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WHY YOU'LL **WANT** SUPREME COMMANDER <<
BATTLEFIELD 2: SPECIAL FORCES PREVIEWED <<
TEKKEN 5 REVIEW <<
GTA: SAN ANDREAS REVIEW <<
CREATIVE **ZEN MICRO** HARDWARE REVIEW <<
SAMSUNG **SYNCMASTER 730BF** VIEWED <<
JAWS UNLEASHED PREVIEW <<
MAJOR **RAGE 2005** UPDATE <<

A large, stylized title for the Quake 4 hands-on preview. The word "QUAKE" is in a large, glowing, serif font, and the number "4" is also large and glowing. Below it, the words "HANDS-ON PREVIEW!" are written in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The background is dark and textured, with a glowing orange and yellow light source on the left side.

[Yeah, that's right. We've played it! And it rocks!]



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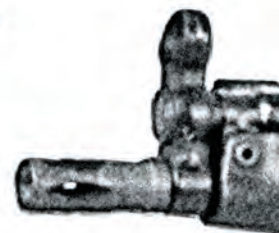
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CONTENTS

REGULARS

- 8 Ed's Note
- 10 Bytes
- 28 Multiplayer
- 34 Opinion – The Domain of The_Basilisk
- 36 Opinion – Miktar's Meanderings
- 38 Opinion – On the Wire
- 40 Inbox
- 94 Tech News
- 118 Game.dev
- 124 Lifestyle: Anime
- 128 Lifestyle: Music & Books
- 130 Lifestyle: Board Games
- 132 Subscriptions
- 134 Game Over

HARDWARE

- 96 Samsung SyncMaster 730BF
- 98 Creative Zen Micro
- 99 AMD Athlon 64 FX-57
- 100 GeCube X850 XT Uniwise
- 101 SilverStone ST65ZF Zeus PSU
- 102 D-Link Wireless 108G Gaming Router
- 103 Thermaltake AquaBay M1 (Flow Indicator)
- 104 Casio EX-Z750
- 105 Thermaltake Aquabay M2 (Radiator)
- 106 H@rdCor3: CPU Coolers

FEATURES

- 20 Hot Coffee
- 24 rAge 2005 Preview
- 32 Tatsuya Minami, Capcom Japan
- 42 The 12 Signs of Gaming Addiction
- 46 Blog: Guild Wars

PREVIEWS

- 52 Quake 4
- 58 Supreme Commander
- 62 The Movies
- 66 Shadow of the Colossus
- 68 Jaws Unleashed
- 70 Odama
- 72 Condemned
- 74 Battlefield 2: Special Forces
- 76 From Russia with Love

REVIEWS

- 80 GTA: San Andreas [PC]
- 82 Sacred Expansion: Underworld [PC]
- 84 Pariah [PC]
- 85 Settlers: Heritage of Kings: Expansion [PC]
- 86 World Snooker Championship 2005 [PC]
- 88 Tekken 5 [PS2]
- 90 Shin Megami Tensei: Lucifer's Call [PS2]
- 92 Cricket 2005 [PS2]



ON THE DVD

ADD-ONS

Battlefield 2 Cooperative | DOOM III Map Pack
| NAG Sizzler August 2005 | The Escapist 1 | The
Escapist 2 | The Escapist 3 | The Escapist 4

ANIME

Burst Angel | Full Metal Alchemist | Gunslinger Girl
| LO Magazine September 2005 | Songs for AOI
House

CHEATS

CheatBook-DataBase 2005 | Update - April 2005 |
Update - July 2005 | Update - June 2005 | Update
- May 2005

DEMOS

Codename Panzers Phase 2 | Fahrenheit | F.E.A.R.
| Moto GP 3 | Professor Fizzwizzle | War World
- Tactical Combat

DRIVERS

ATI Catalyst 5.7 XP

FLASH

20001 | Caveman | Marooned | Stone-trekkin |
Super Mario Physics | The deadly ears

FULL GAMES

A Game with a Kitty | Wesnoth

GAME.DEV

1st - National Defense | 2nd - NonexV1 | 2nd
- Prometheus | 3rd - Arkapongtris | Game Maker
6.1 | Tutorial - First game | Tutorial - Maze | Tutorial
- Platformer | Tutorial - Shooter

MOVIES

A Few Good G-men | Band of Cousins | Bone |
Call of Duty 2 Xbox 360 | Coke World of WarCraft
| Condemned Xbox 360 | Dead Rising Xbox 360 |
Demonik Xbox 360 | DOOM Movie | EA Xbox 360
| Empire at War trailer 1 | Empire at War trailer 2
| Fable: the Lost Chapters | Final Fantasy XI Xbox
360 | Full Auto Xbox 360 | Ghost Recon 3 Xbox 360
| JcB Video | Kameo Xbox 360 | Lumines | Marvel
Nemesis | Need for Speed Most Wanted | NHL Xbox
360 | PGR3 Xbox 360 | Quake 4 Xbox 360 | rAge
2004 | Resident Evil 5 | Serious Sam 2 | Shattered
Faith | Still Seeing Green | Test Drive Unlimited Xbox
360 | The Darkness Xbox 360 | The Elder Scrolls IV
Xbox 360 | V for Vendetta | Vietcong 2

PATCHES

Battlefield 2 patch 1.02

PHOTOS & SCREENSHOTS

Guild Wars | Matrix Online

UTILITIES

DivX 5.21 XP | NAG CD Database | QuickTime
Alternative | Winamp 5.094



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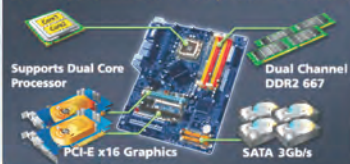
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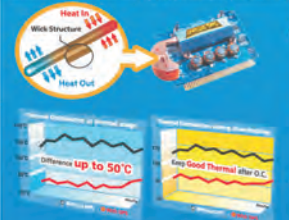
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ED'S NOTE



SAVE THE SNAILS

THE OTHER DAY SOMEONE told me I should buy a battery powered car instead of upping my engine capacity to suit my paycheque every year. Now I'm all for saving the planet, but there are limits here – at least we've got a fair to strong idea of what Kuala bears and humpback whales look like [endless hours of footage, in fact, and from multiple angles, all preserved on film for eternity].

So if they all do disappear one day, we won't need dedicated teams of scientists on Discovery Channel trying to figure out what colour a brown bear might have been by analysing fossilised bear pooch under a microscope. The same goes

for Earth's natural resources, such as fossil fuels. I don't see a petrol slot on my PC case, so why the hell should I care about how much oil we have left under the skin of the planet? I believe that

when we do finally run out of oil, it'll solve more problems than it creates. Then I might get a battery powered car. So don't worry about the dwindling rainforests because we can ship in more air from Mars. Animal species disappearing by the hour. Who cares? We know more than enough about all the animals on the planet already. If this ozone thing blows, we can always move into little domes connected by tunnels, and if the polar ice caps melt, great, it'll bring the coastline much closer to where I live and as a bonus clean up some of those dirty costal towns. As long as they keep piping power to my PC and making games, I need never worry about anything else ever again.

Big bad NAG

I'VE BEEN ACCUSED OF furthering my own evil agenda every time I write something in this space about how well NAG is

doing. But these people are probably just jealous, living out their meaningless empty lives matching up their mom's Tupperware lids to the bottoms on a Saturday night. But anyway, back to world domination. This is an incredible issue of NAG. We've got the massive F.E.A.R. demo on the DVD, I went to London for some exclusive hands-on time with the stunning Quake IV, we're kicking off a game development section, but that's not all...

In fact, we had to increase the size of the magazine by 12 extra pages this month – something that'll be happening more often by the look of things. All good for you and all good for you!

rAge and more rAge

IN MORE BLATANT PLUGGING... rAge 2005 is almost here. In fact, by the time you read this we'll be less than one month away. There is something you need to know – I incorrectly stated that rAge starts on the 29th instead of the 30th of September last issue. I must have had a mental blockage somewhere because I've been talking about rAge, meeting about rAge, writing about rAge and I still get the damn date wrong in the magazine. Sam, my super efficient event organiser called me to point it out – she seemed concerned on the surface, but I sensed a little gloating deep down that I'd actually screwed up for once.

Solution: Read the following: rAge 2005 is from 30 September to 2 October. Write it down.

Oh, this is very last minute! We have confirmation that Fatal1ty, the world's number one gamer, will be at rAge this year. If you're lucky you might get a chance to go up against him and win R20,000 or consolation prizes from ABIT and Zalman - if you can even get a single frag off him.

Goodnight everybody, goodnight!

Michael James [Editor]

COVER STORY

I'LL BE APPALLINGLY HONEST here. Anytime id Software and Activision invite me anywhere, I always have a good time. But for all the love and attention I get, I have to give something back and that something is usually the cover of NAG. Does this make me a sell-out? Perhaps, but hey, I'd probably go as far as to change the name of the whole magazine just to get a chance to play Quake IV a few months before anyone else will, especially when the magical carrot of a deathmatch game with the guys from id is up for grabs! Besides, I sold my soul a long time ago to Intel. So how's a little full frontal marketing going to hurt now? Besides, given the same circumstances, what would you have done? Enjoy the preview. You will love this game – probably. I'd like to thank Tim and Suzanne at Activision UK for an excellent trip and Tim and Todd from id Software for taking the time to correct my wine drinking etiquette and pretending that my Quake DDR with Strogg karaoke idea might be the next big thing. :) Note to all game publishers – I'm always available for any trips that involve luxury five star hotel accommodation, dinner at world class restaurants and privileged exclusive previews of new games.



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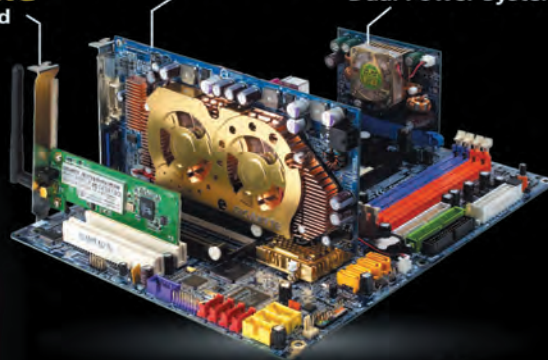
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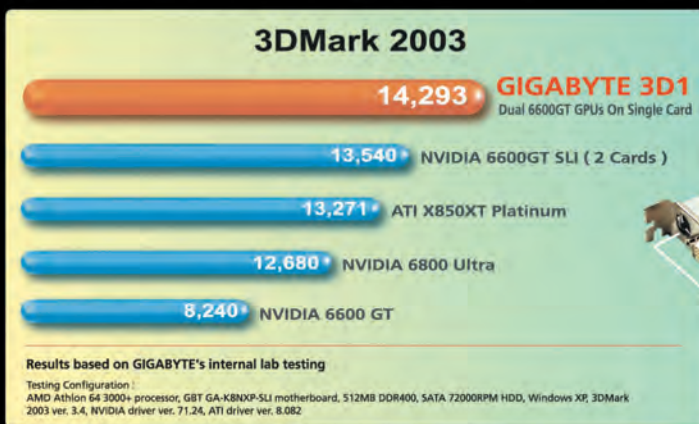


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BYTES

ITALY GETS 2006 WCG GRAND FINAL

The Autodromo Nazionale Monza in Monza, Italy, has been selected as the venue for the 2006 World Cyber Games Grand Final. Monza is the first European host city to host this international gaming tournament, having to bid against Sydney, Australia, Cancun, Mexico, and Shanghai, China, to win the vote.

"Our City Administration is deeply interested in any event related to the younger generation and in which youth are involved with sport and cultural activities. That's why we are thrilled and greatly honoured that Monza has been chosen as the host city for the world's largest e-Sports event next year," Monza mayor Michele Faglia said in a statement. "Being the first European City to host the World Cyber Games Grand Final will help us strengthen the relationship between the young generation and these new electronic activities."

More console stats

It seems every financial analysis company has something to say about the future of consoles. Strategy Analytics claims that, over the next seven years, 200 million consoles will be sold. It also reckons that Microsoft will prove a worthy rival to Sony, but the veteran will maintain dominance, while Nintendo will continue to suffer. The company breaks down the total projected sales to about 121 million PlayStation 3 units, 59 million Xbox 360s and 18 million Nintendo Revolutions.

Resident Evil 5

Capcom's upcoming Resident Evil 5 will be available on both PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360. At present, no release scheduling information is known, but it is expected that it will be quite a while before this game is released. Capcom has stated that delivering an intense atmosphere is its primary goal, and visual and audio capabilities of the next-generation consoles will be extensively used.



PLAYSTATION 3 UPDATE

PS3 physics

At a recent conference, Sony revealed that the Havoc Complete and AEGIA physics modelling solutions will be included in the PlayStation 3 SDK, which excited developers considerably. Additionally, technology demos of games planned for the console were shown off, with breathtaking graphics very much on display. Looks like PS3 games are going to be something to see!

Router functions dropped from PS3

Sony has scrapped plans to include router functionality in its upcoming PlayStation 3, on the grounds that it would drive the unit cost too high, and due to the fact that broadband users generally have routers already. Sony plans to put the three specified Gigabit Ethernet ports to some use, nevertheless, perhaps allowing the PS3 to act as a basic hub or switch.

JOHN ROMERO LEAVES MIDWAY

John Romero, who until recently was project lead for Midway's Gauntlet: Seven Sorrows has left the company. According to both him and the company, the development schedule will not be affected by this turn of events, and the game is still expected to be released in October, available for PC, PlayStation 2 and Xbox.



Havok looks to multi-processor future

Havok is developing a new generation of physics, dynamics and animation engine called HydraCore. The technology will take advantage of multi-core capabilities emerging in the gaming sector, and will run on PC, Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3.



TEKKEN CHARACTERS VISIT URBAN REIGN

Namco's upcoming Urban Reign will feature cameo appearances by several Tekken characters, including two playable characters. In addition to a standard versus mode, the game's multiplayer game types will include one in which each player has certain objects to protect, with the aim to destroy the opponent's items, and a weapon battle where players battle over possession of the only weapon in the arena.



CERAMIC WHITE PSP

Sony has started introducing a range of alternatively coloured PlayStation Portables. The ceramic PSP white is available, in Japan only, as part of a value pack that contains, in addition to standard accoutrements headphones, remote control, a pouch and hand strap.

PSP WEB BROWSER

Sony has finally addressed a huge oversight by providing a Web browser for its PlayStation Portable. A free-to-download upgrade has become available that implements this feature, as well as providing several enhancements to multimedia functions, including new video (MPEG-4) and audio (ATRAC3plus) format support. In addition, the update implements security fixes that disallow the use of bootleg software.

AGE OF THE MMOG?

Ensemble Studios, responsible for Age of Empires and subsequent titles, has recently started looking for a Senior Server Programmer "... to assist in creating a world-class massively multiplayer game." No doubt we'll be seeing more about this sometime in the near future.

PlayStation®2 TOP TWENTY



1. Tekken 5



2 GT4



3 God of War



4 Brian Lara Cricket 2005



5 Fantastic Four



6 Destroy All Humans



7 Charlie & the Choc Factory



8 F1 05



9 Killer 7



10 Metal Gear Solid 3



11 Area 51



12 SingStar Pop



13 Worms 4: Mayhem



14 Madagascar



15 MX VS ATV



16 Street Racing Syndicate



17 Outlaw Volleyball



18 Dynasty Warriors 5



19 Conspiracy



20 Enthusia

DIGITAL HOME STATISTICS

Sony with 23% and Microsoft with just fewer than 15%, currently have the largest shares of the digital home market. Sony's success is largely thanks to the versatility of the PlayStation 2, while Microsoft's runner-up spot is due to growing success of the Xbox. It is interesting to note that consoles are exerting such an influence. Although, as devices go, PCs dominate sales. Only about 3% of PCs sold are media PCs, therefore not contributing much to these figures. Both of the leading companies are banking a lot on their upcoming consoles.

Scarface and 50 Cent franchises set to grow

Vivendi Universal plans not only to bring the two abovementioned names to computer games, but to set them up as ongoing properties. The company hopes to bring out at least a sequel to each.



XBOX 360 ON TRACK

Microsoft adds keyboard controller to 360

A new peripheral has recently been revealed for the Xbox 360 console. A mini keyboard roughly the same size as that found on a BlackBerry fits onto the bottom of a standard joypad in between the two sides of the controller. It will apparently be used for text chat communication over Xbox Live or MSN Messenger.

Xbox 360 will feature parental control

The Xbox 360 will include built-in parental control functionality that will allow parents to set rating levels that the unit will run. It will also feature a means to restrict Internet chat room access.



BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH II

A sequel to EA's recent Lord of the Rings real-time strategy title is being planned. It is interesting to note that the company has forgone the more usual approach of first expanding an existing game, but this seems consistent with a general change of direction in the franchise. The game will return to a more traditional free-form building style, rather than offering fixed points for players to build on. It will also feature naval combat. While the naval aspect has been sadly lacking in RTS games of late (neither WarCraft III nor C&C: Generals featured it), and will be welcome in its return, this development begs a question: where in the Lord of the Rings is there any naval action? The game is expected early in 2006.

NINTENDO GAMES IMMINENT

October will see the release of several highly anticipated GameCube titles. Pokemon XD: Gale of Darkness, Fire Emblem: Path of Radiance and Dance Dance Revolution: Mario Mix will all be released in the US, with European releases likely to follow soon after.

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ANIMEWORX TEKKEN 5, GOD OF WAR LAUNCH

ON THE 14TH AND 16TH of July, AnimeWorX and Ster-Kinekor Games hosted the launch of two of the largest Console title releases of the year at The Brightwater Commons Randburg - Tekken 5 and God of War. A variety of prizes such as Silver PS2 Slim-Line console hampers, Tekken 5 and God of War were given away to the winners of the Tekken Tournaments and God of War "cos-play" competition.

Over 700 people of all ages attended both the Thursday and Saturday launch events and tournaments, with 324 entrants in total for The Tekken Tournaments.

Congratulations to Darren Peacock winner of the Tekken 5 Masters League tournament.

For details of the Soulcalibur 3 and Resident evil 4 launch event as well up and coming Tekken 5 tournaments visit the Events section of their Website (www.animeworx.co.za), or e-mail them at: info@animeworx.co.za



PIMP MY WORM

No, this is not an indecent proposition, but rather a Web-based e-toy made available by Codemasters to celebrate the release of Worms 4: Mayhem. It allows players to outfit a worm in clothes, jewellery and accessories, superimpose it on a backdrop of the user's choice, and then e-mail it or do whatever else people do with things like this!

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WORLD CYBER GAMES MOBILE COMPETITION

Exactmobile is organising the local qualifiers and final for the abovementioned event. The competition games are Bruce Lee, Goolie, Mid Town Madness and Chopper Rescue. The local finals will be held on 15 October, and the winner of each game will be fully sponsored to participate in the world finals in Singapore. About 30,000 people are expected to participate in the global qualifying rounds, and 800 gamers from over 70 countries are expected at the world finals.

[www.exactmobile.co.za/wcg]

Next Tomb Raider, Hitman delayed

Both Tomb Raider: Legend and Hitman: Blood Money have slipped to next year. SCI recently bought Eidos, and has allocated additional development time to its titles in order to assure high levels of quality.



SPACE INVADERS ON PSP

Marvelous Interactive is working on Space Invaders: Galaxy Beat, a fresh new revamp of Taito's 1978 classic. The game will be presented in first person 3D, and musically themed novelties have been added to the player's guns, such as firing special bursts when pressing the fire button in time to the beat. In addition, a classic mode will be available, allowing players to play the original version, and an adversarial mode will be included. The latter is quite clever. Whenever a player shoots an alien on his side of the screen, it will appear on his opponent's - simple, but neat! The project is nearing completion.

NEW MOBILE GAMES FROM VIVENDI

Five more titles have just been added to Vivendi Universal's range of mobile games, distributed by WonderPhone. Two have already been released - SWAT Force, a new chapter in the SWAT franchise, and Larry's Sexy Pinball, which is a Leisure Suit Larry-themed pinball game.

FFXII MUSIC ALMOST READY

Hitoshi Sakimoto, the composer for Final Fantasy XII's musical score, recently announced that he will soon finish composing the soundtrack for the game. He stated that this chapter's music has an orchestral air about it.



GAMERS ARE "BETTER LOOKERS"?

A recent study suggests that gamers may have quicker eyes than non-gamers. The study included subjects who, on average, spent about two hours a day, six days a week, playing games, and revealed that, on average, response time was faster by 100 milliseconds. Gamer subjects were particularly adept at searching out specific target objects from environments, both virtual and real. One researcher expressed interest in the possible applications of gaming in brain rehabilitation after something like, for example, a stroke.



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COMICS AND GAMING

COMIC-BASED GAMING FRANCHISES ARE going from strength to strength. There is an absolute glut of superhero-inspired titles on the way. Marvel's Ghost Rider will be arriving at the same time as the film, and is being developed by Climax, to be published by Majesco. Another upcoming offering from Majesco is Teen Titans Go!, which boasts multiplayer action. Next-generation console owners will be treated to Top Cow's The Darkness, in development at Starbreeze Studios and to be published by Majesco, next year. Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction, from Vivendi Universal and Radical Entertainment, should already be on shelves. Activision are revisiting the Spider-Man concept with Ultimate Spider-Man, which will be out later this year and will feature the ability to play as the superhero or his nemesis, Venom. Electronic Arts is at work on Marvel Nemesis: Rise of the Imperfects, a fighting game starring heroes and villains from the Marvel Universe.

EA is also at work on Superman Returns, though the company is not letting any cats out the bag at this point. Climax is also busy with a game interpretation of Top Cow's Witchblade, which is said to be similar in style to Tomb Raider games; it will be released for Xbox 360 by Atari. Currently awaiting a publisher is Red Star, which was to be distributed by Acclaim, until the company went insolvent. Besides these specific titles, both DC Comics and Marvel have signed deals to produce massively multiplayer titles.

DC has teamed up with Sony, and their game is expected to hit PCs and PlayStation 3 late in 2007. Marvel has partnered with Microsoft to develop games for the Xbox 360; no timeframe has been specified yet.

All this action sets comic fans up for great excitement – and no doubt great disappointment too, somewhere along the way.



LUCASARTS RETHINKS ITS STRATEGY

A company spokesman recently stated that LucasArts has been thinking about ways to improve its franchises. Foremost was an admission that the firm had overproduced Star Wars titles, and has now decided to make fewer games, but of a higher quality. In addition, we can expect an Indiana Jones game to accompany the next movie.

MARC ECKÖ'S
getting up
CONTENTS UNDER PRESSURE



"...a hybrid between progressive street culture and traditional gaming culture."



PlayStation 2



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WEB SCORES

GTA San Andreas [PC]

NAG [100]	95
GAMESPY.COM [5]	5.0
GAMESPOT.COM [10]	9.0
IGN.COM [10]	9.3



Pariah [PC]

NAG [100]	69
GAMESPY.COM [5]	3.0
GAMESPOT.COM [10]	6.3
IGN.COM [10]	7.8



Settlers Heritage of Kings [PC]

NAG [100]	70
GAMESPY.COM [5]	2.0
GAMESPOT.COM [10]	6.4
IGN.COM [10]	6.5



Tekken 5 [PS2]

NAG [100]	91
GAMESPY.COM [5]	5.0
GAMESPOT.COM [10]	9.2
IGN.COM [10]	9.3



Shingei Migemi Lucifers Call [PS2]

NAG [100]	90
GAMESPY.COM [5]	3.5
GAMESPOT.COM [10]	NA
IGN.COM [10]	7.8



The ratings in this section, apart from the NAG ratings, are not the opinion of NAG Magazine. Duh.

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE GETS STAR CAST

Electronic Arts has pulled out all the stops for their new PS2, Xbox and GC title, From Russia With Love. Hiring celebrities



to star in this James Bond sequel, EA has signed up the likes of Sean Connery, Natasha Bedingfield and Maria Menounos. Connery will be playing the role of Bond with the UK popstar Bedingfield lending her voice and likeness to the character Elizabeth Stark, the kidnapped daughter of the Prime Minister who must be rescued by Bond. Maria Menounos, the actress from Fantastic Four and One Tree Hill will be taking up a unique character role (Eva) which has been created specifically for the game.



NO MORE TAPWAVE ZODIAC

TAPWAVE BRAVELY INTRODUCED THE Zodiac handheld console almost two years ago, but the challenger was unable to stand up against competition from the likes of the Game Boy Advance and the PlayStation Portable. This product, which never achieved a game library of over 20 titles, is no more. The Gizmondo, from Tiger Telematics, may well face a similar fate.

ESA CHALLENGES NEW LAW ON VIOLENCE

The Entertainment Software Association is opposing a bill recently passed in the American state of Illinois that punishes sellers of games rated 'mature' on the grounds of sex and violence. The body feels that the law is too restrictive and threatens freedom of expression. Furthermore, it argues that the statute is too vague, meaning that it would be difficult to abide by and too easy to prosecute on, and is not consistent with comparable laws pertaining to other media. Similar laws were recently proposed and rejected in several other states.

JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA

Warner Bros Interactive announced that a role-playing title will be released in about a year, based on the Justice League of America, which is comprised of DC's foremost superheroes. The game will allow players to develop their characters, and will feature destructible environments. It's being planned for PlayStation 2 and Xbox. No developer has been determined.



DUNGEON SIEGE MOVIE GETS RAY LIOTTA

The cast for Uwe Boll's upcoming film adaptation of Dungeon Siege has been announced. Ray Liotta joins the team to portray the antagonist (which means, "bad guy"), while Jason Statham plays Farmer, the hero of the story. Other cast members include Will Sanderson, Brian J White, Leelee Sobieski, Ron Perlman, John Rhys-Davies, Matthew Lillard, Kristanna Loken, Burt Reynolds and Eva Padberg. Almost all of them have made numerous previous appearances on the silver screen. [www.dungeonsiege-themovie.com]



EA AND VALVE TEAM UP

The two companies have announced that they have entered into a multi-year agreement to publish Valve's games worldwide. The first of these, to be released in October, are Half-Life 2: Game of the Year, Counter-Strike: Source for the PC and Half-Life 2 for the Xbox. For those of you who are wondering, the Game of the Year edition includes Half-Life 2, Counter-Strike: Source, Half-Life 2: Deathmatch and Half-Life: Source. When asked whether this move means that Valve has replaced Vivendi as its publisher, the company side-stepped the question by reiterating that the abovementioned games will be published by EA, but not actually denying the premise. Valve went on to state that this agreement only covers retail versions of games, and that Steam distribution will continue.



SIN EPISODES

A sequel, of sorts, to Ritual's Sin, is on its way – or should that be “on their way”? The Source-powered game will be presented in episodes roughly six hours in length (each), and to be distributed over Valve's Steam service. Ritual is experimenting with a feature that will allow players' choices to influence the future of the plot, but has not settled on anything specific yet. The story's characters have returned from the original game, with a new character or two to join forces with the protagonist. The first chapter, 'Emergence', is expected around the end of the year, with subsequent episodes to be released every three or four months thereafter.



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ON THE HORIZON

US RELEASE DATES



PC RELEASE DATES

Date	Title	Genre
Sept	Dreamfall: The Longest Journey	Adventure
Sept	MotoGP 3	Racing
Sept	Indigo Prophecy	Adventure
Sept	Ultimate Spider-Man	Action
Sept	The Sims 2 Nightlife	Simulation
Sept	Warhammer 40,000: DoW - Winter Assault	Strategy
Sept	Fable: The Lost Chapters	Action
Sept	Myst V: End of Ages	Adventure
Sept	Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06	Sports
Sept	The Suffering: Ties That Bind	Action
Sept	Worms 4: Mayhem	Strategy
Sept	Total Overdose: A Gunslinger's Tale in Mexico	Action
Sept	Bet on Soldier	Shooter
Sept	Earth 2160	Strategy
Sept	Evil Dead Regeneration	Action
Sept	Rugby Challenge 2006	Sports
Sept	Shadowgrounds	Action



PS2 RELEASE DATES

Date	Title	Genre
Sept	Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Lockdown	Shooter
Sept	We Love Katamari	Action
Sept	Armored Core: Nine Breaker	Action
Sept	Burnout Revenge	Racing
Sept	Contents Under Pressure	Action
Sept	Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks	Fighting
Sept	EyeToy: Kinetic	Other
Sept	Genji: Dawn of the Samurai	Action
Sept	S.L.A.I.	Action
Sept	Shadow of the Colossus	Adventure
Sept	X-Men Legends II: Rise of Apocalypse	Action
Sept	Formula One 05	Racing
Sept	Richard Burns Rally	Racing
Sept	FIFA '06	Sports
Sept	Marvel Nemesis: Rise of the Imperfects	Fighting
Sept	Total Overdose: A Gunslinger's Tale in Mexico	Action
Sept	Sly 3: Honor Among Thieves	Platformer



DS RELEASE DATES

Date	Title	Genre
Sept	Ford Racing	Racing
Sept	Romance of the Three Kingdoms	Strategy
Sept	Big Mutha Truckers	Racing



PSP RELEASE DATES

Date	Title	Genre
Sept	Gran Turismo 4 Mobile	Racing
Sept	GripShift	Racing
Sept	MediEvil Resurrection	Action
Sept	Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex	Action
Sept	Burnout Legends	Racing
Sept	BloodRayne	Action
Sept	Virtua Tennis World Tour	Sports
Sept	WWE SmackDown! vs. RAW 2006	Wrestling



XBOX RELEASE DATES

Date	Title	Genre
Sept	Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth	Adventure
Sept	Kingdom Under Fire: Heroes	Strategy
Sept	Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks	Fighting
Sept	Marvel Nemesis: Rise of the Imperfects	Fighting
Sept	The Suffering: Ties That Bind	Action
Sept	Far Cry Instincts	Shooter
Sept	Aeon Flux	Action
Sept	Castlevania: Curse of Darkness	Action
Sept	Fable: The Lost Chapters	Action
Sept	Ninja Gaiden Black	Action
Sept	Rugby Challenge 2006	Sports
Sept	The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe	Action
Sept	Worms 4: Mayhem	Strategy



GAMECUBE RELEASE DATES

Date	Title	Genre
Sept	Ultimate Spider-Man	Action
Sept	Battalion Wars	Action
Sept	Ty the Tasmanian Tiger: Night of the Quinkan	Platformer
Sept	X-Men Legends II: Rise of Apocalypse	Action



GBA RELEASE DATES

Date	Title	Genre
Sept	DK: King of Swing	Action
Sept	Ultimate Spider-Man	Action
Sept	The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe	Action
Sept	Tony Hawk's American Wasteland	Sports

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CHARTS

PC Games

#	Title
1	Battlefield 2
2	Sims 2
3	Sims 2 University
4	Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic Classics
5	Juiced
6	Need For Speed Underground Classics
7	Sims Full House Collection
8	Harry Potter Prisoner of Azkaban Classics
9	SWAT 4
10	Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic 2 Sith Lords
11	Age of Empires II Gold
12	Lego Star Wars
13	Lord of the Rings Return of the King Classics
14	Flight Simulator 2004
15	Empire Earth 2
16	Boiling Point Road To Hell
17	Star Wars Republic Commando
18	CSI 2 Dark Motives Exclusive
19	Rugby 2004 Classics
20	Battlefield Vietnam
19	Grand Theft Auto Vice City
20	Rugby 2005

PlayStation 2

#	Title
1	Gran Turismo 4
2	Star Wars Episode 3 Revenge of the Sith
3	Midnight Club 3
4	EA Sports Pack: Tiger Woods 2005/Fifa 2005
5	Need For Speed Underground 2
6	Rugby 2005
7	Medal Of Honour European Assault
8	Fifa 2005 Platinum
9	Metal Gear Solid 3 Snake Eater
10	Burnout 3 Platinum
11	Juiced
12	Singstar 3 Pop no microphones
13	Splinter Cell Chaos Theory
14	Getaway 2 Black Monday
15	Street Racing Syndicate
16	Tiger Woods 2004 platinum
17	Singstar 2 with Microphone
18	Fifa Street
19	Playboy Mansion
20	WWE Smackdown vs Raw



SEPTEMBER AT A GLANCE

2
Movie
Sin City

www.sincitythemovie.com

17-18
Gaming
World Cyber Games SA National Final [JHB]
www.worldcybergames.co.za

30
Gaming
rAge expo
www.rageexpo.co.za



BATTLEFRONT II GOES ON SHOW IN OCTOBER

DigitalLife is a consumer technology event which takes place in New York from October 14 – 16, and will also be the venue for a nationwide tournament for the first debut of Star Wars Battlefront II. Due to be released on 1 November in conjunction with the DVD release of Star Wars: Episode III Revenge of the Sith, Star Wars Battlefront II will feature new space combat, playable Jedi and new environments from the Star Wars: Episode III Revenge of the Sith movie. The single player game will take players through an epic, story-based saga centering on Darth Vader's elite 501st Legion of stormtroopers where every action the player takes impacts the battlefield and, ultimately, the fate of the Star Wars galaxy.



RIDGE RACER 6 ONLINE

Ridge Racer 6 will be making its online debut on the Xbox 360 with Worldwide Online Multiplayer Battles through Xbox Live. Using a Worldwide Player Matching system, players will be able to pair up against drivers from around the world in head-to-head drift racing match ups. Players will also be able to upload their personal records from the game's Time Attack mode to see how they fair against the rest of the world in a persistent Leader Board. New content, such as cars, will also be made available for download from the Xbox Live Marketplace.

GAMING CONVALESCENCE

The Get-Well Gamers Foundation is an American non-profit charity organisation that seeks to alleviate child patients' pain in various hospitals by collecting and distributing old, unused gaming systems. Children have been found to suffer less if they have something enjoyable to engage their attention, which is how Get-Well Gamers tries to help. A positive side-effect of this approach is that the administration of pain-relief drugs can be reduced. [www.get-well-gamers.org]



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HOT COFFEE

GTA San Andreas gets roasted

THE SAN ANDREAS Hot Coffee fiasco has driven some gamers to the fringes of their minds. It's because it is pretty ridiculous. But it's also a very important chapter in the long running battle between games and the moral watchdogs, who cry about any game that might corrupt the youth. Games have become a soft target for politicians (especially since the Columbine shootings), but up to this point there has been little that they had on their side. Court cases filed against game developers and publishers, as well as numerous game regulation bills, have fallen flat partly because games claim a first amendment right in the US (the right to free speech). It's also ridiculous. According to the ESA's 2004 statistics only 35% of US gamers are under 18 and the average gamer's age is 30. Clearly games are not being created for kids anymore.

Still, an Achilles Heel has revealed itself in the form of Hot Coffee. As is the case with most games, developers often leave unfinished or unused elements in a title; stuff like extra models, levels or weapons. In San Andreas there are interactive sex scenes with each of the six girlfriends that were disabled in the final version. But a Dutch modder, PatrickW, found that the game had a censorship switch and simply turned this off. Suddenly when your girlfriend would invite you in for some coffee, it initiates the sex games (which are in reality not any worse than what we've seen in Sex in the City).

It didn't take long at all before the press got hold of this and in no time so did the US politicians. The 'mod' was first revealed in mid June, but by early July specialist gaming press had already given it extensive coverage. Not long after that it hit the mainstream outlets, with publications like the New York Times, CNN and even MTV talking about Hot Coffee on their sites. The timing of this event is crucial. At this point in time several laws that aim to regulate game sales are being proposed in the US. Game violence is also an extremely lucrative ticket for politicians, because it oozes family values and appeals to more conservative voters. This is perhaps why Senator Hillary Clinton (who oversees the fairly liberal New York state) jumped on this opportunity, along with Democrat Speaker Tom Yee, who criticised the ESRB rating system, a frequent target in these assaults.

The ESRB is the US rating system and is both voluntary and not state controlled. In fact, ESRB funding comes largely from games publishers, similar to how the MPAA is funded by movie studios. This has led to some accusations that the ESRB bends the rules for games (despite that ESRB game testers are not affiliated to the industry in any way; some aren't even gamers). The problem is that San Andreas got rated M (or 17+), while apparently the sex scenes would have pushed it to AO (Adults Only or 18+). It's interesting to note that both Playboy: The Mansion and Singles also got M ratings, despite being far more visual than the Hot Coffee scenes. Still, it's Grand Theft Auto - the bad boy of gaming - and no-one wanted to drop this opportunity. Politicians made lurid accusations about "hardcore sex scenes" that were quite inaccurate. GTA should have been AO, they said. Either the

ESRB was lenient or Rockstar got past the rating system.

