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PCGzine

Issue 1 | November 2006

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Sound Blaster
X-Fi Xtreme
Gamer

Free Magazine For PC Gamers. Read it, Print it, Send it to your mates...

MASSIVE PREVIEW INSIDE!

WORLD OF WARCRAFT: THE BURNING CRUSADE

Plus! Exclusive never-before-seen video footage

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

Championship Manager 2008

We talk tactics with studio
boss David Rutter. Get In!

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40

PAGES INSIDE

INCLUDING...

COMMAND & CONQUER 3

COLIN MCRAE: DIRT

UNREAL TOURNAMENT

MAELSTROM

MEDAL OF HONOUR

FULL REVIEWS



Medieval II

It's the RTS of the year!



Splinter Cell Double Agent

Lie. Kill. Sabotage. Betray.



Warhammer

Tabletop gaming on PC

PLUS

Guild Wars: Nightfall

FIFA Manager

Cricket 2007

Flight Sim X

Welcome to PCGZine



Hello and welcome to the first issue of PCGameZine. If you saw the first issue of our sister title, 360Zine, then you'll be familiar with the interactive format that all our GamerZines employ. But, if all this is new to you then let me explain... PCGZine is a new type of emagazine that features interactive rich media and is distributed freely across the internet. In short, it's free for you to download, and if you want to send it to your mates, or link to it from your site or blog, please do.

We might be free, but you can rest assured that we always tell it how it is. Everyone at PCGZine has a rich heritage in the videogames industry, so you know that every issue we will deliver previews and reviews that you can trust.

Enjoy the issue, and please feel free to send me your thoughts and ideas.

Dan Hutchinson, Editor
dan@gamerzines.com



Don't miss! This month's top highlights

NEVER BEFORE SEEN VIDEO FOOTAGE!

World of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade

Blizzard keeps the world turning PAGE 11

QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away!

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Medal of Honor Airbourne	Maelstrom
Colin McRae: DIRT	Championship Manager
Unreal Tournament 2007	Medieval II
Spore	Warhammer: Mark of Chaos
Crysis	Splinter Cell Double Agent
Lord of the Rings	Guild Wars: Nightfall
Test Drive Unlimited	FIFA Manager 07
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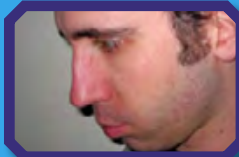
WIN!
Sound Blaster X-Fi Xtreme Gamer

Medieval II

It's more spectacular than ever PAGE 23

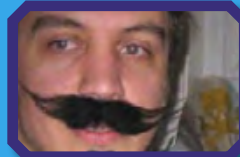
MEET THE TEAM

When it comes to games they know their stuff



Alec Meer

Alec's a regular contributor to Eurogamer, PC Format, PC Gamer, IGN and The Independent.



Jim Rossignol

Jim writes for Wired, PC Gamer UK and the web development portal Gamasutra.



Adam Oxford

Having recently vacated the editor's chair of PC Format, Adam now plays World of Warcraft.



Steve Hill

Steve lives and breathes videogames. He writes regularly for Maxim, Loaded, and PC Zone.



ISSUE 1 OF 360ZINE IS STILL AVAILABLE FOR FREE
DOWNLOAD FROM WWW.GAMERZINES.COM

COMMAND & CONQUER
TIBERIUM WARS

Publisher: EA

Developer: EA LA

Heritage: C&C Generals,
and the good C&C games

Link: [www.ea.com/
commandandconquer](http://www.ea.com/commandandconquer)

ETA: March 30



**"EA is
throwing
everything at
this welcome
return of C&C"**



C&C – like chess,
with fire. And fun.

Classic gameplay
with a 'next gen'
twist. Yup, that'll
do nicely.



Who'd be a grunt in the laser-death
armies of the future?

**FIRST
LOOK**

Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars

How's this for a game of Conquers?

What's the story?

It's 2047 and a global battle for the uber-resource of the future, tiberium, kicks off. The malicious Brotherhood of Nod, led by legendary commander Kane, square-off against the Global Defence Initiative in an RTS-stylee.

What do we know?

EA is throwing everything at this welcome return of C&C. The dev team has been keeping company with MIT scientists and B-rate Hollywood voice talent (the bloke who plays Lando Calrissian) as EA looks to reinvigorate a series that pretty much invented the strategy game as we know it.

Quality cut-scenes, a pile of 30 single player missions and a raft of nifty units – such as some delicious-looking floating battleships – are among the more predictable features.

But promised AI brilliance – which, crucially, reacts to your tactics – and multiplayer options – which enable you to plot the downfall of the world's best players – are the meat in the C&C sandwich.

We're expecting a richly storied and truly beautiful experience that should be boosted by a new sidebar system that's set to make managing your troops and your base-building pleasingly stress-free.

When do we get more?

The developers are drip-feeding info, but we're expecting to get hands-on after Christmas.

Anything else to declare?

Use VOIP to trash-talk your opponents online. Grrrr!

Actual Game Play.



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MEDAL OF HONOR
AIRBORNE

Publisher: EA

Developer: EA LA

Heritage: MOH, Battle For
Middle Earth, C&C

Link: Link www.moh.

ea.com

ETA: TBC

Medal Of Honor Airborne

FIRST
LOOK*A World War II first-person 'chuter*

What's the story?

You're thrust into the Nazi-stained boots of 82nd Airborne unit trooper Boyd Travers in the WWII battle to regain Europe from the occupying Hitlerites.

What do we know?

Airborne is a conscious attempt to drag the veteran first-person battler far away from its linear reputation by opening up gameplay with free form fighting action.

You'll parachute into each level and guide your troops to a landing point of your own choosing, which will have a profound impact on the way you tackle each campaign.

Gliding towards the muzzle-flashes of your skulking foes will cast you into the middle of a balls-out blast, typical of action shooters such as Call Of Duty, itself so heavily inspired by earlier Medal Of Honours.

