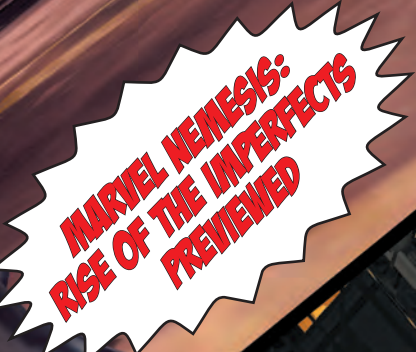


# NAG

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**PC** **XBOX** **GAMECUBE** **GBA** **DS** **MOBILE** **PSP** **PLAYSTATION 2**

- MATRIX ONLINE:** WE CALL NEO <<
- HELLGATE: LONDON - MIND THE GAT** <<
- GHOST RECON 3** PREVIEWED <<
- TOTAL OVERDOSE** 'WITH REAL MEXICAN INSIDE' <<
- 3 PSP** GAMES REVIEWED <<
- FANTASTIC 4!** WHAT'S SO FANTASTIC ABOUT THEM? <<
- 7 SLI 7800 GTX CARDS** POWER PUMPED <<
- WE LOOK AT THE **VIEWSONIC VX925 19" LCD** <<
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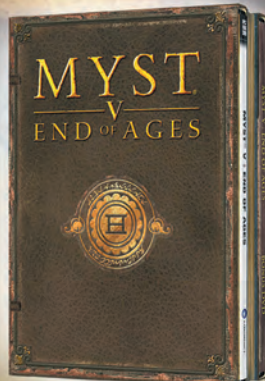
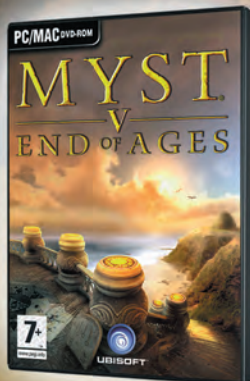


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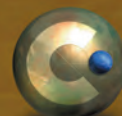
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### PATCHES

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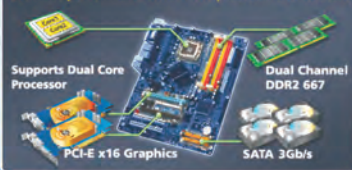
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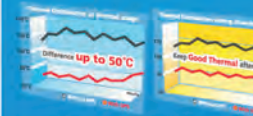
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# ED'S NOTE

## What we do while everyone else is sleeping

THE PUBLISHING COMPANY THAT puts NAG together is the same one that does SA Computer Magazine

[SACM]. Many of the NAG staff work on SACM. In fact, you can think of it as a more in-depth version of all the IT/hardware things NAG is often accused of glossing over in our pursuit of gaming nirvana. This is an editorial message to get you to pick up a copy, give it a read and let us know what you think.

The latest issue features an in-depth article on Google [shiny cover included] – that's everything you need to know about Google, but couldn't use it to find out for yourself. We also have a roundup of multimedia leisure cellphones and an interesting feature on overclocking your CPU – you know, one of those smart 'everything you need to know but were too scared to risk popping a R2,000 processor yourself' articles. Expand that stunted gaming brain of yours a little and go get a copy of SACM.

THEN TO ADD EVEN more pressure to the office setup, we signed a deal to provide content to The Citizen newspaper. NAG and SACM supply all the content for the CitEdge supplement that can be found inside every Thursday edition of The Citizen. We got tired of those other so-called experts reporting incorrect facts about the more fun side of the technology tree in the mainstream media and decided to do something about it. What this really means is more informed gaming and technology news in the mainstream media and that's a good thing for everyone.

## The Citizen

### COVER STORY

"YOU KNOW WHAT WOULD be cool..." These words can be extremely tiresome when used by someone who has no concept of the work involved in getting 'it' to be 'cool'. In this case, the cover of NAG is the 'it' and the tiresome someone is me. However, I'm well aware of the work involved in putting together a decent looking cover, so I can't be pigeonholed like the 'someone' described above. Instead, just think of me as that annoying billionaire who calls his assistant at midnight [from a yacht in the middle of the day on the other side of the world] asking for the name of that quaint seaside market where he can get those nifty massage sandals. Oops, hang on – getting carried away here in my own fantasy. No real story this month as you can tell from the padding above. I just thought it would look cool to make the cover of NAG look like a comic.

# WE'RE NOT A DUMB AS YOU THINK WE IS...

GAMERS ARE A MUCH more advanced version of the human creature than you might realise – think of us as human version 1.8 if you like. Just look around you, I'll refrain from using examples because that usually gets me into trouble – you just can't call a janitor a janitor anymore. Your parents are also in the same category, by the way, and should probably be grateful that their offspring has somehow managed to evolve [this is on a case by case basis]. I call them cabbages – no matter how many layers you peel away; it is cabbage all the way down. Consider the average barely conscious couch cabbage who watches television every night. Any entertainment will do, as Jerry Seinfeld says, "... a car blowing up, somebody naked, I don't care what it is..." In most cases it's possible to actually fall asleep while watching TV. But it's not all gloom and doom, this medium did bring us MTV, Star Trek and Lost after all, and sometimes you do get to prove how clever you are by answering the odd question on trivia shows and prove your superior intellect because you remembered a little high school geography and can name all Donald Duck's nephews.

Anyway, we'll look at an example like Battlefield 2 to prove just how much more evolved your average gamer is... and next month I'll tell you why we're actually the most sociable group of people in any neighbourhood, in any country.

Battlefield 2 goes a little something like this: there's an UAV overhead [that's Unmanned Aerial Vehicle for any cabbage reading this] lighting up enemy positions [top right], a text-based counter of who's killing who and with what [top left], a list of commands from your squad leader or commander [middle left], audio cues [both real voice (receiving and sending) and atmospheric], another language to decipher, how much ammunition you have left and your health, your proximity to the flag and which weapon you have selected and what its capabilities are. All of this information coming at you every

second and you haven't even taken a single step forward into the war zone yet. It's little wonder the rest of the world is getting left behind as we engage our brains every night instead of letting them rot in front of the moving picture box [a 'technology' that was invented over 75 years ago].

### Housekeeping

IT'S THAT TIME OF the year again, everyone holding back with their big guns to cash in on Xmas stupidity. I say we gamers should boycott Xmas buying altogether this year and only start spending our cash reserves in January – that'll show them! Then again, getting anyone to hold off buying items from the blockbuster line-up this year is going to be like trying to get cows to pole vault naked. So if the lack of game reviews is getting you down, take comfort in the knowledge that they're all going to be released during the same month forcing you to pick and choose instead of getting them all during the course of the year – these publishers are so dumb sometimes. You may also have noticed the increase in advertising last month and this month. Now instead of moaning and bitching as usual, remember these few things: we've increased the size of the magazine so we haven't dropped any content [it's just more spaced out], the industry is doing very well [good news for everyone], we're going to be increasing the size of NAG permanently because of all the support, so in effect you'll be getting more content in the future, and we're going to hike up the price for advertising in NAG, which means we'll be able to grow and grow and grow – you know, like those enemies in Dig Dug.

Michael James [Editor]



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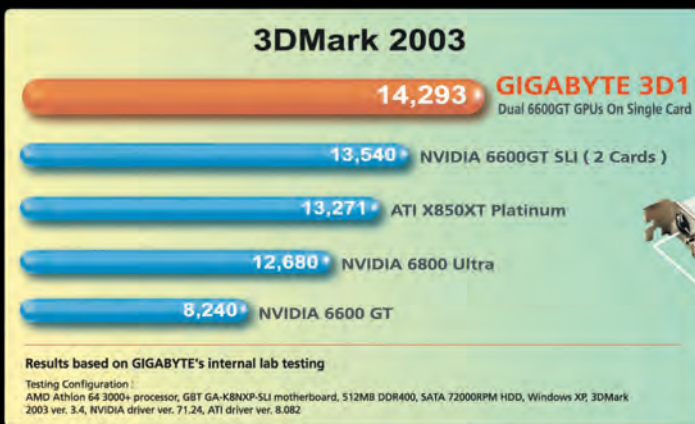


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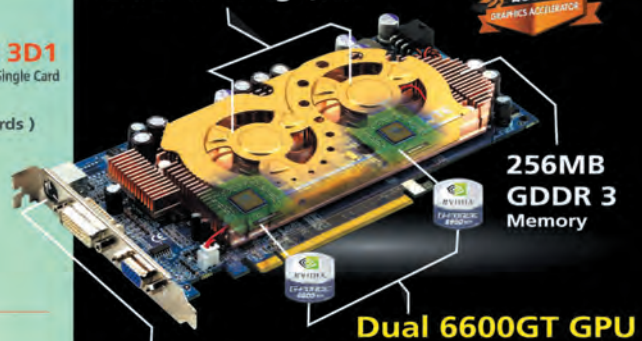
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# BYTES

## XBOX 360 COMING IN TWO MODELS

Microsoft has announced that its upcoming Xbox 360 will be available in two models. The standard Xbox 360 will feature a 20GB detachable hard drive, wireless controller, wireless Xbox Live headset, Ethernet cable, Remote Control, detachable faceplate and Xbox Live Silver membership. The trimmed-down Xbox 360 Core System will include a wired controller, and will lack the hard drive, headset, cables and remote control. It will, however, still be capable of being upgraded with any of these items, and the hard drive will be necessary if Xbox games are to be played on it. The system is still on schedule for release this holiday season, although no definite launch titles have yet been confirmed. Interestingly, Microsoft is not lowering pricing on the Xbox with the launch of the Xbox 360, milking it for all its worth.

### Microsoft will charge royalties for Xbox 360 peripherals

Well, here's a surprise. Microsoft will maintain tight control over Xbox 360 peripheral sales by incorporating a feature in the console that will deny unregistered hardware its functionality. Manufacturers of third-party accessories will have to register their products and pay a royalty on each unit sold. Microsoft's statement? This way, customers will be assured "the best experience possible".



## DS AND NINTENDOGS

**N**INTENDO DROPPED ITS RETAIL price for the DS handheld by 13%, in time for its American release of Nintendogs. It remains to be seen how effective and successful this will be. Previously, in Japan, the handheld sold more units than the PlayStation 2 and PSP combined in the month of the game's release, which

itself sold over 700,000 copies! The game is something of an advanced Tamagatchi, being a pet simulator, and is available in three versions, each featuring six breeds of dog. The microphone is used to issue verbal commands, while the touch-screen allows users to pet their virtual pooches.

## PSP TO GAIN NEW COMMUNICATION CAPABILITIES

It seems that Sony is contemplating adding e-mail functionality to the PSP, but implemented in a way to allow voice and video messaging. This implies that microphone and camera accessories are on the cards for the handheld. Other new capabilities, that are planned, include support for streaming video off the Internet without having to download the content to Memory Stick first.





### STAR WARS GALAXIES DEBACLE

Recently, Sony Online Entertainment released an update to Star Wars Galaxies, dubbed Publish 22. The patch changed the way experience was calculated and displayed. The game's community responded in uproar, with a forum thread of over 300 pages and 7,500 posts. The company has since restored the way experience is calculated.



### MGS3: SUBSISTENCE

Konami will be releasing Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence for the PlayStation 2 in time for this holiday season. This new release expands on MGS3: Snake Eater with new single and multiplayer modes. Multiplayer will include death match, team death match, sneaking mission, capture mission and rescue mission, while the single-player is enhanced with a third-person camera option that offers better vision, and a boss-match mode allowing players who have finished the game to duel with any of the game's bosses. The package will also include the first two Metal Gear games.

### FIFA 2006 COVER ATHLETES

FIFA 2006 from Electronic Arts, to be released for PC, PlayStation 2, GameCube, Game Boy Advance, Xbox and PlayStation Portable later this year, features the collaboration of Ronaldinho from Brazil and Wayne Rooney from the UK. Both players have previously been involved in the franchise.



### PC GAMES HERE TO STAY

Although in the local context the PC is still king of the gaming hill, many in Europe and the US have been wondering about its prospects, given the market strength of console gaming systems in those territories. However, Bill Roper, formerly of Blizzard and now president of Flagship Studios, as well as other figures in the industry, recently spoke out at the Games Convention Developer Conference, stating that the PC is at the heart of online gaming, which is increasingly becoming a major force. So fear not – PC games will not dry up any time soon!

# PlayStation 2

## TOP TWENTY



1. Tekken 5



2. GT4



3. Resident Evil Outbreak File 2



4. God Of War



5. Brian Lara Cricket 2005



6. Fantastic 4



7. Destroy All Humans



8. Charlie & the Choc Factory



9. F1 05



10. Killer 7



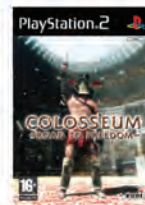
11. Metal Gear Solid 3



12. SingStar Pop



13. Worms 4: Mayhem



14. Colosseum



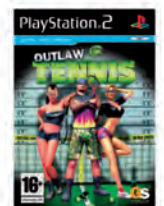
15. Area 51



16. Brave



17. Scooby Doo Unmasked



18. Outlaw Tennis

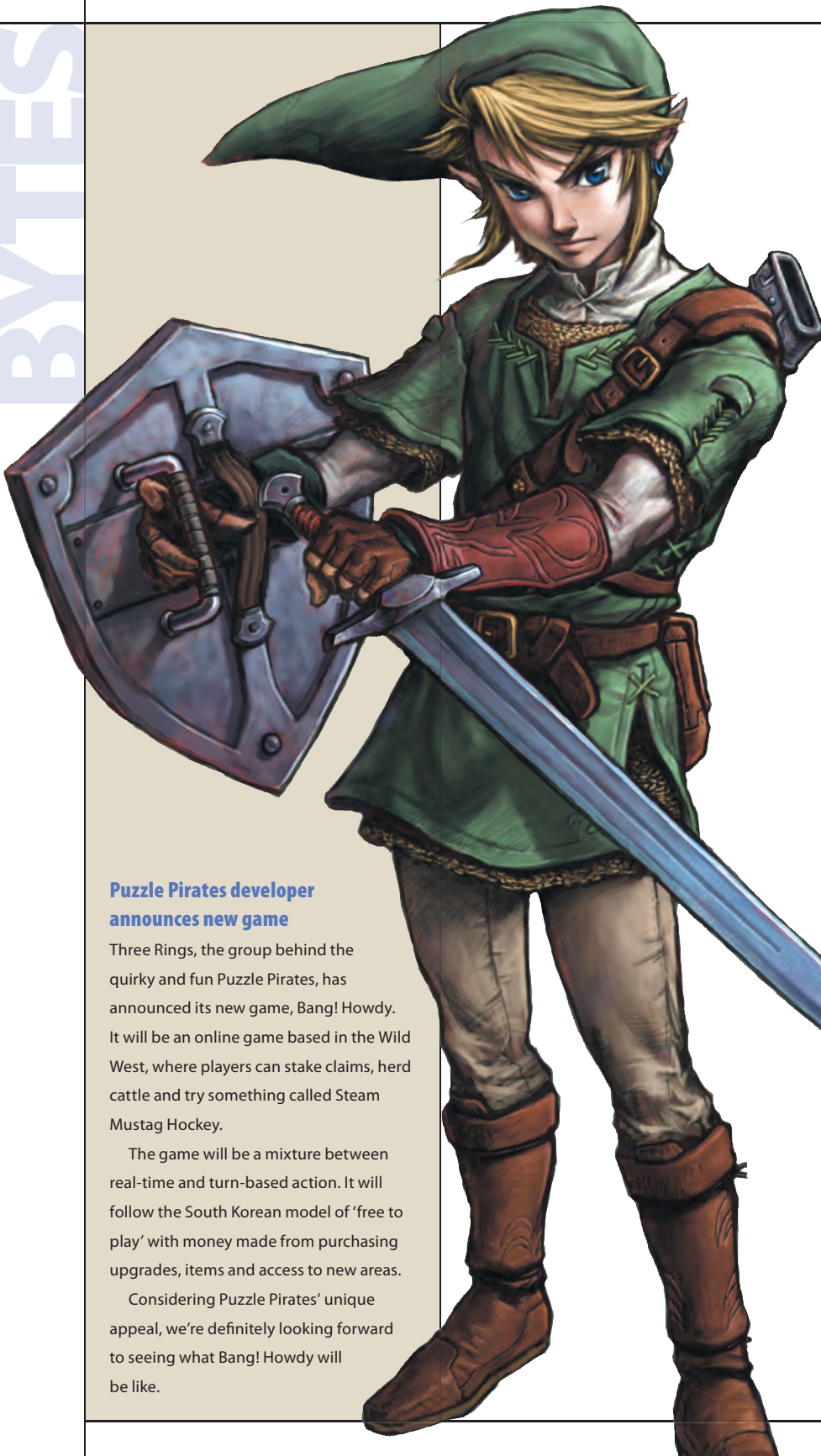


19. Evil Dead



20. Ys: The Ark of Napishtim





# NEW ZELDA GAME DELAYED UNTIL 2006

**T**HE LEGEND OF ZELDA: Twilight Princess has slipped to mid-2006 at the earliest. The reason given for the delay is the addition of "new levels, more depth and even higher quality to Zelda: Twilight Princess."

## Puzzle Pirates developer announces new game

Three Rings, the group behind the quirky and fun Puzzle Pirates, has announced its new game, Bang! Howdy. It will be an online game based in the Wild West, where players can stake claims, herd cattle and try something called Steam Mustag Hockey.

The game will be a mixture between real-time and turn-based action. It will follow the South Korean model of 'free to play' with money made from purchasing upgrades, items and access to new areas.

Considering Puzzle Pirates' unique appeal, we're definitely looking forward to seeing what Bang! Howdy will be like.

## A NEW SAM & MAX GAME?

Fans around the world moaned in protest when Lucasarts decided to can the development of Sam & Max 2 just as it was near its release. With the project dead and buried, we might never see the Freelance Police - a suit-wearing dog and hyperactive bunny again. But in an interview with Gamasutra, Sam & Max creator Steve Purcell said he'd like to get back into making games again. He also admitted that he still owns the rights to the pair.

"Would I get back into games? Sure. The [Sam & Max] license is back in my hands now so we'll see what happens in the near future," he stated. Purcell has been involved with most of the Lucasarts adventure games, including Monkey Island, The Last Crusade and Loom.

"While at Pixar I was consulting on Sam & Max 2 after hours. I got word that it was cancelled from the team, but the subsequent fan backlash was an unexpected side effect. Thirty thousand people signed the online petition protesting the decision. I had no idea there had been that level of anticipation for the game."

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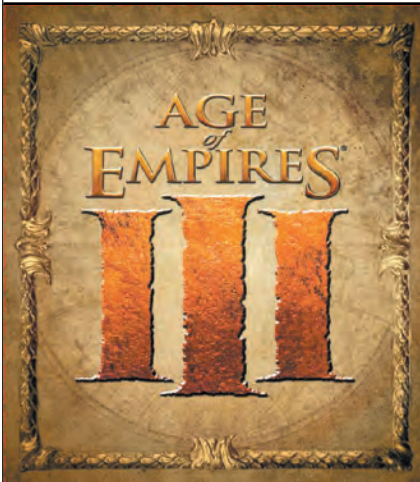






### ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3: WILD!

The next couple of months will see the release of an expansion for Rollercoaster Tycoon 3, titled Wild! It will feature new coasters, characters and other game elements, as well as a facility for players to insert their own content into the game.



### Age of Empires III to feature a Collector's Edition

This month sees the release of the latest chapter in Microsoft's ongoing Age of Empires series. As is becoming common with high-profile releases, the game will be released in a limited Collector's Edition, which will include a 210-page book "The Art of Empires", a DVD covering the making of the game, an audio CD of the game's soundtrack, a concept art poster, an extended game manual and a player's guide.

### BLIZZARD CENTRALISES DEVELOPMENT

World of Warcraft developer, Blizzard, has decided to consolidate all its development studios into one location. Members of the California office are given the choice to relocate to the main office in Irvine to work on unannounced projects. Blizzard hopes the change won't delay title releases, such as the WOW expansion and the Starcraft Ghost console title. It hasn't, though, mentioned if there will be any layoffs.

"We're looking forward to having our PC development teams together in Irvine," stated Mike Morhaime, president and co-founder of Blizzard Entertainment. "In addition to improving our efficiency as a company, the relocation also represents an opportunity for all of our teams to have regular, direct input on each other's projects."

### HOT COFFEE PATCHED OUT

A patch has been released by Rockstar Games that disables the Hot Coffee mini-game in Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas, which has caused so much controversy. The publisher was made to withdraw stock from general circulation in the States after it was rated "Adults Only".

# otaku

the anime lifestyle magazine

雑誌 オタク



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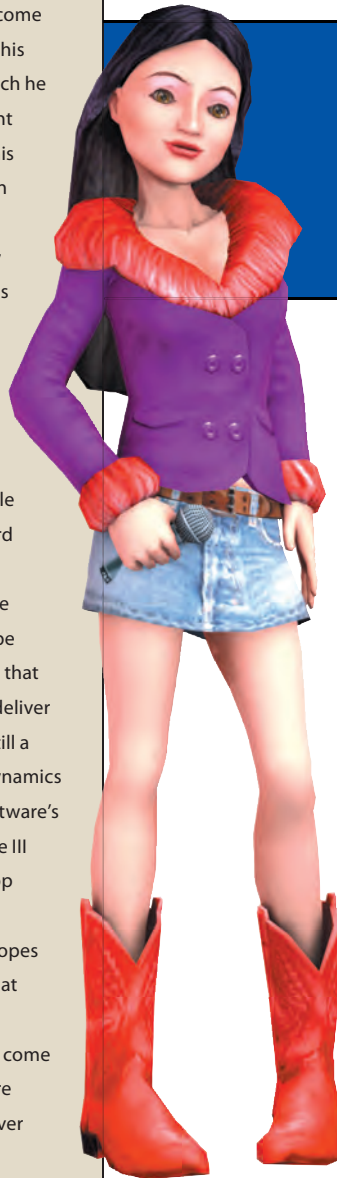


## QUAKECON 2005

The annual QuakeCon event was held at the Gaylord Texan resort. The convention included a host of various competitions and tournaments, including case-modding and performance contests and a retro Quake II contest. As has become tradition, John Carmack delivered his annual impromptu address, in which he shared some of his views on current trends in the gaming industry. In his comments he praised the direction Microsoft has taken with the Xbox 360, lauding its developer-friendly nature. He also noted that Sony has plans to make the PlayStation 3 a more open platform than consoles have generally been to date, and expressed his hopes that this will come to pass. He went on to state that, while multi-processing is the way forward for games, initial efforts will yield modest results, and it will take time for the architecture's potential to be attained. Furthermore, he claimed that physics simulations while able to deliver impressive graphical effects, are still a long way from impacting game dynamics deeply. Carmack also stated id Software's new GPL open license of the Quake III engine will allow people to develop and release commercial products using this engine, something he hopes to see happen. Finally, he noted that he was very happy to see how far massively multiplayer games have come – apparently, his original team were interested in the field, but just “never got around to it.”

# ONLINE MUGGINGS

A CHINESE EXCHANGE STUDENT IN Japan has been arrested for hacking the online game Lineage II and robbing other players of their characters' virtual possessions. The way he did this was by inserting an invincible bot that engaged players in combat and then stripped their imaginary valuables off them, allowing the hacker to sell these items to other players. Authorities and the game's developer, NCsoft, are at something of a loss regarding this case, as the only crime they can charge the hacker with is hacking into the game. There are no laws in place to protect virtual, non-tangible property such as game characters' equipment.



## MORE SONG AND DANCE FROM KONAMI

September saw the release of Dance Dance Revolution Extreme 2 on PlayStation 2, and next month Karaoke Revolution Party will appear for PlayStation 2, Xbox and GameCube.

## PS3 ONLY IN 2007?

First it was due for release in 2007. Then Sony announced after E3 that it's eyeing a mid-2006 launch, probably to stem the tide from the Xbox 360's planned December arrival. But apart from a system that is still pretty ambiguous in terms of what we've seen of the 360, economic firm Wedbush Morgan Securities believes that the console could be delayed to 2007 anyway.

Sony's earlier launch was brought about by the 360's launch date. If the 360 does poorly, Sony can afford to wait a bit longer and push the PlayStation 2 for a while. This might happen if Microsoft drops the Xbox to \$99, which will prompt Sony to do the same and likely steal sales away from both Microsoft's consoles.

Another reason why there will be a delay is supply. Sony has had egg in its face with the launches of the PlayStation 2, PS2 Slim and PSP with not nearly enough units available.

The crux, though, lies in the 360's success. If it does well, Sony will be forced to release the PS3 as soon as possible. The PlayStation division had a loss of ¥5.9 billion in the last quarter.

Zodiac has announced that it won't be supporting the Palm-based gaming PDA Zodiac anymore. The nifty handheld faced stiff competition since its launch in 2000 and has seen products like the PSP and DS slowly encroach on it.

Take 2's woes are far from over with protest now rising over its future game *Bully*. Recently, protesters at the company's New York office demanded the game shouldn't be released.

HBO has joined the growing list of companies who will release material on the PSP's UMD format. The list includes Ali G shows, Chris Rock shows and the animated *Spawn* series.

Konami has purchased Australian studio Ratbag for around 400,000 Midway shares.

The zombie shooter, *City of the Dead*, might find a new publisher after Hip Interactive's recent problems. Kuju Entertainment and Ernst & Young are helping the game find new funding.







### NEW POKÉMON TITLES FOR DS

Pokémon Torouze, a puzzle game that will use both screens for its display, will debut in Japan towards the end of this month. Two others will be released later, most likely in time for the holiday season. Pokémon: Fushigi no Dungeon Blue (Mystery of Dungeon Blue) will be a dungeon-crawl role-playing title, and will be accompanied by a Game Boy Advance version (Fushigi no Dungeon Red). Pokémon Rangers will be an action role-playing adventure, and is being designed to interact with Pokémon Diamond and Pearl, DS titles that are expected early next year.



### ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

Bethesda Game Studios recently announced Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion, to be completed by this holiday season and to be available for PC and Xbox 360. The voice casting includes Patrick Stewart (Star Trek: The Next Generation) and Lynda Carter (Wonder Woman in the '70s, Law and Order).

### FFXII PRODUCER STEPS DOWN

Final Fantasy XII producer, Yasumi Matsuno, has stepped down from his position, citing health problems. His position will be filled by Akitoshi Kawazu, director of the SaGa series. According to Square, the event won't delay the game's release. Matsuno will still be a part of the project as a supervisor.

### AMERICAN MCGEE GETS GRAPHIC

American McGee's company, The Mauretania Import Export Company, and Cellar Door Publishing have signed a deal that will result in McGee's Bad Day LA, Oz and Grimm properties to appear in graphic novel format. The stories will be written by McGee, while the comic company will provide artistic talent for the illustration.

...and  
the  
Oscar  
goes  
to...  
You!



Available November 2005




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# WEB SCORES


## Fantastic 4 [PC]

NAG [100]	<b>60</b>	
GAMESPY.COM [5]	<b>NA</b>	
GAMESPOT.COM [10]	<b>5.8</b>	
IGN.COM [10]	<b>6.5</b>	


## Codename Panzers Phase II [PC]

NAG [100]	<b>70</b>	
GAMESPY.COM [5]	<b>NA</b>	
GAMESPOT.COM [10]	<b>8.3</b>	
IGN.COM [10]	<b>8.5</b>	

## Freedom Force vs The Third Reich [PC]

NAG [100]	<b>70</b>	
GAMESPY.COM [5]	<b>4.5</b>	
GAMESPOT.COM [10]	<b>8.7</b>	
IGN.COM [10]	<b>9.0</b>	


## Big Mutha Truckers 2 [PS2]

NAG [100]	<b>30</b>	
GAMESPY.COM [5]	<b>NA</b>	
GAMESPOT.COM [10]	<b>4.8</b>	
IGN.COM [10]	<b>5.5</b>	

## Destroy All Humans [PS2]

NAG [100]	<b>78</b>	
GAMESPY.COM [5]	<b>4.0</b>	
GAMESPOT.COM [10]	<b>7.5</b>	
IGN.COM [10]	<b>7.0</b>	


## Ridge Racer [PSP]

NAG [100]	<b>89</b>	
GAMESPY.COM [5]	<b>5.0</b>	
GAMESPOT.COM [10]	<b>8.3</b>	
IGN.COM [10]	<b>9.1</b>	

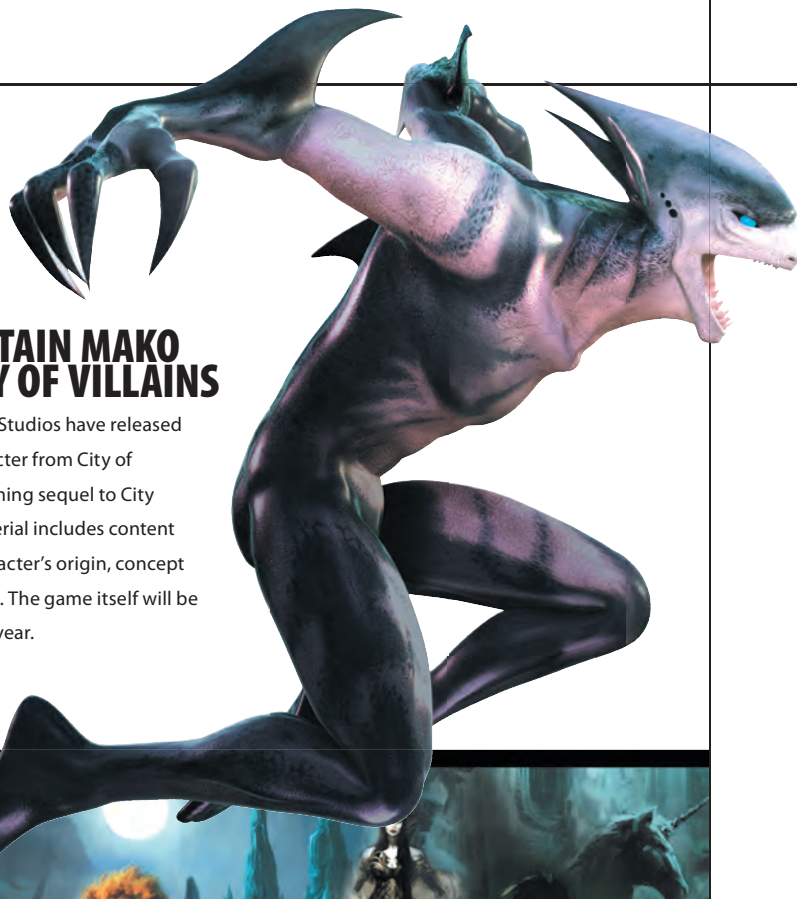
## Wipout Pure [PSP]

NAG [100]	<b>82</b>	
GAMESPY.COM [5]	<b>5.0</b>	
GAMESPOT.COM [10]	<b>8.8</b>	
IGN.COM [10]	<b>9.3</b>	

## Outlaw Tennis [XBOX]

NAG [100]	<b>79</b>	
GAMESPY.COM [5]	<b>3.0</b>	
GAMESPOT.COM [10]	<b>7.1</b>	
IGN.COM [10]	<b>7.0</b>	

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



## MEET CAPTAIN MAKO FROM CITY OF VILLAINS

NCsoft and Cryptic Studios have released material on a character from City of Villains, their upcoming sequel to City of Heroes. The material includes content describing the character's origin, concept art and screenshots. The game itself will be launched later this year.



## THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA: THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE

Buena Vista has entered into an agreement with Sony regarding the rights to this story. Sony will provide marketing assistance, and in exchange Sony has exclusive rights in Europe until the end of March next year. Initially the game will only be available on PlayStation 2 in that region. The movie is scheduled for release in early December in the States.

### Debate over sexual content in games

The International Game Developers Association has formed a Special Interest Group to handle the issue of sexual content in games. In principle, the group is in favour of such, but emphasises the responsible inclusion of such in games, as well as accurate documentation and rating.

### New LAN venue

Since the beginning of September, the Cresta branch of Look and Listen has dedicated a room as a permanent LAN venue. It is open every weekend, from 14:00 till 22:30, and the hosts run various competitions for players occupying the 40 available seats.





# ROBERT LUDLUM

read by Jeff Harding

## THE BOURNE IDENTITY



### VIVENDI LICENSES LUDLUM PROPERTIES

Vivendi Universal Games has acquired the rights to some of the late Robert Ludlum's characters, notably the Bourne series and Covert One. The deal has been described as "long-term", and will include several titles. We can be fairly confident in expecting a concurrent film and game release of The Bourne Ultimatum in 2007.

### CHINA'S TURBULENT RELATIONSHIP WITH ONLINE GAMES

**T**HE CHINESE GOVERNMENT PLANS to invest \$1.8 billion in the growth of its online game industry, a plan that will lead to the formation of between 10 and 30 companies and the creation of up to 100 titles in the next five years.

However, the same government is also imposing strict controls on its citizens' enjoyment of the medium, by disallowing under-18s from playing games wherein players kill other player characters (ranging from first-person shooters to online role-playing titles), and by restricting the amount of time any player may remain logged on at one sitting.

"Minors should not be allowed to play online games that have PK content that allow players to increase the power of their own online game characters by killing other players," Liu Shifa, head of the MOC's Internet Culture Division, which drafts policies governing the online gaming market, told Interfax. "Online games that have PK content usually also contain acts of violence and leads to players spending too much time trying to increase the power of their characters. They are harmful to young people."

MMOGs are big money in China. Twenty million of China's 103 million gamers play online and more than half of them prefer MMOGs. This market is expected to generate around \$1.34 billion in 2005.



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for  
you  
to  
join  
us!