The reality is, in fact, that the sex scenes were in the game, but they weren't active and weren't a covert move by Rockstar or lack of efficiency by the ESRB (as mentioned, this practice is common in game development). An AO rating, though, would have the game removed from the shelves of retailers like Wal-Mart - which affects sales heavily - though game retailers such as EB Games and GameStop still carry adult titles. Unfortunately, Rockstar thought it could get away with this and dodge the bullet by blaming the modders. After a long silence Rockstar announced that the mod used introduced the scenes and these weren't created by Rockstar. PatrickW disputed this, saying it's just a matter of removing the censorship from the game. This is fairly obvious, since the patch that does the job is less than 50KB in size - nowhere close to the size of a file that would contain models or additional game scripts. Rockstar, in all of its arrogance, still maintained that it wasn't responsible. That ended soon, though, when GameSpot and GameSpy both tried to unlock the sex scenes on early PS2 copies of the game - and it worked! With egg on their face, Rockstar retreated and awaited the ESRB decision, which was re-evaluating the game. On 20 July, San Andreas was awarded an AO rating and some retailers removed it from the shelves. Rockstar has since announced that a new version without the sex scenes would be released, sporting the original M rating. A patch is also planned that will remove the scenes from existing copies.

Senator Hillary Clinton is riding this to the end, though, having called for a Federal Trade Commission investigation that could cost as much as \$90 million. Reactionary anti-game lawyer Jack Thompson has already called for The Sims 2 to also be rated AO, because there are mods that allow you to have nude Sims. Thompson also eagerly entered the Hot Coffee debate, at one point calling ESA's Doug Lowenstein a Nazi (specifically, he called him the Goebbels of the industry).

Ironically, apart from Australia revising its rating for San Andreas (the country has already banned GTA 3 and Vice City and has a history for banning or censoring games), the actions in the US haven't been reflected anywhere else. European systems PEGI and ELSPA, as well as Japan's CERO and Germany's USK all rated the game 18+, and there doesn't appear to be any plans to change this. PEGI has said, though, that it will add Sex to the rating description.

This debacle followed on the heels of another US politician calling for the banning of 25 To Life, a yet-unreleased game from Eidos, because you kill cops in it (oblivious that the game is actually Cops and Robbers meet Counter-Strike - you play on either side). Now some are even suggesting that games be rated on their potential community mods (which effectively means that any game that can be modified should pre-emptively be rated AO). While the Hot Coffee saga has now been laid to rest and something else will arrive in the future, it is the first major case where games actually found themselves in the wrong - and the moral watchdogs leaped on it with glee. As for Rockstar, their stock price did take a hit and some speculate the incident will hurt sales. But we doubt that will happen and we really doubt Rockstar will start producing family friendly titles. In fact, watch this space for when Bully is released... **NAG**



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The Expo

rAge is a computer and console video gaming and technology consumer expo, bringing together the most popular games, technology, gadgets and products.

Now in its 3rd year, rAge will once again bring back the fun to the technology expo arena – with all the newest games to play, the hottest gadgets and goodies, a 700 player LAN area where enthusiasts bring their own PCs and play games against each other all weekend long, plus all the latest modded gear to kit your PC out.

rAge will assault your senses in every way.

Details

Friday 30 September 2005 10h00-18h00

Saturday 1 October 2005 10h00-18h00

Sunday 2 October 2005 10h00-16h00

Entry Fee

R30 per person

[Children under 8 free]

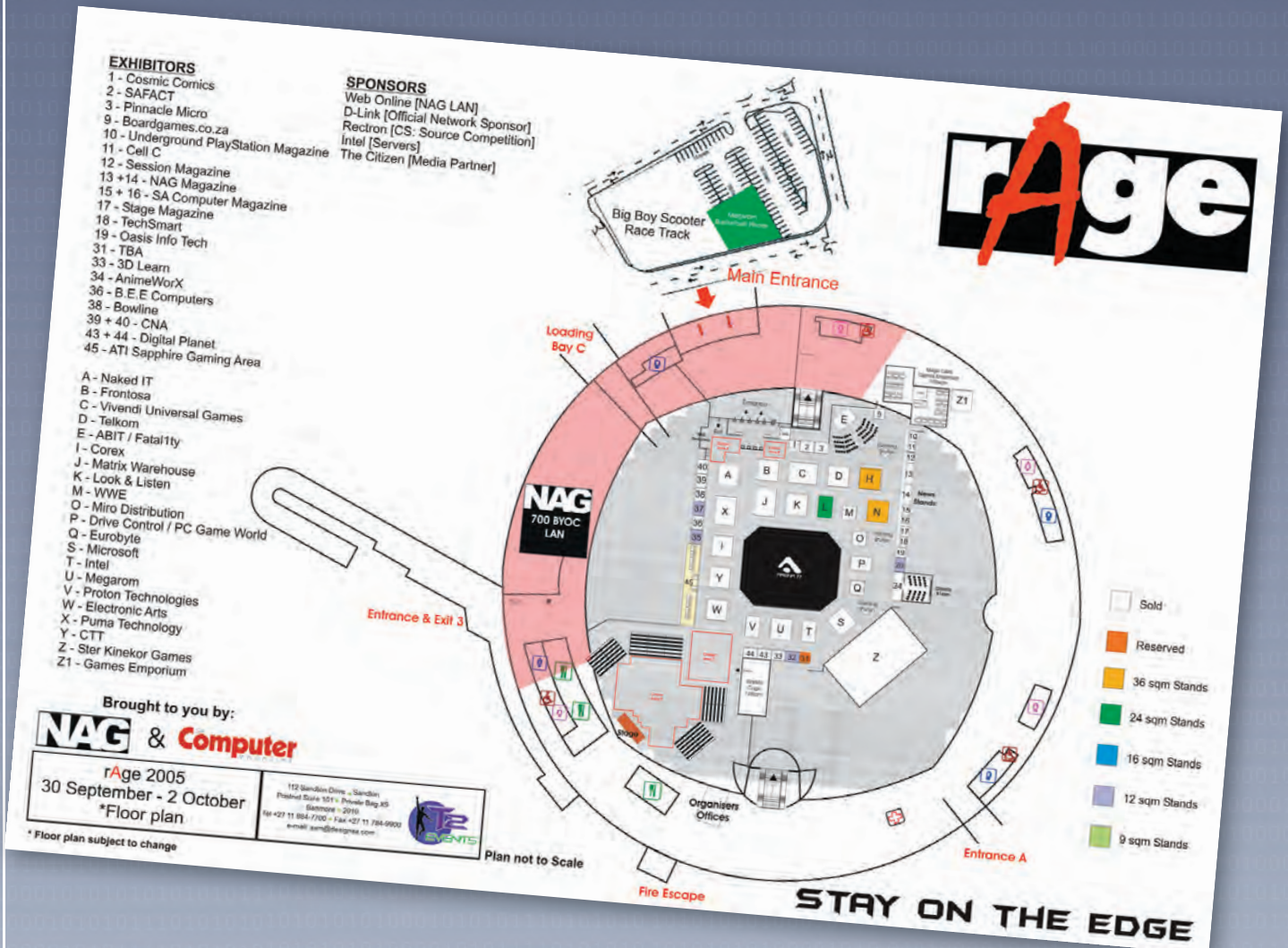
Features

- Computer & technology retailers
- PC hardware & case modding
- Awesome show specials on games, DVDs & PCs
- Hands-on opportunities to play upcoming PlayStation & PC games
- Magic the Gathering role-playing card arena
- 54 hour 700 point PC LAN
- Daily prizes & giveaways to visitors
- Anime & anime cinema
- Comics
- Boardgames
- Arena 77 Counter-Strike clan competition



rAge

2005 Full of Surprises





THE ANNUAL INFORMATIVE ARTICLE for NAG's rAge expo has always been an interesting one to write, as it involves a unique process. It is the only time when the editor himself sits down to be interviewed. Of course, this produces intriguing results all on its own – as our dear friend Michael James is even more sarcastic in person than he is in print – but what he had to say about rAge 2005 comfortably surpassed all expectations. Simply put: you really want to be there this year.

"My evil plan is to smite all other IT shows in South Africa and rule supreme," explained Michael calmly. Last year he spoke about his ambition to turn rAge into a local rendition of the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3), and that goal seems to be drawing ever closer to reality. For starters, the physical size of the exhibition is set to be approximately thirty percent larger than last year, occupying most of the Dome floor space. The list of exhibitors has continued to grow, including local hardware and software distributors, cellular service providers, media, anime, board games and music. The expo has also increased in status. "For example," said Michael, "we're hoping to have Quake 4 code on the show floor as well as international developers coming to

Hitlist – Cool things to do at rAge

- Watch anime – anime theatre
- Win cool stuff – competitions galore
- Play games – PC and PlayStation games
- Photograph chicks – booth babe alert
- Hardware specials – mod your PC
- Board games – try before you buy
- Expert opinions – NAG eXperience workshop
- Gaming pro's – SA's top Counter-Strike teams
- Famous people – get the NAG Editor's autograph
- Scooting around – ride a Big Boy scooter
- Handheld gaming – wireless PSP station
- Card role-playing – play Magic the Gathering

The lighter side of rAge Staying on the edge

Last year (at rAge 2004, for reference sake) a man was unceremoniously duct-taped to a mannequin, while his son looked on in horror. Tears may have been shed, but good fun was had by all (except for the one distraught child).

To explain what rAge is all about using only the primitive confines of the written word would be futile. Sure, one could use words such as 'biggest' and 'computer', perhaps even throwing in 'expo' for effect. But where is the pizzazz, the glamour? Dear friends and innocent bystanders, rAge is much more than a simple computer and electronics expo. It's an indescribable explosion of sight, sound, touch, smell, taste and a little something extra, localised around a certain date and venue, September 30, 2005 at the Coca Cola Dome Northgate.

There are countless (count them) events happening at rAge. You can keep abreast of developments by religiously checking www.rageexpo.co.za every day, before breakfast or perhaps after a light lunch.

For those without a connection to the "interwebs", here is a brief rundown of some of the aspects rAge 2005 will contain: kids, adults, chairs, tables, carpets, posters, music, a poodle, some cables and lots of air. It's amazing how much stuff can fit into the Coca Cola Dome.

If you're not interested in any of the above, then perhaps rAge 2005 can still provide.

Webcams will be tracking your every move as you run rampant through the various displays, stalls and vendors. You'll get to buy stuff, try stuff, play things, pick up objects and even (if you're so inclined) bring your computer so you can participate in the massive 700 player LAN. D-Link will be providing over R250,000 worth of equipment to make sure that your can frag (kill), capture (steal) and be 'pwned' (that's slang for 'abused') without any problems.

If multiplayer mayhem isn't your thing (shame on you), then the expo itself will be more than happy to accommodate you. rAge is after all, the ultimate consumer show encompassing gaming, computers and IT.

Specials on stuff will let you fill your shopping bag and only marginally empty your wallet (come with a full wallet), while various other activities will keep you (or your hyperactive children) entertained. You'll be able to play board games, test-drive the latest games that won't even be on sale yet and participate in a variety of workshops.

Speaking of the workshops, if you're interested in game development, magazine layout or even digital art, be sure to stop by the NAG eXperience workshop for a little practical participation. A full itinerary of what/when/where will be posted on the rAge Website blog.

rAge is all about challenging the misconceptions around gaming, and bringing the best to the South African market. The event itself is diversifying and other fancy-sounding things, so that it will Stay on the Edge, for you.

So do the right thing. Don't do drugs. Be kind to yourself. Come to rAge 2005.



demonstrate other big titles." The opportunity to play-test Quake 4 is what most competitive gamers have only been dreaming of until now. "As far as I've been told it'll be hands-on code," Michael elaborated. "We're also trying for an informal multiplayer thing, but this is a big maybe because the id Software people might not have proper competition software ready at that time. Hold thumbs."

If that doesn't sound impressive enough, NAG is excited to announce that the world's most famous (or infamous) professional gamer, Johnathan "Fatal1ty" Wendel, is coming to rAge to participate in a Fatal1ty Shootout, with NAG offering a R20,000 cash prize to the first person who

can beat him. The format of the competition will be explained in more detail on the rAge Website once it has been finalised. "The idea," said Michael, "is that people draw numbers and are then randomly selected to go up against him. I believe Quake III will be his game of choice, and from what I've seen, my R20,000 is safe."

As usual, Arena 77 will be running a 'Bring Your Own Computer' tournament in addition to the NAG LAN which was spoken about last month. The featured game this year will be Counter-Strike: Source and the

Exhibitors*

3D Learn
AnimeWorX
ATI Sapphire Mini LAN
B.E.E Computers
Boardgames.co.za
Bowline
Cell C
C.N.A.
Corex
Cosmic Comics
CTT Computers
Digital Planet
Drive Control / PC Game World
Electronic Arts
Eurobyte
Frontosa

Games Emporium
Intel
Look & Listen
Matrix Warehouse
Megarom
Microsoft
Miro Distribution
NAG Magazine
Naked IT
Oasis Info Tech
Pinnacle Micro
Proton Technologies
Puma Technology
SA Computer Magazine
SAFACT
Session Magazine

Stage Magazine
Ster Kinekor Games
TechSmart
Telkom
Underground PlayStation Magazine
Vivendi Universal Games
WWE

Sponsors*

D-Link [Official Network Sponsor]
Intel SA [Gaming Servers]
Relectron [Counter Strike: Source
Competition]
The Citizen [Media Partner]
Web Online [NAG LAN]

*Exhibitors confirmed at time of going to print

event has already garnered a huge response from the local competitive community. In fact, a new South African record was established for the fastest online registration. Another major improvement being implemented this year is the focus on the spectators at the event. A grandstand/stage area with a big screen will be positioned away from the players, with constant commentary to accompany the action. People new to competitive gaming are encouraged to come along and experience the thrill of this new sport, which is gaining increasing popularity worldwide. Prizes for rAge have traditionally been staggering, and this time is no exception. The winning CS: Source team will receive R50,000 with second and third place prizes still to be confirmed. To spice things up a bit, rAge will also be featuring less formal tournaments for Xbox and PlayStation, as well as the PC title F.E.A.R. and Serious Sam II. Prizes for these competitions will include 3D cards and games.

A new addition to rAge is the advent of South Africa's first competitive gaming conference. In an effort to further a unified competitive gaming community in South Africa, NAG will be hosting an open panel discussion at rAge on Friday, where the public and those with vested interests in the future of competitive gaming, can come and pose questions to a panel of people involved in the competitive gaming industry. The conference will be open to all expo attendees, and will feature several SA gaming personalities such as Len Nery from Arena 77, gaming journalist Anton "The_Basilisk" Lines, Michael James Editor of NAG and top local player Karl "Mburr" Buys. Michael explains: "I think it's important to do this, because at the moment there's nothing like a group of experts discussing the topic of competitive gaming in South Africa as a more serious activity."

[www.rageexpo.co.za] **NAG**



**Come and see
Fatal1ty at
rAge and try
to get a frag
off him.
[Good luck,
b1atches ;)]**

Exhibitor announcements

- Naked IT will be launching the first Issue of Otaku Magazine at rAge 2005. Otaku Magazine – a first for SA – is a magazine focused on the growing SA Anime Subculture, featuring articles and reviews on locally and internationally available Anime (Animation) and Manga (Comic) titles, related movies, sound tracks, music, PC/Console games, gadgets and accessories
- Naked IT show specials - 10%-30% off all products at rAge 2005
- Matrix Warehouse will showcase the latest in hardware (including motherboards, CPUs, memory, graphics cards, fans and cooling) as well as PC and PlayStation games
- B.E.E. Computers will be showcasing and selling brand new Thermaltake products only due out on the street at the end of 2005
- Look & Listen will be stocking PSP consoles, hardware, software, accessories and Ital racing seats with sound. Look & Listen will also have a range of top selling CDs and DVDs, clearout stock of GameCube software titles and plenty of prizes up for grabs
- Digital Planet promise to source any gaming products that are not available at rAge to be ordered and delivered to the customer within a few days. Digital Planet will also be selling most of the games and hardware that will be exhibited by the major distributors at the lowest prices in the country. The focus will be on a large selection of products ranging from games across all platforms to hardware for all type of machines
- Frontosa will be launching the all new CPU Cooler from Zalman, the CNPS9500 LED Series Cooler as well as a whole new range of niche LCD series, and Antec's newest chassis, the P180. As official distributors of ABIT and Zalman in South Africa, Frontosa will be launching the ABIT Fatal1ty as well as the Zalman Fatal1ty range of products which will include the Mainboard Series and Pure Copper and Fin cooling fan techniques. To round off Zalman's show case, Frontosa will be displaying the Totally No Noise (TNN) solution chassis using Heatpipe Technology. This will be featured in the TNN300 and TNN50AF series
- Oasis will be showcasing the brand new Microsoft Media Centre software that facilitates multichannel simultaneous recording off TV. Oasis will also be providing wireless and other accessories on excellent show special rates
- Various workshops will be run at the NAG Magazine stand during the course of rAge, ranging from game development right through to digital art and even tutorials on how to design your own magazine. Each workshop will be hosted by someone in the field and most will even include practical sessions and tutorials. A detailed schedule of events will be released on the NAG Website two weeks prior to rAge
- Competitive Gaming: From Here to There – an open panel discussion will be hosted by NAG after lunch on Friday afternoon at rAge where the public and those with vested interests in the future of competitive gaming, can come and pose questions to a panel of figures involved in the competitive gaming industry
- A rAge blog is up and running where you will be able to read the most up to date information and happenings on the expo. The blog will also be updated during the show with news and photos for those unable to attend. www.rageexpo.co.za

MULTIPLAYER

IT'S BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD AFTER ESWC

HIGH HOPES ARE A permanent feature whenever South Africans head off to large international competitions. Unfortunately, however, our campaigns usually end less than favourably. Yet again, both our Counter-Strike team and our WarCraft III representative failed to qualify for the second round of the Electronic Sports World Cup. The Basilisk spoke with Counter-Strike team Evolve and SA team leader Len Nery [Arena 77] to gather some opinions about the Parisian tournament, which has been hailed by the international community as possibly the most successful gaming event ever.

After a long flight, the players arrived in France and were met by surprisingly cold and rainy weather. Registration for the tournament was to take place at the hotel, and to get there they had to navigate the subway and public bus systems. Once this was completed, and the staff had figured out who they were, they were taken back to the Louvre for the opening ceremony. Kevin "Silencer" Murphy said he and his team were disappointed at the setup, which was cramped and difficult to follow. Afterwards a delay in the ESWC bus service forced them to wait until roughly midnight before being taken back to the hotel. This, said Kevin, was one of the many reasons for their poor performance.

When the time came to play, the team attempted to pull themselves together and focus, but a problem with Kevin's PC and peripherals caused a further drop in morale. Even after the ESWC staff had replaced the PC four times, and tried several different mice and keyboards, the problem refused to be solved. Kevin was unsatisfied with the staff, saying they did not appear to care, perhaps since South Africa was causing delays for the more recognised teams. Len Nery, speaking in their defence, said that from an administration perspective, the staff was under considerable pressure to keep the tournament moving along. Regardless, the team was essentially only playing with four players, as Kevin's keyboard suffered a buffer overflow (which did not allow him to press more than one key simultaneously) and the problematic mouse drivers rendered his sensitivity much higher than what he was used to. All in all, Evolve were unable to overcome these factors, and lost three important games to Brazil (5-16), Norway (3-16) and France (3-16). As a consolation, they managed to beat Israel (16-14). "There isn't much to say

about the games," said Kevin, "We got owned really. At ESWC, if there's a little problem against those teams, a little problem, you will lose. You can't afford to make one mistake.

With everything that was going on, I'm surprised we didn't lose every game 16-0."

Our WarCraft III representative, Travis "Shase" Weedon, won his personal psychological battle and controlled his nerves admirably. His group was particularly difficult, and he performed as well as can be expected of someone in their first ESWC, losing games to SaSe (Sweden), Sweet (Korea), Giacomo (Czech Republic) and Syphonia (UK). His two victories came at the expense of the two Saudi Arabian competitors, Qoot and Kaser.

Arena 77 extends its thanks to Rectron for making the local leg of the tournament and the overseas trip possible.



FINAL RESULTS:

COUNTER-STRIKE 1.6

1. Complexity (USA)
2. SK-Gaming (Denmark)
3. Mousesports (Germany)
4. Lunatic-Hai (Korea)

WARCRAFT III: TFT

1. Grubby (Netherlands)
2. Deadman (Russia)
3. Reign (Korea)
4. Sky (China)

QUAKE III

1. Cooler (Russia)
2. Czm (USA)
3. Fox (Sweden)
4. Socrates (USA)

UT2004

1. Winz (France)
2. Falcon (Austria)
3. Lauke (Netherlands)
4. DevilMC (Italy)

WORLD CYBER GAMES 2005 COMES TO SA

AFTER A TERRIBLY FLAWED series of qualifiers in 2004 and fights between major industry players as a result of the whole debacle, there was much speculation as to whether there would even be local qualifiers this year. Thankfully, South African players are again being given the chance to attend the WCG grand finals, which will be held in Singapore from the 16th to the 20th of November. Samsung is once more the title sponsor and will be flying one Counter-Strike: Source team, one WarCraft III player and one FIFA 2005 player to Singapore to compete in this prestigious international tournament.

Problems with last year's events included a very cramped playing area for the WarCraft III

and Unreal Tournament 2004 players, inadequate computer hardware and a disappointing prize distribution, especially for the regional qualifiers. The organisers, Penguin International, have pledged to rectify the problems, so we will have to hope for the best. Twenty-eight CS: Source teams and twenty-four WarCraft III players have given a show of faith and signed up to participate in the 2005 Gauteng preliminaries, which get underway at Eastgate shopping centre on the 6th of August. The Cape Town preliminaries follow on the 27th of August, at Canal Walk shopping centre. Eight teams and eight players qualify for the national finals at Sandton City on the 17th of September.

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MULTIPLAYER

WEG SEASON 2 WRAP-UP

FOR THE PAST FEW months we have been following the progress of the longest running LAN tournament in the world: the World E-Sports Games. Season two recently reached the end of its four-week timetable, and the standing of the final four Counter-Strike teams has at last been decided. With season one winners NoA (Norwegians of America) out of contention, almost every international e-sports writer had been punting last season's runners up, Four Kings, to take the title. But, as it so often happens when a team is picked as the outright favourite, the pressure to perform just becomes too much.

In the semi-finals Begrip (Sweden) won 13-7 on de_inferno and 13-0 on de_nuke against Abit Strike (China) while Four Kings (UK) lost to Catch-Gamer (Norway) 13-8 on de_inferno and 13-5 on de_nuke. The final and consolation final were held a week later. Four Kings were clearly demoralised, but still managed to edge out a win against Abit Strike to take third place and \$10,000. The match was played on de_nuke (13-11) and de_inferno (16-13; overtime). Abit Strike earned a respectable \$7,000 for their fourth place. However, the final was not quite as close. Begrip continued on their unbeaten run, dominating Catch-Gamer 13-0 on de_nuke and 13-7 on de_inferno. They took home \$50,000 for the win, while Catch received \$20,000 as the runners-up.

There were no surprises in WarCraft III though, and both South Korean players advanced to the final without any trouble. In the semi-finals, GoStop (South Korea) beat Shortround (USA) 3-1, while Moon (South Korea) dispatched of Winner (Lithuania), also 3-1. The match for third place brought a win for Winner and a loss for Shortround (3-1), while the final gave the defending champion, Moon, a 3-2 victory against GoStop, and his second WEG title.

[www.worldesportsgames.com]



CPL USA: FATAL1TY TAKES FIRST PK TITLE ON HOME SOIL

2005 HAS BEEN A rough year for Johnathan "Fatal1ty" Wendel, America's premier pro-gamer. After investing his time in Doom 3 only to find that Painkiller (PK) would feature in the CPL World Tour instead, he struggled to catch up to the rest of the field. His results were mixed, ranging from a second-place finish at the Spain qualifier to a lacklustre sixth place at the Spain stop itself. But something changed last month at the Sweden stop, and we saw him returning to second place as if he were a different player altogether. His confidence had returned. Perhaps it was only a matter of time until the dedication and rigorous practice regime paid off. And now, halfway through the 2005 season, in his own country, Fatal1ty has finally won a World Tour stop.

In the first upper bracket semi-final, the legendary Vo0 met with the Italian Stallion, Stermy. Vo0 took the first game by a huge margin (31-4), but Stermy came back in the second to square the match with a similarly large score of 14-32. The decider then saw both players adopt defensive strategies. Vo0 took an early lead and slowed the game down to thwart Stermy's chances of a comeback, winning 8-1. In the second semi-final, Fatal1ty was victorious over Zyz. It took the American a little while to find his feet, and he lost the first game 13-14. The second and third were less tense, however, and saw Fatal1ty coming through with scores of 20-8 and 27-9 respectively.

By the time the admins and players were

ready for the upper bracket final, there was a nervous anticipation in the air which could be felt even over the Internet video stream. Game one began. Vo0, as usual, did not look as though he was feeling any pressure, but Fatal1ty was clearly nervous. The score remained close throughout the game, but eventually ended comfortably in Vo0's favour: 12-9. Afterwards, Fatal1ty stood up from his PC and walked off, returning a few minutes later. Whatever he did in those minutes seemed to have worked, and it showed in game two. Getting into a quick rhythm which Vo0 was unable to break, he won 23-11. Then, making good use of the momentum, he proceeded to take total control in game three. Final score: 26-3. After a brief sojourn to the lower bracket, Vo0 returned for the grand final match, but Fatal1ty was too solid to be beaten this time. After his jubilant upper bracket victory, the American held his cool admirably to finish off the tournament, 12-11 and 36-26.

OVERALL STANDINGS:

1. fnatic/Vo0
2. Fatal1ty
3. SK|Zyz
4. Stermy
5. SK|SteLam
6. fnatic/Ztrider
7. fnatic/Gellehsak
8. 3D-Daler

[www.cplworldtour.com] **NAG**

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Cape Town Preliminaries

Where: Canal Walk When: August 27th-28th, 2005

National Finals

Where: Sandton When: September 17th-18th, 2005

GRAND FINALS

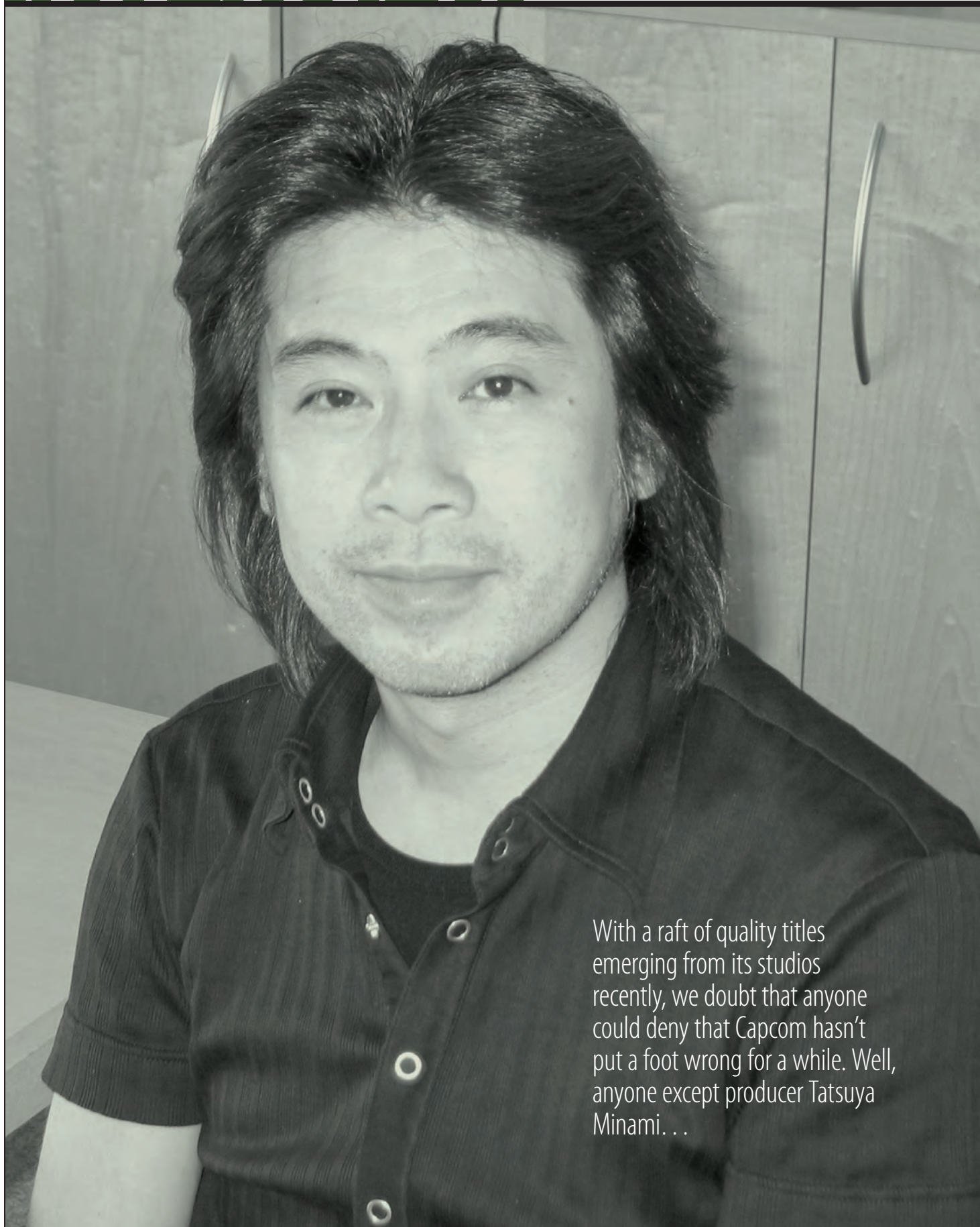
Where: Singapore When: November 16th-20th, 2005

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INTERVIEW



With a raft of quality titles emerging from its studios recently, we doubt that anyone could deny that Capcom hasn't put a foot wrong for a while. Well, anyone except producer Tatsuya Minami. . .

TATSUYA MINAMI

CAPCOM JAPAN

THERE HAVE BEEN MANY publishers that have brought us high-quality titles over the last few years. Even some of the smaller companies have been able to prove that 'every dog has his day', turning out at least one exceptional title in recent memory. But to continually produce original and challenging titles without missing a beat? Now that's amazing.

There's one company that seems to be managing it, though – Capcom. After joining the firm back in 1987, and working on 2D games for a year before a swift rise to the rank of producer, Tatsuya Minami must be the perfect person to let us know just how the company has managed to become the 'Midas' of the videogames industry...

"Are you sure about that?" Minami asks with a laugh. Yes, we are, very sure. As modest as Minami may be, nearly everything the company has worked on recently, qualifies as a 'must-have' game, and we're not going to let him suggest otherwise. So what's the secret of his success? "Well, first of all Capcom has about 700 staff which is pretty vast when compared to most of the other Japanese publishers," he admits. "And all the others are based in Tokyo, whereas Capcom is based in Osaka. It may not sound as much, but this makes a lot of difference. Things are very different there – not as populated. There is very little noise from outside as it's a much smaller town. This means that we can just shut out all the noise and we can get on with our jobs."

It's not the answer we were expecting. An epic tale of arduous activity and a lengthy description of the months of hard work and dedication that's been fed into every title would have seemed a little more appropriate. But, if Minami chooses to attribute Capcom's success to the lack of noise pollution in Osaka, then that's fine with us. But surely there's more to it than that? "Also, I think that it's because Capcom isn't a marketing-led company," Minami continues. "Things are done from a creative point of view as it's a creative group of people leading the company. Sometimes we succeed and sometimes we fail, but with these creative gamers actually playing the games and making the decisions, our titles tend to turn out more challenging than most."

'Challenging' is certainly one of the words that springs to mind when attempting to describe many of the

company's recent games. After just about recovering from the toughness of the third Devil May Cry instalment, we've been struck by the difficulty of killer7 – a title that's likely to draw mixed opinions largely due to its difficulty level and its stylised graphics. "Personally, I love this game," Minami reveals. "It's brand new and something totally different. You wouldn't think that any other company could deal with it. I don't know whether it will sell or not, but it was certainly a challenge to create and it definitely has its place."

killer7 was actually a bold move for Capcom. Games such as Viewtiful Joe 2, Resident Evil 4 and Devil May Cry 3 proved that the company could continue its winning streak solely by building upon its existing franchises. "There's a trend in the games industry – it's a global trend," Minami says.

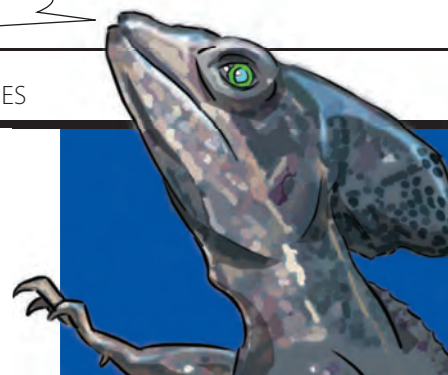
"The most difficult thing to predict is whether the player can actually play."

"Franchises are much safer to produce. It's obvious really. But within the industry – regardless of whether it's a tactic that's likely to succeed or not – companies have to try out some original ideas, or they soon end up not knowing where to go. You just have to take these risks."

These risks have certainly been coming thick and fast. From recent titles such as killer7 and the online Monster Hunter, to Viewtiful Joe's upcoming DS debut and GameCube beat-'em-up VFX Battle, there's a lot to be proud of. But what's been Minami's high point at Capcom?

"I loved Resident Evil 4. Although I dealt with Resident Evil Zero as well, that was ultimately just not satisfactory for me. When compared to the other titles in the series, Resident Evil 4 just turned out better. We started out with just another zombie game and we managed to evolve it to a point where it was something completely different. So many ideas were incorporated and so many new challenges, ideas and concepts were implemented. It really was just great. If we can get things that right again, I'll be happy."

Given Capcom's current hit rate, we reckon Minami will be smiling for a while... **NAG**



AMD vs. Intel? My Decision is Final.

TO BE DEAD HONEST, I thought I'd be able to avoid this debate forever. Until now, I was quite content to sit back and let other people do the arguing for hours on end. The processor war really is an amusing one when you stop to think about it. Where else can you see grown men getting so worked up over a little chunk of silicon that they're ready to engage in fisticuffs?

At any rate, my non-involvement was all going according to plan until I made the mistake of commenting, during one such altercation, on IRC that it really doesn't make much difference which processor you have. Well, God forbid! Soon enough I felt like Switzerland during World War II. Educational tip: being neutral doesn't necessarily prevent conflict. So I've decided I simply cannot remain silent on the issue any longer. Therefore, the debate is now over. The _Basilisk has spoken. And the winner is... the consumer. That's right, you – you whining fan boy – are the victor in the Intel/AMD race. Now please do us all a favour. Be quiet and listen carefully as I explain.

First let's examine just how different the two brands really are. I've actually heard claims that an AMD Athlon XP 2000+ can outperform an Intel P4 3.2GHz. On the other side of the fence, there are countless stories of AMDs falling apart at the seams while their Intel counterparts don't even break a sweat. The truth is rather unexciting by comparison. According to numerous reliable benchmarks, including tomshardware.com and ocworkbench.com, the difference is negligible. Bear in mind that these tests were performed several times with several different processors of the same specifications, to account for individual variation. (This is why you haven't proven anything when your computer performs better than your friend's). Using games ranging from Quake III to Far Cry, the tests revealed that the highest difference in frames per second between two price-equivalent CPUs never exceeded five. Guess what? Your eye can't tell them apart – so why on earth should you care?

