey 98	1	0	1	1	1	1
	Powerplay 98	0	1	0	0	0	0
<i>NHL Hockey 98</i> is the best PC sports game ever made, bar none.							
BASEBALL	High Heat 99	3	0	0	2	3	3
	Triple Play 99	2	1	3	3	2	1
	HardBall 6	1	2	2	0	1	2
	Microsoft Baseball 3D	0	3	1	1	0	0
Check out this month's review of <i>Microsoft Baseball 3D</i> , and a close-up of our head-to-head matches.							

W

hen a team rises to the occasion for an important moment, they

are said to be taking their game to a new level. With Play By Play, we are doing exactly that. Since the advent of 3D accelerators, PC sports games have dramatically changed for the better. To meet the needs of the growing number of sports fans who have tossed out their consoles for better games, we have created the only dedicated sports section in a PC gaming magazine.

In this section you will find the most in-depth look at all your favorite sports games, and detailed previews of the biggest games still on the way. We will provide an unflinching, straightforward, and always irreverent look at the games you want to play most, letting you know which titles make the most of your system, and which titles are best left on your father's Tandy computer.

Like you, we are diehard sports fans and have high standards for the games we play. Because of that, we have taken an innovative (and long overdue) approach to reviews. Each game will be judged in comparison to others in the same sport through a standings system. On the left is the result of those head-to-head match-ups, and on the next few pages are the comparisons in action.

PCXL's Guide to Fixing the Winter Olympics:

This year's Winter Olympics registered the lowest television ratings of the last few decades, and we know why. The Olympic Committee has turned soft, embracing events such as figure skating, freestyle moguls, and cross country skiing (the kind without a gun). If they really wanted to make things better for the next go-round, they'd mix up a few sports, as we've suggested below. (Note: We think these revamped Olympics would also make a stellar computer game.)

MOVE THE BOBSLED TRACK TO THE SKI JUMP AREA

Sure bobsleds are fast, but they are stuck in a tiny groove that keeps them from flying about. Move the ski jump to the end of the track and let players cross the finish

line while they are 40 meters in the air and it's sure to be more exciting.

MIX THE BIATHLON WITH ICE DANCING

If athletes skied for six kilometers and then quickly shot a perky ice dancer, they'd gain points while making the world a decidedly less annoying place (extra points should be given for hitting any guy in a sequined Neil Diamond jumpsuit).

ALLOW HOCKEY PLAYERS TO PARTICIPATE IN CURLING

Watching some fat guys in jumpsuits (who are strangely referred to as "athletes") sweep the ground as an oversized puck slowly moves behind them would be infinitely more fun if hockey goons were cross-checking them from time to time.

FORGET MIXING SPORTS AND CAN THE HUMAN-INTEREST STORIES

Every Olympic event seems to feature one contestant who was born without a spleen or other important body part, whose parents are dying of botulism, and who must win a gold medal or else a local orphanage will get shut down and all the nuns will have to work at Arby's.

In case you didn't know, if all the events in the Winter Olympics were to take place back-to-back, the entire proceedings would last only two hours, 18 minutes, and 35 seconds. It's the friggin' human interest stories that make everything drag out so long. Cut the stupid stories and let us watch some sports, unless those stories involve one skater hiring a hitman to whack another's knees. That's a story worth watching.



DEVELOPER →	WizBang!
PUBLISHER →	Microsoft
REQUIRED →	P133, 16MB RAM, 45MB hard drive space, 3D accelerator card
IDEAL →	P200, 32MB RAM, Voodoo 2 card, gamepad



GAMEPAD

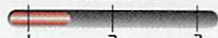
ACCELE-RATED

The polygon-heavy graphics in *Microsoft Baseball 3D* demand a 3D accelerator; the game even requires one to play. Because it is a Microsoft game, this title supports only Direct3D and no other card-specific APIs.

VOODOO 2



VOODOO 1



RENDITION V2200



RIVA 128



API SUPPORT → Direct3D
OTHER CARDS SUPPORTED → Direct3D compatible cards only

Overexposure

To make sports games authentic, many developers replace the numerous billboards that fill up a major league stadium with either fake ads or real, paid sponsorships. Microsoft apparently will have none of that, and has instead made sure to let everyone know that *Baseball 3D* is a Microsoft product by placing ads for other Microsoft games all over its stadium.

We think that the company's efforts may not have been enough to catch our attention, so we've suggested a few ways that it can help promote other Microsoft products.

- Bitmap all player faces to look like Bill Gates (Cheat codes could even bring a pie to the face)
- Make the players freeze-up every 30 minutes to simulate Windows 98
- Buy MLB, bury baseball technology, and make *Microsoft Cricket 99* the industry standard
- Have players hold Microsoft Force Feedback Pro joysticks instead of bats

Microsoft Baseball 3D

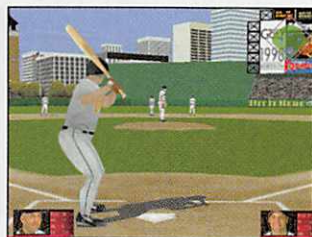
The empire strikes out

Just because the mega-conglomerate Microsoft Corporation dominates nearly every corner of the software market doesn't mean it's going to do the same when it comes to games. Take for instance *Microsoft Baseball 3D*, a game that looks, feels, and plays like it was made by a group of oily-haired executives. Sure it has the requisite snazzy graphics, high-powered sound, and detailed player models that buyers demand, but when compared to a hardcore favorite like 3DO's *High Heat Baseball*, this effort is positively disheartening.

What's so unsatisfactory for baseball fans is that at times it's virtually unplayable. Camera changes make players reorient themselves at the most crucial moments, and the ball is simply too tiny to follow. *Baseball 3D* has enough gameplay flaws to frustrate the most saintly of PC ball players — just attempting to play through one torturous nine-inning affair is punishment enough. Add unrealistic ball movements from the pitches, a flawed batting meter (which is neither responsive enough nor defined clearly enough for smooth play), as well as the inevitable confusion about



Cal Ripken looks fine in this side view ...



... but from the back he looks more like John Kruk.

what is going on, and you have a mess of a baseball game.

Even the game's strengths (smooth 3D players, excellent ground textures, variety of sounds) contain weaknesses. The players' uniforms look washed out and muted (on a Voodoo card) — nowhere near real representations of the actual jerseys — and even though the ground textures are excellent, slight bugs, such as runners who don't quite stand on base, overshadow any benefit those graphics may bring. Sound quality is another problem: Certain noises (such as the seventh-inning stretch music) dramatically rise above everything else, driving you to turn your speaker volume down in fear of another outburst.

Hardcore fans will also be frustrated by the game's lack of options (like a home run derby for

one), which they've come to expect from baseball games. In another software field, Microsoft would be able to release this game, call it the standard, and force everyone to buy a flawed title, but thankfully in the game arena players have better choices and can easily avoid this one.

— DAN EGGER used Microsoft Word to write this review.

GRAPHICS

The ground textures look nice, but the rest is bland.

SOUND

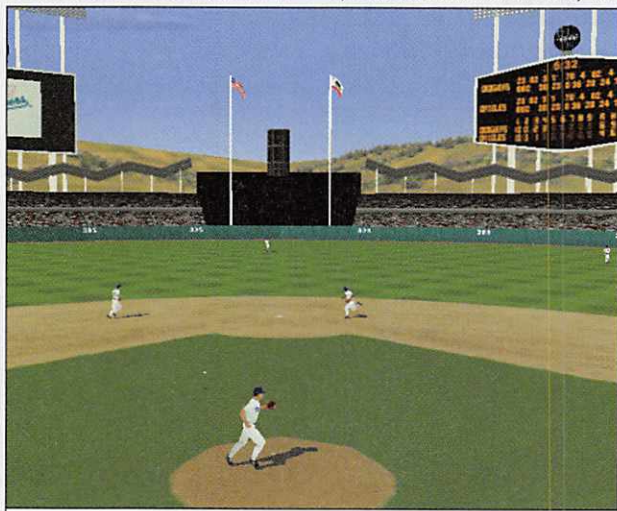
Crowd sounds are great, but the game sounds are awful.

CONTROL

The camera switches the second you get the ball, making simple grounders far too difficult to field.

REALISM

In real baseball, the ball is bigger than a pea.



Can you see the ball in this picture? At full speed, we had a hard time finding it.

RATING

Pluses

- Realistic throwing and running speeds
- Recognizable players
- 3D crowd sounds

Minuses

- Unintuitive managerial options
- Poorly defined batting meter
- Unrealistic ball movement on pitches

HEAD TO HEAD

GRAPHICS SOUND CONTROL REALISM FINAL

Triple Play 99 vs. HardBall 6

EA's *Triple Play 99* takes on its first competitor in Head To Head in a direct match-up with *HardBall 6*. *Triple Play 99* dominated the face-off in nearly every category that mattered.

EDGE
TRIPLE PLAY 99

Both games feature 3D acceleration, but the motion-captured players in *TP99* look far more realistic than their *HardBall 6* counterparts.

CLEAR WINNER
TRIPLE PLAY 99

No contest here. *HardBall* loses for its poor game sounds, crowd noises, and its (pause) incredibly (pause) halting (pause) play (pause) by (pause) play (pause) commentary.

EDGE
TRIPLE PLAY 99

Despite its sluggish controls, *TP99*'s better-designed camera system results in fewer moments of confusion while camera views change.

EDGE
HARDBALL 6

Accolade's title includes better defensive AI, and slightly smarter base runners.

WINNER
TRIPLE PLAY 99

Triple Play 99 (1-0) outslugs an undermanned *HardBall 6* (1-1) in an easy win.

High Heat vs. Microsoft Baseball 3D

The fan favorite faces off against Microsoft's first shot at PC baseball.

WINNER
BASEBALL 3D

It's 3D against 2D and *High Heat* just can't compete.

EDGE
HIGH HEAT

Another close match, but *High Heat* wins it because of its play-by-play and better in-game sounds.

CLEAR WINNER
HIGH HEAT

Control is where *High Heat* shines and *Baseball 3D* is at its worse, so this battle is easily decided.

CLEAR WINNER
HIGH HEAT

Better AI and more realistic pitching win this one for *High Heat*.

WINNER
HIGH HEAT

The battle was never in doubt as *High Heat* (1-0) absolutely destroys *Microsoft Baseball 3D* (0-1) in a laugh.

Triple Play 99 vs. High Heat

In its second competition, EA's *Triple Play 99* takes on a baseball rookie in *High Heat*. Developed by Studio 3DO's team .366, this title puts the play before presentation and focuses on the heat of the battle.

CLEAR WINNER
TRIPLE PLAY 99

Flat sprite players vs. 3D polygonal players. Which do you think wins?

CLEAR WINNER
TRIPLE PLAY 99

Triple Play wins again, thanks to its near flawless color commentary, game sounds, and stadium noise.

CLEAR WINNER
HIGH HEAT

The more responsive fielders in *High Heat* make defense as fun to play as offense.

WINNER
HIGH HEAT

High Heat packs some wicked defensive AI, control, and accurate ratings.

WINNER
HIGH HEAT

High Heat (2-0) proves to be a savvy rookie as it nips *Triple Play 99* (1-1) in a true battle of gameplay vs. glitz.

HardBall 6 vs. Microsoft Baseball 3D

It's another old timer facing a rookie title in a battle to keep out of last place.

EDGE
HARDBALL 6

Baseball 3D has a smoother engine, but *HardBall 6* just looks and moves more like a baseball game.

EDGE
BASEBALL 3D

Microsoft gets the nod here for its rousing crowd noises.

EDGE
HARDBALL 6

Both titles have unforgivable camera switching problems in the middle of hits that affect fielding, but *HardBall* gets the nod — barely.

EDGE
HARDBALL 6

Both titles have realism problems, but *HardBall* has a little better feel to win this category, but not by much.

WINNER
HARDBALL 6

HardBall 6 (1-1) sneaks past *Microsoft Baseball 3D* (0-2) simply because it is playable.

Triple Play 99 vs. Microsoft Baseball 3D

The big boys of software publishing face off in a battle of big-bucks baseball games.

CLEAR WINNER
TRIPLE PLAY 99

Presentation means something, and *Baseball 3D* has almost none to speak of.

WINNER
TRIPLE PLAY 99

It's the commentary and game sounds that win it for *TP99*, but Microsoft makes a strong statement with its crowd sounds.

CLEAR WINNER
TRIPLE PLAY 99

The awkward camera changes in *Baseball 3D* keep this game from even coming close.

WINNER
TRIPLE PLAY 99

TP99 just feels more like a real baseball game.

WINNER
TRIPLE PLAY 99

No question for *Triple Play 99* (2-1) here, as it easily romps Microsoft's clunky *Baseball 3D* (0-3).

High Heat vs. HardBall 6

Since *High Heat* defeated *TP99*, which in turn defeated *HardBall 6*, the result in this match-up is a foregone conclusion.

EDGE
HARDBALL 6

Flat sprite players just can't compare to 3D polygonal characters.

EDGE
HIGH HEAT

A close match, but *High Heat* wins it because of its smoother play-by-play and better in-game sounds.

CLEAR WINNER
HIGH HEAT

Fewer camera problems and faster response times make *High Heat* the better controlling title.

EDGE
HIGH HEAT

Two solid computer AIs, but *High Heat* wins because the in-game action is faster and more reflective of real baseball.

WINNER
HIGH HEAT

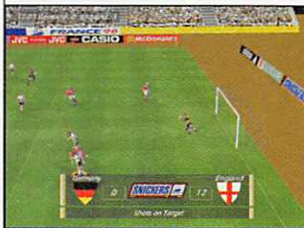
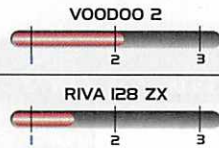
The veteran *HardBall 6* (1-2) suffered another disappointing loss to the current baseball king *High Heat* (3-0).

PLAY BY PLAY



DEVELOPER → EA Sports
PUBLISHER → EA Sports
REQUIRED → P100, 16MB RAM, 20MB hard drive space
IDEAL → P166, Voodoo 2 card, 32MB RAM, gamepad, 20MB hard drive space

ACCELE-RATED



Amazing realism. England on its way to lifting the Cup.