# CALL OF DUTY 2

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# ON THE HORIZON

US RELEASE DATES

RELEASE DATE	GAME	PLATFORMS	GENRE
10/01/2005	Half-Life 2	Xbox	FPS
10/01/2005	NBA Live 06	PC	Sports
10/03/2005	Conflict: Global Terror	PS2   Xbox   PC	Action
10/03/2005	Pokemon XD: Gale of Darkness	GCN	RPG
10/03/2005	Stargate SG-1: The Alliance	PC	Adventure
10/04/2005	25 To Life	PC	FPS
10/04/2005	Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow	DS	Action
10/04/2005	Conflict: Global Terror	PC	Action
10/04/2005	FIFA '06	DS   PS2	Sports
10/04/2005	Shattered Union	PC	Strategy
10/04/2005	Vietcong 2	PC	FPS
10/06/2005	Brothers in Arms: Earned in Blood	PC	FPS
10/07/2005	Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06	PSP	Sports
10/10/2005	Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth	PS2   Xbox	Adventure
10/10/2005	L.A. Rush	PS2   Xbox	Racing
10/10/2005	Metroid Prime: Hunters	DS	FPS
10/10/2005	Serious Sam II	PC   Xbox	FPS
10/10/2005	Zoo Tycoon	DS	Simulation
10/11/2005	Cowboy Bebop	PS2	Action
10/11/2005	Crash Tag Team Racing	DS   GCN   PS2   PSP   Xbox	Racing
10/11/2005	F.E.A.R.	PC	FPS
10/11/2005	Marvel Nemesis: Rise of the Imperfects	PSP   PS2   Xbox   GCN	Fighting
10/11/2005	SOCOM 3: U.S. Navy Seals	PS2	FPS
10/11/2005	Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas: Oogie's Revenge	PS2   Xbox	Action
10/11/2005	X-Men Legends II: Rise of Apocalypse	PSP	Action
10/16/2005	Asterix & Obelix XXL 2: Mission Las Vegum	PC   PS2	Action
10/17/2005	Stubbs the Zombie in "Rebel without a Pulse"	PC   Xbox	Action
10/17/2005	The Warriors	PS2   Xbox	Action
10/18/2005	Age of Empires III	PC	Strategy
10/18/2005	American Conquest: Divided Nation	PC	Strategy
10/18/2005	Call of Duty 2	PC	FPS
10/18/2005	Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi	PS2	Fighting
10/18/2005	Shadow of the Colossus	PS2	Adventure
10/18/2005	Tony Hawk's American Wasteland	GCN   PS2   Xbox	Sports
10/24/2005	Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	PS2   Xbox	FPS
10/24/2005	Bully	PS2   Xbox	Action
10/24/2005	The Movies	PC	Simulation
10/25/2005	Jaws Unleashed	PS2   Xbox	Action
10/25/2005	Resident Evil 4	PS2	Action
10/25/2005	Soulcalibur III	PS2	Fighting
10/30/2005	Heroes of the Pacific	PC	Flight
10/31/2005	Aeon Flux	Xbox	Action
10/31/2005	Dark Age of Camelot: Darkness Rising	PC	RPG
10/31/2005	Half-Life 2: Aftermath	PC	FPS
10/31/2005	RollerCoaster Tycoon 3: Wild!	PC	Simulation
10/31/2005	Star Wars Battlefront II	PC   PSP   Xbox	FPS

Look & Listen  
DVD • CD • GAMES • MP3 • ACCESSORIES

## CHARTS

### PC Games

#	Title
1	Grand Theft Auto San Andreas
2	Battlefield 2
3	Sims 2
4	Sims 2 University
5	Sims Deluxe Edition
6	Toca Race Driver 2 Best Seller Series
7	Juiced
8	Need For Speed Underground Classics
9	Cricket 2005
10	Rugby 2005
11	Star Wars KOTOR 2 Sith Lords
12	Sims Full House Collection
13	Microsoft Flight Simulator 2004
14	Star Wars KOTOR Classics
15	Brian Lara Cricket 2005
16	Civilization 3 Deluxe Edition
17	CSI 2 Dark Motives Exclusive
18	Unreal Tournament 2004
19	Worms 4 Mayhem
20	Rollercoaster Tycoon 3

### PlayStation 2

#	Title
1	Need For Speed Underground 2/Burnout 3 Combo
2	Cricket 2005
3	Gran Turismo 4
4	Burnout 3 Platinum
5	Singstar 3 Pop with Microphones
6	Medal Of Honor European Assault
7	Tekken 5
8	SSX 3 Platinum
9	MX vs ATV Unleashed
10	Star Wars Episode 3 Revenge of the Sith
11	Singstar 3 Pop no Microphones
12	Need For Speed Underground Platinum
13	God Of War
14	Juiced
15	Madagascar
16	Fantastic Four
17	Tiger Woods 2005 Platinum
18	Smashcourt Tennis 2 Platinum
19	Ratchet & Clank 3 Platinum
20	Rugby 2005



## OCTOBER AT A GLANCE

1-2  
Gaming  
**rAge expo**  
[www.rageexpo.co.za](http://www.rageexpo.co.za)

1-31  
Modding  
**Pimp My Box**  
[www.pimpmybox.co.za](http://www.pimpmybox.co.za)





## GAUNTLET FOR PC CANNED

After John Romero and Gauntlet designer J.E. Sawyer's departures, things still seemed on track for the Gauntlet remake to arrive on the PS2, Xbox and PC later this year. It definitely had the NAG staff excited over the prospect of LAN multiplayer with the respective characters. Alas, Midway has removed the PC version, leaving only the console versions for release. Midway didn't announce the removal as such, instead just removing mention of the PC version on the official Website.

## UNREAL ENGINE 4

With Epic's Unreal Engine 3 only just entering the market and nowhere near having its potential realised, the company has revealed that the next generation has already been in the early stages of development for two years. The company hopes to dominate the market in the next-generation console environment, and so far, so good - Unreal Engine 3 has already been licensed by Microsoft for the Xbox 360 and by Sony for PlayStation 3, as well as numerous developers. Epic is currently hunting for talent to help realise the project, and are tempting candidates with a new office building that, while described as "modest", sounds like nothing but a luxurious working environment that is pretty much unthinkable of in this country.



## TOP DEVELOPERS BACK REVOLUTION

Sega's Yuji Naka, creator of Sonic the Hedgehog, and Peter Molyneux, who needs no introduction, have both expressed their approval of Nintendo's upcoming console, Revolution. Neither could elaborate on their feelings, however, as both are subject to non-disclosure agreements with Nintendo.

## GRAN TURISMO 5 COMING IN 2007

Polyphony Digital claims that the next Gran Turismo game, scheduled for 2007, will be 100 times more detailed than GT4, though it is unclear whether this pertains to graphics alone, or to other elements of the game as well. It is most likely that this game will debut on PlayStation 3. On a related note, Gran Turismo 4 is being developed for the PSP.

# ...burn rubber with the old boys!



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# MULTIPLAYER

## WCG FAVOURITES THROUGH TO FINALS

**D**URING THE FIRST TWO weeks of August, deep in the heart of Johannesburg East, Gauteng's Counter-Strike, WarCraft III and FIFA 2005 communities fought it out for qualification for the World Cyber Games SA Finals. The finals, to be held at Sandton City, will be contested amongst the top eight teams and players determined by the preliminary tournaments. The eventual champions, as is the tradition, will be flown overseas (this year to Singapore) to compete against their counterparts from the rest of the world.

In Counter-Strike, South Africa will have a unique advantage for the 2006 grand final. Many recognised teams in the world have opted to stay with version 1.6 and thus will not be attending this Source-based competition, while virtually every SA team has made the switch to the new game. The WarCraft III field, by comparison, is likely to be tougher than ever, and perhaps we will see Grubby (last year's WCG winner and this year's ESWC winner) and Moon (two time WEG winner) compete together in a tournament for the first time. Exciting as this may be, it means SA's representative is again unlikely to make it through the group stage.

At the first of the Eastgate qualifiers, the top seeds for the first event, Evolve.Aim, Bad Habit Boyz, Evolve.Ethereal and Vigour, all cruised through their early matches to the upper bracket semi-finals. As expected, Aim then walked over Vigour, and BHB won comfortably against Ethereal.

The first leg of WarCraft III proved to be less exciting than Counter-Strike as two of the better players in the country, the brothers Trend and Black, failed to make it up from Durban. This left the field open for ESWC winner Travis "Shase" Weedon to take first place without any significant resistance. H4T3, who has for a long time failed to live up to



his true potential in tournaments, finished second, with Mr. Garrison (Shase's brother) coming in third.

A week later, the second half of the field arrived at the WCG arena. Again it proved to be a good weekend for the favourites – Rival, Zero Defekt, and Identity Gaming – who stampeded through the upper bracket without any difficulty.

WarCraft III was dominated by the Nightfall players, reminding of the old days before they were overthrown by Shase at this year's ESWC. Perhaps this signalled a return to glory for Ross "Cavalier" McIlroy and Chris "Swoop" Barter, who finished first and second respectively. The lesser-known (but by no means novice) Zilk pulled off a respectable third.

At the Cape Town preliminary only two qualification spots were available for each of the supported titles. The Counter-Strike tournament was won by Enmity, with Nix coming in second, Aspekt third and Krenk fourth. The Cape Town community has undergone several major changes in the past few months, and with a lot of new blood and increased levels of competition, we can expect this region to be more of a force at the finals this year.

In WarCraft III, first went to q6-Reaver, followed by Jaxxass. q6-Valprax finished just outside of qualification. However, the absence of names like nf-Juvenile and BB-Sage may indicate that the Cape Town standard has fallen since the last major tournament. **NAG**

### FINAL BERTHS:

#### COUNTER-STRIKE: SOURCE

- Evolve.Aim
- Identity Gaming
- Bad Habit Boyz
- Evolve.Ethereal
- Rival
- Zero Defekt
- Enmity

#### WARCRAFT III: TFT

- q6-Shase
- nf-Cavalier
- nf-sWoop
- H4T3
- Zilk
- Mr Garrison
- q6-Reaver
- Jaxxass

#### FIFA 2005

- Daniel Robeiro
- Wesley Fernandes
- Monwane Khopo
- Kamohelo Bako
- Chris MacDonald
- Wesley Sullivan
- Faiz Carstens

## CPL ANNOUNCES WORLD TOUR 2006

**N**O STRANGERS TO CONTROVERSY and heated debate, the USA-based Cyberathlete Professional League have released a statement concerning the details of next year's World Tour. The big surprise is the choice of the primary game, which will come as a relief to some and a shock to others. It had been known for a long time that the game for 2006 would be team-based, but most of the international press had been expecting Counter-Strike: Source or Battlefield 2. In what has been criticised as a regressive move, the CPL has instead selected the rather dated

Counter-Strike 1.6.

For those disappointed by the announcement, the secondary game – which we know will be a duel-based first-person shooter – has yet to be chosen. Rumours are circulating that this will in fact be Quake 4, and these rumours have been strengthened by a recent poll on the CPL forums regarding whether the community thinks it is an agreeable choice. At the time of going to print, the poll results were 75% in favour of Quake 4.



# Watching Videos on PC is as Good as on Best TV

Anyone that has watched movies on a computer monitor can tell you that the experience is like sightseeing at the Grand Canyon through a smoke screen. You know there are great visual effects going on, but the display just can't seem to show the video's true colors.

## Video on PC has never been so beautiful

Videos on a PC never looks as good as on a TV because most PCs usually don't come with the image-processing units commonly found in consumer electronics display devices. That's why images often lack depth and appear grayish.

In comes an array of graphics enhancement technologies in past year and a half to solve this issue, which has discouraged many users to build their home entertainment system around their PCs. One such innovation stood out from the rest is the Splendid video enhancement technology available exclusively on ASUS graphics cards.

## What is Splendid?

Splendid is a driver-based feature that detects activation of video applications and automatically optimizes image quality. It enhances the color saturation, brightness and contrast of PC video based on human eye preferences.

## How does it work?

Splendid improves image quality through three different technologies:

### Pixel-based color processing -

The advanced Area Pixel Processing Algorithm carefully evaluates each pixel in every frame and adjusts them based on smaller regions without affecting the whole picture.

#### Hue and Saturation



Original



Powered by Splendid

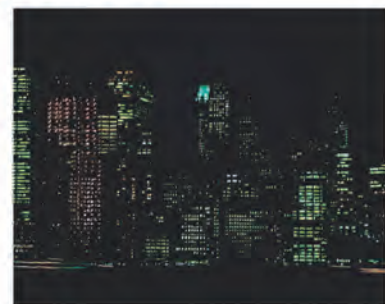
### Condition-based video processing -

Dynamically adjusts colors according to image conditions most sensitive to the human eye. Improvements on colors for skin tones, green stretches (fields and forests) and blue skies and seas are especially pronounced.

### Dynamic contrast optimization -

Like the human eye, which balances the overall brightness and color contrast of the world we see, Splendid adjusts the brightness output level of the dark areas in each frame to bring out every image detail even during dark and rainy scenes.

#### Brightness and Contrast



Original



Powered by Splendid

Any users of ASUS graphics cards can enjoy Splendid. Simply download the latest ASUS graphics card driver from the company homepage to your system and cinema-quality graphics quality is yours.





# JOHNATHAN "FATAL1TY" WENDEL: THE WORLD'S BEST GAMER

by Bart Cop/featurenet.co.za

**T**HIS YEAR ALONE I will have made half a million dollars with gaming." Johnathan Wendel looks like any person you would encounter in a shopping mall or on the street, but he kills people for a living, and at 24 he's got it made for life.

Without a doubt, he has committed the largest number of murders since Stalin, but even then he still has a clean record. Some time ago, he was mentioned in the same breath as Bill Gates by Time as "Masters of the Game". He has his own reality show on MTV and appears on CNN just about every other minute. He has travelled the entire world, spends only 50 days at home a year and is a millionaire at 24. All of this thanks to playing computer games. Johnathan Wendel, aka Fatal1ty, from Kansas is arguably one of the best and most famous gamers in the world. In the area of first-person shooters, to be exact, such as Quake, Unreal Tournament

and Painkiller, he has been untouchable for many years. He is the first star in a new sports discipline: electronic sports or e-sports. "I hope gaming will be acknowledged as an Olympic sports discipline", he says when we meet him on invitation by his sponsor, Creative, in the German city of Leipzig. "Who knows maybe I will become an Olympic champion?"

#### What was your first contact with video games?

**Johnathan Wendel:** "At the age of five or so. But the first time I really played a game on my computer, was at the age of 13. Already then, first-person shooters were my thing: Wolfenstein 3D, Quake and the first two Doom episodes. I think I was about 16 when I read somewhere that a gamer had won a Ferrari by winning a tournament. That was the first time I realised money could be made through gaming, even if that was an exception to the



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rule as most of the tournament prizes were limited to computer parts and games. When I was 19, real money could be won. That was music to my ears."

**Were you already fanatically playing games by then?**

**Johnathan Wendel:** "During the day, I went to school. After school I worked washing dishes, and at night I played computer games with my friends. It was a hobby, something I only did for fun. However, I had the feeling I was pretty good at it. I didn't have any idea how good I really was, and whether I would stand a chance against the top gamers at large tournaments. But I decided to give it a try. Then I had a discussion with my father, who obviously would have preferred me to go to college and didn't like the idea of me as a passionate gamer. I said: 'Look, I don't know if I really stand a chance, but please let me give it a try. If I don't return with a serious amount of money, I won't bother you again with this gaming stuff and I will look for a steady job.' He allowed me to go to Texas, where I passed the qualification round and won \$500. At the end of the day, I came third and took home \$4,000 (chuckles). I will never forget the moment I threw that cheque on the table at home and shouted: 'Look what I won with those stupid computer games!' He couldn't believe his eyes and the only thing he said was: 'What the hell has happened to this world.' (Laughs)"

**I suppose he has changed his mind by now?**

**Johnathan Wendel:** "I recently bought him a brand new Cadillac. I think that's pretty okay."

**Gamers are often seen as unsociable, geeky nerds who seldom go outside. But you look pretty normal. Was that any different before?**

**Johnathan Wendel:** (Defensive) "No, I have had a wide area of interests and I do a lot more than only playing computer games. I was school captain of the tennis team and I played American football and ice hockey. I also had a girlfriend for three years."

(Continues unruffled) "As a teenager, I was very close to making a career of pool billiard. At 13, I already played high-level tournaments. I beat old men who had been playing pool all of their lives, and got the chance to play the Junior Nationals (youth games on a national level). However, my mother didn't allow me to go. The year before, my parents divorced and during 'her' weekends she wanted me to stay with her. Because I was doing so well at all those sports, I knew my eye-hand coordination was very good. I knew I had to make profit out of that one way or another. I did so by becoming a professional gamer, but I could have been a top billiard or tennis player as well."

**Real physical sports must be a welcome distraction from e-sports, which demand more mental effort and concentration.**

**Johnathan Wendel:** "Indeed. That's why I regularly do other sports. Once in a while I play a game of tennis, I go jogging and I recently participated in a beach volleyball tournament. Moreover, I went snowboarding and surfing on the same day in California. Really cool."

**Do you have to train as hard as other top sportsmen?**

**Johnathan Wendel:** "Yes, because I want it myself. I go jogging every day, I go to the fitness club and if I have the chance, I play basketball with my friends. It clears my head - the most important weapon apart from my hands."

**Talking about your hands, three years ago British pro-gamer, Alex Nikitin, took out insurance for his fingers worth €600,000. How much are your fingers worth?**

**Johnathan Wendel:** "No idea, they are not insured. But to go back to your previous question, training makes me more alert and faster, and those are two skills that can be decisive in a shooter game. That proves that gaming is a sports discipline like all the others and why professional gamers are not called cyber athletes for nothing. For every action in a so-called normal sport, I can give you the equivalent in gaming. A smash at the net in tennis? In shooter games such as Unreal Tournament 2003, you regularly have to shoot opponents that are hidden behind a hill or fence. You do that by jumping high and aiming during your jump. The same idea, isn't it? I always say, gaming is sports and chess together. You have to think, but also stay physically and mentally alert. If you just shoot around in a shooter game, you won't get far. If you do the same in tennis, you won't either."

**Top sportsmen have to look at what they eat, but you could easily get fat and even then shoot everybody from behind your screen?**

**Johnathan Wendel:** "No, because I need a balanced lifestyle to stay fit. I do look at what I eat, even if that sounds strange. Some people forget I had to train hard to get where I am now. And I still have to do that, because competition is getting better all the time."

**Can anyone who trains a lot become a top gamer, or is talent involved as well?**

**Johnathan Wendel:** "The exercise makes the art. That counts for all sports and skills. But talent is involved for sure, just like stamina and devotion. Tiger Woods is the best golf player in the world, because he is involved day and night - the same for Michael Jordan. I want to be like that. The Michael Jordan of e-sports."

**How many hours a day do you train?**

**Johnathan Wendel:** "Two to six hours a day, but when I prepare for a specific tournament, that can become eight to ten hours. Once I am training, I never stop. I once trained 36 hours with a number of sparring partners, because the first was already exhausted after twenty hours or so (laughs). I always have the same sparring partners. Sometimes they travel with me, but I have some very good gamers in different countries who train with me when I am around for a promotion tour or tournament."

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**sponsors pay between \$2,500 and \$125,000 to whomever can beat you. Do you feel any pressure?**

**Johnathan Wendel:** "That's a two-sided sword. On the one hand it keeps me fit. I constantly have to be alert, can never let loose or I go down. I love that, because I am even better when the pressure is high. On the other hand I don't like to be challenged everywhere, certainly not when I just visit to promote one of my sponsors or products. There are always jerks that use such occasions to beat me when I am not focused. But I am onto that very fast, you know. Then I refuse to play against them. If they want to beat me, they should challenge me at an official tournament. Then I will be happy to kick their ass." (Laughs)

**What if someone puts up money to challenge you, just like in boxing?**

**Johnathan Wendel:** "Normally I would never do that, but I have been persuaded to do so. But I always stress the fact that the loser has to pay, even if I win. Then they refuse instantly." (Laugh)

**Tennis and soccer players end their careers around 35. Gaming is a relatively new sport. Do you have any idea how long a top gamer can take it?**

**Johnathan Wendel:** "Much shorter, as most gamers focus on one specific game. I think you may say the normal career of a top gamer ends between 18 and 23."

**So you are already old at 24?**

**Johnathan Wendel:** "In that sense indeed, but I don't feel like a veteran. There comes a moment in your life when you start a family and you can't keep on playing games and tournaments. Like any other adult, you have to make sure the bills are paid at the end of the month, you know. The career of a top gamer ends when he can't be a child anymore."

**Those bills are no problem for you, because you are already a millionaire. How much have you earned with gaming up to now?**

**Johnathan Wendel:** "About \$400,000, but at the end of the year I will have passed half a million. Without sponsorships."

**Next to that, you have built a business empire with your nick. You can buy Fatal1ty mouse pads and main boards. What else?**

**Johnathan Wendel:** "Mice, processors, cooling systems, sound cards, everything that has to do with gaming and I can add to with my experience. Only good products. I will not put my name on 'lollys', if you know what I mean. It all started a year or two ago with linking my name to mouse pads. I was tired of depending on a number of sponsors, so I created my own company. I did everything myself: distribution, promotion. After five months I had already made \$50,000, which I put back into the gaming industry by sponsoring some gamers. I paid their travel costs so they could participate in big tournaments in the States and abroad, gave them good material and some money so they could focus only on gaming. In the meantime, we supported different gamers and I already have one top gamer as a fulltime employee. But the idea is to help hundreds of gamers from all levels by means of the Fatal1ty brand."

**How difficult is it to manage your own business and stay the best gamer in the world?**

**Johnathan Wendel:** "I realised very quickly that it was impossible to combine the two if I wanted to stay on top of my game. Luckily, I met the people from Auravision who took the business side from me, so I can fully concentrate on gaming again."

**For us, being involved in a gaming magazine means we often have to play games as our job and are not always able to play for fun. Do you find you get tired of playing 'serious' games?**

**Johnathan Wendel:** "No, not at all. Even if I am a professional, gaming is still huge fun for me. I can always play other games to have some fun. I regularly play games for the pure enjoyment thereof such as Counter-Strike, Battlefield 1942 and WarCraft III."

**You are the first real famous gamer. MTV gave you a reality show some time ago and in Time Magazine you are mentioned in the same breath as Bill Gates. Does that mean you are accepted by the American jet set? Are you invited to decadent parties? Do you have famous friends?**

**Johnathan Wendel:** "I start to, yes. I have met a lot of interesting people recently. Sinbad is a good friend of mine and last month I met actress Darcy Donovan - you may know her from the movie Showtime with Robert de Niro. I have such a good relationship with her, we are thinking of working together. Elijah Wood is a friend of mine (Frodo from The Lord of The Rings) and I have met a number of other celebs."

**Do they know you as a top gamer or do you have to explain who you are?**

**Johnathan Wendel:** "Some of them do know me, yes. Most of them have read or heard about me."

**Do you have a lot of numbers of celebs on your mobile phone?**

**Johnathan Wendel:** "One or two, that's all."

**Apparently you are only a real celeb when you have done it with Paris Hilton. Or so we have been told.**

**Wendel:** "I haven't. Not yet. That is my next challenge."

(Laughs) **NAG**





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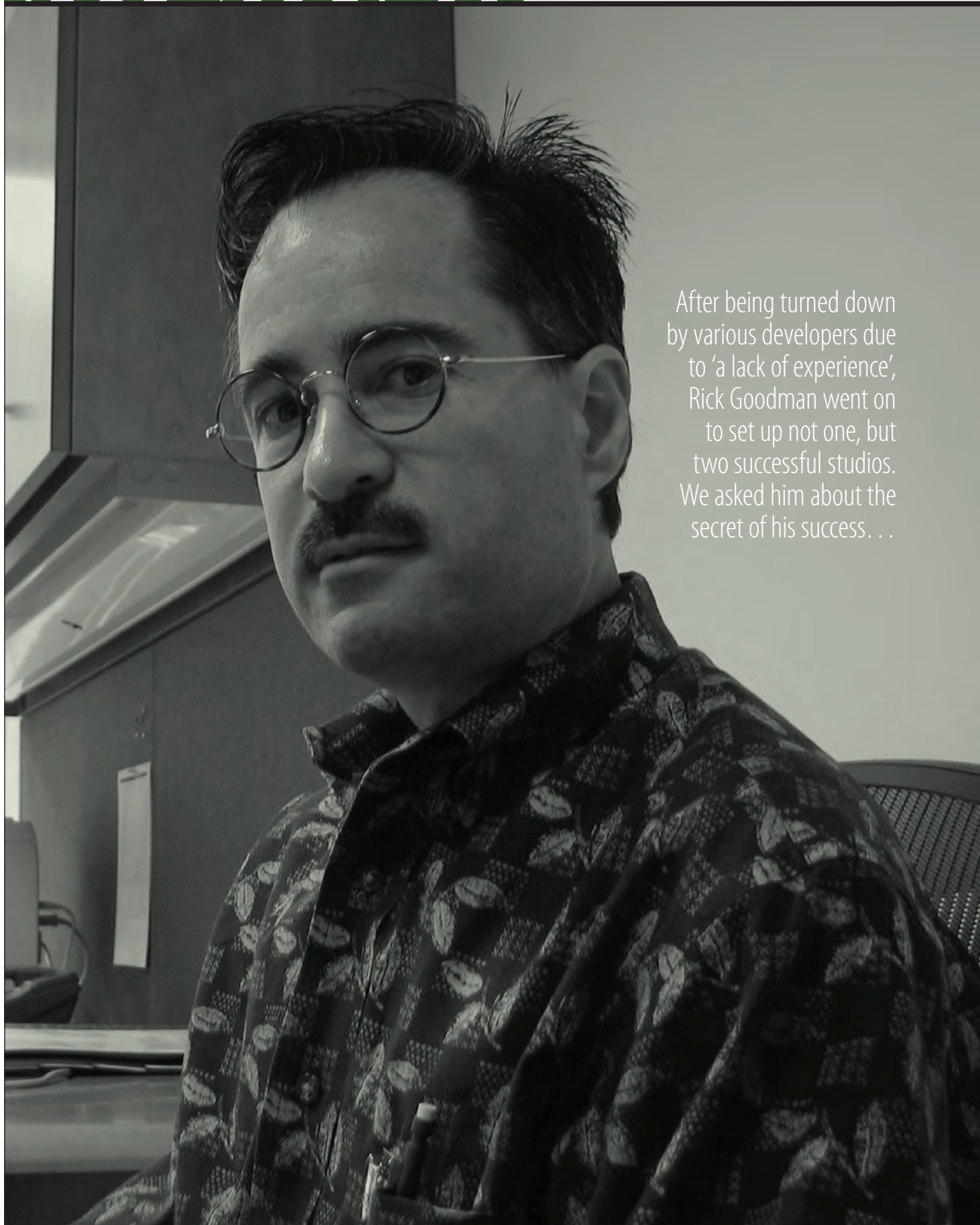
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# INTERVIEW



After being turned down by various developers due to 'a lack of experience', Rick Goodman went on to set up not one, but two successful studios. We asked him about the secret of his success. . .



RICK GOODMAN

# STAINLESS STEEL STUDIOS

**R**EAL-TIME STRATEGY GAMES CONSUME your time in the same way starving monkeys chomp bananas. To review an RTS takes days of ordering units to collect whatever serves as currency in the particular era you're playing in, and then building up civilisations. This time-intensive gameplay doesn't deter us from playing though, as these are some of the most involving games around. And a man responsible for many of them is Rick Goodman, co-founder of Ensemble and now president of Stainless Steel.

"I was actually an accountant about ten years ago," he begins. "And I kind of decided that it might be more fun to make games, so that's exactly what we did. I got together with my brother and we started a game company. We started very small and eventually grew." The studio Goodman is talking about is Ensemble, the company behind the hugely successful Age Of Empires series. These games are rated among the best RTS titles on the market and prove that whatever your budget, it's the effort that's put in that affects the quality of a title. "We did work really hard on that game," Goodman tells us. "We got together a cool team and put the whole thing together ourselves. It was fuelled by passion and pizza. None of us on the team had any experience in making games, except for one or two people, so that was a real test and a true challenge. After that, I came back home to Boston, Massachusetts, and started up a company called Stainless Steel, which is now making Rise And Fall."

From what we've seen, Rise And Fall will stick closely to the formula that made Goodman's Ensemble titles so popular (only this time it seems that a greater emphasis has been placed on graphics). We see many developers specialising in a genre in this way, and it's usually the players who benefit. But Goodman hasn't ventured outside the RTS genre since he started in the industry. Doesn't he get tired of creating the same elements time after time? "I personally got into this industry because I love real-time strategy games," he says. "And I think for the last ten years the industry has been making some really fine RTS titles. I also think in the last three or four years we've been a little bit guilty of not stretching ourselves quite enough, and not pushing the envelope in terms of new and innovative

things we can do with the genre."

Maybe this is part of what influenced his decision to leave Ensemble and start Stainless Steel. It was certainly a brave move as the company had formed a solid relationship with Microsoft on the back of Age Of Empires and was set for great things. But this lack of creativity had been responsible for many talented individuals leaving the nest in search of opportunities. In fact, Goodman agrees with the view that a lack of creativity may soon cause major problems and changes within the industry. "I think as the industry matures it's also going to consolidate from both a development side and a publishing side," he tells us. "I've seen a little of that in my short time of being in London. In the US we have a lot of competing cellphone companies. Here I see Vodafone everywhere with a little bit of T-Mobile. So as the market matures, we do see

"We got together a cool team and put the whole thing together ourselves. It was fuelled by passion and pizza."

consolidation and I honestly don't know what that might mean in the future for creativity. Whether that's a plus or a minus, we'll just have to wait and see."

Goodman hasn't just confined himself to the RTS genre. He has also never worked on another platform than the PC. Although this is obviously because his genre works best on PC, the launch of the next-gen consoles will provide many new opportunities for developers, giving those bound to the PC more options. So will we be seeing future Stainless Steel titles on consoles? "It's always possible," Goodman says with a shrug. "But we don't have any direct plans. One of the things that we've noticed with the way in which we've conceived Rise And Fall, is that it has already become a more console-like experience in some ways. If we wanted to, we could easily pick up on that and move more along those lines, and I think that's a way to get a more action-orientated strategy game on a console. And I certainly think that is a very exciting idea." **NAG**



CTF isn't a game, it's war!



## Modern Art

**S**INCE THE DAYS OF the original Quake, when gamers first realised they could dump in-game frames to external video files, there has been a proliferation of gaming movies. At first they were created purely for interest sake, not widely distributed and generally poorly put together. The potential was obvious, and as more and more people got involved and game engines became ever more conducive to movie-making, the practice developed into a sophisticated and massively popular art form. So popular in fact that the Leeroy Jenkins video is currently downloaded over ten thousand times a day.

Perhaps I'm being generous calling this an art form – it's probably more accurate to put it under the general label of a 'cyber medium'. This medium is used for a variety of purposes, from recording memorable moments and situations within games to the creation of actual narratives.

Most people have come across the concept of a 'frag movie' at some point in their lives – the Clanbase Eurocup video of 2001, including Panicore's last-second frag spree to force the semi-final into sudden death; Heaton's save round ace against Four Kings; the collection of inspired Quake III kills that is Annihilation; et cetera (for the uninitiated, I highly recommend a trip to [www.own-age.com](http://www.own-age.com)). The frag movie has been the driving force behind cyber media since its inception. Even though the productions are amateur, they have managed to build up to an impressively high standard. Post-production lighting effects are frequently applied, and the kills are timed to music. Their effect is much like the highlights inserts which are shown on channels such as SuperSport, and could possibly be used in future to promote e-sports to a mainstream audience.

The frag movie can also represent non-FPS genres. For instance, moments when tactics are executed with particular style are captured in strategy or role-playing games. After the release of World of Warcraft, this form became particularly fashionable. Guilds began to release videos of their crowning achievements, and you can now watch the defeat of all the major bosses. Of course, other guilds were also releasing their crowning failures, producing gems like the antics of Mr Jenkins. The site [www.warcraftmovies.com](http://www.warcraftmovies.com) hosts almost 200GB of the stuff.

The final conventional use of the medium is

comparable to the corporate instructional video. These productions usually manifest themselves as trick-jumping tutorials for games like Quake III and Counter-Strike, but can also be used to teach the general principles of competitive gameplay. The potential of this form has yet to be fully exploited, but I believe we will see more of it in times to come, especially considering that many top players already give lessons for payment.

However the narrative elements are what truly give cyber media its substance. The first story-based gaming movie I came across was a dramatisation of a Quake III capture the flag scenario, called Comedy in Armour (it's a true classic: get it at [www.machinima.com](http://www.machinima.com)), and in the years following that I have seen many more and even voice-acted in one. The pertinent question to ask is: will this ever become a professional art form? Will a 3D-animation film ever be produced using, say, the Half-life 2 engine? This I doubt, because while the game engine may render well in real-time, the quality of pre-rendering software such as Maya or 3D Studio Max is far higher. But this is the very essence of the cyber medium. It's a medium for the people, and something which anybody can get into with minimal effort. The amateur no longer needs a camera to bring his or her ideas to fruition. **NAG**



“The frag movie has been the driving force behind cyber media since its inception. Even though the productions are amateur, they have managed to build up to an impressively high standard.”

*The views and opinions cited in this column do not necessarily reflect those of NAG Magazine and its staff.*



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# This Show is not for Kids (SNVL - PG13)

**T**HE FOLLOWING PROGRAMME CONTAINS scenes with sex, nudity, violence, strong language, mild taunting, surprise stock quote and hyperactive children and is filmed before a live audience. For now. The characters in this show are entirely fictional. Any resemblance to any person, living and dead, is purely coincidental.

*\*Theme music plays, something catchy with a zesty rumba beat.\**

*\*Title screen rolls. Copy editor is fired for misspelling 'unequivocal'.\**

*\*Miktar enters, stage left, sits down in world's most comfortable chair and promptly falls asleep.\**

*\*Guests enter from stage right and mull about, poking Miktar with coffee cups until he snorts, mutters something about "... but I don't want to be a pie" and then wakes up.\**

*\*After a brief period of Miktar chasing the guests around with a broom while screaming "Get out of my house!" things settle down and the show starts.\**

**Miktar:** "You people probably think there is a process here, don't you? You think I've got this all planned and that I know what to ask. You probably think I actually know who you people are! Well, you're wrong! All of you!"

**RedTide:** "Hey, the invitation said there would be cake. Is there cake?"

**Miktar:** "No. No cake. That was a lie."

**RedTide:** "Figures. And who are these other people? Why were we invited to this show anyway?"

**Priest:** "I'm here because I slept with a goat."

**RedTide:** "I'm starting to wonder why I employ you people. We have a magazine to put together, so stop goofing off and give me some cake."

**Miktar:** "Right, now that we're all on the same page, time for my happy face. Hello viewers out there (and stop, and wave, and two, and...), wondering what the hell you're watching. This is my show, where people sit on that couch there, and I sit on this comfy chair here. I may ask those people questions, I may not."

**RedTide:** "Can we get this over with?"

**Priest:** "Yes, please. Scruffy needs her daddy. She gets moody if left alone for too long."

**Miktar:** "My show, my rules. Now, I'm going to ask

you some questions and you're going to answer with witty little anecdotes and references to something someone popular somewhere said."

**Martin Lawrence:** "I heard there was to be cake?"

**Miktar:** "No! And you're late! Go stand in the corner!"

**Martin Lawrence:** "Aw. White man is putting me down."

**Miktar:** "RedTide, the first question goes to you. How does it feel, being the most powerful man in South African gaming? Does it feel good?"

**RedTide:** "Yes. Yes it does. It feels great, like driving an expensive car, or eating overpriced food from Woolworths, or..."

