

ISSUE 04 - DECEMBER 2017 -- RTS

Abandoned Times



ronic Arts

Wallpaper (C) GameWallpapers.com. Artwork (C) publisher/artist. No part of this wallpaper may be reproduced without permission.

ALSO INSIDE
 DUNE II
 COMMAND AND CONQUER
 SENSIBLE SOCCER
 CHRISTMAS GAMES

THE HISTORY OF
Westwood
 STUDIOS

PAGE FIVE

Hello everyone, and welcome to the fourth issue of Abandoned Times online magazine! I never imagined I'd be writing the editorial for a magazine of any sort, and yet here I find myself sitting down to write this off the back of just having finished the last article for the magazine. And yet of everything I've written, I think this could be the most difficult thing to put in to words how I feel about this project.

I think the first thing I'd like to stress it that this is a learning curve for me, and over the four months since I started doing this project, I've already learned a lot about making magazines! This issue in particular is very much 'testing the waters', just as Red Avatar penned in May 2009 in the first editorial for Abandoned Times. So if you read this and think 'hmm, it's certainly missing bits', that's why. There are things I'd like to add, such as the Vs segment, and even some interviews or similar. But it's all a bit much to jump into for a first time effort, so please do bear that in mind.

The other thing of course, is the focus of the magazine. Abandoned Times 2 and 3 were huge and feature packed, and they are definitely excellent but I'm not sure if that's something I can live up to. My plan is to make smaller, more concise issues, that can be turned around in a matter of months, meaning two, three or even four could be made in a year. It's not something I'd like to commit to one hundred percent yet, but that's the idea. I also will be branching out more from strictly DOS, as I was never one to use DOS particularly extensively; being an English girl, me and my friends all grew up on Amigas, and by the time we all upgraded to Windows on the death knell of Commodore, things were moving towards Windows '95.

Having said that, I think the last thing I'd like to mention, before I let you get on with reading AT4, is that if there is something you'd like to see in the magazine, I strongly encourage you to write it yourself. I will read anything and everything sent in to me, and if it needs a bit of work, I'll help work to fix it with you. Contributions from the readerbase are crucial; Doing this has really opened my eyes to realise how difficult it is trying to do things on your own, and Abandonia has such a great community filled with people who are talented enough to write a cracking article for the community to enjoy. Who knows, might even be you.

With all that off of my chest, I'd like to again welcome you to Abandoned Times, Issue 4. I thoroughly hope you enjoy it!

All the best,

L.Watson, Editor

Abandonia (R) Abandoned Times 4

ISSUE 4 - RTS - DECEMBER 2017

C:/Page2/Editorial And Contents
C:/Review/Page3/Dune II
C:/Retrospective/Page5/The History Of Westwood Studios
C:/Review/Page10/Sensible Soccer
C:/Feature/Page12/Top 10 RTS Games
C:/Review/Page15/Space Hulk
C:/Review/Page17/Command & Conquer: Red Alert
C:/Discussion/Page19/Text Adventures
C:/Festive/Page20/Christmas Games
C:/NextIssue/AT5!

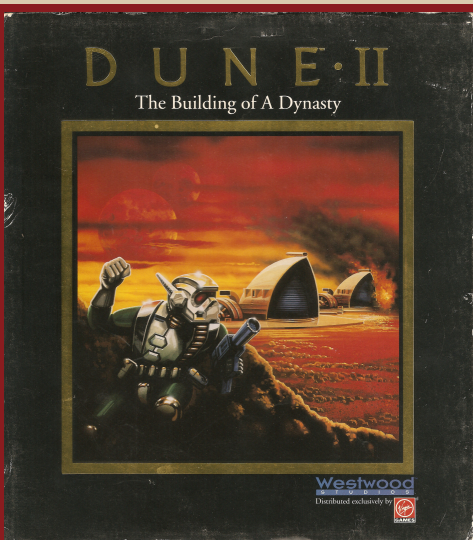
WITH THANKS TO MOLLY MCDADE FOR HER HELP!



DUNE II

The Building Of a Dynasty

WESTWOOD STUDIOS' DUNE II IS OFTEN hailed as the progenitor of the Real-Time Strategy genre, and whilst this claim may be disputable, one fact of Dune II is clear: It was one of the most influential titles of this genre, laying the foundations for future titles for the likes of Command And Conquer and Age Of Empires among so many others.



Released: 1992 (MS-DOS)
Developer: Westwood Studios
Publisher: Virgin
Also On: Amiga, Mega Drive (1993), RISC OS (1995)
Abandonia?: YES (DOSBOX, C:/ AND XP)

Dune II was initially released by Westwood Studios for MS-DOS in 1992. Based on Frank Herbert's pioneering space epic Dune and the universe in which the series of novels take place, players find themselves arriving on the planet of Arrakis, the only known place in the universe that the Spice, Melange, can be found and harvested. It is the Deus Ex Machina of the universe of Dune, and is the current cause of the war that has erupted on the planet between three of the largest Houses in the universe: House Atreides, House Harkonnen, and House Ordos. These three houses came here with the aim of producing more Spice than the other, so that the Emperor would give them full control of the planet. The Emperor plans to use the Spice as a payment for the enormous costs generated by wars with rivals to the throne of the imperium.

As expected, this causes a massive conflict that will eventually see one House claim the title of the rulers of Dune. Which of these Houses takes this title is in your hands; Each House has several of its own unique units, though most units in the game are very much similar to their equivalent in the other two factions. You must select your faction and then move on through the nine different missions that will ultimately lead your house to glory, though these are also barely different from one another; seemingly the only difference in the houses is their colour scheme!

The game plays as a standard RTS would: Players start each level with a base, and must build from this Command Centre the means of which they will conquer the planet and crush their enemies (literally, in the case of the Spice Crawler!) by making more and more units and throwing them into combat. There are a variety of different units and buildings available to players, though, once again, these are all virtually identical across the three factions.



There's the Command Centre, Wind Traps to generate energy from the harsh winds that swirl across Dune; Barracks', from which infantry units are produced, Factories that produce wheeled vehicles like Dune Buggys or Tanks, Spice Refineries that create with them Crawlers required to harvest the all-important Spice and turn into credits to perpetuate your houses' war machine, and so on and so forth. It very well stays true to what would become a standard RTS mould, but was something of a trend setter for future titles in this emerging genre when it was first released.

Everything in Dune II is controlled using the mouse, clicking on units and then right-clicking to carry out a move or action command, and this changes contextually, something that was considered quite impressive by reviewers of the time, and does help the game age with grace, cleverly avoiding clunky controls in favour of this two button combo. The only absence is the ability to give the same command to a group of units: being as this would later come to be a standard of the



>> Beware the sandworms!

genre, clicking on the ground and pulling the mouse out to create a square, selecting all units within as a group, is notably absent. It's hardly a game-breaking problem, and shouldn't deter any would-be players, but the 'drag'n rush' tactic just doesn't work when it takes several minutes to go through all your units and give them commands.