World Cup 98

Hey America, this is the world's greatest sport

Thirty-two nations. Eight groups. Sixty-four matches. One winner. By the time you read this, France 98 will be over. But during its six weeks, half the population of the globe will have tuned in to cheer on their heroes. And you're not going to get a fairer recreation of the soccer brilliance on display than in EA Sports' update to *FIFA 98: Road to the World Cup*.

World Cup 98 is essentially *FIFA: RTWC* with fewer teams (just the 32 participants), but accurate recreations of the French stadiums, enhanced gameplay features, and improved AI score on most counts. Goalkeepers are definitely better than in *RTWC*. On-the-fly play-calling is a great addition (examples include

calling through balls, double-teaming attackers, playing a quick one-two — that's all football — ahem — soccer jargon, by the way) that makes the game more cerebral while maintaining the on-field action.

The difficulty level is enhanced and a number of special moves (and their associated animations) have been added. Control does seem a little sluggish at times, but the quick access to special moves is great.

Bonuses include being able to replay "classic" World Cup encounters (such as games from 1934, played in black and white) as a reward for winning the World Cup. The best soccer sim by a mile.

— **ROB SMITH** *kicked the cat because England didn't win the World Cup.*

GRAPHICS

Superb 3D accelerated fields, weather effects, players, and animations.

SOUND

Chants (without expletives, damn!) and atmospheric effects do the job.

CONTROL

Quick calling plays and pulling off special moves is ideal with a gamepad.

REALISM

Nothing else comes close. It's like you're watching a game on TV.

RATING

+ Pluses

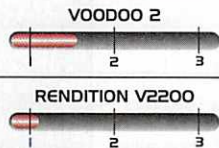
- Gorgeous graphics
- No hooliganism

Minuses

- Only World Cup teams
- No hooliganism

DEVELOPER → Gremlin Interactive
PUBLISHER → Fox Sports
REQUIRED → P120, 16MB RAM, 87MB hard drive space
IDEAL → P166, Voodoo 2 card, 32MB RAM, gamepad, 87MB hard drive space

ACCELE-RATED



Don't worry about strategy here, just aim for the goal.

Fox Sports Soccer 99

Simulation? We don't need no stinkin' sim

Frankly it must suck to be a developer sometimes. Imagine being in Fox's shoes. You've decided to publish your first soccer title, only to have it compete directly with *World Cup 98*. Your title, though not without its strengths, is in danger of being completely overshadowed by this competition.

Two key problems are that your graphics are nowhere near the same quality of *World Cup 98's*, and the game sounds simply cannot compete with your rival's. Even though you've taken full advantage of 3D acceleration and added decent sound clips, they both pale in comparison.

You offer exciting arcade game-play, but fanatic soccer fans don't want to be able to dribble all the way

down the pitch and shoot at will. That kind of play is for hockey, and trust me, not just the hardcore fans will complain about this.

These problems will make many overlook the tight control and smooth play speed that you've included in your game, but it won't make them overlook the blocky player models that they control.

A few will prefer your title because it plays faster and is more arcade-like than the competition, but in the end, most fans will ask themselves "Why play this game when I could be playing *FIFA*?" And you'll be asking yourself, "What do we have to do next year to compete?"

— **DAN EGGER** *kicked Rob's cat just cuz he's mean.*

GRAPHICS

Players look and move like cheap marionettes.

SOUND

Decent commentary, but lackluster crowd sounds.

CONTROL

Tight and fast, everything an arcade-style game should be.

REALISM

Plays like an arcade sports title, so realism goes out the window.

RATING

+ Pluses

- Fast gameplay
- Plenty of teams

Minuses

- Easy goals by defenders
- Unrealistic AI

GRAPHICS

CLEAR WINNER

WORLD CUP 98

The player models alone make *World Cup* a far better-looking title than *Soccer 99*.

SOUND

CLEAR WINNER

WORLD CUP 98

Better commentary and crowd sounds, however the overuse of Chumbawumba's "Tubthumper" anthem almost made us poke out our eardrums.

CONTROL

CLEAR WINNER

WORLD CUP 98

Its sheer variety of control options make *World Cup* the easy choice.

REALISM

CLEAR WINNER

WORLD CUP 98

Fox Sports Soccer 99 is an arcade-type game that focuses more on speed than on realism.

FINAL

WINNER

WORLD CUP 98

World Cup 98 (1-0) sweeps *Fox Sports Soccer 99* (0-1) with the outcome never in doubt.

World Cup 98 vs. Fox Sports Soccer 99

It's the longtime title holder from Electronic Arts facing off against the scrappy new challenger from Fox.

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"PERFORMANCE WAS SIMPLY STUNNING"

Appeal: Gamers looking for the fastest most reasonably priced gaming system

-Computer Gaming World, July, 1998



"BOTTOM LINE: IF YOU'VE GOT THE MONEY TO SPEND THIS IS THE GAMING SYSTEM TO OWN"

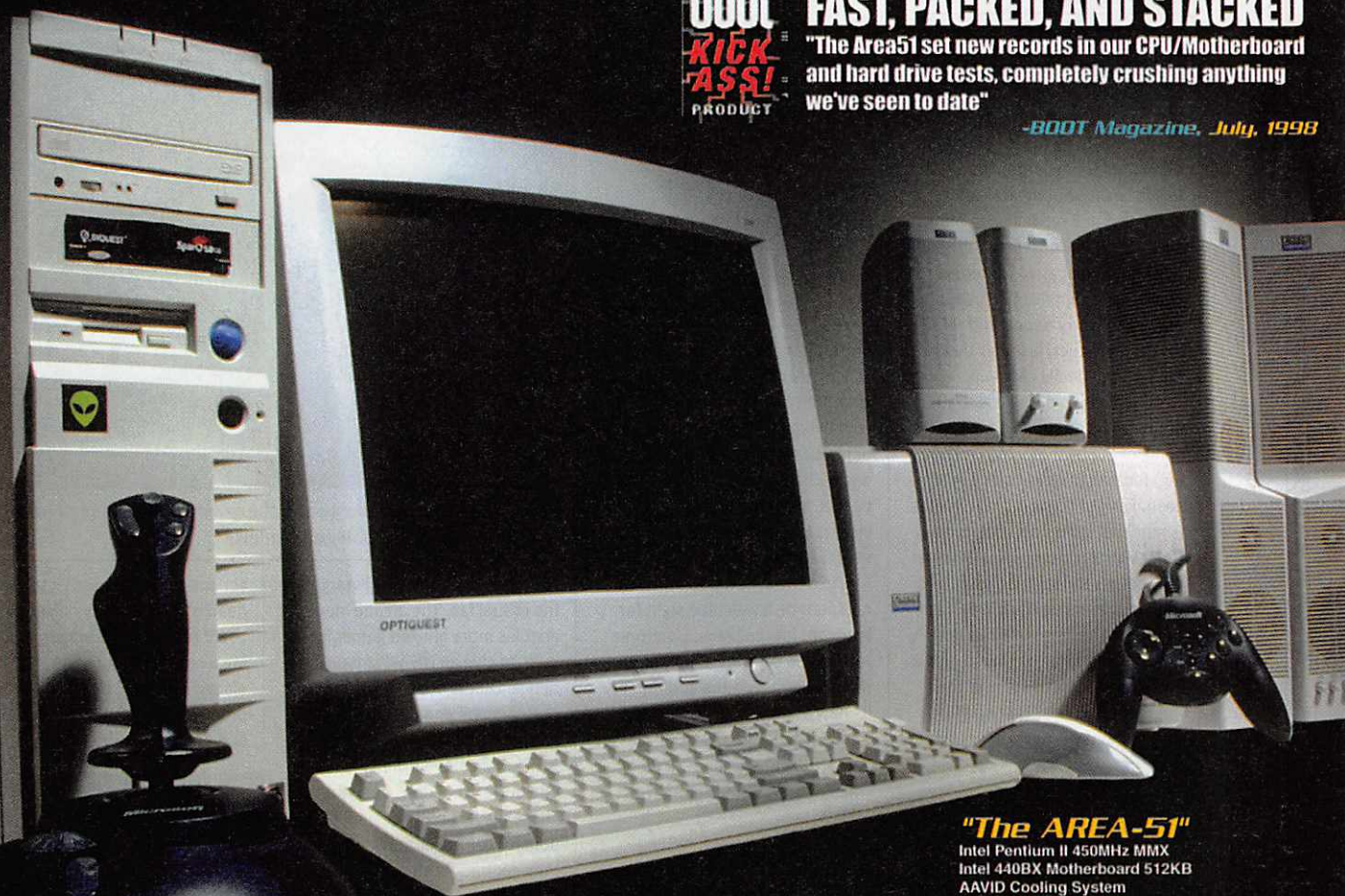
-PC Gamer, January, 1998



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-BOOT Magazine, July, 1998



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Toshiba 32X CD-ROM
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Subwoofer & Speaker System
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DEVELOPER → Electronic Arts

PUBLISHER → Electronic Arts

RELEASE DATE → September

THE HYPE → With the right hardware, *Madden 99* has the best graphics of any football game on any system.

THE HURDLE → *Madden 98* bombed, and a few of the faithful are still carrying a grudge.

THE HIT → It's the *Madden* franchise built right, from the ground up.

Madden 99

BEAUTY AND ...

Polygons + Madden = gridiron glory

Football has trailed all other sports games in terms of graphics during the 3D accelerator revolution. Much of this is because of the difficulties in animating and modeling 22 players simultaneously onscreen (although *FIFA: RTWC* managed it); other sports have significantly fewer players to worry about. With *Madden 99*, however, it seems that football will finally catch up.

With the help of the latest 3D accelerators, *Madden 99* animates some of the best-looking (and moving) football players you've ever seen. Each of these digital athletes is modeled from 1,200 polygons (for a Voodoo 2 system, with lower poly counts for other boards), and each moves remarkably well. Electronic Arts has also used its first PC polygonal football engine to give a much needed fix to some of the holes in the series. First and fore-



Fog is just one of the cool weather effects in *Madden 99*.

most, arm tackles are being added, which means that every tackle is no longer a straightforward collision with two players ignoring the laws of physics and merely bouncing off each other. EA is also adding realistic hits, including a particularly vicious tackle that sends an opponent flying head over heels.

While these new additions will no doubt be a welcome sight for hardcore football fans, Electronic Arts is also courting a market for new players. With the addition of its new arcade mode and one-but-



Running on a Voodoo 2 board, the graphics engine renders all 22 characters in 1,200 polygon models.

ton mode, the company is targeting the casual fan. The arcade mode enables more relaxed gameplay rules to give an *NFL Blitz*-type experience. On the other hand, the one-button mode enables the casual gamer to jump into a simulation game and compete well with only one button that does everything. These players sacrifice a bit of freedom for control options, but what they get back is an easy to play yet competitive game.

Madden's role has also been stepped up in the title, adding more color commentary than ever before in a football game.

Commentary bits are being scripted for key members of every team, so between plays Madden will add stories and anecdotes to the gameplay. (We've suggested ones such as "Michael Irvin is leading the league in drug convictions this year, but he has slipped to number three on the assault and battery list behind teammate Erik Williams and public enemy number 1 Lawrence Phillips," although these are unlikely to make the finished game.)

The *Madden* series is being significantly updated over its previous incarnation (the absolutely dreadful *Madden 98*), and by the looks of things, the improvements have a

serious chance to push it to the head of the PC football field. EA could be well on its way to rebuilding a reputation that has been tarnished over the last few years by products offering little innovation and only partial evolution.

MADDENISMS

OK → We like the "BOOM" from time to time, and can even tolerate the occasional "that had to hurt," but we must draw some lines before other habits of the famous commentator make their way into the game. Here are a few things that should and shouldn't be included in the next version.

DOT → Telestrator mania: The thought of pointless Xs, Os, and other marks continually blocking the screen is a frightening but very realistic possibility

IN → "Real" football fans: No NFL game is complete without a camera cut to the parking lot as a few tailgate party folk grill Spam, make pork-sausage sandwiches, or drink pure melted lard as John Madden points to their lack of vegetables and explains how that makes them "real" football fans

DOT → Commercials: Frankly the entire staff of PCXL could go another 10 years without having to watch another Dr Pepper, Ace Hardware, or Tinctin commercial (scratch the last one, we're always on the lookout for a good jock itch cure)

IN → All-Madden goons: Pick the ugliest, dirtiest, and smelliest guy on the football field, and there are 2-to-1 odds that he is an All-Madden player. We want lots of those guys in any football game we play

DOT → Mud: Do we really have to hear Madden say for the millionth time "Y'see, if a guy's got mud on his back, that's bad, but if he's got mud on the front of his jersey that's good." We don't even know what that means, but it still bugs us



Taking tons of animated hits and tackles, opposing quarterbacks and running backs alike will spend a lot of time on the ground.



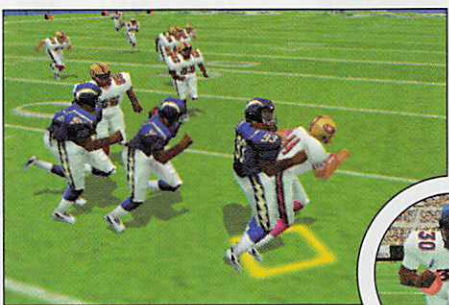
... THE BEAST

NFL GameDay 99

The best console football game gets down and dirty on the PC**DEVELOPER** → 989 Studios**PUBLISHER** → 989 Studios**RELEASE DATE** → September**THE HYPE** → The best playing football game of all time now sports 3D accelerated graphics.**THE HURDLE** → Do PC owners care if *GameDay* was the best console football game?**THE HIT** → A successful PlayStation football series makes its debut on the PC.

After establishing itself as the series to beat in console football gaming, *GameDay* has aimed its sights toward the barely tapped PC market, with a game aimed squarely at the hardcore football fan. The company formerly known as Sony Interactive (now 989 Studios) has taken all the things that made its PlayStation game so rightly proclaimed the best, and transferred them to the PC, taking full advantage of the powers of the platform.