**Miktar:** "Lets stop there. Priest, you're widely considered to be the most vocal figure in local gaming, stoic to a fault and utterly cynical. How do you plead?"

**Priest:** "Not guilty."

**Miktar:** "The defence rests (pause for laughter from the studio audience)."

**Studio Audience:** "..."

**Miktar:** "Moving on. There have recently been allegations that NAG panders to the masses and is incapable of providing new, unique and refreshing content. Some readers feel that the magazine is just a glossy reprint of press releases. Certain readers have even expressed the opinion that the opinion columns are a waste of space, serving only to boost the egos of the writers."

**RedTide:** "That's not true. We pride ourselves on producing a quality magazine that..."

**Miktar:** "And that's all we have time for today. Thank you for watching my show."

**Priest:** "Wait, when do I get to talk about my undying love for Scruffy?"

**Miktar:** "Never. Thank you, and good night." **NAG**

*\*Credits roll, fistfight ensues on the stage.\**

“Hello viewers out there (and stop, and wave, and two, and...), wondering what the hell you're watching. This is my show, where people sit on that couch there, and I sit on this comfy chair here. I may ask those people questions, I may not.”







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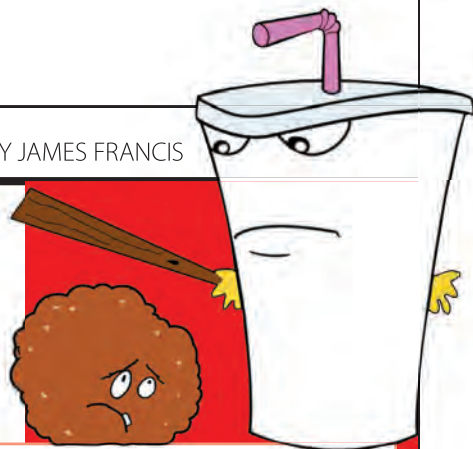


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# Doom the movie



**T**HE DOOM MOVIE IS finally on its way. Seriously. Not a rumour or a project that keeps being shifted from one place to another. It's an honest-to-God film starring The Rock and other actors I don't really care about. It boasts a restricted age rating, guns, demons and all kinds of things we've been waiting for since the first word of a Doom movie was uttered so many years ago. And, frankly, even if it's lame, I'll go and watch it. Because it's Doom and you treat Doom with respect.

There is a catch, though: no Hell. No one has elaborated on this yet, but the trailer shows scientists mapping the last 10% of the human genome and unleashing something bad. That's a far cry from "... let's open a portal to Hell and see what comes out". Some gamers are a bit taken aback by this. How is Doom still the same without Lucifer's minions tearing up the scenery? Mutants hardly meet the grade. But you have to consider it for what it is. A portal to Hell, complete with pentagrams and tortured corpses. Blood flows from the walls in Doom as a matter of fact – even the Exorcist only ventured into projectile vomiting. Movies aren't ready for Hell. Not the Doom Hell.

Constantine had a hard time being produced, thanks to its religious nature (even though the Hellblazer doesn't push the occult angle that hard). Hellboy had a lot of problems with studios not liking the name - you can't put 'hell' in a title, it will offend people. Even projects like Stigmata took a lot of flack for its religious context. Imagine the attention a movie about demons from a portal from Hell versus a bunch of space marines would draw. Sure, it would rock, but you can see why it was left out of the final story. Hollywood clearly isn't ready for Hell in a hand basket.

But not games. Games took the Hell concept in hand, dragged it through prettier and prettier engines and concepts, and handed it bigger and more bad-ass weapons to play with along the way. Let's count a few: Doom, Diablo, Painkiller, Afterlife, Quake (using the Cthulhu mythos), Hell... The latter was an excellent, if obscure, adventure title starring Dennis Hopper. Thanks to games evolving under society's radar, it managed to subvert and break the taboos traditionally imposed on movies and music. In 1994 we were lavishing in material that Hollywood

won't touch in 2005! Games have blindsided the entertainment status quo. It's no wonder everyone is freaking out.

This might explain why games are getting so much flack lately. While today's movies won't touch our 1994 concepts, neither will we. Game stories, violence and everything that goes with it have evolved. Today we have Grand Theft Auto, 7 Sins and Mortal Kombat. Worms feature cute cartoon characters blowing each other into oblivion using various insane weapons - name an animated show or movie that sits on that level. Silent Hill had undertones of fear that few horror movies even come close to, and look at the Chronicles of Riddick game. The movie is a kindergarten adventure by comparison, so if someone complains about you playing games, nod, smile and give them a cookie. In a lot of respects, games are a more evolved form of entertainment Hollywood and its peers have yet to attain. And we get to shoot things for our money's worth. **NAG**

“ Blood flows from the walls in Doom as a matter of fact – even the Exorcist only ventured into projectile vomiting. Movies aren't ready for Hell. Not the Doom Hell. ”

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# INBOX

## [LETTER OF THE MOMENT]

**FROM** Louis

**SUBJECT** Cross-platform curse

There is something I don't understand. On which platform are the most noteworthy games played? PC of course. Now why has realistic interaction with a PC never been depicted in a game? To gain access to a virtual computer, you usually just hold down a button for five seconds. How boring. To date, there have been only two games that vaguely had the right idea. The first one was 'Hacker', consisting of a simple interface [pretty close to the real thing I suppose] that let you hack into systems around the globe. As your success rate climbed, you could afford better software to bypass bigger systems. Very interesting, and it required quick thinking to be successful. The second one was 'Enter the Matrix'. The game itself was flawed and buggy, but one of the extra features was a virtual disk operating system to access the cheats. This consisted of DOS commands that you typed in to unlock hidden drives. Also pretty interesting, and it required a bit of lateral thinking. How difficult could it be to incorporate something like that into a game like 'Splinter Cell', or 'Area 51'? Imagine how addictive the game would be! However, I fear this dream is lost forever, because most games these days are simplified to be accessible to all platforms. And seeing that consoles don't have keyboards... guess what? We're doomed to this brainless play dynamic for all eternity!

PS: Congrats on your brilliant E3 coverage, once again proving you are the top gaming magazine in SA. Michael, you deserve your BMW, so drive it with pride. Must say though, I prefer your old sarcastic self to this new sweet dripping fake politeness...

*Good point - it almost seems as if developers think we don't actually use computers to play their games. I guess this is leftover thinking from console gaming, and the fact that having to defrag a hard drive while playing a game is about as dull as watching geese migrate.*

**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



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**FROM** Ma3lstrum

**SUBJECT** NMG Syndrome

Congratulations on a publication of excellent calibre. NMG - better known as No More Gaming syndrome. Every night I sit and look at my collection of games ranging from good old Command & Conquer through to Quake III up to Half-Life 2, and for the life of me I can't decide what to slot into my PC. Games have always been an escape from reality. I go to work before sunrise and the whole day I think about how I'm not going to do anything but play games when I get home. So after working like a dog all day, I slump down and then, well, refer to line two. What happened to me? Am I losing interest in gaming? Am I growing out of it? Is that even possible? In the past I could sit in front of my PC for 24 hours playing one game. Now I can't even choose what to play. I know this is a common condition as I've seen it before, and I hear of others with the same symptoms. I think we either need a full proof cure or a good inspirational rambling. /me slaps Ma3lstrum. Snap out of it man. What's wrong with you? **NAG Ed.**

**FROM** Richard

**SUBJECT** Morality of Gaming

Wait, this isn't another silly parent complaining about the effect gaming is having on his or her little Lord Fauntleroy. I am not writing a long letter about killing in games is bad, etc. I'm sure we've all heard that one a million times before. No, what I want to achieve in this letter is a meaningful discussion.

The topic I want to broach is the issue of killing in gaming. Now let's first look at how often we are made to kill people, monsters and things etc. to complete games. What we find is that in almost all games this is required to complete the game. Now I'm sure most diehard readers of the glorious NAG, such as me, wouldn't hesitate for an instant to pop off a head shot in CS, or shred an alien monster with a Flak Cannon in Unreal 2004. This is obvious, and most times you wouldn't even consider being... ahem, 'humane' in situations such as these. However, in more artful games, where characters actually develop a personality and grow, these games make decisions such as killing a loyal ally in cold blood far tougher. And what about executing a hostage, a hostage begging for his or her life?

What we find is that human instincts, basic comradeship and the like, set in. Some of us ignore these instincts, and some actually feel compassion. So is killing in this manner just a fun way to relieve stress? Or is it something more profound? So, thank you to all those who took the time to read this [somewhat boring] letter. I just ask for another twenty seconds of your

time... take a minute, and just 'meditate' on this topic.

*Ending life is a staple in computer games. How else do you get people to understand your side of an argument if you don't sling a little lead around? We're basically a few hairs away from being primitive savages, and although we surround ourselves with all this technology and modern comforts, deep down we'd all like to leap over the neighbour's wall on a Sunday while he's mowing and you're sleeping and stick his screaming head under that mower until he stops twitching. Who's with me? **NAG Ed.***

**FROM** Jacques

**SUBJECT** LAN Cable

Hey there! Firstly, thanks for a great magazine! I was wondering if you could tell me where I could find a LAN network cable, because I have been searching for a while now, but can't seem to get my hands on one.

*Just pull one of those cables out of the back of your DVD player - they all work in much the same way. A cable is a cable after all. **NAG Ed.***

**FROM** J van Wyk

**SUBJECT** Give me advice

I would like to enter the world of game reviews (journalism) as playing games is pretty much my life. Please give me some advice as to how to get started, who I can talk to or any other advice you may have on the subject. Please respond via e-mail. *Mostly via cabbage into the other realm is sometimes both cheese over the other door clicker not pretty light connected to beans other than most other types of settings without totally.*

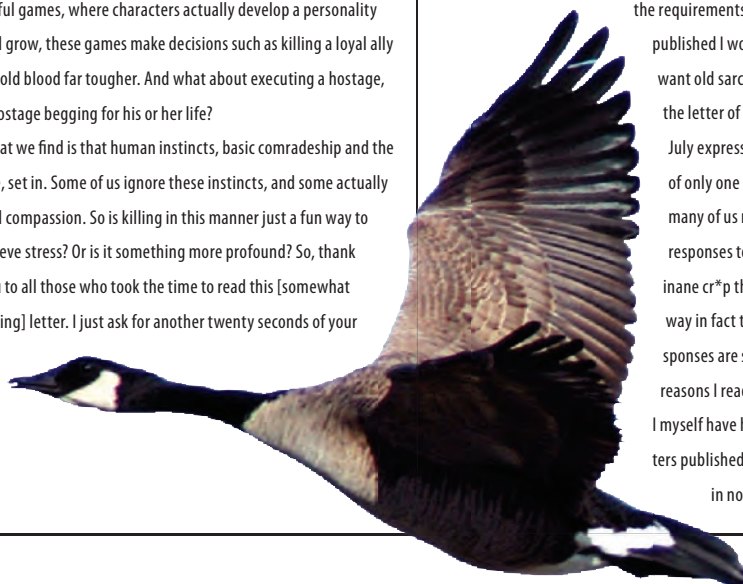
**NAG Ed.**

**FROM** "KnightofNI!"

**SUBJECT** None given

First off I would like to say that I have been a reader of NAG since its start and I love your magazine now that I have completed

the requirements to get my letter published I would like to say I want old sarcastic editor back the letter of the month for July expressed the opinion of only one person and many of us really enjoy your responses to some of the inane cr\*p that gets sent your way in fact the amusing responses are some of the only reasons I read the letters page I myself have had several letters published in NAG and was in no way offended







Contra (1987)

by the sarcastic replies now that a great source of amusement in my life has vanished I think I'll drive my Mazda 323 to my house in Nelspruit so that I can go play Counter-Strike on my AMD powered machine while listening to the latest Backstreet Boys album or go to pick up my latest copy of PC Format or perhaps inform a large group of concerned parents that gaming will rot the mind of their children though maybe I can pose a question what does the big white button on the bottom of my keyboard do and could you direct me to a Website where I could download a decent open source operating system with my 28K modem and thanks for bringing back the squirrel guy. [Disclaimer: the author of this letter wishes it to be known that this has been an attempt to invoke sarcasm from the editor. I am in no way affiliated with Nelspruit, nor do I own Counter-Strike, an AMD processor, or any Backstreet Boys album. I do not believe gaming is in any way harmful. I am familiar with the function of the space bar and the use of punctuation].

*[This letter has in no way been edited or altered – Ed]*

*The problem with a letter like this is that in specifically trying to evoke sarcasm you get nothing. It's doesn't work this way – you need to actually be the person you describe in your mail for sarcasm to work properly. NAG Ed.*

**FROM PCK**

**SUBJECT What the...**

What is your thinking behind this month's DVD? I am speaking about the requirements! Minimum specification is a 3.0 Gig CPU! I mean come on, it's nice to have a DVD that you can put a barrel full of stuff on, but it is cr\*p not being able to access it. I am running an AMD Athlon which is clocked to 2.5GHz (Should be 1.8GHz). I know that it is not the best on the market, but hell I can play Unreal, Counter-Strike Source and WarCraft, no problem. What more do you want from me! Sorry but it just irritates me to think I have been supporting you guys for over three and a half years now and all of a sudden this! When I put the DVD in it does not even boot up. If I actually get it to boot after a tweak here and a tweak there, all it shows is a black screen and nothing more! My system runs DVD games, movies and your previous DVD covers but why make the requirements this high? Come on guys and gals this is not on! Are you guys in cahoots with Intel and also forcing me to upgrade? Will the AMD processors run the DVD at all, since I do not know about an AMD 3.0GHz CPU? Maybe you guys are trying to persuade everyone to move to Intel? Is this going to be the requirement of each issue from now on? If so, I must inform you that you will be losing three readers because of that. Three might not seem a lot to you guys, but remember: "That if it is not for the last step you would not have walked a mile." I am sorry if I sound a bit angry and hostile, but this is how I feel. Could you please respond to this letter and inform me what is going on regarding this. It would be appreciated.

*Whoa! Hold the horses there mate. I received a mail from some souls complaining that we didn't put the specifications of the latest demos on our DVD, and they didn't want to buy it for nothing. This made sense, so I did. Now you're complaining because the specifications are too high. Firstly, this is the specification for the most demanding demo on the DVD and secondly, if the interface doesn't work have a look at <http://www.nag.co.za/community/index.php?topic=362.0> for a list of fixes. Or simply hold down your shift key when you insert the DVD and explore it from Windows Explorer. If the demos are too highly specified for you, upgrade your computer. Did you really think it was going to last longer than a few months when you bought it? NAG Ed.*

**FROM Soon-to-be-known gamer**

**SUBJECT Online Gaming**

I am an avid online gamer and play a lot of WarCraft 3 on Blizzard's Battle.net. The only problem is I am looking to make a name for myself, but the gateways provided are only for America, Europe and Asia. I know to be invited to gaming events one has to make yourself known on the Net – but where? I have not found a genuine online South African gaming site for WarCraft 3 or any other game, which is weird considering South Africa is a fast growing gaming community. Surely it should be advertised somewhere for keen gamers like myself to stumble upon. Can you please tell me the address of a site where I can prove myself to the gaming community?

*Sigh! NAG Ed.*

**FROM Predator**

**SUBJECT Battlefield 2**

I am going to start my letter like everyone else and say thank you for the great magazine and cover DVD. I recently read that game developers have realised that gamers do not like to wait, and so that if they make the copy protection hard to crack and make us wait, we will buy an original and I agree. I personally hate waiting, and late last month I was forced to wait, not by the developers but by the distributors. I am a huge Battlefield fan and loved BF 1942, and like many gamers out there I was eagerly awaiting the release of Battlefield 2. I got the release date, 21 June, and saved the money and waited. I never expected it to arrive in Durban on that day, but when I got home that afternoon I phoned around and surprise, no one had it. That night I went on the Net and discover it was available in South Africa and Johannesburg had it. So, the next day I phoned around and still no one had it, and it was the same story for the following two days. This really annoyed me as I was going to a big LAN that weekend, starting on the 24th, and I wanted to have my original copy by then. But when

I arrived at the LAN, I still did not possess my own copy and later that night I found someone who was distributing a cracked version, which I happily copied. I know us gamers tend to climb on top of our high horses and talk about how the gaming industry can be improved when we know nothing, and I am about to do that. Seriously, how long does it take to ship a game from JHB to Durban? A day or two? It's not that hard really. If JHB had it on Tuesday the 21st, then surely Durban should get it on Wednesday, Thursday or Friday at the latest. Why don't the distributors send the game around the country a few days before the release date so everyone can start selling it on the release date? We eventually got it on Monday, a whole six days late. I was now left with a dilemma. I had the game – do I go and spend R300 on something I already had? I have now bought an original, but many people will not do that. If they get a cracked version, they won't go and buy an original just because they want the game, they have it. So, my point is that delays cost money. If I had not had to wait, I would have bought an original without a second thought, and some of my friends would have one too.

*I get your point about having to wait, but this isn't a good enough excuse to support piracy. Out of interest, I called a local distributor about this and they confirmed that games do ship out early so the whole country gets them on the release date. Perhaps you should find a better computer store. NAG Ed.*

**FROM (MemFi\$) and Rusty**

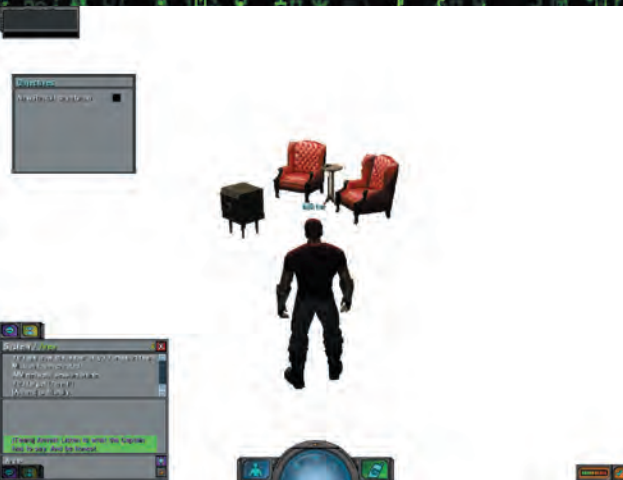
**SUBJECT PC's D.O.A. [Second Opinion]**

Last month, in volume 8 issue 4, we read a very disturbing article concerning the very lives of most gamers who read this magazine. Unfortunately James Francis was obviously dropped once too many by his mother during the early years of his life, to have written such a 'vicious' article. We believe he is entirely incorrect. This is why: *[snip, Ed]*.

*This is about the PC is dead article. We received a record number of complaints about this. Also, as a child he wasn't so much dropped as he was tossed around. NAG Ed.*







## THE MATRIX ONLINE

www.matrixonline.com

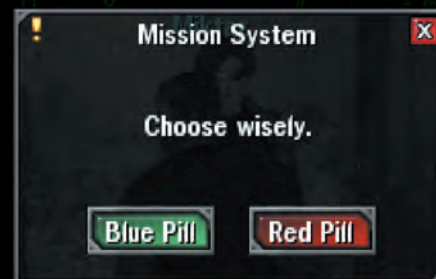
```
C:\> The Truth is Out There
Bad command or filename.
```

```
C:\> What is the Matrix?
Bad command or filename.
```

```
C:\> MatrixOnline.exe
Loading...
```

- \* Please register your nickname: Neo25hotsex69
- \* Account exists, please choose another: MorpheusCoolDude122
- \* Account exists, please choose another: Miktar
- \* Jacking into the Matrix...

Whoa. Now who in their right mind would be able to resist a MMORPG based on the highly successful Matrix trilogy? Die-hard fans of the Wachowski brothers' hit action/kung fu/special effects extravaganza would die for this game. However, if you're one of those people who didn't like the movie, or think Keanu Reeves has about as much acting talent as a dead noodle, then move along. The rest of you, take this Red Pill with me.



> Day 1... Execute

The signup process for Matrix Online is a lengthy one. Copious amounts of forms assaulted me before I was allowed to enter Credit Card details and take one step closer towards learning kung-fu. Matrix Online will set you back roughly \$12 a month, on top of the initial purchase of the game for about R300. As luck would have it, after registration the server was down due to maintenance. Matrix Online used to consist of nine independent servers, but on my first day they were being merged into three servers to promote population density. Once the servers came back online, I logged in and created my 'Residual Self Image', essentially my gaming avatar that would represent me in the Matrix. The entire Matrix Online takes place inside the Matrix.

Do you think that's air you're breathing?

The entire creation process is themed appropriately and really pulls you in. Matrix Online has a heavy emphasis on storyline, continuing directly after the events in the last movie. As time progresses Monolith, along with a script written by the Wachowski brothers, progress the story. You'll be interested to know that Morpheus is dead (all critical plot progressions are listed on the Matrix Online Website). Once I had designed my character from the ground



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up and picked an appropriately trendy set of clothes, I was whisked away to a set of tutorials which educated me about the finer points of opening containers and talking to NPCs (Non-Player Characters).

I know kung-fu and how to poach an egg.

The introduction to how combat works inside the Matrix was actually fascinating. Matrix Online uses a system called Interlock, which is essentially a more complex form of Rock, Paper, Scissors. When you fight another person, or even multiple people, combat is always one-on-one and represented by icons moving towards each other. You pick either Quick, Heavy, Block, Throw or Disarm and then, based on your character's statistics, you either succeed or fail based on what your opponent picks. After a successful 'round' in battle, Matrix Online renders that part of the fight in rather incredible detail. Since the fight conditions are predetermined by the Interlock and your stats, if you succeed at blocking an enemy's attack, your character will pull off a convincing kung-fu array of blocks and/or counter attacks. Despite the almost turn-based nature of the kung-fu combat (gunplay can also be incorporated into the kung-fu), Interlock is a great way of distilling the idea into a manageable and fun system. The back of the box describes the battle sequences as "hyper-kinetic", and for once, the back of a game box doesn't lie. Knowing kung-fu, I set off into the Matrix to play.

Welcome back, Mr. Miktar

Matrix: Mega City is the virtual city in which humanity is being kept, so as to provide long-life batteries for The Machines out in the real world. It is also the world in which you play Matrix Online. Once inside Mega City, the Lithtech engine does a sterling job of rendering possibly the most realistic cityscape seen in gaming yet. Pigeons do convincing pigeon impressions, people and cars traverse the streets and arbitrary kung-fu battles erupt wherever two players from opposing factions meet. The game steered me towards clicking on my cellphone icon, where an Operator was standing by to assign me to a mission. Once accepted, waypoint markers lead me through the city streets and into a random building. Heading up a few floors via an elevator put me on the Mission Floor, as it were. Mission Areas are assigned once a character accepts a mission, and only that character and/or party can enter that area. Impressively, every room of every floor of everything building can be a Mission Area. Completing the quest (I had to unleash some kung-fu on someone, for some reason) gave me experience and information. Since money isn't real inside the Matrix, players deal in 'information'. Essentially, it's just a fancy dress-up of 'gold'. The idea is exactly the same, just presented in a more themed way. So far, I was enjoying Matrix Online despite severe lag and extreme over-crowdedness. I headed off towards...

\* Connection Lost. Reconnect?

What the ...? The server must have crashed. I tried reconnecting, but to no avail. After a while, the Matrix Online Website reported that "there is a problem" and the servers should be back up soon. A solid nine hours later, I could reconnect. I tried logging into my character, but it kept saying the account didn't exist. Checking the Website again, it seemed that the servers had to 'roll back' a few hours due to a bug. This meant my character was never created. So...

> Day 1... Execute

Whoa. Déjà vu.

Next month: A new character, machines, teamwork, character classes, lag and the horror that is Sony Online. Whoa.





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# PREVIEWS

WANTED



## Nintendogs

**PLATFORM** DS

Cute, fluffy, friendly and you can tickle them with a stylus. They can even play with other pets via wireless. That's either really awesome or incredibly sad... You probably can't kill your puppy, but we are going to try and create at least one pit fighter.



## Total Overdose

**PLATFORM** PS2

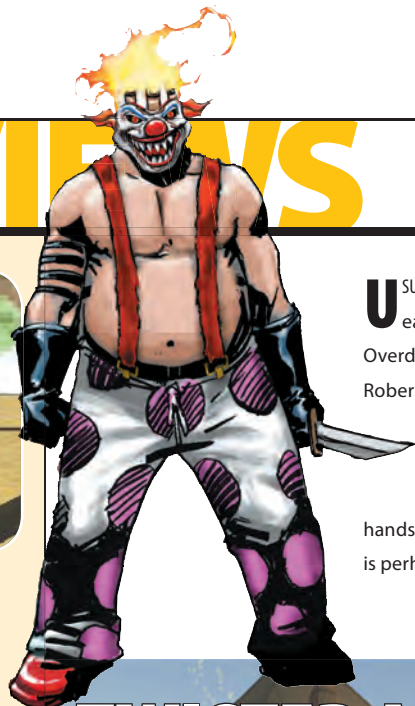
With a shot of tequila and more guns than Ted Nugent on a good day, Total Overdose is going to be the action title of the year. Style points, chain combos, stealing hats and shooting grenades in slow motion using your rifle... It's everything action movies should be.



## King Kong

**PLATFORMS** PC, PS2, Xbox, GCN, PSP, 360

A movie game that might not suck? That's not unusual anymore. With the team that made Beyond Good & Evil behind it, this should be very impressive. Play as both a character on the island trying to survive and the mighty Kong himself picking fights with dinosaurs.



# TWISTED METAL: HEAD ON



**U**SUALLY YOU GET A laundry list of what to expect from the previews each month. But here we're just going to focus on one: Total Overdose. Destined to be the sleeper hit of the year, it is GTA meets Robert Rodriguez as you gun down gangsters with machine gun guitar cases, back flip off walls and a masked Mexican wrestler. All that and more in arguably the most high-octane and enjoyable action game of 2005. Read our hands-on preview and remember its name. Total Overdose, gringo, is perhaps just what the doctor ordered for action fans.

**DEVELOPER** Invog Inc. **PUBLISHER** Sony **PLATFORMS** PSP **RELEASE DATE** Q4 2005

The long-running Twisted Metal series, complete with its deranged characters and insane vehicles, is heading for the PSP. Everyone expected it to, but that doesn't dampen the anticipation of fourteen different vehicles to choose from and crush your opponents with. The levels stretch the globe and new powers and weapons are also part of the mix. The real reason we want it is to play via wireless. Using Gameshare, players can also invite PSP owners who don't have the game for a quick spar on a level.

## SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS: LIGHTS, CAMERA, PANTS!

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

We love Spongebob Squarepants. If we have to explain this to you, you'll never understand. Perhaps because it's from the same guy who brought us Family Guy. The producers of the hit show 'The Adventures of Mermaid Man and Barnacle Boy' are in town to shoot an episode and they want some local talent as well. Expect to navigate Spongebob, Patrick, Mr. Crabs, Sandy, Squidward and even the diabolical Plankton through puzzles and challenges to get roles.





## STATE OF EMERGENCY 2

**DEVELOPER** DC Studios **PUBLISHER** Playlogic **PLATFORMS** PC, PS2, Xbox **RELEASE DATE** 2005



State of Emergency's sequel dropped off the map a while ago, but it appears to be back and promises to be bigger than ever. It's back to starting riots in order to fight the corporation, but this time there are more characters to play, as well as vehicles such as speedboats, APCs and tanks to cause mayhem with. A new reputation and gang control system give players more control, plus interrogation and a host of new weapons (and a much more populated game world) are sure to keep the chaos going.

## AND THEN THERE WERE NONE

**DEVELOPER** The Adventure Company **PUBLISHER** The Adventure Company **PLATFORMS** PC **RELEASE DATE** TBA



Okay, games from The Adventure Company are usually more miss than hit, but the studio has delivered some gems in the past. This title is based on the Agatha Christie novel of the same name and involves ten guests who go to Shipwreck Island, where their absent host accuses one of them, in a taped recording, of being a killer. Players take the role of a new eleventh character, the boatsman, who also gets trapped there and has to solve the mystery before more people die...

## DARK MESSIAH OF MIGHT & MAGIC

**DEVELOPER** Arkane **PUBLISHER** Ubisoft **PLATFORMS** PC **RELEASE DATE** 2006



Did anyone hear us say "Source"? Yup, the latest instalment in the Might & Magic group of games will be using Valve's new engine. Then again, so did the average-looking Vampire, but Dark Messiah looks considerably better. As the screens show, it's a first-person action-style RPG that reminds one of Arx Fatalis. That's not a coincidence, since that was Arkane Studios' last game. The game will also introduce Ashan, the new game world for future Might & Magic games.

## GT LEGENDS

**DEVELOPER** Simbin **PUBLISHER** Atari **PLATFORMS** PC **RELEASE DATE** Q4 2005



If you enjoyed the very technical and demanding GTR - FIA GT, you have to keep an eye out for SimBin's next title, namely this one. No points for guessing the premise: players will be able to race the classic cars that made up the GT series' rich history. Ninety of them, in fact, including the Austin Mini Cooper S, Mercedes 300 SL, Ford Capri, Porsche 906 and Ford Mustang. Expect Simbin's high attention to detail with the steering, car physics and even tracks, which will include the European circuits.

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



## Dungeon Siege 2

**PLATFORM** PC

It's back to the land of Ebb as you have new skills, new teammates and a new combat system. It's still really, really addictive.



## Puzzle Pirates

**PLATFORM** PC

Who needs a fancy MMORPG? Sometimes all it takes are a few puzzles, some singing pirates and a knack for pillaging before your life goes down the drain.



## Matrix Online

**PLATFORM** PC

No, you can't be Neo. But you can kick ass and the turn-based combat system is pretty bandwidth friendly. Thankfully there is no drudging around the basement they call Zion.



# SPESIES

MARVEL IS **FLEXING ITS GAMING MUSCLE** AGAIN. THE WORLD'S LARGEST COMIC BRAND IS PLANNING ANOTHER **BRAWLER**-STYLE TITLE USING ITS ROSTER OF SUPER HEROES, THIS TIME WITH PUBLISHING BEHEMOTH ELECTRONIC ARTS. BUT IN A CHANGE OF **TRADITION**, THE TWO COMPANIES COLLABORATED AND CREATED A WHOLE NEW SET OF SUPERHEROES FOR THE GAME, SOMETHING SOME MARVEL FANS FROWNED UPON. BUT WE'RE NOT HERE TO TALK COMICS; WE WANT GAMES AND ANYTHING THAT **PROMISES** ONE-ON-ONE FIGHTS WITH SOME OF THE MOST AWE-INSPIRING **SUPERHUMANS** IN POPULAR CULTURE SHOULD BE REALLY IMPRESSIVE. GRANTED, THE PROOF IS IN THE **PUDDING**, BUT THE INGREDIENT LIST LOOKS GOOD...



**C**OLLABORATIONS BETWEEN TWO TYPES of media usually aren't all that great. At least one of the sides gets short-changed, all for the sake of reaching a bigger audience or making a big marketing splash. But every now and then two very different companies will collaborate on a single project. Comics are not new to this ground, especially when you look at the dozens of "comic of the movie of the comic" releases over the years. And the comic industry has been friendlier towards games than anyone else. Comic-based titles have existed for almost as long as games have, and only movies have had a longer involvement, but comics definitely have had a more prolific presence.

Marvel hasn't been shy in this area. The first Marvel game was Spider-man in 1982 and subsequently most of the Marvel heroes have appeared in a game. This culminated in two respects: the upcoming Marvel MMOG and Marvel vs. Capcom in 1999. But for the first time a new set of heroes has been developed specifically for the purpose of a game. Contrary to popular belief, this wasn't EA's idea but Marvel's. The company wanted to bring new blood into comics that would appeal to a new generation of readers. Sadly the Rise of the Imperfects mini-series hasn't met with great critical acclaim. Thankfully the game looks like it will be something impressive.

It's not hard not to come to this conclusion. At face value, Rise of the Imperfects looks like most EA games: stylish, well produced and arguably devoid of any real substance. It's not that we're anti-EA, but the company has been sacrificing innovation for familiar concepts that definitely will sell games. Also, when one initially looks into this brawler, it's very easy to get swept up by the marketing machine around it – talks of 'innovations' like a power bar and large, destructive 3D environments, etc. Well, the power bar has been around since Street Fighter II, and Capcom's Powerstone on the Dreamcast already laid the groundwork for extended 3D arenas. But at the same time EA has a quality to surprise gamers, especially when the company allows developers to do what they want to do. The Sims, Burnout 3, Battlefield – these are all examples of development gone right, backed by lots of money. Rise of the Imperfects, despite its obvious spin-off nature, seems to fall in this class. It's apt to remember that EA also produced another spin-off brawler that impressed us: the gangsta-rap opus, Def Jam Vendetta.

**T**HE PLOT IN IMPERFECTS isn't a new one: an alien scientist, Dr. Rorekel, decides to make the perfect beings and the Imperfects are born. But as is always the case, they aren't all that perfect and some of them turn out to be pretty nasty. Thus Earth's superheroes get involved. The development and design crews had full access to Marvel's entire hero family, and they settled on ten popular choices known for their cash potential, such as Wolverine, Spider-Man, The Thing, Elektra and Iron Man (Venom has also been added). While criticism has been launched that these are the obvious 'cash cow' characters in Marvel's line-up, they do add a wide range of powers and styles to the game – which is important as we'll explain in a minute. On top of that, EA collaborated with Marvel to create the Imperfects, a set of eight grungier and grittier superheroes sporting names like Brigade and Johnny Ohm. The initial designs came from Paul Catling, who worked on the Spider-Man and Harry Potter movies, while renowned comic artists Mark Millar and Jae Lee handled the final writing and design respectively. The point was to be more "graphic novel" and less "Wham! Bang! Pow!" This gritty feel



#### VITAL INFO

##### Platforms

PS2 Xbox NCC PSP

##### Developer

EA Games

##### Publisher

Electronic Arts

##### Supplier

EA Africa [011] 516 8300

##### Genre

Fighting

##### Release Date

Q4 2005





works well with the visual style of the game, which reminded us of Def Jam Vendetta. But while Imperfects probably uses the same base technology, the engine was more or less built from scratch to accommodate the game's ambition and scope: super heroes fighting.

This is the bit that could make or break Imperfects. EA has a vision here: superheroes beating each other up. One thing to keep in mind is that Imperfects will be a mainstream brawler and is not likely to appeal to the hardcore fraternities of Tekken, Mortal Kombat and Soul Calibur. The game does away with memorising combos. Instead, every character uses the same control scheme and power-moves are all executed the same way. To create variation, the control scheme is contextual. Actions depend on what character you use and their position relative to their opponent and the level. This means that, for example, jumping with Spider-Man will bring a leap, a bound up against a wall or a stream of web shooting up and swinging the hero across the stage. Players will have to learn how characters work and use the level design and fight to build combos and beat up opponents. Each superhero obviously comes with its own powers, determined by a power bar. The exhaustibility of the bar depends on the hero: more powerful heroes will drain it faster. Along with this, weaker characters will be faster, bringing some balance to the game. But unlike most fighting titles, Imperfects emphasises the need to use the level to your advantage, since the heroes aren't restricted: Iron Man can fly, which would put Wolverine at a disadvantage since he's a close-quarter fighter.