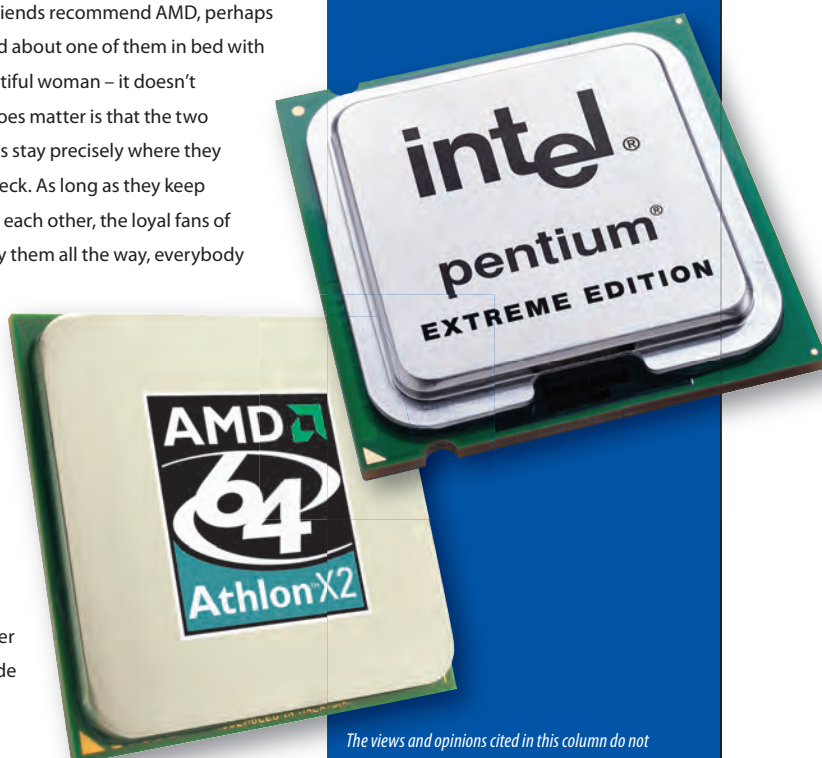
But, of course, you do care. And the reason you care is completely unrelated to the performance of your processor. There's a psychological theory

called "cognitive dissonance" which explains this phenomenon nicely. In layman's terms, your brain strives for consistency of thought and action. You naturally do what will reduce conflict in your mind. Conflict such as the anxiety of just having bought a new processor and not being sure that it was the right choice. With all the advertising out there, how can you be sure? Well, the easiest way is to convince yourself that your choice was significantly better than the alternative. And since there's no evidence putting either Intel or AMD notably ahead, there's nothing concrete to prove you wrong. You can keep arguing indefinitely. Until you meet me, that is.

It becomes clear that most of what makes a person choose one or the other is purely opinion. Perhaps you've had good experiences with Intel, perhaps your friends recommend AMD, perhaps you've dreamed about one of them in bed with you and a beautiful woman – it doesn't matter. What does matter is that the two hardware giants stay precisely where they are: neck and neck. As long as they keep trying to outdo each other, the loyal fans of each sticking by them all the way, everybody wins.

Competition is good for the industry. The harder they battle to win the support of Joe Bloggs, John Doe and Jack Prat, the cheaper my next upgrade will be. **NAG**

“That's right, you – you whining fan boy – are the victor in the Intel/AMD race.”



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Ambiguous heading!

DON'T OWN A PARROT. But if I did, I have no doubt that it would be the most intelligent parrot yet, capable of streaming expletives and colourful profanities at any passer-by. It would even do the dishes while whistling something catchy, yet tasteful. Thankfully, I don't own a parrot. Parrots are one of the most self-centred, stubborn, noisiest animals in existence, second only to the average self-serving Counter-Strike clan member.

Yes, that was a cheap shot. I don't believe in paying full price for taking a stab at Counter-Strike players. But take note, I'm not actually attacking the game, but those who support it vehemently to the point of zealotry. That's a big change for me, actually. A paradigm shift in my angle of attack. No more do I accuse Counter-Strike of being a substandard team-game/chat-insult program riddled with bugs, imbalances and presented in the wonderful baby-poop quality graphics of yesteryear. I don't need to say those things anymore, everyone knows it.

Even the avid version 1.6 players, still living in their parents' basements at the tender age of 28, agree that Counter-Strike has had a good run, but should move along.

That's where Counter Strike: Source comes in, with revamped graphics and a whole host of new bugs. Of course, the v1.6 zealots wish to burn this newfangled Source version at the stake, spewing pleasantries such as "Source version is 'ghey', it has too many bugs!" I hope that I'm not the only one seeing the ludicrous amount of irony here.

Fortunately for you readers, I am the only one being subjected to wonderful inter-office Taoism's such as (cue sitar music), "Peeling a banana is wonderful". Thank you for that, Reej (our local hardware guru who apparently loves a good banana peeling).

Meanwhile, back at the ranch it seems Sony has seen fit to release - hold on to your hats kids - a Web browser for their PSP in the 2.0 update. Now me, personally, I'm blown away. Somewhere someone at Sony must have decided that, "hey, for once... let's give something away, instead of selling it at full price." I approve.

Keeping with the conversational tone here

just to, you know, mix things up a little; I'm very curious to see how the PSP will be received in South Africa. It's expected to launch on the 1st of September locally, but there seems to be the off chance that it will only be launched at rAge (which occurs on the 30th of September). Either way, is the local market going to buy into this flashy overpriced PlayStation 1.5 that barely fits into your pocket? Are gamers really going to hand over almost R500 for a watered-down game or diet-DVD (UMD Movie)?

I'd like to think that, perhaps, the local consumer market has grown a large enough pair to demand slightly more competitive (read: fair) prices. But who knows? Consumers are such fickle beasts, who will complain about their PCCD games costing R299, but then happily hand over close to six grand for an overpriced, underperforming PCI Express video card just so they can swing their e-penis (electronic phallus, commonly used to prove you're better than the rest) around while giggling.

I'm wondering if, perhaps, that last sentence wasn't a little too graphic for our younger audience?

Remember children, if Oprah can say it on her show, then it can't be a naughty word. **NAG**

“I am the only one being subjected to wonderful inter-office Taoism's such as (cue sitar music), “Peeling a banana is wonderful”. Thank you for that, Reej (our local hardware guru who apparently loves a good banana peeling).”



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WWE
GET READY TO PLAY

Planet America

BEAR WITH ME; I'M going to get a tad political. One of my pass times is reading about and exploring social issues across the globe, especially what happens in the US. That's because when the American giant moves, everyone follows. Often decisions in the US don't reflect the clarity and insight other places, like Europe and the Far East, apply. But US policy and culture dominate the world. So does its financial decisions.

Two examples of this are the war against drugs and housing prices. The US is at the forefront of combating illegal narcotics, which are such because of prohibition-style laws. But countries like Columbia, which is the literal front-line of this war, are suffering the consequences. The plan is to throw money at the problem to make it go away. The world spends billions of Dollars every year to fight drugs, but it's losing the battle. It's been losing it since it started and drug use has grown year upon year. In Columbia this circle-in-square approach has rendered the government impotent in handling the problem proactively, and the cash has actually just increased the civil wars there. The US has already stated that it will oppose any form of legalisation in Columbia, despite even the latter's most conservative party considering some form of decriminalisation. In other words, one country's short-sighted outlook is literally destroying another. High real estate prices are also because of the US. When the dot-com bubble burst in 2000, the US dropped interest rates to combat the fallout. This meant people could buy houses for cheaper. The rest of the world followed and now property prices are at a global record high.

Heading into our field, entertainment, you could expect similar effects if some politicians and groups get their way. The US is the world's biggest gaming market. So if violent games suddenly become taboo there, expect a lot less games like Doom 3 and Half-Life 2 to appear on shelves (both were rated M for violence). This same lack of insight is being applied to these areas, mainly because US politicians care more about votes than the issue at hand. When you study comments made about all the games that

have caused controversy (GTA, Carmageddon, Soldier of Fortune and so on), the politicians and press in the US seem to be basing their opinions on what they heard. A stunningly inaccurate statement like, "in GTA you get points for shooting cops", or, "in GTA there are missions that expect you to kill cops" evokes a lot of emotion, but it is also completely inaccurate. As any GTA player will tell you, the last thing you want to do is shoot a cop - unless you are suicidal or really looking for an ultra-intense getaway.

The controversy over the GTA Hot Coffee mod is just the latest chapter of a culture that quoted misinformed spokespeople and reflected a tendency for button pushing. I wouldn't care, but if this goes far enough it could affect the rest of us and our playing habits. Rockstar won't make a game that won't sell in the US - that's financial suicide. Of course, gamers just retort by saying how dumb the statements are. We can do more. We can write to newspapers and magazines. You and Huisgenoot love to publish syndicated articles about bad games. The local Reader's Digest has also made a foray into this tabloid pastime. Have you written and complained yet? Have you told their ombudsman how wrong the facts were? Or did you just sit and bitch on the local gaming forum, where all your peers agree and no one else even hears about it?

Speak up and fight this nonsense (intelligently, please)! Mainstream knowledge about games is a priority that all gamers should focus on - unless you're happy with playing Nintendo-style games for the rest of your life... **NAG**

The controversy over the GTA Hot Coffee mod is just the latest chapter of a culture that quoted misinformed spokespeople and reflected a tendency for button pushing.



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UBISOFT

INBOX

[LETTER OF THE MOMENT]

FROM Maelstrom

SUBJECT Identity crisis

There is something that's never been mentioned and until recently I never really realised what an irritation it was. We all have our nicks right, a name that sets us apart and that gives us individuality. To some it's just a jest or something without real meaning, but to others it's a reflection of their personality. Now my gripe is this: you build up a reputation, grow attached to your nick, people begin to know you by your nick and then some game comes along and gives you limited characters to use – Need for Speed as an example or Quake 3 Arena. Shouldn't there be a set standard of amount of characters or an unlimited amount for that matter?

That's a good point. But I don't think it's an issue anymore, right? One thing this does highlight is that considering games like the original Quake featured nickname size limitations, I wonder how many of the older gamers today have shorter-than-they'd-like nicks thanks to this arbitrary limitation. Then again, why do we cling to our nicks? Is the reputation aspect that important, or does one build and develop this imaginary character that we cannot bare to let go of? Or even worse, how about being so famous that you can't change your nick [think of Fatal1ty – what if he doesn't really like his nick...]? I think this topic needs more expert discussion, or even a whole book written about it. This is a suggested working title: 'Alter egos and the avatar a55a55in' by Lumpy111.

Another scrap to consider: remember back then when you hit a high score on an arcade machine, you only had three letters to work with! So at the end of the day, if you think about it, we've actually come a long way.

NAG Ed.

The 'Letter of the Moment' prize is sponsored by EA Africa. The winner receives 2 games for coming up with the most eclectic chicken scratch



IMPORTANT STUFF! PAY ATTENTION!

Land Mail: P.O. Box 237, Olivedale, 2158

Cyber mail: letters@nag.co.za

Important: Include your details when mailing us or how will you ever get your prize if you win...

There is a new rule for those of you sending in any artwork for publication. Your submission must include the NAG logo or one of our magazine covers [download @ www.nag.co.za] built into the image somewhere – and by 'built in' we mean not pasted or stuck on somewhere – built in. You real artists will know what we're talking about – no logo / cover – no fame. NAG logo on CD.



FROM We'll keep this quiet

SUBJECT Miktar's Column

Miktar needs to think about who is audience are [sic] before he writes another column. His audience are [sic] mostly children and teenagers and even people who don't speak English as their first language. He should think about that before he writes another column. When I read through his column, I have so much trouble understanding what the words mean that I end up not knowing what the point of the article is at the end [*you're not alone here, Ed*]. NAG is supposed to be a gaming magazine and not a place to show off how wonderful your English is to people who don't understand it.

*I think the real humour here is in your first line [grammatical mistake included]. It proves what he fears most, but refuses to accept since he started working here... But back to your letter. In the office when he speaks we all usually just nod politely and smile because nobody can make head or tail of anything he says. And we can't get rid of him because we can't speak his language [he also has some odd eating habits that we claim stem from a poor upbringing, but he claims are perfectly 'acceptable' where he comes from]. Also, these well researched 'statistics' of yours are completely bogus if you think our readership consists of Afrikaans teenagers. That's like saying most of the fish in the sea prefer noodle soup. **NAG Ed.***

FROM Justin

SUBJECT I'm a hypocrite

A few years ago, I, Tempest, wrote to NAG saying how evil Diablo was. Then, late last year, I went and purchased Diablo II and Diablo II: Lord of Destruction. I enjoyed it. I mean, I really, really enjoyed it. It didn't even seem that bad... So, yeah, I'm a hypocrite (am I spelling that right?). I say a game is pure evil, and then I go and play it for months on end... Did I mention I'm a hypocrite?

A hypocrite – no. Confused – maybe. Retarded – definitely.

NAG Ed.

FROM Keagan

SUBJECT Violence in games

Why is there always so much violence in all the games that have been released so far this year? What are all the developers trying to do to all the children who own computers? This is just a money scam for the consumers of computer games (including myself)! If children are being exposed to all these games, they can become killers themselves. Please tell me if it is a good idea to put a slowdown to all the violent games.

Firstly, no game is ever going to turn a child into a killer. They have parents for that part of their upbringing. Violence in games and movies is a basic supply and demand dynamic – if nobody bought violent games then nobody would make violent games. It really is very simple if you think about it. We

*are [society is] getting pretty much exactly what we want, when we want it and how we want it. And you can't go against society because there are more of them. **NAG Ed.***

[The mail below has not been altered for publication]

FROM Johan Steffens

SUBJECT

I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE!!!!!!!

#@%&*^

I'm E-Mailing [sic] from a computer class and NOBODY except [sic] me and my friend know what to DO!!!!!!!

*Well I don't know about that. Firstly you neglected to type in a subject for your e-mail which not surprisingly caused my spam filter to file it under junk mail. Then you write your entire first sentence with the 'Caps Lock' key engaged in case, I assume, I didn't 'get' that you were shouting by adding, let's see, nine exclamation marks after it. You then obviously must have thumped your keyboard with your fist or something similar to generate more random characters. Finally I can begin making sense of it all in line three of your 'mail' where you shout the word nobody, spell the word except incorrectly and finally end with a shouted do and another nine exclamation marks. You're also typing mail to me instead of paying attention in class. You fail. **NAG Ed.***

FROM Dorks

SUBJECT Escape

Many people have asked me the same question about why I play games for such long periods. My answer I believe is shared with thousands of gamers around the world and I can break the answer up into two equally relevant categories. The first is obviously the fact that we enjoy the hell out of them but the second part is important. When you play a really intense game you get so sucked into all the action that everything else dissolves away, including the bad day that you had at work, problems with the missus... I could go on forever. It's in that time that you forget about all your worries and you step into that happy place we know as utopia. We can't however run from our problems but everything can be good in moderation.

*You do realise that from the word 'everything' in your mail, you could be talking about anything from a triple whiskey to a snort of cocaine. Let's pray this magazine never ends up in the hands of Hillary Clinton. **NAG Ed.***

FROM PJ Stock

SUBJECT Games value

I've noticed lately that while game prices are staying the same, the quality of how it is presented and the play dynamic is getting lower, for example the SWAT franchise. I recently bought SWAT 4 – inside the box were two CDs in paper folders and the manual. When I bought SWAT 2 a few years ago, inside the box where two



Splatterhouse (1988)

CDs in a proper case, and a thick manual that gave background information on SWAT, walkthroughs for all the missions, and information on the actual SWAT call-ups the game's missions were based on. SWAT 4 is a good game and I enjoyed it, but for the same price, SWAT 2 was better in packaging, the manual, and completion time. (SWAT 2 had 30 missions to 14 in SWAT 4). It seems while game prices are staying the same, overall value is going down. So why are we still paying high prices for inferior goods?

You have a valid point, but you have to consider that while it now costs more to develop a game, ship a game, package a game, market a game, put a game on a shelf etc., the price you pay hasn't changed in the last five years. The only way for game publishers to compensate is to find more economical ways of presenting the 'same' product. I personally think that putting a condensed manual in the box and a more extensive manual on the CD is a good tree saving practice. Having less of a game to play through is open to interpretation. Is it shorter but better, or would you prefer the old engine but with new missions? This would also be no good because then someone will complain that the sequel didn't have enough improvements and so on. I get your point, but you need to be realistic here. **NAG Ed.**

FROM Sane1

SUBJECT Why all the pentagrams in games

I'm writing to you guys just to ask why in a lot of games are there pentagrams all over, like in DOOM 3. Sure you're dealing with hell but it wasn't needed as much, or in Constantine you're supposed to be a 'good guy' but right next to your health there is a pentagram, or as you're about to start a new game the difficulty levels are represented by pentagrams. Another example is the Quake series, or Painkiller, you are supposed to be an 'angel' but your checkpoints are pentagrams, which doesn't add up because the pentagram is a cult symbol or used at Satanist rituals, nowhere is it used by God. So why do it?

Why do teenagers and some adults get tattoos of symbols or icons they don't know the origin of or meaning of... because it looks cool? I suspect there are far too many developers who use pentagrams for silly things like menus and save points because they haven't had an original idea in the last four years. Except for id Software of course – they invented Hell in games and probably own the patent on the pentagram. **NAG Ed.**

FROM Byte

SUBJECT Gamer or worker?

I have been wondering for a while now, what is it that makes a gamer, a gamer? It may seem like a very easy to answer question but is in fact rather complex. Is a gamer someone who is bored at work and decides to play solitaire? Or is a gamer someone who strives to get the 50th kill first? I believe that there is no "Hard-

core" gamer or "Casual" gamer. I believe that anyone who has engaged in computer use for interactive entertainment should be considered a gamer. There is no generalisation or stereotyping but rather there is only the "Gamer" or the "Worker".

But aren't you generalising and stereotyping now? I think we should subdivide the human race into as many different categories as possible. This way there's bound to be at least 20 or so 'minorities' beneath me that I can poke fun at, judge and feel superior too. **NAG Ed.**

FROM yUDI

SUBJECT GameCube and Xbox

GameCube and Xbox – cube and box pretty similar, huh? Now get this: The new Xbox is called the Xbox 360 and the new Nintendo console is called the Revolution. 360° is known as a revolution. Coincidence or what?

No silly, a revolution is when the peasants come revolting and overthrow the current government. They originally wanted to call it the Nintendo Coup, but that wasn't snappy enough so they settled on Revolution. It's people like you who don't have a firm grasp of the facts who end up starting these weird rumours on the Internet. **NAG Ed.**

FROM s0ultaker from Clan UnSeen

SUBJECT Can I have Source with that?

It all started one fine morning. <Snip>

Alert! Counter-Strike letter... click. Eject. **NAG Ed.**

FROM Louis

SUBJECT Star Wars Republic Commando

I know opinions differ, but I cannot believe you gave Star Wars: Republic Commando such a good score. Yes, the AI is quite cool, but that alone is not enough to carry the game. To start off with, it doesn't even feel like a Star Wars title. I have never seen those stupid flying bugs in any Star Wars movie. No Jedi or Sith, no lightsabres, no blasters, and they call it Star Wars? The weapons you use are so puny and inefficient; you might as well fight barehanded. What does that pathetic machine gun use for bullets? Needles, maybe? The flamethrower is much too slow, and equally ineffective. The gameplay is boring, repetitive, and a total no-brainer. Snipe there, breach that, slice this, whatever. Big deal. Not like you have to think about any situation. I was totally disgusted that I wasted R300 on such a light weight piece of c**p. Very unlike Silent Hunter III – now that is what I call a brilliant game...

Thankfully I only played the demo. And based on what I saw there, I hated it too and quickly gave the review to another unsuspecting soul who, amusingly enough was grateful that I bestowed the honour on him. All this was even more disappointing because I was really hyped about the game based on some slick looking trailers. These are my reasons for not

liking the game, which might seem ridiculous, but not as odd as someone comparing a submarine simulator to a first person shooter. But yes, Silent Hunter III is excellent no matter what your ping... get it? I think Republic Commando was never destined to appeal to 'serious' big Star Wars fans and this is why we're not singing its praises. **NAG Ed.**

FROM Falcon

SUBJECT Question

I want to know which one is better between ATI and NVIDIA and between Intel (Pentium) and AMD? I want to know which one is more reliable (not which one pays bigger bribes).

Around the office that depends on who you ask. You all know which I like [for whatever irrational reasons]. I was even accused by some wisecracking Joe in the office [yes, he's new] that I'm a sucker for using Intel, but he forgets that I don't actually buy technology anymore so I can afford to insist on a particular item of hardware based on its colour and shape alone. **NAG Ed.**

FROM Not sure

SUBJECT Just a thought

Could I mail in more ideas... or would I just be wasting my time? Because it isn't a problem thinking of stuff but I don't want it to go to waste. So should I keep the ideas coming?

No please, keep them coming. **NAG Ed.**

FROM Robert

SUBJECT Age restricted games

People make age restricted games for a reason. To prevent people who are not the age from playing it. So why make age restricted games when toddlers are sitting in front of their PCs playing DOOM 3? They should make it clearer to people that if you are not the same age as it says on the box, then you can't have it. It's rather quite disturbing to see young children about the age of four running around pretending to kill people. So now I say that people should take games away from kids who are not old enough to play a specific game. I hope this made a strong point.

You know, I read you letter about three times and I'm still not entirely sure what you're trying to get across. I predict you'll do well in politics or sales. **NAG Ed.**

FROM Oni

SUBJECT Nothing too important

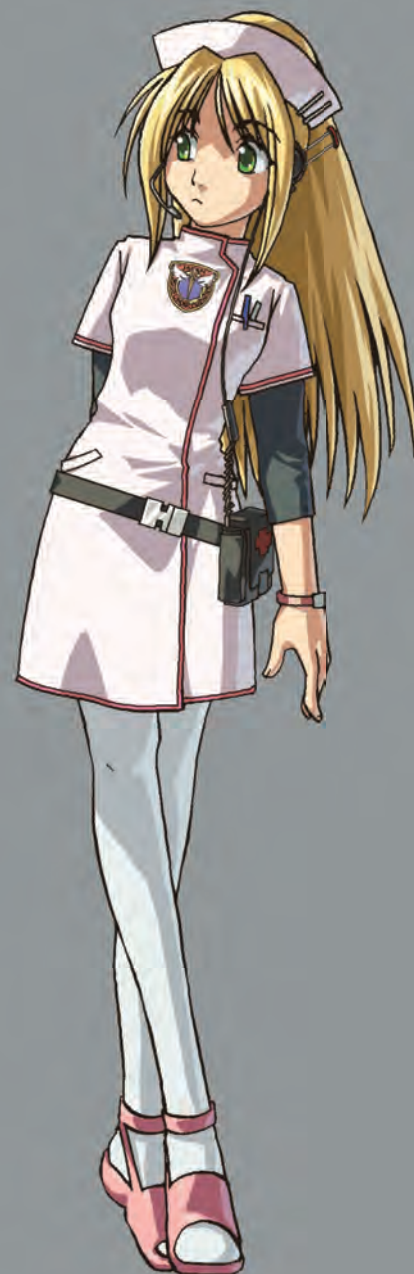
This is probably quite a terrible letter as letters go but the fact is I heard a rumour stating that Bard's Tale will be published on PC. Is this true or should I take a shovel to the head of the person who told me this?

It is true. Put your shovel away and calm down. Maybe you shouldn't be playing games. **NAG Ed.**

THE 12 SIGNS OF GAME ADDICTION

Games are terrible things. They can take up so much of your time. You start playing in the afternoon and the next moment it's the next morning and the postman has just greeted you through the window. It's just a few steps before you are hooked, spending months at a time on a game and forgetting the basic social skills that we all use in day to day stuff.

Us telling you what a game addict is might smack of the pot calling the kettle black, but some NAG staffers have put crack addicts to shame with gaming addiction. So we consider ourselves the most qualified and, as part of community service for punching an old lady (we thought she was that character from Metal Gear Solid 2), we present you with twelve signs which indicate that you are addicted to gaming. These are very serious and should be considered as a warning that, if you are a game addict, you are in worse danger than you thought you were.





You look above people's heads for their names

Social interaction isn't your thing to begin with. And when you are lured out into public for some reason, perhaps an insistent (and clearly selfish) girlfriend, someone's bachelors or a funeral they wouldn't let you attend via Webcam, you keep looking above people's heads to look for a name floating there. This aggravates social anxiety, because when you don't see a name, you have to fight urges to attack, because clearly this is the enemy.



You can't remember your girlfriend's cup size, but you know she has split ends.



You can crack walnuts with one hand, but you're too weak to climb up stairs

Anything involving lifting your carcass more than half a meter at a time isn't even considered. And if there are more than ten stairs, you look for the elevator. But years of gaming on all kinds of peripherals have given you amazing strength in your hands, so much so that you could thumb-wrestle the Hulk. You've also managed to crush a few controllers by accident and you've had to replace your PS2 several times, citing poor structural integrity on the warranty card.



Making coffee is exhausting, but the coffee can look like an abstract design.

You only speak English, but your written Korean is excellent



Unknown to your co-workers or students, you actually know more than one language. After years of playing online against South Korean gamers, you have perfected reading and writing Korean, but you can't speak or understand a spoken word of it. Still, given a keyboard, you can dish out slander, obscenities and general smack-talk faster than most people can in English. And you know 101 ways to tell someone in Korean they are a 'n00b'. But you don't actually know where South Korea is, other than 'near Japan'.



You frequently threaten to cook someone's pet.



You think you had a cat

Whatever happened to Mr. Fluffy? Or was it Sniffles? Or maybe it was something more butch, like Puma or Razorback. Maybe it was all of them - you can't even remember how many cats you've had, and you rarely see them. Usually they are gifts from some thoughtless relative who thinks the social interaction will do you good. The only place where this sign doesn't apply is when your cat sleeps on your monitor and lives off your fast food left-overs.



You know you have a pet, because you named your virtual one after it.



You refer to long queues as excessive load times

Ever stood in a queue? Not if you ask someone who knows you. In their minds, all you can complain about are excessive loading times. Sometimes, when in line, you shuffle people around in an attempt to defrag the queue. On occasion, you've insisted to your bank that they install a pause mechanism for people who take up excessive time (bandwidth) at a teller. In fact, you chose the bank and other establishments you use purely on their queue times, and you argue with other people in the queue that a hard drive upgrade would obviously speed the line up.



You try to reboot your phone when being put on hold.



You find out about the movie by playing the game

If it weren't for Chronicles of Riddick, you wouldn't know who Vin Diesel was. Neo is a game character who also happens to have a role in a trilogy. And you're still confused why Lucas made Episodes one to three instead of just making KOTOR movies. The Jedi in that game clearly rock harder than anything in the movies. While some don't read the book and wait for the movie, you play the game and then think the version on the circuit is a movie based on the title you played.



You hate Uwe Boll more than anyone else possibly could.

Your character has more clothes than you do



What will you wear today? You don't really care. The T-shirt and tracksuit pants combo has been going well for the past few weeks. But the food and coffee stains on your shirt could prompt a clean one. If only things were this easy when it came to dressing your favourite character. Should your Sim wear the tank-top today? How about traversing San Andreas in a tuxedo? Do those boots match the rare armour set you killed seven dragons to get? Your character's wardrobe fits onto seven DVDs, but you can pack everything you wear in a shoebox - with space to spare.



You only know what a cardigan is because your Sim owns one.



You can invoke insomnia on demand

Who needs sleep? Serious gamers clearly don't, but when you go without rest for a long time, you risk your health. So you meet the problem both ways with complete control over when you can and can't sleep. You are able to sleep through anything, even a dentist appointment, and you can manage to stay awake for days on end, perhaps with ten minute sleep breaks while a level loads.



Your biological clock is set to game time.



Distributors call you for release dates

Any true gamer knows when their favourite game is being released. You, though, know when all games will be released and you have more game release dates than appointments in your diary. But the real sign here is when the local distributors call you for release dates. In fact, you are the first to now when a game's release date is announced or changes. In extreme cases, you declare a game's release date as a public holiday, but you always think a holiday is a work day. If you have the release dates memorised for all the regions, you are beyond help.



You know when the next Final Fantasy arrives, but you forgot your birthday.



When you play with your food, you complain about the poor AI

Your mom told you to not play with your food and you agree. Clearly, whoever served the meal didn't pay enough attention to the AI, which doesn't exist. You also have other problems with it. The various factions (peas, mash, stew, rice) are clearly unbalanced and only one, the mash, gives you any kind of building options. But peas are useful - you can start a network game with someone else just by using your spoon.



You give boiled carrots unit names.



You swap GBA cartridges faster than Clint Eastwood draws a gun

It has been said that Clint Eastwood has a faster draw speed than even the legends of the Wild West. He did of course have help from Andy Anderson's draw designs, but the man is quick. Still, not even he compares to the speed with which you change games on your handheld. Spring-loaded systems like the PSP and DS' cartridge eject rank as your favourite, and sometimes you can swap cartridges before the handheld's boot logo comes on.



Friends have recorded you swapping games so they can play it back in slow motion.

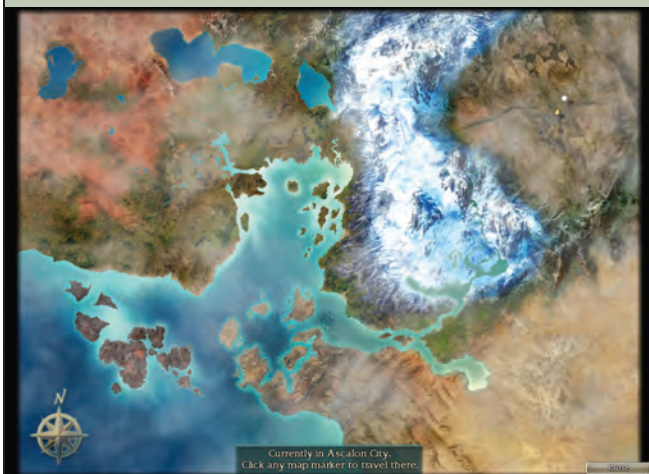


You correct strategy guides

You own every strategy guide for every game out there. Mostly you don't even use strategy guides because you are that damn good, but you still sit with one open every time you play, along with a red pen for corrections. Your strategy guides look like MBA study manuals and in some cases you staple extra pages onto the back for more notes. Then again, not all strategy guide editors see the need to detail the various door sizes in Battlefield 2, but you think it's important.



You detailed all the weak spots on Mario's enemies.



THE GUILD WARS JOURNAL PART 2 / FINAL

DAY 20

July 20, 2005 | 7 Comments

It's amazing how much can happen in a month of playing a **MMORPG**, especially one that is so action focused as Guild Wars. To recap the earlier days of my endeavours; around day three I did my first quest which required a **human companion**. It was one of the only points in the game where they force you to find a real person to complete a mission with. It taught me a lot about how the game was designed, how team-work is important and so forth. Unfortunately for me (and my companion), I attempted the mission too early in my character's life and died, repeatedly. I went and completed other menial quests first to improve my character, and completed the mission later.

It's important to note that in Guild Wars you can only take **eight skills** into a mission. Your skill choice to use on a mission is what determines the usefulness of your character. Since Guild Wars isn't as item-centric as most MMORPGS, which skills you take with you are as critical a choice as which weapon to use.

I joined a guild early on called the **Black Dragon Elite**. They're a local guild comprised entirely of South Africans, with an impressive member list of over 40 people. You can form your own guild, of course, but it's rather pricy. I found the BDE guild to be supportive and very friendly, always a bonus in a game where you have to interact with other people.

The **Warrior character** I had originally created wasn't suiting my play-style, so I decided instead to create a new character (**a Necromancer/Ranger**), which I'm still using. The journey from the early days of my character has been a lengthy one. Once you're ready to leave the 'tutorial' area (**called Pre-Searing**), the game thrusts you into an **Academy** where you do some quick Player vs. Player combat (just to mix things up a bit), and then a cut-scene explains what had happened to the world.

The Post-Searing world (after a warrior race called the Charr have pretty much ruined the environment), is bleak and desolate. The entire world is different. Gone are the lush greens, replaced by deserts, red sand and fearsome looking crystals jutting up from the environment. Occasionally, something may look familiar (based on the Pre-Searing area) albeit ruined or destroyed, which is an interesting touch.

The game progresses its story via **cooperative missions**, which you can play either with friends/strangers, or **hirelings**. Hirelings are AI team-mates capable of most missions, but sometimes a little frustrating as you have no way of controlling them (for example, you can't tell them not to run in and attack enemies, thus bringing an entire army down on your head).

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Over the course of the month, I've completed many missions, a lot of small quests and even dabbled in some **Guild vs. Guild** action, which is an odd mix of King of the Hill and 'kill everyone in the enemy team'. Overall there hasn't been a dull moment - there are always quests to do, new items to find and new skills to try out.

Posted by Miktar at 1:42 AM

COMMENT?

DAY 21

July 21, 2005 | 2 Comments

I'm on level 14 (out of a possible 20, which will probably increase once the first expansion is released) and I've barely begun to scratch the surface of the world. I've actually travelled so far, from the barren wastelands, through the winter peaks of a mountain right into a tropical island paradise, filled with even more exotic and dangerous creatures.

Every day, I find another South African who is playing Guild Wars, expanding the local community within the game exponentially. Guild Wars seems to appeal to South Africans, more so than World of Warcraft (based on the figures I've found).

Posted by Miktar at 11:17 PM

COMMENT?

DAY 22

July 22, 2005 | 4 Comments

It's interesting how, in any scenario, you always find people willing to **scam** others just for a quick buck. Guild Wars is no exception. You get players who will 'run' you through difficult mission areas - you pay them half up front and the rest at the end. Unfortunately (for both sides, really), sometimes the '**runners**' will take your cash and leave you in the middle of the mission. Or the people 'running' will refuse to pay the other half of the agreed amount at the end.

I originally wanted to expand upon the various classes and the **PvP**



section of the game. Unfortunately, time just didn't allow it and there isn't nearly enough space here to write about everything. So, I'm going to point all those interested in Guild Wars, or those who want to know more about the various classes to this site:

www.guildwarsguru.com. It's a highly informative fan-site, containing all the info you could possibly want including an interactive map of the world.

Posted by Miktar at 3:40 PM

COMMENT?

CLOSING

While this has in no way been a complete guide to Guild Wars, I hope it has been informative enough to help you decide if you want to play Guild Wars or not. I'd have to say, personally, that Guild Wars is simply the best **MMORPG** I've played (I've yet to play Matrix Online, but more about that next month), and I'm joining the ranks of players eagerly awaiting the free Summer Patch which will add a whole host of new content.

BLACK DRAGON ELITE

I'd like to send out a personal thanks to the BDE guild and its members, who have been helpful, friendly and entirely willing to help a complete newbie like me at all hours of the night. **NAG**



The Guild

Again, NAG would like to thank the members of the Black Dragon Elite guild ... at least the ones who hadn't hit their cap and were able to show up for the group photo. *Pictured from left to right:*

BACK ROW: Master Bigray, Raiden of Za, Alayon Arcanum, Mkima Dracon, Saidar II, Axl Of Rose, Stygian Doll

FRONT ROW: Alana Evershot, Thorn Deepblade

Computers that Accommodate Your Lifestyle, Not the Other Way Around

Multimedia and home entertainment are the next big trends that are projected to take personal computing out of offices and studies, and become the entertainment centerpiece of your living room. However, how many computers out there really deliver all the promises of fun, excitement and convenience? The best way to get a computer that fits your way of life, is to build it yourself with all the customized features you really need.

Just imagine a computer that lets you watch TV, record your favorite shows, enjoy FM radio and stereo-quality sound, share information and go online wirelessly, compute with exceptional performance, lower system noise and overclock intelligently all right out of the box. Hmm...sounds too good to be true right?

The recently launched ASUS Intelligence (AI) Life Series motherboards, the P5WD2 Premium and P5LD2 Deluxe, from ASUS are made to blend lifestyle and computing in one single package. Some of the innovations adopted by the boards are excellent foundations for putting together a true multimedia entertainment system.

TV tuner and wireless connection - Double Joyment

Most boards don't have more than 5 PCI slots, so why take up two precious connections with a TV tuner and a wireless card. The two AI Life boards bundled the unique WiFi-TV card, which includes TV tuner functions and wireless connectivity in one PCI card.

Besides regular TV and PVR (personal video recording) functions, the card also supports digital TV with DVB-T standard to provide a flexible solution for TV viewing. FM radio reception is also available for more entertainment options. The card further provides IEEE 802.11a, b and g standards for wireless connection to the Internet and other digital devices. Share photos, videos and

MP3 music files between the wireless devices at home without tangling wires, and link the same devices to the Internet with AP (access point) functions. The unique setup wizard makes establishing a wireless environment a piece of cake whether you are an expert or beginner.



Great audio experience

Alright, you can catch the Super Bowl or other shows on systems based on the P5WD2 Premium and P5LD2 Deluxe, but an entertainment system is not really an entertainment system without bumpin' sounds. The P5WD2 Premium and P5LD2 Deluxe offer 7.1-channel and 8-channel audio output, respectively, and Dolby audio technologies to deliver powerful sound to go with whatever visual applications you have running on the system.

AI Quiet - Powerful yet quiet

Many motherboards offer overclocking features that raise CPU performance to handle resource-hungry tasks. The two ASUS boards, of course provide these overclocking features to bring out the true potential of a system, but they took it up step further.

It's hard to concentrate on a huge proposal or a movie when the fan keeps spinning away and making annoying noise. AI Quiet dynamically controls CPU speed and reduces temperature and fan speeds when peace and quiet are what you desire.

Stack Cool 2 - Zero noise cooling

Another feature to lower system acoustics is Stack Cool 2. It is a fan-less cooling solution that effectively transfers heat generated by the critical components to the other side of the specially designed PCB (printed circuit board) for heat dissipation. The result is a temperature decrease of up to 20°C.