The most notable change is the graphics, which, thanks to 3D acceleration, look far better than the original PlayStation version. Each player's size is based on his real counterpart's height and weight, so linemen look like linemen and punters look like punters. Player animations are also much smoother and more realistic looking than their PlayStation counterparts, even though they look similar at first glance.



GameDay's players are blockier than those in *Madden 99*, but the tight, well-designed gameplay of the console version is still intact.

A less notable, but far more important change is the addition of Internet head-to-head play. This means no more looking over your shoulder wondering if your opponent is scoping out what play you called when he should be looking at his own list. It also means that you are able to set the camera to the most optimal angle for both offense and defense so you are no longer tied to whatever camera angle the other player is using.

Even though *GameDay 99* is essentially a PC upgrade of *GameDay 98*, the title manages to improve on a successful gameplay



formula, without changing what made the game successful in the first place. At this early stage, *GameDay* already has the tight feel, the solid hits, and the peerless runblocking that a great football game needs. It also has the wide variety of control that enables players to juke, jive, stiff arm, and even hurdle over opponents using a simple control layout.

It's quite apparent that *GameDay 99* is little more than a



souped-up version of a PlayStation gridiron favorite, but considering the quality of its predecessor, we could hardly be more excited about this title.



Just like in the NFL, if you don't watch out (above and below), the defense is going to make you pay.

BEASTLY MOMENTS

THE LAST JOE THEISMAN GAME

In the "Monday Night Football" audience, we watched linebacker extraordinaire and renowned coke fiend Lawrence Taylor snap the veteran QB's leg in two. Then we watched again and again as the broadcast team replayed it until even those with the strongest stomachs started to heave. The Joe Theisman broken leg pencil sharpener just made things worse.

THE AGONY OF DEFEAT

The best moment in "The Wide World of Sports" was always the intro, which showed a hapless ski jumper tumbling down a steep slope, over a ledge, and through a crowd of shocked onlookers who could only duck beneath the flurry of limbs.

THE PIPER'S PIT AMBUSH

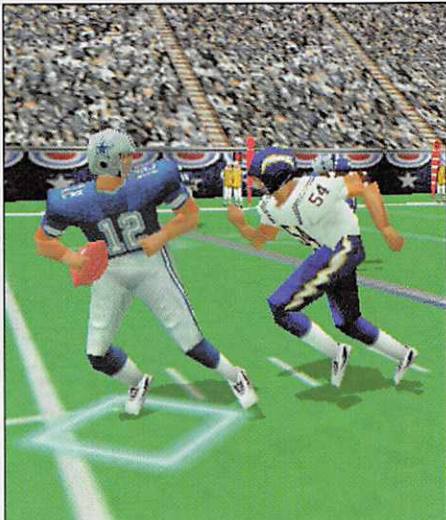
Who could forget the classic sports moment when Rowdy Roddy Piper ambushed Jimmy Superfly Snuka and pummeled him with assorted tropical fruits, including a particularly nasty pineapple?

THE SUPERBOWL SHUFFLE

Jim McMahon rapping and the Fridge dancing. Nothing more needs to be said.

TYSON'S LATE-NIGHT SNACK

Knowing he was going to lose his second straight match to Evander Holyfield, Mike Tyson made a strategic decision to bite his way out of trouble. Mmmm ... tastes like the end of a career.



The game looks good, but we have a question. Wasn't Roger Staubach's number retired?





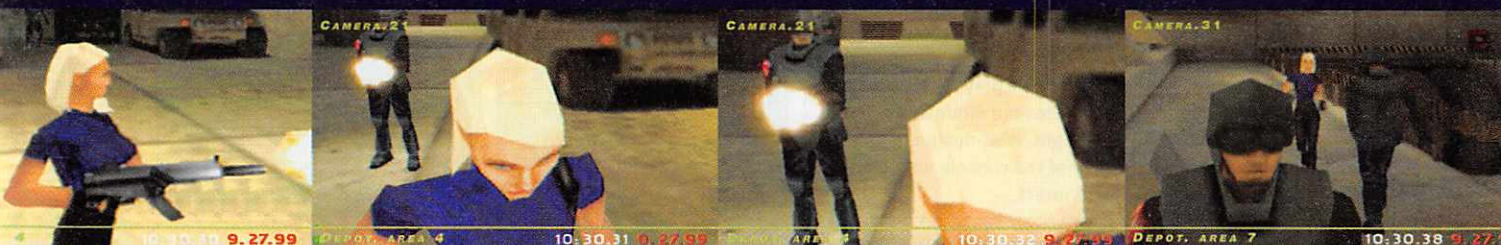
CAMERA.03 WAREHOUSE, AREA 18 09:01.31 9.27.99 CAMERA.03 WAREHOUSE, AREA 18 09:01.32 9.27.99 CAMERA.03 WAREHOUSE, AREA 18 09:01.32 9.27.99 CAMERA.03 WAREHOUSE, AREA 18 09:01.32 9.27.99

09:00.00 hrs. Enter warehouse..... Maintain stealth.....



CAMERA.05 MONASTERY, AREA 1 01:11.02 9.27.99 CAMERA.05 MONASTERY, AREA 1 01:11.03 9.27.99 CAMERA.05 MONASTERY, AREA 1 01:11.03 9.27.99 CAMERA.05 MONASTERY, AREA 1 01:11.03 9.27.99

Sanction Level Alpha..... Primary objective



CAMERA.21 DEPOT, AREA 4 10:30.30 9.27.99 CAMERA.21 DEPOT, AREA 4 10:30.31 9.27.99 CAMERA.21 DEPOT, AREA 4 10:30.32 9.27.99 CAMERA.31 DEPOT, AREA 7 10:30.38 9.27.99

Sanction Level Omega..... Search and destroy

"...the odds-on Goldeneye killer for PC." -Next Generation

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Recon munitions and depot..... Determine preparedness level of target....



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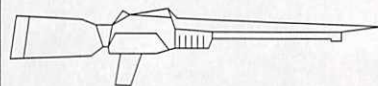
Go to <http://www.pcxl.com/gaming411>



Unreal

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE

DEATHMATCH DO'S AND DON'TS



The basics (or everything any self-respecting deathmatch should know)

➔ Learn the maps. You can't waste any time wondering where you are or where that cool weapon is. You should always know exactly where you're going and what you're gonna do when you get there.

➔ Keep moving. Especially in levels like Tundra and DeathFan, you could be the victim of a lethal head-shot at any time. Disregard this rule if you are a sniper-wuss.

➔ Your mouse sensitivity should be at least 10. Being able to turn 180 degrees in a flash or make a quick check at an intersection is absolutely vital. This also dramatically improves your agility in circle-strafing.

➔ Know your weapons. Being familiar with each gun's capabilities and switching quickly in



response to the situation, rather than continually using only your favorite gun, is the difference between a hack and an expert.

➔ Learn your opponents' tendencies. Are they mad rushers, always running and charging others on sight even if they only have a pistol? Are they snipers, hiding out in the perfect spot, not moving? Use this knowledge to your advantage — and destroy them all.

➔ Adapt your playing style to the map. If it's small and consists mostly of narrow corridors, always running with a heavy-hitting weapon like the flak cannon is the way to go. On a large, multitiered level, a sniper approach may get you the win. The

number of opponents on the server should also play a part in your strategy: If there are a few, a hunting mode in which you relentlessly attack one enemy at a time will serve you well. If it's crowded, awareness and survival should be a higher priority than single-minded pursuit.

➔ Know when to back off. If you're clearly outgunned or low on health, don't give anyone an easy kill, get the hell outta there — and come back when you're in fighting shape with a fresh clip in your weapon. While you retreat, lay down some fire to discourage pursuit.

➔ Be nimble. When facing off against an opponent, standing in one place too long will get you killed real quick. Anticipating where and when he'll fire and dodging accordingly is vital if you want to end up on top. Avoid tactics that reduce your maneuverability — crouching for example — like the plague. Seasoned players know there's nothing easier than taking out some crouching fool.

➔ Time your shots. Nothing's easier than just burning ammo like a complete newbie, even if the chance of hitting someone is extremely low. Particularly for slow-firing weapons like the eightball, firing blind will waste ammo as well as leave you open for a counterattack.

➔ Have a backup. You should try to avoid a full-on conflict until you pick up at least two weapons. Ideally, your knowledge of the map will let you quickly power-up with multiple weapons and armor before you start looking for trouble. Imagine if in "Taxi Driver" Robert DeNiro had gone into that hotel with only one gun — he'd have been toast.

➔ Use ping times to your advantage. The lower the ping, the quicker the connection speed between your



computer and the server. This is likely to affect you only if you play over the Internet a lot, rather than a LAN. Your ping should be as low as possible, with anything above 300 being a serious disadvantage. You'll still be lining up your shot when your carcass is launched sky-high by an eightball round.





A Guide to Unreal Weaponry

BY CLIFF BLESZINSKI

lead level designer/
co-designer for *Unreal*

Unreal is real, and people seem to really be enjoying it, thus making the entire product development team from Epic MegaGames and Digital Extremes very happy. From the start, *Unreal* was created to be a different kind of 3D game. Not only does your aim have to be straight and true in an *Unreal* deathmatch, you need to master a few tricks in order to reduce your foes to steaming heaps of meat. It's quite possible, but it requires serious skills. So, here are some thoughts on my weapon priorities for deathmatch play (note that they are different from single player) and why I use them.



ASMD

Good for most every situation. If your enemy is far away, you can hit him with the regular fire instantly, which imparts some momentum on him. If he is up close, you can use the alternate fire to knock him away from you and do more damage. Be careful, however, as the alternate fire can damage you if you fire it too close to an enemy or the wall. Both modes are great for throwing your foe off with some momentum; this is helpful when he is trying to take your head off with the rifle!

Above all, the ASMD's special move cannot be beaten. There are few things in life that are more gratifying than timing this move properly, but it requires patience and skill to master. To perform it, first fire your alternate-fire, and do not move: Stay perfectly still. Then, shoot your alternate fire projectile with your regular instant hit firing mode. This will cause a super explosion, which will annihilate all who stand in your way. Practice this move while standing still, and perhaps someday, grasshopper, you will be able to perform it on the fly — while strafing, while jumping, while dodging. You will become unbeatable. If you have both the amplifier and the ASMD, you're in luck — this gun will be twice as powerful as normal, making gibbage much easier.



Eightball

The ultimate rocket launcher. This gun has an intricate timing system that requires a clear head to master. Shed all preconceptions about 3D shooter weapons — this

gun does not shoot when you press your fire button, but rather when you release it. This allows for the loading of multiple grenades — up to six. (The original idea was to have the gun load eight, but it proved to be too much, and the name had already stuck around the office, which is why it isn't a "sixball" launcher.) The regular firing mode fires the explosives as rockets, the alternate fire lobs them like grenades. The rocket mode is excellent when you want to deliver quick death, the alternate fire is a good retreat mode, useful when lobbed down tight corridors or down staircases.

Remember that all explosions cause what is commonly referred to as "splash damage." This allows you to merely hit near your enemy, instead of having to make a direct impact. When you load up multiple rockets, the gun has an "auto release" mechanism, which will automatically dump out all six grenades/rockets. Make sure the business end of your weapon is pointed at your foe at this point, not at the pretty stucco wall next to you.

Learning the timing of the eight-ball gun and keeping a count of your loaded explosives is essential to mastering this weapon. When you load your first rocket, be sure to keep a count in your head of how many you are loading: Each time one is loaded, you will hear a distinct clicking sound. Use this as your audio cue to count. When you have all six loaded up, the auto-release will kick in and all hell breaks loose. In an eight- to 16-player deathmatch, many players will immediately start loading up rockets the

The Annihilation Move

WEAPON: ASMD

A play-by-play of how to do the ASMD special move. Watch the gruesome results!



The Eightball Six-Pack

WEAPON: EIGHTBALL



Aaaah, the trusty shieldbelt. A remarkably useful pickup, especially for deathmatch.



However, six rockets can make short work of that shield when used properly.

moment they pick up this gun, fire out six, and continue to load and fire from that point out. While loading up multiple rockets, you can press the alternate fire button to force the rockets to leave your barrel in a tight "o" shape instead of in a fanning motion. This is useful when you want to concentrate your attack.

But wait, there's more! The eightball also has a heat-seeking mode. Simply point your gun at your foe and you'll hear a beep. Your crosshair will also change. At that point, any rockets fired out of your gun will be heat-seekers and will track your foe. If you can keep a lock on your foe and load up multiple rockets, then each subsequent rocket will be a heat seeker. Talented deathmatchers will be able to load up all six rockets while keeping a lock on their opponent.



Minigun

While the minigun is an old standby of the genre, few 3D shooters' miniguns have matched the animation or lethality of *Unreal's* egg beater from hell. Dual barrels shuffle between one another, unloading hundreds of bullets that will shred foes to pieces — if you can keep a bead on them. The regular fire is pretty powerful; it starts up quickly and keeps a consistent pace. It also doesn't use up a lot of ammunition. However, the alternate fire is much hungrier. It starts slower, but once it gets going it can mow

down campers like the front lawn, eating up all available ammunition quickly. If you can keep your gun on someone and in his face, you can kill him within two to three seconds.

The regular fire is useful for long range, when you don't want to use a lot of ammo and want to make someone panic. The alternate fire is useful when you're chasing someone and you bear down on him. Just make sure to keep an eye out for ammo for this gun: If you run out of ammunition you run the risk of being incapacitated during the weapon switch period!



Flak Cannon

Extremely effective in single player, and still tough in deathmatch. The regular fire unloads a pile of razor-sharp chunks of metal toward your enemy; the shots spread out in a cone. When you see a couple of poor saps duking it out down at the end of a hall, unload a few shells of flak death in their direction and watch the blood fly.

The alternate fire grenade is extremely lethal. If you can hit your foe square on with it, you can kill him instantly. A square hit with the grenade not only does the damage of the grenade, but also hits with all of the flak chunks.

A good strategy for this gun is to alternate between firing modes, fire the chunks at the floor and let them ricochet up, and use the splash damage of your

The Flak Double Whammy

WEAPON: FLAK CANNON



Here, the alternate fire is lobbed into the corner at the foe.