Graphically Dune II looks appealing enough, as long as you like sand. Yellow and brown, in their various hues, are the foremost colours displayed in this game. Normally that would be something to the detriment of the game, but Dune II uses this narrow spectrum of colours to convey how dead the world of Arrakis is, and it actually feels very much like you are in the harsh Arrakeen wastes. It also makes spotting your and your opponents forces a considerably easier task than in other games of its ilk.

Accuracy to the source material was, however, a little sketchy. Whilst the houses are accurate, although House Ordos is mentioned only in the Dune Encyclopedia, the use of guns is certainly straying from the swordplay demonstrated in Frank Herbert's works, as well as the David Lynch film. This would only bother you if you were a hyper fan of the series, however, and for the most part this shouldn't bother you particularly. Whilst included to undoubtedly add appeal to the game and make it more accessible for players, it does also help to make the game more exciting overall. The game was clearly a success, as it would go on to receive ports first to the 68000 machines, the Amiga and Mega Drive, in 1993, but with the slightly altered name of Dune II: Battle For Arrakis, and even wriggled its way onto Acorn Archimedes and RISC PC machines several years later.



Interestingly, Dune II almost never actually happened. Dune is an WRPG of a sort that was also released by Virgin Interactive, and was originally intended to be the game that made use of the licence. However, Virgin Interactive were allegedly planning to cancel this game, and, needing to find something else to ensure the Dune licence was not wasted. Stephen Clark-Wilson then found out that a game called 'Herzog Zwei' was being played in the Virgin Studio's offices. The staff of the office found the mixture of fast-paced action with strategic gameplay intriguing and entertaining, and approached Westwood Studios with the intention of making a 'resource management' based game, and using Herzog Zwei as a direct influence on the design of the game. Later they discovered that the original Dune game was continuing to go ahead, and, thanks to this miscommunication, Dune II was created, after quick addition of roman

numerals to distinguish it from the WRPG. Needless to say, only one of these is widely remembered to this day.

So whilst Herzog Zwei might have been one of the first games to be recognisable today as an RTS, it took Dune II: The Building Of a Dynasty to truly develop the template that would go on to influence so many other games later on, from Westwood Studios very own, and even more widely known, Command & Conquer, to the likes of Total Annihilation, Age Of Empires, Warcraft, leading on to the juggernaut that is World Of Warcraft, to games like Dungeon Keeper or Dawn Of War, that use the genres established template and do something a little bit different with it. It remains a game that is very much worth experiencing to this day. It makes for an excellent game, despite how far the RTS genre has evolved since. Herzog Zwei may have inspired the RTS, but Dune II was the game that built a dynasty.



>> Despite a lack of mouse control, the Mega Drive version plays well.

FINAL SCORE

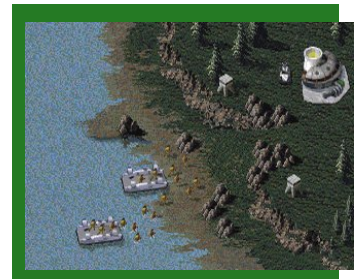
8.5

THE HISTORY OF...

Westwood™

STUDIOS

A tour de force gaming studio of the 1990's, Westwood Studios were behind some of the biggest computer RPG's of the era, as well as creating some of the most genre-defining titles in RTS. But whilst hits like 'Eye of the Beholder' and 'Command and Conquer' defined their position at the forefront of the industry, Westwood Studios brought far more to the gaming table...



Westwood Studio's founders, Brett Sperry and Louis Castle, formed their Las Vegas based company in 1985, initially known as Westwood Associates. The name was a reference to the 'Entertainment meets professional' attitude of the nearby Westwood area of California, an area that attracted teens and young adults, according to Castle, and he felt that reflected the idea of the company revolving around entertainment well.

During the first years of the company, they worked on contracts from larger companies, porting titles from 8-bit machines to 16-bit computers like the Commodore Amiga. However, during this time they were also working on their own independent titles. One of these was 'Roadwar 2000' for SSI, a mixture of Mad Max and Wasteland, which had the player travelling through the wastes and fighting hordes of mutants and criminals. Released in 1986, it was made several years prior, but was only released once the company had earned enough money through porting contracts to fund it.

Having earned enough money from contracts to afford to make their own game, Westwood set about creating 1988's Mars Saga, an accessible CRPG that places the player as a down-on-his-luck Space Traveller who uncovers a



>> Brett Sperry and Louis Castle, founders of Westwood Associates in 1985

conspiracy of a cover up of extra-terrestrial contact. The game featured a first-person perspective, (not uncommon for the time) similar to what would be later seen in Eye Of The Beholder and many other CRPG's of its nature, but also curiously featured a third-person top-down tactical combat system, more reminiscent of Laser Squad. Initially released on C64 and Apple II, the game was at least successful enough to fund its own move to DOS a year later, although it was renamed Mines Of Titan, relocated to the moon of the same name, and made a little more expansive; there are more side quests and more tasks to complete for the main quest in this sister version.

Several years after the release of Mars Saga, BattleTech: The Crescent Hawk's Revenge was published, and whilst the game retained most of the features seen in Mars Saga, particularly the RPG elements of the title, although the game put a large emphasis on the tactical battle system, and used more mechanics from the Battletech rules system within this. The game is arguably more accurate to the tabletop game than other games of the era, such as Mechwarrior (covered in AT 1), and was fairly well received by the press, garnering a 4/5 score from Dragon magazine, and with Computer Gaming World praising its accuracy to its tabletop cousin "without having to get out the tape measure and stacks of charts". Whilst many claim the game to be a RTS game, it feels more like Mars Saga than Dune II.

After this Westwood Studios would return to its' arguably more familiar territory of CRPGs, predominantly those that would feature locations and mechanics from Dungeons and Dragons. Hillsfar and Dragonstrike were two such games, released in 1989 and 1990 respectively. The turn of the decade also saw Circuit's Edge, another CRPG, but this time based on a series of novels by George Alec Effinger. It takes place between the first and second novels in the Audran Cyberpunk trilogy, based in a unique futuristic Middle Eastern setting. Having produced such a volume of RPG games over the preceding couple of year, Westwood would have been forgiven for perhaps finding the CRPG genre to be losing its luster, but the next game released by the studio, at this point expanding to around 50 employees, would be the first genuine breakout success: Eye of the Beholder.

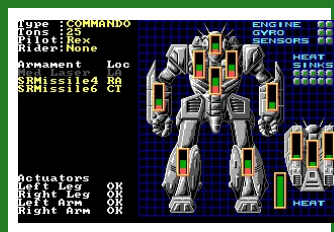


>> Eye of The Beholder is an excellent dungeon crawler, drawn from the same vein as the likes of Dungeon Master.