Dual-core CPU - Power for multimedia

To enjoy multimedia entertainment that includes simultaneous operation of several applications, your system needs the power to handle multi-tasking. Supporting the Intel 955X chipset (P5WD2 Premium) and 945P chipset (P5LD2 Deluxe), both ASUS boards are ready for the Intel dual-core CPU. The advanced processing technology contains two physical CPU cores with individually dedicated L2 Caches to satisfy the rising demand for more powerful processing capability.

AI Life motherboards bring lifestyle and personal computing together. They entertain you with TV, radio and Dolby sound, and link you to the rest of the world via wireless connection. To create a peaceful environment, several new and improved innovations are also included to reduce noise and temperature. Don't change your way of life for a computer. Instead let the ASUS Life Series improve the quality of your life.

P5LD2 Deluxe	P5WD2 Premium
Support Intel LGA 775 CPU	Support Intel LGA 775 CPU
Intel 945P chipset	Intel 955X chipset
FSB 1066/800/533	FSB 1066/800/533
DDR2 711/667/533/400	DDR2 711/667/533/400
Intel Dual-Core CPU Ready	Intel Dual-Core CPU Ready



PREVIEWS

WANTED



Serious Sam 2

PLATFORMS PC, Xbox

Well, you saw what Sam will get up to in the last issue. Now how can you not want to get into that action? Obviously we want to, because Sam is the biggest ass-kicker since Duke. Perhaps the biggest of all time!



UFO: Aftershock

PLATFORMS PC

The X-Com range of games haven't had it good for a while, so perhaps this new title (from the same publishers as Sacred) with its global defence angle and improved tactics, will do the trick.



Supreme Commander

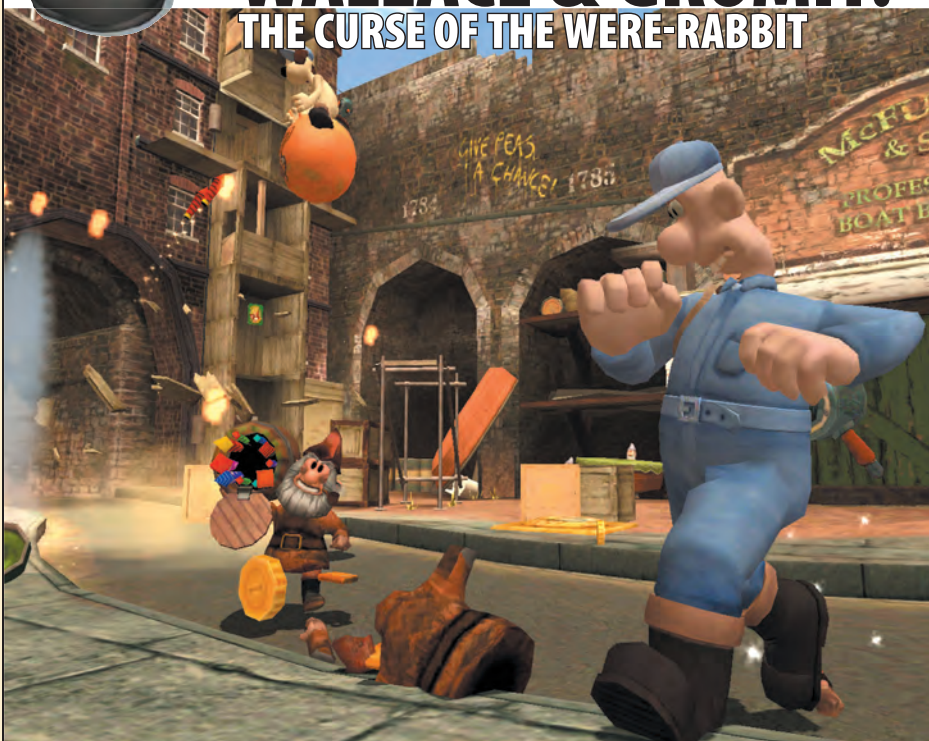
PLATFORMS PC

Read the preview to see why, but any Total Annihilation fan will already want it. And any RTS fan should also want it. In fact, anyone who likes to nuke stuff should really want it.



THIS MONTH WE ASSAULT you with no less than three preview features, including one nifty hands-on look at Quake 4 (that's what a flight to London gets you) and an interview with Molyneux himself about The Movies. And for the older gamers, Chris Taylor is making another RTS: the huge Supreme Commander. Still, no need to shun the small previews – Condemned, Shadow of the Colossus and Jaws Unleashed are just a few titles this month worthy of your scrutiny.

WALLACE & GROMIT: THE CURSE OF THE WERE-RABBIT



DEVELOPER Frontier **PUBLISHER** Konami **PLATFORMS** PS2, Xbox **RELEASE DATE** Q4 2005

There are some who haven't heard of this duo, but that's their loss. The claymation inventor and his dog are back – both for a new movie and this game. Based on the movie, our heroes have to discover the truth behind the notorious were-rabbit. Will it be as funny as a glove-wearing penguin?

HELLO KITTY ROLLER RESCUE

DEVELOPER Namco **PUBLISHER** Namco **PLATFORMS** PC, PS2, Xbox, GCN **RELEASE DATE** Q4 2005

Frequent readers will notice that we can't resist punting Hello Kitty. It's not that we are fans – there is no HK merchandise in the NAG office – but denying Hello Kitty is like denying reality. There are even Hello Kitty cabs in Japan! And now the world's cutest feline has a 3D game heading towards us. Cutesy in three dimensions!



WWE: DAY OF RECKONING 2

DEVELOPER Yuke's PUBLISHER THQ PLATFORMS GCN RELEASE DATE September 2005



The WWE games have become quite impressive, at least in terms of graphic fidelity. The polygon count on the models is a lot higher, so you will be able to recognise your favourite wrestler. Plus, apart from a story mode, each wrestler has 4 – 6 unique moves and more varied styles.

TOCA RACE DRIVER 3

DEVELOPER Codemasters PUBLISHER Codemasters PLATFORMS PC, PS2, Xbox RELEASE DATE February 2006



With a new engine in tow, the next TOCA wants to take things a step further. There are more game modes and a new Pro career as well as cars spanning several decades. As a bonus, players can also try the kart career, which ends up with the Williams F1 team.

METAL GEAR ACID 2

DEVELOPER Konami PUBLISHER Konami PLATFORMS PSP RELEASE DATE TBA



MGS Acid showed that the Metal Gear franchise isn't just about real-time stealth. It can also be about card collecting stealth! The first title was a bit of a rush job, but it looks like Konami is taking its time with the sequel, promising a new look and a lot of gameplay improvements.

PACMAN WORLD 2

DEVELOPER Zoo Digital PUBLISHER Zoo Digital PLATFORMS GBA RELEASE DATE Q4 2005



The Pacman universe changed into a side-scroller a while ago and one of those versions will be there to keep GBA fans happy. Including both arcade games and 3D mazes to solve, there will be over 20 levels and a lot of pill-popping. And to think they said Hot Coffee is bad for us...

What we're playing at the NAG office ...



Sacred: Underworld

You can read the review elsewhere in this issue, but suffice to say that anyone who liked the first game will love the expansion. It's really, really, really big and it now has guns. Guns!



Guild Wars

It's a MMOG without subscription fees, so several NAG staffers have already gotten hooked to it. If the magazine is a few weeks late, this might be the cause of it. Work seems to be something that happens in between Guild Wars.



Quake

In a bid to return to our old-school roots, the original Quake is making its rounds in the office again for some good, old deathmatch action. Nothing quite beats the chaos of an office full of people running around The Bad Place. And Telefragging has never been this much fun.

IT'S A STROGG! WHAT SHALL WE CALL IT?

You can think of Quake 4 as the lovechild of id Software and Raven Software – they've been courting each other for a number of years now and are finally [and surprisingly] making a game together. If you were to create a game using the Doom 3 engine while taking all the best bits from the Quake III multiplayer game and all the best from the Quake II single player game, you'd have something that loosely resembles Quake 4.

Prepare for the ultimate in first person shooter entertainment – a game that will deliver both single player and multiplayer delights in the same way that Quake I and II did. NAG, along with a few UK gaming journalists, was invited to a posh London hotel recently to sit down with Tim Willits and Todd Hollenshead and play Quake 4. This is what happened...



QUAKE FOR4VER

QUAKE 4: HANDS-ON PREVIEW

VITAL INFO

■ Platforms

PC Xbox

■ Developer

Raven Software | id Software

■ Publisher

Activision

■ Supplier

MegaRom [011] 234 2680

■ Genre

FPS

■ Release Date

When it's done



TO SET THE SCENE, Raven Software and id Software's unique relationship began way back in 1992 when Raven licensed id Software's engine technology to build their latest game – ShadowCaster [1993]. Since then, Raven has gone on to create some truly remarkable games including Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast and the controversial Soldier of Fortune series [usually using licensed 3D engine technology from id]. Quake 4 is something new for both developers – they've never collaborated on such a level before. The reasoning is that id isn't interested in expanding the company to accommodate a massive project like Quake 4, so the development reigns have been handed over to Raven while id [overseeing the process] works closely with the development team providing 'artistic' direction and inspiration. Based on the respectable track record of Raven, the Doom 3 engine and the intellectual property involved here, there is no question that whatever comes out of this unholy trinity will undoubtedly please most fans. And if you're not in the least bit excited about this game, then you're probably reading this magazine by mistake – go back to your life citizen, we game here.

SINGLE PLAYER

IT'S THE ALL ACTION extravaganza you're expecting. Quake 4 has heaps of traditional first person run and gun action, but now with some squad dynamics and group hug tactics all the way over to the more extreme and unexpected – becoming a Strogg. There's an entire storyline to follow [video sequences included] and now you have a name – Matthew Kane. If this weren't enough, they've expanded the play dynamic to include vehicles [a mechanised walker unit and a hover tank] and during other missions you'll find yourself sniping enemies while riding on the back of a truck. But that's not all...

At the actual presentation we were zoomed through a few sections of the game and then stopped to play four different missions – each featuring a very different play dynamic all for the benefit of showing the gaming press what the Quake 4 experience is all about. It was amusing to hear Todd Hollenshead commenting that we were definitely a bunch of gamers as we all had our configurations mapped out in a few minutes. This compared to the mainstream press people who he said you could sometimes find holding their mouse up to the light wondering what to do with it. Anyway, the first mission and also the beginning of the game thrusts you right into the middle of the conflict. Waking up from a transport vehicle crash, you must find the other members of Rhino squad – your team. The game is well scripted with you lying in the wreckage unable to move, while witnessing various elements of a



fierce battle moving past your position. Eventually you're set free and can begin the actual game. Right from the start you're made very aware at all times that there's an epic battle on the go all around you of which you form a very small part, but such is the nature of the war machine. As the story moves along you become more pivotal and your actions start having a more direct and crippling effect on the enemy. You're constantly reminded of the ongoing backdrop of war as huge mechanised vehicles stomp towards targets you cannot see and aircraft zoom overhead. The radio is constantly chattering with animated snippets of intense fighting and occasionally you'll run past lone soldiers taking shots over high embankments. By implication you feel right in the middle of it all – much like Call of Duty. Interestingly, much of the first level is played outside and it's only when you enter a building that you are reminded that the Doom 3 engine is running the show. It's a far cry [sorry] from the dark and terrifying Mars base level design and game flow. When you are inside and fighting alongside your team-mates, the action is intense and fast paced and your level of participation varies depending on how you decide to play the game. Thankfully not once did our squad members stand in the way of our sights, block any doorways or stir up trouble where they shouldn't. id and Raven are acutely aware of the fact that if you're going to force gamers to play with a bunch of AI controlled squad mates, you'd better make it fun. During the game a number of familiar faces came and went such as the Berserker and other Strogg favourites. Serious attention to detail has been taken here and the more observant player will notice many of the same logos and other homage paid to the series. We can only hope they throw in a few more items of nostalgia in the final game. After clearing out the first level, the action switched to controlling a vehicle. Here we had to control a large mechanised walker equipped with a primary cannon and a six pack of rechargeable rockets. During this segment the play dynamic changed from fast paced running, ducking and gunning, to plodding along and tearing given kinds of meat out of the enemy. The downside is that the pace is much slower, but then again you're packing more firepower, so this evens things out. Next up your squad must protect a convoy as it travels to the heart of the Strogg to deliver a massive EMP bomb. Now you're positioned on one of the trucks in the convoy and must protect the bomb by shooting anyone or anything that comes near you. That wrapped up the single player session, which was over far too quickly and left everyone wanting more. It's really difficult to be critical of the game at this stage because everything we saw was just so slick and well put together. We believe the only real challenge Quake 4 will have is making sure it offers enough innovation within its various disciplines.

WEAPONS

The one thing that can be said, without any hesitation, is that while they're artistically different [from a polygon and texture point of view] and the effects they spew out look different, Quake 4 features all the same weapons we've come to know and love and they all behave as you remember them from Quake III and in some instances Quake II. Things we didn't see were a gauntlet or an axe and they've already stated that there'll be no BFG. Nostalgic neurosis aside, the rocket launcher still dominates the game [ask the ten or so European gaming journalists NAG took apart during the two intense death match sessions we had - NAG came out on top in both games, so feel proud people] and surprisingly the grenade launcher accounted for a great number of kills. On the list of weapons we actually fired there was the pea shooter, still good in a pinch and it also features the ability to power-up a little and fires a slightly larger pea. The nail gun still spits out the pain at a high rate, but oddly didn't 'feel' that effective during the multiplayer games - still a very cool looking and sounding piece of hardware. The other notable mention was the rail gun. This definitely doesn't look or feel as you'd expect, but at the end of the day still fires a deadly accurate and instantly killing projectile. And finally we come to the hyper blaster - still deadly if you can fix a steady stream on your target and will literally melt anything it comes into contact with. The spread of armaments is diverse and should make for some interesting match-ups, especially between players without explosive weaponry. But again it seems that the rocket launcher and rail gun will dominate the multiplayer arena - so business as usual then. The developers have also stated that weapons will be upgradeable. So for example, you'll be able to bolt on a guidance system for your rocket launcher or perhaps an 'increasing the rate of fire slide' for the rail gun making it that much more devastating. How this will translate into the multiplayer game [if all at] remains to be seen.



DROPPING THE HAMMER ON ANOTHER SEQUEL

Prepare for a little gaming philosophy. This isn't just another simple preview. You can't list a few snippets of information and how the levels will look and briefly discuss the multiplayer when dealing with a game of this magnitude. The Quake franchise has always changed the face of PC gaming in one way or another since the first game arrived, so there are much bigger implications to consider here.

Naturally expectations are going to be unrealistically high. If magazines and Websites aren't already hyping it enough, there's sure to be some impressive advertising campaign designed to get you to buy the game - not to mention all the fan sites popping up all over the place. The fact that Raven is developing the game with id watching closely is also going to have a bearing on the final product. It honestly has far too much attention and pressure. So much in fact that actually delivering a game that everyone will like is near impossible. It seems as the years go by the expectation for sequels to be infamous landmark titles grows until it becomes unachievable to give gamers what they're expecting or in many cases 'remembering'. This is what's bearing down on id and Raven at the moment. Unfair you might say, but they are, after all, the same people who had a hand in getting this industry to where it is today.

THE QUAKE FRANCHISE

What the Quake franchise has brought to gaming [not an exhaustive list]

Quake

- 3D engine technology
- The death match
- Online death match
- Game modifications including character skins and Quake C
- Bunny hopping and rocket jumping
- The Bad Place and The Abandon Base [maps]
- The Lightning Gun

Quake II

- Coloured Lighting
- Popularised CTF
- The Rail gun
- The Edge [map]

Quake III

- Shaders, curved surfaces and 32-bit colour
- Jump pads
- The Longest Yard [map]
- Space levels

Quake 4

- An eclectic blend of everything we've come to know and love
– well that's what they'll probably say on the box...



MULTIPLAYER

IF ONE THING IS certain, Quake 4 is going to pick up plenty of attention when it comes to multiplayer. It's been said before that Doom can be considered id Software's single player game and Quake its multiplayer game - something set in stone when Quake III was released [essentially a multiplayer only game].

After playing through a few of the single player levels on demonstration, we turned our attention to the multiplayer game. While waiting for the other journalists to settle down, we were busy browsing through the multiplayer options and happened upon the map list confirming that The Edge and The Longest Yard are in the game - hooray. We even managed to start a server on The Edge for a quick look around. It took a while to find our bearings, but soon enough it all started feeling familiar and we went looking for the rail gun... that is, until we were politely asked to disconnect and join the proper game server. But we had found what we were looking for. Later, after the whole multiplayer session was over and everyone was reconciling their thoughts about what might be the next evolution for multiplayer gaming for at least a few years, we snuck a quick look at The Longest Yard - exactly the same map we all know and love, but due to the new engine the scale was different. The map felt a little narrow and the red armour model is much smaller than what you're used to in Quake III. This quick scout about the settings also confirmed that all the usual options are accounted for. These guys certainly know their stuff when presenting multiplayer gaming on the PC. The other maps' names all looked new, but here's hoping we'll get at least one Quake I level. Based on the hat tipping to the other two games in the series, this is almost a guarantee. The Bad Place perhaps?

But back to the game [after a pleasingly short loading time]. The multiplayer action was frantic thanks to none of us having ever seen any of the maps, so the games degenerated into running around and firing off whatever weapon you happened to have in your hand at the time [which proved to be quite fun]. Occasionally someone would accidentally get the quad, but before realising what they had, someone else ended their reign of terror. Of the two maps we played, both featured a number of jump pads and the air time in Quake 4 feels the same as Quake III [we still play Quake III in the office religiously every week]. The speed of the jump pads also felt spot-on and the pace of the action was overwhelming. In many cases groups of seasoned gaming journalists were reduced to a bunch of newbie gamers all running into each other and firing blindly. It was hard to concentrate on the game because most of the time the level graphics,



weapon locations etc. were all new – a little too new for any kind of expert sniping or rocket placement. The bottom line is that the death match gaming is fast and frantic. So if the amalgamation of Quake III and the rest of the series was the goal, it's been achieved. The next set of games was CTF (Capture The Flag, if you're new to all of this). Again, the level was confusing at first, but after some playing things seemed to settle down. Tim Willits was playing on the one team and had some superior map knowledge, so it wasn't completely fair. The game dynamic is the same as the death match level except that you have to manage flags. Having played the disappointing Doom 3 death match game engine to death, we can tell you Quake 4, although still using the same technology, is nothing like that at all. It features the exact same flow and speed as Quake III and it was an extremely encouraging experience.

STROGG PODS

AND IF QUAKE 4 isn't the spectacular hit everyone is hoping for [although this seems unlikely based on everything we've seen to date and some considerable time spent playing it], all eyes will turn towards the next big game which will have even more expectation and anticipation. Considering the monolithic historic culture these games [Quake and Doom] have created, the prediction here is that the next time we'll see a massive hit [on the level of Quake and Doom] from id Software, will be their new game – a new intellectual property. As far as sequels go, you definitely aren't going to get much better than what is on the table here in terms of being the first truly decent hybrid multiplayer and single player game. The last time we saw this was Quake II, eight years ago. Now Quake 4 is set to do it again. **NAG**

VITAL INFO

Platforms
Developer
Publisher
Supplier
Genre
Release Date

PC

Gas Powered Games

THQ

WWE (011) 462 0150

RTS

2006



SUPREME COMMANDER

IT'S BIG, IT'S BOLD, IT'S FULL OF METAL AND IT HAS MORE NUKES THAN THE COLD WAR. SAY HELLO TO SUPREME COMMANDER, THE UNOFFICIAL TOTAL ANNIHILATION SEQUEL AND THE BIGGEST DAMN REAL-TIME STRATEGY GAME YOU'LL EVER PLAY.

I HAVE A SAYING, f*** Rock, Paper, Scissors. Instead, how about a bunch of big, cool units going at it?" When Chris Taylor speaks, you listen - especially when he swears. While you might not find him on the same ground as Kojima, Molyneux or Wright, it really depends who you talk to. Taylor wasn't just the mind behind Dungeon Siege. If you head back to 1997 you'll discover what some have called the best RTS of all time: Total Annihilation. But it's a point often disputed. So let's clear something from the start. If you thought super weapons like the nukes and Big Bertha cannons from Total Annihilation were overkill and unbalanced the game (in other words, you just didn't get it), you might want to avoid Supreme Commander, the spiritual sequel to Total Annihilation and the biggest damn RTS ever made.

SOME MIGHT RECALL THAT there actually was a Total Annihilation 2 in the works, though Taylor had no involvement in it. Instead, he's been trying to buy the IP back from Atari, which ended up with the game after buying the defunct GT Interactive. But that came to nothing and instead we have Supreme Commander, a game that has nothing to do with Total Annihilation, but it clearly screams the title's name from mountain to mountain. A notable change (if you have to pick one) is that Supreme Commander will feature a proper story with a timeline that extends over 1,800 years, explaining where the three races come from. It could be argued that this was one of the things that flawed Total Annihilation - a lack of a good campaign story was something that helped carry classic RTS titles like Starcraft. But Taylor regards the current RTS genre as 'resource wars' or real-time tactics. Supreme Commander wants to bring serious strategy back into the mould.

There are only two resources, mass and energy. The first you mine and the second you generate. As with Total Annihilation tradition, the resources are practically inexhaustible, as are the amount of units you can build. But this shouldn't get rush fans excited. Despite the massive unit count, to win in Supreme Commander you need to do more than build a huge army. You need to think about what you are doing. This is all because of cost-balancing. Some of the units in Supreme Commander are massive (more about this later) and carry a lot of firepower. But they come with hefty price tags and have some of their own drawbacks. For instance, super weapons tend to use your resource reserves to create ammunition. The point of the game is that players



A naval battle standoff

Massive armies and loads of unit types mean that the battles are huge and brutal

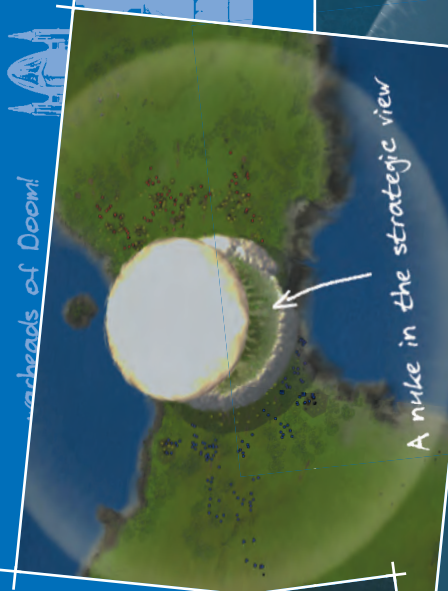
have to use the various units in planned strategies. Simply rushing a base or battlefield won't have the results one would like, and making tactical errors, such as sending the wrong units up against larger ones or not letting scouts and light fighters clear areas for heavier convoys, can mean the difference between winning and losing.

BUT TO FULLY UNDERSTAND where Supreme Commander is going, you have to look at its scale. As mentioned, there are three races in the game: the Terran (humans), Cybran (a cyborg-human species) and Aeon (an alien race that was once conquered by human colonists). Each side has a distinct look and feel. Human hardware tends to be more robust while the Cybran have a love for heavy metal designs and things with legs. The Aeon is a peace-seeking race, so their units are smooth and sleek in design, with all the weapons hidden away until needed. All three factions have three military fronts: land, air and naval. Perhaps this is where Taylor's preference for functionality and gameplay shows. Instead of extremely futuristic designs, a lot of the craft in Supreme Commander will remind you of World War 2 units. This is particularly evident with the naval units and some of the airborne units (including smaller jets that engage in dogfights and kamikaze stunts), which resemble anything from futuristic bomber designs to clear inspiration from World War 2 aircraft. And each front has units that range from the small to the obscenely huge. Naval Battleships — the truly big ones — cannot fit into a single screen on the normal zoom level, and feature turrets that are bigger than the tanks. The Submarines will also have their own super-units, capable of launching short-range nuclear attacks and carrying aircraft. On the land you just need to look at the Cybran's massive walking spiders (and those are still on the smaller side). Super units are definitely there to give you an edge, but they come with drawbacks. They cost a lot and they all have their flaws. The Battleships, for instance, have little protection against torpedoes.

Employing smaller units to cover the larger ones is key to winning the game (this isn't entirely accurate — there are also powerful vast units and slow, near-impotent ones). While you want firepower, sometimes you need speed and a low price tag. Speed is particularly important — Supreme Commander maps range to around four by four kilometres and some aircraft can't make a bombing run across the map without a mid point to refuel. Because of this size, the base designs



Some naval units can launch sea to land attacks, including short range nukes

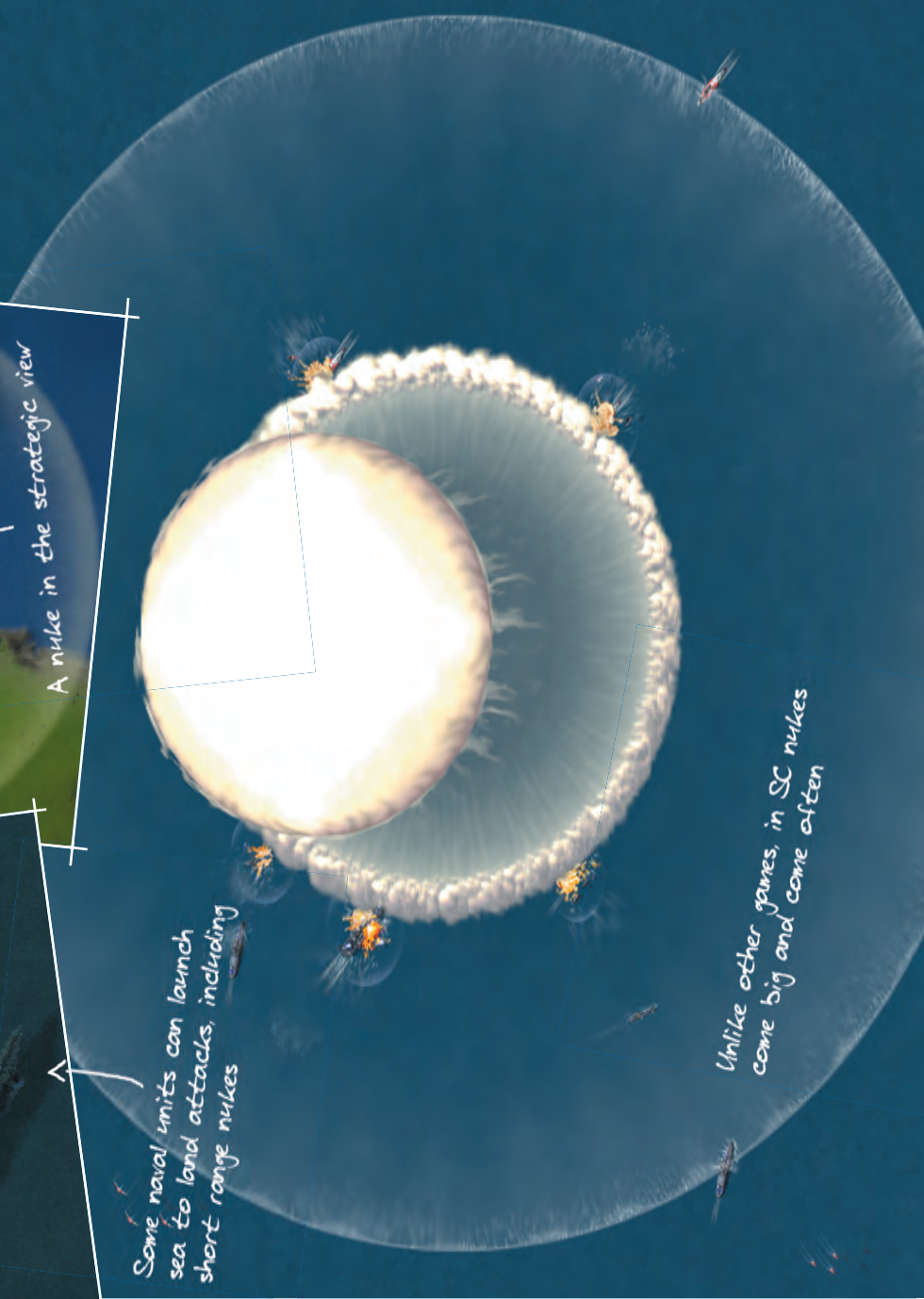


A nuke in the strategic view

Wings of Doom!



Wings of Doom!



Unlike other games, in SC nukes come big and come often



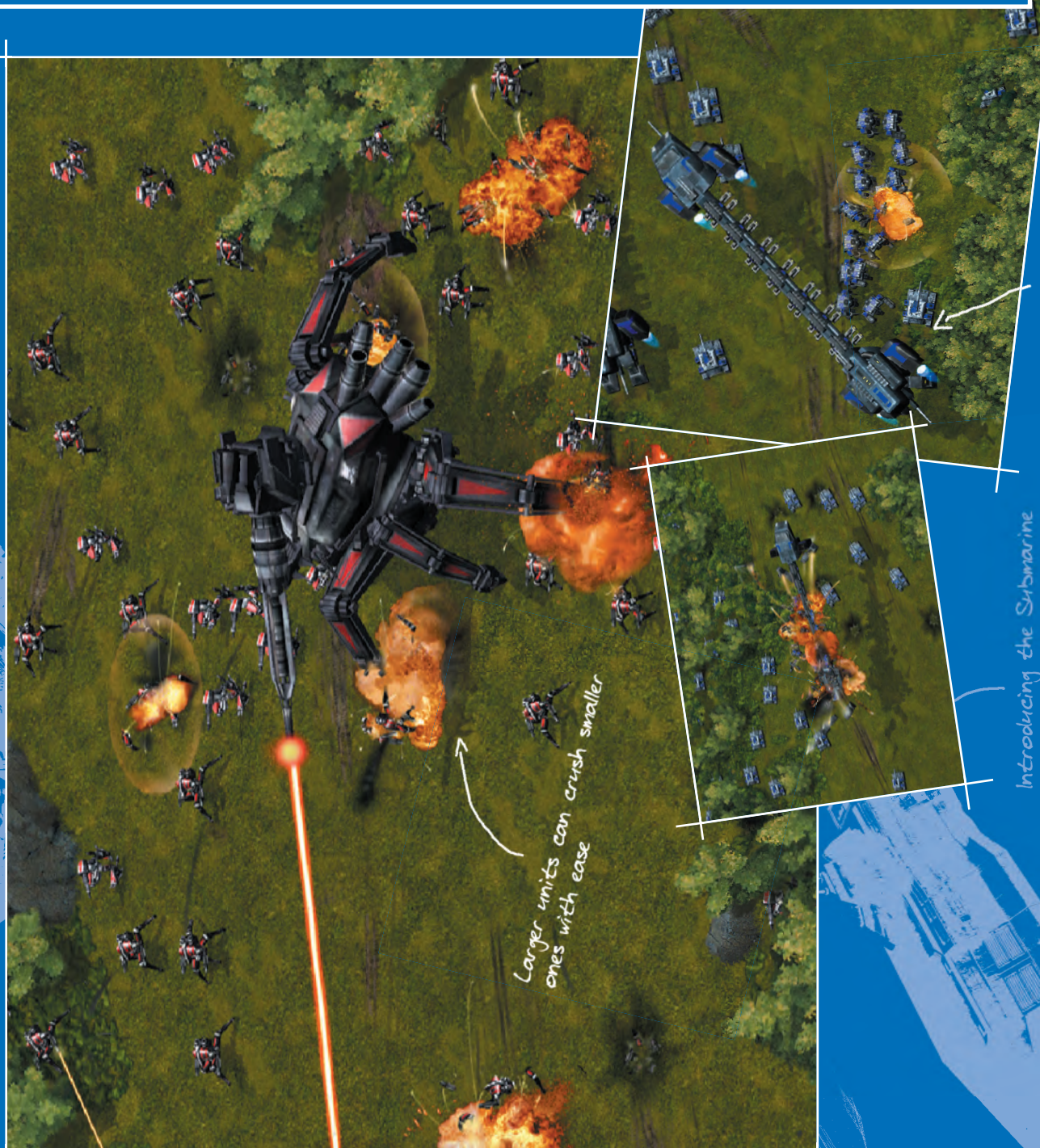
Wired for carnage

will also vary a lot. As with Total Annihilation tradition, you can link buildings together to save on power and resources, but at the cost of security. When a building explodes it does damage to structures around it, and a clustered base is perhaps more efficient, but also an easier target (especially those volatile power reactors). Hiding your bases is just as important, because if the enemy knows where you are, it can use nuclear and artillery strikes to do damage. All three races come with some form of radar jamming or cloaking technology, but the sheer scale of the maps also require players to expand their radar with outlying towers and mobile radar stations.

There is a specific reason why Supreme Commander will be a new generation in RTS games, as its name indicates. Taking up the role of the Supreme Commander (a titanic robot capable of launching nukes and aircraft) means you have the whole battle under your control. The zoom level goes up close to all the way out, showing you the entire game map with the units as icons. To alleviate on micro-management, players can assign a base commander to manage unit construction and building repairs. This allows commanders to spend their time on the battlefield, coordinating land, air and sea forces in a variety of attacks on the enemy locations. With this come a few useful tools as well.

One new touch is that waypoints for units will have time estimates of when they will arrive. Units are also pretty self-sufficient — they will rearm and repair if needed. Finally, you can set a level of urgency on an attack. Clicking once will initiate a general attack while two clicks will focus the selected units on a specific target. And three clicks? "Three clicks — it's Gary Oldman in The Professional yelling, 'Get me everyone!'" explains Chris.

THERE IS NOTHING SMALL about Supreme Commander, but it's not an RTS that is lazily about with quick, powerful units that encourage a marathon up the technology tree. Yes, building the best of the best in the game is what will help you win, but it's far from all that you'll need to do. By the looks of it, the thinking man's RTS game will finally return. It's impossible to jam all the information about the game into these few pages, but we'll definitely keep you posted, because we definitely want to play it when it's released. **NAG**



Larger units can crush smaller ones with ease

Introducing the Submarine Aircraft Carrier

A drop ship and its load engages the battle

Barely wireframe



TO TINSEL TOWN AND BEYOND!

Scene: Interview with Mark Webley, Development Director of The Movies, Lionhead's long-awaited movie studio game

Fade to Interview

What has evolved and changed since starting this project?

Our biggest change has been to try and keep the player in the game at all times. Initial interfaces were standard straightforward menu-based systems which, although functional, were not very satisfying. Consequently, to do a number of things within the game you would be taken out of the game to some 2D menus. We have tried to change this. For example, to hire someone you would pick up your characters and place them in a building. Within each building there are a number of different rooms and each room has a different function, effectively like menus, but within the game. The other change is stat screens. What would typically be outside the game in 2D menus, are available in the game by pointing at characters and then bubbles, containing the information, appear allowing the player to get at them quickly.

The Movies went from a tycoon game to something vaster. What brought the changes?

The Movies felt more like a tycoon game in the early stages due to the interface we used. As the game developed, we added depth to areas like movie making with a huge numbers of sets and scenes, and you can actually produce a movie at the end of the day, as well as run a business. There is obviously a great sim underlying the movie studio, looking after stars, dealing with the low level aspects of a star's personality and getting the ingredients right for a successful movie. To run a fantastic studio you need to get the combination right.

It was never a case of have we got enough ideas for a game, but more a case of which ideas can we use. Which ones work? Sometimes we have to bounce ideas, try them out, but sometimes they just don't play well or gel with the rest of the game.



VITAL INFO

Platforms

PC

Developer

Lionhead

Publisher

EA

Supplier

EA Africa [011] 516 8300

Genre

Management

Release Date

Q4/2005



Exactly how much control does the player have when it comes to creating scripts and movies? Is it a case of a finite number of possibilities, or is the freedom completely up to the player?

The number of options a player has is vast. Thousands of different scenes, many different sets, vast numbers of costumes, props that can be placed where you want them, backdrops, weather effects, the atmosphere, the music and coolest of all, you can add a voiceover and make the characters lip sync lines you have spoken. You can even add subtitles with your own dialogue. The combinations really are infinite. Most scenes have one or more sliders which can affect things like the emotion within the scene, the duration of the scene, the camera angles and the level of violence adding yet another huge dimension of personalisation.

Can you explain the Stage School process within the game?

The starting point of a 'star' in the movies is at the stage school. Here you can review resumés, access their personality and experience to see if you want to work with them. You can hire directors, actors and extras. You can also fire them here too. In addition, you can rehearse people on different sets and improve their acting skills.

The lip synching technology is impressive! Will it play a big role in the game?

The Movies is past its Alpha stage now and

apart from bug fixing, balancing and polishing is essentially finished. Lionhead has used lip synching in Black & White and Fable and we are using it in Black & White 2 as well. It is reasonably advanced technology for us. In The Movies it is very important that someone can create their own storyline, and being able to add your own dialogue and subtitles make a huge difference to what a movie storyline is. Being able to record a bit of text makes it so much more realistic and believable and it's really a great use of technology.