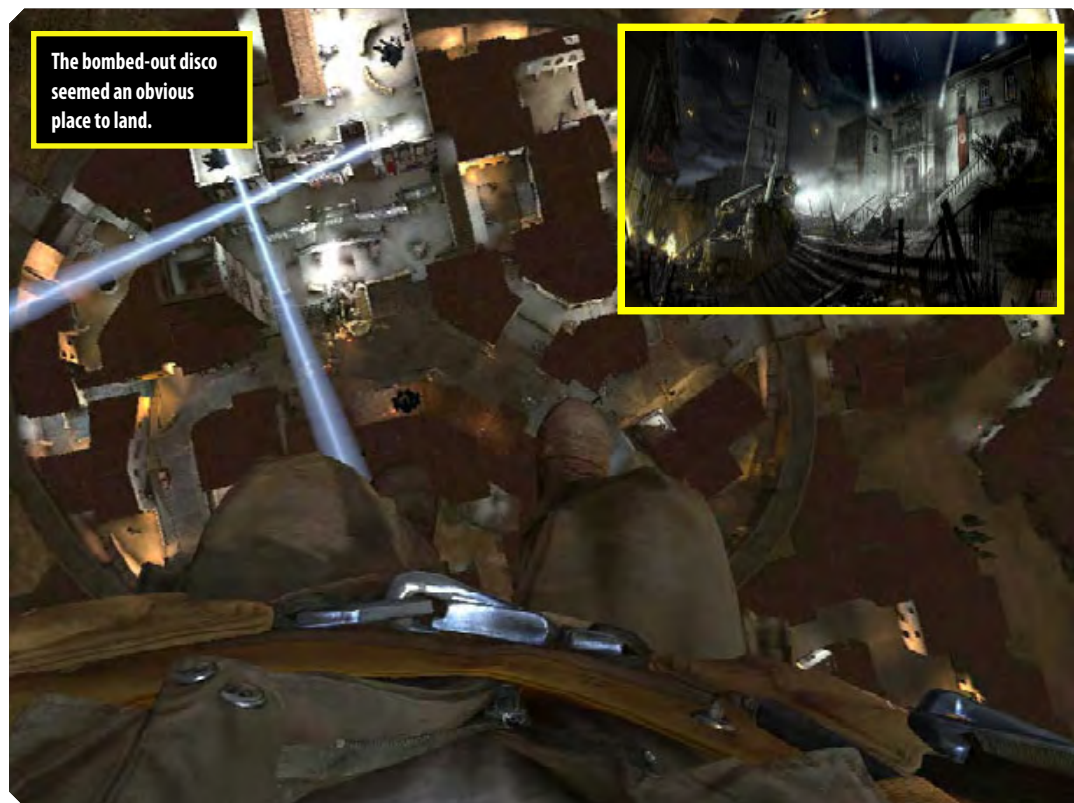
Sneak behind, say, a church tower and you can use the element of surprise to tiptoe behind foes who will be blissfully unaware of your menacing presence.

When do we get more?

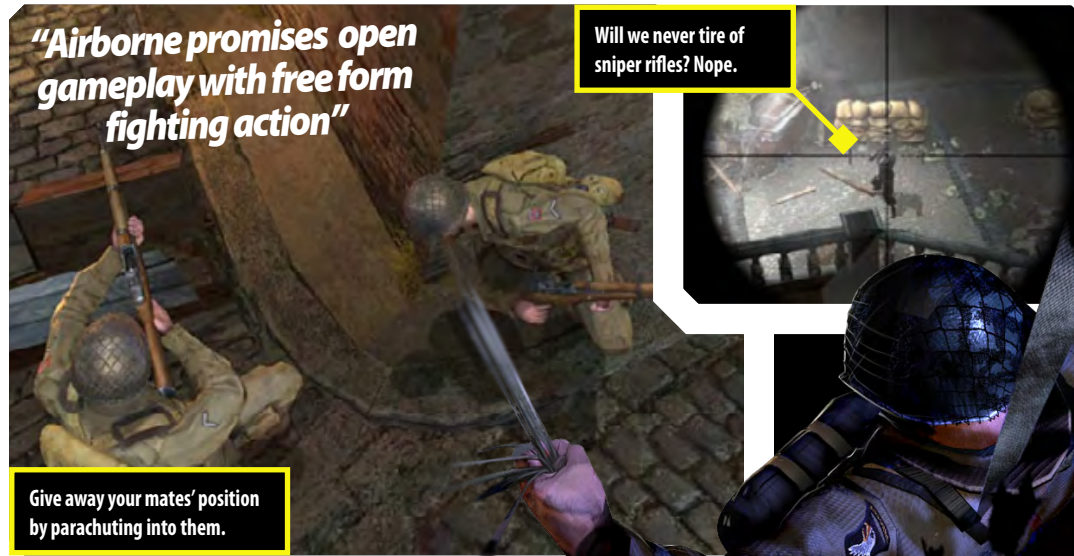
Soon. In time honoured EA fashion this game has been on the drawing board for months and is already well on the way to completion, even if D-day for release is still top secret.

Anything else to declare?

Customisable weapons, licensed vehicles – such as the Willy Jeep – and finite enemy units instead of mindless respawning foes promise to make Airborne the most glittering Medal yet.



The bombed-out disco seemed an obvious place to land.



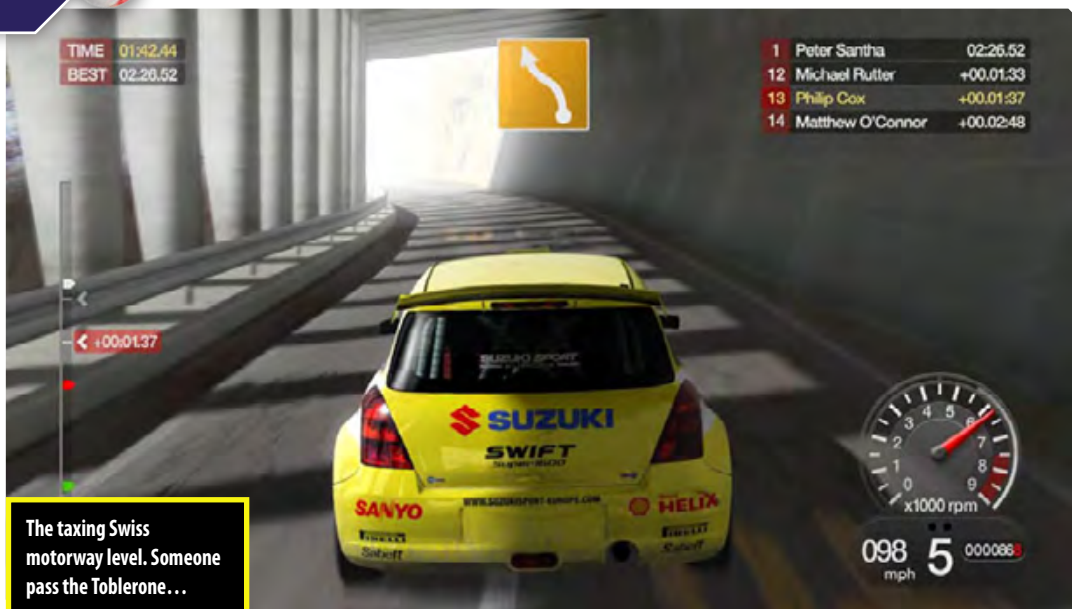
"Airborne promises open gameplay with free form fighting action"

Will we never tire of sniper rifles? Nope.