The regular fire follows in quick and tears 'em to shreds.

Off With Their Heads

WEAPON: RIFLE



Heads will roll when you're good with the rifle.



Aim high to score the critical head shot.

The Panic Attack

WEAPON: STINGER



The results of hosing someone from a distance and slapping him with the alternate fire up close.

grenade to your advantage by bouncing your foes into lava or slime (but then you don't score the kill).



Rifle

The ultimate camper weapon. The alternate fire mode allows you to zoom in on your foes, up to hundreds of feet away. Release the mouse, and the zoom stops. Zooming also lowers your mouse sensitivity on the fly, so you can have precise aiming when you're attempting to take off the heads of your enemies. That's right, if you are good enough and can hit someone in the head, it will kill him instantly (provided he's not wearing armor) — one of the most satisfying kills in *Unreal*.

When you're caught camping, this gun can still be effective, but chances are you're not going to be steady enough to go for a head shot when a ticked-off foe is chasing you down with an eightball, so get ready to switch weapons when you're caught with your pants down. This gun also becomes harder to use in lag situations, as characters may tend to pop around a bit more and will become harder to hit.



BioRifle

The best retreat weapon ever. If you are low on health and you have to back away from your foe, simply unload biorifle waste in the hallway between you and your foe. He'll have a tough time avoiding all of the lethal snot wads and might just give up and chase down someone else.

The alternate fire allows you to load up and create an immense globule of Tarydium waste, which you can stick on the ceiling and watch drip down on your opponents. A larger glob is also far more lethal.

The biorifle is similar to the sticky grenades that you see in other 3D games, only with a fast firing rate and a chain-reaction feature. If you lay out a pile of goop globules and prevent them from touching one another, they will explode when touched. However, if one globule touches another, it will cause a chain reaction that will trigger an explosion throughout all nearby globules.



Stinger

The sound of the regular fire and sight of shards whizzing at opponents' heads can cause a panic reaction in a deathmatch. You'll have to keep a bead on your foe for a bit; the best technique is to run at him with the regular fire hosing and then hit him with an alt-fire blast up close to finish him off. This gun is slightly weaker than the others, but it is good for inducing panic.



RazorJack

The razorjack is extremely useful for decapitating foes. The ricocheting ability and ability to curve the razors makes it very useful for sneaky around-the-corner attacks. When aimed at your foe's head or fired in a small room, this gun quickly becomes indispensable. The alternate fire can be curved by a slight flick of the mouse, allowing you to "steer" your shots. This mode also shoots faster than the regular fire.

If you need to conserve ammo, use the regular fire, otherwise hose your enemy with the alternate fire. Also, avoid wrecking yourself with rebounding razors by firing at the ground. You can still decapitate an opponent, but you can save yourself in the process.



Dispersion Pistol

Most default weapons are pretty useless, but *Unreal's* dispersion pistol can kill your foes with a few well-placed hits and blind them when they're trying to attack you with a stronger weapon, which allows for a quick getaway.

If you manage to find weapon power-ups, you can improve your dispersion pistol several times, which can increase the damage greatly. With the amplifier, the dispersion pistol can be a one-shot kill weapon. When it's the only weapon you have, first panic, then run. Don't get caught up in a fight, even with someone else with the pistol. Get armed fast. A few shots in the face can help your getaway, though.



AutoMag

Good for precision, but I'd strongly suggest acquiring another weapon fast if you expect to win your deathmatch. So it's pretty much useless!



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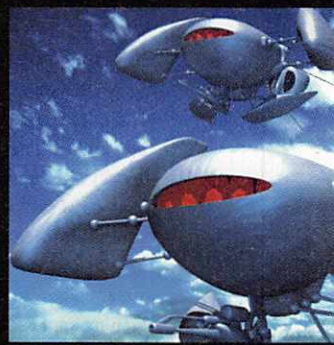
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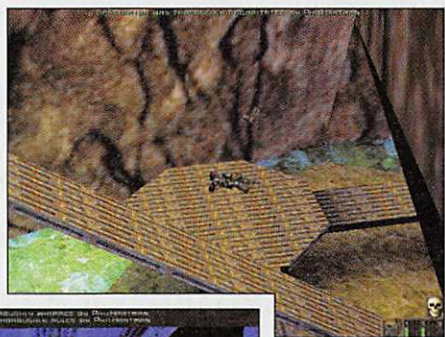
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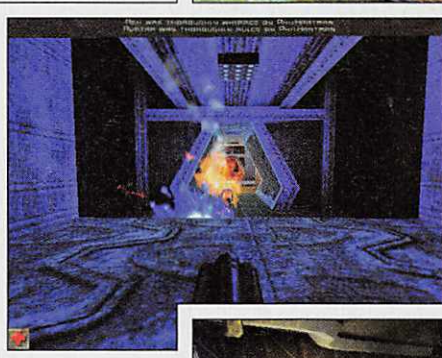
We've all heard plenty about camping and how lame it is, slowly destroying deathmatch, yadda yadda yadda. However, *Unreal* takes camping to all new heights (lows?) with the sniper rifle. With the level of skill and precision it requires, it threatens to turn camping into an art form. Here's a primer on how to handle various camping spots scattered over five of the default multiplayer maps.

Who are you calling a camper?



DMARIZA:

This peach of a camping spot is on the highest platform in the level (where the sniper rifle respawns), on one of the four ledges found on the sides (not where the second rifle respawns, mind you). Find the one overlooking the razorjack respawn and crouch there. This is a high-traffic area due to the razorjack, as well as the armor and health at the end of the platform. You'll be popping heads like big zits if no one discovers your crouching ass.



DMMORBIAS:

This spot underneath an elevator gives you a straight line of fire into the center of the room. Fire your shots in a spread rather than a cluster to increase your chances of hitting someone. On the down side, don't expect to live too long when someone clues in on what you're up to. Let's face it, this rocket arena doesn't offer many camping options.



DMHEALPOD:

This one's a little tricky to get to, and easy to miss — but well worth it. First, pick up the sniper rifle found on the second level. Then, jump into one of the darkened corridors (there are two, so if it turns out to be the wrong one, just go back). It looks like a dead end, but if you turn 90 degrees, you'll see that it continues on — all the way to a sniper rifle ammo respawn and a hell of a camping spot. In the shroud of darkness, you can pick off people from three directions, like a big shooting gallery.



DMDECK16:

On the second level, look for the area with the goo gun and the toxic suit. Jump to the platform with the sniper rifle and lots of ammo. Go to the edge and pick off the fools who run around without a clue. To get a camper, use the eightball spread or grenades. The biorifle close to the sniping platform is also effective for destroying those camping gits.



DMTUNDRA:

You might be tempted to lean over the edge of the tower and shoot down into the courtyard, but don't — it's too easy for someone to sneak up on you. Instead, go to the far edge of the elevator and look down. When people use the elevator to come get you, greet them with a cluster of eightball rounds. You can also fire out one of the windows to the courtyard. Thanks to the ammo that respawns right next to you, you can stay up there all day, you camping bitch. Just kidding.

So your buddies are raving about how good this game is, but you just haven't had the time or inclination to get into it yet? No worries, **PCXL** is here for ya with a crash course in *Unreal* in the form of a zany test. Take it, and you'll be talking like a seasoned pro in no time. And if you think you know your stuff, here's your chance to prove it, hotshot. There is only one correct answer for the questions.

- 1** When firing a rocket at someone, you should aim at:
- (A) The torso
(B) The feet
(C) The family jewels
- 2** Which does the most damage?
- (A) Direct hit from an eightball round
(B) Direct hit from flak cannon (primary)
(C) Direct hit from goo gun (secondary)
- 3** In an open space, you should:
- (A) Use the automag
(B) Use the ASMD
(C) Run around like a headless chicken and fall off things
- 4** In a tight corridor, it's best to:
- (A) Rush through with guns blazing while screaming profanities
(B) Wait to see what's around the next corner
(C) Blow yourself up in a panic
- 5** In a one-on-one confrontation, you should:
- (A) Pick your shots carefully
(B) Fire at will
(C) Look for someone named Will, then fire at Will
- 6** The secondary fire mode of the dispersion pistol:
- (A) Will not hurt you if fired point-blank
(B) Is the most powerful weapon in the game
(C) Sucks

How to sound like an Unreal expert

EVEN IF YOU'RE NOT

- 7** At respawn, the first thing you should do is:
- (A) Try to finish off a weakened opponent
(B) Go find a good weapon
(C) Find someplace dark to hide
- 8** Crouching is:
- (A) An excellent defensive strategy
(B) Hopelessly stupid and makes you easy to kill
(C) All of the above
- 9** Which playing style is most effective?
- (A) Rushing like mad at the nearest opponent, regardless of what weapon you have
(B) Camping in one area and picking off targets
(C) Selecting only servers that host players who are dumber than level zero Bots
- 10** Holding down the right mouse button when charging-up primary fire eightball rounds will:
- (A) Make the rockets fire in a cluster rather than a spread
(B) Cause everything to explode in your face
(C) Quit out to the desktop
- 11** What's the main disadvantage of sniper mode?
- (A) Loss of mobility
(B) Tunnel vision
(C) You can't hit a damn thing
- 12** How can you steer your razorjack shots?
- (A) You can't
(B) Flick the mouse immediately after you fire
(C) Use the Force
- 13** What's the difference between a Skaarj and a Nali?
- (A) Skaarj good, Nali bad
(B) Nali good, Skaarj bad
(C) Is this question about single-player or something?
- 14** The best *Unreal* competition is typically found:
- (A) On an online gaming service
(B) On your office LAN
(C) In Botmatch level 3
- 15** Hitting the F key will:
- (A) Make you lie down and play dead
(B) Flip the other guy off
(C) Activate the secret shoe phone
- 16** When someone wins a game by more than 15 kills, you:
- (A) Quit out of frustration
(B) Vow revenge, come back for more
(C) Must have gone to get a beer for that to happen
- 17** What's the main difference between the three types of character models?
- (A) Troopers have the most health, girls are the quickest
(B) The guys can jump the highest
(C) The Wookie model kicks everyone's ass
- 18** What is, hands down, the coolest deathmatch level in *Unreal*?
- (A) The Cone of Tragedy
(B) The Shooting Gallery
(C) You haven't played either and must try the **PCXL** Disc
- 19** The best way to kill someone in *Unreal* is:
- (A) Launch 'em in the air with the eightball, then hit 'em again as soon as he lands
(B) Shoot his head clean off with the sniper rifle
(C) Do whatever it takes to punch his ticket. As long as he dies, it's good
- 20** If you don't have a 3Dfx or PowerVR card, you're:
- (A) Screwed
(B) Really screwed
(C) Both A and B
- 21** How many weapons can decapitate?
- (A) One
(B) Three
(C) More than three

MATCHING:

Match the thingy in Column A with the thingy in Column B.
Note: You can use items in Column B more than once.

A	B
Camper's	Losers
Snipers	Incorrectly named
People who whine about low ping	Last month's Fantasy Frag
Eightball	Costs 89 cents in San Francisco
Flak	The Man
Dinky, the Taco Bell chihuahua	Shouldn't be banned
People who whine about snipers	Good for distracting foes
Taco Bell bean burrito	Buggy as hell
Voice box	Legit players
Tim Sweeney	Plays <i>Unreal</i> while high
John Carmack	Bad in a high ping situation
Ultimate fighting	Deadliest weapon in the game
Farrah Fawcett	
Internet <i>Unreal</i>	
Sex	
Sniper rifle	

ANSWER KEY:

1-b, 2-b, 3-b, 4-a, 5-a, 6-c, 7-b, 8-b, 9-c, 10-a, 11-b, 12-b, 13-b, 14-c, 15-a, 16-b (your beer should be next to the computer), 17-a, 18-c, 19-c, 20-c, 21-c.

For each correct answer, give yourself 5 points. If you completed the matching section, give yourself 20 points.

90+: You are an *Unreal* god or at least can sound like one (or you cheated).

70-89: You know your *Unreal*, but couldn't resist checking off the funny answers (hell, this is what we all scored and we made up the quiz).

50-69: The knowledge just isn't there but the real key is the skills.

0-49: Umm... what's a nice way to put this. Stick to *SimCity*.

Connecting ...

The Internet is no longer the place where only hardcore gamers come to play. The proliferation of connected computers has made online gaming the highest priority in game development. Take for instance *Quake Arena* (see news story on page 120), a game that primarily focuses on multiplayer, with its single-player

experience concentrating on practice against Bots for the online challenge. And where Id leads, the industry follows.

Because of this online explosion, we have created a column that covers multiplayer gaming like only we can. Our goal is to help you to become a more competitive player and a more deadly opponent for any poor soul who dares challenge you.

HOW TO BECOME AN UNREAL GOD (AND HAVE FUN DOING IT)

STEP 1: GET A GOOD SKIN

Face it, joining a deathmatch with one of the standard *Unreal* skins is inexcusably boring. Wearing the most common skins, you lose any chance of standing out as a true *Unreal* champ, so you might as well get comfortable in the middle of the standings ladder.

Currently www.planetunreal.com/houseofstyle has the most comprehensive list of skins on the Internet. The site offers players pre-made skins, such as a lava creature, the obligatory female nude, and a voluptuous Vampirella. Note that setting up the skins takes a lot of work, and this site has by far the best explanation of how to get them up and running.

If you can't find what you're looking for, House of Style also gives tips on creating skins of your own. If you're short on ideas here are a few:

- Stephen Hawking in nuclear-powered exoskeleton armor
- A really pissed-off Smurf
- A really pissed-off Gary Coleman (then, bind taunts like "Whatchu talking about, Willis?")
- A half-nude Martha Stewart (it's a good thing)
- The entire cast of "The Facts of Life" (except Natalie — no one wants to see that)

STEP 2: UPGRADE YOUR GAME

You've already found that *Unreal* has some lag problems; now it's time to get that fixed. Epic is (at press time) near finished with a patch that will fix some online bugs. Download the latest update from the PCXL Disc.