How would a movie succeed or fail?

There are a number of obvious steps to making a movie. It starts with writing a script, moves on to casting where you choose which actors you want to star in your movie, and is followed by assigning a crew and some extras. Once they have rehearsed, they will go through a number of sets and locations and shoot the movie. During each stage of the movie making process, the player is told what the likely success of the movie will be. For example, if I cast a bad actor in my script this will have a direct effect on the success of my movie. More subtle things like having leading actors who have a good relationship with each other, being able to keep them happy, keeping the director sober, using people who have experience in a particular genre and using new and exciting sets all pay dividends. Later in the game, factors such as marketing and public awareness all matter. Also, current affairs at the time of release





come into play. If you've created a movie based on say, for example a disaster scenario, then releasing it just after a real disaster event could impact on its success.

Could you elaborate on the new 'sensible' system and how you ensure the challenge is maintained throughout the game?

We have introduced something called a 'guiding stream', the aim of which is to point the player at the most sensible choice. However if you want to, you can experiment by trying to turn a janitor into a movie star, or other crazy out-there stuff like that.

How integrated is the movie-making aspect in the overall sim/management structure? Can you create movies without playing through the sim aspects?

There are two ways to play the game. There's the simulation where you need to run your whole studio as well as make movies, or a 'Sandbox' mode where you can just concentrate on making the movies of your dreams. In simulation mode you can get as involved in the moving-making process as you like, from directing your people in the choices you want, to selecting the content of every single scene. **NAG**



VITAL INFO

■ Platforms

PS2

■ Developer

SCEI

■ Publisher

SCEA

■ Supplier

Ster Kinekor Games

[011] 445 7900

■ Genre

Action/Adventure

■ Release Date

Q4 2005



SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS

SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS has caused some debate in the NAG office. The concept is very, very interesting. But will it go the same way as the development team's other title Ico? Ico, while stunning in nearly all aspects, had relatively lacklustre sales, especially in the US, and is one of the most underrated games ever released. Critics loved it and the Ico faithful exist in an almost cult capacity.

Fortunately, the lack of global financial success didn't deter the developers from sticking to their guns and their vision. Shadow of the Colossus is graphically awesome and conceptually unique. In fact, it's the only game we could think of in which you only fight boss characters – no minions or low-key questing.

In the game, your character, a nameless hero, has to save the spirit of a loved one, but needs a power to do so. Unfortunately, the odds are stacked against him. To gain this power, he has to kill sixteen colossi that roam the vast game world. Towering behemoths, these opponents are not to be taken lightly. Then again, once you run into one you cannot but appreciate just what a mammoth task awaits you. Shadow of the Colossus plays in a free-roaming world that is said to be huge and can be explored at the player's leisure. You travel from place to place on your trusty steed, oddly named Agro, and use the power of your sword to guide you to the next colossus. Holding up the sword reflects light from

it, which in turn will guide you to the monsters. It will also have a function in the combat system. Fighting the monsters happens in linear style. So you can't simply take on the final guy the minute you start playing. Then again, you wouldn't want to either. While not confirmed, it appears that every colossus will imbue you with a part of the power you need, which in turn will be useful against the next giant.

Your weapons are very simple: you have a sword, a bow and arrows and your wits. Shadow of the Colossus offers a lot of mobility, because our hero will have to navigate the vast landscape through horseback riding, climbing cliffs and grappling vines. Using all of these, as well as running and dodging, players will have to defeat the monsters.

Now to put all of that into perspective: the colossi are huge. When we say that some will make you look like an ant, it's not an exaggeration. In fact, the first monster you encounter you actually scale, thinking it's a mountain. That illusion quickly shatters, though, when the mountain starts to move.

The colossi look to be the most impressive part of the game. The animations are startling and the designs are a mixture of natural elements and mechanical parts; depending on what you are fighting. Each colossus looks and feels unique and also requires different ways to beat. That's perhaps Shadow of the Colossus' true hallmark: the hero



Shadow of the Colossus features a huge free-roaming world



isn't equipped with any kind of WMD or weapons capable of inflicting massive damage. Using the sword, bow, actions and movement, players will have to outwit each colossi to beat it. The ways to beat one are usually simple – or at least in plain view – but it takes some thinking to figure out what to do. Considering that this is from the guys who made Ico, don't expect the mundane way to beat a boss: figuring out the pattern. To beat these guys you'll actually have to do some thinking.

The rest of Shadow of the Colossus also reflects the colossi's graphic fidelity. Elements such as ridges, hills and more are all huge and detailed; keeping you constantly reminded that you are indeed a small part of a very big world. The animation of the world, the hero and his trusty steed is amazing – this game definitely takes the PlayStation 2 to places it has never been. Perhaps that means that the final title will have some slowdowns, because Sony's machine is definitely not a young buck anymore. Perhaps it works because the game has a minimalist feel to it - not too much, just enough to make the world alive and interesting. The sound keeps the same tradition, with ambience generally created by the world itself; something Ico players will be familiar with.

Shadow of the Colossus might not be to everyone's taste, but it will definitely be a title deserving your brief attention when it's released. You might not like it, but if you do, then you're likely to love it forever. **NAG**



*No time for
minions! In
this world the
monsters are,
well, colossal.*



VITAL INFO

Platforms

PS2 PC XBOX

Developer

Appaloosa Interactive

Publisher

Majesco

Supplier

TBA

Genre

Shark simulation

Release Date

Q4 2005

JAWS UNLEASHED

THERE'S A SENSE of irony in that Appaloosa was also the developer of the somewhat cuddlier Ecco the Dolphin. But sticking to the theme of water-based creatures, the company bagged the license for the one and only Jaws – and now they want to create a game about it. But, as you might have gathered from the screenshots, you don't hunt the shark. You are the shark.

Despite all the animosity we generally have towards games based on film licenses (yes, they are getting better, but the vast majority are still lame at best), it's hard not to get excited about this, mainly because you play a massive shark. No morals, no story, no "rescue the princess from the evil ogre". It's all about eating people and anything else that crosses your path.

Jaws will have some competition, though. The story kicks off with you having eaten the boy of a local industry tycoon, so he hires a famed shark hunter to kill you. Meanwhile a scientist also wants to capture you for research. You just want to eat stuff. Now in the film we barely saw the shark, so pulling off being the shark requires a bit of creativity. Jaws will be able to do attacks under and above the water, as well as in the air. Not that the shark will fly or lumber across dry ground, but stunts such as leaping out of the water or snatching people off boats will be easy. The game will have ten environments largely based on

the original film's locations (the game takes place in the same town of Amity), which Appaloosa boasts will be very interactive and destructible. Vehicles and such will also be privy to demolition. The gore tally will also be high – victims will have up to 25 connection points (and some more than that) which can be severed. The blood flows thickly as well, and Jaws will definitely not be for a young audience.

Graphically there have been some mixed reports, since the game in action doesn't look that impressive. But that might be early code in action. Still, even with less-than-impressive graphics, the concept is unique and bound to be very entertaining. You could have a few people over for beers and then show them how you casually chew through a few careless swimmers.

With a lot of game modes, including a free roam option and perhaps the chance to play as some of the human characters in sub missions, Jaws Unleashed looks like it will be a lot of fun. Even if it's nonsense, we like the idea a lot. **NAG**





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VITAL INFO

Platforms

NGC

Developer

Odama

Publisher

Vivarium

Supplier

Nintendo [011] 256 7760

Genre

RTS Pinball

Release Date

Q4 2005



*Weird,
pretty and
dumbfounding
- God bless the
Japanese!*



*Command your
soldiers with
voice and the
ball with paddles*

ODAMA

OKAY, STAY WITH US here. Odama is a real-time strategy pinball game with voice control. Got that? Good - because it also took us a while to get to grips with this one. Not surprisingly, though, since Vivarium is also known for the ultra-strange, but very addictive Dreamcast title Seaman. Anyway, back to the voice-powered RTS pinball game.

In Odama, you essentially command an army. In fact, that's what you literally do. While earlier versions of this game (which made its appearance at E3 last year) had you moving soldiers with the D-pad, the current game uses the GameCube's voice add-on. Using commands like 'left', 'right' and more specific ones ('form up'), soldiers move across the battlefield and engage the enemy or protect the big bell.

Ah, yes - the bell. That's the point of the game. To beat a level, the bell has to be carried to a specific spot. Enemy soldiers constantly pour out to stop your army and the bell, and you have to fight them off by commanding your army and

slamming the big Odama into them. The Odama is your pinball.

Essentially, every battlefield is a pinball level with ever-more complex objectives. You use the giant ball to crush the enemy and clear a path for the bell. Crushing the other army also gives your soldiers more of a fight. You also need to prevent the enemy from grabbing onto the pinball flippers, because if you lose the Odama, you might as well give up the battle. The Odama is used to roll over soldiers, but you also need to crush walls and catapults or, in one level, hit a dam switch so that your soldiers can cross a river.

If this isn't bizarre enough yet, you can also throw a giant hamburger into the battlefield, which will distract enemy forces (and line them up for a good pummel with your big ball). Clearly, though, Odama has limited appeal, being both on the GameCube and also using voice for commands. But apparently it plays well and is very reactive. Chances are Odama will enter that famed cult niche that a handful of games like Rez and Seaman already grace. **NAG**



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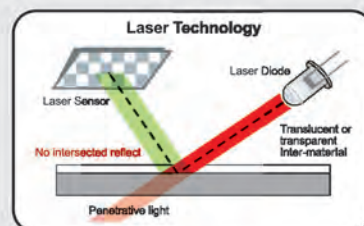
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MOQ

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PDAS	15x15 μ m
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VITAL INFO

■ Platforms

360 PC

■ Developer

Monolith

■ Publisher

Sega

■ Supplier

TBA

■ Genre

Crime Action

■ Release Date

November 2005



It might look like a shooter, but psychological thriller is more apt



CONDEMNED

BEFORE WE START, TWO things. Firstly, the date says November 2005, because this is likely to be a 360 launch title. Since we don't even know if the console will be released here, there's no saying when and if it will ever surface locally. It also means that the PC version is likely to be released only well after the console version.

Secondly, don't let the still screen shots fool you.

Condemned is one of the most visceral, detailed and involved games to be heading to any game platform anywhere. In fact, what has been shown of the game so far is only from the pre-Alpha stage, and it's already looking right on par with high-end PC shooters. Imagine what the final product will look like.

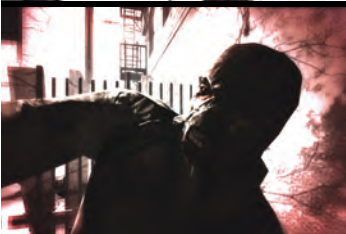
Condemned will no doubt cause a lot of controversy, partly because of its subject matter and mostly because of its grimacing real melee combat. Clearly an adult game, this first person perspective title puts players in the role of Ethan Thomas, a former FBI agent and current serial killer hunter. In a move that could most aptly be described as *Chronicles of Riddick* meets *CSI*, Monolith (considered by NAG to be one of the most creative FPS developers around) brings serial killer hunting to your TV screen. Thomas is after a few bad guys and he has to do the police legwork to catch them. This means clue-hunting, though not in the maddening pixel-hunter fashion that most forensic games force you to engage in, yet neither in a fashion so easy that it seems rather pointless.

This gets complimented by a combat system, which is by far the most violent we've ever seen in a game. Or at least,

it's the most realistic. Melee combat takes centre stage over weapons. While *Condemned* does have firearms, ammo is scarce and so are the weapons, so you hang onto them for a rainy day. Instead, fighting with fists and weapons from the debris lying on the ground, like steam pipes and pieces of wood, to heavier options like sledgehammers and axes, is the way to do it.

The point is the pace and atmosphere of *Condemned*. It's indeed a very stark and creepy game, and hands-on reports indicate that the atmosphere is laid on very thick. That's largely thanks to some very impressive graphics and ultra-violent fight scenes that will have us all cringing on our sofas.

Of course, the proof is in the pudding, but *Condemned* looks to be going where no mature game has gone before. And if it pulls it off, we'll all be playing it. Well, the grown-ups amongst us, at least. **NAG**



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VITAL INFO

■ Platforms

PC

■ Developer

DICE Canada

■ Publisher

EA

■ Supplier

EA Africa [011] 516 8300

■ Genre

FPS

■ Release Date

November 2005



When the going gets tough, the tough wear goggles.

[Lame, Ed.]



BATTLEFIELD 2 SPECIAL FORCES

IF THERE'S ONE THING EA and DICE have been doing extremely well together, it's pumping the Battlefield series for money with spans of expansion packs. In fact, with the patch for Battlefield 2 barely out, along came the announcement that an expansion is already in the works. And it definitely has the Battlefield 2 fanatics in the office giddy with excitement.

Special Forces will delve a bit deeper into the lives of soldiers on the modern battlefield. This type of unit is an important part of modern warfare, so there is no shortage of material to

work from. The expansion, developed by DICE Canada, will have no less than six types of Special Forces units to choose from: US Navy SEALs, British SAS, Russian Spetsnaz, MEC Special Forces, Rebel groups and insurgents. Obviously these will be determined by your side and the map. And it's not clear if some of the new units will replace the current Special Forces position in Battlefield 2. Keeping true to the theme, all the equipment (used in the game) is actually in use

by Special Force groups worldwide. There are likely to be some liberties taken here though. We doubt insurgent Special Forces have the same grade of equipment as, say, the SAS does.

The equipment is particularly interesting. Apart from twelve new weapons, Special Forces players will be able to use gas masks, flash bang grenades and night-vision goggles (which compliment the new night time maps). Speaking of maps, there will be eight new maps to choose from and ten new vehicles to drive, though nothing more was revealed about them. Two items that will be used often is the grappling hook (no explanation needed) and the Zipline. This is a crossbow that shoots a line horizontally, allowing players to move over open spaces. Multiple players can use the line or grappling hook once placed, putting a lot more emphasis on teamwork.

The new units will also be ranked on online servers, and there will undoubtedly be a few new items and awards to unlock if you use these guys often enough. The only real area of concern is that Battlefield expansions never really ignited the game as much as they should have, and eight new maps seem a bit like the bare minimum DICE would put in. But with new units, new vehicles and a lot of new cool items to use, it should be worth your hard-earned cash. **NAG**





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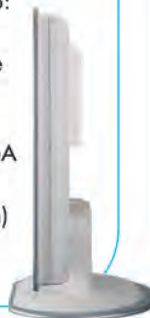
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VITAL INFO

Platforms

PS2 XBOX NGC

Developer

Electronic Arts

Publisher

Electronic Arts

Supplier

EA Africa [011] 516 8300

Genre

Action

Release Date

TBA



FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

SO WHO WAS THE best Bond? Sean Connery? Roger Moore? Some even argue that Pierce Brosnan was the best. But be it logic, nostalgia or just your idea of cool that made the decision, at least we know it's not George Lazenby. If you chose him, you are mentally ill. Anyway, there's little doubt that when it comes to the popularity stakes, Sean Connery is the ultimate Bond. Sadly he stopped performing the character a long time ago (though he did step out of retirement here and there, once to rescue the series after the awful 'Her Majesty's Secret Service').

Even though EA has been milking the Bond franchise for a long time now, it never did a version of any of the films. The only Bond game based on a Bond film was Rare's 'Goldeneye' on the N64. And while Bond fans everywhere are reeling over the horror of 'Rogue Agent', the good news is that Bond is back as we know him best – shaken, not stirred, with a Scottish accent thrown in. Yes, Sean Connery is to provide the likeness and voice for the game rendition of the 1963 classic 'From Russia with Love'. SPECTRE wants revenge for the death of Dr. No, so it devises a trap for Bond in which he goes after the Soviet encryption machine Lektor. Soon our chiseled super agent is in a whole lot of trouble, including ex KGB agents with poison-tipped shoes.

This was the second Bond film (or third if you count 'Casino Royale') and it's not clear why EA decided to kick start the game series here instead of Dr. No. Either way, though, expect some truly classic Bond action with vintage weapons and quaint inventions that must have been impressive on 1960's

movie screens. Playing them in a game is definitely going to be a hoot. Vehicles are also part of the mix, and Bond will both drive and move on foot in some of the levels. And yes, your car is armed and dangerous. Finally, melee combat plays a large role this time and fluently switches between ranged and close combat modes as the situation calls for it. A nimble and athletic Bond can navigate stages in a lot of ways, including climbing and sidling objects.

From Russia with Love won't likely blow your hair away with new gameplay or technical achievements. So far it looks to rather be aiming towards familiar ground, but with that authentic touch and a game world solid enough to have fun in. The Bond universe always had a lot of richness and depth, but the games tended to miss the point more often than hit it. Yet, as 'Goldeneye' clearly proved, if you do a Bond game right it's a classic. With Connery on board and a serious amount of atmosphere that would have made Ian Fleming proud, From Russia With Love is definitely heading in that direction. **NAG**





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THERE'S NO USE CRYING OVER SPILT COFFEE...

REVIEWS

80 GTA: San Andreas [PC]

82 Sacred Expansion:
Underworld [PC]

84 Pariah [PC]

85 Settlers: Heritage of
Kings: Expansion [PC]

86 World Snooker
Championship 2005 [PC]

88 Tekken 5 [PS2]

90 Shin Megami Tensei:
Lucifer's Call [PS2]

92 Cricket 2005 [PS2]

80



88



AWARDS CRITERIA

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Editor's Choice

Once in a while, a game comes along that displays certain qualities which our editor likes. Pretty colours and loud noises help...



Platform

Platforms are described using icons rather than just plain old words. For those of you who don't know (shame on you) they are, left to right, top to bottom: PC, PS2, GameCube, Xbox, PSP, Game Boy Advance, and DS.



Scoring

Our scores range from one to one hundred, with a score of fifty being considered average - because we can. Live with it.



Screenshots taken from Xbox version

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VITAL INFO

Platforms

PC

Suggested Retail Price

R 319

Developer

Rockstar

Publisher

Take 2

Supplier

Ster Kinekor Games

[011] 445 7900

Genre

Simulator

Age Restriction

18+

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GTA SAN ANDREAS

PC GAMERS HAVE BEEN waiting for this one. Finally in the history of the modern GTA games (that is since GTA 3) we're getting a version that is superior to the PlayStation 2 game. When Vice City was ported to the Xbox and PC, only the Xbox owners got the advantage of having substantially more powerful hardware. But this time around the PC version also boasts much better graphics, higher-resolution textures and a range of effects the PS2 isn't capable of.

Basically, it's another "Welcome Home" party for the GTA series, which started on the PC. And as with previous versions, San Andreas is infinitely easier to play on the PC, mainly thanks to the mouse interface. In fact, missions that were near-impossible on the PS2 (such as when you have to shoot from the back of a bike) are a breeze with a mouse. And doing the Gang Wars is now far less of an exercise in frustration.

To make up for the delay in the game's release, Rockstar created a hardcover manual that is stylish and pretty in-depth. While it would still be a wise idea to get a game guide if you want to get the full mileage out of San Andreas (since the game is huge), the manual is, for a change, a big compliment to the title. And thanks to the recent Hot Coffee fiasco, these hard-cover copies are already bound towards becoming collectors' items.

There isn't anything particularly new to the game, though, apart from improved graphics. SA boasts widescreen support

and you can play MP3s as a radio station (this is now a lot better, since you just need to drag shortcuts to the MP3 folder). The keyboard controls for actions like running and riding a bicycle are not as accommodating as a console controller, but unlike those versions you can, for instance, break into a run by just holding down a key (as opposed to constantly tapping away).

Giving San Andreas a score is moot. If you don't know this by now – it's the best GTA game yet. And it is just as good, if not better, on the PC. It will consume your time, destroy relationships and allow you to cause so much mayhem that regaling stories about your escapades in a crowded place could get you arrested. Go out and get it – it's as simple as that. **NAG**



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A great expansion for Sacred fans

85

VITAL INFO

Platforms

PC

Suggested Retail Price

R 199

Developer

Asceron

Publisher

Asceron

Supplier

WWE [011] 462 0150

Genre

RPG

Age Restriction

12+

Minimum Specs

Pentium 3 800MHz

256MB RAM

4x CD-ROM

16MB Video Card

2GB HDD

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sprees!*

SACRED UNDERWORLD

BAD THINGS ARE AF00T in the world of Sacred. The expansion to the buggy, but magnificent Sacred kicks off a short while after the first. This time you have to rescue the dead sweetheart from the demon realm. But Sacred being Sacred, it's going to be quite a journey to get there.

Expansions are always a mixed bag because you never really know what you are getting until the game arrives. The real changes come in the little things and the world itself depends on whether the developers are just fleshing things out, going for more of the same or heading somewhere new. Underworld wastes no time with the technical changes. The interface is a bit more polished, monsters finally have information bars and stats and levelling is more intuitive. There have also been some gameplay tweaks. For instance, dragons are far tougher this time around. The world itself is what will probably strike you first, though. Underworld adds an additional third to the Sacred map, plus it expands regions within the original map. Along with the 'Plus' pack installed, there are now tons of side quests and a lot of places to visit. The new areas are a blend of old and new, but there are enough monsters and terrain unique to Underworld to make it stand apart. Even at the beginning of the game you find yourself in a strange Mushroom forest. No apparent new shops or such have surfaced, but there are lots of new items and sets to collect. Still, the sheer scale of new land to explore just makes it worth it.

Underworld's other large contribution comes with two new classes: demon and dwarf. The dwarf is effectively a 'steam punk' character: he dabbles in hammers and guns, and he has a large cannon mounted on his back. The cannon can shoot

mortars and cannon shot, plus it's a flamethrower - these are all special attacks. While he's a strong melee attacker, the dwarf's guns are the most useful and become devastating at higher levels. It's probably the best blend of melee and ranged combat you'll find in a class. Unfortunately, though, the dwarf can't ride horses - he's a slow character to boot.

The demon, on the other hand, has to be a 'thank you' to fans. This class is just completely devastating all the time. What takes other classes work to kill, she disposes of with ease. Her special attacks, such as black tentacles attacking out of the ground or a leap that crashes down on multiple enemies, are over the top as well. Not that she's an easy character to finish the game with, but she leaves a lot of room to experiment with and is probably the lowest maintenance class to try out.

Some of the persistent bugs and problems Sacred players have become accustomed to, are still there, but Underworld does for Sacred what Lord of Destruction did for Diablo II, and Sacred wasn't even bad to begin with! Get Sacred if you enjoyed Diablo. Get this expansion if you enjoyed Sacred. **NAG**



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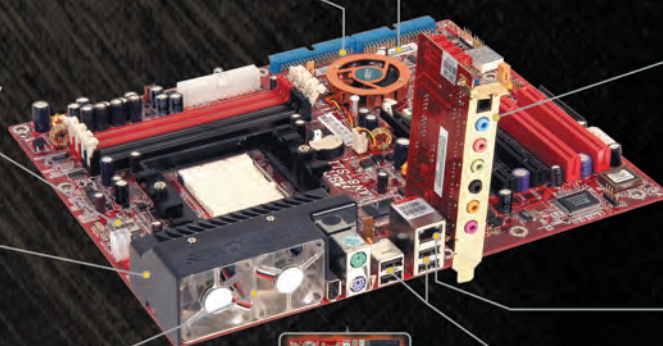


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VITAL INFO

■ Platforms

PC

■ Suggested Retail Price

R 299

■ Developer

Digital Extremes

■ Publisher

Hip Interactive

■ Supplier

Megarom [011] 234 2680

■ Genre

FPS

■ Age Restriction

16+

■ Minimum Specs

Pentium 3 800MHz

256MB RAM

4x CD-ROM

NVIDIA GeForce 2™ Video Card

1.2GB HDD

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*Advanced AI,
incredible
graphics, just so
you can shoot
at a crouching
guard?*

AS THE DEVELOPERS OF Unreal and Unreal Tournament, the upcoming Dark Sector and the arbitrary Epic Pinball, Digital Extremes should have a certain level of understanding of the First Person Shooter genre, or at least, game development in general. Somehow though they managed to miss the proverbial boat in more ways than one with Pariah. This may sound pedantic, but it's not a good sign when you need to download a 24MB patch just to get the game to work (if you have an ATI video card, you will need the official patch to be able to play the game at all, otherwise it will crash right after the introduction).

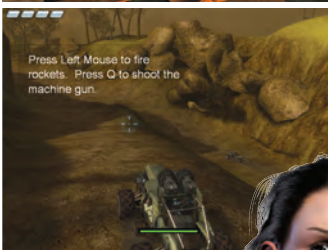
Technical difficulties aside, Pariah isn't a terrible game, per say. It's not even bad, really. It just isn't anything other than run of the mill. It's rather incredulous when Digital Extremes themselves say that they were "... reaching beyond their limits with their most ambitious project to date" with Pariah.

Pariah tries for a cinematic feel, action-packed shooting, advanced environmental interaction and weapon upgrading, yet somehow doesn't succeed at any. There is actually a term for the type of game Pariah is, and that's "meant to be played a certain way". If you play Pariah in a very specific way, shooting enemies in a certain order, hitting bits of scenery with explosives at just the right moment and so fourth, the game becomes explosive and manages a rather progressive level of interaction. Unfortunately it's rare that gamers will hit this 'sweet spot', preferring instead to play the game their way and thus

pretty much messing up the experience the developers envisioned. As for the weapon upgrades, you find points to put into weapons, making them incrementally more powerful. Each iteration of upgrade however, is lacklustre and doesn't really enhance the experience much.

The built-in map editor deserves honourable mention. Its ease of use and sheer simplicity make for some truly inspired map-making sessions (limited to multiplayer mapmaking, however), and the multiplayer itself makes provision for easy sharing of user created maps. The multiplayer side of Pariah is mostly hit or miss however - it's slow pace making for lethargic deathmatch (or any of the other game types).

In this oversaturated FPS market, it would have been wonderful to see something fresh and inspired. Pariah is not that, relegating itself instead to the 'generic' pile. Perhaps next time, Digital Extremes will remember to let gamers skip cut-scenes they've already seen twenty times. **NAG**



A mildly entertaining add-on

70

VITAL INFO

■ Platforms

PC

■ Suggested Retail Price

R 199

■ Developer

Ubisoft

■ Publisher

Ubisoft

■ Supplier

Megarom [011] 234 2680

■ Genre

Strategy

■ Age Restriction

12+

■ Minimum Specs

Pentium 1.0GHz

256MB RAM

8x CD-ROM

32MB Video Card

1.5GB HDD



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While a bridge is being built, defences should be erected in advance



THE SETTLERS— HoK EXPANSION

THE SETTLERS – HERITAGE of Kings is a blend of real-time strategy and management genres, and features a fairly involved resource model and technology tree. A number of resources must be successfully managed in order to succeed, and players must look after a growing town population. An unusual feature of this game is that every couple of minutes represents a periodic payday, at which time military units' upkeep is paid and taxes are collected. The latter forms the main form of currency income, and is entirely dependent on the population.

The expansion disc introduces three new buildings, a handful of new units, an additional campaign, as well as new heroes. The new campaign revolves rather heavily around a new element in this add-on – the building of bridges. These can only be built at certain locations, and overall the impression given is that of a highly contrived and artificial new 'feature'. Furthermore, the building of a bridge being a requirement in almost every mission comes across as rather forced. In other regards, the new campaign is challenging enough, and will fill many hours.

Several new heroes make their debut in this expansion, many of them female, balancing out the ratios somewhat. These heroes are not only 'good' characters, though, and in fact some are more accurately referred to as villains. Particularly welcome is Ari, an archer hero that can lead archer battalions. Some new units have been introduced as well – the scout, the thief and riflemen. As well as new units that a player can recruit, this expansion introduces new enemies – the most common being an evil demon-like creature that is very weak, but appears in huge numbers.

The most noteworthy new building is the 'Tavern', which serves a two-fold function. Firstly, it feeds several townsfolk – a very welcome fact. Secondly, and more importantly, it enables all the new technologies. Several research items are available that are required for the new units to be unlocked, and the scout and thief are recruited here.

Although we cannot fault any of the new elements being introduced into the game, overall we find that what has been served up is not really enough to warrant a whole separate product. **NAG**



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Looks great, and fun to play, if you're a snooker fan

74

VITAL INFO

Platforms

PC

Suggested Retail Price

R 299

Developer

Blade Interactive

Publisher

SEGA

Supplier

WWE [011] 462 0150

Genre

Sport

Age Restriction

3+

Specifications

Pentium III 800MHz

128MB RAM

8x CD-ROM

32MB Video Card

1.4GB HDD

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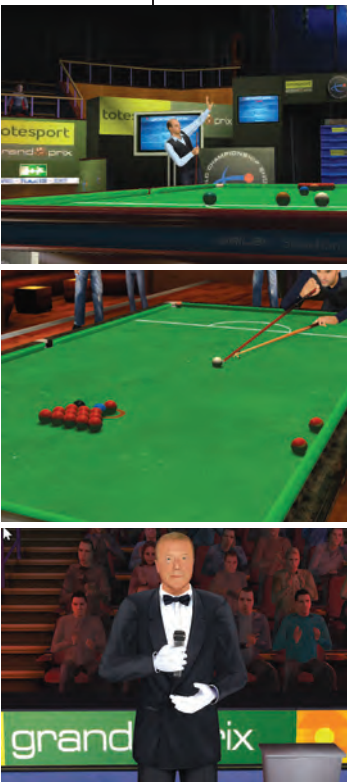
There's a joke here about balls and poles but we can't remember it



WORLD SNOOKER CHAMPIONSHIP 2005

SNOOKER TITLES, DESPITE THEIR prevalence in days gone by (we still have fond memories of many hours wasted in front of the old PC title, 'Rack 'em Billiards'), have become somewhat of a rarity nowadays, with the only recent videogame interpretation of the sport being Codemaster's 'World Championship Snooker' series. Though that franchise is now defunct, the developers behind it, Blade Interactive, are back, this time under SEGA's publishing license, with a minor rearrangement of words in the game's title. The game sports an official license for the 2005 championship season, complete with recreations of real-life venues, tournaments and, of course, players. The game expertly recreates the environment familiar to any snooker aficionado, complete with commentary teams, announcers, and a television-style camera system – coupled with the fabulous graphics, World Snooker Championship 2005 certainly looks the part. In addition to snooker, the game also offers pool, billiards, as well as a trick-shot mode. It's fairly easy to get to grips with the controls, and the game makes it easy to apply English ("spin", for those unfamiliar with the terminology) to your shots, adjust cue elevation, and fine-tune all aspects of your shot.

The only adverse control issue is that the mouse feels a touch too sensitive, particularly when trying to apply the correct power to your shot – though the provision of aiming guides, which can be adjusted according to your level of expertise, makes it somewhat easier to become acclimatised to the system. Ultimately, World Snooker Championship 2005 is a well executed and extensive recreation of the sport, and soon becomes quite addictive and entertaining, particularly with more than one player. If you long for the pool simulations of days long past, this should be just your thing. **NAG**





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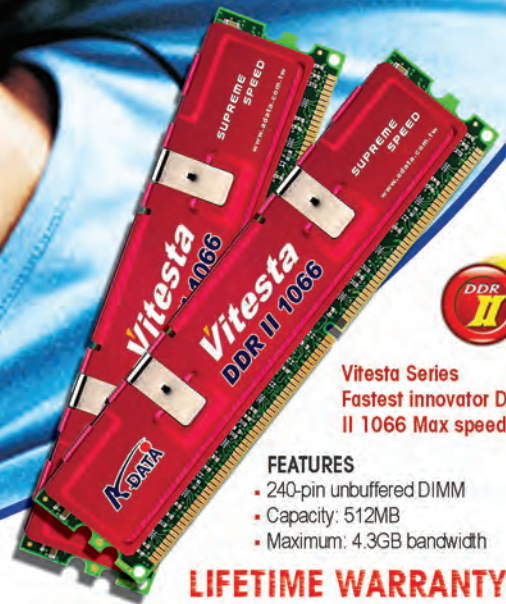


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VITAL INFO

■ Platforms

PS2

■ Suggested Retail Price

R 499

■ Developer

Namco

■ Publisher

Namco

■ Supplier

Ster Kinekor Games

[011] 445 7900

■ Genre

Fighting

■ Age Restriction

12+

■ Specifications

1-2 Players

56KB memory

Analogue: sticks only

Vibration compatible

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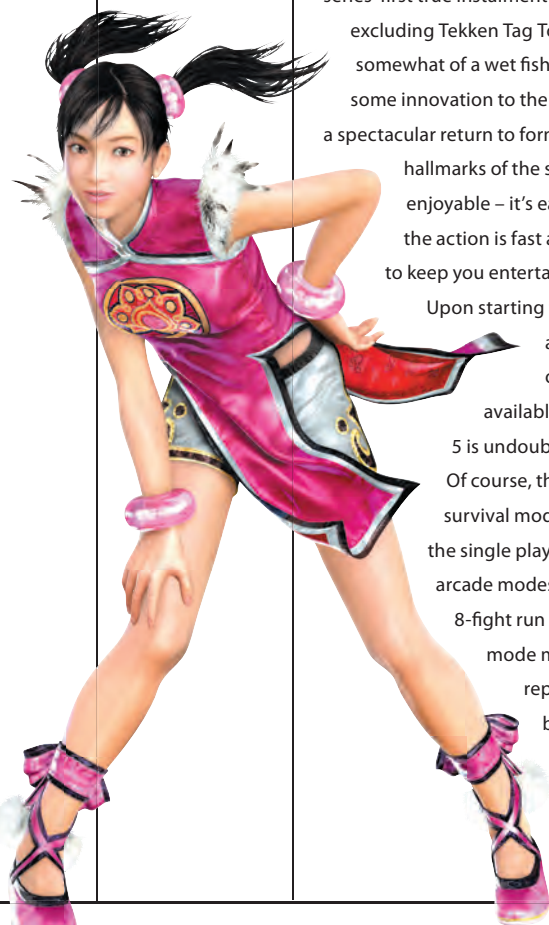
TEKKEN 5

NAMCO'S TEKKEN SERIES HAS long been one of the PlayStation's major drawing points, and for good reason. Though the series' first true instalment on the PS2, Tekken 4 (obviously excluding Tekken Tag Tournament), was regarded as somewhat of a wet fish, which tried unsuccessfully to bring some innovation to the game dynamic, Tekken 5 marks a spectacular return to form for the franchise. It bears all the hallmarks of the series that made its predecessors so enjoyable – it's easy to get into, difficult to master, the action is fast and frenetic, and it has the potential to keep you entertained for ages.

Upon starting the game, one is greeted with a surprisingly expansive menu outlining the different modes available, and the variety offered by Tekken 5 is undoubtedly one of its strongest points. Of course, the rudimentary versus, practice and survival modes are present, but the essence of the single player game is found in the story and arcade modes. The story mode is the typical 8-fight run through, and this is probably the mode most players will head to first, since repetitively beating it unlocks all but one of the hidden characters.

Halfway through the story mode opening, you'll be pitted against a predetermined character that ties into your storyline,

accompanied by a short cut-scene, and after defeating your final opponent, you'll be treated to an often-hilarious full-motion video clip, in familiar Tekken style. Unfortunately, playing through this mode the nine times required to unlock all the hidden characters soon becomes quite tedious, especially given that the boss character is undoubtedly the cheapest fighting game character ever created. The arcade mode offers a little more variety, however, and pits you against named and ranked AI characters, in a very similar way to that employed in Virtua Fighter 4. Beating opponents will not only increase your ranking, but will also reward you with currency which can be used to purchase items to customise your character. The character customisation is not nearly as expansive as that found in SEGA's title, but it's still a nice addition, and provides some incentive to play through the arcade mode. The artificial intelligence used for the arcade-mode opponents is also worth



a mention, since it is superior to that usually found in fighting games.

The other major single player mode "The Devil Within" will instantly evoke memories of the "Tekken Force" mode found in earlier titles. Once again, it is a platform-action hybrid starring Jin Kazama, though the controls are far more fluid than the painful "Tekken Force" modes of the older games. It does become tedious, however, but it's worth persevering through, since completing it is by far the quickest way to unlock the last remaining hidden character. In addition to all of the above, one of Tekken 5's most impressive additions is the inclusion of 100% accurate arcade ports of Tekken 1, 2 and 3, as well as Namco's Starblade space-shooter arcade title. It's entertaining to take a look back at where the series came from, and definitely adds value to the latest title.