Give away your mates' position by parachuting into them.

colin mcrae

Publisher: Codemasters
Developer: Codemasters
Heritage: Colin McRae
Link: www.codemasters.com/dirt
ETA: Late 2007



The taxing Swiss motorway level. Someone pass the Toblerone...

"There'll be loads of other motors on the track"



A replay – that'd be cheating if the game didn't always look this good.

Colin McRae: DIRT

FIRST LOOK

Get the low down

What's the story?

Codies unveil their new Neon engine with their latest racer, taking the action muckily off-road. It's simple really – you race people online or simulated beings who live in your computer for bragging rights and the thrill of spinning muck into their eyes (real or artificial).



What do we know?

There's a comforting predictability about the Colin McRae series, and we're not talking in a drunk uncle at Christmas kind of way...

Every time the gaming bar gets raised across the board with new consoles pushing our beloved PC to prove it's the daddy, old Colin turns up with some impossibly beautiful first screenshots. Only this time these latest lookers seem deliciously plausible.

Forty licensed motors, from the Dakar numbers Colin is forced to drive these days, to 4x4s that have been retired from the school run... all are to be caned around oodles of yet-to-be-revealed real-life courses.

When do we get more?

Expect a string of license announcements to bore you in the run up to us getting some lovely playable code by the time we can actually put the roof down on the office convertible.

Anything else to declare?

These days Colin's lonely battles against the road are only part of the story. There'll be loads of other motors on the track so you're not simply laying down PBs for others to humble.

AS DARKNESS FALLS, YOUR DESTINY DRAWS NEAR

GUILD WARS NIGHTFALL

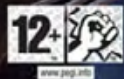
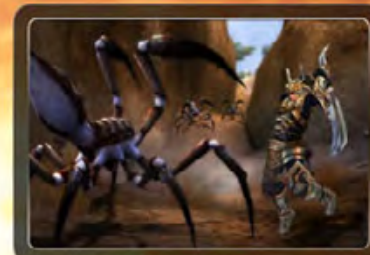


⏮ REPLAY VIDEO

ONLINE GAMING WITH NO FEES
EU.GUILDWARS.COM



"HUGELY ATMOSPHERIC...
SIMPLY THE BEST GUILD WARS YET"
- PC GAMER



PC DVD
ROM

*Requires product purchase and access to Internet. Player is responsible for all applicable Internet fees.

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FIRST
LOOK

Unreal Tournament 2007

The mods will rock us

What's the story?

Some ragged excuse for burly mofos to blast the hell out of each other until one of 'em's left standing. In a pool of blood. Surrounded by wisping gun muzzle smoke.

What do we know?

That this is going to be a classic American sequel, expanding at the waist to offer more of absolutely everything.

Most attention has been lavished on the guns, which have been lovingly rendered in minute detail. Every imaginable combination of laser beam and conventional weaponry looks to be included and, best of all, some of the projectiles are mounted on brilliant vehicles such as a monstrous tripod killing machine.

Levels are massive - bigger than anything the series has ever seen. Luckily, hoverboards are on hand to get you from A to B... in the style of Marty McFly. Oddly.

In terms of clever-arse physics the game is looking top notch, using its own snazzy Unreal 3 engine, which is also borrowed by MOH: Airborne (see page 5) don't you know?

The crux of the action will be the usual mix of relentless gun-toting action, super speedy encounters and immersive multiplayer duelling.

When do we get more?

UT 2007 is a slippery little bugger. Net release dates of May 1 are wide of the mark. It'll be done when it's done and in our hands for testing sometime in Spring, we'll warrant.

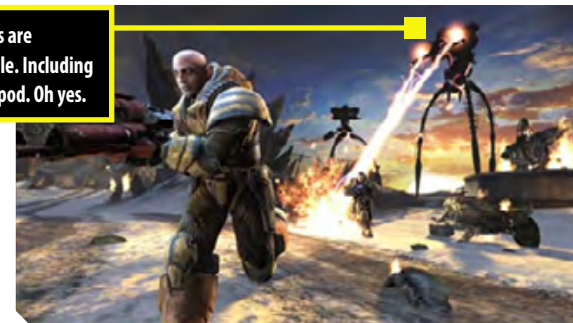
Anything else to declare?

Expect this to be a modder's dream. Epic are committed to giving hardcore players the tools to create endless new levels for the masses.



"In terms of clever-arse physics UT 2007 is looking top notch"

Vehicles are driveable. Including that tripod. Oh yes.



Have a fraggin good time. In China.

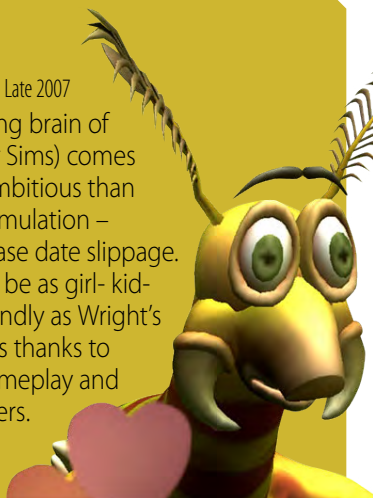
7UP

Our pick of the new releases coming in 2007

Spore

Publisher: EA | ETA: Late 2007

From the pulsing brain of Will Wright (Mr Sims) comes nothing less ambitious than an evolution simulation – hence the release date slippage. SPORE is set to be as girl- kid- and gamer-friendly as Wright's previous efforts thanks to progressive gameplay and cutesy characters.



Enemy Territory: Quake Wars

Publisher: Activision | ETA: May 2007

This is Quake with character traits, and promises to be an epic online battle punctuated with the screams of your fallen foes. Work together to form strategic alliances with your pals, or you'll end up a fraggin' mess.



The Lord of the Rings Online: Shadows of Angmar

Publisher: Codemasters | ETA: April 2007

Middle Earth promises to be a teeming backdrop for your adventures as one of the fantasy realm's iconic character classes. As you undertake quests and battle to maintain the liberty of the Free People, Frodo's fellowship will plot towards Mordor.

Halo Wars

Publisher: Microsoft

ETA: Late 2007

RTS Halo will be exciting enough on Xbox, but the genre's spiritual home is on the PC. Control Covenant and earth-born forces as you strategise in the familiar Halo environment. Promised online modes make this a potential winner.