**I**T NATURALLY BRINGS ALONG more fears of imbalance, the key element that makes or breaks a fighting title. What's to stop someone from using The Thing to pummel everyone into oblivion or using Iron Man's flying and ranged attacks to pick someone off from a distance? When Soul Calibur II had Link and Spawn in the respective GameCube and Xbox versions, they quickly stood out as over-powered and superior characters, ruining their use. So in Imperfects the levels will play a big role in creating balance. Environments

will both be from familiar Marvel settings, such as the Avengers' mansion, and new areas specific to the game and comic mini-series. A big change is that the fighting arenas will be very destructible and almost everything lying around – from cars, trucks and barrels to debris – can be used as weapons. But the characters' agility and power determine what can be used and how easily things can be dodged. Wolverine won't have The Thing's strength to pick up and throw trucks, but The Thing will take a lot more head-on instead of avoiding attacks. The context-based control system will impact on this as well. While EA hasn't stated that levels completely deform, boasting about superhero scale combat certainly suggests this and an ever-changing level layout will determine advantages and disadvantages as the fight progresses.

Imperfects will have two modes: versus and story mode. The first is for multiplayer while the latter is a single-player campaign that will take around nine hours to complete. Similar to Mortal Kombat's Konquest mode, it doubles as a tutorial for characters, but hopefully much better executed than the Mortal Kombat variant. An interesting twist is that players have to choose four characters which are rotated in a relay fashion as the story progresses. You can swap a character for another, but by limiting the active characters, more strategy is applied to how to approach the missions. Also, if you don't keep a character in the group, you won't see the conclusion to its story. And instead of simply replicating the versus mode, players can face multiple characters and control the rotation of the camera.


**O**N THE ONE HAND you have a soulless cash-in with characters clearly engineered to appeal to a new audience. On the other you have EA's reputation of generally doing a good job with a game, if not always a substantial one. If Rise of the Imperfects does what it sets out to do – a brawler of superhero proportions – we could be in for a treat, as only games like Dragonball Z: Budokai has truly managed the feeling of super-human characters involved in a titanic struggle and more games in this niche are welcome. **NAG**










 he year is 1989, and deep in the sweltering heat of the Mayan jungle, Ernesto Cruz catches his breath for a moment before boarding a DEA plane. Unfortunately for him, he is thrown out of the plane during flight and his death is reported as due to an overdose.

Tommy and Ramiro are the twin sons of Ernesto, the first an undercover DEA agent and the latter a delinquent with a penchant for destruction. Tommy, disabled by a hand grenade accident convinces his brother to take part in an undercover operation closing in on the ruthless drug cartel overlord Papa Muerte.

Ramiro plays the reluctant hero, spurred on only by the thought of avenging his father and the chance to exact wholesale destruction across the stylised Mexican neighbourhoods. While the story is amiable and helps keep things moving along, make no mistake: Total Overdose is not a soppy character-driven epic.

It is an over-the-top, adrenaline-fuelled, free-style 3<sup>rd</sup> person cinematic adventure. A Grand Theft Mexico that has ingested one Burrito too many, if you will. Explosive action taken to a new level and much like the movie of its inspiration, Total Overdose is a true

underdog title from a relatively unknown developer hoping to take the world by storm:

 nitially the game plays out in linear fashion as you gun through the Mayan jungle as Ernesto before his accident. Then it opens up into a free-roaming fake Mexican city complete with innocent bystanders, cars and other bric-a-brac for Ramiro to either interact with or shoot. In true Grand Theft tradition you can hijack cars as a means of transport, but this isn't entirely necessary. To keep the action intense, you can opt to go directly to a mission instead of driving there yourself. Cars do have a noted advantage: they serve as wonderful explosive missiles when driven full tilt into a group of enemies.

The original owner of the car (who doesn't get thrown out when hijacked) will even shout protests as you drive him around and eventually into a lake/wall/car/group of people.

Most of the combat in Total Overdose is handled on foot and takes inspiration from titles such as Max Payne in more ways than one. Ramiro can dodge bullets with the expected slowdown provided by a depleting adrenaline bar, but that is where the Max Payne similarities end. While in



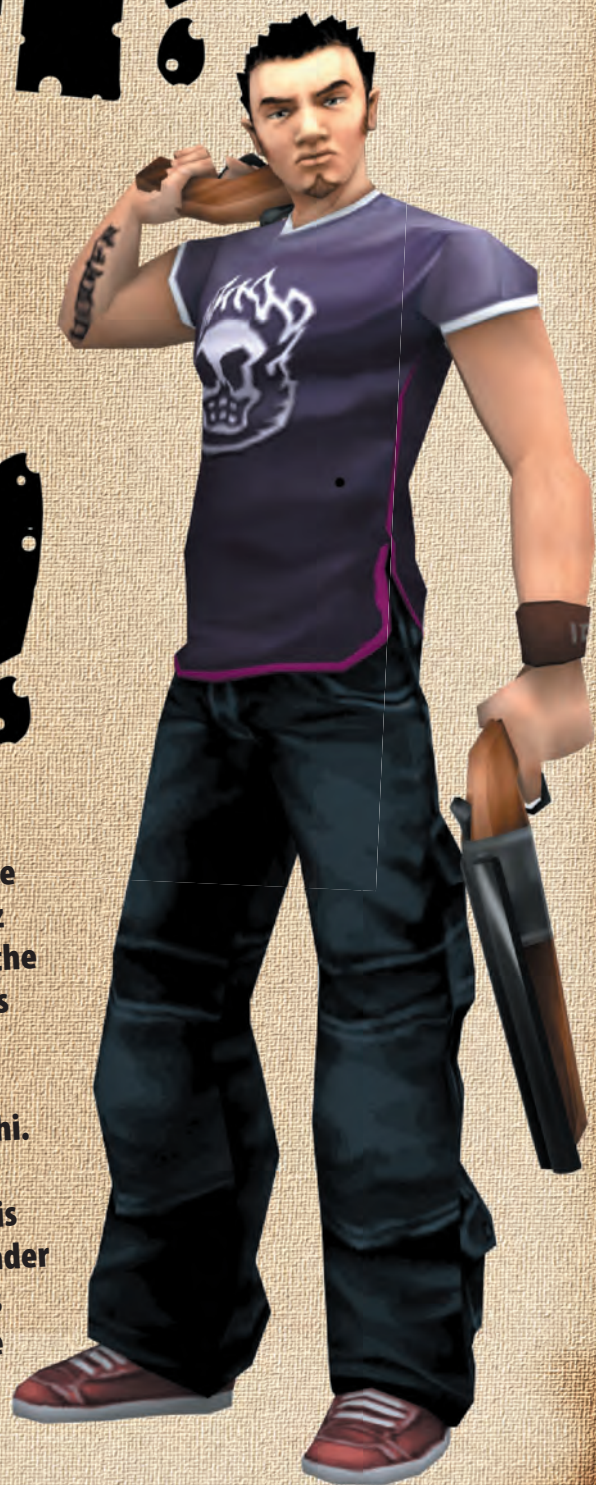
# ¡ANDALE!

# ¡HAZ

# MI DÍA!

In terms of independent film-making, the 1992 movie *El Mariachi* by Robert Rodriguez set the benchmark for inventive direction and production. With little to no budget, Rodriguez gave the world a mini-masterpiece. The entire concept is all the more incredible when one realises that the majority of it was shot in the one-take.

*Total Overdose* is not a game about the movie. In terms of plot, direction and cast it shares no elements with *El Mariachi*. What *Total Overdose* does have in common with Rodriguez's series (*El Mariachi*, *Desperado*, *Once Upon A Time in Mexico*) is sheer spicy Mexican styling mixed heartily with tequila-bender fuelled action. While not a game about the movie, it may as well be a spiritual translation right down to the guitar-case machineguns.







Max Payne one could achieve kills in wonderfully stylish fashions thanks to the acrobatics and bullet-time, the game didn't really care how you killed the bad guys as long as you did. In *Total Overdose*, the game applauds style and execution.

**W**ith an almost Tony Hawk inspired combo system, Ramiro can use his full range of acrobatic moves and link them together to perform impressive kills that both give score and take into account timing. For instance, you can either shoot someone in the vanilla way (bullet, head), or you can run up a wall sideways, flip off and then shoot someone in the head with perfect timing. Depending on how many types of moves (and there are plenty) you string together to kill enemies in succession, the more points you are awarded at the end of your streak. You can even mix in vehicular combinations for effect. There is a certain joy attained from leaping out of a moving car and gunning down enemies not caught in the explosion resulting from the wonderful marriage of car and wall.

The points you gather from your stunts aren't just for show. As you progress, new skills are unlocked. Each skill is functional and very important, especially the skill that lets you use two shotguns at once, *akimbo*. Points also expand your maximum health and ammo capacity, always a good thing in a fire fight.

Combo moves resulting in kills also have the wonderful property of awarding the player with *Loco Moves*. These are stackable and their





variety is refreshing. When triggered by selecting the move you want, these Loco Moves can result in a variety of things. The most memorable Loco Move is the El Mariachi (obviously inspired by Desperado) which awards Ramiro with two machinegun guitar cases that fire continuously for a limited time. It even kicks in the sound of a crowd chanting Ramiro's name, just for style. Other Loco Moves include summoning a screaming Mexican wrestler with a machete, doing a spinning jump into the air with Uzis blazing or even lowering your head and running around like a bull. The Loco Moves are funny and functional, often capable of tipping a one-sided fire fight in your favour.

Once all the dust has settled and the explosions stop, there are a variety of missions to attempt. Missions come in two flavours: story-progression missions are only available once you have amassed a certain amount of points, and mini-missions award you with points and/or Loco Moves. The missions vary their form and function to keep things fresh. Some missions see Ramiro moving crates with a forklift so as to reach a boxed-in car, while others are the more explosive 'go here and kill all these people' kind. Total Overdose doesn't bother with stealth and/or sneaking missions, which is a blessing as it wouldn't fit into the attitude of the game.

While the voice acting from the cast of characters may be laughably bad in a charming kind of way, the music is terrific. Every track has a zesty Spanish flavour and compliments the action of the game perfectly. Even the theme song is delightfully catchy. The music has been designed to take into account the player's actions. Once the mayhem starts, a basic background ditty kicks in. If you do well and continue the carnage, more and more layers of music pile on until eventually the full-blown cacophony of Mexican rap/ opera/classical/rock assaults your ears.

There are so many things that Total Overdose does right and almost nothing it does wrong. One could argue that the bad voice acting and slightly dated look of the graphics have no place in today's market, but then you'd be missing the point. What it lacks in graphical fidelity and high production values, Total Overdose more than makes up for with its sheer attitude and funky game dynamics. Ramiro is your typical rebel-without-a-cause character who'll either appeal to or annoy gamers, while the plot makes for good filler in-between the action. Deadline Games has done an excellent job with Total Overdose and in its final stages looks to be the undisputed sleeper hit of this year. **INACT!**



#### VITAL INFO

##### Platforms

PS2 XBOX PC

##### Developer

Deadline Games

##### Publisher

Eidos/SCI

##### Supplier

TBA

##### Genre

Action

##### Release Date

Q4 2005



# WELCOME TO HELL

**W**HY SHOULD YOU PAY any heed to the new development studio Flagship? Clearly it's one of impressive calibre because Namco is comfortable enough to publish Hellgate, Flagship's first game. It will also be Namco's first PC game, so the stakes are fairly high here. Flagship has something to its credit though: a whole whack of former Blizzard developers, including former Blizzard boss Bill Roper.

We'll keep the jokes of over-priced games and legal action against community projects aside. Flagship deserves a clean slate and Hellgate: London definitely deserves your and our undivided attention. An FPS/RPG hybrid might not sound that hot - the greats in this sub-genre are few and far between - but Hellgate made one big splash at E3 earlier this year and those who have seen it can't stop talking about it. Thus we decided to speak to someone who can talk a lot about Hellgate - Bill Roper himself.



**VITAL INFO**

■ Platforms

PC

■ Developer

Namco

■ Publisher

Flagship Studios

■ Supplier

TBA

■ Genre

FPS

■ Release Date

2006





### What kind of obstacles have you had to overcome for your game?

Since Flagship is a small company, we spend a lot of time with each other so no one feels like a cog in the machine. This also means, though, that we have to take on more tasks than normal, and if there is one real difficulty we face, it is in trying to do too much too fast. We have a lot of ideas and goals, and making sure we approach them sanely - and intelligently - is a constant struggle. I also think that an obstacle we are facing is in not doing too much with the game. By that, I mean we have so many good ideas, if we tried to put them all in, we'd never ship. Boiling the game design down to its fundamental elements and then building around that core will make for the best game. While we all realise that, the temptation to get 'just one more cool thing' in can sometimes be distracting. Fortunately, we've been down this part of the road before, know the potential for hitting major potholes, and are very serious about avoiding them!



### Is innovation the real issue and focus for the team?

While the concept for Hellgate is quite different from what we've done in the past in many ways, there are some specific design philosophies that we would incorporate into any game we did, and those are easy to spot in our current game. We place a strong design emphasis on focusing on what's fun, throwing out what's not, and iterating, iterating, iterating! Some of the more important elements are making the game simple to learn and easy to play, while offering amazing depth and replay ability, based on highly randomised and then customisable content. Also, we make sure that we keep going over the game and its design every step of the way so we can do everything possible to make it as much fun as it can be.

Basically, we envision a game that we would love to play, and then we make it. We think that fans of our past games will see this and appreciate it. Gamers can expect an exciting, compelling, addictive experience with a strong multiplayer component and a lot of content to keep them coming back for more and more and more!

### Is there any reason you have chosen London as the setting for the game?

The world of Hellgate is a blending of fact and fantasy, of the real and the rumoured. We have done a lot of research, not only into the look and feel of modern day London, but into the history of the city itself. There is so much there: from its inception as the ancient Londinium, to the years of Roman occupation, to the Elizabethan, Edwardian and Victorian eras through two World Wars. Our goal is to create a place where players experience a realistic setting that has been interweaved with myth, magic and demons to create something unlike anything they have seen before. We are using current day London, both above and below ground, as the basic model for creating the randomised environments for our game. Players will explore the devastated streets and structures of different areas within the city as well as the tunnels and locales beneath the surface.

### Hellgate blends several games. Why not stick to a specific type of game?

While there have been first-person RPGs, there has never been anything quite like Hellgate. We are creating an action orientated, fully randomised, and dynamically generated RPG with a massive cooperative online component, that combines the community and economy





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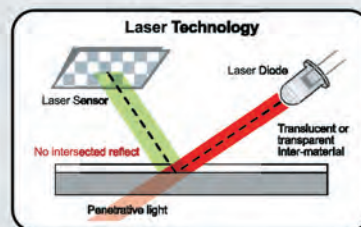
MOQ

### Specifications

Power Supply	5V
System Clock	27 MHz
Laser Diode	850 nm
Speed	28+ inches/sec
Acceleration	20g
PDAS	15x15 $\mu$ m
Scan Frequency	6,700 frames/sec.
Current consumptions (laser diode)	6mA
Sensitive to optical mouse	30X



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elements of a MMORPG with an individualised gaming experience. Imagine the massive diversity of items from Diablo II, mixed with the persistent economy and vibrant community of a MMORPG, played from the immersive perspective of Half-Life 2. Players can play the game as a stand-alone RPG or join forces with players from around the world through a dedicated online gaming destination.

#### What can players expect from the engine?

We undertook the creation of our own 3D engine because we felt that there were numerous things we needed to do from a graphics standpoint that weren't easily facilitated with existing engines. The vast amounts of randomness and how that affects lighting, for example, or how we are approaching online multiplayer would have required a major reworking of a licensed engine. The high degree of randomness leads to graphical problems and a big one was how to present global illumination. Currently, we use a hybrid light-map approach. We pre-generate a light-map containing local lighting information, such as streetlamps, and then at load-time, we calculate global lighting like moonlight and shadows. We then add this to the original light-map for that chunk of the environment. This has given us very good results, and the hellish rendition of London seems to have the unifying colour and shading that we're all accustomed to seeing in conventional fixed-layout game levels.

#### What impact will the role-playing system have on the game?

While all characters in Hellgate are humans struggling to survive in a world overrun by the minions of darkness, players can choose between male and female and will have all the basics of defining their individual looks, such as hair colour, faces and skin tone. Character development will be based on classic RPG precepts, meaning as you gain more experience in the world, you gain more skills or spells, as well as increasing your basic physical and mental statistics. Each class will have its own set of abilities, either mundane or magical in nature, and players will be able to choose a skill path to take their character down. We are looking at ways to introduce some new dynamic elements into the skill/spell system that should make even the most experienced role-player sit up and take notice.



#### Apparently weapons will be customisable. Why did you decide to do this?

Hellgate uses the concept of customisation to increase game replay ability and long-term personalised advancement for characters. In addition to the over 100 base weapon types, which all have randomised variations, we're introducing a way for players to add a layer of customisation to their items through modifications. Almost every type of item in Hellgate has a chance to have a slot on it where a specific type of mod can fit. Some items have just one slot while others can have multiple possible places for mods. Just as any item in the game, the potential power of mods increases as the character finds them at higher and higher levels. The structure of modding means that, while there are some restrictions on how many and what types can be attached to any item, the variations and level of customisation is nearly limitless.

#### What can gamers expect multiplayer-wise?

Multiplayer gaming is something that's in our blood, so you can be sure this has been a big part of our plans since the beginning of development. We're working with our partners to create a specific, dedicated online gaming destination for Hellgate that is designed to bring gamers together from around the world.

The game can be played entirely solo if that is what the player desires, but will easily support play for groups both small and large. Since all adventuring areas are completely randomised for each individual experience, we can create areas that can support groups of various sizes.

We do intend for there to be a lot of cooperative online play, so these areas need to be able to dynamically scale in difficulty to accommodate differing numbers of players. We're also creating areas that are specifically designed to accommodate large, 'raid' sized groups so that guilds can have events they can all do together. Fortunately, the self-balancing nature of a dynamically generated game makes this all very possible. **NAC**





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## VITAL INFO

■ Platforms



■ Developer

Capcom

■ Publisher

Capcom

■ Supplier

Ster Kinekor Games

[011] 445 7900

■ Genre

Survival horror

■ Release Date

TBA



*While not images from the final game, the RE5 tech trailer does show its graphical potential*



# RESIDENT EVIL 5

**H**OW LONG HAS THIS series actually been going on? Don't let the number fool you - Resident Evil has had a lot of games, especially spin-offs, all of which contributed in some way to the RE universe. All except RE 4 - this took familiar protagonist Leon and placed him into an Umbrella Corp-less game world, hunting mad townsfolk and cultists instead of t-virus zombies. Ironically this was also the game that breathed new life into the franchise and showed its new potential. RE5 producer, Jun Takeuchi, explained that the game caused a lot of excitement at Capcom and showed where the series could go. So naturally Resident Evil 5 will take on its predecessor's approach.

But it also returns to the original story line involving zombies and the Umbrella Corporation - some have speculated that the game might even conclude the RE saga. The main character is believed to be Chris Redfield from the original RE, but Takeuchi remained quiet on the topic. What we do know is that the game will be very impressive, graphically. These screenshots are from the trailer produced for the PS3 and Xbox 360 showcases, and the team went to ridiculous lengths for detail. For instance, every strand of hair of his beard is a polygon and every one of the character's teeth was modelled. Even the muscle structures were created to give realistic skin movement. But that's the perk of doing a demonstration for a trailer - you aren't bogged down

with calculations for gameplay-related elements, such as a haphazard camera or lots of characters. The final game won't have this amount of faces, but it does show where the developers are heading. Real-time physics will play a large role (to the point that Takeuchi even speculated using middleware for this). Still, the next generation hardware will be used to full effect - age will be one thing clearly visible in the game's characters.

The storyline is still kept at bay and there is speculation that the game will feature multiple paths, something Takeuchi indicated he's very keen on. Of course more will be revealed in due time. Next generation games take at least three to five years to develop (according to Capcom) and while Resident Evil 5 is the company's top priority, it is still far from ready for release. In fact, all that we've seen so far is what the trailer showed and it is unlikely that what was created for the trailer will translate directly into the final game. Resident Evil 5 is also a true-blue next generation title, heading for the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 (it appears Capcom isn't that keen on Nintendo at the moment).

So RE fans will have to wait. But after the incredible Resident Evil 4, there's plenty of reason to give this game its time - it will definitely blow us away when it is released. Think about it, look at the screenshots and imagine what the monsters will look like. And the sound... **NAG**





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A real entertainment system needs to stimulate your sense of sight as well as sense of hearing to deliver a total audio and video experience. With the high-profile introduction of new graphics interface such as PCI Express and video enhancement technologies implemented on computer displays, most consumers know that PCs have caught up in the entertainment market in terms of visual quality. However, many have yet to realize that audio performance on PCs is not far behind.

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↑ Stack Cool2- Noiseless and effective cooling design



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## VITAL INFO

### Platforms



### Developer

GRIN

### Publisher

Ubisoft

### Supplier

Megarom [011] 234 2680

### Genre

Tactical squad

### Release Date

2006

## Firstlook



# GHOST RECON: ADVANCED WARFIGHTER

**Advanced Warfighter truly is a next-gen title with crisp visuals**

**G**HOST RECON SUITABLY SNUCK in under the radar when it arrived. While the Tom Clancy name definitely gave it some clout, it wasn't based on a novel and didn't garner the same attention Rainbow Six and Splinter Cell did. It also appeared at a time when tactical shooters were still new and still finding their feet. It was a gem and instantly appealed to a certain group of gamers who preferred outdoor military tactical operations to the in-door environments of SWAT 3 or confined missions of Rainbow Six. The game was ported to the console platforms, which gave the sequel an over-the-shoulder point of view a lot of fans didn't appreciate. Eventually Ghost Recon 2 was cancelled for console versions. At E3 this year, Ubisoft revealed that Ghost Recon is far from dead - instead it is perhaps the most impressive tactical shooter yet made.

In development by GRIN, the new game looks nothing less than spectacular. That's because Ubisoft decided to take advantage of the advances in modern technology. This is also perhaps part of the reason why the name was changed to

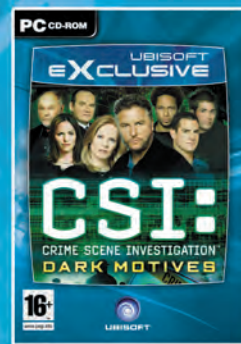
Advanced Warfighter, because the second Ghost Recon sequel truly looks advanced, sporting an eerie but effective film-grain feel - as if you were watching a TV broadcast. This look, combined with high-resolution graphics and highly detailed models, definitely makes for the most realistic-looking tactical shooter yet - even well ahead of the Full Spectrum Warrior games.





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As usual, the action takes place in the near future. It is the year 2013, and the president has been kidnapped. On top of that, there are some very dangerous terrorists doing the rounds, and so are very precious nuclear codes. So it's time to send in the Ghosts, the elite tactical squad used to go behind enemy lines and get the job done with as little of a mess as possible. Perhaps in a sentiment to avoid current world clichés regarding terrorism, the game will take place in its entirety in Mexico City. Being just shy of a decade from now, the game world is fairly familiar, but liberties could be taken to portray the changes explained through the story. The real advancement though comes with the Ghost units themselves.

Advanced Warfighter's weapons technology is based on research done by the US military and it all centres around the Integrated Warfighter System (IWS). It sounds pretty advanced, but in essence it's a better way for the player to manage his squads and the various events that happen around the combat area. Each soldier is connected via satellite to one another and a commander can get instant point-of-view feedback from his own squads, other allied forces and drones in the area. Players will also have access to advanced surveillance and air strikes, as well as some vehicles to order.

This might sound strangely familiar: Full Spectrum Warrior 2 is also boasting remote command of squads and vehicles, but Advanced Warfighter keeps it authentically Ghost Recon with a blend of action and planning. The console versions will use the over-the-shoulder approach, but GRIN has gone to the lengths of developing a more unique PC game. In the latter, PC gamers have the preferred first-person view. To compliment the inherent higher accuracy of a mouse and keyboard, the enemy AI and aggression will be higher and the maps have been remodelled with more cover terrain. We can also expect both the PC and 360 versions to look very impressive. A final notable addition to the PC gameplay is having access to the planning map at any time, so that commanders can change strategies if things go wrong. Basically the console versions will

be far more action focused, while the PC game leans towards the traditional tactical origins of Ghost Recon.

Multiplayer will feature in all the versions, though Ubisoft and GRIN have been quiet about this aspect. It is likely, though, that it will follow the usual model where players can take up the various positions in the Ghost Squads. Since the Tom Clancy games revolutionised the use of headsets and microphones in console multiplayer, you can expect VoIP as well.

Ghost Recon fans became worried when the second game didn't live up to expectations and the series didn't seem destined to go the same route as other titles from Ubisoft's tactical stable. Advanced Warfighter has blown everyone who has seen it away and perhaps created an even bigger interest in the genre than there was before. Between this and Full Spectrum Warrior: Ten Hammers, 2006 is definitely going to be a great year for tactics junkies. **NAG**

*The PC version is in first person, while consoles use over-the-shoulder*







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## VITAL INFO

### Platforms



### Developer

EA Sports

### Publisher

EA

### Supplier

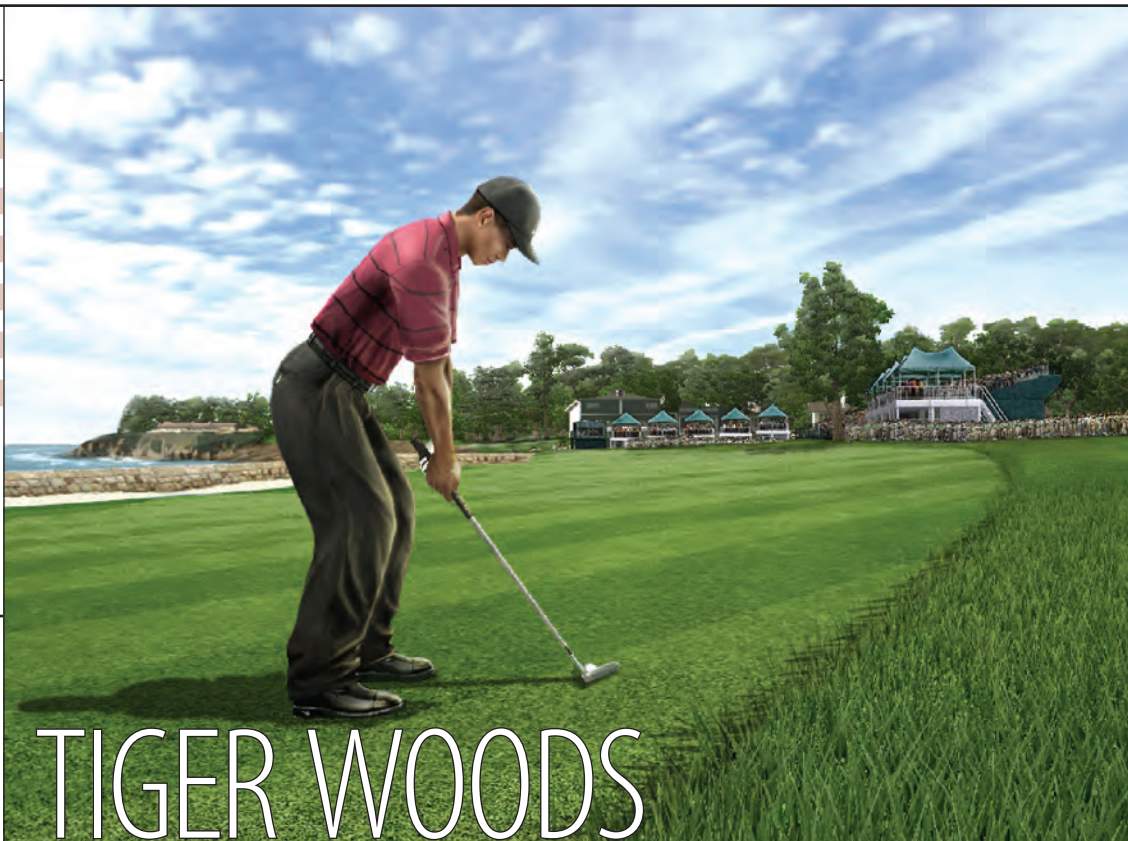
EA Africa [011] 516 8300

### Genre

Sport

### Release Date

TBA



# TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2006

**Check it out!**  
*Individually rendered blades of grass. How cool is that?*

**O**KAY, WE'LL CONFESS. NAG'S coverage of sports titles has not been superb and we're sure sports aficionados would love to see more from their favourite genre. And this preview might not change that problem, but maybe it can. Why? Because even if you don't like golf, just take a look at these screenshots from the Xbox 360 version. If sports titles are going to look like this and better, we just might start looking at them exclusively!

EA has endured a lot of criticism about how it develops games, a lot of which are well-founded. A lot of avid gamers don't like the publisher's cookie-cutter mentality, releasing new versions of games with obvious graphic and information improvements, but still essentially the same as the one before. The golf games, though, have been more of a flagship for EA's sports innovation, even more so than the FIFA and Madden series.

Should we credit Microsoft's long-running Links series, which provided a benchmark for golf simulators, especially in terms of control schemes? EA has since taken over this role. The Tiger Woods series revolutionised both EA's control schemes and character creation systems. Naturally these are in the next game, powered by next-generation brute force (note that a lot of the advanced features mentioned don't necessarily apply to the older platforms). The character creation system will be more robust than ever before - which says a lot - while the control scheme will use both analogue

sticks so that players can shape shots. This will be in all the console versions.

The next-gen flair comes with the courses themselves. The terrain is more detailed and reflects the bumps, curves and nooks of the course more accurately. This is complimented by more advanced physics, so the little white ball will act more like you expect it should (except when it goes into the rough, naturally). Lighting and weather effects will play a larger role and the more powerful hardware allows for more realistic movement, crowds and grasslands.

The sports genre has progressed to a point where changes are not leaps and bounds anymore, but small steps. That's because in terms of a game, a lot of them can only improve what they already have and little ground has been left unbroken. But the next generation presents developers with a lot more options, especially in delivering realism. Tiger Woods, Madden, FIFA, NASCAR and even the Rugby titles - watch all of these in the future. Meanwhile, we're taking up golf. **NAG**





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## VITAL INFO

Platforms

PS2 XBOX360 N64

Developer

Radical Games

Publisher

VU Games

Supplier

MIDigital [011] 723 1967

Genre

Action

Release Date

October 2005

*The Abomination, The Hulk's opponent, is a formidable foe*



# THE HULK: ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION

INTELLIGENT GAMEPLAY MIGHT BE a big deal these days. Involved storylines, mind-bending puzzles and complicated character studies are something that the general games press corps laud and admire. At the end of the day though, you can't beat the sheer value of a destroy-everything, crush-anything title. These titles go far back to the tradition of the classic Rampage. But in all the years of comic-to-game translations, the one character fully capable of this has never had the chance. Thankfully someone finally woke up to The Hulk's real potential.

The title says it all: Ultimate Destruction. What sets this title apart from other former Hulk games is the ability to destroy pretty much everything in your way. Fans of the character know of his colossal strength and great physical feats. For instance, The Hulk can leap more than twenty stories in the game if he has the momentum, and that's just the beginning of it.

Based completely around the comic, the story is about Bruce Banner's confrontation with Emil Blonsky, aka The Abomination. The game won't feature Bruce as a playable character - it's all Hulk, and with that in mind, it's everything

you'd want the Hulk to do. Everything in the levels will be destructible and most objects can be picked up as weapons. Some can also be bent and changed to form new weapons: for instance, ripping a car in two gives The Hulk two massive metal fists. Objects and stuff ripped from buildings can also be used as shields.

To compliment this, players will have over 150 unique moves, seventy of which can be unlocked during the course of the story, which stretches over eight chapters and thirty missions. There are an additional forty side-missions and the main branch features six boss battles and two different







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**Hulk smash! Hulk break! Hulk jump! It's a Hulk party!**

environments: the city and badlands. In all of these, The Hulk will be able to run up buildings, through walls and come crushing down from unbelievable heights. When you deal with the most physically powerful being in existence, you should be able to do all of that. Okay, perhaps he isn't the most powerful, but players will definitely get that feeling when playing the game.

The Hulk will meet his match several times, though. Apart from The Abomination, there are even larger foes, including massive super-mechs designed to stop player onslaughts. The world will also be spiced with smaller tasks - for example: players can grab ambulances and take them to people who are injured. Okay, to finish such a task you throw said ambulance into a hospital, but it's all about intentions anyway. And as is standard these days with games, professional voice acting will be in the game, including work from Ron Perlman (Hellboy), arguably a favourite actor amongst gamers.

The detail curve is significantly higher in this title. In fact, everything that was wrong with other Hulk games has been removed and the technology available is really being pushed to create the ultimate experience in destruction. Which is why it's called Ultimate Destruction and even gamers who don't care about The Hulk should love the fact that you can smash everything in existence out of existence. Just what you need after a day at the office. **NAG**





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**MARVEL**



**VITAL INFO**

- **Platforms**
- **Developer**  
Midway LA
- **Publisher**  
Midway
- **Supplier**  
Ster Kinekor Games  
[011] 445 7900
- **Genre**  
Action adventure
- **Release Date**  
Q4 2005



*Midway once again wants to expand MK into new genres. Hopefully fans will approve*



# MORTAL KOMBAT: SHAOLIN MONKS

**F**IGHTING GAMES HAVE ALWAYS been a stoic bunch – they’re about beating seven shades of breakfast out of your opponent. They dabble in story and such, but these never reach any real depth. Occasionally there are spin-offs such as DOA Hardcore Volleyball or the pathetic Death by Degrees, but no one has ever taken the idea and ran with it. Midway has been tempted by releasing Mortal Kombat Mythologies - the first and only of the series looking at Sub Zero’s life. But you can’t keep a good idea down, and now fans will be treated to a game exploring the events between the first and second games from the perspective of two of Earthrealm’s best warriors: Lui Kang and Kun Lao.

Obviously we’ve fought with these characters before. So Shaolin Monks breaks from the fighter mould and heads into action-adventure. Players can take charge of one monk (or play co-op with a friend) and complete the storyline - this hasn’t been revealed yet, but as we’re dealing with Mortal Kombat here, this bit isn’t important.