In terms of the character roster, old favourites make their return. New additions are Raven, clearly modelled on Wesley Snipes in Blade, Japanese schoolgirl Asuka (who is powerful enough to raise suspicions that she might be using anabolic steroids), and Shaolin monk Feng. The characters' moves are a lot more balanced this time around, with much of the 'cheese factor' thankfully being eliminated. In addition to this, the arenas are far bigger than those in Tekken 4, and the quirky uneven ground and position switching moves have also been eliminated. Ultimately, the characters tend to be quite evenly matched, and the complete roster of more than 30 characters, most of whom have vastly different styles, ensures that everyone will be able to find a character suited to them - and all have immensely destructive potential in trained hands.



Visually, there is little that can be said about Tekken 5, other than that it is simply astonishing. The character models are all beautifully detailed and realistic, with exceptionally fluid animations. The soundtrack too is well executed, with better variety than that of this game's predecessors, and the sound effects lend a very forceful presence to the play dynamic. Full recorded dialogue is also present for each character, and although little of it is in English, it still serves to enhance the charisma and presence of the characters.

On the whole, Tekken 5 is an expansive, entertaining and thoroughly well-polished title. It's a refinement of all the best elements of the series, rather than a revolution of the concept. The end result is a thoroughly enjoyable fighting title with mass-market appeal, but more than enough depth to satisfy Tekken enthusiasts. Try not to miss it. **NAG**



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VITAL INFO

■ Platforms

PS2

■ Suggested Retail Price

R 399

■ Developer

Atlus

■ Publisher

Ghostlight

■ Supplier

MegaRom [011] 234 2680

■ Genre

RPG

■ Age Restriction

18+

■ Specifications

1 Player

175KB memory

Analogue: Sticks only

Vibration compatible

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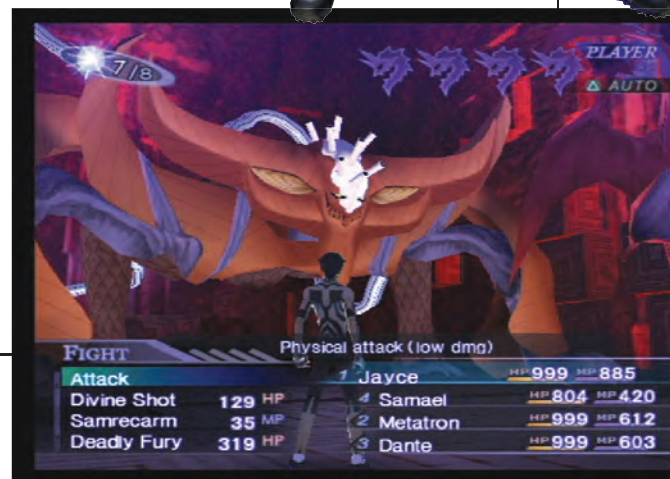
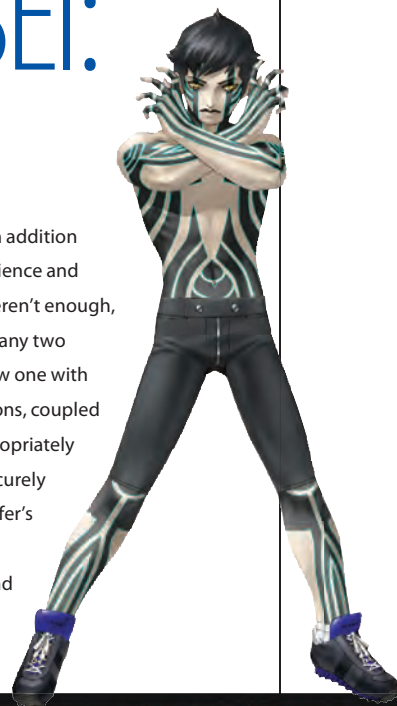
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SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: LUCIFER'S CALL

AT FIRST GLANCE, *Shin Megami Tensei: Lucifer's Call* may appear almost indistinguishable from the myriad of other turn-based console RPG titles in existence. But the first Western-released instalment of this very popular Japanese franchise is far from ordinary. For starters, the storyline is much darker than the fare usually seen in this genre. The game is set in Tokyo and starts off just before the occurrence of an event known as "the Conception" where the entire world is destroyed just minutes into the game, and replaced with an expanding realm in which demons roam free and chaos reigns supreme. Your character, initially human, is transformed into a demon, and instead of being charged with saving the world from destruction, you're left to puzzle through the intriguing and well-told storyline, shaping the world as you progress. If it sounds bizarre, that's because it is, but it soon becomes very engrossing and compelling. In terms of the play dynamic, although the combat is typical RPG fare (and much loathed random battles are present in full force), there are some interesting twists – you are capable of conversing with any demons you encounter (even during the course of battle), and you can persuade (or bribe) them to join your party. Each demon has unique elemental affinities, and correct utilisation of these is indispensable in defeating

the often-challenging bosses. In addition to this, your demons gain experience and occasionally evolve. As if this weren't enough, you are also able to fuse almost any two demons together to create a new one with unique abilities. These innovations, coupled with exquisite graphics, an appropriately moody soundtrack and the obscurely compelling storyline, make *Lucifer's Call* a highly refreshing and absorbing take on this genre, and one that should definitely not be ignored. **NAG**



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VITAL INFO

■ Platforms

PS2

■ Suggested Retail Price

R 299

■ Developer

HB Studios

■ Publisher

Electronic Arts

■ Supplier

EA Africa [011] 516 8300

■ Genre

Sport

■ Age Restriction

3+

■ Specifications

Players: 1 - 4 (Multitap)

Memory: 3,305KB

Analogue: Sticks only,

Vibration compatible

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CRICKET 2005

CRICKET NOW ENJOYS A multi-tiered match format which sees games lasting from four hours to five days. To Cricket 2005's credit, these are all available. But unfortunately, a modest amount of entertainment has survived the crossover.

The publishers promised an overhaul of their 2004 edition and have suitably 'EA sportified' the 2005 version. A massive 35 authentic stadiums are available for use, graphics and crowd effects have been improved, a 'create-a-player' feature is in place and a plethora of modes including World Cups, test series, national leagues (English and Australian) and the exciting Twenty20 (albeit only the English league mode) add to the title's robustness. Yet, this has all become standard

It's cricket, except you have to drink in your lounge and there are no streakers

issue nowadays. What is more significant is the gameplay and, unfortunately, it proves to be a major disappointment.

Frustratingly, everything's in place for quality in this regard – it's 'all in the game' as it were. Bowling allows for delivery type, placement and speed, and being consistently accurate opens up 'special' deliveries, depending on the bowler, such as Shane Warne's flipper. Likewise, batting includes a variety of stances and shot directions, but relies heavily on confidence – the higher your 'confidence-meter', the easier it becomes to cleanly strike the ball and utilise power. In all honesty, that's pretty much the game right there, with little else to do other than perfecting your bowling line and length and your timing when batting. Nevertheless, with a bit of practise you'll be firing them in like Ntini. Sadly, you'll be batting like him as well. And this is the game's mightiest downfall. Successful run-scoring shots rely on perfect judgement and are seriously tough to pull-off. The sheer enjoyment factor of blitzing boundaries off an inconsistent bowler is absent, leaving the player with a bizarre reserved control of events. Add to this the poorly balanced nature of the title, in favour of the AI, and you'll struggle to achieve anywhere near a competitive total. Unlike other EA Sports titles, there is also a distinct lack of gaming variety with no mini-games or extras to be earned to relieve the monotony. The end result is a fairly average, uninspiring product.

Potential is infuriatingly apparent, but the game's undoubtedly been rushed out onto the shelves and, frankly, that's no surprise. Cricket 2005 has beaten 'Brian Lara's International Cricket' in terms of release date. Only time will tell whether it will in terms of gameplay. **NAG**



online competition

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1st September until 30th November 2005

Competition Organizers:

- Naked IT
- Arena 77
- ITWeb

Competition Categories:

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- Best performance PC (over-clocking) (1st -3rd Prizes)
- Best creative PC
- Worst appearance PC

Competition Prizes:

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- ASUS motherboard, graphic card & DVD - RW
- GEIL overclocking memory
- SilverStone Case & PSU



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Campus Square (Shop.20), Cnr Kingsway & University Road , Auckland Park . Tel: 011 482 5493
Trading Hours: Mon-Fri: 9.00-18.00 . Sat: 9.00-16.00 . Public Holiday: 9.30-13.00

TECH NEWS

Xbox 360 accessories

Microsoft has announced a number of optional peripherals that will become available soon after the console is introduced. Additional hard drives will allow users to make full use of the system's multimedia functions – 20GB is just not enough for that kind of application. A wireless networking adapter that connects via USB will also be on offer. Controllers are getting quite a lot of attention – a variety of charging units will be available, including one that charges while playing, and the company will also make available a wired controller option (the default controllers are wireless.) Other peripherals will include memory modules and multimedia remote controls.

PSP SPEAKERS

The Logic 3 Sound System is a combined portable 2.1 speaker system and recharging docking-station designed exclusively for Sony's PSP to create a mini home theatre to play movies or music. It uses a high class amplifier, deep bass sub-woofer and 3D surround-sound circuitry and also includes a 3.5mm Stereo line-in for playing other audio devices like an MP3, MD and CD player.



ONE SCREEN, TWO PICTURES

Sharp has developed an LCD screen that can display two different images, depending on the angle the screen is viewed from. Thus, it is possible for two entirely separate applications to be used simultaneously, one seen from the left, and the other from the right. This innovative technology is based on restricting view angles, rather than widening them. Another use for the concept is to narrow the view angle to such a point that no one but the user can see what's on the screen.

FATAL1TY X800 XL 512MB

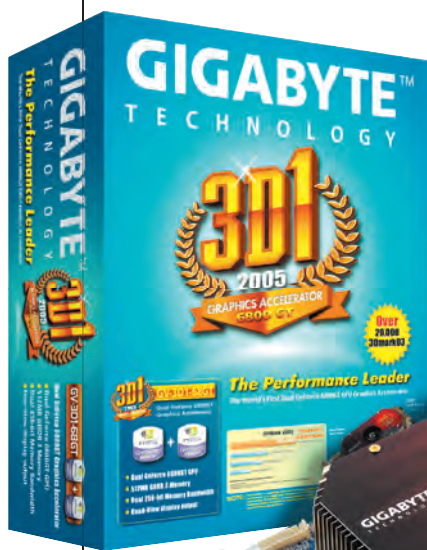
ABIT has introduced a new graphics card under the Fatal1ty brand. This Radeon X800-based card has 512MB of GDDR3 memory, boasts 16 pipelines and features a number of overclocking and management technologies. The quiet fan and copper heatsink assembly are also slimmer than most, occupying only one adjacent slot. On the cosmetic side, it carries LEDs that can be turned on or off at the user's whim. [www.frontosa.co.za]



WINDOWS TO OFFER NEW VISTA

The upcoming Windows operating system, hitherto codenamed Longhorn, has been named Vista, which is something of a pun. Another software company, called Vista, may have issues with this and may try to dispute the branding, although it seems a cheap ploy to try to win some damages in court. The name was chosen to be representative of the nature of the next Windows generation, which strongly emphasizes user views of information. The OS is entering Beta-1 testing, and phase two should commence by the end of the year, with the release expected late next year. Codenames and corresponding product names:

- CHICAGO** – Windows 95
- MEMPHIS** – Windows 98
- WHISTLER** – Windows XP
- LONGHORN** – Vista
- BLACKCOMB** – Some thought is already going into Longhorn's successor.



GIGABYTE GV-3D1-68GT DUAL GPU GRAPHICS CARD

Gigabyte has introduced a new dual-GPU card, this time using the NVIDIA GeForce 6800GT. It has 512MB of memory and dual 16 pixel pipelines. The company is making quite a noise about the fact that this card achieved over 20,000 3DMark03 marks, and almost 10,000 in 3DMark05. As well as 3D performance, video playback is optimised by the hardware, and a number of video connectors are standard. [www.rectron.co.za]

GAMING KEYBOARD

The Wolfclaw Gaming Keyboard Type II was built by FPS gamers to maximise their gaming performance by making use of a specially designed 40 key WASD configuration.

[www.wolfclaw-europe.com]



CREATIVE FINDS VISION

Creative has launched the Zen Vision 30GB MP3 player with a 3.7-inch SharpPix™ high-resolution 640x480 262,144-color screen for photo viewing and digital video playback. The Vision can hold 15,000 songs, over 10,000 photos or 120 hours of video and comes in either pearl white or black.

"The Zen Vision is our most versatile and coolest-looking digital entertainment player ever," said Sim Wong Hoo, chairman and CEO of Creative. "It supports download and subscription music services, photo transfer directly from a Compact Flash card or up to 17 variations of media through our optional Compact Flash Adapter. With the SharpPix technology, your digital photos can look even better than prints.

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VP-1028B



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SwapRACK
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Hot-Swap, Plug-n-Play

Backup Button



VP-1001LSF

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Ultra
UDMA
133

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SwapRack
also Available



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it@frontosa.co.za



**Screenshot simulated*

SAMSUNG SYNCMASTER 730BF

WE ARE GAMERS. WHILE we may use our PC for work some of the time, we ultimately purchase/use them to play games. This fact has prevented us from becoming too enamoured with LCD screens thanks to the poor gaming quality this technology is known for – we simply could not accept ghosting images in the ultra fast-paced Q3 Arena, and likely most of you would have stuck to your good old

CRT roots quite firmly.

The Samsung SyncMaster 730BF, however, goes a long way towards addressing this deficiency and has developed a flat-panel offering as a future possibility for your system. The reason behind this change of heart is the 4ms GTG (Grey to Grey) response time of this display, enabled by the use of a proprietary Samsung RTA (Response Time Accelerator)

controller chip which makes for one of the most compelling LCD screens currently available for the gaming sector.

There's little exciting about the external design of the screen. Its silver-and-black theme and conventional styling make it seem innocuous at first. However, the viewing area is pure 17" and the automatic adjustment of the screen's position means it is always lined up edge to edge so you get the most from its dimensions.

Connect it to your PC and boot up. This SyncMaster is extremely crisp at its native resolution of 1280x1024, with clearly displayed fonts and good if slightly subdued colour temperatures. Some reports on the new breed of 4ms LCD offerings criticise their colour reproduction capabilities, but we have no complaints whatsoever on this aspect of the 730BF. If the colour saturation levels are really not to your taste, there is a wide range of manual adjustments available through the comprehensive, but challenging to navigate OSD.

While on this topic, we must comment that while the claimed horizontal viewing angle of 160 degrees is accurate, changes to the vertical viewing angle cause a rapid deterioration in colour clarity. Positioning your screen at the right height with the right amount of tilt for your environment is pretty crucial for you to get the most out of it.

And in gaming? Well, the 730BF stood up to sharp direction changes in Quake 3 Arena beautifully. No ghosting of the image whatsoever as that RTA maintained the integrity of the displayed image, even under the most severe performance conditions. It had no issues with the void surrounding the Longest Yard overlaid with the bright garish level textures whatsoever, maintaining superb colour definition throughout the fragging, and never once introducing double vision even during reflexive turn-and-shoot moves.

After this performance it came as no surprise that the screen also managed admirably during video playback testing. There's a colour function called MagicBrite built into the SyncMaster, which is similar to Phillips' Lightframe. It allows for the selection of predefined colour settings for specific tasks like working with text, watching movies or playing games, which really works in delivering the full impact of rich colours or deep shadows employed in movies with no negative effects.

The Samsung SyncMaster 730BF would fit perfectly into an enterprise environment thanks to its sober styling, but is in fact a display which the gaming market will most appreciate. It's a superb screen with the fastest responding panel we have ever seen. Buy this if you crave the pure style and small footprint of an LCD, but detest slow response ghosting of gaming images. **NAG**

VITAL INFO

■ **Pros**
An LCD that's perfect for both workstation and gaming systems

■ **Cons**
Nothing worth nitpicking - even the tricky navigation controls on the OSD are overshadowed by its exemplary panel response time

■ **Supplier**
Samsung [011] 549 1500

■ **Internet**
www.samsung.co.za

■ **RRP**

TBA

■ **Reviewer**
Russell Bennett



Tatu

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CREATIVE ZEN MICRO

IT'S INTERESTING TO SEE how the old guard of the digital media players are evolving in this market. Creative was one of the first companies to release an MP3 player - the original Nomad - and it also quickly ventured into large capacity players with the Nomad Jukebox. Still, the iPod clearly made its mark in this sector and even Creative can't help but follow. The Zen Micro isn't an iPod killer, but it comes with its own charm. The unit is much more petite than its peers, bar the Sony Network Walkman, but the touch-pad control system is very reminiscent of Apple, though not nearly as functional. In general the controls work fine, but the volume slider, which doubles for navigation, takes getting used to.

Unlike the iPod, the Zen can also record audio and it has a surprisingly high quality for a built-in microphone. In fact, a recorder function in a high capacity player should be standard, but even then few players record very well. As for playback, the standard MP3 and WMA formats work and you can expect at least 10 hours of play time.

The Zen can double as a mass storage device: you can format a percentage of the onboard space to copy files to, which any PC with XP will access automatically. Strangely,

though, you can't copy songs in the same fashion - here you need the included software. As with iTunes and nearly every music manager out there for players, it doesn't sort by folders and using it is nonsensical. The distributor, Reviva did mention, though, that the next batch of Creative players won't require proprietary software.

You can charge the Zen via USB or the supplied power cable, which plugs into a separate port - this is likely to eventually just centralise around the USB port. FM radio, a contact list and 'To Do' function add some nice additional features to the player, if you ever use them. For protection, a hard plastic shell is included, but it can get detached from the belt clip far too easy. Finally, the player comes in ten colours, though not all of them are available locally.

Creative is definitely making a comeback with the Zen, and once it drops using proprietary software it's definitely a good buy. The iPod looks better and the Zen lacks a bit with its interface, but it makes up for it with all its extra features. There are some design issues, but nothing that won't make you want to use it. Keeping an eye on this family of players for a real prodigy would be a good idea. **NAG**

VITAL INFO

■ Pros

Small size;
Good voice recorder;
Feature rich

■ Cons

Sensitive interface;
Uses proprietary software

■ Supplier

Reviva Technology
[011] 792 7797

■ Internet

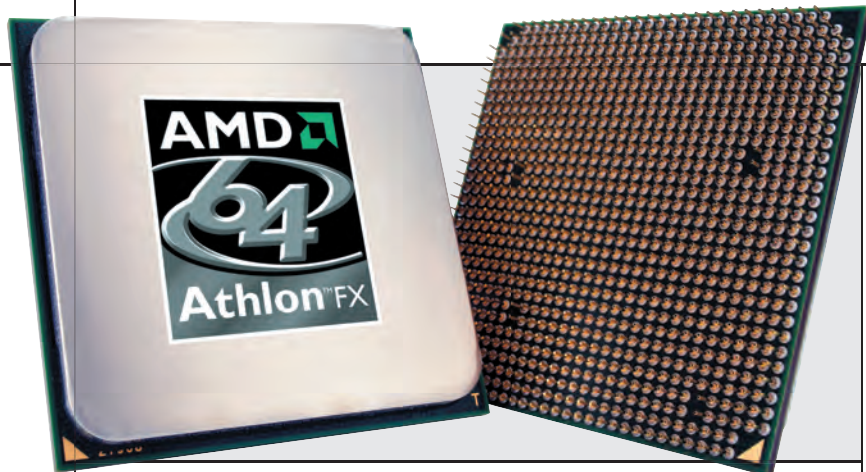
www.reviva.co.za

■ RRP

R 2278

■ Reviewer

James Francis



AMD ATHLON 64 FX-57

AMD RECENTLY LAUNCHED ITS flagship product, the Athlon 64 X2 dual core processor. However, because many applications and games are still based on single threads, AMD has released an enthusiast single core processor. The AMD Athlon 64 FX-57 processor (codenamed San Diego) has a clock speed of 2.8GHz and is aimed at enthusiast and gamer markets. As is usually the case with new technology, we were very eager to put this processor through its paces and were pleasantly surprised by the results.

The FX-57 is the successor to the infamous FX-55, and even though it is only 200MHz faster, it sports numerous tweaks and enhancements which sets it far apart from the FX-55. Probably the most significant of these is the fact that the FX-57 is based on the smaller 90nm SOI (Silicon On Insulator) process as opposed to the larger 130nm SOI process of the FX-55. Looking at some more technical aspects, the Athlon 64 FX-57 supports SSE3 and it features 1MB of L2 Cache. It was also refreshing to see that AMD managed to drop the operating voltage of the FX-57 to 1.40V (from 1.50V on the FX-55), while the maximum thermal rating is 104W (the same as the FX-55). The move to the 90nm process also brought with it a load of benefits such as a lower thermal output and potentially higher clock speeds. We were very eager to benchmark this monster and were quite surprised by the results. The first game benchmark we ran was on Doom 3 at a resolution of 1024x768. The benchmark produced a score of 103.8fps (Frames per Second). We also ran the Unreal Tournament benchmark at a resolution of 1024x768 and it produced a score of 80.6. We were equally impressed with the score produced by 3DMark05. The CPU scored an impressive 5,950. The other benchmarks we ran were Aquamark 3, which produced a CPU score of 12,306 and PCMark 2004 which produced a CPU score of 5,150.

Users who currently own a high-end AMD motherboard compatible with the Athlon 64 FX processor will require a BIOS update to be able to run this processor. This BIOS update will simply allow the motherboard to supply a lower voltage to the AMD Athlon 64 FX-57. On the down side though, this processor is very expensive. If you are one of those people who need to have the best no matter the cost, then you should be very happy with this processor. For the rest of us though, this processor will still be out of reach and we will only be able to dream of owning one, one day. **NAG**

VITAL INFO

- **Pros**
Awesome performance;
Runs as cool as the FX-55
- **Cons**
Price
- **Supplier**
Annex [011] 542-2300
- **Internet**
www.annex.co.za
- **RRP**
R 9173
- **Reviewer**
Regardt van der Berg

The test machine used to benchmark this processor was an ASUS A8N-SLI Premium motherboard, two sticks of 512MB DDR400 RAM, a 160GB Seagate hard drive and an ATI Radeon X850 XT graphics card. Windows XP SP2 was installed with all the latest updates and patches.

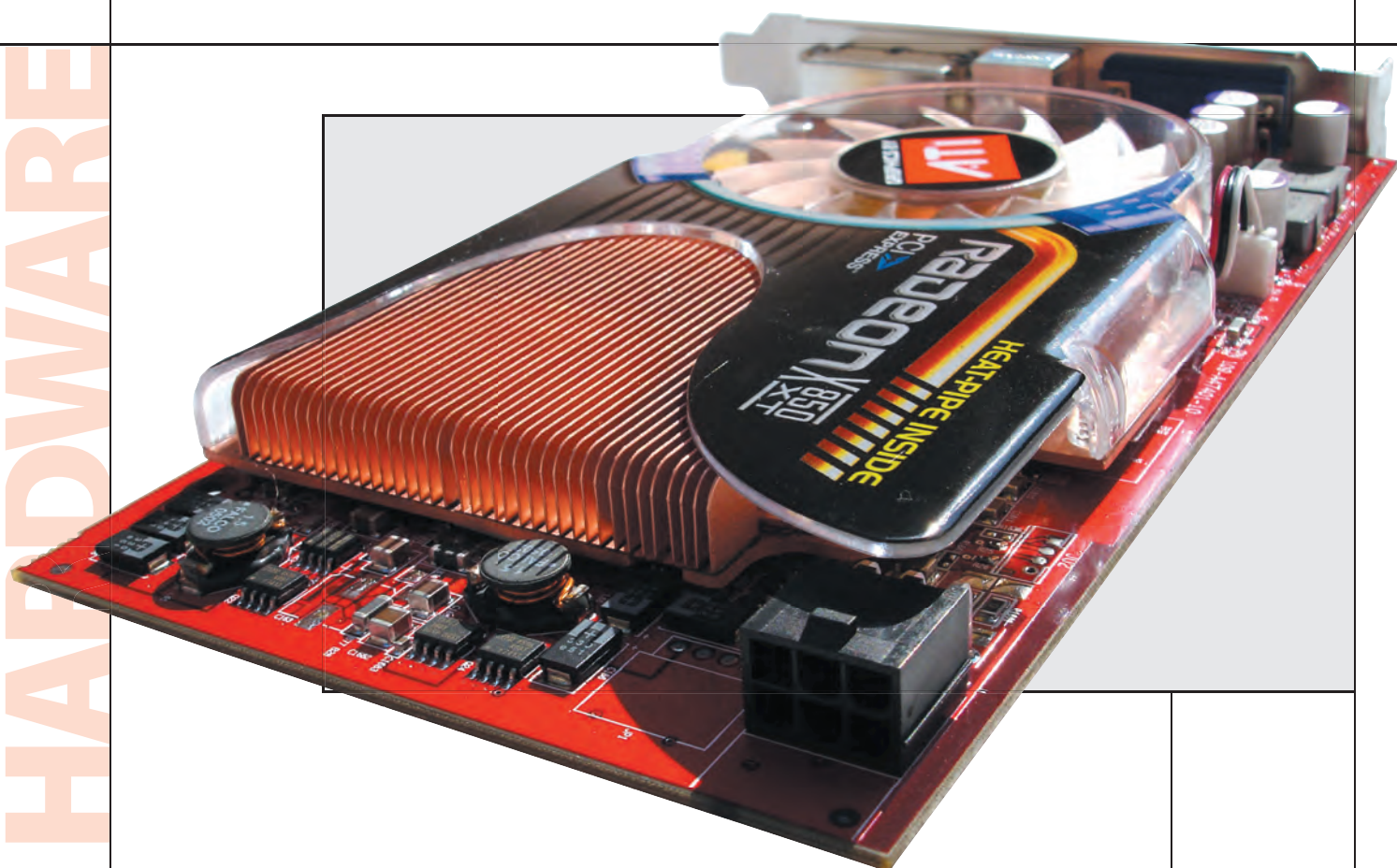


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GAME





GE CUBE X850 XT UNIWISE

THE X850 XT IS ATI's answer to the prohibitive cost of its current range-topper, the X850 XT Platinum Edition (PE). The X850 XT is a slightly clocked-down board, a lot cheaper than the XT Platinum, with all the same high-end features and functions.

Sounds attractive? Even more appealing is the fact that this particular X850 XT is manufactured by GeCube, a company which has the answer for those wanting the performance of this chipset without the inconvenience of a bulky 2-slot design. GeCube builds its cards with a heat pipe-based cooler dubbed Uniwise, and it is this system which allows for a single-slot configuration.

Although no longer at the pinnacle of the GPU world, the X850 XT was, until recently, one of the hottest GPUs money could buy. RAM clock remains identical to the PE at 540MHz, and core drops by 30 to 520MHz in this more affordable variant. It employs 256MB of GDDR-3 via a 256-bit wide bus, which has become pretty standard in high-end offerings lately.

The benchmarking runs spat out the numbers we would expect from a GPU of this calibre. 3DMark 05 got 5,443 on default, and only fell to 3,000 at 1600x1200 with 4-pass multisampling and anisotropy enabled. The same FutureMark bench, but the '03 version, indicated that the XT had no trouble handling older 3D engines and it delivered a high of 11K, with a still cruising 4,478 even at 1600x1200 with pixel processing turned on.

In Doom 3 the card maintained its poise, and in the Ultra detail setting it only fell from a CPU-limited 76fps down to 62.3fps when 4-pass antialiasing was turned on at 1024x768. At 1600x1200 with AA still on, it still spat out 43.0fps. It must be noted that Doom 3 benchmarks, in order to stress the GPU rather than the platform, are run twice in a row - first to load the game objects into cache and the second time to test the rendering capabilities of the card. So these framerates do not necessarily depict what can be expected in gameplay itself.

Where the GeCube actually lost points, was the single-slot cooler. While we aren't fans of the larger, nosier and less handy dual-slot designs, this heat pipe system just can't seem to cope with the heat generated by the Radeon GPU. While it never allowed the GPU to reach a temperature where system stability was impeded, it did require its maximum fan revolutions for most of the time while gaming. After an hour or so of playing, the cooler felt dangerously hot; in fact the heat had spread to the PCB of the board itself due to sheer intensity.

That said, the X850 XT is a powerful performer, and the GeCube Uniwise cooler does allow for single-slot installation. We wouldn't vouch on the longevity of the GPU though, at the temperatures it will be reaching, and we certainly wouldn't recommend trying to clock it back to its PE counterpart's frequencies in our SA climate without serious custom cooling. **NAG**

VITAL INFO

■ Pros

An X850 with single-slot cooler and lower cost;
Very good performance

■ Cons

Single-slot cooler allows GPU to run much hotter;
Can be noisy as well

■ Supplier

Sonic Informed
[011] 880 2684

■ Internet

www.sonicinformed.co.za

■ RRP

TBA

■ Reviewer

Russell Bennett

The test machine used to benchmark this graphics card was an Intel Pentium 4 3GHz with 1GB of DDR 400 RAM. Windows XP with SP2 was installed, along with the latest Catalyst 5.6 driver package.

SILVERSTONE ST65ZF ZEUS PSU

ARE YOU A FAN of the biggest and best, well, everything really? Do you subscribe to the "Bigger is better" mantra of the US, and apply these thoughts to your computing setup?

Well if that's a yes you're nodding, pay attention. This is the SilverStone ST65ZF Zeus PSU, named after the mythological god of lightning and father of the gods of Olympus thanks to its gargantuan continuous power output capability of a staggering 650W, or a 710W peak power output.

This power is provided courtesy of quad +12V rails, incorporating Active PFC and supporting ATX12V Version 2.0 as well as EPS 12V power standards. The Zeus is also NVIDIA SLI-approved and features two power connectors dedicated for use with SLI graphics boards.

The case of this unit is finished in a high-gloss gun-metal grey which cast light around in a suitably epic manner as we prepared to start up the Zeus-powered test system.

To test the electrical capabilities of this unit, we packed every device we possibly could into our system, based on an already fairly power-hungry Pentium 4 3.05GHz CPU. To this we added a DVD Writer, lomega REV internal IDE unit, two IDE hard drives, a SATA hard drive, a power-sapping 6800 Ultra graphics board, and finally a couple of pulsing case-lights for that final touch. Then, measuring the voltages on the +3.3V, +5V and +12V circuits, using the trusty Motherboard Monitor 5, we gradually increased the load on the PSU by bringing devices up to their full power requirements one by one: first by launching a 3D applet to activate the GPU, then starting up writing tasks on each drive in succession until the entire system was under full load.

This testing was easily shrugged off by the mammoth capabilities of the Zeus, and with each additional load taking its toll, none of the voltage readings on any of the three circuits fluctuated by a single decimal point. The SilverStone was more than up to the task, with its single 80mm fan fairly noisily keeping the quad rails cooled – you surely can't expect a monster like this to be quiet as well.

The ST65ZF has the juice to power even the most over-modded gaming rig which could possibly be assembled. The price for this massive power output is not insubstantial, and if you must have the biggest possible PSU for future headroom, this is it. **NAG**

VITAL INFO

Pros

Massive;
Stable power outputs;
Great casing

Cons

Costly and noisy,
although not
excessively considering
its capabilities

Supplier

Naked IT
[011] 678 1288

Internet

www.nakedit.co.za

RRP

R 1299

Reviewer

Russell Bennett



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D-LINK WIRELESS 108G GAMING ROUTER

ON THE SA ADSL network, gaming performance to international servers can be poor at the best of times, with high round-trip latencies frequently causing painful lag and often disconnection from the server. Factor into that family members on the same Internet connection, and all hopes of decent online gaming speeds rapidly dwindle away.

D-Link has come to the rescue with its GamerLounge Wireless 108G gaming router, or DGL-4300. This unit is packed with networking capabilities and optimised specifically for ensuring that your IP gaming traffic gets top priority, making the most of the all-important upload bandwidth which your line offers.

It works too, thanks to the built-in GameFuel engine, which is in essence a set of QoS policies incorporating a wide range of standard game titles as well as the ability for the user to create his or her own games profiles for titles not included by default. With another system on our home LAN viewing streaming video content over the WAN, our LFS session barely even noticed this load as full priority was assigned to the gaming traffic first and the streaming video second.

Even for a dedicated office environment this product has its appeal, allowing you to prioritise VoIP traffic, for instance, to avoid poor voice quality under fluctuating WAN loads as others in the office browse, send and download e-mail and generally consume the clear bandwidth needed to make this technology a viable communications option.

The DGL-4300 also includes four auto-negotiating Gigabit-capable LAN ports, bringing the exceptional throughput of this networking standard to the SOHO environment. Gigabit networking is one of those technologies where once you

have tasted it, it is extremely difficult to go back to the older 100Mbps standard. What's more, Wi-Fi capabilities are built into this purposeful, sleek black router, theoretically capable of transferring data wirelessly at 108Mbps – although, without the D-Link Turbo WLAN NICs, which the technology was created for, we were unable to test the true performance of this component of the package.

All management is done through an HTTP interface, and the embedded management suite makes extensive use of Flash to provide the user with a well-explained and detailed configuration environment. Although the default settings will suffice for most regular users, addicted tweakers will appreciate the ability to manually configure all elements of the router's functionality - from LAN to WLAN, from embedded firewall rules to the GameFuel QoS policies.

In fact, the only aspect of this D-Link offering we did not entirely appreciate was the link-diagnostic lights which have been a standard feature on routers since they first appeared. Whether the LAN ports were connected to a Gigabyte or 100Mbps NIC, these LEDs shone only blue which, while aesthetically attractive, really doesn't help you to identify Gigabit connections easily or pick up any problems with your Gigabit Ethernet environment.

The DGL-4300 is a serious piece of home or home-office networking equipment targeted squarely at gamers, and it delivers on its promises of lower online gaming latencies very effectively, even in our unique connectivity environment. Backed up by Gigabit LAN, built-in wireless and a friendly management platform, this device scores top marks with this reviewer. **NAG**

VITAL INFO

■ Pros

Great LAN performance; Gaming QoS profiles keep pings low even when someone else uses the WAN while you're playing

■ Cons

Blue-only front-panel LEDs provide zero useful link info

■ Suppliers

Drive Control Corporation
[011] 887 8927
Pinnacle Micro
[011] 265 3000

■ Internet

www.drivecon.net
www.pinnacle.co.za

■ RRP

R 1999

■ Reviewer

Russell Bennett

THERMALTAKE AQUABAY M1 (FLOW INDICATOR)

THERMALTAKE HAS RECENTLY RELEASED a standalone flow indicator to the fold. The newbie, dubbed the AquaBay M1, is essentially aimed at being paired with Thermaltake's already successful BigWater liquid cooling solution.

The BigWater benefits from the new 'AquaBay' in that one can now see the level of the liquid in the cooling system through a stylish window, as well as flow rate courtesy of a flow indicator.

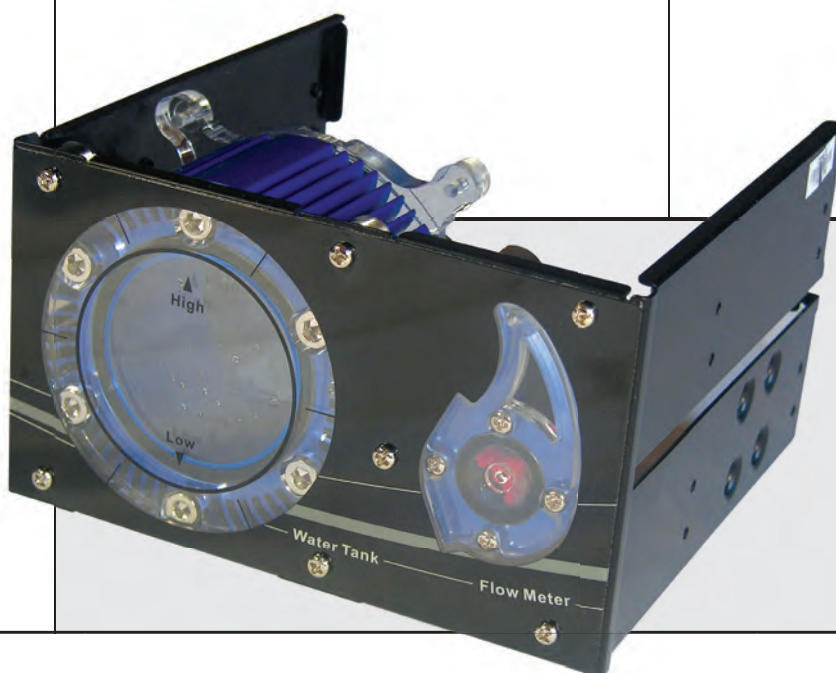
The Unit installs easily, but requires the space of two 5¼-inch drive bays as a result of its profile. The connectors are a marvel, making the connection of the tubing effortless and quick.