Crysis

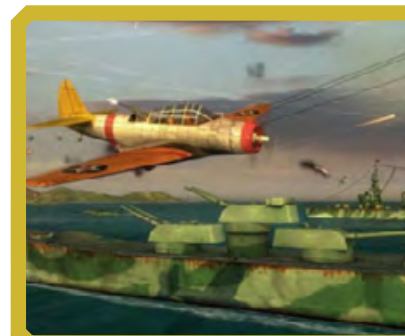
Publisher: EA | ETA: April 2007

Purveyors of cutting edge graphics and tense first-person gameplay in the Far Cry series, Crytek is once again raising the bar with Crysis. The near-future action sees the US and North Korea forming an unlikely alliance to battle alien invaders. Their strategy? You and a sack of ballistics.

Test Drive Unlimited

Publisher: Atari | ETA: February 2007

A sprawling online community of racers battling for control of the highways – that's Test Drive Unlimited. Already wowing Xbox gamers in the US, TDU is billed as part 'lifestyle simulator', meaning you can take on all-comers anywhere in the world.



Battlestations: Midway

Publisher: Eidos | ETA: February 2007

If it moves and, more importantly, if it belches out death from its barrels – you can control it. Everything from battleships to planes, submarines to your own humble pea-shooter of a firearm is here for your killing pleasure. Historical realism looks set to give way to pure gaming joy.

WINTER 2007

AUTUMN 2007

SUMMER 2007

SPRING 2007

ON THE RADAR

Fall Of Liberty

World In Conflict

The Witcher

STALKER: Shadow Of Chernobyl

Assassin's Creed

Lost

Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2

Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway



★★★★★

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12+

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14,000FT ABOVE TO 400FT BELOW... AND ALL THE ACTION IN BETWEEN

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BATTLESTATIONS
★ MIDWAY ★

FEBRUARY 2007
WWW.BATTLESTATIONS.NET

◆ EXCLUSIVE

WORLD OF WARCRAFT: THE BURNING CRUSADE

Is WoW's first expansion a slow burn or an incendiary affair?

Were you, on a quiet Sunday afternoon, to gather together in one place everyone on the planet who currently has an active World of Warcraft subscription, you'd create a new entry just between Hong Kong and London in the table of 'world's most populous urban areas'. With nearly seven million players, only 15 real-life cities around the world can boast more inhabitants. Given the amount of column inches it's generated and the fact that it's even had a South Park episode set within its virtual boundaries, we'll assume Warcraft needs little else in the way of introduction.

One of the reasons that WoW is so

successful though, is that Blizzard has kept the world evolving as it has grown. New game features, graphical effects, weapons, areas and character traits have been steadily fed through the patch system to keep players coming back for more. Does this mean that the first expansion pack, Burning Crusade, scheduled for launch in January, is superfluous to requirements? We had a couple of weeks with the latest beta to find out...

Honour bound

First off, we'll tackle the new player versus player (PvP) honour system – if only because most of these changes will be rolled out to

Another part of the Draenei quest that turns you into a cat, but this time you are gifted with spiritual wings and told to fly...



The drops in the Outland are stupidly good. They really are incredible. Stop grinding. Wait for the expansion.

"With nearly seven million players only 15 cities boast more inhabitants"



INTERACTIVE CONTENT



Click here to play the video with the original in-game sound



Click here to play the video with the alternative voiceover



Click here to stop either video



"You'll no longer drop ranks by not playing for a week"

→ WOW continued

players who don't have BC too. The current system is a time consuming grind; ranks are given out to players according to standing in reputation relative to their peers on the same server – making high levels, and the rewards that go with them, too hard to achieve for the less-than-absolutely dedicated. This is the problem that Blizzard faces with all aspects of BC – how do you create content for the truly hardcore players who do little else with their lives, without cutting out the rest of us who can't afford to spend eight hours a day, every day, revisiting dungeons or playing battlegrounds hoping for a one-in-twenty drop?

The changes to the PvP mechanics address this in two ways. Firstly, the old system of ranks has gone, and the reward items are purchased by trading honour points earned by slaying

opponents. This means anyone can eventually earn enough for, say, the Field Marshall's regalia, given enough time – you can't drop ranks, or possible rewards, by not playing for a week.

Gladiator

Burning Crusade also introduces a new type of battle, Arena PvP, adding variation and team play to the existing system, which can be a bit free-for-all. The arenas are exactly that – small, gladiatorial rings – in which two, three or five player teams, with an equal number of substitutes per side, compete in swift deathmatches. They're fast enough for the time starved player to drop in and complete quickly, but because you can set up regular teams to compete in ladder tournaments, you can bring back more regular players time and again for the new Arena PvP gear.

And it's around the gear in Burning Crusade that debate is



The Dark Portal from the other side.



From the bright reds and gold of Eversong Woods, the Ghostlands are a luminescent and somewhat creepy starter area for the Blood Elves.



The Draenei running across the fields is reminiscent of Tumnus the Faun at his most hasty...



"Green is the new purple as basic drops spew forth delicious weapons"

➔ **WOW** continued

currently raging hardest. At the moment the quest rewards, drops and PvP gear are so powerful that they make the epic gear in the original look a bit bland. In Burning Crusade, green is the new purple as basic drops spew forth a cavalcade of delicious weapons and armour. Those of you who plan to purchase the expansion should just walk away from the epic armour grind back in Molten Core & Blackwing Lair right now. Unless Blizzard re-balances this before release, and avoids rebellion by players who have given a good



Two of the brightly coloured and very covetable Blood Elf mounts.



chunk of their lives for the Netherwind attire, it seems pointless to continue working hard for armour sets today when five minutes in the Outlands will yield you better tomorrow.

Part of this, of course, is down to the better buffs offered by level 60-70 kit (70 being the new top level cap), but it's also because of a couple of new elements in Burning Crusade.

Crown jewels

There's a kit stat, 'Resilience', which affects your percentage chance of being hit by a critical attack and the amount of damage you will take from it. The second is a jewel slot, via which you can customise weapons and armour by adding a stat'd up stone. These are acquired in the usual way – rewards and drops – or created by experts in the jewelcrafting skill.

SADDLE UP

Two new races, two new mounts...



Along with the introduction of two new races, come their mounts. Which is the more covetable of the two? Of course, the dainty Belfs get Hawkstriders with luminous plumage and a lust rating that's off the charts. We have yet to see someone galloping around on one, however. It may yet look a bit like Paris Hilton trying to ride an ostrich. The Draenai, meanwhile, ride the Elek, a miniature elephant – as clumsily graceful as it sounds.

Race on

Character-wise, there are two new races and newbie areas – additions to the existing Azeroth map. The extra-terrestrial Draenei (Alliance) are all Mr Tumnus-style hooves and horns. They offer more science fiction



The female of this species is actually great fun to design and work with but the males are extremely muscular to the point of being off putting.

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Cutting edge A.I. combined with a dark gothic atmosphere immerses you in the most intense Warhammer battles experienced on PC.