Eye Of The Beholder was, just as Dragonstrike and Hillsfar before it, was a first-person Dungeons & Dragons game published by SSI. It stood out with a great looking animated sequence with excellent attention to detail, and displaying far more colours than earlier games, thanks to the new VGA graphics engine used. The sequence did an excellent job of immersing the player in the world of Waterdeep, before submersing the player-characters in the sewers of the city, with a far larger display window again demonstrating the detail undertaken by Westwood in crafting the game's world. It's not to say the game is perfect; the combat system is a little simplistic, and many found the game's difficulty curve to be challenging in the early game, but most agreed that the game was overall fantastic.

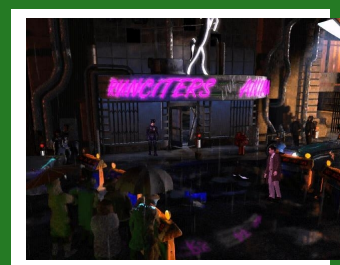
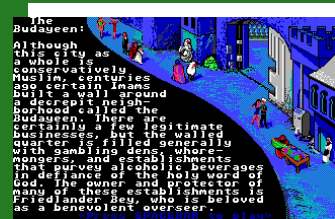
UNDERRATED WESTWOOD STUDIOS GAMES

There are a lot of classic games that were produced by Westwood over the years, but not all of them are well recognised today. Here are a couple we think you should try...



BattleTech: Crescent Hawk's Revenge
Available on a variety of platforms, and noted for its fantastic adaptation of the famous mecha wargame, this is a game worth playing for any fan of giant fighting robots!

Circuit's Edge
Whilst the game itself may be very much a standard CRPG of the era, the uniqueness of the setting alone, and how well it is presented, make this a worth a look.



Blade Runner
Fans of the Blade Runner series should find a way to play this game. A great way for you to explore the world of Blade Runner, it was awarded Adventure Game of The Year in 1997

The game soared to the top of the Software Publishing Associations MS-DOS sales list and the number one spot, the last time an SSI D&D game would ever reach the top. Reviewers in the gaming press went wild for it, receiving 5 stars in Dragon, 95% for its Amiga version and 96% for its DOS version in CVG, and was described by Computer Gaming World as 'a stunning, graphically brilliant game' as well as 'agonisingly tricky'. It was the opinion of many that the games graphics and sound (with an appropriate sound card, of course) finally gave IBM-Compatible owners an equivalent to 1987's Dungeon Master for Amiga and ST, and a source of envy for PC-owning RPG fans. Later Mega CD and SNES ports were met with a more mild reception; the CD version getting a lukewarm 7, and the SNES port a disappointing 6. But it did far more than simply sell copies and make money; it put Westwood Studios firmly on the map.

Rolling off of the success of Eye of the Beholder, Westwood Associates released the sequel in the same year The Legend Of Darkmoon, but in the same year also produced Order of the Griffon for the Turbografx and Warriors of The Eternal Sun for the Mega Drive in 1992. Around this time Westwood were garnering a solid reputation for themselves (Cont.)



>> *Dune II in action as the Atrides prepare for war...*

(cont.) as the company matured. During the 1980's Westwood's were known for shipping products late: By the 1990's, the Westwood name guaranteed not only punctuality, but also quality, proven by their slew of hit titles around the turn of the decade, and this success caught the eye of Richard Branson at Virgin Games, who bought the studio in 1992, and began work to publish their newest game: Dune II. Having proven themselves capable of consistently producing excellent RPG games for SSI, the attention of Westwood was turned to strategy games by new owner Virgin Games, following a desire from the staff at Westwood to produce something different, and feeling that their new owners would be happy to oblige. Having acquired the licence for Dune, and following some complications which almost meant Dune II would never have been made (see our Dune II review for more details).

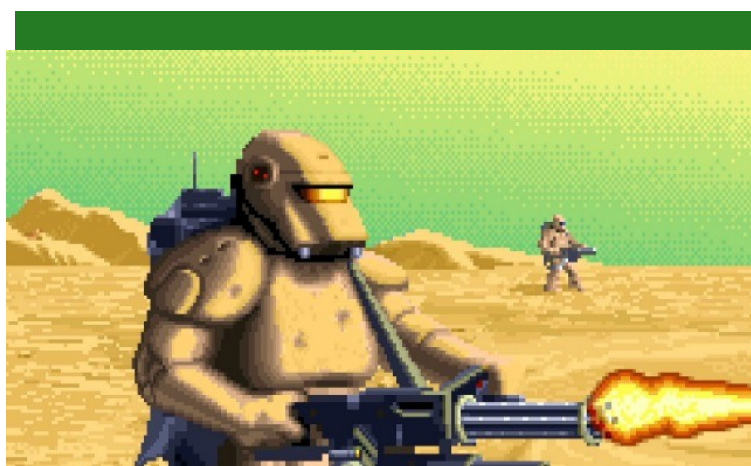
After this, however, Westwood returned to what they knew best, and the next several years saw a slew of fantasy games gain emerge from the Studio, who by this time were now referring to themselves as Westwood Studios, having abandoned the less exciting 'Associates' name. '92 to '94 marked the release of an entire trilogy of fantasy games in The Legend of Kyrandia trilogy, not based on a licence this time, but on concepts created by the game makers, a refreshing change of pace for the studio, who also created the first installment of the Lands of Lore series during this time, which was similar in play style to their previous hit Eye of the Beholder, but just as the Legend of Kyrandia series did, the game was an original IP, the team enjoying the freedom away from the AD&D licence to create all new fantasy worlds for their players to immerse themselves in.

Dune II innovated with successful use of Fog of War, absent from comparative game such as Herzog Zwei, and managing to set up a strong theme and do sufficient justice to the Dune licence. It would eventually wind up earning two sequels later down the line, with semi-remake Dune 2000 on PC and PSX, and 2001's Emperor: Battle For Dune. It set a standard for future games of its ilk to follow, creating a template that would go on to inspire the likes of Blizzard, with their fantasy WarCraft series and its sci-fi counterpart, StarCraft, amongst othercritically-acclaimed Lands of Lore: Guardians Of Destiny in 1997, the point-and-click Blade Runner for Windows, and then another expansion for Command And Conquer and another for Red Alert by the end of 1997, bringing total expansions and releases in the series to six during two years. This glut of releases carved Westwood a 6% share of the PC games market, catching the attention of Electronic Arts.