At the heart of the AquaBay M1 is a blue anodised liquid indicator. The liquid indicator is incredibly well designed and offers a large window situated on the front of the unit for easy viewing. Joined to the liquid indicator via a connecting tube is the flow indicator, similarly sporting the blue anodised finish. The flow indicator clearly shows the rate of liquid flow, or lack thereof, via a similar front window, albeit not as large.

Side note: With the release of the AquaBay M1 (Flow Indicator), M2 (Radiator) and M3 (Liquid Tank) all occupying two 5¼-inch drive bays, one must ask oneself how large a case Thermaltake have in mind?

With the AquaBay M1 installed and the cooling system operational, both liquid level and flow rate are easily read at a glance thanks to the layout and large viewing windows. For folks with illuminated interiors there is the added benefit of having the illumination pour out from the transparent windows and surrounds. Case modders prepare to feed.

The new AquaBay M1 oozes a sense of pure design genius, from its tantalizing sleek looks to expert craftsmanship. The manner in which the unit has been assembled indicates Thermaltake's commitment to offering only the best in cooling products. **NAG**



VITAL INFO

Pros

Excellent build quality;
Stylish design;
Ease of use

Cons

Consumes two
5¼-inch drive bays

Supplier

Corex [011] 707 5000

Internet

www.corex.co.za

RRP

R 550

Reviewer

Victor Moore



MiniView™ Micro Audio KVM

2 Port MiniView™ Micro Audio KVM Switch w/6

Introducing the two port MiniView™ Micro Audio KVM switch from IOGEAR – the simplest way to manage two PCs or Macs* from a single keyboard, monitor and mouse, and share your speakers among them.

8 Port Video Splitter

8 Port VGA Video Splitter for use with analog displays

The Video Splitter is a signal booster and splitter that is used to take video input from a single source and direct it to eight video outputs for monitors using analog signals - it allows you to not only split the signal but to extend the distance so that you can send the signal to about 215 feet away. This is no small feat, your average VGA card, over a standard VGA cable, sends a clear VGA signal approximately 25 feet. Dividing this between other displays reduces the video quality. This is why IOGEAR's video splitters are the best choice for allowing you to carry and split the video signal to more than one display with the same quality as the original signal.



Miniview Ultra+

8-Port Miniview Ultra+ KVM switch, PS2/USB, w/Audio

IOGEAR's new eight-port Miniview Ultra+ KVM switch is the ideal tool to help reduce redundant hardware. Eight monitors, mice and keyboards are simply too expensive, bulky and inconvenient for most system administrators.



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FAX: 011 707 5050



CASIO EX-Z750

MEASURING A MERE 89MM x 59mm x 22mm and weighing only 165g, it seems almost impossible that Casio has managed to squeeze in a 2.5-inch (63.5mm) LCD. The EX-Z750 features 3X optical zoom (38-114mm) and supports MPEG-4 movie clips with sound. Its size requires a small memory card technology and makes use of an SD card to store your images. It features 8.2MB of built-in memory, which is handy if your SD card runs out of space.

Its support for full manual controls means that you are able to adjust the aperture and shutter priority allowing you to get a lot more creative than simply having the camera automatically adjust your settings. The shutter priority is adjustable from 60 seconds to 1/1000 of a second, while its aperture priority has two settings: F2.8 and F4.0. The EX-Z750 also features a variety of 'Best Shot' modes. These are various preset modes for both still images and video clips that allow you to quickly snap an image or record a clip based on your conditions. For example, you can set the 'Best Shot' mode to sports which will automatically select a faster shutter speed allowing you to catch your subject in action without blurring the image. Another impressive feature is the short time it takes this camera to start up once the power button has been pressed - we timed it at just over one second to when the

camera was ready to take its first picture.

Using this camera is an absolute pleasure. On default automatic settings this camera produces sharp well saturated photographs. The menu structure is easy to navigate and if you have a basic understanding of photography you should not have any problems experimenting with the advanced settings. On the left side of the camera is an 'EX' button, allowing you fast access to some of the most used settings such as image size (resolution), white balance, ISO and AF (Auto Focus).

The bundled cradle also adds heaps of functionality to this camera. Using the supplied cables and the cradle you are able to connect the camera to a television to view your images or video clips. If you have a PictBridge compatible printer, you also have the option of printing images directly from your camera using the USB port on PictBridge-enabled printers.

The only negative feature of the Casio EX-Z750 is that it needs the included cradle to charge the battery. It also does not feature the standard mini-USB port, so you would either need an SD card reader or the cradle to transfer images from the camera to your PC. Although it is quite pricy, its small size, great features and high resolution definitely make this worth it. **NAG**

VITAL INFO

■ Pros

Small size;
Manual aperture and shutter priority;
Large LCD;
Produces great photographs

■ Cons

Requires cradle to charge battery;
Price

■ Supplier

BlackDOT IT Solutions [011] 315-5445

■ Internet

world.casio.com

■ RRP

R 5128

■ Reviewer

Regardt van der Berg

THERMALTAKE AQUABAY M2 (RADIATOR)

NOT TO BE CONFUSED with the other derivatives of the AquaBay, the AquaBay M2 is what we have all been waiting for - an even larger radiator. The new derivative is bigger, quieter and cools better than its predecessor. The unit was designed for use with ThermalTake's BigWater Liquid Cooling solution, or as an upgrade solution to others.

The AquaBay M2 comes packaged in a sturdy cardboard box. The unit is shipped with UV sensitive tubing and quick install connectors, together with a brief instruction manual. The manual unfortunately assumes the installer has experience in liquid cooling system installation, as it isn't very thorough.

The unit itself is made of copper piping cooled by aluminium fins. It measures in at 166mm x 122mm x 35mm and weighs a hefty 925g. A large 120mm square, 1,300rpm fan is responsible for airflow across the fins. This ensures low noise levels and cool temperatures. It would have been interesting to have seen what an impact an all copper radiator would have made here, but we suspect pricing would have made it an unpopular choice.

Partly as a result of the radiator's large size, it has been moved up front to the 5¼-inch drive bay area. With ThermalTake's anticipated airflow characteristics within the case, the company intended for the unit to draw air up from below the drive cages and expel it toward the power supply area. This is achieved as the cooling ability is better than its predecessor.

One downside to such a large radiator is the amount of space it consumes, and as with all units in the AquaBay series, it consumes two 5¼-inch drive bays.

With the unit now upfront, ThermalTake has created a very stylish front panel for it. This ensures maximum integration into any enclosure.

The unit installs very easily and rapidly as a result of the useful quick connectors and clever design. With the unit powered by its 4-pin connector, the large fan spins slowly, very quietly drawing in an enormous 54CFM of air.

Cooling power is very good, with the AquaBay M2 exceeding the cooling ability of usual suspects that attach to the rear of the case.

Again, ThermalTake has outdone itself and produced the 'Big Daddy' of in-case radiators. **NAG**

VITAL INFO

Pros

Stylish/Aesthetically pleasing panel;
Very quiet;
Excellent cooling ability

Cons

Requires two 5¼-inch drive bays

Supplier

Corex [011] 707 5000

Internet

www.corex.co.za

RRP

R 550

Reviewer

Victor Moore



ThermalRock
a Division of **ThermalTake**

Mystic Xaser Case Series



FRONT VIEW



- 80mm cooling fan in the front (intake)
- Dual 60mm cooling fan at rear (exhaust)

Specifications:

- Home theater style appearance
- Noble aluminum front door design
- Sound level indicator
- Fits standard motherboard and PSII power supply
- Performance-oriented
- Retractable foot stand Side I/O ports for easy access



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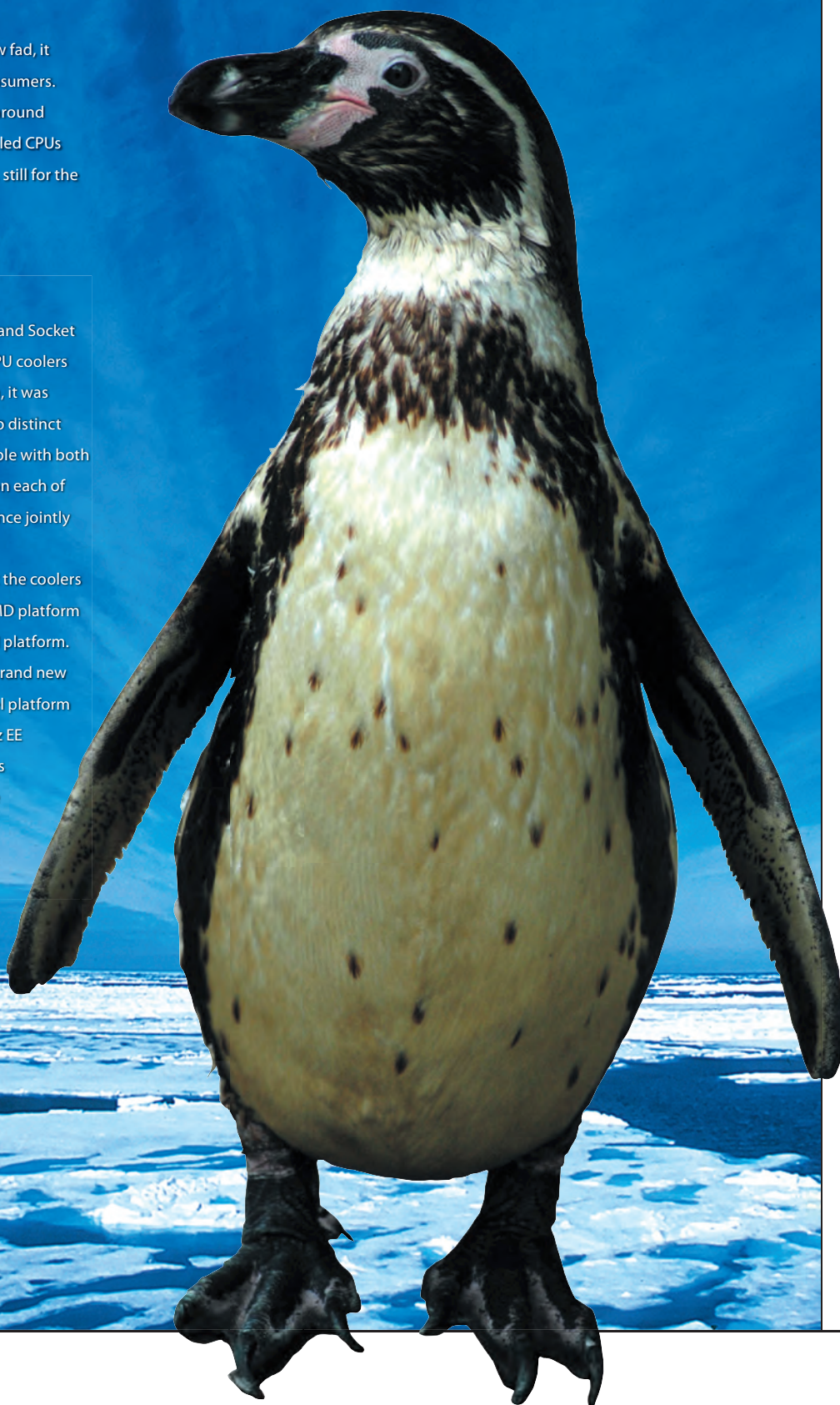
THE CHILL FACTOR

EVEN THOUGH WATER COOLING is the new fad, it is still too expensive for most consumers. Air cooling will undoubtedly still be around for as long CPU vendors make air cooled CPUs - which, according to Intel, will be "... still for the foreseeable future."

How we tested

THIS MONTH WE LOOKED at Socket 775 and Socket 939 coolers. But because most CPU coolers are based on a multi-platform design, it was difficult to split these coolers into two distinct groups. Where a cooler was compatible with both platforms, we tested its capabilities on each of the platforms and rated its performance jointly across both.

The motherboards we used to test the coolers were the ECS KN1 Extreme for the AMD platform and the ECS PF5 Extreme for the Intel platform. On the AMD board we installed the brand new AMD FX-57 processor and on the Intel platform we installed the Intel Pentium 3.4GHz EE processor. We rated each cooler on its installation complexity, as well as the temperature and noise it produced while we ran benchmarks on the test machines.



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- SSI
- FrontPage server extensions
- 1 Database (MySQL or Postgres)
- Control panel
- Virus scanning
- Spam filtering (SpamAssassin)
- Webstats
- Webmail
- Custom error documents
- 25 Group mails

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ASUS X-MARS

[Intel and AMD compatible]

Asus stuck with the traditional design with this cooler, but that doesn't make it any less impressive. The X-Mars is designed for the AMD platform and is compatible with Socket 754, Socket 939, and Socket 940 motherboards. It has also been certified for use with the new AMD Athlon X2 processor line-up. The design of the X-Mars is pretty standard, but features a copper base, aluminium fins, and two copper heat pipes. The X-Mars is cooled by a single 70mm fan which ran surprisingly quiet and even under load didn't make much of a noise. Probably the best feature of this CPU cooler is the retention clip which secures it to the motherboard. Unlike AMD reference design coolers, this one's clip makes use of a double swivel mechanism which doesn't require much pressure to lock the cooler into place, making it a lot safer to install.



VITAL INFO

Plus

Retention clip requires little pressure; Supports AMD Athlon X2 processor

Minus

Looks plain

Supplier

Asus [011] 783-5450

Internet

www.asus.com

RRP

TBA

TEMPERATURE DROP: 3%

VALUE	CHILL FACTOR	NOISE
NA	75	75

OVERALL

75*

* Scoring is provisional as price information was not available at time of going to print.

ASUS VR GUARD

[Intel compatible]

The VR Guard from Asus is a complex looking CPU cooler, but it is actually one of the easiest units to install for Intel's Socket 775. The heatsink consists of a copper base with aluminium fins and it has three heat pipes which help to dissipate the heat. The 80mm fan is situated on the side of the heatsink and blows the air through the fins and over the heat pipes. This cooler's name is derived from the plastic fan duct situated on its side. This duct redirects some of the cool air over the motherboard's voltage regulator (VR) modules, which tend to heat up when the motherboard and CPU are under load. The VR Guard ships with a base plate that fits on the underside of the motherboard, and is used to secure the screws which are used to fasten the heatsink to the CPU socket.



VITAL INFO

Plus

Low noise; Easy installation

Minus

No indication when the screws are tight enough

Supplier

Asus [011] 783-5450

Internet

www.asus.com

RRP

TBA

TEMPERATURE DROP: 4%

VALUE	CHILL FACTOR	NOISE
NA	80	75

OVERALL

77*

* Scoring is provisional as price information was not available at time of going to print.

Wireless TV Motherboard



AI Life Series motherboards bring lifestyle and personal computing together. They entertain you with TV, radio and Dolby support, and link you to the rest of the world via wireless connection (WiFi-TV bundle edition only). To create a peaceful environment, several new and improved innovations are also included to reduce noise and temperature. Don't change your way of life for a computer. Instead let the ASUS Life Series improve the quality of your life.



AI Quiet

With PCs serving as the entertainment centerpiece and playing a bigger role in our lives, quiet operation is in high demand. No one wants to hear the cooling fan spinning when watching a movie or listening to music. The ASUS AI Quiet function dynamically controls CPU speed and reduces temperature and fan speeds when peace and quiet are what you desire.



Stack Cool 2

Stack Cool 2 is a fan-less and zero-noise cooling solution. It effectively transfers heat generated by the critical components to the other side of the specially designed PCB (printed circuit board) for effective heat dissipation.



WiFi-TV PCI Card

Connectivity and entertainment are the key words of personal computing in the 21st Century, and the AI Life Series delivers both.

(Note: Optional, the WiFi-TV card has to be purchased separately)



Leading the way through innovation

Total Wireless Solution

Offering IEEE 802.11a/b/g standards all in one add-on card, the WiFi-TV PCI card allows convenient wireless connection to the Internet and other digital devices. Share photos, videos and MP3 music files between the wireless devices at home without the tangling wires. Moreover, the unique setup wizard makes establishing a wireless environment a piece of cake.

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- ✓ Setup wizard simplifies wireless network establishment

The Next TV Standard

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- ✓ Enjoy great multimedia experience with the bundled Cyberlink PowerCinema

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SILVERSTONE NT02

[Intel and AMD compatible]

The SilverStone NT02 is a fairly large heatsink and consists of various parts making it a tad more difficult to install. It is compatible with AMD's Socket 939 as well as Intel's Socket 478 and Socket 775 motherboards. The kit consists of a 114mm-high heatsink as well as an 80mm fan and a fan controller. The accessory kit includes a variety of screws and mounting brackets which will replace the ones on your motherboard. Once the heatsink is secured to your motherboard you have the option to install the fan on either side of the heatsink, making it easy to fit if other components are in the way. The fan controller is a very handy add-on and allows you to control the fan speed. Once installed, we were surprised at how quiet the fan operated - even when turned on high, it created nothing more than a loud whisper.



VITAL INFO

- **Plus**
Fan speed controller
- **Minus**
Large heatsink;
Awkward height
- **Supplier**
NakedIT [011] 678-1288
- **Internet**
www.nakedit.co.za
- **RRP**
R 499

TEMPERATURE DROP: 6%

VALUE	CHILL FACTOR	NOISE
90	85	85

OVERALL

86



VANTEC MACH1

[Intel and AMD compatible]

The Mach 1 is a relatively small cooler, but in terms of its cooling capabilities it is pretty powerful. The heatsink is manufactured from copper and the 70mm cooling fan is situated on the side of the heatsink, which cools the two heat pipes built into the heatsink. The Mach 1 is compatible with AMD's Socket 939 as well as the Intel's Pentium 4 Socket 478. Bundled with this cooler is a socket replacement kit for your motherboard as well as two mounting clips which will keep the heatsink in place. Once the socket is installed, the heatsink can be installed and removed fairly easily. Also attached to the heatsink is a fan controller which slots into an open PCI slot at the back of your case. On the downside, the Mach1 can get noisy when the fan is turned on high, but luckily the manual speed control will allow you to custom-set the fan speed.



VITAL INFO

- **Plus**
Small size;
Easy installation
- **Minus**
Noisy fan
- **Supplier**
Frontosa IT [011] 466-0038
- **Internet**
www.frontosa.co.za
- **RRP**
R 370

TEMPERATURE DROP: 6%

VALUE	CHILL FACTOR	NOISE
80	85	80

OVERALL

81



VITAL INFO

■ Plus

Quiet operation

■ Minus

Large heatsink

■ Supplier

Frontosa IT [011] 466-0038

■ Internet

www.frontosa.co.za

■ RRP

R 465

TEMPERATURE DROP: 6%

VALUE CHILL FACTOR NOISE
85 85 85

OVERALL

85



ZALMAN CNPS7700-CU

[Intel and AMD compatible]

Zalman definitely knows how to make them big. The CNPS7700-Cu features a very unconventional design with a large 120mm fan situated in the centre. The design of this cooler works surprisingly well and it is able to dissipate the heat very quickly thanks to the thin copper fins. On the downside though, this cooler's installation process is fairly complicated and there are numerous parts included with this kit for its installation. Removing it is also not easy. The CNPS7700-Cu is compatible with almost all processor platforms including Intel Socket 478 and Socket 775, as well as AMD's Socket 754 and Socket 940. The kit also includes a fan speed controller, but sadly this controller needs to be installed on the inside of your case making it more difficult to access. Even though this cooler features a 120mm fan, it is whisper quiet even when the fan is turned on high.



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onyx black brilliant red midnight blue

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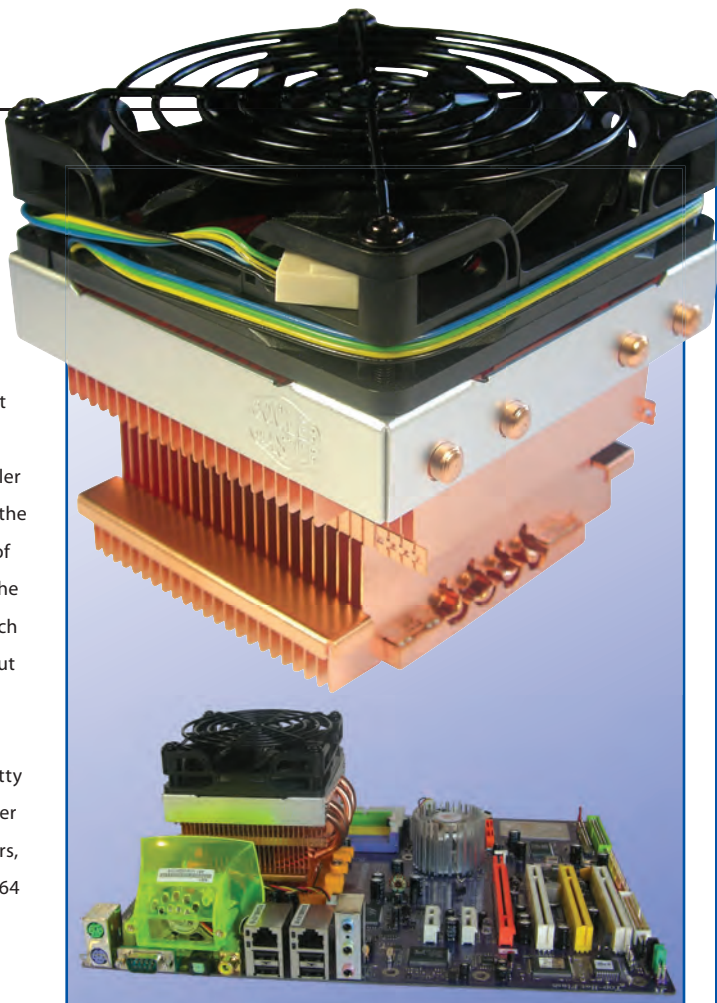
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COOLER MASTER HYPER 48

[Intel and AMD compatible]

The Cooler Master Hyper 48 looks pretty much like a traditional CPU cooler, but it is constructed entirely out of copper, except for the fan mounting bracket. It is compatible with AMD's Socket 754, Socket 939, and Socket 940 as well as Intel's Socket 478 and Socket 775. This cooler features four heat pipes that are built into the heatsink fins which help to dissipate a lot of the heat directly from the CPU. On top of the Cooler Master Hyper 48 is a 92mm fan which also does a great job of cooling the CPU, but sadly it comes at a cost. This fan produces quite a bit of noise when the CPU is under load, but under normal conditions it is pretty quiet. The installation process for this cooler is not as complex as some of its competitors, but you would need to remove the Athlon64 mounting bracket in order to install it.



VITAL INFO

■ Plus

Great heat dissipation

■ Minus

Fan is noisy when CPU is under load

■ Supplier

Rectron [011] 203-1000

■ Internet

www.rectron.net

■ RRP

R 400

TEMPERATURE DROP: 7%

VALUE	CHILL FACTOR	NOISE
85	90	70

OVERALL

81

GIGABYTE G-POWER PRO

[Intel and AMD compatible]

This Gigabyte cooler features a somewhat unconventional design. The aluminium heatsink is connected via four aluminium heat pipes to the heat spreader which fits onto the CPU. On top of the heatsink is a large 110mm fan and there are four blue LEDs which light up the fan when the PC is switched on. The Gigabyte G-Power Pro is compatible with almost all modern CPU sockets including Intel's Socket 775 and Socket 478 as well as AMD's Athlon64 and Socket A. The installation process for this cooler is not as complex as some of the other coolers in this roundup, but the size and height of this cooler make it tricky to install into certain cases. Also bundled with the Gigabyte G-Power Pro is a fan speed controller. Gigabyte also provides brackets for both front and rear mounting of this controller. Sadly though, this cooler makes quite a bit of noise when turned on high.



VITAL INFO

■ Plus

Blue LEDs;
Front and rear fan control brackets

■ Minus

Noisy fan when turned on high

■ Supplier

Rectron [011] 203-1000

■ Internet

www.rectron.net

■ RRP

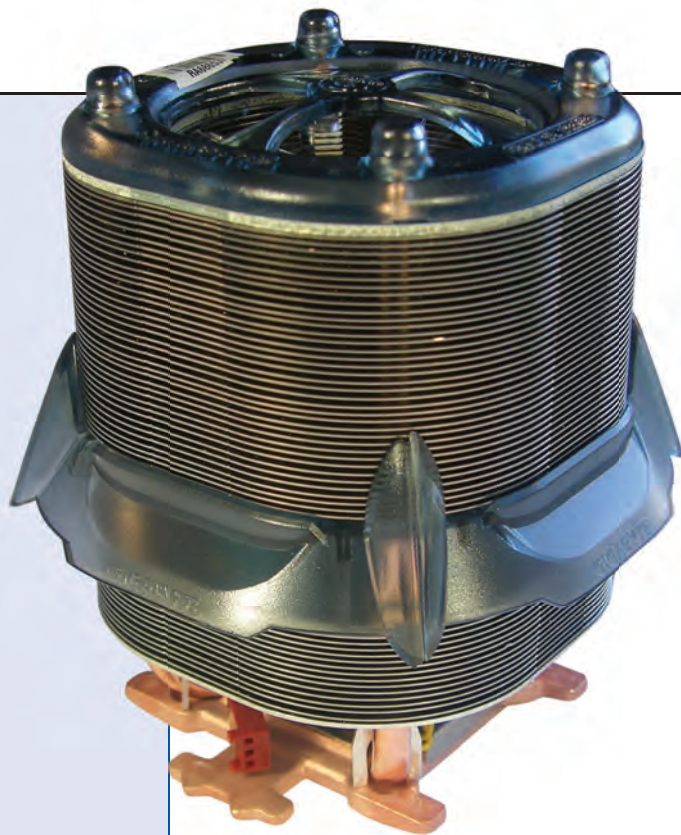
R 370

TEMPERATURE DROP: 5%

VALUE	CHILL FACTOR	NOISE
75	80	70

OVERALL

75



VITAL INFO

■ Plus

Quiet

■ Minus

Tricky installation due to awkward cooler size

■ Supplier

Rectron [011] 203-1000

■ Internet

www.rectron.net

■ RRP

R 400

TEMPERATURE DROP: 4%

VALUE CHILL FACTOR NOISE
85 80 85

OVERALL

83

GIGABYTE 3D ROCKET-PRO

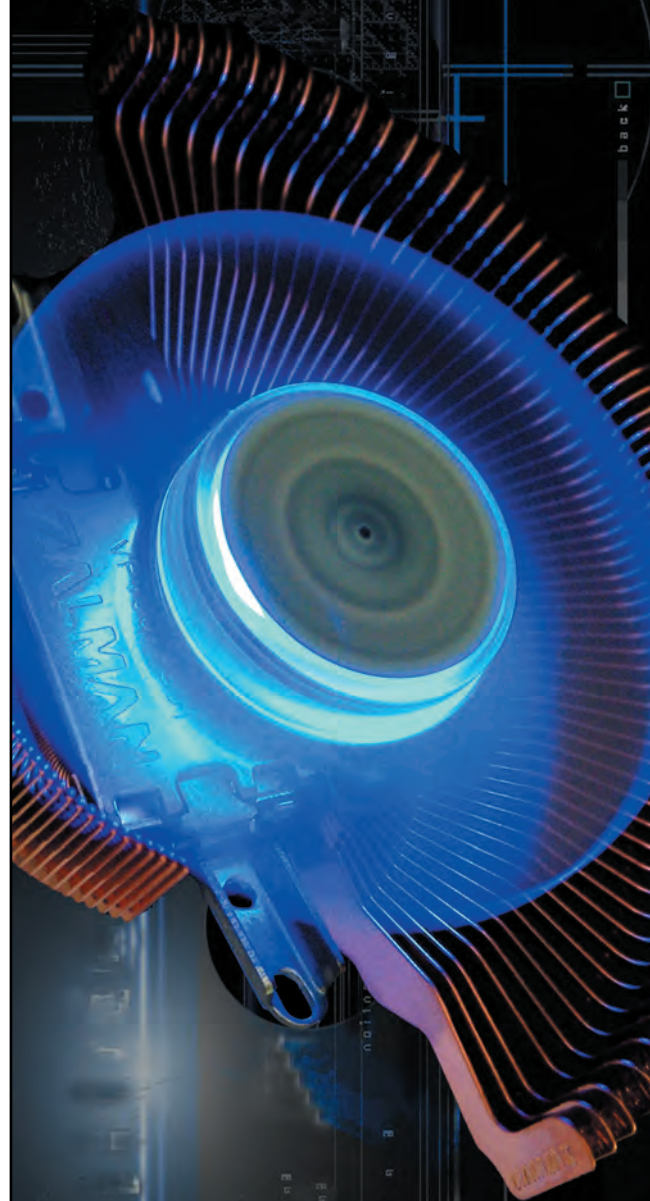
[Intel and AMD compatible]

The Gigabyte 3D Rocket-Pro definitely wins the award for weirdest looking cooler in this roundup. This cooler consists of a copper base with aluminium fins and four copper heat pipes. The heatsink's cylinder shape allows for a fan to be placed in the centre, while the plastic ducts on the side of the heatsink redirects the air over nearby components on your motherboard. Interestingly, there is a plastic cover on the top of the heatsink.

This forces cool air to be sucked in through the fins rather than from the top of the cooler. The Gigabyte 3D Rocket-Pro is compatible with Intel Socket 775 as well as AMD's Socket 949. Also included with this kit is a fan speed controller and brackets for front or rear mounting. We were impressed to find that this Gigabyte cooler did not produce much noise, even when the controller was turned on high.



ZALMAN



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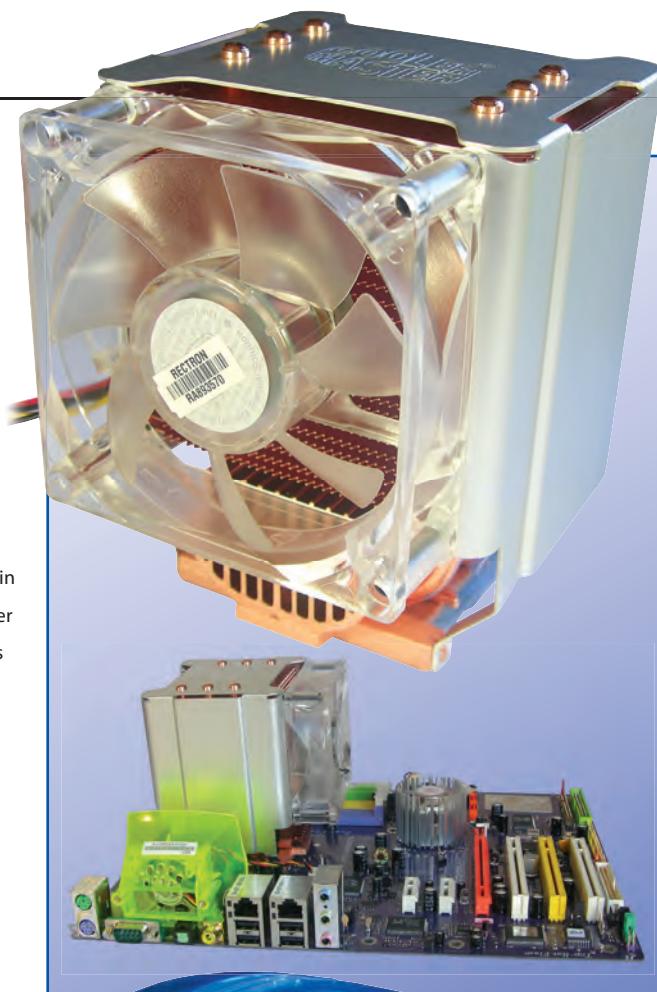
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COOLER MASTER HYPER 6

[Intel and AMD compatible]

Cooler Master's Hyper 6 cooler is made almost entirely from copper which is a great feature for a high-end cooler. It is compatible with AMD's Socket 940 and Socket 754 as well as Intel's Socket 478. This cooler is bundled with an 80mm fan which can be mounted on either side of the heatsink; depending on the space you have available in your case. Attached to this cooler you will also find a fan controller, and in the kit is a bracket for mounting the controller in a floppy drive bay, allowing for easy access should you need to control the speed of the cooling fan. The installation process is a tad tricky, as you need to remove the fan mounting bracket from the motherboard and install the one provided. But installing and removing the cooler once the bracket is installed, is very easy as it is mounted with a set of retention clips.



VITAL INFO

■ Plus

Six heat pipes;
Efficient cooling

■ Minus

No socket 775 support

■ Supplier

Rectron [011] 203-1000

■ Internet

www.rectron.net

■ RRP

R 400

TEMPERATURE DROP: 6%

VALUE	CHILL FACTOR	NOISE
85	85	80

OVERALL

83

ASUS STAR ICE

[Intel and AMD compatible]

Resembling a Boeing engine, the Star Ice cooler from Asus is fairly big compared to most other coolers. It features a copper base with six heat pipes which conduct the heat to the copper fins and is cooled by the 80mm fan. The Star Ice is compatible with Intel's Socket 775, Socket 478, as well as AMD's Socket 939. The installation process is not particularly difficult, but the size can make it tricky to install in certain cases. Bundled with this cooler are fan controllers for both front and rear mounting, and if you have a transparent side panel on your case you will appreciate the Star Ice's built in UV lights. On the downside, this cooler can get very noisy when turned on high, but is whisper quiet when set to blow at a minimum. If you want the Star Ice to provide even better cooling, you can install a second 80mm fan.



VITAL INFO

■ Plus

Efficient cooling

■ Minus

Very noisy

■ Supplier

Corex [011] 707-5000

■ Internet

www.corex.co.za

■ RRP

R 478

TEMPERATURE DROP: 6%

VALUE	CHILL FACTOR	NOISE
80	85	70

OVERALL

78



A PARANORMAL THRILLER
BY DAVID CAGE

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THERMALTAKE BEETLE

[Intel and AMD compatible]

The Beetle is a very innovative and strange looking cooler. It resembles a beetle which is where it got its name from. The Beetle features a copper base and has six copper heat pipes which run into its aluminium heatsink fins. This cooler is compatible with Intel's Socket 775, Socket 478, as well as AMD's Socket 939. Bundled with the kit is a fan speed controller which fits into an open floppy drive bay, allowing for easy access to control the fan speed. The installation process for this cooler is complex due to its size and it is difficult to remove as well. On the front of the Beetle's fan is a colour changing LED, and built into the plastic body are two more blue LEDs. Sadly though, when turned on high, the ThermalTake Beetle makes a lot of noise and its high retail price will not make it a great seller.



VITAL INFO

■ Plus

Looks different

■ Minus

Price

■ Supplier

Corex [011] 707-5000

■ Internet

www.corex.co.za

■ RRP

R 600

TEMPERATURE DROP: 4%

VALUE	CHILL FACTOR	NOISE
70	80	70

OVERALL

73

THERMALTAKE POLO 735 REV.2

[Intel and AMD compatible]

The ThermalTake Polo 735 Rev.2 is another fairly plain looking CPU cooler, but it is pretty powerful in terms of cooling capabilities. This cooler is compatible with AMD's Socket 939 as well as Intel's Socket 775 and Socket 478. The cooler features a very simple installation process across all of its supported platforms. Bundled with the cooler are two fan controllers, one for back and one for front mounting, although only one can be used at a time. The bundled kit also includes a thermal probe which will allow the fan to automatically adjust the fan speed based on the temperature of the CPU. The heatsink is made entirely from copper and features an 80mm fan which cools the copper fins. Even though this cooler does a great job in cooling the CPU, it is also very noisy when the fan is turned on high.



VITAL INFO

■ Plus

Efficient cooling;

Price

■ Minus

Very loud

■ Supplier

Corex [011] 707-5000

■ Internet

www.corex.co.za

■ RRP

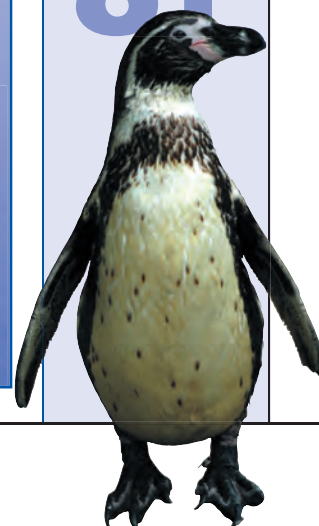
R 260

TEMPERATURE DROP: 6%

VALUE	CHILL FACTOR	NOISE
90	85	70

OVERALL

81



Tenor

Home Theatre PC!



- Tenor Home Theatre Chassis
 - ASUS (I955X) P5WD2 Premium motherboard & ATX PSII PSU (Wireless, and TV-out)
 - Supports Intel LGA 775 Processor (Dual Core)
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GAME MAKER

THE IDEA OF A South African game development community has always been thrown around in gaming circles, mostly in the same tone of voice as pink elephants and the Loch Ness monster. Those of us who are old enough to remember Celestial still speak of them in hallowed tones, whilst the new generations of gamers look to I-Imagine for inspiration. Few still remember the legendary Denthor and his famous tuts, but everyone agrees that there simply aren't enough local games.