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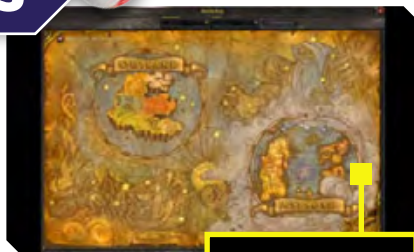
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WARHAMMER® MARK OF CHAOS™



Keep right clicking folks, that's right, here we have a nice outside view of both worlds.



The Draenei get the fabulous opportunity to play with their mounts really early on in the game.

WOW continued

technology than The Exodar – a capital city/crashed mothership that glows and throbs with an ethereal purple light. Their racial abilities include healing, a natural block and an inspiring presence, while the new quests for their first 15 or so levels really are outstanding; more story and action-based than the usual 'kill 10...' type. However, they do lack the cool factor which has been draped about the Blood Elves like mist on a Scottish river – as part of which this race of fey fairies features the spoonerised Haris Pilton in its NPC number.

Burning Crusade's high level area – the intergalactic Outlands – doesn't bring much that is new, though.

"The new quests for the Draenei's first 15 levels are outstanding"

Stepping through the Dark Portal to reach it for the first time is dramatic – there's an NPC fight going on just through the gate in perpetuity; but if you try to take part you'll die instantly. But the bits that are open in the beta are structured in similar ways to the existing Plaguelands, with PvP elements as well as grinding 'collect 10 of...' quests. Sure, there are flying mounts, but we haven't seen them yet – the beta is capped three levels too early to play with them.

You're the boss

There are no new 40-man raids in Burning Crusade, either, but there is an option for you to set the difficulty level of the new dungeons. This will affect the quality of the drops, but it does allow for players who want to concentrate on questing to journey through to boss characters much faster. To go along with the dungeon refinements, the spam ridden Looking for Group channel has been closed down, and replaced with a new (thankfully silent) menu panel and meeting stones can now summon party members to the instance.

NEW FOUND LANDS

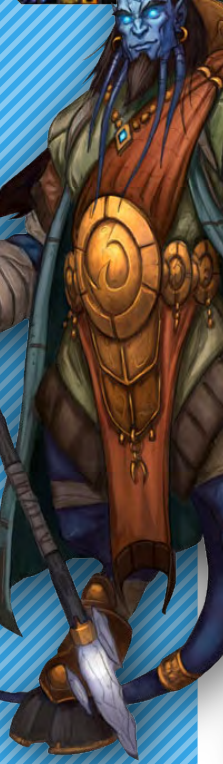
And we're not talking windmills and tulips



Unfortunately our attempts at riding across Outland to discover the floating bits were thwarted by an "unauthorised entry" message and an automatic beaming back to a random starting point. What we did see was more of the excellently realised Warcraft world – Zangamash is worth visiting for its giant toadstools and watery feel. Back in Azeroth, and the Blood Elf starting areas of Eversong Woods and Ghostlands, marred by the Dead Scar – the path taken by the Scourge – are both pretty and pretty gloomy.

The World turns...

Which means that in both praise and criticism, Burning Crusade feels just like more World of Warcraft. Criticism, because after nearly two years of nightly play, it's hard for us to shake the feeling that we've seen it all before. Praise, because with a seven million strong subscriber base, more Warcraft is clearly exactly what the World wants, and Blizzard is absolutely right to deliver it. ●



NEARLY THERE?



HOW WILL IT FARE?



It's more World of Warcraft, no more, no less.

COMPANY of HEROES

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CHANGED THE FACE OF HISTORY

ELITE GAMER

**"Bored of world war 2 games?
After Company of Heroes, you won't be." 10/10**

PC GAMER
MUST
BUY
★★★★★

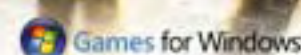
"The finest RTS we've ever played." 94%

CLASSIC + CLASSIC
PC ZONE
★★★★★

"Its nothing short of brilliant" 93%



REPLAY THIS VIDEO



MAELSTROM

Publisher: Codemasters
Developer: K-D Lab
Heritage: Perimeter.
Link: www.codemasters.com/maelstrom
ETA: February



Eat strobe lighting
you alien scumbag!

HANDS ON

MAELSTROM

An RTS stormer is brewing...

If you're a discerning PC gamer – and let's face it, you must be if you're reading these love-soaked pages – you may have heard of Perimeter, you may have even had the sweet joy of playing the genius RTS.

If not, you have to seek it out – it's a brilliantly designed game in which you can morph units and erect a forcefield around your bases by tapping into the energy of the planets you scuffle over. Its only real downfall is an almost incomprehensible plot that makes it more likely to turn up in the looney bin than your local videogame shop's bargain bin...

That's where the equally clever but far less random Maelstrom comes in. Developed by the same team, the game looks like a stormer so far, bar a few dodgy graphical issues and AI



Another positive view
of the future shows up
in gaming's crystal ball.



"This Russian developed strategy is an RTS with a spin"

stupidity we expect to see ironed out in time for a Springtime release. Once again, the Russian-developed strategy effort is an RTS with a spin. In it you take the side of one of three factions: scavenger humans, The Remnants; hi-tech humans, The Ascension; and stinking alien invaders, The Hai-Genti.

The three-team formula is a tried and tested staple of battlefield





Maelstrom continued



Alien flooding causes havoc for humans, especially those with no 50m swimming badge.

general gaming, but never have the forces at your disposal been so brilliantly drawn and different, making the game lusciously replayable with each warring group. Yup, this really is – like football if the Americans made the rules – a game of three halves. We got to grips with each of the battling tribes with a version of the game that looks near-as-damn-it finished and bloody tasty to boot.

The Ascension are an invention-hungry force

The scabby Remnants shop in TK Maxx, but they can put up a mean fight.



who need to tap the water sources – the lifeblood of each faction – to fuel their seemingly endless technological advancement. Playing as them is an almost neurotic experience as you constantly research improved weapons and buildings. You'll need to morph and remorph your buildings to take advantage of newly developed techs and overcome your insatiable foes.

The Remnants rely on their wits to survive and are a great race for 'hedgehog' gamers who hedge their bets and hog resources, erecting defensive towers and using conventional weapons against the hi-tech lasers of the Ascension and putrid bio-attacks of the Hai-Genti. The aliens themselves are a tricky proposition. You must feast on man-flesh to fuel their reproductive abilities,

and lay down spawning sacks of bile to call in eggs that you then hatch to create your warring units. But all the effort is worthwhile when you tap the game's water sources and gradually flood maps to slow attacking humans and create the perfect habitat for your otherworldly brethren.