Lands of Lore: The Throne of Chaos released in 1993, and was another huge hit with the gaming press, though not as much as Eye of The Beholder, the largest criticism was that some of the puzzles were 'pathetically easy', but praised for its length and focus all round, whilst the Kyrandia trilogy was also received well by fans and the press, seen as an amalgamation of Secret of Monkey Island, Loom and King's Quest, some of the most popular Point-and-click adventures of the time. And with their games a success, and reaching out as far as the FM Towns and NEC PC-98, it would seem that Westwood could do no wrong going into 1995...



>> *The Westwood HQ*



>> *Excellent intro cinematics immersed players in the world of Dune.*



If everyone remembers Westwood Studios for one game, and one game alone, it's 1995's Command And Conquer. The definitive real-time strategy game for many, and a recognisable name even for those not familiar with the genre, or indeed gaming in general. But to take an objective look at the game, it isn't too dissimilar to its predecessor from the company, so what difference did Command And Conquer bring to the table? Its gameplay was very much similar, simply swapping the spice Melange for the Deus Ex Machina 'Tiberium', reducing the faction count to two, over the three of its spiritual cousin, and the added multiplayer that came as part of its release during a rise in the uptake of the internet in homes around the time, as well as popular LAN network play.

The truth is, Command And Conquer was not a revolution, but rather a refinement of the formula. After all, if it ain't broke, don't fix it; a wise choice from the developers. One of the biggest and most noticeable changes was the inclusion of FMV intro sequences prior to missions, mostly recorded using the sometimes questionable acting skills of the Westwood staff, with the exception of Joseph Kucan, who played the part of fan-favourite Kane, of the Brotherhood of Nod. These intro scenes, whilst at times certainly cheesy, were still an excellent means of immersing the player in the alternate universe that Command And Conquer finds itself in, and allows the player to better understand the story unfolding over the course of each campaign; indeed, the game's inclusion of an expansive story, and its portrayal in this grainy video manner was a major point of praise from fans and reviewers. The modern warfare setting was chosen thanks to the turbulent political climate of the 1990's, with the fall of the USSR.



>> Of all the (ahem) actors in the FMV Cutscenes, everyone loves Kane the most. Must be the beard.

Copies of Command And Conquer flew off of the shelves. Initially only available on DOS and Sega Saturn, following a deal between Virgin and Sega, and would remain a Saturn exclusive on consoles until 1997, a year after the Saturn port was released, but on PC the game sold 500,000 copies by 1996, and would go on to sell over 3 million on all platforms, aided by the speed and focus of the game, and no doubt in part due to its exposure on all three major home consoles at the time. This propelled the RTS genre forward proving that, despite the absence of a mouse and keyboard set up, that they could still be playable games on home consoles, quite a lucrative and accessible market in the mid '90's. The success of the game would of course go on to spur the creation of the rest of the Command And Conquer series, which would go on to sell 30 million units and elevate itself to the level of, or even eclipse rival games Age Of Empires, StarCraft or even Warcraft III.

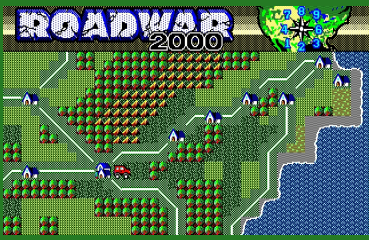
Even when confronted with a seemingly quick job like Monopoly, also released in 1995, Westwood made a million seller out of it when it appeared on Mac and Windows, selling steadily until 1998. After that, the focus of the company stayed firmly with Command And Conquer, releasing four successive entries in that series during 1996 and 1997: Covert Operations, an expansion, then the alternate universe to the alternate universe (don't think about it too hard) Red Alert (see page 16 for our review). Following that was two Red Alert expansions, Counterstrike and The Aftermath, all well received and well sold. The company then went back to RPG's, releasing the critically-acclaimed Lands of Lore: Guardians Of Destiny in 1997, the point-and-click Blade Runner for Windows, before another expansion for Command And Conquer and another for Red Alert by the end of 1997, bringing total expansions and releases in the series to six during two years. This glut of releases carved Westwood a respectable share of the PC games market, catching the attention of none other than Electronic Arts.

AFTER EA

In 1998, EA forked over \$122 million to buy Westwood as part of a deal to acquire Virgin Interactive's North American division. Many long-term employees were unhappy with the decision, and left the company, leaving several games unfinished, including Command And Conquer: Tiberian Sun. From there the studios focus was primarily Command And Conquer, but there was also a remake of Dune II, Dune 2000, as well as the subpar Emperor: Battle For Dune of 2001.

By 2003, EA made the decision to liquidate the company, at the time having a third of the original Westwood personnel, many of whom would go on to form Petroglyph Studios, remaining in the Las Vegas area: As of 2012, they had 115 employees, and remain an independent game studio. Adam Isgreen and Rade Stojsavljevic, along with one of the founders of the studio, Brett Sperry, would go on to form Jet Set Games in 2008, again in Las Vegas, meaning that the embers of the flame that was Westwood Studios, glowed still.

1986



1990



1989



1992



1997

2000



Westwood Studios

Sensible SOCCER

THE FACTS

Released: 1992 (Amiga)

Developer: Sensible Software

Publisher: Renegade

Also on: Mega Drive, SNES, Jaguar, Acorn Archimedes, Xbox Live, Windows Vista

Abandonia? YES

In an era where sports games' success and quality are defined based on their proximity to real life, Sensible Soccer may very well stand out as something of a curio from a bygone age. With its flagrant disregard for realism over gameplay, and with some of the least realistic looking player models since the days of the Atari 2600. But beneath this surface veneer lies a fantastically addictive video game that continues to entertain fans even today, over 25 years since its original release, with an assortment of games following in its wake, from the proclaimed sequel Sensible World of Soccer to the (far) less spectacular 2006 'reboot', it's very well time to look back at the original release of the game.



>> Looks like a nasty injury there... Best get the magic sponge.

Upon loading, Sensible Soccer (more affectionately referred to as 'Sensi' by fans) offers the player with a simple menu, giving you options for a quick pick up and play friendly, either with the CPU or with a friend, as well as options to play a longer campaign, from a 'playoff style' knockout Cup competition to a season commanding your team to the top of the table in the 'round robin' league mode, or even making up your own tournament. It's a great touch that means you won't get bored of playing the game any time soon with the variety on offer, and this is extended to the amount of teams you can choose from.

Whilst not as extensive as the options available in Sensible World Of Soccer, for example, it is nonetheless a good offering, especially compared to other games of the era. There is an option to pick from National teams, representing a variety of countries across the globe, but also the greatest club teams in the world, from the likes of Bayern Munich to Barcelona, Manchester United and more and, to top it all off, an assortment of ridiculous teams made by the Sensible Software team themselves, from a team entirely comprised of words beginning with A (The A Team, of course!) to Bad Words Utd (not what you'd expect), to the plain daft, such as Speling Mistaiaks, or Wobble Bottom. Plenty of bizarre English humour shines

through, and you could easily lose hours playing a league with your friends that culminates in Crimes United beating Crisp Flavours FC 2-1 on the final day. All of these teams are fully customisable too, so you can insert all your favourite teams, or even your Sunday League team, with minimal effort, excellent for avoiding licensing and making the game just as you please.