STEP 3: PRACTICE, PRACTICE, AND PRACTICE SOME MORE

Unreal has four levels of Bots rang-



No *Unreal* master would be caught dead in a standard skin; something with a little more artistic flair is always preferable.

ing from downright stupid to smarter than the entire archeology department at William and Mary College. Start with 15 level-zero Bots and get a feel for the pace of the game, slowly raising the competition level until you feel comfortable with the chaos of a full deathmatch at level two. Before you start online, you should be able to beat 15 level-one opponents at least 80% of the time.

STEP 4: CREATE A GOOD NAME

If you've been playing as much online *Unreal* as the staff of PCXL, then you know just how important a good deathmatch name is. If you run around with an improper name (like Player, Gazzilla, or JuliaChilds-

Fan) you will only raise the ire of those around you, making yourself a prime target. You must have a name worthy of respect, and to help you, we've created a few sure-fire formulas to make a truly perfect deathmatch nickname.

Method 1

- A: Pick a body part or bodily function you wouldn't talk about in front of your mother
- B: Pick an animal
- C: Put together
- Examples: ButtKitten, FartRhino, PhlegmMonkey

Method 2

- A: Take a heavy-metal song title
- B: Subtract one word and



Unreal skins are flat picture files (right) that wrap around character models like clothes.

replace with sex-addicted politician

- Examples: PourSomeSugarOn-SenatorPackwood, BarkAtBillClinton, SympathyForTedKennedy

Method 3

- A: Choose a dead celebrity
- B: Let hilarity ensue
- Examples: PhilHartman, SonnyBono, Gandhi, RiverPhoenix

Method 4

- A: Have a friend choose a dead celebrity's assailant or cause of death
- B: Read kill lines, then laugh hysterically at the irony
- Examples: PhilHartman'sWife, PineTree, Bullet, Heroin

STEP 5: FIND THE BEST COMPETITION

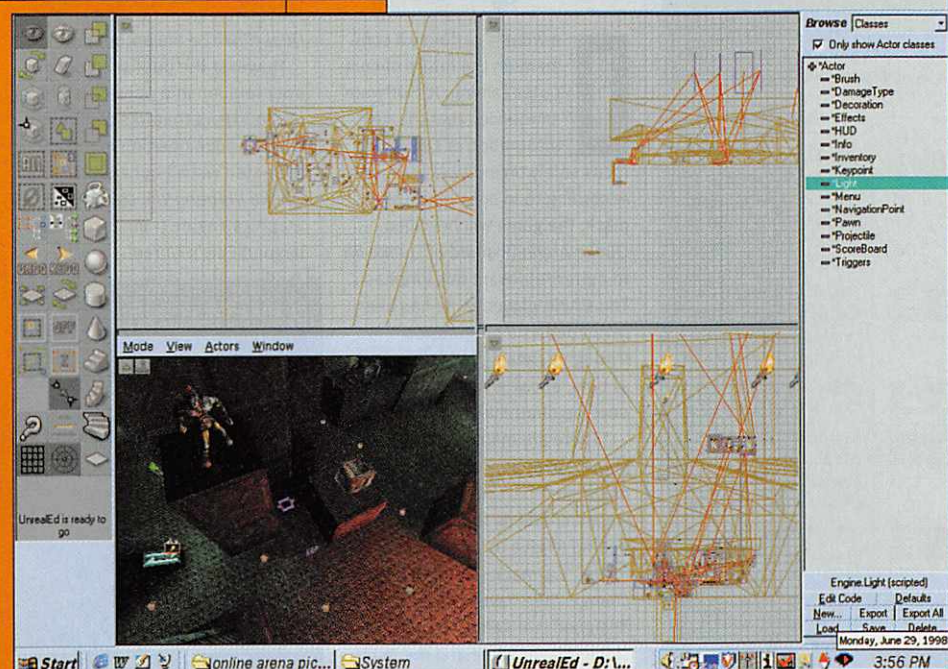
Lag can be as important to your rankings as your well-honed skill. If you have a high lag, you are at a



Decapitations are better with funny names.



UNREAL EDITOR



The *Unreal* level editor seems daunting at first, but with a little help from online tutorials, you'll be designing your own worlds in no time.

severe disadvantage to every low-life camper with a fully loaded sniper rifle and a low ping connection (the infamous "LPBs" — Low Ping Bastards for the uninitiated). The best way to do this is to find the closest connection with a utility, like the handy game finder from GameSpy. Available for trial usage at www.gamespy.com, it gives players information about opponents, ping times, and current game statistics so you know what kind of war you're jumping into before you ever get there. Look for a connection below 300 ping for a 28.8 modem and lower for faster connections.

STEP 6: JUST WIN, BABY

No one remembers second place and only the best become legends, so everything else is secondary if you don't win. If you want to find out exactly how to win, check out our in-depth strategy guide from the guys who made the game on page 110.

STEP 7: PERFECT YOUR TAUNTS

Now that you're winning, it's time to rub it in. Go to the options menu and click on the advanced options bar. Inside this is another advanced

options menu that contains the key binding menu. From this menu, pick an unused key and add your taunt in the following manner: Say [insert taunt here]. Here are a few taunts that work in any situation:

- That's gotta hurt
- Take that you sniping little ...
- Mmm. Tastes like chicken
- Die #\$\$@%% DIE

STEP 8: CREATE YOUR OWN LEVELS

OK, you've mastered the gameplay and can take down anyone who dares cross your path. It's time to put a little something back into the community. Nothing will immortalize you like a few well-crafted deathmatch levels, and *Unreal* has all the tools packed in for you to create a masterpiece world of your own. Beware, however, that while the tools are easy to use, the editor itself is grossly underdocumented. If you really want to know how to build levels, take a look at a few websites that will transform you from confused world builder to master *Unreal* architect.

- www.unrealed.com: Unrealed.com has more walk-

throughs and tutorials than anyone else to teach beginners the basics and experienced users the hidden details in the editor.

- www.creativecarnage.com/unreal: For beginners, the tutorials at this site are the most straightforward and easy to use.
- www.planetunreal.com/portal: The tutorials in Portal are supplemented with pictures for those who

are more visually inclined.

- unreal.epicgames.com: The Unreal Technical Information page is the perfect supplement for *Unreal* experts. It gives concise tutorials on extras like modifying AI, animating textures, and composing your own music.

STEP 9: CREATE SOME UNREAL ANARCHY

If you're tired of making straightforward *Unreal* levels, it's time to have a little fun. The editor enables you to test out the full range of your creativity no matter how weird that may be. Oddities, at www.planetunreal.com/oddities, has the biggest collection of *Unreal* modifications, including the cuddly but dangerous BattleCows, aptly named BunnyBazookas, and downright bizarre BubbleBoxes.

STEP 10: JOIN PCXL'S GATHERING OF LEVEL DESIGNERS (GOLD)

Now that you have mastered multiplayer games and have made the definitive deathmatch level (complete with your unique touches), it's time to take it to the big leagues. Each month the PCXL Disc will be packed with the best user-created levels on the Internet, and a few of our own creations that, uh ... defy description. So if you want to truly be an *Unreal* god, submit your level or modification to gold@pcxl.com, and if it's good enough we'll list it alongside such luminaries as Cone of Tragedy and Shooting Gallery. Then you'll have finally arrived. 🍌

CONE OF TRAGEDY



You can find more original *Unreal* deathmatch levels — like the Cone of Tragedy — on the PCXL Disc.

GAMESCAN

HERE'S A QUICK LOOK AT THE BIGGEST GAMES WE DIDN'T PREVIEW THIS MONTH.



ANACHRONOX ION STORM

WHO WANTS TO PLAY IT →

RPG fans who don't want to sit through another ugly, aimless PC RPG

WHAT IT IS →

A *Final Fantasy VII*-style RPG set in a fully 3D world. Using the high-end graphics of a first-person shooter, this title aims to recreate the PC RPG *Quake II* engine, and the promise of super special effects

WHERE IT'S AT →

Still early in development, and with its ambitious premise (and Ion Storm's burgeoning reputation for tardiness), this game could be a long time coming

WHEN IT'S COMING →

Summer '99



TRESPASSER DREAMWORKS

WHO WANTS TO PLAY IT →

Those who think *Deer Hunter* isn't scary enough

WHAT IT IS →

First-person shooter with nearly every object in the environment modeled with real physics so players can use things such as boxes, sticks, and barrels to help them survive against some of the most realistic (and frightening) dinosaurs yet seen in a game

WHY IT'S A PCXL GAME →

Hungry dinosaurs, real physics, and rocks that you can chuck at velociraptors

WHERE IT'S AT →

Trespasser was one of the most impressive titles at E3, but it still needs to make better use of 3D accelerator hardware

WHEN IT'S COMING →

Fall '98

THE POWER METER

Last month's ratings are from PCXL's trial issue, distributed only at E3 and now available only online at www.pcxl.com.

THIS MONTH LAST MONTH

1 7

2 5

3 2

4 -

5 8

6 -

7 -

8 10

9 1

10 -

OTHER CONTENDERS

3D REALMS → With *Prey*, *Duke Nukem Forever*, and *Max Payne* stealing the show at this year's E3, 3D Realms established itself as the one to beat in 3D gaming.

EPIC MEGAGAMES → *Unreal* lived up to its considerable promise, and has become the engine of choice.

3DFX → *Voodoo 2* is still the king of 3D acceleration.

GT INTERACTIVE → The publisher behind 3D Realms' biggest titles and *Unreal* is sitting pretty.

ACTIVISION → *Sin*, *Heavy Gear 2*, *Heretic II*, and *I-82* anchor this company's ambitious plans for 1998 and beyond.

SIERRA → Sierra has locked on to action gamers with a host of new titles like *Half-Life*, *Homeworld*, and *Starsiege*.

MICROPROSE → Both *X-COM Alliance* and *StarShip Troopers* are a step in the right direction.

ELECTRONIC ARTS → *Madden* looks good — really good.

ID SOFTWARE → A temporary drop down the power meter until *Quake Arena* blows away every other game on the market.

EIDOS → Thanks in part to Ion Storm, Eidos has plenty of titles scheduled for the coming year. It could have ranked higher if it didn't run out of beer at its E3 bash.

SEGASOFT → Skies looks terrific, and the company *didn't* run out of beer at its E3 party.

BLIZZARD → Dropping *Warcraft Adventures* was smart, but now that *Diablo II* has been pushed into next year the company will have to rely on *StarCraft* sales through '98.

LUCASARTS → *Force Commander* and *Indiana Jones* are almost enough to make us forget *Star Wars Rebellion* ... almost.

POWERVR → Promise of second-generation sounds good, but we'll defer judgement until we have one in our hands.

Is Quake III Dead?

What is certainly a comment on the future of computer gaming, Id Software announced that the next incarnation of *Quake* will focus solely on multiplayer action. According to Id boss John Carmack, the game will be called *Quake Arena* (instead of *Quake III*) to better represent this emphasis. The single-player game has been revamped as a progression through a ranking ladder against AI bots, and will exist primarily to develop deathmatch skills.

"There are many wonderful gaming experiences in single-player first-person shooters, but we are choosing to leave them behind to give us a purity of focus," Carmack said of the change. "We have always designed two games at once, the single-player game and the multiplayer game, and they often had conflicting goals."

Even though the company has announced changes, the deal is not yet done. Publisher Activision knows that the market for action games is exploding, and does not want its considerable investment in the *Quake* franchise to go to waste. PCXL expects the *Quake III* name and single-player action will be added to the game before it is finished. Activision is moving toward 3D acceleration-only with its new action game lineup, and expects

Quake III to be the anchor title.

However the publisher/developer relationship pans out, it is fair to expect that Id's continuing leading-edge position in the genre it created will all but ensure *Quake III/Arena* will ship with a graphics engine that steps well beyond Epic's *Unreal*.

TIPS FOR A LOSING MAN

OK, you can't win 'em all. Unless you are *Quake*-master extreme Thresh, you're eventually going to get fragged by some cheating camper, or outscored by some lucky idiot, so expect a few disappointments on your way to deathmatch immortality. With the help of noted manly psychologists and animal therapists, we have compiled a list of ways that you can deal with losing without being a loser.

STEP 1: Don't lose, you idiot. If that doesn't work, follow the next few steps.

STEP 2: Spend next few hours perfecting your excuse. A few examples:

- My [x] wasn't working properly
- I meant to do that
- I was doing something else
- The other players were cheating

STEP 3: Blame the people who made the game

STEP 4: Take a deep breath and then release it in the form of an especially foul profanity

STEP 5: Release aggression by playing sports (like computer tossing)

STEP 6: Put on soothing music, so neighbors don't hear you cry like a baby

STEP 7: Drive to local computer superstore, return game, take hostages

STEP 8: Get back in car, start engine, close garage, and contemplate the afterlife as you slowly drift to sleep

FANTASY FRAG

LEONARDO DECAPRIO



WHY WE HATE HIM: Fifty-one appearances in *Teen Beat* and a career that started on "Growing Pains" should be enough. But he also deserves a good frag every time some hormone-induced 12-year-old girl screams in a theater when the smooth-faced girly man walks onscreen.

HOW HE SHOULD BE FRAGGED:

He should be bound and dropped into a matinee showing of *Titanic*, to be torn apart by the horde of pre-adolescent girls that will be watching. Or he should be forced to watch his movie debut in *Critters 3* until he chokes on his own bile.

WHAT KIND OF GAMER ARE YOU?

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK MADEO

At **PCXL** we cater to a distinct type of gamer: the hardcore action fan. Distinguishing between the **PCXL** gamer and other gamers is simple, but just in case you were wondering which you were, we offer this pictorial guide.