The game's inventiveness doesn't begin and end with the warring factions. Colossus units, who feel the screen and third-person controllable heroes, who smash through deformable scenery, hint at a game that dares to be different. And, dare we say it, could be absolutely brilliant. ●

"It's lusciously replayable with each warring group"

PCGZine

MAELSTROM

NEARLY THERE?



80%

HOW WILL IT FARE?



80%

Rough round the edges, but great brainy gameplay.

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See the Movie - Only in Cinemas

Let's Talk Tactics

PCGZine enters the Championship Manager dugout for a team talk with dev studio manager David Rutter...

Beautiful Game Studios, tasked with rebuilding the Champ Man empire, have looked to a real-life match analysis tool to further boost to the game's slavish realism. Now ProZone is central to the developers' plans as they look ahead to next season...

How has Championship Manager 2007 fared?

We're pretty happy with the quality of the game – we'd only been working on it since March 2006 and development was interrupted for the World Cup patch. One thing that really pleases us is the introduction of ProZone.

The difficulty we had with the tool is getting across that it's not about

making you a better manager 'full stop', but it lets you look at what's happened in a game in a new way so you can have more impact on the success of your team.

How can you make sure people get more out of ProZone?

We've got big ideas for it going forward. In real-life a consultant expert sits in a room with a manager such as Arsene Wenger and gives him a rundown of the previous game. Bosses have this oh, say, a Tuesday before a Saturday game so they can adapt their tactics.

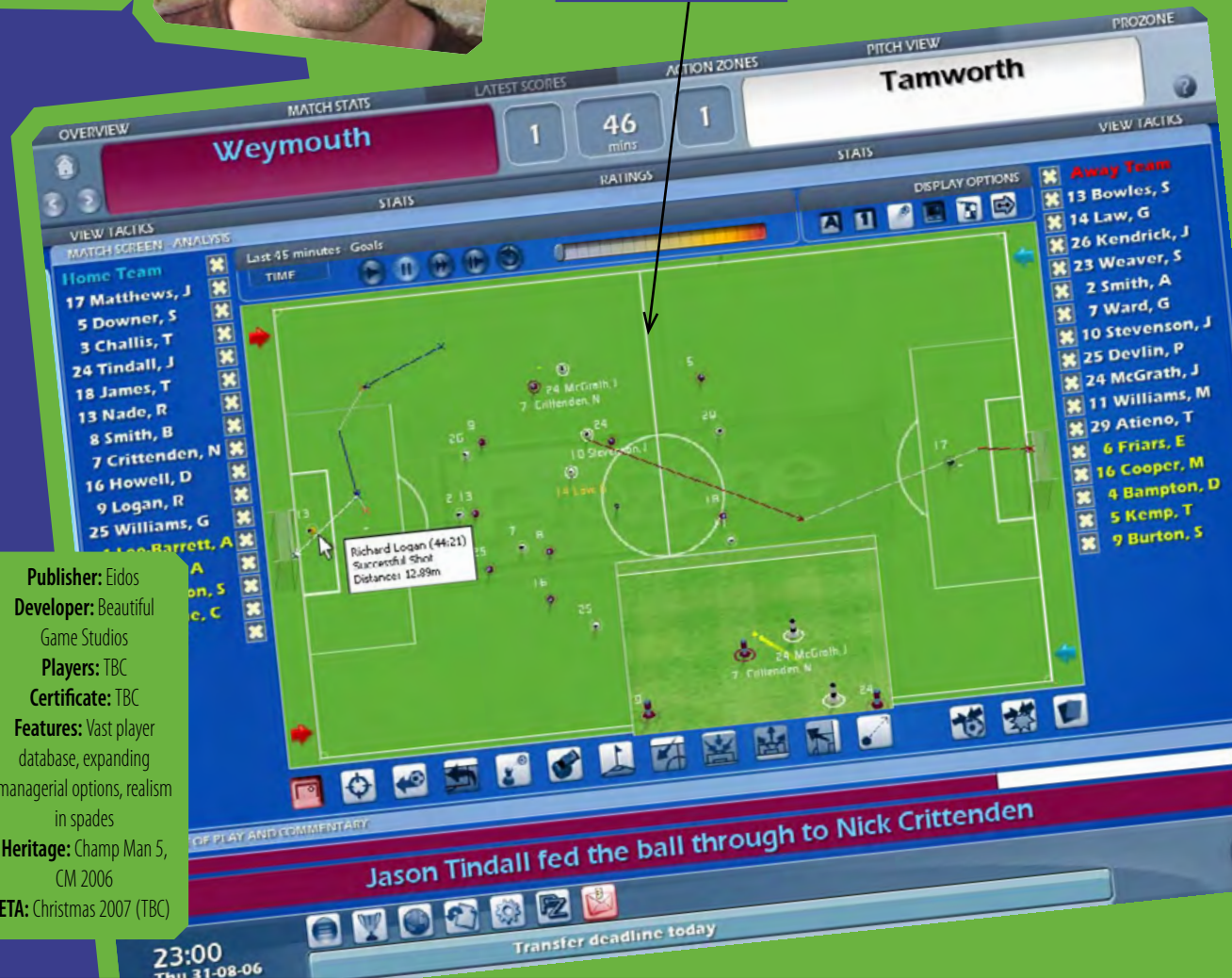
In CM there's no expert yet, but in the longer term we'd like to see agents in CM giving advice



David Rutter, Beautiful Game Studios, Studio Manager

The ProZone offers you cutting edge match analysis technology, but not a sure-fire way to win.

"ProZone lets you look at what's happened in a game in a new way"
David Rutter



Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Beautiful Game Studios
Players: TBC
Certificate: TBC
Features: Vast player database, expanding managerial options, realism in spades
Heritage: Champ Man 5, CM 2006
ETA: Christmas 2007 (TBC)



"In CM2008... we want to add more soul to the game."
David Rutter

Yes and No. Look, anyone who has seen football transformed as an industry sees the way people in the game have adapted. Football is becoming more scientific. I'm reading a book called Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game, which is about how scientific analysis of baseball has changed the drafting policy away from superstar picks towards more all-round players.

Football is going exactly the same way, and ProZone is a part of that. With ProZone, if a player is taking too many touches, a consultant tells a manager, who will give the player the goal of reducing their stat. We're in the simulation business so we want Champ Managers to be able to do the same.

The tool also helps improve our match engine by making the action of games more realistic.

Is there a danger that all this hi-tech stuff moves you away from the grass roots of football?

I see the point, but small clubs have their own version of ProZone, even if it's just a bloke going to the game with a home video camera so the manager can watch the footage back.

One way of reflecting the hugely differing resources of clubs would be for us to give the ProZone experts within the game attributes. It could work just the same way as our scouts and coaches who are more effective the better their skills are.