TURKEY			
(EUROPE)		IPEKGLU	
1 ENGIN IPEKGLU	G	OZALAN	
2 RECEP CETIN	RB	KESKIN	
3 ALPAY OZALAN	D	CETIN	KORKMAZ
4 GOKHAN KESKIN	D		
5 BULENT KORKMAZ	LB		
6 TUGAY KERIMGLU	RW		
7 OGUZ CETIN	M		
8 O. TEMIZKANGLU	M		
9 ABDULLAH ERCAN	LW		
10 HAMI MANDIRALI	A		
11 HAKAN SUKUR	A		
12 RUSTU RECEP	G		
13 EMRE ASIK	D		
14 TOLUNAY KAFKAS	M		
15 BULENT UYGUN	M		
16 ERTUGRUL SAGLAM	A		
COACH: FATIH TERIM		MANDIRALI - SUKUR	
		4-4-2	5-4-1
		5-3-2	3-5-2
		4-2-4	3-4-3
		5-2-3	ATTACK, DEFEND
		USER A	USER B
		USER C	USER D
		USER E	USER F

>> There's a great manager options menu, which allows you to craft your perfect team to take to cup glory!



>> Things get a bit hectic in the box...

But the most glorious part of Sensi's adaptation of the beautiful game is the after-touch. In real football of course, players rarely play the ball in a straight line, usually playing looping balls high into the air, or a curling shot that leaps into the top left corner, past the stretching fingertips of the goalkeeper. Sensible Soccer takes the 'Bend it like Beckham' concept and takes it to the next level, offering exaggerated yet believable football physics that see any area of the pitch to be a potential spot for a screamer of a goal, again using a mere single button and eight directions, and really brings the game to life, with fluidity rarely seen in football games of the time (indeed, for quite some time) that puts it far ahead of the rest. You can also see this in the speed of the game: The game plays at a tidy pace, making for frantic football fun; combine this with the quick games (a match is split into two halves, each of just 3 minutes), and you'll find yourself quickly immersing yourself in a football world, wasting away the hours as you try to take on the best of the best and win the coveted league title. And Sensi will make you work for the glory. The game is harder than nails, and with very little to exploit on the pitch, it'll often come down to your skill as a player, looking through your squad, trying to pick the best formation, of which there is a variety, and mixing and matching your players, searching for the perfect set-up that will conquer all

And last, but not least, the games rich atmosphere. As your players leave the tunnel and jog out on the pitch, they're greeted by thunderous applause and cheering, a crowd (you imagine, at least) on it's feet, clapping and roaring as your players line up. They don't just cheer when a goal is scored: They'll chant throughout the match, more frequently as the play gets faster, the action more frantic, rising in pitch as you clinch your joystick firmly in your hand, fuelling your own excitement and you desperately try to pound home the winning goal, or hold back the advances of your opposition. It's a fantastic representation of football, every second of it.

But of course, silly football names are all very well and good, but how does the game itself actually play? The answer is fantastically well, and beautifully concise. The entirety of Sensible Soccer is played using a single button, which would ordinarily sound like a recipe for disaster, especially with such a complicated game as football. And yet with such a simple control scheme offers so much to a player. A simple tap of the button will perform a pass in the direction you are facing to the nearest player on your team. Holding the button longer, however, will instead thump the ball upfield, and without the targeted passing gained from tapping the button, but offers the opportunity to avoid much of the middlemen on the field and get the ball straight to your star goalscorers. And unlike a lot of other soccer games, the ball isn't glued to your feet; you'll have to take care when moving your players to ensure you retain possession, and deftness with the control stick is a necessity: Make sure you use a

You may very well have gotten the impression, from this review, that Sensible Soccer is the best football game ever made. That may not be strictly true anymore, and even I have alluded to its successors outstripping it during this review. It's not a perfect game, by any means; the goalkeepers, in particular, are capable of doing some incredibly bone-headed things that could cost you the match (although it is thoroughly entertaining in multiplayer!). But Sensible Soccer IS a perfect encapsulation of football, and remains one of the genres defining titles to this day. Eventually those small pixelled players (stolen from Mega-Lo Mania, fact fans) become living, breathing football players, for you to scream at on your television, just like you can in real life. Excellent.

FINAL SCORE

9.0

TOP TEN

REAL TIME STRATEGY GAMES

We here at Abandoned Times think we know enough about RTS games to compile a list of our top ten favourites. So we have. Feel free to (inevitably) disagree with our decisions, and let us know what you think should or shouldn't be on this list in the Abandonia forums!



WARCRAFT: ORCS AND HUMANS #10

Blizzard's first computer-exclusive title, Warcraft boasted some excellent looking graphics, nicely scaled sprites, and includes a variety of units for both of the factions (orcs and humans) that makes gameplay varied and exciting. Also including a genuine form of resource micromanagement, it might be a little basic now with so many other games in the genre outstripping what it can do, but Warcraft still has something to offer.



ROME: TOTAL WAR

#9

The third game in the Total War series (and quite frankly any of them could have been placed here!), the Total War series covers a variety of time periods from Ancient Rome to the Napoleonic Wars, but we included Rome: Total War because pretending to be Caesar is a lot of fun, and formula for the large pitched battles you oversee has remained largely unchanged. It may not be a typical RTS as you'd imagine it, but is nevertheless a fantastic time sink with an extensive campaign mode that spans hundreds of years. It was even used by the BBC for their show Time Commanders.



STAR WARS: GALACTIC BATTLEGROUNDS

#8

This game may look very familiar for anyone who has ever played Age of Empires, as it was actually made by the same people that developed that game, but this is more than a mere reskin. The game (along with the absolutely necessary expansion Clone Campaigns) contains all the units and characters from the Star Wars films and more, with a large variety of factions from the popular sci fi universe, and not one but six different campaigns to sink your teeth into, as well as a custom scenario creator. For every fan of George Lucas' sci fi classic, the potential to recreate all those epic battles you saw in Star Wars or even make your own, this is a must have.



HOMEWORLD

#7

Homeworld is something of an oddity for RTS games: Because it strays substantially away from the standard 'kill em all' mentality that comes as part of the 4X nature of many games in the genre. The focus of Homeworld is instead on exploration in a search for your species Homeworld. Combat does still appear, however, but the emphasis on a campaign objective other than the annihilation of your foes is commendable and noteworthy. Homeworld also features an intuitive UI and excellent looking graphics, from huge planets to the blinking lights of the various spaceships you can create, Homeworld is certainly worth a look in if you're after something a bit different.