Why not? Well, if there is one thing MK stands head above shoulders above any of its peers, it is violence and gore. Since hitting arcades thirteen years ago, the Midway series has never backed down from showing everything in living crimson colour (bar a few censorship episodes). Shaolin Monks embraces this tradition wholeheartedly and we have to approve. Comparisons (because of the genre) have been made to Prince of Persia and God of War, but Shaolin Monks isn’t that prolific in its game design. But it is far more combat-focused and extensively gorier than either of the

other games. When in a fight, your character will be able to attack in four directions (similar to the Prince’s multi-directional combat) and the series takes a few other ideas, such as bounding against walls. Weapons (courtesy of the alter MK games) also appear, including a massive sword that can cleave an opponent in half - vertically and horizontally. The game world has lots of traps and particularly violent ways to dispatch of someone. Finally, MK fans will be glad to hear that the fatalities remain and are far more simplified than in the original series.

Fighting game spin-offs are always dubious in their nature and no one has had particular luck in this field. But Shaolin Monks looks polished, sticks to its ethos and has everything MK fans want to see without having to climb a fighter ladder. **NAG**





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# PREVIEW

## VITAL INFO

Platforms

PC PS2 Xbox

Developer

IO Interactive

Publisher

Eidos

Supplier

TBA

Genre

Tactical Stealth

Release Date

Q4 2005



Agent 47 is back and still man-handling people

# HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY



**A**GENT 47 IS BACK! But you've heard that before. In fact, the world's deadliest assassin has been back twice before and he's in his third sequel now. Who would have thought that a series that involved the slow and calculated planning needed to assassinate a target would be so popular? It has stood the test of time, combining constant innovations in graphics and techniques to keep fans happy - not unlike the Splinter Cell series. The bald-headed killer, we'd all dig to be, has been around longer than Sam Fisher and knows more tricks than Solid Snake.

Like any long-running series, you can only go so far with marginal gameplay improvements. The third game already deviated from the storyline, instead looking at past missions of Agent 47 and allowing players to try out specific hits not really connected to a larger storyline. The fourth Hitman game goes back to the original idea of one long story, but it combines that with the freelancing style of the third game.

Agent 47 is still working for the agency NEC, which has had other agents show up dead. It's clear someone is slowly wiping out the agency. But who and why? Naturally it will be up to the player to discover this plot. Before we can get to that, though, our trusty assassin needs to make

some money first. As the name suggests, the fourth Hitman game is all about the money.

IO Interactive, still doing the development honours for the series, has taken familiar elements of Hitman and expanded them with a cash-based system. A player's efficiency and intuitiveness during a hit will bring a certain amount of cash. How well one performs on a mission determines what other missions open up. Notoriety is a big factor in the game and you'll need cash to keep this down. A particularly messy mission means a rise in this area, and perhaps paying the NEC to cover things up.

In addition, weapons are also purchased with the cash that you make. These in turn determine how well you can execute a mission. In the tradition of Hitman, there will be multiple ways to kill a target, and your weapons could determine what is possible. For instance, enough cash could buy a sniper rifle along with a silencer upgrade - the alternative is to get up close and personal which is definitely more risky. So, the more proficient and cleaner a kill is, the more cash the player makes, and more mission and weapon options will be available.

Not to rest on its laurels, IO also added a few extra moves for Agent 47. It is now possible to





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take someone hostage, as a human shield, should things get sticky, or if you want to remove a target out of the area. If you run into an armed guard, there is a range of disarming manoeuvres to pull off and remove the guard's weapon. A small but nice touch is that Agent 47 can now take a gun out of its holster and keep it behind his back with the coolest addition being the ability to use nearly anything as a weapon. For example, the agent can use a pen to stab someone in the neck with.

The puzzle element for kills still remains. Each mission has multiple ways to take care of a target and some of them require a bit of thinking. On a trip to Paris you are contracted to take out a singer during a stage rehearsal. One option is to replace the stage gun she is shot with, while another is to rig the stage chandelier to fall on her at the right time. These are only two of many methods. Another example is when you have to kill someone at a photo shoot. You can replace the photographer with ease, but this first requires poisoning one of the models' dogs because it will bark when it doesn't recognise you. Don't expect much globe-trotting though, Blood Money's 13 missions largely take place in the US (apart from the mentioned trip to Paris).

The Hitman series has become a stalwart for the thinking person. Moral groups might decry its content, but the game demands a lot from its players and Blood Money wants to expand that even further, both in scope and in player options. If pulled off, this might be the best Hitman game yet. **NAG**







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**VITAL INFO**

- Platforms
- PS2
- Developer  
Game Republic
- Publisher  
SCEE
- Supplier  
Ster Kinekor Games  
[011] 445 7900
- Genre  
Action/RPG
- Release Date  
October 2005



*Pretty, action-packed and very clever - the Japanese strike again*



# GENJI: DAWN OF THE SAMURAI

**T**AKING INSPIRATION FROM MOVIES such as 'Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon', Genji has an undeniably and beautifully crafted aesthetic. A rare commodity in gaming, Genji takes a visually artistic approach towards its graphics and its gameplay, both elements working towards a wonderful synergy.

Autumnal forests, grand eastern palaces and blood soaked feudal battlegrounds with incredible attention to detail serve as a backdrop for the player's own legend.

In yet another rare instance, Genji plays as good as it looks - slick and deadly manoeuvres, motion captured from a Samurai Sword-master, all tied into a responsive control scheme. Combos, super-moves, parries and more are easily executed, but require quick thinking and excellent timing to be effective.

To help gamers along with the timing aspect, Genji features 'Mind's Eye' style bullet-time limited activation, but utterly necessary in the later battles against numerous foes. When activated, the game slows to syrup and enemies back away to consider their attack. Then, they'll charge one by one (or sometimes in groups) and the player has to press the correct button at just the right time. If successful, your character anticipates the enemies' movements with lightning precision and unleashes a glorious ballet of counters and kills. These are framed with a final score of your reaction times, accompanied by the expected stylish explosion of cherry leaves.

A rather unique artificial intelligence, developed in conjunction with top Japanese fight director Mitsuhiro Seike, constantly controls the action around the player.

This transforms each battle sequence into a carefully choreographed kung-fu extravaganza. An example of this is how, when faced with multiple enemies and a general, the general will order the lower-ranking enemies to move in first before attempting to engage you himself. Small touches such as these add up over time and create something truly unique and memorable.

As an action/RPG, Genji also includes all the trimmings one would expect. You can craft your own weapons and armour from components found throughout the world, and play as a second character Benki (a large, slow moving giant of a man). Both the primary character (a quick samurai-like protagonist) and Benki have very different styles and require different mindsets to play effectively.

Genji sets itself apart with its enchanting story, fluid gameplay and truly outstanding visuals. There is no doubt that Genji will be a sleeper hit for this year. **NAG**





*A COMMON ENEMY*



*AN UNCOMMON ALLIANCE*

# X-MEN LEGENDS II

RISE OF APOCALYPSE II

X-Men-Legends2.co.uk

Available October 2005



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## AWARDS CRITERIA

*In case you didn't know yet...*

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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

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Recommended for someone looking for a fresh, vibrant and original experience

70

**VITAL INFO**

■ Platforms



■ Suggested Retail Price

R 299

■ Developer

Digital Jesters

■ Publisher

Irrational Games

■ Supplier

WWE [011] 462 0150

■ Genre

Action RPG

■ Age Restriction

12+

■ Minimum Specs

Pentium 3 800MHz

128MB RAM

4x CD-ROM

32MB Radeon 7000 Video Card

700MB HDD



Games reviewed on  
Rectron machines

*Below: An*

*alternative use*

*for a traffic light?*

*As a bludgeoning*

*weapon, of*

*course!*



# FREEDOM FORCE VS. THE THIRD REICH

**T**HE GAME RESEMBLES A cross between Syndicate (for those of you who can remember that far back) and Diablo, wrapped in a 3D engine. In single-player mode, players experience a fairly long mission-based campaign with a rich story line – rich also in cheesy melodrama, but given that this game is comic-inspired, this is not only acceptable, but actually perfectly appropriate. In the characters' voiceovers, alliterations such as "voluminous villain" and "my Soviet sweetheart" abound, as well as numerous humorous chirps. There are no video cut-scenes as such, but rather the story unfolds by means of narratives accompanying animated slide-shows. The imagery is characteristically comic-book-like.

The game surprised us (pleasantly) in every regard. The graphics manage to be highly detailed while maintaining a character consistent with comics. Lighting and shadows are particularly well executed, and we were delighted by occasional unorthodox effects, which will not be described so as not to spoil it for future players. All this envelops a mechanic that has players controlling a squad of up to four superheroes, each with its own complement of superpowers. These powers include various attack types, flying, resistances to various forms of attack, defensive abilities and more exotic powers like the ability to polymorph one character into another or into an object, for example. The game can be paused at any point while still allowing commands to be issued (in single-player

mode), and use of this feature is highly recommended, as each character's powers need to be effectively managed.

Between missions, players have the opportunity to spend prestige points earned in previous missions to recruit new characters to their cause, and to spend experience points on purchasing or increasing heroes' superpowers, and increasing attributes. One disappointing fact is that characters gain experience not in direct proportion to their involvement, so even idle heroes gain experience. It would have been nice to see a system whereby only active characters learn, thus necessitating an overall strategic choice – to specialise in a few characters (and if so, which ones) or to diversify by advancing all heroes (though mission briefings would then have to be more informative to allow players to decide which heroes to take on the mission). Nevertheless, this is a minor gripe, mainly because the challenge level isn't quite what it could have been.

Multiplayer game modes require players to design a character by spending allocated points on attributes and abilities. Once this process has been completed, the effectiveness is determined on the battlefield, where players duke it out deathmatch style.

This game truly shines in single-player mode, as the campaign is satisfyingly involved and lengthy, and the engrossing story is presented in an unusual and very artistic manner. **NAG**





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An enhanced, improved version of an already excellent game

70

### VITAL INFO

#### Platforms

PC

#### Suggested Retail Price

R 299

#### Developer

Stormregion

#### Publisher

CDV

#### Supplier

WWE [011] 462 0150

#### Genre

Tactical simulation

#### Age Restriction

12+

#### Minimum Specs

Pentium 3 1.0GHz

256MB

8x CD-ROM

NVIDIA GeForce 2™ Video Card

3GB HDD



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# CODENAME: PANZERS — PHASE 2

*Below: Higher ground gives the Axis platoon an advantage over the advancing British forces*

**T**HE GAME IS SO similar to its predecessor that it can be considered another episode, rather than a sequel, and neither can it be classified as an expansion pack, as the previous title is not required.

The single player campaigns consist of a series of military missions set during World War II. Players control a small number of units, which can be infantry, vehicles or, most often, a combination of both. The action is intensely tactical, and the slightest mistake can be very costly as units cannot be replaced during the course of an engagement. Formations play a great role, as well as line of sight. So, it is highly advantageous to use stealthy units with a long range of vision (such as snipers) to spot enemies, and to bombard these with artillery. To protect the artillery, one can deploy tanks as a wall in front of them, with repair and re-supply vehicles between the two lines. This is, of course, only one possible tactic, another being the use of flamethrower infantry and tanks to force tank crews out of their vehicles and to take these over (once they've cooled down) with one's own tank crews.

The game has fairly great scope, allowing players to choose between infantry-heavy armies and more vehicle-oriented approaches, and incorporates elements such as support fire from long range artillery, air-strikes and airborne reconnaissance. New in this version is the inclusion of

nocturnal operations and an expanded experience model for units. The graphical engine has been enhanced, and is now even more breathtaking. One of our original gripes was the fact that when characters talked (in Phase 1), their faces remained impassive masks. This has now been rectified, and the facial animations are not bad at all. The cut-scenes are now presented in a very clever way – while using the 3D engine to render the action, a filter is applied that makes the clips look like footage from WWII. The overall quality is that of sepia-toned film, with an unsteady image that flickers and changes brightness unpredictably, and artefacts and lines appear briefly. Very nice!

Phase 2 takes the action away from Europe and into the North African theatre, so the names Rommel and Montgomery make their appearances, and Italy features in the plot. In fact, players start by commanding an Italian Axis contingent. This is a welcome move because Phase 1 covered the European theatre thoroughly, so there was nowhere left for the story to go. The action in Phase 2 takes place in parallel to that of its predecessor.

Stormregion has taken its previous Panzers game, which despite some quirks is really excellent, ironed out the wrinkles and produced something even better. This does, however, beg the question: why not just get it right properly the first time? **NAG**





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Potentially excellent action title that sadly falls short of the mark

### VITAL INFO

■ Platforms

PC

■ Suggested Retail Price

R 299

■ Developer

Beenox

■ Publisher

Activision

■ Supplier

MegaRom [011] 234 2680

■ Genre

Action

■ Age Restriction

12+

■ Minimum Specs

Pentium 3 800MHz

256MB RAM

2x DVD-ROM

32MB Video Card

3.5GB HDD

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## FANTASTIC 4

**S**UPERHERO GAMES, PARTICULARLY THOSE based on movies, have done much lately to improve the genre's reputation for spawning some terribly bad games. There are still a few failures (*Batman Begins* comes to mind), but there are definitely more and more successes - most notably, titles like *X-Men Legends* and *Spider-Man 2* (at least in its PS2 incarnation). Needless to say, we had high expectations for *Fantastic 4*, based on the recently released movie, going a little further to incorporate additional foes and scenarios from the long-lived and widely-adored comic book series.

For those not in the know, the *Fantastic 4* comprises 'Mr Fantastic', Reed Richards, complete with genius IQ and the ability to stretch his body, 'The Invisible Woman', Sue Storm (capable of making herself - wait for it - invisible!), her brother Johnny, also known as 'The Human Torch', who can hurl fireballs at will, and 'The Thing', Ben Grimm, made of stone and inhumanly strong. It's an impressive assortment of diverse characters, especially when crammed into a single title, but in spite of this line-up's vast potential, the play dynamic somehow manages to be quite uninspiring.

The game is a typical action combat title, spread over a number of missions and submissions, during each of which you have the option of controlling at least two members of the *Fantastic 4*. In addition to basic melee attacks and combos, each character has three cosmic power special moves, upgradeable as you progress. Although the foes are generally quite diverse, and the bosses challenging, the game dynamic soon becomes quite tedious. This problem is compounded by the fact that although the characters can interact with

the environment at certain points, the manner in which they do so completely disengages the player. As an example, *The Thing* might be able to throw a vehicle at his foes, but instead of allowing you to pick up the truck, aim it and release it, you instead have to complete a button-mashing mini-game, after which the action is performed automatically.

Assuming you can forgive the less-than-enthralling play dynamic, *Fantastic 4* does feature voice-acting from the film's cast, and some generally above-average (if sometimes glitch-ridden) graphics, as well as a number of features which could be unlocked, including character bios and art, which are sure to please fans of the comics. If you're looking for a compelling and engrossing action title, however, *Fantastic 4* is unfortunately, at best, quite mediocre. **NAG**



*Well, the game actually sucks less than the movie*





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"Word up, this game isn't phat, you jiggy?"

**VITAL INFO**

- **Platforms**
- **Suggested Retail Price**  
R 299
- **Developer**  
Ubi Soft
- **Publisher**  
Ubi Soft
- **Supplier**  
Megarom [011] 234 2680
- **Genre**  
Racing/Action
- **Age Restriction**  
16+
- **Minimum Specs**  
1-8 Players  
142KB memory

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# 187 RIDE OR DIE

**Guns + cars = fun, usually...**

IT'S OKAY FOR A game to rely on a popular theme to enhance its setting. It worked for Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas and it might have worked for 187 Ride or Die, had they focused less on exuding street 'cred' and more on actual content.

Featuring the voices and likenesses of Larenz Tate, Noel Gugliemi and Guerrilla Black, 187 Ride or Die does everything it can to recreate the thug street life. Unfortunately for 187, most of its voice and likeness cast aren't exactly your more well-known celebrities. But who cares, right? This is all about the money, fast cars and beautiful women. Danger lurks around every corner in the Los Angeles underworld, where

you as lead protagonist Buck must defend the territory of his mentor Dupree.

This of course involves copious amounts of violence while barrelling down city streets shooting at anything that moves.

At face value, 187 Ride or Die doesn't do a bad job at being a combat-racing game. The vehicular component of the game is very much akin

to the likes of Burnout 3, complete with obscene amounts of motion blur when you hit the boost button. Even taking out other cars results in a Burnout 3-inspired slow motion camera pan around the unfortunate car and its driver/gunner team. The cars handle respectably, while the method for shooting enemy cars works well. The R2 shoulder button shoots forward, while the R1 shoulder button shoots backwards. All aiming is pretty much automatic; it's more about timing than anything else. Driving over weapon markers gives you a new weapon from the rather limited range, and slamming into enemy cars will steal their weapon.

Several game modes help keep things fresh, unlike the stale hip-hop soundtrack produced exclusively for 187 (probably because the soundtrack wouldn't sell on its own). Aside from the standard racing mode, Cop Chase, Assassination and Death Match modes spice things up and are used to break the monotony in single-player mode. Each of the modes can be used in split-screen or online head-to-head, but the cooperative mode for playing the single player with two people (one driving, one shooting) is much more interesting.

Cars get unlocked as you progress, the missions get harder but don't vary enough, and at the end you're left with a game that glitters with promise, but is unable to shine due to the crud surrounding it. **NAG**







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A surprising success, albeit slightly lacking in depth

**VITAL INFO**

- **Platforms**
- PS2
- **Suggested Retail Price**
- R 499
- **Developer**
- SCEE
- **Publisher**
- SCEE
- **Supplier**
- Ster Kinekor Games  
[011] 445 7900
- **Genre**
- Sport
- **Age Restriction**
- 3+
- **Minimum Specs**
- 1-2 Players  
(10 players network play)
- 347KB memory

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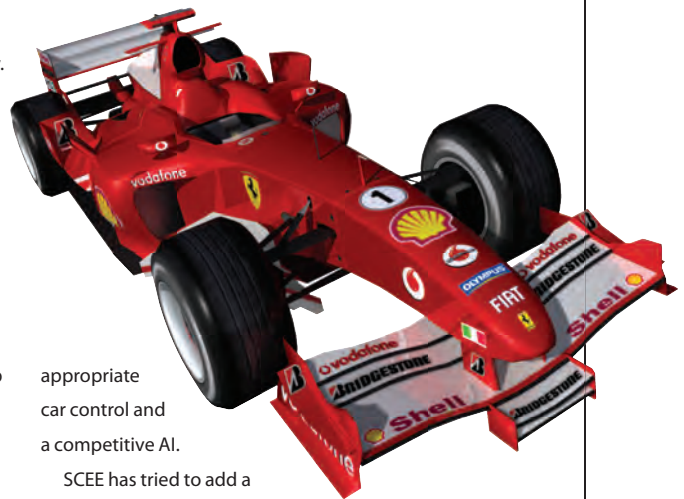
*While the game won't fight over TV rights or drag your team into a hearing every week, it's still very accurate*

# FORMULA ONE 05

**F**ORMULA 1, A SMORGASBORD of talented drivers, technical excellence, beautiful women and nonsensical commentary. For once, we have an F1 game that has it all.

In all seriousness though, Formula One 05 can lay claim to be arguably the best F1 game available. There are a number of reasons for this declaration, but most significant is the title's accessibility to both GP aficionados and those who just want to pick up and race. The developers have worked hard on creating a product that appeals to both and have, for the most part, succeeded. The novice simply selects a game mode and goes racing. To fill in the gaps for any interested party, a superb 'Introduction to F1' section is most informative. Alternatively, for the enthusiast, choosing 'hard' difficulty mode, switching off all driving aids and optimising setup, will envelope them in the total F1 experience. There are numerous game modes to indulge in, but the most challenging is 'career' which involves the player having to earn a seat at a weaker team via time-trials. If successful, a season-seat awaits, if not, a frustrating test-team role will have to suffice. Obviously, the challenge is to meet your team's expectations and thus work your way up to more competitive outfits, season by season, with championship glory the ultimate aim. Fail and be consigned to the driver scrap-heap.

Out on the track, the most noticeable vehicle trait is the excessive yet unquestionably realistic bumpiness of the ride. Though one may feel that the realism factor here could be toned down for the sheer sake of enjoyment, racing nevertheless remains pleasurable and suitably tough with



appropriate car control and a competitive AI.

SCEE has tried to add a deeper gameplay element by including a number of legendary cars. Trying out the handling (or lack of) of these classic vehicles is a nice touch, though it does wear thin quite quickly. In fact, on the whole, the game is missing that vital something to be a truly exceptional game. Perhaps we will see interactive tutorials, a more story-based season and a refined multiplayer mode in future versions. (Acting lessons for dreary commentators Martin Brundle and James Allen wouldn't go amiss either.)

Still, let's take nothing away from a quality F1 game. Unlike the real deal, where arguments fly debating the sport's entertainment, Formula One 05 provides no such dilemma. It's challenging, hard to put down and universally enjoyable. **NAG**





Trucking hell, this is a trucking horrible game

30

VITAL INFO

Platforms

PS2

Suggested Retail Price

R 250

Developer

Eutechnyx

Publisher

THQ

Supplier

Ster Kinekor Games

[011] 445 7900

Genre

Trucking

Age Restriction

12+

Specifications

1 Player

200KB memory

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BIG MUTHA TRUCKERS 2: TRUCK ME HARDER!

THE CONCEPT BEHIND Big Mutha Truckers 2 is sound. You play some inbred redneck hick who has to bail his mom out of jail by picking up and delivering cargo to various cities. Along the way, you give hitchhikers rides, avoid alien abductions and generally participate in missions involving some form of vehicle.

Actually, the concept doesn't seem so sound after all.

In a game where you spend your entire time driving, you'd think Eutechnyx would have spent more than the five minutes they did writing the physics behind the driving simulation. The trucks, cars and other assorted vehicular components handle trucking badly. Very trucking badly. In limbo, somewhere between arcade-style physics and riding a dead horse, Big Mutha Truckers 2 sits and tries to cover up the nonexistent fun-factor with humour.

Instead, Big Mutha Truckers 2 comes off just like a person who laughs too loud at their own jokes, especially when they're not funny.

You should not play Big Mutha Truckers 2. Not even if the developers paid you to.

Gaming has come a long way during the last 10 years, with advancements in graphics, sound and even gameplay concepts. Big Mutha Truckers 2 ignores all of that and focuses instead on trying to perfect the ultimate fart joke. In short, this game should really go truck itself. NAG

Sacrificing realism, stopping at truck stops won't get you an STD



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**VITAL INFO**

- Platforms  
PS2
- Suggested Retail Price  
R 489
- Developer  
Pandemic Studios
- Publisher  
THQ
- Supplier  
Ster Kinekor Games  
[011] 445 7900
- Genre  
Action
- Age Restriction  
12+
- Minimum Specs  
1 Player  
134KB memory  
Analogue: sticks only;  
Vibration compatible

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*Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's a little green alien hell-bent on humanity's destruction - yay!*



**I**N MORE OR LESS a complete about turn on the general premise of every science fiction title featuring aliens of one or another denomination, *Destroy All Humans!* places you in the role of Cryptosporidium 137 (no relation to the parasite), a grey-skinned, bug-eyed, desperately-in-need-of-anger-management member of the Furon race. Your mission? Put simply, to destroy all humans. Put less simply, the Furon race is capable of propagating only through cloning themselves (owing to a lack of genitalia – long story, don't ask), but their gene-pool is thinning, and pure Furon DNA has become rather scarce. Fortunately for them, however, hidden deep within the human genome is the genetic information required to save the Furon race, and Crypto is sent to Earth to harvest this DNA from the brainstems of unsuspecting humans.

To aid you in your quest, you have a flying saucer, equipped with the kind of weapons-of-mass-destruction that would put Saddam Hussein to shame, plus a number of other weapons that can be used when you're travelling around Earth on foot. Among these are the Zap-o-Matic (a kind of supercharged stun-gun), a disintegrator ray, an anal-probe launcher, an ion grenade launcher, as well as psychokinetic abilities that allow you to hurl people (or livestock, for that matter) through the air. Needless to say, if you get yourself killed, you'll simply find yourself in control of a freshly-cloned Cryptosporidium, and you can pick up right where the last Crypto left off.

In case you've yet to realise, the game presents

a very satirical, tongue-in-cheek perspective, heavily influenced by 1950's alien B-movies, and this is in fact where the game's greatest asset lies. The play dynamic, though fast-paced and enjoyable, is a very 'no-frills-attached' affair, with no great degree of depth to it, but this is compensated for by the game's presentation. To call *Destroy All Humans!* humorous, is definitely an understatement. The game abounds with moments that will have you in stitches, from the hilarious dialogue to the visual presentation of the characters and environments. The graphics are crisp and clear, the soundtrack superbly appropriate and the scripting spot-on. A number of extras (which could be unlocked), including full-length B-grade movies from which the game draws its inspiration are also included.

If you're in the market for some light-hearted (if slightly short-lived) fun, that puts a very witty and unique twist on the sci-fi genre, and provides an addictive, if slightly repetitive, gaming experience, you need look no further than *Destroy All Humans!* **NAG**





**VITAL INFO**

- Platforms
- Suggested Retail Price R 261
- Developer Hypnotix
- Publisher Take 2
- Supplier TBA
- Genre Sport
- Age Restriction 16+
- Specifications 1-4 Players



**OUTLAW TENNIS**

**T**HERE ARE A FEW things you need to think about when looking for a good tennis game. You need to take into account the mechanics and how well the game will reproduce the sport. You need to consider the angle at which the game will present the action, since certain angles make it difficult to gauge the position of the ball. Finally, you need to ask yourself, "Why the hell do I want to buy a tennis game?"

Tennis is like golf. It's one of those sports that you either like, or actively hate for no good reason.

Along comes Outlaw Tennis. With its sexy swagger and dashing good looks, at a glance one might think that Outlaw Tennis is nothing more than a good looking tennis game. That assumption would be incorrect, since Outlaw Tennis isn't just a good looking tennis game; it's a tennis game that's fun to play. The reason for this has got nothing to do with interesting game dynamics or a kinetic action-packed representation of tennis. In fact, Outlaw Tennis is a pretty shallow tennis game when it comes to the gameplay.

Outlaw Tennis is a good tennis game and a good game in general, because it is <expletive> funny. As long as the type of humour Outlaw Tennis employs appeals to you, you shouldn't be able to play it without falling off your chair/couch/bed at least once, from laughter.

Every single one of the 16 playable characters is outrageous, with their own style of humour. The game has a plethora of modes, game types and content to unlock, but those take a back seat to the comic value the characters instil into a simple game of tennis.

When you've seen all the animations and heard all the dialogue, you're still left with a decent enough tennis game that can hold its own. **NAG**



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**Death Row**  
**Bowls...**



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Ridge Racer at its best and travel sized for your convenience

89

VITAL INFO

- Platforms  
PSP
- Suggested Retail Price  
R 399
- Developer  
Namco
- Publisher  
Namco
- Supplier  
Ster Kinekor Games  
[011] 445 7900
- Genre  
Racing
- Age Restriction  
3+
- Specifications  
1-8 Players  
100KB memory

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200km/ph down the city streets and not a cop in sight

RIDGE RACER

**S**EASIDE ROUTE 765. CRIMSONROCK Pass. Greenpeak Highlands. Do these three race course names inspire a halcyon sense of nostalgia within you? Do they bring back fond memories of virtual wind through your hair? If not, then you might still be interested in Ridge Racer for the PSP, but you won't truly appreciate it for what it is.

Namco's PSP offering combines the best loved race courses from the arcade classic Rave Racer and the entire Ridge Racer series, 24 in total, with reworked and enhanced car designs. Game modes include the usual ones one would expect from a racing game. Time Attack pits you against the clock, while the World Tour Mode has you progressing up the ranks through leagues, unlocking hidden bonuses along the way.

Up to eight players can compete in the Wireless Battle Mode, provided each player has a copy of the game and is in close

proximity to the person hosting the game.

Despite not bringing anything new to the table in terms of gameplay mechanics, Ridge Racer stands the test of time with its high octane racing, exhilarant scenic race courses and 'fun before all else' approach to racing. Its slick visuals make it a decent poster boy for the PSP and its depth and replay ability raise it above the current mediocre release list for Sony's portable handheld. **NAG**



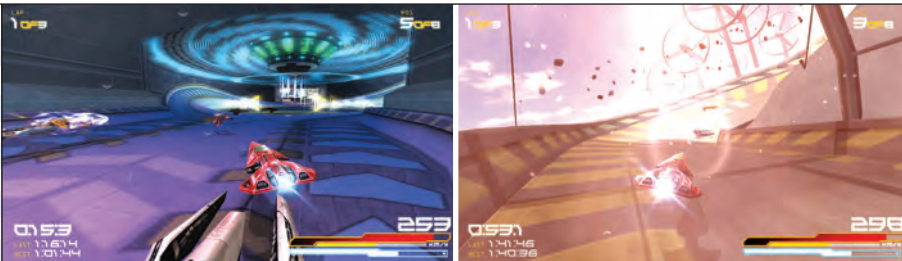
A high-quality addition to the lacking PSP library

82

VITAL INFO

- Platforms  
PSP
- Suggested Retail Price  
R 399
- Developer  
SCEE
- Publisher  
Sony Computer Entertainment
- Supplier  
Ster Kinekor Games  
[011] 445 7900
- Genre  
Racing
- Age Restriction  
3+
- Specifications  
1-8 Players  
100KB memory

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In the future, everything glows

WIPEOUT PURE

**T**HE WIPEOUT SERIES IS as old as the PlayStation franchise itself, so it only makes sense for Sony to cash in on the licence and milk it for some PSP sugar.

'Pure' is a reference to the distilled nature of the anti-gravity racing series with its tacked-on combat. The racing element itself, when zipping down the tracks at high-octane speed, is pure bliss as long as you don't touch a wall. If you so much as tap the sides of the track your craft slows to a crawl instantly, a game mechanic that is either hit or miss with gamers. The combat element, picking up weapons by flying over specific points of the course, is also another duality that either appeals or annoys, depending on your preference. If you're the type who enjoys the combat and loves the flying physics, then WipeOut Pure is pretty much the sole reason to run out and buy a PSP right now.

Instead of rehashing content from the previous titles in the series, Pure contains all-new environments, race craft and music. The content that comes with the game may seem paltry, but that's due to the downloadable content aspect. Extra circuits, new craft, personalised skins and even additional music can be downloaded.

With the right people each having a PSP and a copy of the game, WipeOut Pure shines as an example of what the PSP was created for. **NAG**





Reborn portable, but suffers from being a rehash

**VITAL INFO**

- **Platforms**
- PSP
- **Suggested Retail Price**
- R 399
- **Developer**
- SCEE
- **Publisher**
- SCEE
- **Supplier**
- Ster Kinekor Games  
[011] 445 7900
- **Genre**
- Action
- **Age Restriction**
- 13+
- **Specifications**
- Players: 1 - 8
- Memory: 100KB

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*Why would skeletons attack a skeleton?*

# MEDIEVIL

**H**ERO DAN IS ACTUALLY coward Dan, resurrected 100 years down the line to fight the return of evil Sorcerer Zarok. Essentially, Dan now has the chance to become, in death, the hero he never was in life.

Yes, the plot is incredibly tongue-in-cheek, a setting the rest of the game follows. This humour, alongside some rather excellent voice acting, could have saved MediEvil from mediocrity, had it not been so incredibly mediocre. MediEvil feels just too much like a half-hearted rehash of the old PlayStation game. Despite promising 'gazillions' of combat moves, MediEvil is a generic and surprisingly simple hack-and-slash, despite its range of weapons and attack combos. The controls are the main culprit here - they're just not good

enough for varied combat.

The multiplayer mini-games certainly make for an interesting deviation and even compliment the oddball humour of the game. Included on the MediEvil disc are also a few PSP game demos, which can even be sent to other PSPs wirelessly - definitely a nice touch. The Fired Up demo, in particular, allows limited multiplayer mayhem via the PSP's GameShare (one disc, many players).

On its own merits however, MediEvil comes off looking like it might be interesting, but all too quickly the action degenerates. Despite its lovely touches of humour, the watered-down action is just not what gamers expect from a full-priced game. **NAG**

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Not the best controls, but still action-packed

80

You'll either love it or get bored

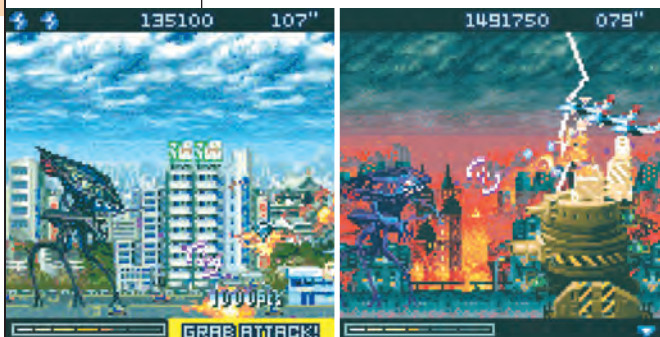
75

**VITAL INFO**

- **Platforms**
- **Suggested Retail Price**  
R 50
- **Publisher**  
Thumbtribe
- **Distributor**  
www.thumbtribe.co.za
- **Genre**  
Action
- **Download Code**  
SMS: tribe 20346 to 40014  
*NB: make sure you leave a space after the word tribe.*  
Check www.thumbtribe.co.za for phone compatibility and downloading instructions.