We're also addressing grass roots in other ways. We've added the Conference North and South, but we would like to see a couple more

divisions below that in future releases of Champ Manager.

What other improvements would you like to implement in CM2008 and beyond?

The number of home nations and other football countries needs to be upped. We want to better reflect the whole football universe. Then there's the usual raft of improvements, amendments, fixes as well as better tactics, training and a better use of the media. We want to add more soul to the game.

And what about the game's look? It often gets criticised for its appearance...

In 2007 the user interface (UI) moved on and is entirely clearer. We want to continue to improve that without scaring people off. Anyway, our game is not necessarily about eye candy... and not always for people who buy the Gears Of War Special Edition DVD. It's for people who watch, or can no longer watch their team.

It's for those holding onto their love of football around family commitments, students who should be writing essays... I'm not convinced the UI needs to completely change, but it needs a kick up the arse... ●



Lose your rag with CM's team talks. Will future editions feature chuckable tea cups? Probably not.

The match day promises to get ever-more realistic thanks to Champ Man's love-in with ProZone.

Interview continued

about ProZone to make the tool more accessible and mainstream. At the minute it's more of a hardcore level of football analysis.

This is a simulation, but it needs to be enjoyable.

So are you running with ProZone because it's unique to you in the management game market?

VANGUARD

SAGA OF HEROES™



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PCGZine
GOLD

Medieval II: Total War

Breathtaking battles and incredible complexity – they don't come more PC than this



Publisher: Sega

Developer: Creative Assembly

Heritage: Shogun: Total War

Link: www.totalwar.com
OUT NOW

The Pope's a big meanie. He won't let anyone have any fun. War? Not unless he says so. Money in the bank? Kiss it goodbye – the petulant pontiff needs an army for the Crusade he's just declared. Your best general

has taken a bit on the side to keep him happy during those miserable, cold Alpine military manoeuvres? Never mind that he almost single-handedly liberated Milan – the Inquisition are still gonna burn the poor heretic. If there's one thing this Total War has that its predominantly BC-set predecessor didn't, it's hard line Catholicism – and it's all the better for it.

Six years and four games down the line, it's slightly terrifying that no serious rival to



Cannons versus Aztecs. Scarcely seems fair really.

"Total War has hard line Catholicism - and it's all the better for it"



City sieges make for spectacular, but hugely challenging battles.

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
1.5GHz CPU, 512 Mb RAM, 128Mb 3D card

TRIPLE PLAY

The three faces of Total War



Campaign



Historical Battle



Multiplayer



Campaign

Med 2 is at heart a single player game, as evidenced by the enormous campaigns. The long version can take dozens of hours, but there's a quick campaign for attention-deficit types. In the twilight turns, you'll set foot in the New World. Playing through once will unlock an additional 12 states to play as, including Muslim nations who can join a Jihad against the infidel, rather than be prey to the whims of the Pope.



The snow will rust that horse armour right up.

FREEZE FRAME

Clock watching on the Med 2 campaign trail



1 HOUR

The first siege on an enemy city. Boom, boom! Watch those walls crumble.



5 HOURS

The Pope's called a Crusade. Special units, including a Crucifix on wheels, are yours.



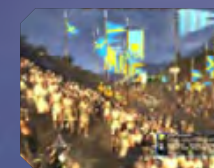
10 HOURS

Disaster! Your most veteran general's boat is sunk en route to the New World.



15 HOURS

Down to just a handful of nations now, and each are massively powerful.



25 HOURS

The known world is yours; so now it's time for all the unknown bits.



Medieval II continued

Total War's scale and depth double-whammy has yet emerged. The time to strike is now, however. Though without question still the king of strategy hill,

Medieval II shows the first signs of the complacency that an undisputed lead so often leads to in sport, politics, rabbit-versus-tortoise foot races or whatever. It's the last Total War, Rome, with the volume way up and some particularly effective plaster over almost every crack, but nevertheless unavoidably very similar.

In many ways, this is nothing to feel

down about – we're talking about the most advanced real-time strategy engine going, complemented by turn-based globe conquering that presents a serious rival to even Civilization's completism. In other ways, it is a shame that the steps forward are relatively baby-sized compared to the giant leaps Rome took from its precursor. It hasn't even addressed the



"It's the most advanced real-time strategy engine going"



This doesn't look good for the red guys.



➔ Medieval II continued

maddening lack of real-time naval battles, still requiring that ship-based punch-ups be resolved by a behind-the-scenes dice roll. But consider this a consolidation of what made Rome great, adding more than enough visually and tactically to make it an unmissable game in its own right.

It's in that turn-based strategy map that the bulk of the improvements lie. The real-time battles only really benefit from a lick of paint that renders its hundreds of troops in more diverse and

far better-animated colours, and from more advanced war technology not available to the Caesars. The rock-paper-scissors mechanic of battle remains - victory hangs, as always, on picking the right men for the job and pointing them in the right direction. On the strategy map, there's far more to manage, to the point where it's often tempting to auto-resolve many battles just so you don't lose your more global train of thought. If playing as a European nation, the aforementioned Papal demands especially are an interestingly affecting factor, amplifying the Senatorial orders of Rome, but with

much more clout behind them.

There's also a greater emphasis on trade to bulk up your finances, and on whether your cities are dedicated to military might or population and culture. Though it's an inevitable part of empire expansion, war isn't always the answer – diplomacy is perhaps the hottest potato to juggle, and thankfully Medieval II's a better, more deeply-layered game for its significant increase. So, the RTS of the year for sure, but the next Total War /must/ see more change – Rome's empire can't get away with rising a third time. ●

Alec Meer

Roll over screen for annotations



Europe has the Pope; Egypt has camels.



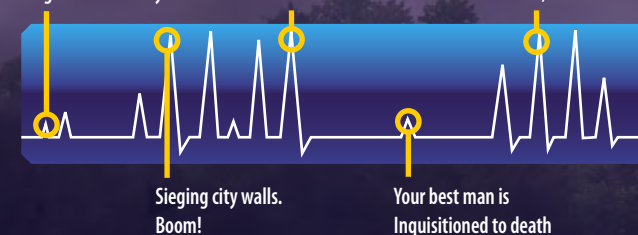
Welcome to the pre-Easyjet age.

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*

Deciding which neighbour to betray

The first rival nation crumbles

Europe is yours; next, the world.



“War isn’t always the answer - diplomacy is the hottest potato to juggle”

PCGZine Verdict

Still the big man of strategy, though the first signs of age are there

👍 Spectacular battles

👍 It'll eat your life. In a good way

👎 Somewhat familiar

90%

All New Content for Oblivion™

Winner, Best RPG of E3 2005

Game Critics Award, GameSpot, IGN, GameSpy,
Daily Game, Games Domain

"#1 Game of All Time" - PC Gamer

"This is a stunning RPG"

10 out of 10 - Tiscali.co.uk



The Elder Scrolls IV KNIGHTS of the NINE

THE GODS HAVE FORSAKEN TAMRIEL.