We will start off with Game Maker 6.1, an excellent tool that you can grab off this month's cover DVD or download from www.gamemaker.nl. Game Maker makes it a lot easier to build a game, especially for new people who might not know how to program. No more battling with obscure code or confusing languages.

Surprisingly enough, Game Maker is also useful for experienced coders: It gives you access to a fully featured engine that can display hundreds of sprites at the same time, with full animation, transparency, motion, collision detection, scaling, sound and input handling. The registered version adds even more functionality: networking, rotations, advanced collision functions, extensibility via DLLs and more... It would take a dedicated programmer upwards of six months to build an engine with even half the functionality that GM allows people to use for free.

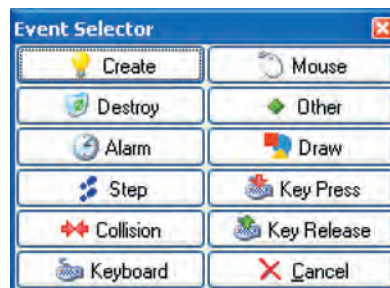
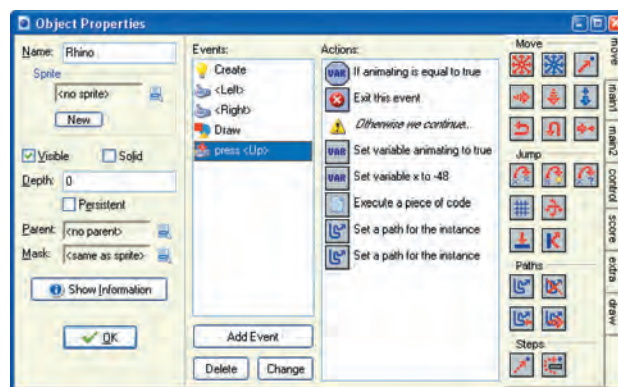
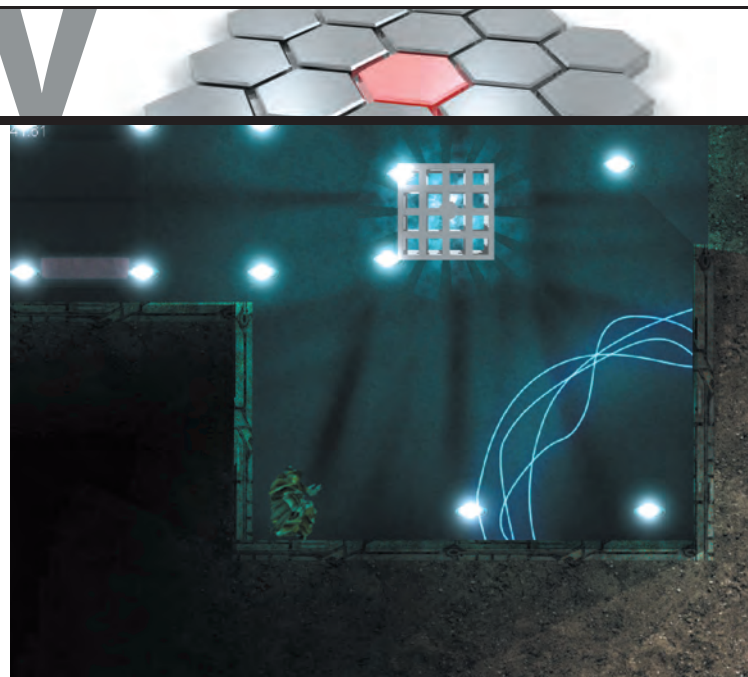
A brief introduction to Game Maker:

GAME MAKER WORKS ON the basic principle that a game consists of objects that react to events. You, the developer, can specify what actions the objects you create should perform when one of their events gets triggered.

OBJECTS: Objects in GM have some standard attributes to make it easy to use them. The most important is the object's *Sprite*, this is what your object will look like in the game. Sprites are loaded as resources in GM and you can select which sprite you want your object to use via a drop-down menu. If you leave an object with <no sprite>, it has nothing to draw and doesn't affect the game. This is similar to un-checking the *visible* properties, invisible objects are great for when you need an object to control something but affect the game. An object can be marked *Solid* if you want it to be impenetrable by other objects and you're sure it's not going to move. This is great for terrain or platform objects.

The Depth of an object is the order that it gets drawn and processed in. If you have a terrain object that you want to be under everything else, give it a depth of 1,000. Interface objects that need to appear over other objects should get the shallower depths: 0 or even -10. Not only are objects drawn deepest to shallowest, but their events are processed that way too. If you have an important controller that's invisible but needs to move other objects around before anything else does, put it down deep.

Objects exist in *Rooms*. A *Room* in Game Maker can be an intro screen or an entire level. Think of them as ways to organise objects. You can position objects in the room editing view to make things look the way you want or you can create new objects on the fly as an action in the game. Marking an object



Game maker's object properties and event selector menus allow you to easily manipulate where and when action occurs in your games.

Great online resources

Game design:

www.Gamasutra.com; www.GameDev.net; www.IGDA.org

Sprites and art:

www.gamemaker.nl/resource.html

Sounds and music:

www.flashkit.com; www.freeplaymusic.com

Forums:

www.nag.co.za/community/index.php?board=2.0
forums.gamemaker.nl; forums.indiegamer.com

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as *Persistent* means that it will only be created once and won't be destroyed when you exit the room it's in - great for an inventory or character in an RPG.

The last two properties are *Parent* and *Mask*. An object's *Parent* can be used to inherit events and for collision purposes. If you want a character to collide with a *Floor* object, but want lots of different looks for the floors in your game, create an object called *Floor* and set it as the parent of anything else you want your character to be able to treat as a floor. The *Mask* for an object is the sprite it uses to collide with. This means you can make an object look a certain way, but collide differently - useful in isometric games and menus. The default is <same as sprite>.

EVENTS: The events list is extensive and has been added to over the years to try and make it as comprehensive as possible. The *Keyboard*, *Mouse*, *Key Press* and *Key Release* events all expand to let you select which key or mouse button they respond to (each different button becomes a new event on your object). The *Mouse* event also allows you to choose between global clicks, clicks on the specific object (the default) and mouse entry and exit events.

The *Step* event is executed every game step, i.e. every frame. This gives you a place to activate actions that you want to be continuous. *Collision* events need you to specify which object to collide with. The collision testing is handled for you and the event is only triggered when a collision takes place. *Alarms* are useful timers that can be set to go off after a certain number of frames - great for reloading or other delayed actions. Game Maker gives you 12 alarms to do as you please. *Create* and *Destroy* should be self-explanatory. The *Draw* event is only there if you want to change how Game Maker draws your object, so if you don't want to do something special, don't worry about it. Finally, the *Other* events provide all sorts of interesting extra functionality like end of animation events, outside screen events and even 16 user events that you can use for whatever you like.

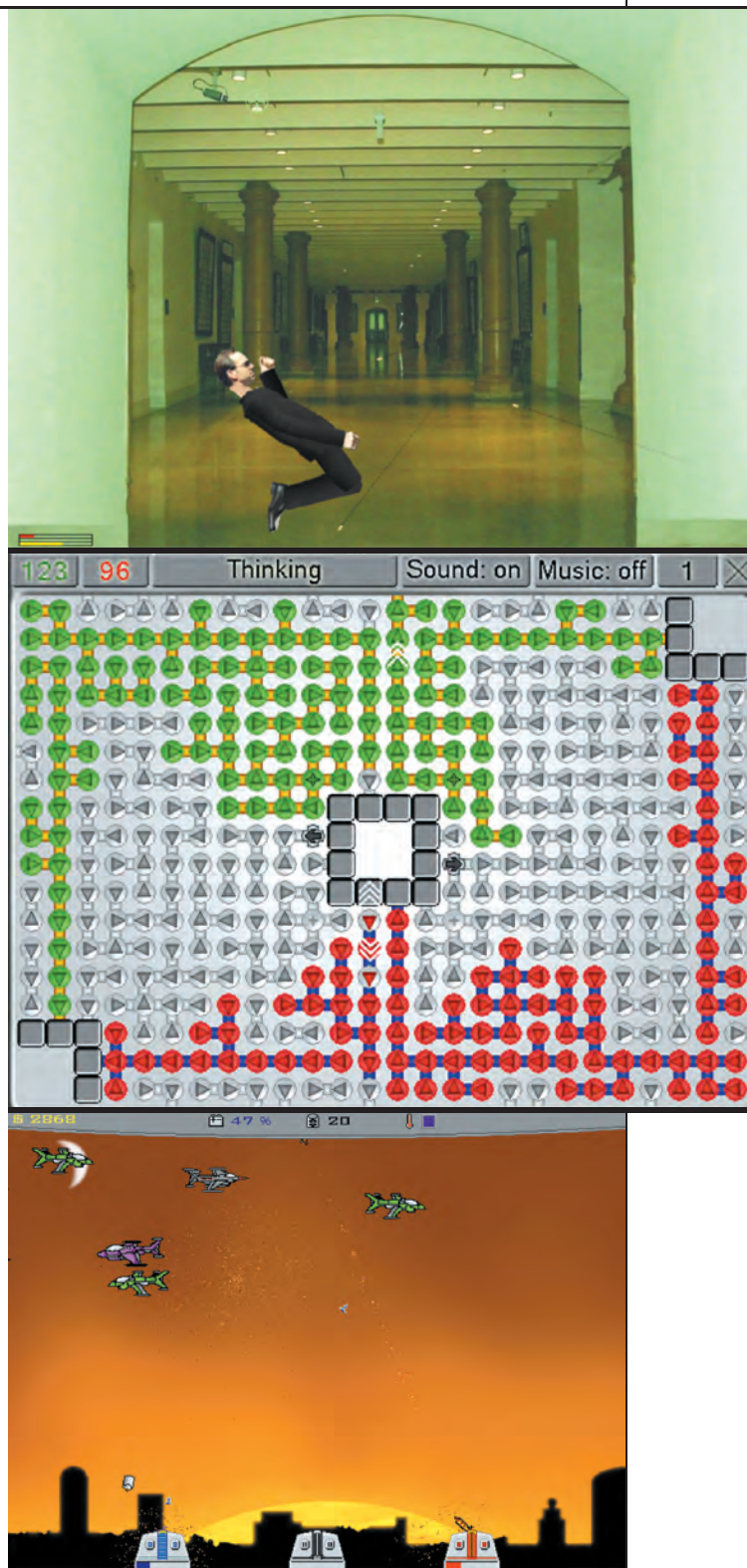
ACTIONS: Events say when something happens. Actions do the happening. Actions are separated into tabbed lists on the right of the object. There are too many actions to cover in a brief overview, but the tabs where you'll spend most of your time are: *Move* for motions, positioning, bouncing and paths; *Main 1* for instance creation, sprite settings and room changing; *Main 2* for timing and save/load; and finally *Control* for conditional logic (ifs) and the omnipotent script and variable actions. New tabs can even be added by installing user-made action libraries. There are several networking libs for example.

While the actions are powerful, the scripting possible in GM is where the real oomph lies. Game Maker Language (GML) can be written in C, Pascal or even almost-BASIC syntax and it's possible to interchange between them on the fly. If that sounds complex, don't worry, people find themselves naturally and easily moving on to scripting when their games get a bit more complex. GML is the best programming teaching tool we've ever seen.

Help!

THE DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED WITH Game Maker is excellent and very easy to use. We can't emphasize how useful the help can be. Often a simple search is enough to solve most problems once you're familiar with how Game Maker is structured. There's also a full listing of all the GML functions and variables, which is more extensive and powerful than you'd expect for a "simple" scripting language.

Hopefully by now you're itching to install Game Maker off the DVD. Head over to www.gamemaker.nl/tutorial.html and get started! **NAG**



Game.Dev Forum

IF YOU NEED HELP or ideas, the www.nag.co.za Game.Dev forum is there to answer your questions and provide support. The forums host competitions, group projects, game showcases, design discussions and more.

July's Comp 03 focused on remakes of fun older games and received 15 entries. There were some really innovative conglomerations, funny ideas and even an entry by our youngest game dev ever: 9-year-old Loreley "StoneFairy" Cairns.

First place was awarded to forum regular Ch1ppit's National Defense, a polished descendant of *Missile Command* that can be found on the cover DVD. Give it a play!

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LAZY GAMER'S GUIDE

SONY HD5 MP3 WALKMAN

SONY CERTAINLY TOOK ITS time getting onto the MP3 bandwagon. It was, after all, the company that brought mobile music to the masses with the original Walkman. But the MP3 Walkman is finally here, gunning straight for Apple, Creative and iRiver's territory. Does it make the grade?

Supplied by: Sony [011] 690-3555

Internet: www.sony.co.za

RRP: R 2 699

The Player

The 20GB Walkman comes in several colour options and has its own software suite to handle your music (but it can't sort by folder). Along with the software is Gracenote's CDDB software, making tagging and sorting collections a lot easier. Apart from playing music, you can also use the player as a mobile hard drive, since it shows up as an external hard drive when connected to a PC running Windows XP. Unfortunately you can't change the music on the player without the supplied software. The player has had a visual redesign and the interface is obviously inspired by the iPod. The battery life is quite impressive: the packaging boasts 30 hours, we got at least 20.



Get connected

The Network Walkman connects via USB and supports USB 2.0. It can be used on PCs (Windows and Linux) and Macs. It also charges via USB. Apart from this, the package has a battery, headphones and an iffy protection pouch. The software used, SonicStage, will work with most players and is one of the better music managers around; though obviously, direct access to the play lists would have been ideal. The Walkman can play MP3, WMA and WAV files (it has no Ogg Vorbis or AAC support).



The original Walkman

The original Walkman was first sold in 1979 by Sony and was created by Masaru Ibuka, Kozo Ohsonoe and Akio Morita, who also thought of the name. The player sold more than 330 million units and was released under several names, including the Stowaway and Freestyle. To promote it, Sony tapped into the jogging craze of the 80s and the player even got some pop culture reference to it, such as Cliff Richard's 'Wired For Sound'. The Walkman line turned towards MP3s in 2001 after growing competition from Apple's iPod.

5 REASONS TO GET THE NEXT ISSUE OF SA COMPUTER MAGAZINE



5 digital handheld video cameras tested

500 watt Antec PSU powered up

5x4 software applications you simply can't be without

5-star rating: IBM X3 server

5-year-old hi-tech kids — good or bad?

TAKE ME HIGHER

We spent an entire week recording every conceivable still and moving image we came across using Sony's new High Definition camcorder. We like.

Breaking news: ICASA goes to war with Telkom over broadband

ON SALE 31 AUGUST 2005

AOI HOUSE: ADAM ARNOLD TALKS ABOUT YAOI FANGIRLS AND PANTIES



HOW FAR WILL YOU take your love for anime and manga? Start a fan site? Create an e-zine? Pioneer an online anime magazine? Launch an online manga series? Well, Adam Arnold (AA) did all of this and more.

What made you decide to write a manga story?

AA: It's just one of those things that I'd always wanted to do, but knew that it wouldn't be something that magically came about overnight. Sure, I wrote stories back when I was in school, but I just stopped one day in favour of more journalistic efforts. Eventually, I got into a position where I was performing rewrites on manga (a.k.a. English Adaptation) and found myself with ideas for my own series. It just took the right company believing in me before my story became a reality.

Tell us a bit about the Aoi House.

AA: Two straight guys and an anime club full of crazed, oversexed yaoi fan girls. That's the basic concept in a nutshell, but there is a lot more going on than first meets the eye. Alex and Sandy don't know the girls are into yaoi and the girls just assume they are. So, the first chapter is all about the girls welcoming the guys in and then everything goes to hell. Throw in Sandy's panty snatching hamster, Echiboo, and you've got a harem comedy like no other.

How do you come up with ideas for the storyline?

AA: Some of the club activities come from my own personal experiences over the years, but most of the fan service is just me trying to put the characters through the ringer. I also often call upon the vast array of arcane random knowledge I've collected over the years in order to do homage and references. Shiei, Aoi House's artist, has also picked up on this and made an active attempt to toss in her own references as well.

Strangely enough, my fixation with panties in the story has actually earned me the unofficial title of 'Panty Boi'. I haven't had anyone come up to me and ask me to sign their panties yet, but I'm sure that day will come soon enough.

Do you have any manga or anime that inspires you?

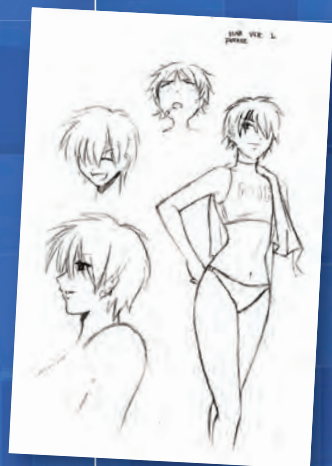
AA: I tend to get ideas from all over and not really from any set series. I've got this massive collection of stuff that I've seen and read. So, in my mind it all has, in some small way, inspired me. Since Aoi House is a story about fans, I can really just go wild with it, but I also try to use references that make sense for the story.

You are also the editor of Animefringe. How did this magazine/Website come about?

AA: I had an entertainment Webzine back in 1998 called Digested Digest and I took on a columnist named Steve Diabo, whom I had met through CompuServe's Anime/Manga Forum the previous year. We changed the name of the Webzine to Weekly Stuff E-Zine and put out twenty-nine weeks worth of issues before stopping. We both had some fan sites we were running and decided to do our own anime site, but we eventually realised we wanted something unique. So on 1 January 2000, we launched Animefringe: Online Anime Magazine (www.animefringe.com) as a fully-fledged monthly anime Web magazine and have been going strong for over six years now.

Where did your love for anime and manga start?

AA: With 'Sailor Moon'. I grew up with 'Voltron' and pretty much every other 80s show, but I never really knew what anime was until The Sci-Fi Channel started their yearly Anime Fest. It was 'Sailor Moon' and its ever-evolving storyline that made me a fan. I actually have a shrine in my room dedicated





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to some of the 'Sailor Moon' merchandise I've collected, which includes dolls, plushies, wands, a watch, a shampoo bottle, lip balm, make-up mirror and even an unworn children's shoe that one of my friends gave me back in high school!

My love for 'Sailor Moon' lead me to Tenchi Muyo and then to anime and manga of all kinds and I've never looked back!

How much is Aoi House's creation influenced by your Western values and sense of humour?

AA: I never really thought about it before. The humour is a mix of slapstick, fan service and visual and textual references. So, it's really just this amalgamation of everything.

My own sense of humour had always been pretty dry, but I could always make people laugh. I didn't realise I could actually write humour until I started doing rewrites and had to make an effort to make jokes that were lost in translation funny again. For some reason, editors keep giving me work. So I guess I must be doing something right!

Who thought of creating a theme song for Aoi House?

AA: That would be my editor, Jason DeAngelis. Two of the guys on our production team are a part of the J Brothers, which is a huge platinum record selling group from the Philippines, so we suggested the idea of doing a theme song one day and they ran with it. We currently have three versions of the theme song online: a gal version with vocals by Tin Tin and performed by the J Brothers, a guy version also performed by the J Brothers, but with vocals by Jay Jimenez, and an instrumental version.

If you have to recommend five must see anime, which ones would it be?

AA: Oh gosh, that's hard. I tend to ask people if they prefer action or comedy and then go from there. But since you've put me on the spot, I'll start with 'Neon Genesis Evangelion' since it's guaranteed to make you think and 'Cowboy Bebop' because each episode is so stylised and unique. Those two are pretty standard responses, but I'd follow them with 'Otaku no Video' as it's the first true look at what it means to be a hardcore fan. 'Comic Party' and 'Genshiken' both have a lot to owe to Gainax's



classic two-part OVA 'mockumentary' and it's best to see the original before moving on to the more recent shows.

This next one is a tough call, but I'll have to say the original 'Oh My Goddess!' five-episode OVA series for the simple fact that it's one of the few anime I ever showed my mom years ago that she absolutely adored.

Finally, I'd have to say 'Azumanga Daioh' as you just feel good after watching the episodes. The show follows a group of friends from their first day of high school all the way through graduation. It's also self-contained enough for anyone to just pick up an episode and just enjoy it.

Do you have any future plans with Aoi House?

AA: Our first big goal is getting volume one out in print and we're definitely shooting for an early spring 2006 release for that. The series definitely has a fan following and getting the series out in print is definitely going to be a milestone that they wouldn't want to miss.

As for the long term, I've got the series planned through the third volume. Since it's got so many unique characters, the concept can really take me anywhere after that. I have an idea of where I want to go in the long run, but it's just a matter of getting there and fan support has a lot to do with that. **NAG**

Aoi House can be found online at www.gomanga.com



STAGE

FASHIONABLY LATE MUSIC!

A central collage of pop culture references. At the top right is a blue skateboard. Below it is a dinosaur. To the left is a boombox with a person on top. In the center is a video game screen showing a character and the text 'CALL THEM', 'NEXT STAGE', and 'ART'. To the right is a magazine cover with the text 'NEW MUSIC MOVIES CLASSIC REVIEWS ART INTERESTING PEOPLE'. Below the magazine is a video game screen showing a character and the text 'File Action Special Speed', 'Inventory <TAB>', 'See Object', 'Brand new look!', 'Each issue includes:', '20 Track CD', 'Poster', 'Plenty of give aways', 'The latest in local and international music'. To the right of the video game screen is a speech bubble saying 'Stage is the greatest thing since polyester suits!'. Below the video game screen is the text 'AND WHATEVER BLOWS YOUR HAIR BACK'.

CALL THEM

NEXT STAGE

NEW MUSIC MOVIES CLASSIC REVIEWS ART INTERESTING PEOPLE

File Action Special Speed

Inventory <TAB>

See Object

Brand new look!

Each issue includes:

- > 20 Track CD
- > Poster
- > Plenty of give aways
- > The latest in local and international music

AND WHATEVER BLOWS YOUR HAIR BACK

Stage is the greatest thing since polyester suits!

September/October issue of Stage magazine out now!

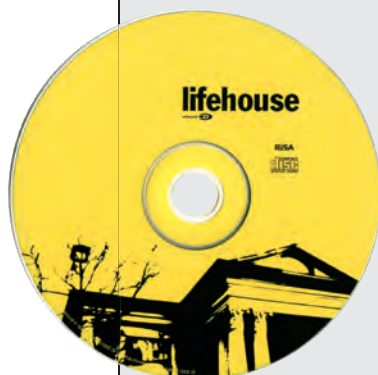


Music CD Review:

Lifehouse

LIFEHOUSE'S SOUND AND STYLE is described by some as a mix between spiritually slanted modern rock and adult alternative rock. The band's style and sound is thus a hybrid of the aforementioned. One could sit and argue for hours, over a few beers naturally, what spiritually slanted rock and adult alternative rock have in common, and still not come to a conclusion. But who cares anyway?

The CD contains some really good tracks and excellent vocals, courtesy of Jason Wade. The CD features thirteen tracks with the most memorable being 'You And Me', 'Come Back Down' and 'Blind' also need to be mentioned. Unfortunately, after that, all the other tracks sound too familiar and not even Wade's excellent voice and guitar playing skills can save the album. This album will appeal to Lifehouse fans, people looking for a sort of 'Live' sound-alike and obviously, girls who think the band members are gorgeous (which, by the way, they aren't). If you're into mellow spiritually slanted rock, then this album is definitely for you.



Music DVD Review:

Bigg Snoop Dogg's Puff Puff Pass Tour

A GREEN STICKER ON THE cover of the DVD jewel case states (or does it warn?) that the DVD, contained within, is an uncensored journey into the world of Snoop Dogg. It further states that on stage, off stage, back stage and any stage, all the decadence and debauchery you have never seen before will be revealed once you watch the DVD.

The DVD features twenty-seven chapters and covers, among others, 'Snoops advice to young rappers', the 'New Orleans Concert' (featuring hits such as 'Murda Was The Case', 'The Next Episode' and 'Gin & Juice'), 'Snoop's Music Appeal', 'Birth of a Hip-Hop Dynasty', 'What do you like to smoke' and 'Who Am I (What's my name)'. While it's an average to mediocre DVD, it would appeal to Snoop's die-hard fans.

books

Battlefield 2: Prima's Official Game Guide

by: David Knight, Michael Knight

Price: R 238.95

Supplied by: Kalahari.net | www.kalahari.net

PRIMA'S STRATEGY GUIDES ARE *the* resource for any gamer wanting a deeper insight into a game. The 176 page glossy Battlefield 2 guide provides loads of tips, tricks, and strategies, which is just what is needed if you want to up your game in Battlefield 2. The various sections cover everything from basic movement to detailed information about each infantry unit, vehicle, weapon, and map. Even though we have been playing Battlefield 2 since its Beta release, there are still many things that this guide

taught us. Probably the most useful part of this strategy guide is the immense detail of the map section. Here you will find out about every part of each map as well as strategies for each faction and an in-depth rundown of the bases and control points for each of the map sizes (16, 32, and 64 players). At the back of the guide is a rundown of each of the medals you are able to get awarded and a firearm comparison guide. It really is a pity that this guide does what the game manual is supposed to do, but it is a great read if you play the game and it is a must-have accessory if you are a die-hard Battlefield 2 fanatic.



GTA: San Andreas Guide

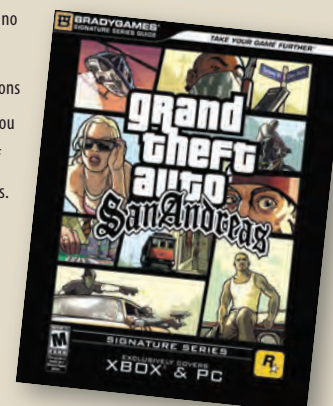
by: Bradygames

Price: R 115.95

Supplied by: Pearson Education [021] 532 6000 | www.bradygames.com

IF YOU ALREADY OWN the PS2 guide, there's no reason to get this one. In fact, it's the same book – or we just failed to spot any new additions in terms of the Xbox and PC. It's exactly what you need if you want to get all there is to get out of San Andreas. It also still has the same problems. The stats system is not explained at all (which would be very useful) and it would have been nice to have more tips and tricks (such as how to spot crack dealers, since they tend to have a lot of cash on them).

Still, despite some wanting features, you can't do better than this and the content will keep you occupied for a long time. It's a pity the different chapters hadn't been arranged in a better order, but we're just being pedantic here. Get the guide if you are a serious San Andreas player. It's a high-quality piece of work, complete with an extra map for all the jobs and special locations.



books

Brilliant Photoshop CS

by: Andy Anderson, Steve Johnson

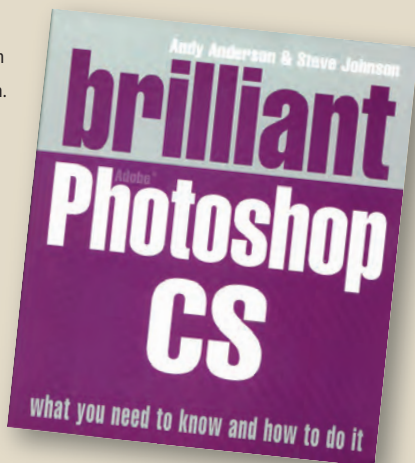
Price: R 229.95 for the series

Supplied by: Pearson Education [021] 532 6000 | www.pearsoned.co.za

THERE ARE THREE TYPES of books usually available on a computer subject or program. The first type is often referred to as a 'reference manual', containing just the facts. The second is the 'hold my hand' type, which leads you painstakingly through every minute detail. The last, is the 'school textbook' type, often suited for teaching a class on the subject or program.

This book is the third type. Covering a 'what you need to know' spectrum with a decent amount of detail and visual referencing, it functions perfectly as an aid to any lecturer wishing to teach Photoshop CS. If you are already familiar with Photoshop CS and want a refresher, this is also a good book for that. Newcomers to the program may feel a little daunted, but the book does a decent enough job of bringing the novice up to speed, although it would work best in conjunction with a person who can answer questions.

Overall, Brilliant has added a quality book to the 'learn something' range at a very respectable price. Two other books complete this series – Brilliant Windows XP and Brilliant Office 2003.



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Knight Rider Online

<http://knightrideronline.com/>

KNIGHT RIDER ONLINE recently celebrated its tenth year. Ten years on a show that aired in the eighties? Clearly daily news isn't a frequent feature, but this is everything you'd ever want to know about the show, the car, the man and that catchy theme tune. It's also got lots of David Hasselhoff news, in case you haven't heard enough of him yet.



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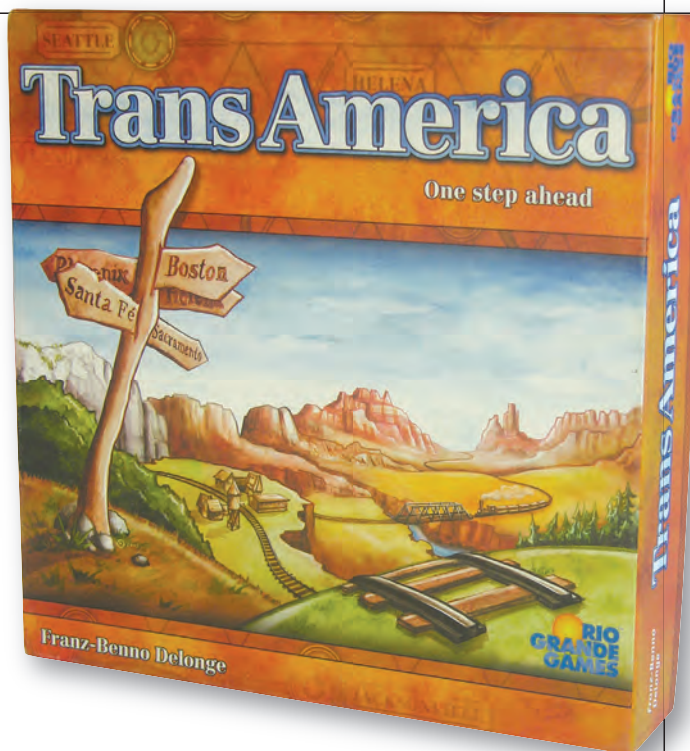
TransAmerica

Price: R 269 | www.boardgames.co.za

TRANSAMERICA IS A STUNNING little Euro-game - very light on rules, with a depth to the gameplay that will come as a surprise to many board gamers. The principle behind the game is simple. Connect five cities across America - one in each of five zones. The first player to complete a route to all five cities is the winner of a round, with rounds running until a win is achieved. During a turn one can lay down tracks - either two on flat terrain, or one when building a bridge or a tunnel. The game ends when a player finishes laying tracks to all five of his or her cities.

Tactics come into play as one can link up with other players' rail networks, automatically allowing access to all of the cities linked by that network. The converse is also true in that other players now gain access to your rail network. As you don't know the cities that your opponents have to link to, you may be giving them a helping hand by connecting to their networks.

The game comes in a small box with a diamond-grid board that folds out showing a map of the US, divided into five major colour-coded sections. City cards are included, six locomotives, starting location markers and 85 black rails, representing the railroad tracks, round out the content. The 'rule book' is the thinnest yet seen - a single square of paper the size of the box.



If you like a game that is quick to play - 30 minutes for a typical game - that has a depth to it that belies its light rule set and is a lot of fun, take a look at TransAmerica.

Evo

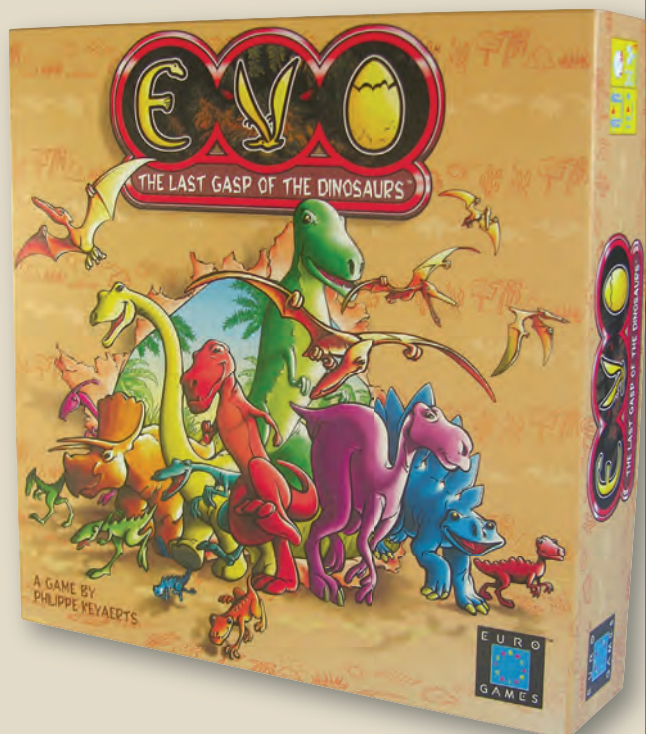
Price: R 400 | www.boardgames.co.za

CONSIDER THE PLIGHT of the dinosaur. Evolving in a changing world until one day its existence is ended when a giant comet screams from the sky. If this grabs your attention, take a look at Evo; a light-hearted, fun game with very interesting mechanics, aimed at keeping three to five players amused.

Each player takes on the role of a group of dinosaurs trying to survive and evolve on an island. The size of the island is dictated by the number of players and is divided into separate zones. During gameplay the zones change as the climate changes, with temperate zones becoming hotter or colder. In extreme situations of heat or cold a dinosaur will perish, unless protected against the elements, or being able to move to less extreme zones.

Players take turns in bidding - using mutation points earned during the game - for genes that will allow them to obtain from additional legs (allowing them to move faster) to extra horns (aiding in battle) or even fur to keep their dinosaurs warm during cold spells. When different dinosaurs meet in the same space (often forced together through circumstance as the survivable areas diminish) they fight it out with the winner surviving in the zone.

Evo combines some bidding - a pinch of luck and lots of strategy into a fun game that takes on average an hour to play. Do not dismiss it as a



children's game due to the cartoon-like, colourful drawings on the box - Evo brings out the competitor in everybody, as each person fights for the survival of his species.

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GAME OVER

BADGER HUNT

EACH MONTH WE CHOOSE a cunning hiding place in the magazine for our badger friend [this might be in a screenshot, on a piece of artwork, the cover or anywhere really]. Your job is to find him and let us know you have! We'll announce a random winner each month, but we don't have a sponsor for this competition yet. So all you'll get for your effort is a pat on the back and your name up in lights. Send your badger spotting to this address [ed@nag.co.za] with the subject line [September Badger].

The incredible amazing disappearing Badger

Okay. Here's the thing – we didn't put the badger in the last issue of NAG. A simple screw up [technical explanation – the Editor forgot to update the image because he usually does this last and was in a flap last month] that has various implications, the most serious of which is that you're totally disgusted that we did this and vow never to look for him again. However, to prevent this kind of stupidity from happening in the future we've put a double layered checking mechanism in place, so happy hunting this month. It'll take time for the pain to heal but at least we didn't use one of the entries we did actually get and try pawn off some indistinct white blob as the badger citing printer reproduction errors as the reason why he's so tiny and impossible to see clearly. Forgive us?



CAPTION OF THE MONTH

EVERY MONTH we'll choose a boring, odd or peculiar screenshot from any random game and write a bad caption for it. Your job is to come up with a better [funny] caption. The winner will get a free game from Vivendi Universal Games. Send your captions to [ed@nag.co.za] with the subject [September Caption].

RULES: (1) If you don't use the correct subject line, your mail will be automatically filtered by our spam software and deleted. (2) If you think sending in 20 captions for the same screenshot is how you want to play the system, then put them all in the same mail or we'll keep the top one and delete the rest. You probably won't win anyway because you can't follow simple instructions. And people who can't follow simple instructions don't deserve to win things.

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September contest
NAG's LAME ATTEMPT:
"Aren't giant green boogers supposed to come out your nose?"



August Winner

"Red Leader, we got a bogey coming in at 12 o'clock, over." - Krishin Pillay



NAG

NAG is not available in large format print, brail or on audio tape.

publisher
replay itv media (pty) ltd

editor
michael james
ed@nag.co.za
+27 83 409 8220

assistant editor
lauren das neves
lauren@nag.co.za

features editor
james francis
james@nag.co.za

senior technical writer
regardt van der berg
regardt@nag.co.za

staff writer
miktat dracon

copy editor
nati de jager

advertising sales
len nery | len@nag.co.za
+27 84 594 9909
jacqui jacobs | jacqui@nag.co.za
+27 82 778 8439
dave gore | dave@nag.co.za
+27 82 829 1392
gustav andor | 2005@stage.co.za
+27 21 421 4467

art director
chris bistline

designer
kirsten alcock

assistant to editor
cheryl basset

office assistant
paul ndebele

contributors
adam liebman
alan kent
alex jelagin
andrew stephens
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