AGE OF EMPIRES II

#6

Age Of Empires 2 was somewhat different from the standard fare of the RTS genre of the time by focussing on a historical, non-fiction setting, as well as its inclusion of a variety of playable factions (or Civilizations, as it is referred to here), 13 in fact, over a broad spectrum of powerful kingdoms and empires from history, such as the Mongols or Teutons. With the usual gathering of resources and manufacture of armies to conquer your enemies, it's not an entirely trendsetting take on the genre, but it does bring enough to the table to make it a unique game. Alongside this, the inclusion of five campaigns offers enough gameplay variety to keep you interested for hours upon end. Something of a cult classic, Age of Empires II can be found on Steam these days for a reasonable price.

COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT #5

Whilst the original Command And Conquer may be the game that kickstarted the famous series, here at AT we have more of a fondness for its spinoff, Red Alert. The story is the usual fluff that precedes the slaughter, where Albert Einstein builds a time machine and travels back in time to kill Hitler and prevent the rise of the Nazi's, only to return to his present (the late '40's) and realise that the Soviet Union were pretty keen on conquering Europe as well. Whoops. What follows this insanity is a fantastic array of missions on both sides of the battle, with the typical assortment of Command And Conquer soldiers for you to sic on your foes. With an excellent theme and soundtrack, whilst any of the C&C titles could have appeared on this list, there's room in our hearts for Red Alert.

TOTAL ANNIHALATION #4

It was a difficult choice to make on this list, but we feel that Total Annihilation deserves the number four spot. Another highly innovative game that appears on this list, Total Annihilation differed itself from its mid-90's peers with a standout resource system that very much challenged a player to balance resources with maintenance of an army. Speaking of armies, the amount of units available for players to control on the field at once, with patches allowing players to control up to 5,000 units per side, is highly impressive for 1997, and the variety of these units makes the game highly enjoyable to play. Whilst the story is mostly fluff, the true testament to the strength of the game and its gameplay is the number of players that still play it to this day.



#3 SINS OF A SOLAR EMPIRE

Described by its creators as 'RT4X', Sins of a Solar Empire sets players about with conquering various star systems whilst defending against the advances of the other factions in the game, either through sheer military might, diplomacy or sheer Keynesian economics. It has great detailing for astronomic anomalies, such as ice or asteroid fields, gas giants, space junk and more, fully giving you the impression of this dangerous void through which your conquering fleet creeps. The variety of planets and the strategic advantages they grant to players leads to a highly tactical game that is very much worth your time.



#2



WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR

The Warhammer 40,000 universe has been pretty well treated over the years in the video games department (look at our review of Space Hulk for more on this), but Dawn Of War is easily one of the best. The unique squad mechanics very well ties it in with the original tabletop game, and gives it it's own identity in the genre. With an excellently written campaign that sees you take control of the Blood Ravens Space Marine chapter in a yarn with many twists and turns inside the brooding 40k universe, four very much different factions to control, and a variety of customisation options (we're very much proud of our all-pink Space Marine faction), it's a fully recommended game for RTS fans.



Whilst the original appeared earlier on this list, there is no way we could neglect its very much well known sequel. It was very much a difficult decision as whether or not to place this game at the number one slot. Whilst other games on this list may be far more innovative, Warcraft III's impact on the Real-Time Strategy genre, and on gaming at large, simply cannot be ignored. Four well-balanced factions (Orcs, Humans, Night Elves and Undead) are yours to command, and the gameplay never fails to get old. It sells itself not necessarily on the amount of change it brings to the table, but in how well it presents it, and the game is certainly fantastically well done. Selling well over four million copies, including shifting over 1 million within a month of its release. Having also accumulated many Game Of The Year awards, as well as inspired the creation of the MOBA genre after modification to its game engine lead to the creation of DOTA, which now pulls in players the world over, hosting enormous tournaments that offer millions of pounds in prize money, its influence is unquestionable, None of which may have been possible without Warcraft III.

#1

WARCRAFT III



SPACE HULK®

THE FACTS

Released: June 1993 (PC)

Made By: Electronic Arts

Published By: Electronic Arts

Other Platforms: Amiga (1993) and PC-98 (1995)

Abandonia?: YES

In the depths of space, no-one can hear you scream. The ship appeared as if out of nowhere, a mere faint ripple as the ancient metallic carcass materialised in reality. The Emperor himself has dictated that your chapter, the Dark Angels, must board this Hulk, and purify it of all xenos filth. You prepare your storm bolter, see your brother marines do the same, all adorned in the holy terminator armour. Yet if there were genestealers aboard, as was suspected, then this shield would be of little use...

Yes of course it's the classic strategy game, Space Hulk, a real-time strategy game released by Electronic Arts in 1993, and based on the classic board game of the same name made by UK company Games Workshop four years prior. It's an atmospheric and tense game, as you slowly wind your way through the tight corridors of the titular Space Hulk, an enormous derelict spaceship that appears from warp-space (think a black hole meets Pandora's box – there's a lot of unspeakable evil in there!) and it falls to you, the Space Marines, to board the ship, completing a variety of missions as you do so. You can either play missions that were ripped straight from the board game or the Deathwing expansion, or you can instead opt for one of many one and two squad missions created especially for this game. You certainly won't be left wanting for things to do, that's for certain!

The game boots up to a brilliant introductory sequence to get you right in the mood to slaughter some xenos, using some great pixel art that still looks fantastic today (they just don't make 'em like this any more...), with blood dripping from the mouth of a suspiciously Giger-esque alien (or should that be Alien? Ahem) to a scene with a marine mowing down several of the blighters, where you'll swear you can almost hear him shout "you want some?!". It's a great touch and full credit to the artists for putting real effort into something most people probably skipped because of the loading times...

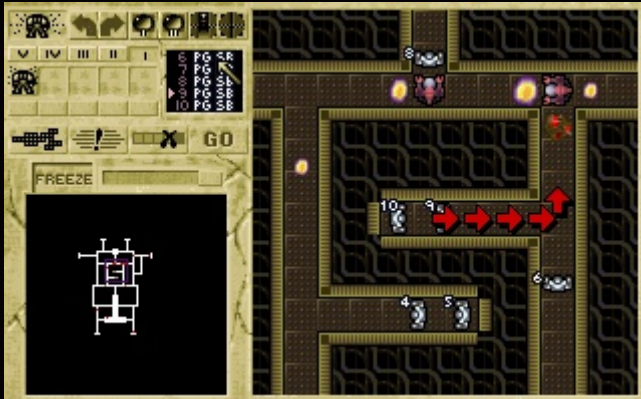


>> *The ever-present threat of the genestealers makes encounters tense*



Upon loading to the menu, players are presented with several different options for play, either to dive right into the game by playing a one-shot mission either as One Squad or, if you are feeling particularly brave, by taking control on two Marine squads at the same time. These are particularly brutal to the uninitiated (as I discovered to my chagrin during my youth), and are predominantly intended for play by those a little more familiar with the game.