THE NON-PCXL GAMER



1 Often wonders why the mouse needs three buttons (apparently he has never heard of alternate fire buttons) 2 Clean desk = clean mind = *b-o-o-o-ring* 3 Watching a fat lady sing in a language you don't understand is more important than games 4 Wife left him for running up \$200 phone bill calling the *Myst* help line 5 Real dogs are just too messy 6 Why would you want to build an island when you can destroy one? 7 No need for 3D acceleration here 8 Full of words like milquetoast, wimp, weakling, sissy, milksop, pantywaist, wussy, doormat, yellowbelly 9 Plays with himself

THE PCXL GAMER



1 Sustenance is crucial during long game sessions 2 The all-important backlog of classics (See "25 Greatest Guy Games" feature) 3 Bad games make the best posters 4 Souped-up gaming rig more important than car 5 The ever-present Lara 6 Hardware upgrades galore 7 Crazyed look reserved for most intense deathmatches 8 Spare stick for use when primary stick fails 9 Remains of last guy who changed his *Quake* settings

GAMESCAN



ALIENS VS. PREDATOR
FOX INTERACTIVE

WHO WANTS TO PLAY IT→ Fans of "aliens eat humans" movies
WHAT IT IS→ The long-awaited meeting between the baddest alien baddies ever conceived
WHY IT'S A PCXL GAME→ C'mon, it's a 3D shooter where you can be a slimy alien monster, a camouflaged creature from outer space, or a hapless Colonial Marine
WHERE IT'S AT→ At this early stage the game isn't as visually exciting as those built on the *Quake II* or *Unreal* engines, but the concept behind it is strong
WHEN IT'S COMING→ Winter '98



GIANTS
PLANET MOON STUDIOS

WHO WANTS TO PLAY IT→ Fans of Gheorghe Muresan
WHAT IT IS→ A strategy/action game. You control a giant, a crack military unit, or a sultry sorceress battling for a small island
WHY IT'S A PCXL GAME→ Half-naked magic women
WHERE IT'S AT→ Its unique gameplay elements and flashy graphics make this game one to watch out for
WHEN IT'S COMING→ Spring '99



HERETIC II
ACTIVISION

WHO WANTS TO PLAY IT→ Those who can figure out how

GAMESCAN

this relates to *Hexen II*

WHAT IT IS→ The first third-person shooter in the *Hexen/Heretic* franchise with plenty of magic spells to replace the lack of rocket launchers

WHY IT'S A PCXL GAME→ Lots and lots of special effects

WHERE IT'S AT→ The title looks very cool right now, and with many more months before its holiday release, *Heretic II* could nudge into Lara Croft's adventure territory

WHEN IT'S COMING→ Winter '98



STARSHIP TROOPERS

DYNAMIX

WHO WANTS TO PLAY IT→

Fans of the old *Earthsiege* series

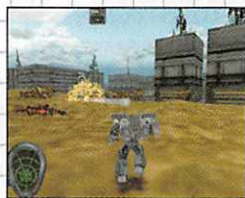
WHAT IT IS→ A shooter that lets players know what it must be like to be a footsoldier amongst the giant robots that populate many a game

WHY IT'S A PCXL GAME→

Great graphics and plenty of cool weapons and vehicles

WHERE IT'S AT→ Looking good, and the technology demos work

WHEN IT'S COMING→ Fall '98



STARSHIP TROOPERS

MICROPROSE

WHO WANTS TO PLAY IT→

Would-be exterminators

WHAT IT IS→ An alien-filled shooter based more on the sci-fi novels by Robert Heinlein than the big-budget gorefest directed by Paul Verhoeven

WHY IT'S A PCXL GAME→ The bug rush, and the hope that they added a co-ed shower level from the movie

WHERE IT'S AT→ The game engine already can display attacks by amazing numbers of aliens at

▶ p. 123

The Real Battle Betwe

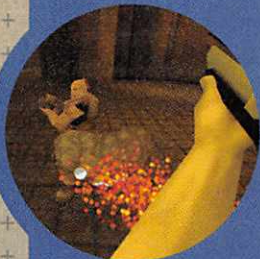
The 10-second QUAKE II STRATEGY

HOW TO KILL A CROUCHER
When playing multiplayer *Quake II*, some opponents will try a strategy of crouching to avoid fire. Here is PCXL's sure-fire way to kill a croucher.

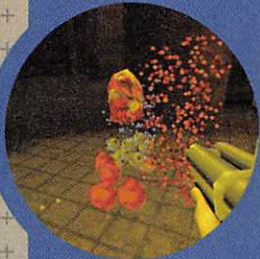
STEP 1: AIM LOW



STEP 2: SHOOT CROUCHER



STEP 3: REPEAT STEPS 1 & 2



While you have undoubtedly determined your preference between the two first-person-shooter-big-kids-on-the-block, another, more important battle between *Quake* and *Unreal* is taking shape. Developers who are tired of trying to keep up with the latest 3D engine technology are now licensing already-made graphics engines for their new titles. The two most popular choices are Id Software's *Quake II* engine and Epic MegaGames' *Unreal* engine.

At first the clear choice was Id's *Quake II*. When it debuted, it was the undisputed technological leader, and developers rushed to license the engine for their own take on the first-person-shooter genre. (In addition, the release of QuakeC had developed a rabid amateur *Quake* community creating inventive — along with truly awful — add-ons.) But once people caught wind of Epic's *Unreal* engine (and more importantly its simple, lightning-quick editing tools) the tide turned the other way with an equal number of developers rushing to use that technology. The resulting war has created an impressive lineup of new titles boasting either technology. Many of the best games at this year's E3 used either of the two engines, which will only prompt more movement toward both.

However, a trend is emerging in the development community, and one engine is slowly moving toward the top. Developers are latching on to the ease of use and reduced rendering time of the *Unreal* engine. They have also begun to discover that scripting events is much faster and easier with Epic's technology, and the company offers much more support for developers with questions.

3D Realms recently announced that it was switching *Duke Nukem Forever* to *Unreal* from *Quake II*. "The switch to the *Unreal* engine was simply a business decision, and it came down to what we wanted to do with *Duke Nukem Forever* and how best to achieve it," George Broussard said. Because of *Unreal*'s editing tools, 3D Realms figures it will take only four to six weeks to have the entire project at the same point as it was before the switch.

Even though the licensing battle is almost equal right now, *Unreal* is picking up steam and will likely become the clear leader in the coming year. If Id (which practically created the user-definable 3D worlds) learns from Epic's brush up-and-comer and makes its *Quake III* engine more developer-friendly, the upper hand could change once again. The titles currently in development for each system follow.

HEAD TO HEAD

The battle between the *Quake II* and *Unreal* engines will be fought in games that license them, but debate already rages (on the Internet and in certain bars in the Silicon Valley) over which game looks the best.



Quake II's graphics are certainly amazing, even if all the textures tend to be a little ... brown.



Unreal's graphics are more flashy than *Quake II*'s, but it takes a monster PC to make them run smoothly.

en Quake II and Unreal

GAMESCAN

GAMES WITH UNREAL ENGINE

KLINGON HONOR GUARD

DEVELOPER: MICROPROSE

Finally a "Star Trek: The Next Generation" game that doesn't focus on that wimpy peace-loving Captain Picard and his milksoop band of Starfleet officers, but turns its attention to the real heart of the sci-fi series, the bloodthirsty Klingons. With plenty of impressive hand-to-hand weapons to complement "Star Trek"'s usually wussy phasers, players can get down and dirty without ever having to worry about maintaining the Prime Directive.



WHEEL OF TIME

DEVELOPER: LEGEND ENTERTAINMENT

Based on Robert Jordan's popular fantasy novels, *Wheel of Time* blends action and strategy from a first-person viewpoint in detailed worlds. Rather than sticking players in a straightforward deathmatch, the game enables players to equip their castles with various traps, weapons, and guards as they attempt to invade an opponent's fortress. These elements separate *Wheel of Time* as a hybrid action/strategy title that could offer a distinct alternative to the typical shooter. It's hard to believe that this title is only two games removed from Legend's last text-based adventure.



X-COM ALLIANCE

DEVELOPER: MICROPROSE

Remember the wildly popular turn-based strategy franchise that moved more toward action gaming with the realtime/turn-based mix in *X-COM: Apocalypse*? Well now it has made the leap to first-person, courtesy of the *Unreal* engine. In this latest incarnation there's a definite *Aliens* flavor while retaining some strategy as you move through detailed environs with team members watching your back. Video screens show their movements and their viewpoints, and motion sensors let you know where danger lurks. Even early in development this looks promising.



DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

DEVELOPER: 3D REALMS

Goodbye *Quake II* engine. Hello *Unreal*.

DAIKATANA 2

DEVELOPER: ION STORM

This is one of the most telling titles of all, considering Ion Storm used the *Quake II* engine for *Daikatana* and shifted to *Unreal* for the sequel (being developed out of Ion Storm's house).

GAMES WITH QUAKE II ENGINE

DAIKATANA

DEVELOPER: ION STORM

Will John Romero live up to the reputation he built as a level designer at Id Software? Will *Daikatana*'s RPG elements make multiplayer action more fun? Will the game ever come out? From an early look, the answer to all these questions is yes. And thanks to its *Quake II*-powered graphics, no one is asking whether or not it will look good.



SIN

DEVELOPER: RITUAL ENTERTAINMENT

Lovingly called "baby Id" by Activision, developer Ritual is creating a shooter that offers a unique design to keep the action fresh. Players' actions determine the course of the game, and certain key decisions result in a variety of branching paths. The multiplayer gameplay is also very refined, with high-tech sniper rifles and location-specific body damage.



HALF-LIFE

DEVELOPER: VALVE SOFTWARE

All other things being equal, story matters, and *Half-Life* is chock-full of story. In contrast to the usual shooter, *Half-Life* blurs the line between good guys and bad guys, forcing players to assess their targets rather than shooting everything that moves. It also features numerous interactive elements such as vehicles you can ride, taking the action away from the standard run-and-shoot first-person gameplay (check out the full preview on page 47 for more details).



ANACHRONOX

DEVELOPER: ION STORM

Think of it as *Final Fantasy VII* set completely in a beautiful *Quake II*-rendered world.

KINGPIN

DEVELOPER: XATRIX

The hard-edged gangster action in this not-for-kiddies game is a fresh change from Xatrix's stale *Redneck Rampage* series.

one time, and a newly added atomic bomb weapon leaves a memorable wave of destruction in its path

WHEN IT'S COMING...→

Winter '98



X-COM ALLIANCE

MICROPROSE

WHO WANTS TO PLAY IT...→

Those hoping to graduate from the realm of strategy geeks

WHAT IT IS...→ Essentially a single mission of *X-COM* played in the

first-person perspective, allowing

ground-level team management

WHY IT'S A PCXL GAME...→ Usually boring strategy now set in a

first-person shooter environment

WHERE IT'S AT...→ The *Unreal*-based graphics feature some awe-

some new textures, and the game-

play design has plenty of original

ideas. It is quite a departure from

the gameplay *X-COM* fans expect,

but that is good

WHEN IT'S COMING...→

Spring '99



KINGPIN

XATRIX

WHO WANTS PLAY IT...→ Joe

Pesci fanatics who want to know

how it really feels like to be a

goodfella

WHAT IT IS...→ An uncensored,

politically incorrect mobland title

based on the *Quake II* engine in

which you control a gang of criminals

to become a virtual godfather

WHY IT'S A PCXL GAME...→ Didn't you just read what it was? Add in

tons of swearing, intense violence,

hookers, and mob-actor Dennis

Farina's voice and we're looking at

a hit

WHERE IT'S AT...→ It's about time

there was a gangsta game. This

one's set to cash in on its unique

setting as much as its *Quake II*



Depression hurts. Deathtrap Dungeon and Tomb Raider II can help.

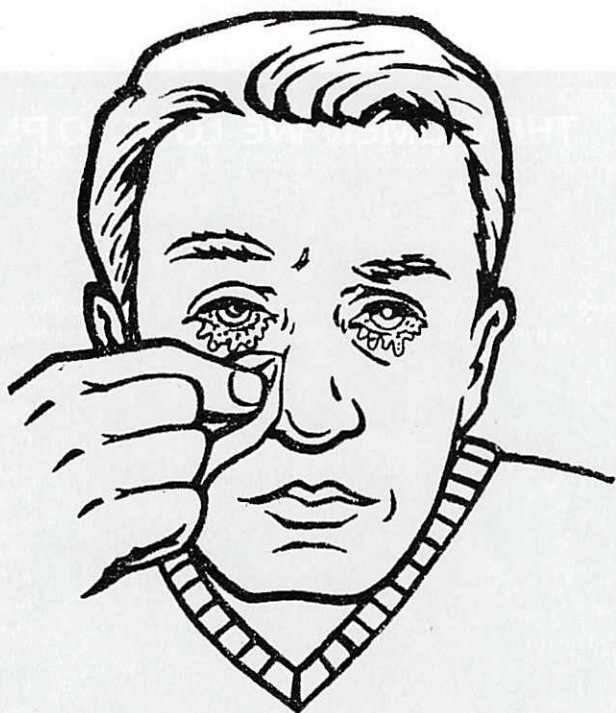
SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS **OF DEPRESSION**

- **Persistent sadness and or irritability.**

- **Recurring thoughts of how much better life would be if you had Deathtrap Dungeon or Tomb Raider II.**

- **Statements such as, "I'm bad. I'm stupid. No one likes me."**

When depression strikes, immediately seek the help of a trained professional at your local computer game store.

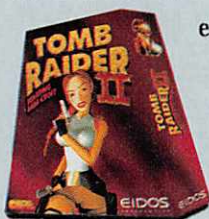


Wiping secretions



Research shows that the leading cause of depression among gamers is a noticeable lack of Eidos games.

Fortunately, this deficiency can be treated both safely and effectively with games like Deathtrap Dungeon



or Tomb Raider II. But early intervention is crucial. Or else, it's only a matter of time before they threaten to do something really stupid, like go to therapy.