**WAR OF THE WORLDS**

**H**ERE'S A NUGGET. IT'S based on the movie, but you don't spend time running around with a screaming Dakota Fanning. Instead, you pilot one of the alien tripods and blow up everything in your way. Time is of the essence. Blowing up buildings, vehicles and military opponents add to the clock, while damage reduces it. The tripod moves forward on its own while players rotate and fire from its cockpit and use the lasso move to grab and throw vehicles. Doing this is a bit tough on some phones since the action can become fast and thick, requiring quick reflexes. Overall this is a pretty tough game, but very satisfying if all you want to do is blow up things. **NAG**



**COLIN MCRAE 2005**

**T**HIS IS A BIT of a miss, depending on what you expect. Encompassing the classic CMR formula, players have to race against the clock to reach the end of the stage, but you won't be expected to accelerate or break. The rally car races at an even pace across the track and players simply have to navigate the corners on the track. These vary from slight turns to hair-pins. The terrain changes from time to time, affecting the car's traction. Since you can't exactly slow down, timing the corners is essential. Driving off the track will cost you time, plus you can get stuck in the trees that line the track. CMR 2005 isn't very innovative, but it does make for good pick-up-and-play gaming. **NAG**



**VITAL INFO**

- **Platforms**
- **Suggested Retail Price**  
R 50
- **Publisher**  
Codemasters
- **Distributor**  
www.thumbtribe.co.za
- **Genre**  
Racing
- **Download Code**  
SMS: tribe 10321 to 40014  
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Fluid, simple but engrossing

91

Not quite tactical, but still fun

87

**VITAL INFO**

- **Platforms**
- **Suggested Retail Price**  
R 50
- **Publisher**  
Gameloft
- **Distributor**  
www.thumbtribe.co.za
- **Genre**  
Stealth/Action
- **Download Code**  
SMS: tribe 20340 to 40014  
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**SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY**

**I**T'S VERY HARD TO fault the Splinter Cell side-scrollers in general. They encompass everything a good platform game should be, while keeping within the spirit of the series. Playing as Sam, you navigate missions and levels similar to the larger game. Likewise, Sam has more moves at his disposal, such as grabbing guards off ledges. The stealthy, rhythmic gameplay translates very well to a mobile phone and is a joy to play. The mission list is not too shabby either, but the game won't take too long to finish if you learn from your mistakes and move quickly in tight situations. Just as with the 3D series, the mobile games of Splinter Cell are excellent and the latest one is definitely the best in the series. **NAG**

**RAINBOW SIX: LOCKDOWN**

**N**ATURALLY YOU CAN'T TRANSLATE Rainbow Six's squad-based system to a mobile platform. Instead, players are given command of up to four squad members, who are simply directed as a group around various stages. The gameplay does get complicated after a while, but Lockdown is more of an action title than a tactical one. This might disappoint fans of the series, but as a mobile game it works well. There are still elements of tactics involved and run-and-gun tactics won't get you far. The levels vary fairly nicely and there are enough weapon options to keep things varied. It's not great and perhaps more could have been done with the material, but that depends on your expectations. For what it is, though, it's fun to play. **NAG**

**VITAL INFO**

- **Platforms**
- **Suggested Retail Price**  
R 50
- **Publisher**  
Ubisoft
- **Distributor**  
www.thumbtribe.co.za
- **Genre**  
Tactical Action
- **Download Code**  
SMS: tribe 20345 to 40014  
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You need to connect to this via WAP/GPRS to download the game onto your phone.

For Nokia handsets, if the message does not appear in your inbox, go to Services/Service inbox to retrieve the game.

For Samsung and Sony Ericsson handsets ensure Push Message settings are set to 'Receive All' or 'Always'.

**WARNING:** Data and Fax enabling your SIM card may take up to 24 hours to be activated, depending on your operator.

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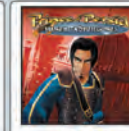
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to 40014



sms tribe 20336  
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1 Samsung D500	2 Samsung E310 E800 E810 X460	3 Samsung Z130	4 Samsung Z500	5 Samsung E330	6 Samsung E710	7 Samsung E700	8 Sagem MyX5 MyX7 MyC5-2
9 Sagem MyX5-2 MyX7 MyC5-2	10 LG C3400 F2400 C1100	11 Nokia 3100 3200 3300 5100 6100 6220 6230 6610 6800 6820 7210 7250 7250i	12 Nokia 6600 6260 6670 6680 7610	13 Nokia 3230 6680 3650 7650 ngage	14 Nokia 3510i		
15 Motorola C650 V180 V220	16 Motorola V300 V500 V600	17 Motorola V547 V550 V620 V975 V980	18 Motorola V3 V80 E398 E550 E1000	19 Sony Ericsson F500i K500 K700 S700i V800	20 Sony Ericsson T610 T630 Z600		

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# THE GAMING EXPERIENCE BENCHMARK

At the Fall IDF which took place in late August in San Francisco, Intel announced various new technologies and architectures. Surprisingly, they also announced that they were working on an application aimed at measuring the "gaming experience" delivered by any given computer system. With this they aim to change the way we look at benchmarking and are hoping to make it much easier to interoperate for consumers.

**W**HEN 3D GRAPHICS CARDS first became popular, some of the game developers such as id Software and Epic games developed the 'time demo' concept, which hardware reviewers use today to benchmark graphics cards. In essence, a time demo is a recorded piece of game footage, usually recorded with the game's engine, which is then played back and used to calculate the average framerate of that game on a particular graphics card. The problem with the time demo lies in the fact that it was designed to benchmark the 3D rendering capabilities of a graphics card, and as such it usually disables any in-game features such as physics, collision detection and AI (Artificial Intelligence). This resulted in a great method for testing the graphics card only, but it cannot accurately indicate the performance a game will produce on a complete system.

At IDF Fall 2005, Intel highlighted the two major flaws of time demos. The first is that they produce an average framerate. The data points that make up the average framerate consist of a data set made up by widely varying data points, which often leads to skewed results. According to Intel, averages also do not convey enough information about the gaming experience that a player would have when using a specific set of hardware on a particular game.

The second limitation of time demos is, as mentioned before, the fact that they usually disable many in-game features which are essential to the gameplay. These features also take up many other system resources which should be taken into

account when calculating the performance of a game on a particular system.

Intel also added that the core feature of a time demo is consistency. You will always be able to run the exact same game sequence for each hardware item you test. This, however, is one of the time demo's biggest flaws. Today's games are designed to eliminate linear gameplay, and many games will not subject you to the same routine of enemy behaviour if you play it for a second time.

Even though this will make it a lot more difficult to accurately compare various hardware items, Intel is confident that their new tool will be able to accurately deliver a result which will indicate the gameplay experience on any given machine.

Intel's new gameplay experience benchmark tool is called the Intel Gaming Capabilities Assessment tool. In order to develop this tool, Intel worked with the market research firm, Gartner. The research for this application was conducted at the Cyberathlete Professional League in Dallas, Texas during the winter of 2004. They studied 175 participants on







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five PCs which were indistinguishable from each other. Each participant was then asked to play each of the three most popular and commonly used first-person shooters available today - Half-Life 2, Doom 3 and Unreal Tournament 2004 - and rate their overall gaming experience. The computers they played on ranged from a 1.5GHz Pentium 4 with 256MB of RAM, to a high-end (at the time of the research experiment) 3.4GHz Pentium 4EE (Extreme Edition) with 1 GB of RAM. Each of the five PCs featured a high-end graphics card based on the platform. Each participant was given three minutes to play each game and was asked to rate each PC on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being bad and 5 being excellent, according to the gameplay experience).

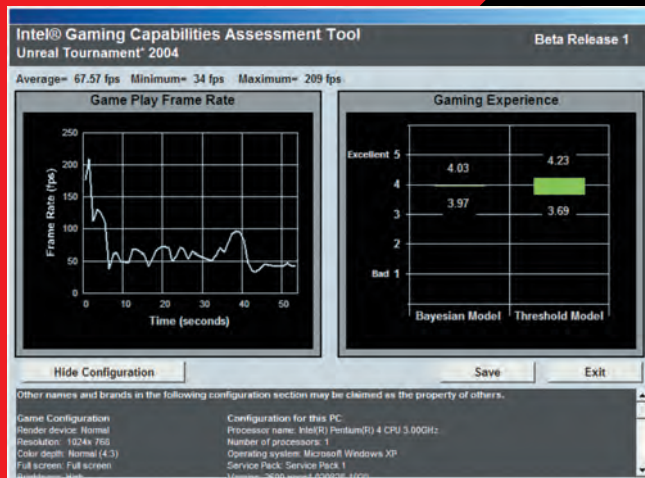
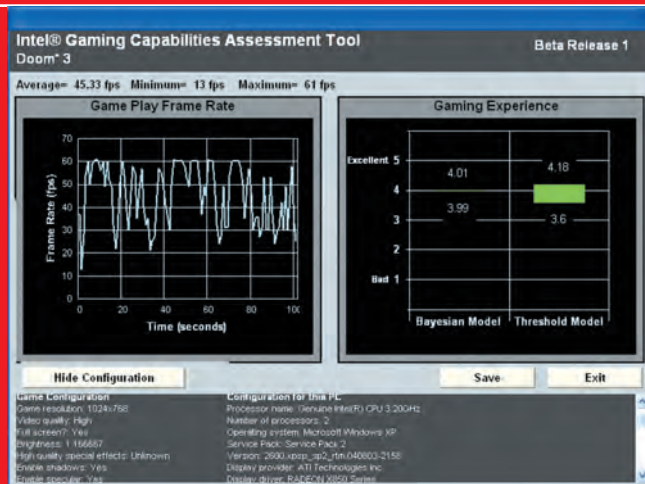
Looking at the results from that survey, it showed that with anything above 60 frames per second the user experience remained virtually the same. This confirms that the average framerate is not as important as we always thought. Having said that, if you benchmark your graphics card to see its performance capabilities independent to the rest of your system, or if you are directly comparing a range of graphics cards, then the average FPS would come into play.

Intel further explained that the research results suggested that a gamer's experience is affected by a computer's ability to maintain framerates above a performance threshold which will vary according to the game. If a computer spent most of its time below this performance threshold, the gamer experience would be negatively affected regardless of the framerate, with the opposite equally true.

These results prompted Intel to develop an application geared to measure the gaming experience based on the calculations involved in modelling the survey's results. This application requires you to play any of the aforementioned games for three minutes on any level or part of that level you choose. You also have the ability to customise the time that you play the game, and you can switch between real-game mode and time demo mode. Once the three minutes have passed, the game will automatically exit and display the results in two columns. Each of these columns produce a different result which is generated through a statistical model based on the Gartner report (which indicates how a gamer would rate that game on a scale of one to five).

We had our concerns regarding this application, as it could possibly be biased towards Intel, but Intel announced that it would make most of the source code available to developers allowing them to improve the application where necessary.

Could rating a gamer's gameplay experience, be the next big thing? Well time will surely tell. The concept is interesting and makes a lot of sense, but we still feel that traditional benchmarks will always remain at the forefront in today's hardware reviewer toolkit. **NAG**



### UT 2004: System Memory Transfer Profile

RETIRED EVENT	TIMEDEMO	ACTUAL GAMEPLAY
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2 <sup>nd</sup> Level Cache Load Misses	1.0	1.18
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1 <sup>st</sup> Level Cache Load Misses	1.0	1.07
Mispredicted Branches	1.0	1.06
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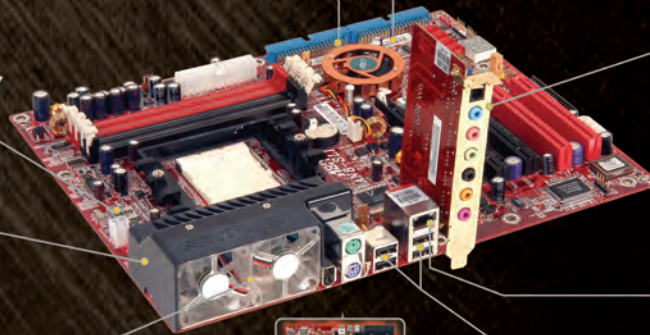


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# TECH NEWS

## Razer 2,000dpi optical mouse

Razer has introduced a new optical mouse that boasts a resolution of 2,000dpi and a frame rate of 7,000fps, as well as 32KB of built-in memory that allows it to carry multiple profiles and allows owners to use it on multiple PCs without the need to install drivers wherever they go. Customisable weights allow players to adapt the mouse's kinetic feel to their own particular needs, and the unit can be personalised with a variety of exchangeable face plates.



## GAMETRAK VERSION 2

In2Games recently introduced a new version of the Gametrak technology. This new evolutionary step can accurately track 3D motion at speeds of up to 2,000 miles per hour (3,600km/h). This easily satisfies the requirements of any sport simulation game that makes use of faux bats, racquets, clubs or the like.

## ASUS SPLENDID VIDEO ENHANCEMENT

This new technology from Asus is aimed at allowing video viewing on PC to approach the quality levels achieved by traditional video recorders. The algorithms enhance colour quality and depth in real-time. The technology is now incorporated into the drivers for Asus graphics cards, and existing users can update their drivers to add this new functionality, while cards sold henceforth will feature it bundled with the other software. [www.asus.com]

## NEW ALIENWARE CASE OPTIONS

Alienware has introduced new case options for its Area-51 3500 and 7500, and Aurora 5500 and 7500 systems. The new cases depart from the radical designs that Alienware is known for, providing a stylish option more suited to a wider variety of computing environments, even corporate ones.

"While many of our customers prefer the famously edgy styling of Alienware's gaming systems, we responded

to requests from our customers for a more subdued, traditional case design that will look at home in a wider variety of computing environments," said Stefan Konopatzki, vice president of sales and marketing for Alienware. "The new mid-tower chassis demonstrates Alienware's continued commitment to lead the industry in

providing customers with a wide range of options to suit their computing needs."

[www.alienware.co.uk]







## WIRELESS NETWORKING FOR CONSOLES

Gigabyte has introduced the GN-MD01 AirCruiser G Game Adapter, a wireless networking solution for gaming applications on consoles. The unit offers multiple modes of use. It can be employed as a direct link to another Game Adapter for local networking, can connect to an existing wireless network, allowing access to online connectivity, or can be set up as an access point. [www.rectron.co.za]



## NEW GB MICRO

Next month, Nintendo will launch a new Game Boy version, the Game Boy Micro. However, this unit will not be able to communicate with Game Boy Advance and GBA SP units without adapter hardware that the company will make available. A Link Cable allowing up to four GB Micros to connect to each other will also be introduced.

## X2 BATTERY FOR PSP

This 3,600mAh Lithium-polymer battery provides double the power that the standard unit delivers. It doesn't significantly alter the contours of the handheld and it provides up to eight hours of operation per charge.

[www.codejunkies.com]



## SOUND BLASTER LIVE! ON-BOARD

Gigabyte, Shuttle Computer and MSI, three motherboard manufacturers, have signed agreements with Creative allowing them to use Sound Blaster Live! as the on-board audio solution. This marks a giant leap for this segment of the industry.

"The PC industry recognizes the fact that Sound Blaster audio technology is far superior to any of the host HD Audio solutions or integrated chipsets currently on the market," said Steve Erickson, vice president of audio for Creative. "More and more, we're seeing motherboard manufacturers choosing Sound Blaster technology for their on-board audio solutions, because of its exceptional high-definition audio quality and clarity, and we're pleased to welcome Gigabyte, MSI and Shuttle Computer to the Sound Blaster family."

All three manufacturers have already begun producing boards using SB Live!

## Portable in Style



## External Notebook Drive Enclosure for 2.5" Hard Drive NST260



midnight blue

## Aluminum Enclosure with Mirror Finish



onyx black



brilliant red



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**More Nintendo colour options**

Nintendo has announced that, to accompany the European launch of Nintendogs this month, the DS will become available in two new colour options – pink and blue.

“With three new colour choices now available and the launch of the groundbreaking Nintendogs in time for Christmas, we will continue to expand the handheld market and will be well on track to achieve sales of over 3 million Nintendo DS units across Europe by the end of this year,” stated Nintendo’s senior director of European marketing, Jim Merrick.



**LOGITECH WIRELESS HEADPHONES FOR MP3**

The accessory manufacturer has introduced a line of Bluetooth-based headphones that connect to the output of any portable music player, allowing the player itself to be left more or less unattended. Integrated controls allow adjustment of volume without touching the player, and the unit’s range is about nine metres. The batteries will last for up to eight hours. The headphones will become available locally this month, retailing in the region of R900.



**LOGITECH G15 KEYBOARD**

This is a peripheral in Logitech’s G-series of Gaming-Grade accessories. It features an LCD display that can provide in-game information from games that support it (such support is expected to begin later this year), or from other applications running in the background (for instance a media player). The keyboard also carries 18 function keys with three shifts, allowing up to 54 keystrokes or keystroke sequences to be programmed (isn’t the use of macros generally regarded as cheating?) Other features include backlighting, USB outputs (at last!) and a switch that disables the Windows key, which is a great feature for high-intensity gaming! [www.logitech.com]



**NEW LOGITECH LASER MICE FOR GAMERS**

Logitech has introduced the G5 and G7 laser mice, intended for the gaming market. The main differences between the two are the fact that the G7 is cordless, while the G5 offers a set of customisable weights to fine-tune the kinetic feel of the unit. Both boast resolutions of up to 2,000dpi, which can be adjusted on the fly, and 500 reports per second. The G7 also carries a built-in battery power indicator that will warn a player when the battery has reached a preset level of depletion. [www.logitech.com]

**Action Replay MAX for PSP**

This accessory from CodeJunkies is similar to their offering for the Game Boy Advance. Among its loudly touted features is extensive game cheating capabilities (yuck!). However, it also allows players to interface the PSP with a PC, manage audio and video content, and it has 64MB of built-in storage. It can convert various formats of video into a format that the PSP will play back. [www.codejunkies.com]







## CREATIVE X-FI SOUND CARDS AT LAST

Earlier this year we covered Creative's new audio processor, the X-Fi, which introduces several new technologies and compares to a Pentium 4 processor in terms of sheer computing power. The company has finally unveiled a complete range of sound cards powered by this chip. Several models are available, with varying feature-sets to accommodate differing budgets. One model was designed with input from Johnathan Wendel (Fatal1ty), specifically to suit the needs of high-end gaming. The Sound Blaster X-Fi Fatal1ty FPS sound card provides stunning 109dB SNR audio quality, accelerated gaming performance and includes 64MB of on-board X-RAM for high performance gaming. [www.soundblaster.com]

## ASUS EXTREME AX800 SILENCER

This is a Radeon X800-powered PCI Express graphics card that uses SilentCool Technology – a huge heatsink and copper pipes to dissipate the heat. The copper fins can be rotated, allowing them to be angled away from heat-sensitive components. Among a host of software included with the card are GameLiveShow, which allows users to stream a game in progress over the Internet, and GameReplay, which can record the progress of any game in MPEG-4 format. Built-in memory is 256MB of DDR3. [www.asus.com]

## SONY WALKMAN BEAN

This new music player is styled in an organic bean shape, and is available in a variety of colours, each inspired by a different flavour of jelly-bean! It boasts 50 hours of battery life, and also offers the option of quick-charging for three minutes to gain three hours of playing time. Two capacities exist – 512MB and 1GB.



## SONY ERICSSON W550 WALKMAN CELLPHONE

This is a new addition to Sony Ericsson's Walkman range of mobile phones. It features a music player that can be used independently of the phone, so it can be used even in locations where switching the phone off is required. It has 256MB of memory, a 1.3 megapixel camera and built-in gaming functionality, with several games included. Games can be played in multiplayer mode via Bluetooth. Finally, the phone can be customised by means of a variety of face plates and matching downloadable wallpapers.

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Backup Button

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## VIEWSONIC VX925 19" LCD

**T**HE LATEST VIEWSONIC VX924 digital LCD display has come under the spotlight in the global technical press for its dodgy claims of being a 4ms, 19" LCD panel. Although we'll touch on this sticky subject here, we feel it's also important to look at products like this from the point of view of the regular user, who may not care that the Overdrive electronics driving this claim are somewhat suspect, and only wants to know how the display performs in the real world.

Let's deal with the technology first. Viewsonic maintains that the response time of this LCD panel is 4ms from Grey-to-Grey (GTG). A new phenomenon in panel response times, since the release of digital voltage boosting technology like Overdrive, is that, rather than it taking longer to reach the shade required by gradually brightening the pixel, it is now in fact turned around and the image will shoot up past the requested level of brightness and then have to settle back down into the accurate point.

The quoted response time here is measured only on the initial rise of the brightness level. That is, the Viewsonic will indeed go from a black pixel to the required level of lighting in around 4ms, but then continues past this level and will take a few more frames to subside back to an acceptably accurate shade. This makes the quoted response time pretty much meaningless really.

Fortunately this doesn't affect the user's experience all that much, as the problem only occurs during the transition phase itself and not on a static image. What's more, the time it takes to drop a pixel from fully lit to darkness is very rapid, which entirely eliminates the ghosting phenomenon that is such an issue on 'regular' LCD panels.

In fact, for gaming the unit is excellent as a result of this total lack of image delay. It's in movie playback that you may notice some peculiarities, which will look a little like a digital form of heat shimmer. This effect is clearly visible in the



\*Screenshot simulated

invaluable MapMaster application, and when zoomed to a point on the map so the surrounding area is darkened, it creates a flicker across the entire display. It isn't enough to really slate the product, but is a tad unusual to say the least.

You're also likely to notice less than perfect horizontal scan-lines on Windows panels, but only if their edges are resting on certain, predictable horizontal levels. Edge a panel up pixel by pixel, and suddenly at a certain line, the image will fragment and digital noise will flicker across it, which can be very disconcerting as it looks like an imminent LCD failure.

This can be avoided entirely by sticking purely to DVI for connectivity, as these imperfections only show up when sending signals over the regular analogue VGA connector. We would not suggest running this screen if an analogue VGA port is your only option. In fact, it needs DVI to shine.

In every other sense, the VX924 is a very good product. The casing is stylish even if made entirely of plastic, the OSD logical and useable, and technical concerns like colour reproduction and lighting uniformity in league with the best in the business. **NAG**

### VITAL INFO

**■ Pros**  
Good image quality (using DVI);  
Very fast response time from grey to black eliminates ghosting

**■ Cons**  
Analogue connection quality issues;  
Inaccurate 4ms quoted response time;  
Poor video playback performance

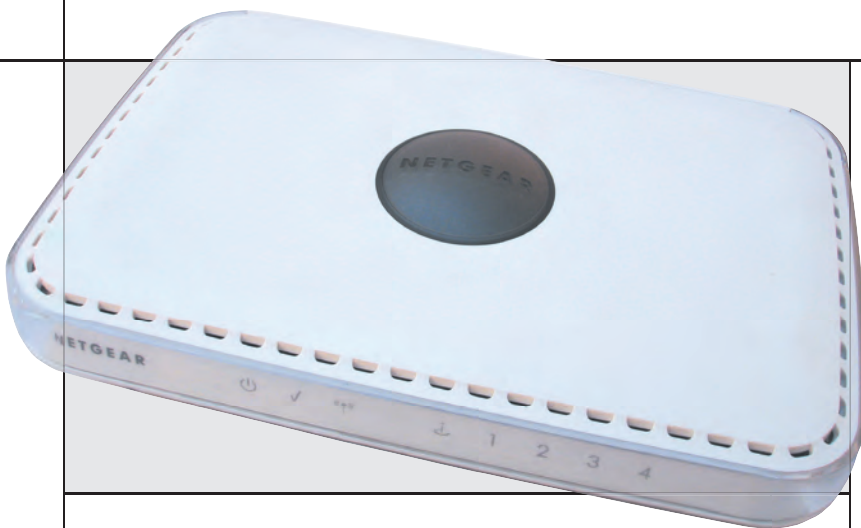
**■ Supplier**  
Proton [011] 486 0748

**■ Internet**  
[www.prototech.co.za](http://www.prototech.co.za)

**■ RRP**  
R 4,599

**■ Reviewer**  
Russell Bennett





## NETGEAR RANGEMAX WIRELESS ADSL ROUTER

**T**HE NETGEAR RANGEMAX WIRELESS router's features are similar to the smaller NetGear device, with four 10/100 LAN ports and WAN connection, with advanced Wi-Fi capabilities thrown into the mix as well. Even the styling is the same, although this newer unit is larger complete with a large blue light at the top, which turns out unlike a police light when the WLAN is in use.

The technology which has led to the RangeMax moniker, is dubbed MIMO (Multi In, Multi Out) by the networking specialist, and features no less than seven antennas built into the box. Not only are these antennas claimed to boost signal strength and therefore area coverage dramatically, they incorporate built-in intelligence which will automatically reconfigure these devices on the fly to any one of a hundred different configurations to compensate for any signal interference encountered.

This MIMO technology really delivers the goods here. We were still receiving excellent signal strength halfway up our road, well in excess of 50 metres away from the router and through more than one brick wall. Interference like cellphone signals had no effect on the quality of this signal either, the data merely choosing another, better path to the router with no human intervention at all.

Unexpectedly, it's the management console interface which provided the first sign of disappointment. It's very much like the smaller router, but after every change made, the router has to apply the alterations before moving on - a process which takes around 15 seconds and which becomes extremely tiresome.

Last but not least, that blue light ruins the aesthetics. Sure it's fairly cool at first, but after just a few short hours you wish that somewhere in the management software there was an option to disable the darn spinning light effect entirely. There isn't.

The NetGear RangeMax is a mixed bag of feelings. It brings to Wi-Fi technology what, in our opinion, the technology has sorely needed. Further range, stronger signal power and less interference headaches. However the painfully slow management console, annoying blue light and difficulties establishing a WAN connection in SA are enough to half our original expectations. **NAG**

### VITAL INFO

#### ■ Pros

Superb WLAN signal range and interference avoidance

#### ■ Cons

Management console a pain; Getting ADSL connectivity seemingly impossible; Annoying epilepsy-inducing flashy blue light

#### ■ Supplier

Duxbury Networking

#### ■ Internet

[www.duxbury.co.za](http://www.duxbury.co.za)

#### ■ RRP

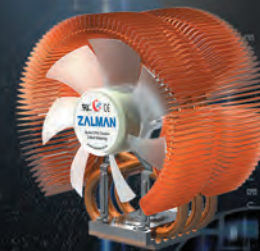
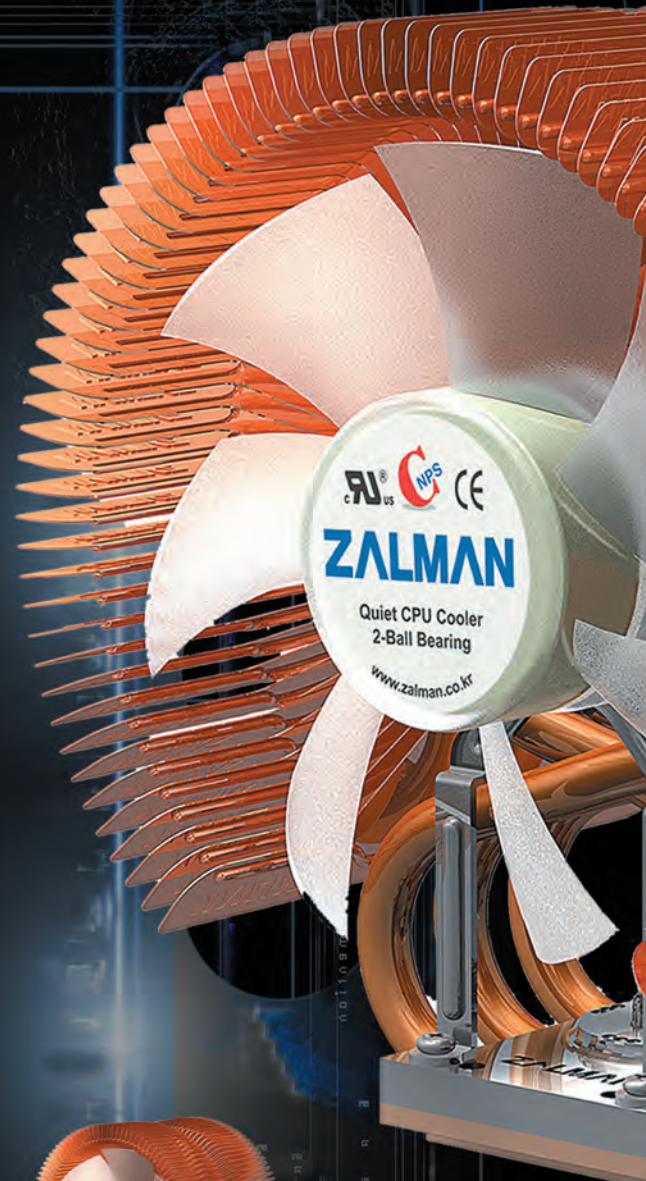
R 1,690

#### ■ Reviewer

Russell Bennett

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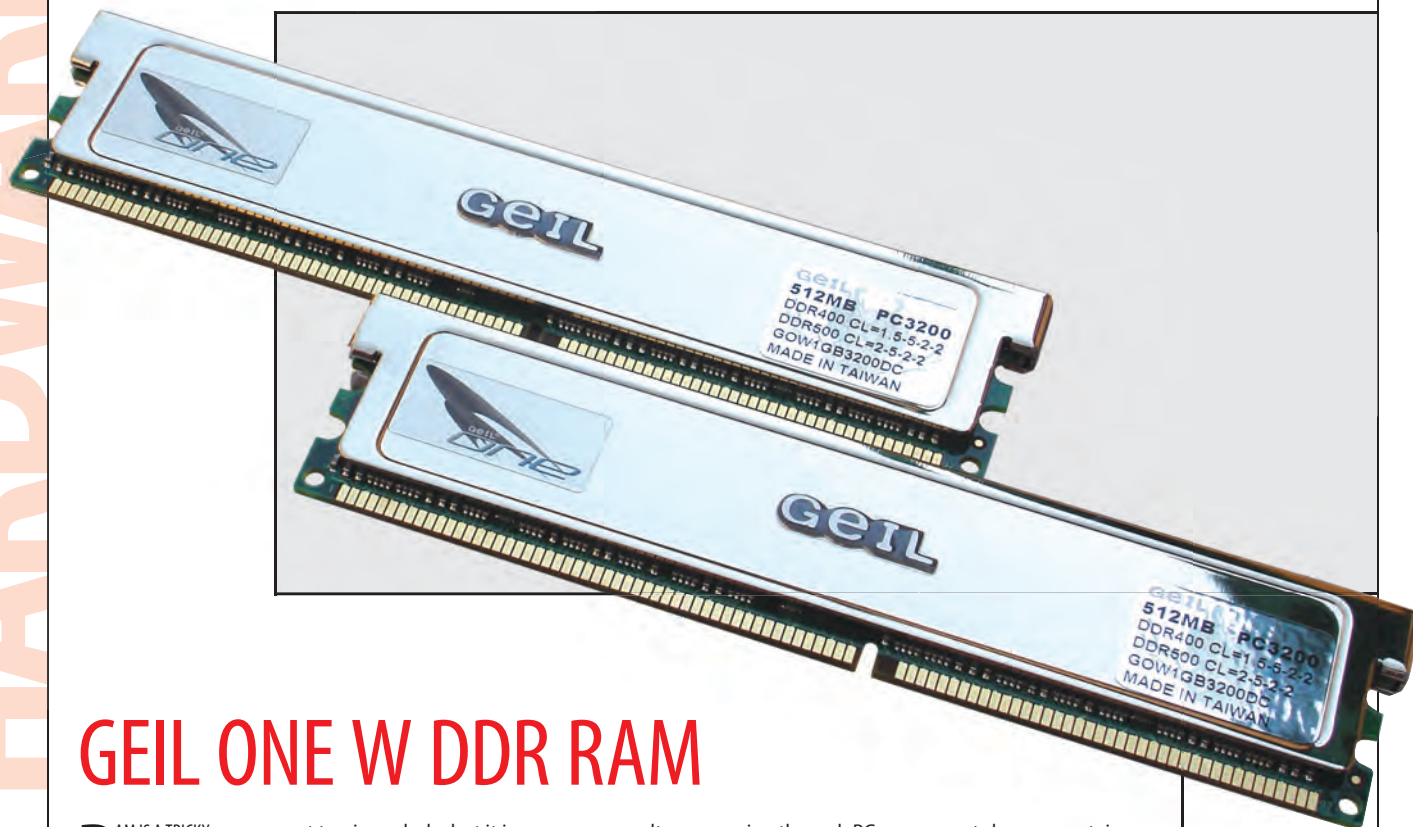
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## GEIL ONE W DDR RAM

**R**AM IS A TRICKY component to pigeonhole, but it is generally accepted that lower-latency memory performs better than RAM running at higher clock frequencies. This is the reason why DDR2 was, and often still is, viewed with some scepticism, as the higher frequencies which this newer standard runs at requires that timing be slowed somewhat, offsetting the MHz performance boost with higher latency.

This year at Computex, renowned enthusiast RAM manufacturers Geil revealed a particularly interesting new product line, dubbed Geil One. In short, this branding denotes DDR400 DIMMs with a CAS latency of less than 2, or 1.5 to be precise - an idea which was met with some resistance as it was widely considered to be impossible and irrelevant. Nonetheless, here we have possibly the fastest DDR modules on the planet - Geil One W capable, not only of CAS 1.5 at 400MHz frequencies, but CAS 2 at an overclocked 600MHz.

The question is does this low latency actually translate into any tangible performance benefit over CAS 2 modules at all?

Immediately, however, we ran into problems. It seems that just about the only motherboards capable of supporting this shortened latency timing is the overclocker's delight, the DFI LanParty using an nForce 4 Ultra chipset and AMD64 CPU. Unfortunately we had no such platform to test with, but luckily we discovered that the low latencies could be unlocked on an older Intel 855-based platform using a little software tool called MBTweaker.

To force CAS 1.5, you have to push the input voltages on your RAM sockets up to over 2.9V. As we all know, higher

voltages running through PC components has one certain effect... higher heat generation and therefore shorter component lifespan. This is where those attractive silver heat spreaders start to do their thing, and also where the Geil lifetime warranty (we hope SA suppliers will honour this brilliant assurance) really soothes the worried wallet. These DIMMs are very expensive, after all.

Whether it's even worth the risk or not, however, is uncertain. In fact, at this point we'd have to say it isn't. The performance benefit over the standard CL2 setting is just about nil in any application from memory-intensive operations, like file compression, to gaming.

In fact, clocking the RAM frequency up yields far more tangible improvements in this case. Again the board itself limited our efforts somewhat, but we were nonetheless very impressed to be able to run these modules at just on the 520MHz mark without losing all system stability. Instantly, RAM bandwidth jumped by almost 1GB/s, which is impressive. Of course you cannot run the headline CL 1.5 at this frequency though, but CL2 is still very good for an overclocked DIMM.

Conclusion? Well, right now we cannot suggest paying the price of this Geil RAM for imperceptible performance benefits. Anyone buying this RAM now is likely just after the bragging rights of having CL 1.5 memory and you'll need a robust supporting platform to boot. It is good for overclocking, as Geil makes excellent modules backed up nicely by that lifetime warranty. However the attention-seeking latency figures offer pretty much no tangible performance benefits. **NAG**

### VITAL INFO

#### ■ Pros

Great overclocking potential

#### ■ Cons

CL 1.5 offers no performance benefit at a high price

#### ■ Supplier

NakedIT [011] 678 1288

#### ■ Internet

www.nakedit.co.za

#### ■ RRP

TBA

#### ■ Reviewer

Russell Bennett



# LG FLATRON EZ T910BU

**P**RICED AT AROUND R1,800, the LG ez T910 is within the reach of most budgets and promises mammoth resolutions at high refresh rates using a flat-screen CRT design.

The packaging only rates this screen up to 1600x1200, but it will go substantially higher than that, past 1920x1440 even. The OSD is not particularly intuitive, but offers the geometry and brightness controls you'll need to set up the screen to your liking, while the silver bezel surrounding the viewing area is unfashionably thick.

Here's an interesting little observation made during this test. Do any of you use VGA extender cables? Forget them if you're going to move up to a higher frequency-range monitor soon. If you need an extender for your machine to fit in with your environment, you may need to move that environment around a little.