Alternatively, you can opt to take a slightly slower approach by clicking on the 'Deathwing' option at the bottom of the menu, which will run you through a storied campaign through interconnected missions. It's worth playing this mode first to get yourself acquainted with Space Hulk and how it plays.



>> Whilst you do get a tactical map with which to control your marines with at times, the rapid timer keeps you on your toes.

Despite the first impression a player might get from the first-person perspective the game uses, this is very much a strategy game at heart. Whilst it is predominantly real-time (hence why it's getting featured in the 'zine), the game still takes cues from its analogue cousin by including a tactical map (look up!) where you can see the placing of all your Marines and any oncoming enemies for you to plan appropriately. But you can't completely control the game from here, as a harrowing time limit, constantly ticking down just above the map reminds you that, whilst you may struggle against the inevitable, sooner or later, you'll have to face the Xeno horde...

Thankfully, once in first-person view, the game is very much similar to Hired Guns, with players able to control one character directly either with just the mouse, or mouse and keyboard (my preferred option) in Real-Time, and you can easily swap Marines at any time by clicking on their window. And don't worry, your Terminator Warriors automatically go into Overwatch when not actively controlled, meaning that they will shoot at any Xenos that move into their Line of Sight. Tactical positioning of your Marines is paramount to your survival in the tight corridors of the hulk...

The visuals are respectable for the time, giving a good feel of creeping around an abandoned spaceship, with the Genestealers looking especially menacing when they run up in your face (it's certainly quite terrifying!), and the sound effects are pleasant enough, in particular the use of voice samples during missions, as your marines roar 'AMBUSH!' as Genestealers jump out at them in an effort to tear your squad to shreds, or even before the mission, when your Sergeant gives his mission briefing (although he does look like he is still feeling the effects of anaesthetic after the dentist with his rubbery mouth movement).



Expect enemy contact from here onward

>> These sections are fully voice-acted, allowing you to hear the Brother-Sergeants best Jonathan Ross impression...

It is worth noting though, that for all its brilliance, Space Hulk can be, and often is, a brutally hard, even downright unfair at times. The first mission you play in the campaign, for example, places a Genestealer entry point right next to your squad, and many attempts at this mission were cut short as a single enemy tore through the whole group, leaving some missions to finish as quickly as 30 seconds in. Whilst the difficulty level does keep encounters intense and the player cautious, and is very successful at making the player and his marines feel vulnerable and encourage careful and tactical gameplay, there are numerous occasions where the game seems deliberately engineered to kill players swiftly, and you will hear 'All Terminators Dead' often before you leave the tight and musty corridors of this Space Hulk...

Despite its flaws, it's a fun game, full of atmosphere and produced during an era where Electronic Arts were famed for their quality and not their cashgrab efforts. It did well enough to earn itself a sequel, Space Hulk: Venegence of the Blood Angels, which was released on 3D0 in 1995, and ported later to Saturn and Playstation, as well of course as PC. It may not be a perfect game, but it is certainly worthy of your attention, and is available on Abandonia for download.



Final Score

7.5

COMMAND & CONQUER RED ALERT™

The first major follow-up to the success that was Command And Conquer, Red Alert is a spin-off series that takes place in an alternate universe to our own.

You get the sense that the game isn't taking itself too seriously with the plot, as it involves Albert Einstein travelling back in time from 1946 to kill Adolf Hitler after he is released from prison following the failed Putsch of 1923, which he somehow achieves by shaking Hitler's hand (?). Having prevented World War 2, Einstein returns to the present. To literally no-one's surprise, things don't go quite as planned, as the Soviets replace the Nazis as the powerful force that tears its way through Europe, starting an enormous war. Oops.

As far as gameplay goes, Red Alert barely strays from the template set out by its forebears; after all, if it ain't broke, don't fix it, and even uses the exact same game engine the original Command and Conquer used. There's a campaign for each side, Allies and Soviet, spread across two discs thanks to the continued use of FMV cutscenes, something the series is well-known for (it's also worth noting that fan favourite Kane appears in these games through more bizarre plot) Each of these discs also contains 14 different missions per faction that make up the campaign for the respective forces, and these are varied, with one mission early on tasking you with recovering a captured Albert Einstein, for example, and provide a good level of challenge for players, and is easy and intuitive to control.



Whilst there might only be two factions in the game, compared to later entries in the series, Red Alert does an excellent job of off-setting the Soviets and the Allies to provide two different approaches to playing the game, making them feel more unique over being mere reskins, something many of its competitors tend to suffer from. It's not so much 'Rock-Paper-Scissors' as it's substantially more subtle, but both sides have their weaknesses. The Soviets, for example, have only one naval unit, a submarine, but this is more practical for gathering intelligence than combat. Of course, this would put the Soviets at a disadvantage on maps with a lot of water, but of course little water on a map would level the playing field (pardon the pun), and it's the small subtleties between the two forces that makes the game so interesting. You as the player are always thinking about how best to approach any given situation.

THE FACTS

RELEASED: 1996 (DOS/WIN95)
DEVELOPER: WESTWOOD STUDIOS
PUBLISHER: VIRGIN INTERACTIVE
ALSO ON: PSX (1997)
ABANDONIA?: NO



This extends to the faction-exclusive units each side has at their disposal (a personal favourite being the Tesla Coils of the Soviets) which are steadily introduced to players throughout the campaign, giving a great sense of progression as you gradually get more ways to blow the everloving s**t out of your enemies.

Red Alert has aged pretty well in the visual department as well, with the isometric 2D view that has a good amount of detail looking significantly better than many of the early 3D games that came out around the same time as Red Alert. If I did have a small gripe, and it is small in more ways than one, is that I find the infantry units to be a little bit on the small side. I understand that next to fighter planes or flame towers these guys aren't supposed to look particularly big, but I often find it irritating having to search for them, as even with the green health bars above their heads they are easy to miss at times, but this is really a small nitpick in all fairness.

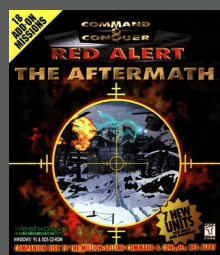


A fantastic draw back in the day was playing the multiplayer online (especially getting the multiplayer-exclusive Nuclear Silo!), and whilst this is probably still an option nowadays with privately hosted servers or programs like GameRanger, most of your playtime will be spent playing the single player campaigns or skirmish mode, and thankfully these will keep your interest for more than enough time to get the value out of Command And Conquer: Red Alert. Some might criticise it for sticking a little too closely to the norms of the genre (as they were at the time) and not expanding drastically over the original game, but the theme of the game and its sheer sense of fun more than make up for this. It might also be worth mentioning that the soundtrack, put together by Frank Klepacki, who had also produced the soundtrack of Dune II and the Kyrandia games, was absolutely fantastic, especially the unforgettable Hell March; very much evocative of the mood of the game.