EIDOS

INTERACTIVE

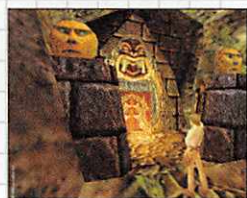
You've been warned.

www.eidosinteractive.com



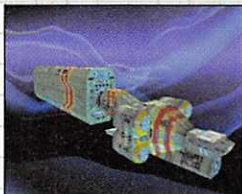
GAMESCAN

powered looks
WHEN IT'S COMING →
 Spring '99



INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE
 LUCASARTS

WHO WANTS TO PLAY IT → Those who think that *Tomb Raider III* looks a little too familiar
WHAT IT IS → An adventure game with everyone's favorite archaeologist at the helm
WHY IT'S A PCXL GAME → Indiana Jones is the man
WHERE IT'S AT → LucasArts is keeping typically tight-lipped. The early screens look good, though
WHEN IT'S COMING →
 Winter '98



HOMEWORLD
 SIERRA

WHO WANTS TO PLAY IT → Those who think top-down strategy is for sissies
WHAT IT IS → A realtime strategy game that will push your PC and 3D accelerator to its limits
WHY IT'S A PCXL GAME → Fully 3D realtime strategy in space
WHERE IT'S AT → The graphics are already impressive, and the gameplay looks equally strong
WHEN IT'S COMING →
 Spring '99



FORCE COMMANDER
 LUCAS ARTS

WHO WANTS TO PLAY IT →
 Darth Vader-wannabes

THE WOMEN WE LOVE TO PLAY

Getting the right look for a videogame character is sketchy business. Just look at RYNN, Psygnosis' lead character from its fantasy shooter, *Drakan*. In the title's short span of development, Rynn has gone through more body changes than Oprah Winfrey during the holiday season. At first she was built strong and slightly mannish, a look that was quickly overcompensated for, leaving a character so gaunt that she wouldn't have the strength to steal a rice cake from Fiona Apple. After much refiguring, the developer was able to settle on a body that we think will make gamers sit up and take notice.



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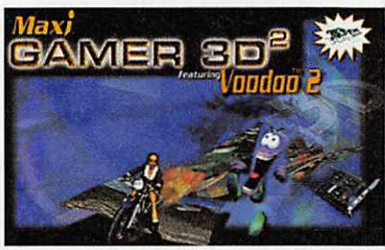
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Diablo II:

Diablo II: Diablo II, players return to a world of dark gothic fantasy. As one of five distinct character types, Players will explore the world of Diablo II, journey across distant lands, fight new villains, discover new treasures and uncover ancient mysteries. Five all-new character classes with unique attributes and abilities. Four different, fully populated towns complete with wilderness areas. Multiple dungeons, caverns and crypts in every town for players to explore. Expanded world filled with all-new quests, weapons, spells, armor, monsters and non-player characters. Advanced combat system which incorporates class-specific fighting techniques and spells.

Starcraft:

Starcraft also boasts advanced control features such as waypoints and training queues to provide enhanced gameplay, in addition to the intuitive interface, superb SVGA graphics, and outstanding sound and music that have come to be expected from Blizzard Entertainment.

Quake II Mission Pack: Ground 0

Ground Zero's vast new regions to explore include 14 new levels and 10 new deathmatch levels. Ingenious new power-ups provide novel means to survive and throttle the new enemies that have emerged from the Stroggs' bio-vats.



All the Top Rated Titles available
 from Worldwide Computers

WHAT IT IS→ A realtime strategy game set in the *Star Wars* universe between *A New Hope* and *The Empire Strikes Back*

WHY IT'S A PCXL GAME→ The possibility of crushing Ewoks with an AT-AT and hearing the satisfying squish in THX surround sound

WHERE IT'S AT→ With its 3D environments, special effects, and high-tech units, *Force Commander* could be LucasArts' perfect realtime strategy companion to the shooter *Jedi Knight*

WHEN IT'S COMING→ Fall '98



REDLINE BEYOND GAMES

WHO WANTS TO PLAY IT→

Those suffering from road rage

WHAT IT IS→ It's *Carmageddon* with first-person action out of the cars, better graphics, and more realistic physics

WHY IT'S A PCXL GAME→

Hardware accelerated, online, and plenty of gory gang violence

WHERE IT'S AT→ Close to finished, Beyond Games is now making levels for the final version

WHEN IT'S COMING→

Fall '98



THIEF: THE DARK PROJECT LOOKING GLASS

WHO WANTS TO PLAY IT→

People who think *Quake II* has too darn much shooting

WHAT IT IS→ A first-person shooter that rewards players for being stealthy

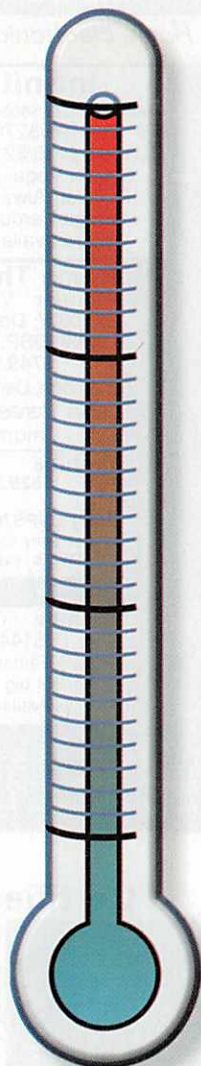
WHY IT'S A PCXL GAME→ It's OK to sneak around as long as you do it for bad purposes

WHERE IT'S AT→ Hopefully the touted enemy AI makes the sneakiness worthwhile, but the graphics could use some tweaking to take

▶ p. 129

The Heat-O-Meter

THE BIG SHOW EDITION



WHAT'S HOT

WHAT'S COLD

For three days in the steamy hot center of Atlanta, the entire videogame world converged to show off their products with the help of multimillion-dollar booths, loud techno music, and an occasional swimsuit model wearing a plastic tube top. When all the sound and fury ended, most things were the same as before, but out of the chaos many things changed, which we've charted on our all-knowing **HEAT-O-METER**.

RICK SPRINGFIELD→ The developers of *Interstate 76* trade in the bell bottoms and afros for a look more reminiscent of the early '80s. Maybe this could be a start of a full '80s revival, and the singer of "Jesse's Girl" could finally be back on top. (Keep an eye out for "Hard to Hold II.")

SALT LICKS→ 3DO's new shooter *Requiem* gives players one of the coolest powers we've seen in a while: the ability to turn enemies into pillars of salt.

COMMON SENSE→ Intelligence reigns supreme as Cyan's best seller *Riven* drops out of the top ten sales charts. Oops, never mind. *Myst* is still in the top five.

DINOSAURS→ Dreamworks Interactive's *Trespasser* is one of the most surprising games of E3. If it sells well, we may finally see that Carnasaur game we've been waiting for.

CENDANT→ Picks up rights to CyberFlix's sinking *Titanic: Adventure Out of Time* and rides the coattails of James Cameron's blockbuster to number two on the PC sales charts.

DIABLO II→ Blizzard announces that its title will be pushed back past Christmas to the first quarter of 1999. Gee, a Blizzard title missing the holiday season? Who'd have ever figured that?

QUAKE II ENGINE→ Duke says "hasta la vista" to *QII* and "hey, baby" to *Unreal*. With the change costing 3D Realms just four to six weeks, how many more will jump ship from Id?

MESSIAH→ Compared to *Quake II*- and *Unreal*-based games, Shiny's shooter looks like it could be a false prophet.

MIKE TYSON→ Electronic Arts signs nearly every influential boxer of the last 30 years, but notably missing is the ear-munching miscreant who is serving a one-year suspension from boxing in a professional wrestling rehab center.

INNOVATION→ Maxis scraps plans for a fully 3D *SimCity 3000* and remakes it to look almost exactly like *SimCity 2000*. You'd think things would change in a thousand years.

VIRTUAL WILDLIFE→ With *Deer Hunter*, *Rocky Mountain Trophy Hunter*, and *Cabela's Big Game Hunter* topping the PC game charts, it's none too safe for digital Bambis these days.

Ever since Ginger Spice left the multiplatinum-selling Spice Girls, the world (well, the PCXL office) has had one question on its mind: Who will take her place? While there is no shortage of attractive young singers around, we feel that the best replacement will be a name we already know. Here are a few of the women we believe can best fill the now-departed Geri Halliwell's shoes.

PCXL SPICE GIRL



SHANNON TWEED

TO BE KNOWN AS→ Straight-to-Video Spice

WHY SHE'D WORK→ Much like Ginger Spice, she will take off her kilt anywhere, anytime



FARRAH FAWCETT

TO BE KNOWN AS→ Stoner Spice

WHY SHE'D WORK→ '80s pin-up girl will do just about anything to support drug habit



MARY HART

TO BE KNOWN AS→ Spasm-Inducing Spice

WHY SHE'D WORK→ Mass seizures at concerts could create some trendy new dance number



JOAN COLLINS

TO BE KNOWN AS→ Old Spice

WHY SHE'D WORK→ She can't sing and she's British: a perfect fit



ANNA NICOLE SMITH

TO BE KNOWN AS→ Spice Rack

WHY SHE'D WORK→ More breast tissue than other Spice Girls combined

Wingman Force

The LOGITECH WINGMAN FORCE will retail for around \$149 when it hits stores in late 1998. The price point will put it in direct competition with Microsoft's Force Feedback Pro.

When Microsoft introduced its Force Feedback Pro joystick, the market for high-end controllers was dominated by the hardcore simulation crowd. The stick was an unqualified success, and many game developers rushed to add full support for the hardware. Now that Microsoft has established that force feedback will sell in the mass market, Logitech has jumped on the bandwagon with a controller that refines the concept to the next logical level: the Wingman Force.

If you crack open the cases of both Microsoft's Force Feedback Pro and Logitech's Wingman Force (don't try this at home unless you have an extra \$150 lying around) you will find that the insides are completely different. The Microsoft stick is powered by a motor and gears, while the Logitech pad is controlled by a wire-driven system that was developed to train doctors how to operate by feel as they stick catheters in various dark regions of unsuspecting patients' anatomy.

The difference between the two is immediately noticeable. In a comparison of smoothness, Logitech's Wingman Force is to Microsoft's force-feedback joystick what Billy Dee Williams and a six-pack of Colt 45 is to Don Knotts and a six-pack of Oly. Its wire-driven system enables much higher feedback frequencies, and quicker, less jumpy directional changes. The new controller not only supports Microsoft's Direct X 5.0, it also supports Immersion's I-Force 2.0 feedback API, which means every new game that includes feedback will work with the Wingman Force.

Force feedback is here to stay, and as more gamers buy joysticks that support it, new uses for the technology will affect the games themselves. For instance, a game could have a repeating heartbeat pulse to indicate health rather than a visual meter, a vibration that warns of danger, or feedback that enables players to feel their way through dark levels. By taking an innovative route in creating its new joystick, Logitech has created a strong contender for leadership in this burgeoning market. ➤



Microsoft's FORCE FEEDBACK PRO is the current market leader in feedback joysticks. Its gear-driven system is effective, but not as smooth or precise as the Wingman Force.

GAMESCAN

full advantage of 3D hardware
WHEN IT'S COMING→
 Winter '98



HEAVY GEAR II
 ACTIVISION

WHO WANTS TO PLAY IT→

Gearheads with a P266
WHAT IS IT→ The next in a seemingly endless stream of games about giant robots shooting other giant robots

WHY IT'S A PCXL GAME→ Big robots with big guns

WHERE IT'S AT→ An all-new engine makes the graphics much better than those in *Heavy Gear*

WHEN IT'S COMING→ Fall '98



INTERSTATE 82
 ACTIVISION

WHO WANTS TO PLAY IT→

Those who couldn't get enough "Miami Vice"

WHAT IS IT→ The sequel to *Interstate 76* steps into a new era with a new look and new '80s music to boot

WHY IT'S A PCXL GAME→ Pastel suits and no socks was some what manly in the '80s, wasn't it?

WHERE IT'S AT→ With new gameplay features and a much-improved 3D graphics engine,

Interstate 82 is raring to go

WHEN IT'S COMING→
 Winter '98



GROUND ZERO
 ROGUE ENTERTAINMENT

WHO WANTS TO PLAY IT→

Insatiable *Quake* addicts

WHAT IT IS→ Another *Quake II* mission pack from Rogue Entertainment, the guys who made *Quake*:

Dissolution of Eternity

WHY IT'S A PCXL GAME→ Fifteen new levels and more *Quake II* weapons!

WHERE IT'S AT→ Pretty typical add-on pack with new weapons and enemies, but it is more *Quake II*

WHEN IT'S COMING→

Summer '98



OUTCAST

INFOGRAMES

WHO WANTS TO PLAY IT→

Those who want 3D action without a 3D accelerator

WHAT IT IS→ A fast and gorgeous game that looks absolutely amazing despite its lack of 3D-hardware acceleration.

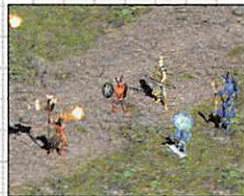
WHY IT'S A PCXL GAME→

Software-rendered explosions still manage to fry the eyes

WHERE IT'S AT→ Right now it looks stunning, and Infogrames has just begun adding 3D acceleration support

WHEN IT'S COMING→

Summer '98



DIABLO II

BLIZZARD

WHO WANTS TO PLAY IT→

Those with an unnaturally active dark side

WHAT IT IS→ The sequel to one of the biggest hits of last year (and ever) with upgraded graphics, four times the level size, and a final end to multiplayer cheaters

WHY IT'S A PCXL GAME→ Lots of destruction and barely dressed female baddies

WHERE IT'S AT→ Delayed until after the holiday season (which is no surprise for a Blizzard game) but right now it looks like more and

PCXL DREAM GEAR

Make sure no one is watching you while you read this article, because there is a good chance that as you read it you will begin to drool. Not the drool of a 14-year-old who discovers "Baywatch" for the first time, but a more intense drool of a computer nerd faced with a system that simply blows his mind.

Now that you have been fairly warned, let's take a look at the **GATEWAY DESTINATION** system. With its massive 36-inch monitor, six-speaker Harmon/Kardon sound system, and 333MHz processor, the Destination needs only an accompanying La-Z-Boy recliner and a refrigerator full of beer for you to happily live for at least two years (or until the beer runs out). The system will play straight TV, music CDs, the radio, and even DVDs along with its computer and gaming functions. Built to be an entertainment center, the Destination utilizes a remote control for a mouse, and uses an infrared keyboard so you can keep typing as you grab another beer from the fridge.

All these benefits come at a cost, however. The entire system we tested (33MHz, 128MB RAM, 10GB hard drive, PowerVR accelerator) retails for around \$4,300 at www.gateway.com. But if you have the cash and a comfortable La-Z-Boy, this is the system for you.