This Flatron ez, connected to our system through the same VGA extender our older Dell 17" had run successfully on for years, had massive, headache-causing issues. Ghosting, especially of black-on-white images (Word cursor for instance), suddenly reared its ugly head and got worse as the resolution/frequency ratio was increased - which is pretty unexpected of a quality CRT offering.

With the extender out of the picture, some other niggles become apparent. All along the left-hand edge of the screen it had a band of flicker of pixels of alternating brightness. Luckily this unnerving affect can be avoided by careful manipulation of the image position using the fiddly OSD controls.

Also disappointing is the total absence of automatic controls to keep the display the correct size and shape while switching through resolutions or refresh frequency. Fortunately there is an auto recall, so it stores this information for future use. However that means you need to manually set up the screen for each and every resolution frequency combination you may use - again, of course, via the illogical OSD menu system.

When all is finally prepared to this product's satisfaction, it performs well. Pixels are crystal clear and colours well defined, although at the 9,300K colour, temperature setting scenes sometimes appeared darker and more shadowy overall. Oh, and it really can do all of those crazy resolutions it lists, should your eyes need that kind of exercise.

The Flatron T910BU is a decent screen, but in the end its downright failures and acute shortfalls are likely to scupper its chances. **NAG**



## VITAL INFO

### ■ Pros

Superb range of supported resolutions;  
Good quality image at an affordable price

### ■ Cons

Display quality issues;  
Confusing OSD

### ■ Supplier

Digital Planet  
[0860] 245 000

### ■ Internet

www.digitalplanet.co.za

### ■ RRP

R 1,779

### ■ Reviewer

Russell Bennett



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## VIPOWER SUPERRACK SATA TO IDE

The ViPower SuperRack will be a well-known brand to anyone who has ever had a look at the realm of mobile data and more specifically mobile hard drives. The SuperRack is a unit which is permanently affixed to your case with a drive 'caddy' in which the HDD itself is mounted.

The company has released a variety of SuperRack connectivity options, and now adds SATA to the list with this latest model, the VP-1001LSF. This unit connects a standard IDE HDD to the system via the SATA interface.

Installing the SuperRack demonstrates the steady decline of quality at ViPower over the years. There seems to be no metal in this unit at all, and even the hard plastic used is of the thin and flexible variety. The unit doesn't fit well into a standard CD-ROM bay and screwing the bay into place makes the plastic twist in a worrying manner. Connecting the required standard Molex power connector to the back is an exercise in tightly controlled force, as you try to balance the pressure needed for a solid connection against the possibility of destroying the fragile SATA to IDE conversion circuitry.

Securing the hard drive into the caddy is similarly troublesome, with the grid at the front constantly falling off

as you edge the drive slightly too far forward and tap this plastic part from the inside.

Once seated, getting the disk recognised by the system is as simple as pressing the caddy firmly into the awaiting SuperRack bay, and sliding the locking mechanism rocker switch across into the ready position. This switch locks the unit firmly in place and also powers the SuperRack up, and within a couple of seconds the mobile drive is accessible to Windows XP and looks just like any other SATA connected hard drive.

What's more, it performs very much the same as well. The 40GB IDE disk we tested was able to deliver the entire throughput it could manage, and the data conversion didn't affect the transfer rate at all.

Despite the technical success of the product, the quality really leaves one concerned about its longevity, particularly if you use it as intended and frequently remove and replace the disk caddy. The flex in both the bay and caddy conspire to make it feel ready to fall apart each time you insert or remove a drive from the unit and does not bode well for the long-term future of the solution. **NAG**

### VITAL INFO

- **Pros**  
IDE to SATA conversion;  
Good data throughput
- **Cons**  
Flimsy and cheap
- **Supplier**  
Frontosa [011] 466 0038
- **Internet**  
[www.frontosa.co.za](http://www.frontosa.co.za)
- **RRP**  
R 330
- **Reviewer**  
Russell Bennett





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BLUETAKE

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- USB receiver



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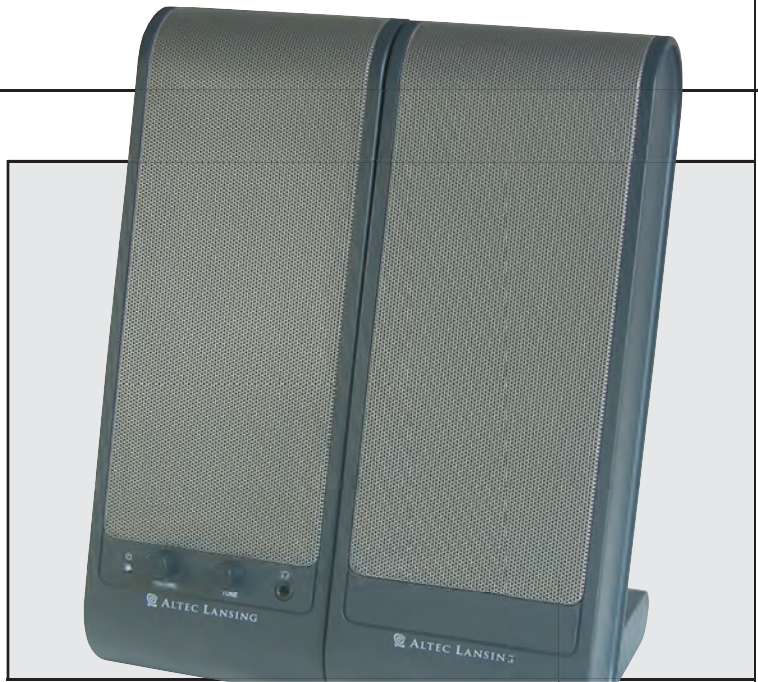
# ALTEC LANSING VS2220

IT IS VERY RARE to see stereo speakers being sold in today's 5.1 and 7.1 surround sound dominated markets. It's so rare, it's almost a nostalgic novelty worth attention solely for the word 'stereo' emblazoned on the box.

Regardless, if all you're looking for is a simple set of stereo speakers, whatever the reason, then the Altec Lansing VS2220 Stereo Speaker System is pretty much your best bet. The VS2220 is a thin, all-black, two-piece satellite set. The set completely outperforms standard speakers in the same category and price range by a clear margin, thanks to its high-fidelity components.

The speakers have a wide frequency response range, with the tonal control knob allowing for adjustments to either high or low frequency settings to suit whatever is coming through the speakers. Both satellites are shielded, so they won't interfere with standard monitors. Their weighted bases provide stability, but they can still tip forward with alarming regularity if the table they're on is bumped hard. Regardless, the sleek matte and high-gloss black trim is certainly stylish, especially next to a thin LCD monitor.

For private listening, the right side speaker comes with a headphone jack and transfers sound well when used.



The most surprising aspect of the VS2220, is the large long-throw ported subwoofers nestled inside the units. While the two speakers combined don't match up to a dedicated subwoofer unit, they certainly outdistance conventional stereo speakers and provide excellent bass.

For a simplistic audio solution, or if you just want cheap speakers to use with a laptop or portable music player, the VS2220 does the trick with remarkable ambiance - especially considering its budget-minded price tag. **NAG**

### VITAL INFO

- **Pros**
- Price
- **Cons**
- Quality suffers due to price
- **Supplier**
- Esquire 0861 70 00 00
- **Internet**
- www.esquire.co.za
- **RRP**
- R 180
- **Reviewer**
- Miktar Dracon

# COMPRO VIDEOMATE ACTION ULTRA

A LOT OF PEOPLE WORK best while watching TV. This may seem counter productive, but it seems to be true in general. Since most people obviously can't drag a TV set to the office, the VideoMate Action Ultra provides a rather makeshift solution to this problem.

What the VideoMate has in its favour is its small form factor. It doesn't rely on an external power supply and can be used (after some fuss) with other video software. Marks against the VideoMate include its heavy power drain from the USB bus, its horrible bundled software and it has problems with weaker radio station signals.

The expected composite, S-video and line-in jacks are on the unit, along with TV antenna/cable and FM-antenna ports on the back. Oddly, while the video feed side of the software allows for time shifting (recording of footage for pause, playback, rewind and etc.), the audio/FM side does not. Also, the time shifting feature needs to be enabled manually, which means if you weren't planning for it, you might miss something important in a video feed you were watching anyway. Other programs of this type usually enable time shifting automatically when you pause.

The included 44-key card-sized remote control is certainly

a novel idea, but in practise the remote is entirely dependent on using the bundled software. If you are buying this product, or have already bought the product, we recommend that you get the latest drivers and applications for it from [www.comprousa.com/](http://www.comprousa.com/), as they fix some very nasty bugs that the shipped drivers/applications have.

The VideoMate is pretty much your standard USB-centric TV-tuner, no better or worse than the hundreds of other TV-tuner USB devices out there. **NAG**



### VITAL INFO

- **Pros**
- Price
- **Cons**
- Same poor quality as similar solutions
- **Supplier**
- Frontosa [011] 466 0038
- **Internet**
- www.frontosa.co.za
- **RRP**
- R 699
- **Reviewer**
- Miktar Dracon



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# NVIDIA STRIKES BACK



**N**VIDIA'S LATEST GRAPHICS CHIPSET arrived with a bang and for the first time we can remember, stock of the new graphics cards was readily available at launch. This allowed us to get sufficient hardware for a roundup, which is exactly what we did this month.

The battle between ATI and NVIDIA is never-ending, with each company gaining the upper hand ever so often. This time it is NVIDIA's turn and its latest graphics chipset, the NVIDIA GeForce 7, is almost guaranteed to force ATI to deliver its next GPU (Graphics Processing Unit) much sooner than expected.

So what makes this card so much faster than its predecessors? Well, the explanation gets a bit technical, so hang onto your hats. According to NVIDIA, the GeForce 7 architecture was designed from the ground up and features eight vertex units and 24 pixel pipelines. It runs at a (default) core clock speed of 430MHz and a memory clock speed of 600MHz (1,200 mega-transfers), while the memory these new graphics cards use is 256-bit GDDR3 with a bandwidth of 38.4GBps. The GeForce 7800 GTX also includes a 128-bit floating-point (32 bits/component) through the entire graphics pipeline, while the 24-pixel pipelines provide a bilinear-filtered texel filtrate of 10.32Gtexels per second.

Compared to the GeForce 6800, it is interesting to note that NVIDIA's latest offering doesn't feature a much faster clock and memory speed. The massive real-world performance jump of the new GeForce 7 series graphics cards is because of the extra pipelines and extra vertex shaders.

Other new and improved features of the GeForce 7800 GTX GPU include tools that were designed to not only increase performance of the graphics processor, but also to make your games look better.

NVIDIA.

GEFORCE™  
7800 GTX





One of the most exciting of these features is a technology called IntelliSample 4.0. This fourth-generation technology introduces two new AA (antialiasing) modes. The first is Transparency Adaptive Supersampling and the second is Transparency Adaptive Multisampling. These modes are able to enhance the quality of objects such as fences, trees and grass by taking on additional texel samples and antialiasing passes. In general, thin objects such as the wire of a fence or a blade of grass are rendered on a simple polygon model. This means that traditional antialiasing would not be able to improve the image, as the image is already part of a texture that is mapped onto the polygon. Currently, pixels inside a polygon will not be enhanced by any of the current antialiasing methods. The two antialiasing modes built into NVIDIA's IntelliSample 4.0 aim to correct this problem. Transparency Adaptive Multisampling improves the antialiasing by calculating the surrounding sub-pixel values based on one texel sample. Transparency Adaptive Supersampling is the method of calculating the colour values for all of the texel samples.

Even though Transparency Adaptive Supersampling is the better antialiasing method, it puts a huge strain on the graphics processor and you should note a slight performance drop if activated.

HDR (High Dynamic Range) is another feature of the new NVIDIA GeForce 7 GPU. This technique is used by many rendering

professionals such as George Lucas' Industrial Light and Magic. HDR makes use of subtle light, colour and texture to create realistic environments by displaying much better colour and intensity levels. Looking at the way light influences other objects, such as a light source shining on an object, most light sources also bounce off other objects and transfer their own colour to that object. This process is called Radiosity and the NVIDIA GeForce 7800 GTX features improved support for this technology.

The CineFX engine also sees its fourth generation built into the new NVIDIA chipset. This technology adds special effects capabilities to the NVIDIA GeForce 7800 GTX. CineFX 4.0 also features Shader Model 3.0. This technology allows game developers to incorporate real-time 3D effects into their games, the aim of which is to bring in-game effects closer to the effects and realism seen in today's movies.



## HOW WE TESTED

**O**UR ROUNDUP THIS MONTH consisted of seven virtually identical NVIDIA GeForce 7800 GTX graphics cards. Due to the fact that these cards are so new, most of the manufacturers have not deviated from the reference design as they wanted to get their products to the market as soon as possible. It can also be said that NVIDIA has done a pretty awesome job with the NVIDIA GeForce 7800 GTX graphics card, so there is very little the manufacturers can do to these chipsets apart from slapping on a different heatsink, adding a decent software bundle, or upping the default GPU and memory speeds.

Our test bed consisted of an Asus A8N-Deluxe SLI motherboard with an AMD Athlon 64 3800+ processor installed. The memory installed in this machine was two sticks of 512MB Kingston Hyper-X DDR400 RAM. All our benchmark tests were done on Windows XP Professional SP2 with all the latest patches installed, and each of the benchmark tests were run in both single and SLI mode. All but two of the benchmark tests were executed using Bench'em All (www.benchemall.com). This superb software application will run all your benchmarks automatically and produce a neat text file with all of your benchmark results in one place. Even though some of the games we benchmarked did not really put any strain on the GeForce 7800 GTX graphics cards, we ran them to get a

better idea of this card's all-round performance.

Each of the benchmarks we ran, except for Battlefield 2 retail version and the F.E.A.R. demo, were run using the default settings in Bench'em All. The abovementioned games were a little more tricky to accurately benchmark and we made use of FRAPS (www.fraps.com) to obtain an average FPS result. It is important to note that because these two games were tested with FRAPS, we had to manually tell it when to start measuring the performance of the card. Even though we tried our best to keep the game conditions as consistent as possible, it was still virtually impossible without a pre-recorded demo, so the scores may vary slightly.

The other point to note in this roundup was that all the contenders were virtually identical except for the odd custom heatsink shield. All of the cards seemed to have been produced at the same manufacturing plant, which meant that the benchmark results will obviously be very similar. Even the three cards which featured slightly higher core clock and memory frequencies performed pretty much on par with the rest of the pack. For the heat-conscious gamer we measured the temperature of each card during the benchmark process. Unsurprisingly the results were all virtually the same and the temperatures of these cards varied between 45°C and 50°C.



### Asus Extreme N7800 GTX TOP

SLI	85.41	50.86	10220	9793	101.3	58.77	131.56	78.73	25999	350.5	83.6	96.9
Single	72	55.66	8095	6887	78.2	56.8	132.98	85.9	15873	368.8	77.5	86.1

### Gainward PowerPack! Ultra/3500PCX Golden Sample

SLI	85.41	50.86	10220	9793	101.3	58.77	131.56	78.73	25999	350.5	83.6	96.9
Single	72	55.66	8095	6887	78.2	56.8	132.98	85.9	15873	368.8	77.5	86.1

### Albatron 7800GTX

SLI	81.11	48.97	10059	9500	96.3	54.32	129.54	77.8	25528	349.6	80.3	95.3
Single	67.39	53.67	7568	6460	69	53.1	129.64	83.66	15499	368.6	75.5	84.31

### ELSA GLADIAC 780GTX

SLI	81.93	47.89	10076	9450	96.5	54.66	129.49	77.89	25545	349.3	81.3	94.5
Single	67.56	53.86	7557	6430	69.36	53.98	130.23	84.94	15483	367.9	76.2	85.1

### XFX PV-T70F-UDF7

SLI	84.22	48.12	10298	9669	98.2	56.52	131.99	77.13	25855	350.9	83.33	93.9
Single	68.15	52.68	8036	6693	73.5	55.16	130.39	83.66	15903	368.6	77	84.5

### Leadtek Win Fast PX 7800 GTX TDH

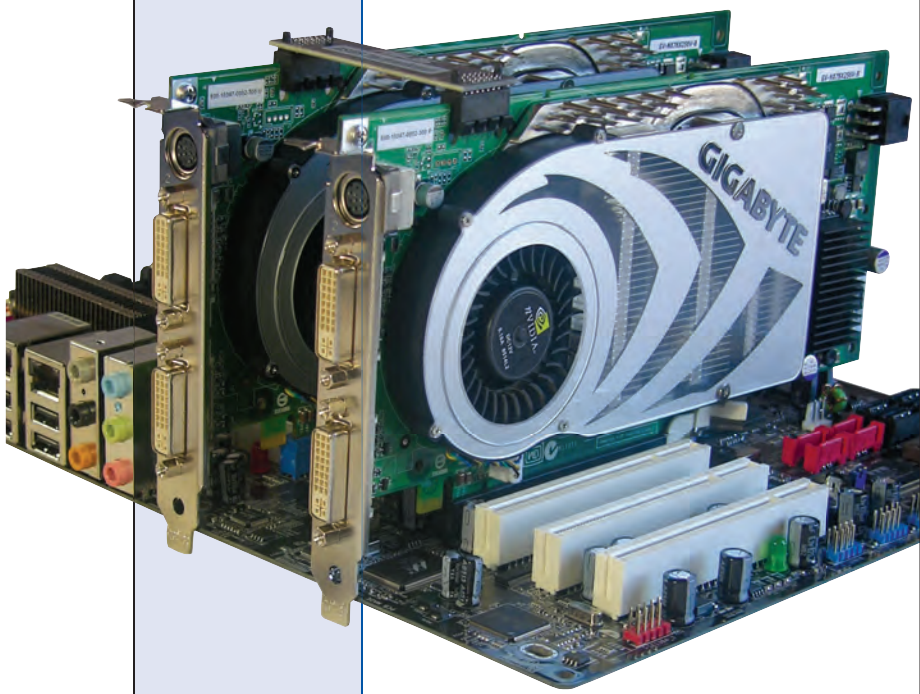
SLI	81.16	48.35	10060	9555	95.9	54.66	129.16	76.96	25469	349.2	79.88	95.4
Single	67.89	53.99	7569	6493	69.52	53.92	130.96	83.56	15433	366.5	76.5	84.7

### Gigabyte GV-NX78X256V-B

SLI	80.88	48.88	10052	9635	96.83	53.61	129.1	79.66	25500	349.1	82.6	94.5
Single	67.4	53.29	7549	6555	69.93	55.03	130.87	83.76	15496	367.2	77.5	84.5







#### VITAL INFO

- **Plus**  
Performance
- **Minus**  
Bundle
- **Supplier**  
Rectron [011] 230-1000
- **Internet**  
www.rectron.net
- **RRP**  
R 6,200

#### SPECS

- **GPU Clock**  
430MHz
- **Memory**  
600MHz

#### BENCHMARKS

- **3DMark05**  
SLI: 10,052  
Single: 7,549
- **Half-Life 2**  
SLI: 48.88  
Single: 53.29
- **F.E.A.R.**  
SLI: 94.5  
Single: 84.5

VALUE PERFORMANCE BUNDLE  
80 90 70  
OVERALL

# 80

#### GIGABYTE GV-NX78X256V-B

Even though Gigabyte is one of the top brands locally, it was a little disappointing that they did not bundle any decent applications or games with the NVIDIA GeForce 7800 GTX graphics card. The two games bundled were Xpand Rally and Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising. Sadly these old titles will not show you any of the capabilities of the 7800 GTX. Looking at the GPU's bundled software titles, you will find CyberLink PowerDVD 6 and CyberLink PowerDirector 3. The bundle also includes a VIVO connector that allows you to connect to a projector or TV. It also features composite video-in as well as an S-video socket.



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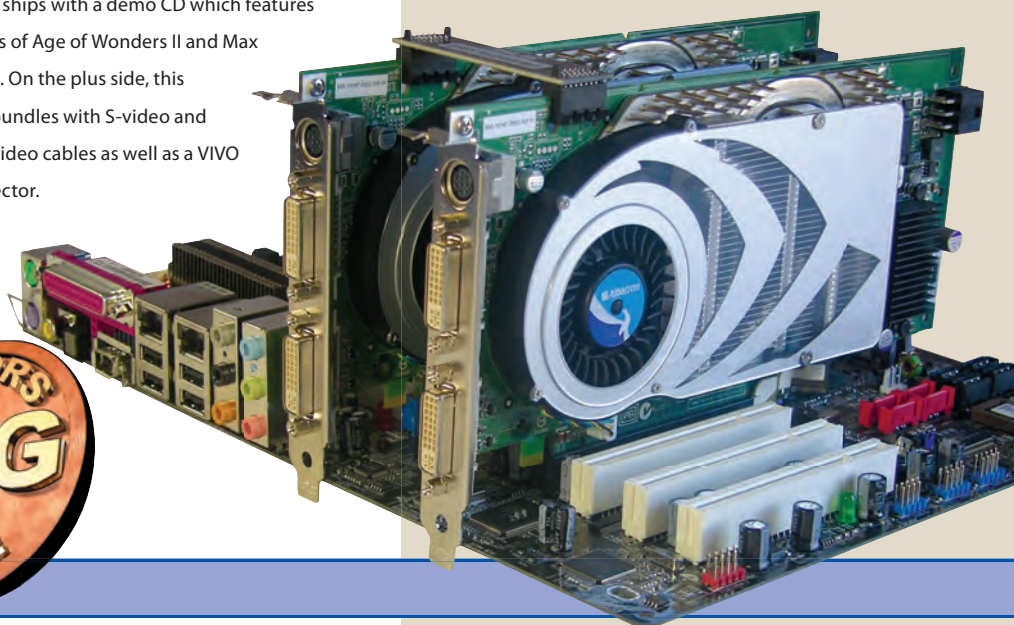
WEB: WWW.COREX.CO.ZA

FAX: 011 707 5050



## ALBATRON 7800GTX

One of the biggest assets of the Albatron 7800GTX is its price. Considering that all these cards are almost identical, this is by far the best buy you will get at the moment. Considering the price, it is easy to forgive Albatron for not bundling any decent games. As it stands, you will find a full version of Arx Fatalis and CyberLink PowerDirector 2.5 ME. It also ships with a demo CD which features demos of Age of Wonders II and Max Payne. On the plus side, this card bundles with S-video and RCA-video cables as well as a VIVO connector.



### VITAL INFO

- **Plus**  
Price
- **Minus**  
Bundle
- **Supplier**  
TVR Computers [011] 807-1390
- **Internet**  
www.tvr.co.za
- **RRP**  
R 5,299

### SPECS

- **GPU Clock**  
430MHz
- **Memory**  
600MHz

### BENCHMARKS

- **3DMark05**  
SLI: 10,059  
Single: 7,568
- **Half-Life 2**  
SLI: 48.97  
Single: 53.67
- **F.E.A.R.**  
SLI: 95.30  
Single: 84.31

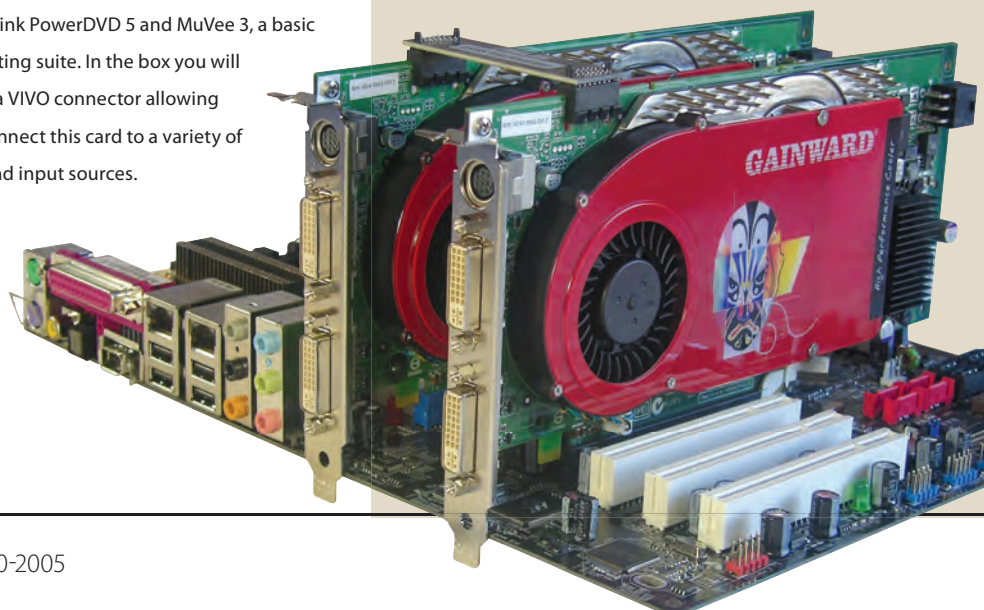
VALUE	PERFORMANCE	BUNDLE
90	90	70

OVERALL

# 83

## GAINWARD POWERPACK! ULTRA/3500PCX GOLDEN SAMPLE

What the Gainward PowerPack! Ultra/3500PCX lacks in bundle, it makes up for in a slightly tweaked NVIDIA GeForce 7800 GTX chipset. Gainward upped the clock and memory speed of their Golden Sample offering. Sadly, the slightly tweaked speed of this card does not produce much difference in performance when looking at the benchmark results. Bundled with this card you will find the usual array of applications such as CyberLink PowerDVD 5 and MuVee 3, a basic video editing suite. In the box you will also find a VIVO connector allowing you to connect this card to a variety of output and input sources.



### VITAL INFO

- **Plus**  
Tweaked GPU and memory
- **Minus**  
Performance on par with stock 7800 GTX graphics cards
- **Supplier**  
Axiz [011] 237-7000
- **Internet**  
www.axiz.co.za
- **RRP**  
R 6,399

### SPECS

- **GPU Clock**  
470MHz
- **Memory**  
650MHz

### BENCHMARKS

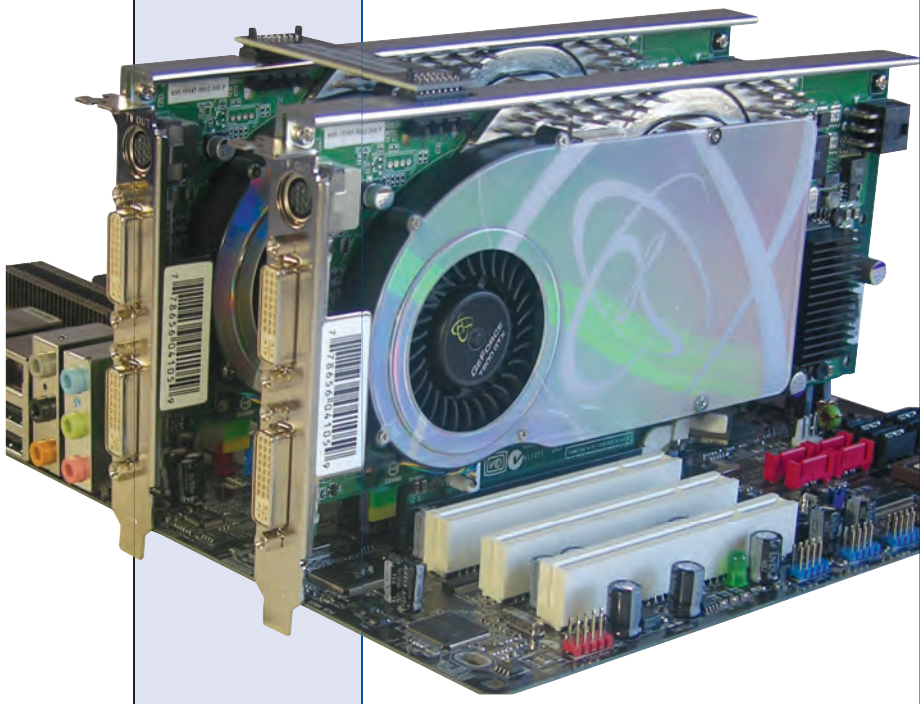
- **3DMark05**  
SLI: 10,220  
Single: 8,095
- **Half-Life 2**  
SLI: 50.86  
Single: 55.66
- **F.E.A.R.**  
SLI: 96.90  
Single: 86.10

VALUE	PERFORMANCE	BUNDLE
75	90	70

OVERALL

# 78





### VITAL INFO

- **Plus**  
Bundled Far Cry game;  
Slightly overclocked
- **Minus**  
Price
- **Supplier**  
Computers Only  
[011] 466-4060
- **Internet**  
[www.computersonly.co.za](http://www.computersonly.co.za)
- **RRP**  
R 5,999

### SPECS

- **GPU Clock**  
450MHz
- **Memory**  
630MHz

### BENCHMARKS

- **3DMark05**  
SLI: 10,298  
Single: 8,036
- **Half-Life 2**  
SLI: 48.12  
Single: 52.68
- **F.E.A.R.**  
SLI: 93.90  
Single: 84.5

VALUE    PERFORMANCE    BUNDLE  
75        90        80

OVERALL  
**81**

### XFX PV-T70F-UDF7

The XFX NVIDIA GeForce 7800 GTX features funky packaging and a near impressive bundle. There are three games bundled with this card. The first two are fairly old titles, X2: The Threat and Moto GP2. The third game is Far Cry. This game is not particularly new, but it is still a great game and will put the NVIDIA 7800 GTX through its paces. This card also ships with a set of VIVO cables and an S-video cable. For the most part, this card is based on the NVIDIA reference design, but an aluminium rail was added to the card which, according to XFX, strengthens its design.



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### WinFast PX7800 GTX

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- NVIDIA® Intellisample™ 4.0 technology
- NVIDIA® PureVideo™ technology
- NVIDIA® ForceWare™ Unified Driver Architecture (UDA)
- NVIDIA® nView® multi-display technology
- PCI Express support
- Microsoft® DirectX® 9.0 Shader Model 3.0 support
- OpenGL® 2.0 support
- Designed for the Microsoft® "Longhorn" operation system.

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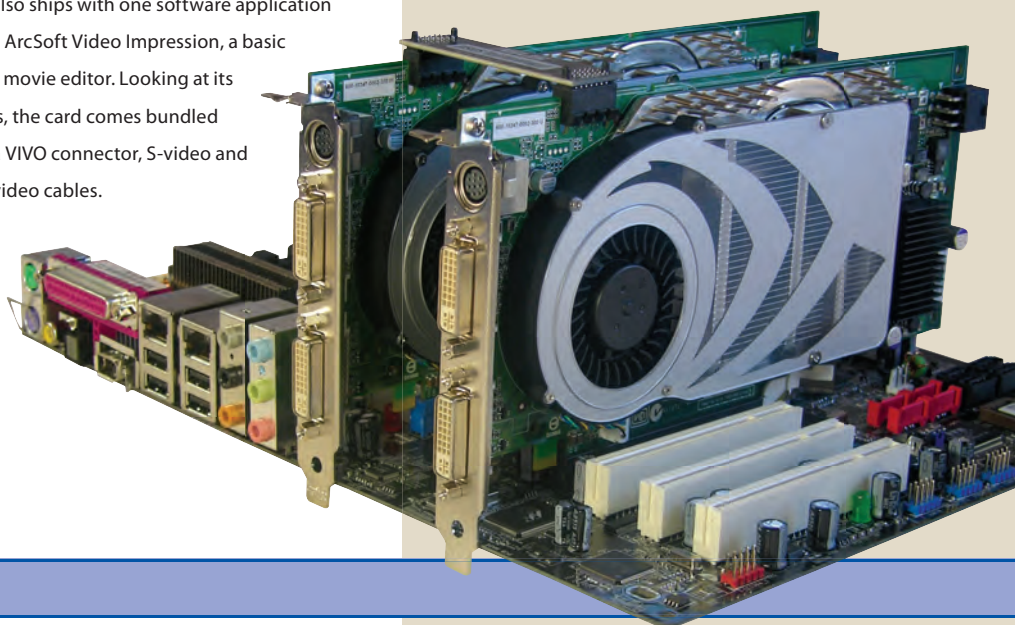
WEB: [WWW.COREX.CO.ZA](http://WWW.COREX.CO.ZA)

FAX: 011 707 5050



## ELSA GLADIAC 780GTX

The ELSA GLADIAC 780GTX's packaging is not awfully exciting and sadly neither is its bundle. In the box you will find a full version of Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield and Tomb Raider The Angel of Darkness. Neither of these games was particularly popular and will not show off the impressive capabilities of the NVIDIA 7800 GTX. This card also ships with one software application called ArcSoft Video Impression, a basic home movie editor. Looking at its cables, the card comes bundled with a VIVO connector, S-video and RCA-video cables.



### VITAL INFO

- **Plus**  
Price
- **Minus**  
Bundle
- **Supplier**  
Proton Technology  
[011] 486-0748
- **Internet**  
www.prototech.co.za
- **RRP**  
R 5,799

### SPECS

- **GPU Clock**  
430MHz
- **Memory**  
600MHz

### BENCHMARKS

- **3DMark05**  
SLI: 10,076  
Single: 7,557
- **Half-Life 2**  
SLI: 47.89  
Single: 53.86
- **F.E.A.R.**  
SLI: 94.50  
Single: 85.1

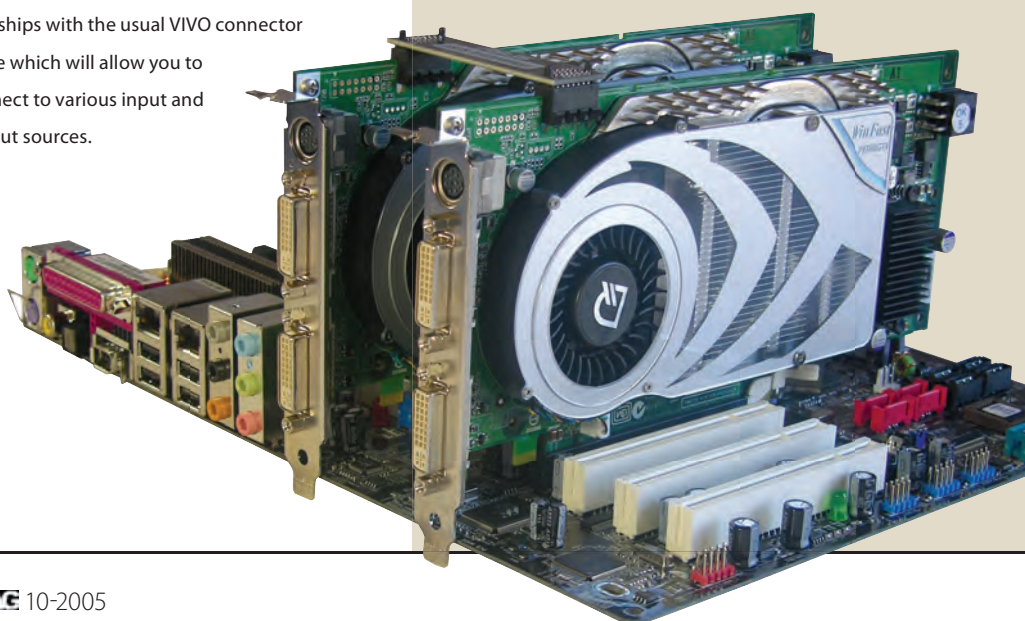
VALUE	PERFORMANCE	BUNDLE
80	90	75

OVERALL

# 81

## LEADTEK WIN FAST PX 7800 GTX TDH

Leadtek's software bundle, which ships with its Win Fast PX 7800 GTX TDH graphics card, is probably the most exciting of all the cards in this roundup. This is simply because Leadtek bundled two pretty decent games, Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory and Prince of Persia: Warrior Within. It also features three other software applications, ULEAD VideoStudio 8 SE, ULEAD DVD Movie Factory 3 SE and ULEAD Cool 3D version 3 SE. It also ships with the usual VIVO connector cable which will allow you to connect to various input and output sources.