Command and Conquer: Red Alert was ported to the PlayStation in 1997, and whilst noticeable poorer in performance compared to the PC version (of course), it is nevertheless a solid effort. Red Alert also received two expansion packs (see boxout), Red Alert: Counterstrike and Red Alert: Aftermath, which were surprisingly also released for the PSX, but as a bundle in 1998 known as Red Alert: Retaliation. There are plenty of updates, patches, hell even open source remakes of this classic title, and you owe it to yourself to find a way to play it. Highly recommended.

FINAL SCORE

9.5



The two expansion packs were produced by Intelligent Games, a developer from London, under the careful gaze of Westwood themselves during 1997, mostly adding new units to fight with, like the excellent Tesla Tank, maps, objectives in games, and adding to the already excellent score with more music. Whilst Aftermath added more of the maps and units available, Counterstrike added some hilarious missions and alternate modes, such as SoyLent Green mode, where humans can be used to generate credits (with some suitably gruesome crunches... mwa hahahaha!) and the mission 'It came from Red Alert', a possible nod to 'It came from the desert' by Cinemaware, which also involves you running around fighting giant ants.



Tavern

As you step out from the cold night air,
a familiar voice calls out to you from
behind.

'Come right in,' the bartender says to
you, flashing a knowing smile.

'What would you like to drink?'

Objects present

food.

wine.

Obvious exits

south east west up

>

>TEXT ADVENTURES

Ahh, the humble text adventure. Akin to sitting in a high-backed chair reading an excellent novel on a cold winters night... Ok, maybe that sounds a bit pretentious (and it is), but you get my point. Unlike many other games, text adventures are for people who wish to immerse themselves in an unravelling narrative of which they are at the very epicentre (at least, usually) which, like all the best books, keep you glued to your screen for hours, keying in commands as you move further and further into your adventure.

With primitive graphic displays (if any) in the 1970's, the practicality for such adventures that did not need pictures, though many used them, and the realtive ease of programming them of course led to something of a glut in the late seventies and early eighties. From the likes of Colossal Cave Adventure to Zork, Trinity to the piss-your-pants funny of Hitchhikers' Guide to the Galaxy, made with the assistance of the late Douglas Adams himself, fans of such games were very much spoilt for choice. Some companies, such as Infocom, became well known for publishing many such titles. With some fiendishly clever puzzles, and others that were just downright fiendish (Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy famously requires a single specific item to complete the game from a choice made by the player at the very start; Douglas Adams made sure that every time it was the item you didn't pick!), text adventure games were very much popular.

But with the increased power of many machines, the text adventure needed more to keep itself relevant. The added horsepower of computers allowed developers of such games to begin to include graphics to set the stage, command lines went from 'kill snake' to being capable of recognising complex english sentences with multiple commands in a singular line. The introduction of 'feelies', widely attributed to Infocom's Deadline in 1982, added the possibility of one of humanity's favourite things: Gubbins. Additional bits and bobs, like journals or a detective's note, or newspaper clippings, helped bring the game to life, a true piece of interactive fiction. Sadly this all wound up by the 1990's, commercially at least, giving way to the Point-and-Click adventure of Sierra Online and Lucasarts. But the text adventure has so much to offer. Games are still being produced today, almost always for free, and can be played in browser. Simply put, I think the medium still has much to offer.

I raise the topic of text adventures for a simple purpose. With the long nights of winter drawing in, and the familiar dEcor of Christmas upon us, we'll all inevitably find ourselves sitting around for a few hours, enjoying a few hard earned days off, to calm and find the time to enjoy that book we've been meaning to read, or the last few episodes of that TV show we were watching, or perhaps even give a text adventure a go? The cosiness of a warm fire, sat on the sofa with a nice cup of tea by your side, playing A Mind Forever Voyaging may very well be the perfect relaxing game to play this Christmas to stave off the boredom that usually sets in around December the 28th. Whilst this genre has been commercially unviable for a long time, there are plenty of new games being made that will keep even text adventure veterans suitable interested. So go on, give a text adventure a go this Christmas. Just watch out for Grues.

CHRISTMAS GAMES

As the Christmas season rolls around and we all spend our time sitting around eating too much and partying, we here at Abandoned Times have put together a little Christmas stocking full of festive games to get you in the mood for the holidays. You might also find them useful for solitude from the in-laws...

Cannon Soccer – Amiga, 1993

Released as a cover disk in the UK on the front of Amiga Format 54 (I still have it around here somewhere!), Cannon Soccer was a blend of Cannon Fodder and Sensible Soccer that tasked you with running around on a football pitch as a squad of troopers, slaughtering football players, who are dressed in a suspiciously familiar blue-and-white strip with black shorts... There is also a more conventional level, but that is substantially less hilarious than the first mission. It's also noteworthy for having a green clear plastic floppy disk, which just looks excellent!

Jazz Jackrabbit: Holiday Hare '94– PC/DOS, 1994

Jazz Jackrabbit is a little known mascot whose games were released by Epic Megagames on IBM compatibles in the mid '90's. It plays in a similar manner to the regular Jazz Jackrabbit games, featuring the same madcap action and fast paced platforming, but this time with a Christmas theme slapped on top (obviously, otherwise it wouldn't have made this list). It adds a 3-level episode to the game, and was released as shareware initially before later making it out as an extra on most pressings of the CD version. The following year would see Holiday Hare '95 release through shareware, which added two new worlds to the mix.

Christmas NiGHTS into Dreams – Saturn, 1996

Another cover disc (this time with a c) from Sega Saturn Magazine, but was also bundled with certain Saturn games across the pond in North America, Christmas NiGHTS into Dreams added two new levels to the NiGHTS experience. It also took advantage of the Sega Saturn's built-in clock, something that seems to have been a point of pride for the console's owners, to change aesthetics, or pull an April fools day prank on April the 1st. It also included a Sonic character model to control to rub more salt into Sega fans' wounds.

Christmas Lemmings – Amiga/Atari ST, 1993/4

Everyone's favourite pixelated suicidal anthropomorphic creatures made an appearance in a Christmas game of their own, adding 32 more levels and of course a pleasant Christmas theme. It's still the same lemmings we all know and love, but this time with more snow, and with the lemmings now adorned in festive clothing. And, quite frankly, that should be enough for you to go out and play it.



ALIEN BREED



 **Abandoned** *Times*

5