I'M MAD AS HECK

We realize that just about everyone will be offended by the contents of our magazine, so we decided to make things easier for you and include this handy little cutout form. Just check off the boxes that apply and send the letter to:

I'm mad as heck!
c/o PCXL
150 North Hill Drive
Brisbane, CA 94005

Or just e-mail us at: easilyoffended@pcxl.com

Dear PCXL staff,
I was reading your magazine when to my

- shock,
- dismay,
- puerile enjoyment,

you did the following:

- Made fun of Evel Knievel's stupidity
- Depicted Southern people as inbred hillbillies
- Trashed the Queen of Nice, Rosie O'Donnell
- Glorified cannibalism
- Made reckless fun of turn-based strategy gamers
- Made offensive religious references
- Used the phrase "Bjork smuggling" (It just has to be dirty)
- Used the phrase "bilinear mip mapping" (ditto)
- Made constant references to dead celebrities
- Glorified violence in videogames
- Implied that manliness means cavemanlike behavior
- Failed to represent female-oriented games like *Jane's Relationship Adventure*
- Used the phrase "erotic grunts"
- Asked a developer the question "Have you ever seen a grown man naked?"
- Used cuss words like hell, damn, big-ass, and hard-assed

- Made constant references to beer
- Included the Cinco De Mayo in Harlem during a Michael Bolton concert bit
- Added *Custer's Revenge* to your Guy Games list
- Knocked a game lower on the Guy Games list because it doesn't include broths
- Used the phrase "guys love Satan"
- Made constant digs at girly men
- Called a revered Democrat a sex addict
- Called a revered Republican a sex addict
- Suggested that peace-loving Ghandi would be a good *Quake* nickname
- Used the word *FartRhino*
- Brought up the image of Don Knotts and a six-pack of Oly
- Reported on slang for diarrhea
- Reminded us of *Critters 3*
- Used "overused cat box" imagery
- Other _____

You guys are:

- dangerous idiots,
- juvenile idiots,
- #@\$%@! idiots,
- a breath of fresh air (but still idiots),

and I wish you would:

- quit writing such an offensive magazine and focus on family titles like *Roger's Reading Adventure*.
- take your stupid magazine and stick it ... (rest deleted).
- die a slow horrible death.
- get to work on issue 2.

Thank you for your time,

X

DEVELOPER SPOTLIGHT



On weekends the Planet Moon guys sing for a church choir and help old ladies out of tar pits.

Planet Moon Studios

STATUS

COMPANY: Planet Moon Studios
FORMED: 1997
PAST CREDITS: *Earthworm Jim*, *MDK* (for Shiny)
GAMES IN DEVELOPMENT: *Giants*
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 6
NUMBER OF EUROPEAN SPORTSCARS: 0
OFFICE GAMING: *StarCraft*
IN THE FRIDGE: Jose Cuervo, yogurt
NUMBER OF MOUNTAIN BIKES: 7
NUMBER OF RECEPTIONISTS: 0
NUMBER OF NAKED WOMEN IN GAME: 1
NUMBER OF NAKED WOMEN IN OFFICE: 0
EMPLOYEE PROFILE: Ability to work very closely with the rest of the team



It may not look like a development studio, but this is Planet Moon's home.

Have you ever wondered what it was like to be a game developer? Well, the experience depends on where you work. Some development houses are highly corporate centers sweating over a product for a profit. But if you were to strip those companies of their Rogaine-enhanced executives, scarf-wearing PR blondes, and nasal-talking bean counters you would end up with something like Planet Moon Studios.

Nestled in the sleepy little town of Sausalito, California, Planet Moon is the closest thing in the current computer game industry to a garage development house. The company is headquartered in what can only be described as a large Victorian apartment almost converted to office space. When you first enter the offices you're not greeted by a gum-chewing secretary, but rather the entire company. All six members of Planet Moon (from the artist to the lead programmers) are stationed

in the front living room, and the other rooms are more likely to contain a mountain bike than a fax machine. The design of the entire office gives the developers a comfortable, but somewhat cramped work space.

This cozy environment is the perfect match to the laid-back approach of the Planet Moon team. After they developed *MDK* for Shiny entertainment (it wasn't just created by Dave Perry as it is often alleged), the six team members made a risky (but quite possibly rewarding) move to work for themselves. The result is a development studio that is motivated more by the artistic side of making games than by the financial side. Because of this it can develop unconventional games (such as its new title *Giants*) without having to pass it through creativity-stifling committees (Interplay is publishing its first title). While Planet Moon Studios is certainly the exception rather than the rule in development houses, it's great to see that a company can still have fun making games. ☺

GAMESCAN

▶ better *Diablo* action for those who couldn't get enough of the original
WHEN IT'S COMING→

Spring '99



**MYTH II:
SOULBLIGHTER**
BUNGIE

WHO WANTS TO PLAY IT→

Guys who can't decide between *Quake* and *C&C*

WHAT IT IS→ The sequel to last year's outstanding 3D/realtime strategy hybrid with vast improvements in graphics, environments, and gameplay

WHY IT'S A PCXL GAME→

Incredibly bloody battles, tougher AI, and many rolling heads

WHERE IT'S AT→ It looks like it's taking the detail of *Myth* to the next level with far more detailed environments

WHEN IT'S COMING→

Winter '98



INDEPENDENCE WAR
INFOGRAMS

WHO WANTS TO PLAY IT→

Those who got excited about the game when it was first announced almost two years ago

WHAT IT IS→ A full 3D-fied space combat game with massive ship-against-ship battles

WHY IT'S A PCXL GAME→ Real physics make its giant spaceships handle realistically

WHERE IT'S AT→ When it first debuted, *I-War* was extremely impressive, but since that time, some excellent looking space shooters (*Wing Commander VI* and *Descent Freespace*) have taken a little of the luster off this game. However, its unique gameplay and flashy graphics still make it one to watch

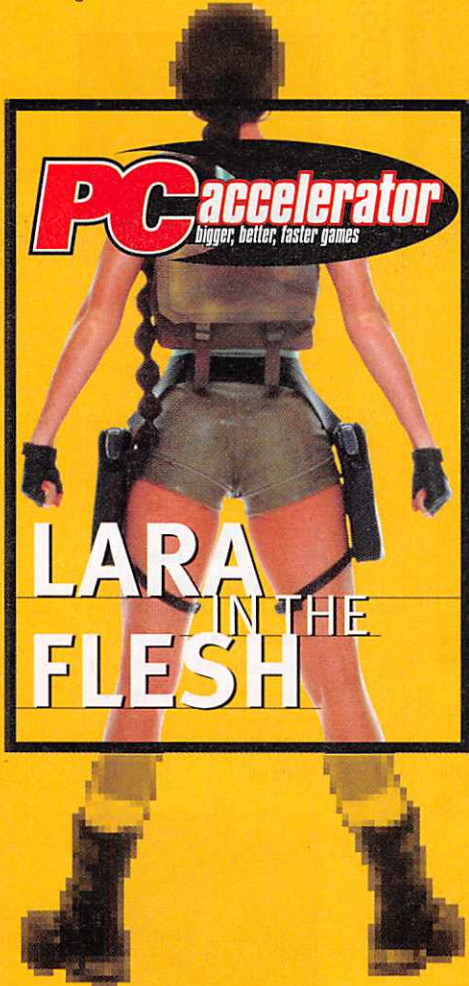
WHEN IT'S COMING→

Fall '98

What's the Story?

PC ACCELERATOR II: REVENGE OF THE SCORNI!

The sequel you've all been waiting for is coming your way next month. The games are bigger, the disc is faster, and the writing is more betterer



TOMB RAIDER 3

Our preview is just the tip of the iceberg. Next month we unveil the full story on *Tomb Raider 3*. Every vehicle, every level, and every secret is revealed

THE DISC

- Playable demos for: *Sin*, *Vigilance*, *Redline*, *Need for Speed 3*
- New *Unreal* levels, including a world premiere of *Rattrap*
- New *Quake II* levels

CHECK BACK NEXT MONTH

We know the addresses of these helpless old ladies and so will Dr. Kevorkian if you don't read issue #2



Let's look back at the greatest games of the past couple of years: *Duke Nukem 3D*, *Quake*, *Unreal*, *Diablo*, *Tomb Raider*, *Total Annihilation*, and *StarCraft*. Anyone remember the story?

If you do remember any of these diluted diatribes, then you are, officially, sad. The fact is, all these games were great fun to play, but the stories were more or less throwaways. So why all this hype lately about making a game with a story? Personally, I think it is just developers and publishers trying to sell their games as different — “We're not just ‘me-too’ *Quake II/Unreal* clones, really we're not!” At the end of the day a first-person shooter is exactly that, and no 5,000 word manual is going to change that, no matter who writes it.

The lack of story in games has never really bothered me. After all, a game is an interactive experience in which you create your own story — just give me a setting and some big guns and I'll make my own damn story! I realize that the story is tacked on in a couple of weeks, so in order to save developers the time and money we've created a seven-step PCXL formula for creating a game story — because they can't get much worse.

Step 1: Create an alien race (just make 'em look weird)

Step 2: Make up alien names like Tsume4it

Step 3: Give the aliens an evil plan to destroy Earth (or anything else that is cherished, like sex or “The Simpsons”)

Step 4: Set the story in a not-so-distant future

Step 5: Make sure player is alone and inspired by the alien destruction of his squadron, troop, planet, family, etc.

Step 6: Give player an artifact or world-saving item that he must retrieve

Step 7: Put it all together with phrases like “dire” and “Earth's last hope”

Example: HOLLYWOOD HELL 2000

In a not-so-distant future, the city of Los Angeles has turned into a gang-infested war zone (OK, this one could actually be set in the present). As the last remaining member of the LAPD (the rest mysteriously died shortly after a taping of the “Magic Johnson Show”), you try to restore order and issue parking citations. What you don't know is that the evil Tsume4it have landed in Bakersfield and once they make it over the Grapevine are plotting to use the Planet Hollywood logo to destroy the rest of the world. The president managed to pull himself off an intern long enough to call you into service. His last words before the transmission broke up were, “You are the Earth's last hope.” Now as the last sane person in Southern California you must shred through the gangs of East L.A. and retrieve the Planet Hollywood logo before it is too late.

If, however, developers want to truly give us a story we actually care about, then I've got some more suggestions. Create the story before the game and the engine — after all, do you think George Lucas was nearly finished with *Star Wars* when he came up with that whole “A long, long time ago” gibberish? Kill the FMV; with the advanced technology all story-driving sequences should be done in the game's engine with scripted events. Give the story branching paths depending on what the player does so that the story is actually interactive. Have a WRITER who understands games create the story, keep it simple, and evolve the story progressively throughout the game with dialogue — not stupid futuristic transmitters that no one pays any attention to. If developers aren't willing to put this type of energy into a story then I'd rather they left it out altogether.

— MIKE SALMON

SECOND PERSON

Mike you ignorant slut. Haven't you read the responses from the developers to our questions on game story in our *Quake Killer* feature? They're all doing exactly what you're asking for. It's called evolution.

Quake, no story = awesome. *Quake II* ditto. *Unreal* ditto. But that's it. We're at the end of the first generation of the 3D action game. Damn it, we gamers want more. We're not all cerebrally challenged monkeys (er, and neither are you, er, boss) aimlessly charging down bad guys with big guns for no reason. We want to care. We want to have a purpose. No more shooting stuff for the sake of it. I want to be able to talk to my victims before removing their spleens with a well-placed bullet. Well, maybe not talk to each of them, but at least have some context for why they're shooting me and I'm shooting them.

So bring on your *Half-Lives*, *Max Paynes*, *Daikatana*, and *Requiem*s and see if you can make me care.

(Uh ... and I didn't mean that ignorant slut bit either!)

— ROB SMITH

**Some of you won't
be going home.**



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CD
ROM**

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Silent Storm™



PROLIFIC

A man with dark hair, wearing a dark t-shirt and military camouflage pants, is sitting on a sidewalk. He is looking to his right. In front of him are two signs made of cardboard. The sign on the left reads "RETURN FIRE VETERAN" and the sign on the right reads "THUMBLESS AND HUNGRY".

RETURN FIRE
VETERAN

THUMBLESS
AND HUNGRY

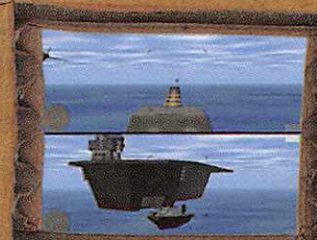
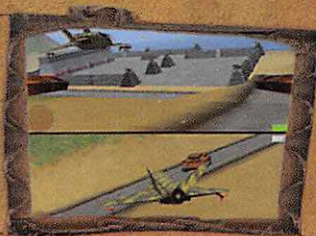
FEEL LIKE KICKING THIS
LITTLE PUNK'S BUTT?
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RETURN FIRE II® THE
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INTENSE THAN EVER.
IT'S UP TO YOU TO CAPTURE
YOUR OPPONENT'S FLAG WHILE
YOU TAKE CONTROL OF SOME
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VEHICLES EVER MADE IN A
KILLER 3-D ENVIRONMENT.
WE'RE TALKING EVERYTHING FROM
JUMP JETS TO TANKS. THERE'S
EVEN A SLEW OF MULTI-PLAYER
OPTIONS IF YOU WANT TO WAGE
WAR WITH YOUR FRIENDS.
JUST DON'T COME-BEGGING TO
US IF YOU LOSE.

RETURN FIRE 2

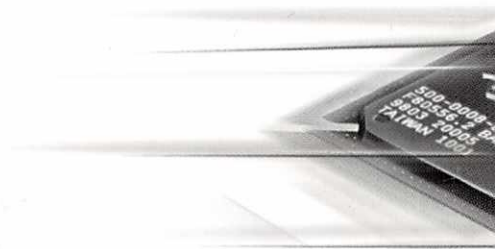
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Voodoo Banshee™



Contest URL: www.3dfx.com/win-a-banshee

Go to <http://www.pcxl.com/gaming411>

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