### VITAL INFO

- **Plus**  
Game bundle
- **Minus**  
Price
- **Supplier**  
Corex [011] 707-5000
- **Internet**  
www.corex.co.za
- **RRP**  
R 6,495

### SPECS

- **GPU Clock**  
430MHz
- **Memory**  
600MHz

### BENCHMARKS

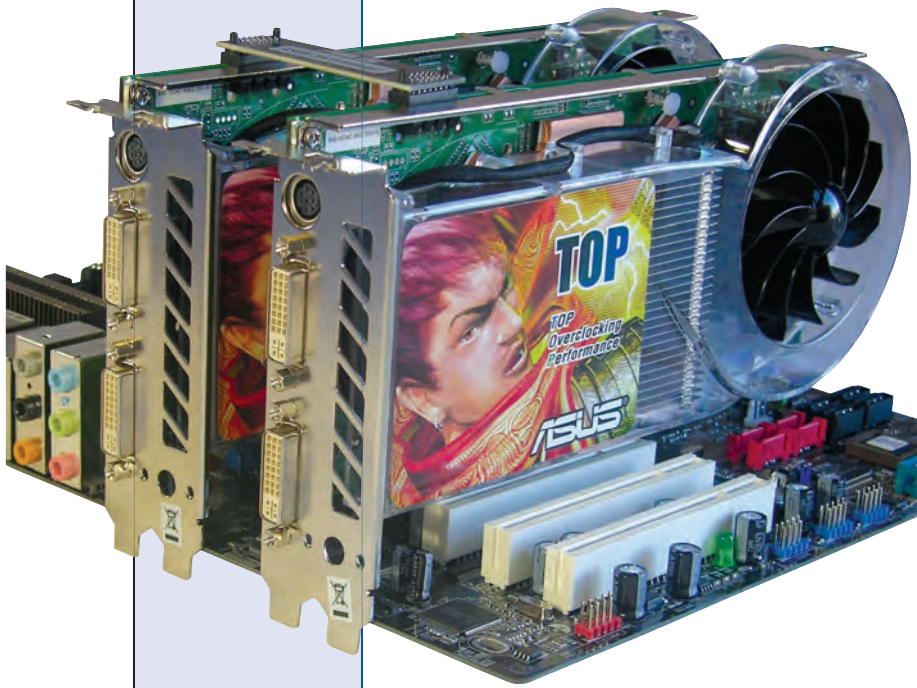
- **3DMark05**  
SLI: 10,060  
Single: 7,569
- **Half-Life 2**  
SLI: 48.35  
Single: 53.99
- **F.E.A.R.**  
SLI: 95.4  
Single: 84.7

VALUE	PERFORMANCE	BUNDLE
70	90	90

OVERALL

# 83





#### VITAL INFO

##### Plus

Extra cooling;  
Slightly faster running GPU  
and memory

##### Minus

Cooling solution can be  
a problem on certain  
motherboards

##### Supplier

Asus [011] 783-5450

##### Internet

www.asus.com

##### RRP

R 6,499

#### SPECS

##### GPU Clock

486MHz

##### Memory

675MHz

#### BENCHMARKS

##### 3DMark05

SLI: 10,519

Single: 8,239

##### Half-Life 2

SLI: 51.63

Single: 56.32

##### F.E.A.R.

SLI: 97.3

Single: 86.16

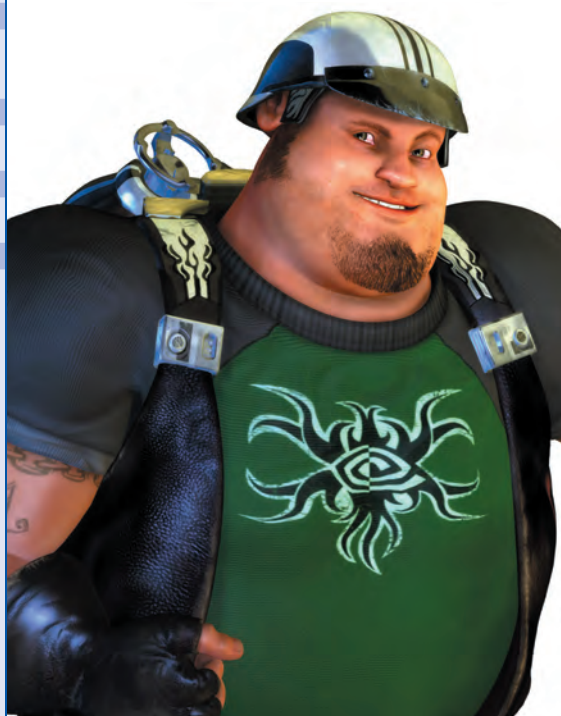
VALUE PERFORMANCE BUNDLE  
70 90 75

OVERALL

# 78

#### ASUS EXTREME N7800 GTX TOP

Asus always has a way of doing things slightly differently, and their rendition of the NVIDIA GeForce 7800 GTX is no exception. The card itself features a two slot cooling solution which can be a problem on certain motherboards (our original test motherboard could not accommodate this card due to a large heatsink on the motherboard). Sadly, the bundle is not all that exciting and features various dated software titles such as Second Sight, Chaos League, and PowerDrome. Asus also upped the default GPU and memory speed of this card, but only slightly, and it is not enough to see a massive performance increase.



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## GAME MAKER: PART 2

**L**AST MONTH WE INTRODUCED Game Maker 6.1 as a tool for aspiring game developers. This month we'll expand on the basic introduction to Game Maker by taking a look at some of the systems that give Game Maker its power. It's important to note that you shouldn't be running Game Maker in simple mode, even when you're just starting. Advanced mode isn't as complex as it sounds and some of the settings and features we're about to cover are only available in advanced mode. To switch modes simply check or uncheck the 'Advanced Mode' option in the 'File' menu.

### First up: Sprites

**A**S MENTIONED LAST MONTH, sprites are 2D images (as opposed to 3D models) that make up the graphics in many games. Exactly what you use to create your sprites doesn't really matter: you could render them from a 3D package, scan them in, draw them in a painting program or even grab them off Google image search. All that matters is that they look the way you want them to and they're in a format that Game Maker can read. This includes most popular image formats, so finding a program that can't render a format that Game Maker supports counts as quite an achievement.

Once you've created a new sprite (either by clicking on the 'New Sprite' button which looks like a red Pac Man, or by right-clicking on the 'Sprites folder' and adding a new sprite from the menu there) and loaded it from the original graphics file, you're presented with something rather similar to Figure 1.

Setting a sprite to 'Transparent' makes Game Maker use the left-bottom pixel of the sprite as a transparent colour, which means that any pixels of that colour are not drawn for that sprite. Remember that the colour must exactly match to be transparent. In some graphics programs it's easy to slightly change the colours of pixels around the edges of your actual image. This will give your sprites an ugly halo that's similar to their background colour and can easily be avoided.

'Precise collision checking' enables or disables pixel-perfect collision detection for transparent sprites. 'Smooth edges' also only works on transparent sprites - it attempts to make sprite edges less blocky by fading edge pixels slightly. 'Preload texture' tells the engine to load the sprite when the game starts up (preloading) or only when it is needed (loading on demand) - only larger games need to worry about this setting. The 'Origin' of a sprite is the point that it's drawn from and rotates around (in the registered version). Most sprites work fine with their origins at the top left: 0,0. The 'Bounding box' is used to speed up calculating collisions with the sprite. This is what you collide with if 'Precise collision checking' is disabled.

Sprites in GM can be animated, either by loading lots of different images into the sprite or by using the large set of animation tools that Game Maker provides. This is all managed via the 'Edit Sprite' button. For instance, to create a sequence of frames that we can use to control

Figure 1

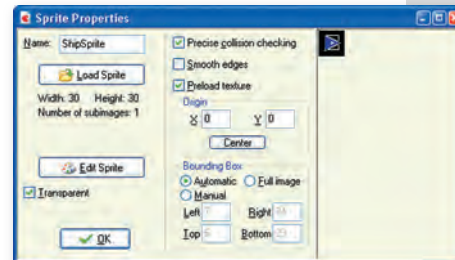


Figure 2

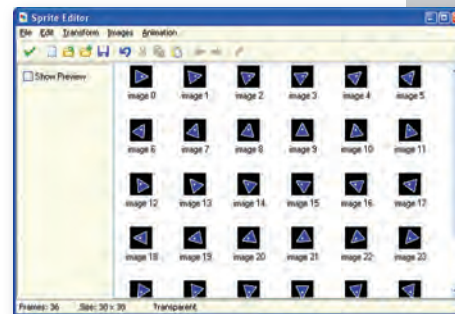


Figure 3

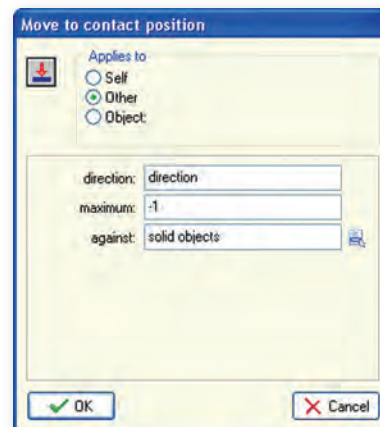
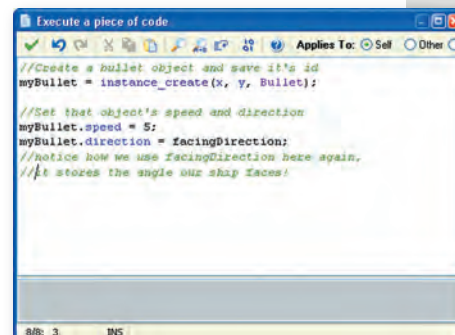


Figure 4







PlayStation 2

PAL



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the direction that the sprite is facing, we click on 'Edit Sprite' then in the new window 'Animation -> Rotation Sequence -> Counter-clockwise' and set the number of sprites to 72 to give us a new frame every five degrees (360 / 72 = 5). The first frame faces to the right because zero degrees in Game Maker is to the right, then proceeds counter-clockwise to up being 90, etc. [Figure 2]

To make the object, that uses this sprite, always look like it's facing a specific angle, all we need to do is determine the angle we want it to face (this is often the object's direction variable) every step and then set the object's 'image\_single' variable to the right frame to display. This is calculated by dividing the facing angle by the number of degrees per frame. For an example, check out the 'Sprite\_rotation\_example.gm6' on the Cover DVD.

You're encouraged to play around with the animations and effects in the sprite editor. They can create some interesting effects with a lot less work than drawing everything by hand. Experiment!

### Next: The Collision system

USING THE COLLISION SYSTEM in Game Maker is surprisingly easy. Compared to writing your own collision system, it's practically ludicrous! All you do is create a collision event on your object and select the object you want it to collide with. The typical action to apply would be 'Bounce against all', but the logic you use is up to you. Another popular response is simply to destroy the colliding object.

If you need to affect the object that is being collided with, Game Maker provides a reference to it during the collision event called 'other'. This other object can be the target of actions (by setting which object the action 'Applies to' in the top part of each action's settings window) or can be used in scripts. [Figure 3]

Collisions between non-solid objects will simply fire when the objects' movement takes them into the same space. Collision between a solid object and a non-solid object makes sure that the non-solid object is not inside the solid one. This can be useful for terrain or anywhere you want to make sure other objects aren't going to interpenetrate.

It is possible for very fast moving objects to go straight 'through' something that they should have collided with. Something small moving at a speed of 15 has a very high chance of seeming to pass straight through another small object - it could pass straight through a wall at a speed of 40! This happens because Game Maker does not normally try to collide along the object's path, it only checks the position the objects are moving to. You can manually do your own path collision checks using the GML functions for collisions. '**collision\_line()**' is particularly useful to

avoid these types of situations.

Be careful when trying to bounce objects that have sprite animations off other objects. If the sprite frame changes just as the two collide, it's possible for them to get stuck together. To avoid this, either disable precise collision or use a sprite mask for the animated object.

### Finally: GML Functions and Scripting

IT'S IN THE 'GAME Maker Language' that the true power of Game Maker lies. Not only can you access all the functionality of the normal 'Actions via function calls', but there are tons of special features that are available through GML that the actions don't cover. All GML expressions can be used in the inputs of actions, making the normal actions a lot more powerful.

Besides the previously mentioned special collision functions, commonly used functions include:

'**point\_direction(x1,y1,x2,y2)**' - this takes two positions and calculates the direction in degrees from the first point to the second.

'**point\_distance(x1,y1,x2,y2)**' - this returns the distance between the first point and the second, using Pythagoras' theorem.

'**lengthdir\_x(len,dir)**' and '**lengthdir\_y(len,dir)**' - these return the distances along X and Y of a distance at a specific angle (using sin and cosine), great for positioning objects relative to others.

'**motion\_add(dir,speed)**' - this accelerates an object in the direction specified by the amount given, useful in space and driving games.

And various other modifications to the object-specific variables of '**direction**', '**speed**', '**x**', '**y**', '**sprite\_index**', '**image\_speed**', '**image\_single**', '**image\_alpha**', etc.

Adding a new variable to an object is as easy as giving it a value. To store an object's maximum number of missiles, simply set maxMissiles to five (the name choice is up to you, but it's good practice to use descriptive names instead of var1, var2, a, b, c, etc.).

GML is also the only way to change settings or variables on one object from another object. This is done via dot notation and each object's unique ID. All objects in Game Maker are assigned an ID that's greater than 10,000. This number can be used to access that specific object. For instance: the '**instance\_create(x,y,object\_type)**' function returns the ID of the object it has just created. If we store this value in a variable we can then change the object's state by using dot notation: '**<id\_variable>.<attribute> = <value>**'. [Figure 4]

GML scripting can be used in two ways: either by using the 'Execute a piece of code' action and typing in the code, or by adding a 'Script' to the scripts folder and using the 'Execute a script' action. Both are found in the 'Control' tab. It is possible to pass parameters to scripts using the special variables '**argument0**', '**argument1**' - up to '**argument15**'. Scripts can be called from other scripts just like GML functions: '**<scriptname>(<arg0>,<arg1>...)**'. The object that calls the script or executes the code is the object that the script runs on. This means that the variable '**x**' in the script refers to that particular object's X value. This makes it possible to write one script that runs on multiple objects. Scripts can return a value by using the '**return <value>**' command.

Excellent information about scripting can be found in the Game Maker help file. It is recommended that you read this before starting to write your own scripts. Scripting isn't essential to make a good game though; fun comes from good ideas and design, not complexity. **NAG**

### A BIT OF PERSPECTIVE

THE BIGGEST ENEMY OF any new game developer is lack of perspective. You should never dismiss how much work something is going to be. If you don't have any ideas on how something might work, you shouldn't be trying to develop a game around it. That MMORPG idea you have is probably not the best place to start learning how to develop games.

Start small and build up your skills and understanding. Do research online and experiment with common game types. Redeveloping an existing game is an excellent learning experience... Don't worry; you'll be able to make your ideas for Half-Life 3 a reality one day!





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# LAZY GAMER'S GUIDE

## RTR-720 MARK II

**IS IT A MOUSE?** Is it a flying saucer? Is it something the Japanese invented and no-one knows what it's really for? The RTR-720 might be all these things, but for now it is a suggested evolution of the mouse, complete with its own can and bottle of wax.

**Supplied by:** Good Work Systems  
**Internet:** [www.gamingmouse.com](http://www.gamingmouse.com)



### The funny-looking mouse

How strange-looking is this critter? At the NAG office we like to wrap our complete, manly hands around the sleek curves of our ergonomic mice. A pod that leaves most of your hand surface on the table surface doesn't have much appeal. But it might just be a matter of getting used to it. The RTR-720 claims to use hand muscles much more efficiently and actually causes less cramping than normal mice, and its design boasts double the speed and twice the accuracy of conventional mice. Inside it has its own CPU and memory, all catered towards advanced gaming functions, such as memorising buttons for different games and so forth. It doesn't require drivers for advanced performance. On top of that it has an ultra-high 1,600dpi resolution.



### Accessories!

When something comes with its own screwdriver, you're talking serious accessories. But the changes are largely cosmetic. The RTR-720 can take different face plates on top and grips around its sides. You can also place Teflon or steel glides on its feet surface for a smooth movement. But if that's not enough, there's always the wax. Yes, a bottle of wax accompanies the mouse and lets users really make a surface perfect for the mouse to move on. Apply it to your mouse pad and let the good times roll! Alas, we didn't try to apply the wax to something – that's just too much – but it does smell nice. And somebody will find that nth degree of extra movement useful.

### It comes in a tin

The packaging is a tin, which reflects just how small and strange this mouse is. It's also a great marketing gimmick. The label literally says: "Can of WHOOPASS". It goes even further with such helpful markings as "Recycle your opponents please!" and the warning: "Opening can of whoopass may cause severe ownage." Even the usage directions are worth a chuckle: "Add contents to server; Beat players well for 3 minutes; Reduce heat; Chill." And the pièce de résistance? "Danger! Use both hands to open." The mouse itself might be gimmicky, but, damn, this is a cool can!





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# Kaare Andrews: Driven by Creativity

**I**N TODAY'S COMPETITIVE COMIC world, it is important to broaden your abilities and sharpen your skills every day. Kaare Andrews (KA) has this craving to be creative through various media and pushes himself until he is not limited by the medium, but only by his own creativity. This is a sign of a true artist.

#### **What was the first comic book you ever collected?**

**KA:** The first comic book I ever remember having was X-Men Annual #4 and I was like four years old. I couldn't even read yet! The first comic book I remember specifically 'collecting' was G.I. Joe. This was around the time the cartoon was on TV and it was just the most kick-butt thing out there. I had all the toys my allowance could afford and it was a real treat to enjoy that stuff in every medium - toys, comics, videogames, and cartoons!

#### **How did you get into the comic book industry?**

**KA:** I come from the vast emptiness of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan in Canada. It's right in the middle of Canada, flat as a pancake and thousands of miles from any comic book company. So it was really an obsession with the medium that got me in. I started off sending samples to 30 or 40 editors every four months or so, started going to conventions and finally got my first non-paying job on a small black and white anthology called Writers Bloc. That led to some other small press work which led to my first low paying colour job for a company in Hong Kong. After that was some time spent at Image and then I broke into Marvel Comics and Wildstorm at the same time. I'm really proud of making it because, man, I worked hard to get here.

#### **How did you develop the 'Kaare Andrews style'?**

**KA:** The 'Kaare Andrews style' to me is like Bruce Lee's style. No style. I rather try to find a style for each project, an attack for each opponent. I do covers in a photorealistic digital style (Hulk, Wolverine), I do an Eastern cartoon-like line art style for some of my other projects (Matrix, Spider-Man Manga) and a very Western pen and ink style with heavy blacks for some of my more serious comics (Wolverine, Spider-Man/Doctor Octopus). I'm constantly trying to push myself and what I do, as opposed to refining a specific set of rules or style. For my next project I'm using the computer more than ever before. Very exciting for me to learn things like 3D.

#### **Which project so far has been the most memorable to do?**

**KA:** That's a tough one. I'm mostly known for my two year run on Hulk covers, but the one cover I'm the proudest of is a Spider-Man cover I did. It was of Spider-Man and MJ kissing and was used to inspire the classic scene in the first Spider-Man movie. They created the whole marketing campaign for the movie based on the kiss. I mean really, the whole purpose of art is to affect people isn't it? And Spider-Man has always been my favourite character.





**With your unique style, do you focus on any particular trait when you draw characters like Spider-Man, The Hulk or Wolverine?**

**KA:** That's the secret! Every character has particular traits you can push and pull to make your mark when you draw them. For Spider-Man it's the eyes, the web pattern and the shades and hues of his red and blues. For Wolverine it's how you draw those claws and how you draw his body-type, how you deal with his hair. For Hulk it's how you draw those muscles and the shade of green you use. That's not only the secret, but that's where all the fun is. You ask yourself how you can push those characters and present them to people in a way that's recognisable but unlike anything they've ever seen. That's fun.

**You had a cameo appearance in Dark Angel?**

**KA:** No, no, not really, (laughing). I was in the crowd in an episode. It's fun to visit sets down in Vancouver. I was able to check out X-Men II and Blade III as well.

**You have quite a fan following on your Website. Do you visit and chat to your fans regularly?**

**KA:** I'm so bad with my Website. I'm updating it right now. I have a new site for a short film I just wrote and directed - [www.unwrittenthemovie.com](http://www.unwrittenthemovie.com). It's about an old man, Andrew Herbert, who is desperately trying to finish his only novel before death knocks on his door. It'll be making its run on the festival circuit and then finding a distributor. It was a great experience and I'm looking forward to the next one. The premiere will be held at the Toronto International Film Festival, the number two film festival in the world. That happens mid-September and I can't wait. I've been doing short films for a while and am currently setting up my first feature. Comic books have been great training for film because I use a lot of the same skill sets when I direct.

**Which projects are you currently working on?**

**KA:** Right now I've taken on a whole platter of Wolverine covers. I'm also drawing Wolverine #32 and Marvel Comics, for the first time, is also printing a black and white version of the issue. I'm really excited about that. I'll have a creator owned mini-series debuting next year, and an amazing Marvel Comics mini-series that I'm writing and drawing come out approximately the same time.

**You did an amazing job with the Eastern influenced 'Spiderman: Legend of the Spider Clan'. Do you watch anime or read any manga at all?**

**KA:** Oh yeah! I grew up on Robotech and that opened a lot of doors for me. I've read a lot of Battle Angel Alita, Akira, Grey, Xenon, Blade of the Immortal, and Riot. I tend to buy fewer books these days, but still pick up a lot of random titles because I enjoy the art so much. There's always so much energy and action. For anime, I just picked up Steamboy and enjoy a little Cowboy Bebop and the CG Appleseed. I'm probably not as much into it as most of your readers, but it's something I'll always love. **NAG**







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**Electronic Games Archive**

[www.flickr.com/photos/petromyzon/sets/538195/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/petromyzon/sets/538195/)

**G**OD BLESS FLICKR AND its apple-pie goodness. The photo site has already spawned a lot of interesting picture collections, but this is truly a gaming gem. Slowly but surely it's building a collection of photos of all kinds of game systems through the ages. If you recognise all of the ones on display, odds are you are a seriously old-school gamer. So old, in fact, that we won't want to hang out with you. Respect you, yes, but from a distance.



**Google It, you moron**

[www.googleityoumoron.com](http://www.googleityoumoron.com)

**T**HE SITE NAME SAYS it all, but we'll elaborate anyway. Clearly a public service announcement, this site puts forward the simple, but effective, argument that before you go and ask a stupid question about something, google it first and see what comes up. Odds are you'll get your answer and we won't be interrupted playing Mario Party.



**Konami**

[www.konami.com/gs/](http://www.konami.com/gs/)

**K**ONAMI FINALLY DECIDED TO change its site design into something far more amicable. It appears that game publishers are finally realising gamers don't want flash and sparkle. We want information! The new Konami site has plenty of that for current and upcoming releases, though nothing on Silent Hill 5 or Metal Gear Solid 4. Hey, we had to try!

books

**Freedom Force vs The 3<sup>rd</sup> Reich Official Strategy Guide**

**By:** Laura Parkinson

**Price:** TBA

**Supplied by:** Pearson Education at [itminds@pearsoned.co.za](mailto:itminds@pearsoned.co.za)

**T**HE OFFICIAL STRATEGY GUIDE for the PC game Freedom Force vs The 3<sup>rd</sup> Reich is now available locally and consists of an in-depth mission guide through the entire game world. You will also gain the advantage while playing after perusing all the stats, attributes and other critical data for every hero and bad guy you encounter in your game. The guide also contains an assortment of tips and tactics which can be used to customise your hero and more effectively manage your character.

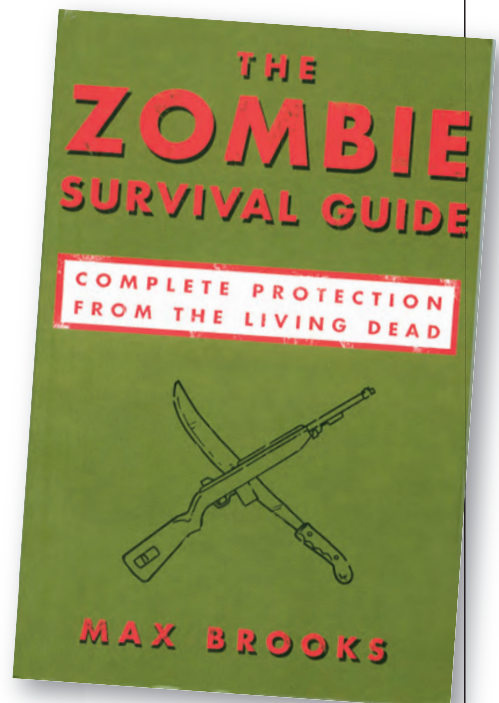


**The Zombie Survival Guide**

**By:** Max Brooks

**W**HILE PERHAPS NOT FOREMOST on your mind, a zombie holocaust is definitely a threat to humanity. There is the technicality that it probably won't happen, since scientifically it's quite impossible (or at least unfeasible), but you never know. For those who take their zombie threat seriously or just want to become a guru in all things zombie, this survival guide is ideal. It is a 'factual' and well-written account on zombies – what they are, how they come to being and their strengths and weaknesses – and how to survive a zombie attack. This is rated from a small problem to the scenario of the world being overrun. The book covers every aspect of this, including barricading options, safe places, what supplies to get and what would be the most effective and practical weapons to use and find.

It's not real, but this guide is written to come across as a factual piece of work and for that it is very entertaining and informative. Arguably useless, but at least you'll be able to maintain a conversation about zombies long after others have lost interest. A must for fans.





## Freshmen

Image Comics

R22.95

Co-created by Seth Green of Buffy fame, this is a story of the horrors of growing up. As though the normal American teen doesn't have enough to go through with the fraternities, then living away from home and wondering if anyone will ever like them, these teens have a rude awakening when they discover that six of them literally wake up with super powers. Imagine what you would do if you could get into someone else's head, knowing their every thought, and feeling everything they do? Would you use it to help them, abuse it to get a date, or hide in a closet when you discover what they really thought of you? Join them as they try to fit in with each other as well as everyone else on campus.

## Dot Hack: AI Buster

Tokyopop

R69.95

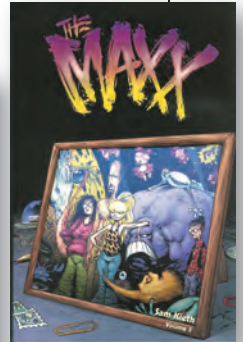
Dot Hack has been both an anime series as well as a PlayStation game. This story is a prequel to both. In the beginning there was an online fantasy role-playing game so advanced it was simply called "The World". With millions of people plugged into it, even the debuggers have to enter the game to remove the glitches from the system. Albirio is one such debugger, just doing her job until she finds a glitch that won't go away: a small piece of programming that appears as a little girl who refuses to be deleted. As Albirio follows Lycoris into the game she begins to wonder if she is as real as she thinks, or is she also just a piece of software that has forgotten its place? For anyone who knows "The World" this is a great piece of extra detail. For those who don't, prepare to be drawn in.

## The Maxx

Image Comics

R149.95

Sam Keith's art is odd - very odd. But it's not half as odd as his story telling. The Maxx follows the stories of six characters each in search of themselves. Moving between the real world, their memories and the outback that is inside their own minds, this is a tale of discovering what really makes you the person you are. Not the mask that everyone else sees, but the one that is awake at three in the morning. As you read through this story you will identify bits that are you, and even better, you will begin to realise what makes other people tick. Perhaps Sam Keith isn't so odd. Maybe he knows things we don't and he's helping us on our journeys.



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## KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

**K**INGDOM OF HEAVEN IS set in the time of the Crusades during the Dark Ages – the world-altering 200-year collision between Europe and the East. A French blacksmith, named Balian (Orlando Bloom), who has lost his wife, is visited by a knight named Godfrey (Liam Neeson), who reveals to him that he is his father. After an unfortunate incident involving the murder of a local priest, Balian has no choice but to flee and follow his father to the East. Along the way, his father is mortally wounded and Balian is knighted. Balian then takes a

journey across continents to the fabled Holy City, in an effort to find divine forgiveness for his sins.

Kingdom of Heaven (directed by Ridley Scott) is an epic film. It has all the right ingredients to make it a great film: a fearless and righteous knight, an exotic but forbidden queen, an imminent war and a doomed king. Orlando Bloom shines as Balian and Eva Green puts in a strong performance as the forbidden love in his life. Ghassan Massoud is excellent as Saladin. Cinematography is brilliant and at times breathtaking, such as when late at night, a string of fires comes to light on the dark, distant horizon, and it takes a moment to register that these are firebombs heading straight for the camera. A definite must see. *[Don't watch it if you're tired, Ed.]*



## MILLION DOLLAR BABY

**// SHOW ME A FIGHTER** who's nothing but heart, and "I'll show you a man who's waiting for a beatin'," reminisced ex-fighter Frankie Dunn (Morgan Freeman) during one of his trips down memory lane in Million Dollar Baby.

Million Dollar Baby, based on a series of stories 'Rope Burns: Stories from the Corner', written by long-time fight manager Jerry Boyd under the pseudonym F.X. Toole, tells the story of 31-year-old Maggie Fitzgerald (Hilary Swank),

a woman who grew up in the backwaters of America and who wants to become a boxer. Through sheer determination and persistence, she convinces the owner of a boxing gym, Eddie "Scrap-Iron" Dupris (Clint Eastwood) who is also a great boxing trainer, to become her trainer. He reluctantly accepts and Fitzgerald becomes a sensation in the ring, knocking out opponent after opponent in the first round of each fight she enters. She becomes an overnight sensation and challenges for the world title, held by a British boxer. She defeats her opponent, who is a mean and dirty fighter (almost like Mike Tyson in drag and on ecstasy). While her opponent, who has just been defeated via a technical knockout, is being given the count, Fitzgerald turns around to walk to her corner and is hit from behind by her defeated opponent. Fitzgerald falls and breaks her neck on her corner chair and is paralysed. She ends up in hospital, unable to move or breathe on her own, and realises that her life is over. To avoid spoiling the dramatic ending, we won't go further into the story.

Million Dollar Baby is Clint Eastwood's 25<sup>th</sup> film as director and the 57<sup>th</sup> in which he had acted. He is brilliant as the troubled Dupris, and was nominated for a best actor award at the 2005 Oscars. Hilary Swank is simply mesmerising as the determined, but searching for a better life, Fitzgerald, and received an Oscar (her second) for her role in this film. Morgan Freeman, as usual, turns in a decent performance.

Hilary Swank underwent a serious training schedule to prepare for this film. She gained nearly 20 pounds of muscle due to the workouts. Hilary, you come kick our ass any day.



## BILLY CORGAN: The Future Embrace

Billy Corgan, former front man of The Smashing Pumpkins, is back, and this time he's going it solo with The Future Embrace. For those who are (or should we say were) fans of The Smashing Pumpkins and are hoping that Corgan will bring back the Pumpkins' magic, don't hold your breath.

The Future Embrace is not a Pumpkins album, and sadly so – Corgan must have realised that he needed his former band when he took out an ad in a Chicago-based newspaper, asking for a reunion of his former band.

It is not that Future Embrace is a bad album per se, it is just that it is so un-Corgan (at least while he was still with the Pumpkins). Gone are the synthesiser magic and guitar wizardry. In place of that we get Corgan, and only Corgan, trying to deal with his angst and insecurities, and all this tells on the album. If you have your own issues and ghosts to deal with and are thinking of ways to electrocute yourself using your PC and the bathtub, then give it a miss.

## STAIND: Chapter V

Chapter V carries on where previous albums, Tormented and Dysfunction, ended. It is a dark, moody and schizophrenic album, and most people who fight their own inner demons will find something in common with Lewis.

Having grown up in a trailer park surely must have left a deep emotional scar on Staind's Aaron Lewis' soul. So deep is this scarring that he, in his own words, cannot live a normal life like the rest of us. His lyrics are true and with no illusions and there are no opportunistic shadows behind his words. All this emotional dysfunction tells in Staind's latest album, Chapter V.

## BROKEN DREAMS: 19 Of The Most Pained Rock Anthems (Compilation)

Broken Dreams is a compilation which contains "19 of the most pained rock anthems". What is it with Rock music and pain anyway? Are pain, hate, mental anguish, emotional dysfunction and paranoia prerequisites for selling music nowadays? Or maybe we just lost the plot along the way.

Broken Dreams features some good (pained) tracks such as 'Boulevard Of Broken Dreams' by Green Day, the ridiculously overplayed 'How You Remind Me' by Nickelback, 'Only Happy When It Rains' by Garbage and 'Love Is Only A Feeling' by The Darkness. The rest of the album is so-so, and you should enjoy it if you are into compilations and pain.



# MAGIC

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# GAME OVER



## BADGER HUNT

**E**ACH 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 [October Badger].



September Badger Hunt winner [p46]: Werner Brummer

## CAPTION OF THE MONTH

**E**VERY 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 [October 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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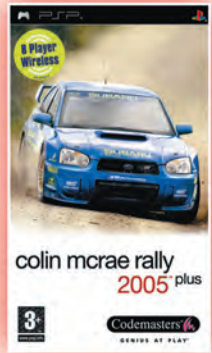
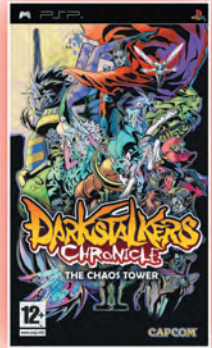
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Telemetry, my dear Watson, telemetry.





On PSP™  
this October



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