A fallen King has been unchained from the darkness of Oblivion to seek vengeance upon the Gods who banished him. Only a champion pure of heart can vanquish the evil that has been released upon the land. You must heed the call, reclaim the lost relics of the Divine Crusader, and return the Nine to glory. New dungeons, characters, quests, and mysteries await.

- **Begin a new faction**

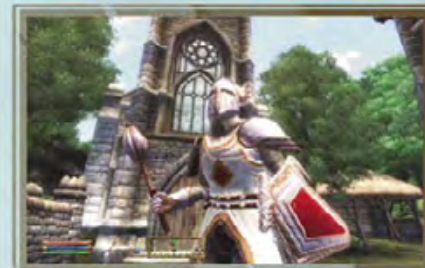
The Knights of the Nine have long been disbanded. Reclaim their former glory as you traverse the far reaches of Cyrodiil across an epic quest line.

- **Battle new foes**

Encounter Umaril, the ancient Ayleid Sorcerer-King, and his minions, the fearsome Aurorans.

- **Discover unique items**

An entirely new armour set and weapons, each with unique powers, are within your grasp... if you are worthy.



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Warhammer: Mark of Chaos

King of tabletop gaming takes another crack at the PC

The world (well, very specific parts of it) has been crying out for a game that does Warhammer justice since for ever. The sci-fi boys are sitting pretty with Dawn of War, a sterling adaptation of the Warhammer 40,000 tabletop game – so how come the poor fantasy fellows get left out in the cold? Well they don't any more, but as it turns out, a lot of people are going to wish they'd waited a bit longer.

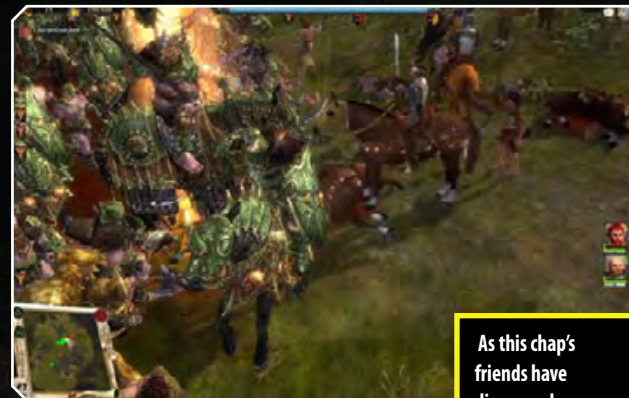
While it's true that Mark of Chaos is certainly the best-looking Warhammer game to date, and it stays truer to its

roots than Dawn of War did, it's also, sadly, a bit of a mess.

First, the good. Rather than resort to the usual resource-gathering and constructing bases that build people out of thin air, this is strictly military. Its approach is very similar to that of Medieval II: Total War – you head off to battle with a predetermined army, and victory is won by careful use of positioning, terrain, and unit type.

Though it does diverge significantly from tabletop Warhammer rules (whether this enrages fans or is

"Mark of Chaos is the best looking Warhammer game to date"



As this chap's friends have discovered, charging can be vital to success.

regarded as a worthwhile sacrifice remains to be seen), aesthetically it's pretty close, and having hundreds rather than just a few dozen men gives it an epic sense of scale. Though visually inferior to Medieval II, mostly due to some really bland landscapes, it often looks more interesting. We have, after all, seen men with swords any number of times, but towering Rat Ogres, hideous Daemon



Little can survive a Rat Ogre attack.

RACIAL HATRED

Demons, wizards & rat men



The Empire is the race of man – that means predominantly standard medieval weaponry with just a touch of gunpowder, and staunch support from a few powerful wizards.



The Empire's arch-enemy Chaos is the most visually interesting race to play as. There's a whole slew of nightmarish demons, dark sorcerers and hulking Norsemen to control.



Skaven are something a little different – they're a race of malevolent rat men. As well as standard swords'n'arrows, they have tunnelling stealth units, and the terrifying Rat Ogre.

Publisher: Deep Silver
Developer: Black Hole Entertainment

Heritage: Medieval: Total War, Warhammer: Dark Omen

Link: <http://warhammer.deepsilver.com>

OUT NOW

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
2.4GHz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 256Mb 3D card



Fortress assaults require siege units and patience.

This isn't soft focus Tolkien fantasy, but rather brutal and bloody.



Warhammer continued

Princes and men sat on dragons makes for a much more thrilling sight.

Faux fighting

Then the fighting starts, and things immediately go a bit wrong. There are problems with animation and very little collision, so two massed armies going at it can end up looking a bit like a Sealed Knot recreation of Hastings. It all looks reasonably convincing from afar,

but peer closer and it's clearly faked. The front row is stabbing oddly at thin air and most of the back ones are standing absolutely still, and yet overall damage is being calculated. The game, it turns out, doesn't seem to keep tabs on what each unit is up to, but rather is working out the odds behind the scenes, so what *appears* to be happening doesn't entirely match up with what is *actually* happening. Rigid rules are still there, and MoC could end up being quite a success in multiplayer as a result of them, but it all feels just a bit ridiculous.

Another serious failing is how flaccid the single player campaign is. It doesn't have an overarching strategy map like Medieval II, rather just a crude path that forces you from fight to similar fight, with optional interludes to buy new

troops and upgrades from a dull menu screen. It gets fairly tedious fairly fast, and screams that the brief was to make a tactical strategy engine first and a game second. The nearly-there feel to the whole game is a little depressing; it's definitely on the right track, especially visually, but so often feels crude and unfinished. ●

Alec Meer

Big shouty Orcs are available as optional mercenary support.



Clearly, the fashion war is already lost.



"What appears to be happening doesn't match what is actually happening"

PCGZine Verdict

A fine approach let down by poor fine-tuning

Often looks spectacular

Plagued by animation shortcomings

Poor single player mode

74%

KONAMI



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Rbk 

FEEL IT

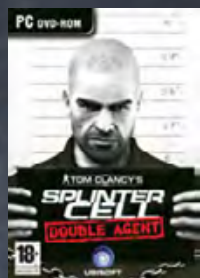


PlayStation.2



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Publisher: Ubi Soft

Developer: Ubi Soft
Montreal

Heritage: Splinter Cell,
Rainbow Six

Link: www.splintercell.com
OUT NOW

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
3Ghz CPU, 1Gb RAM,
128Mb 3D card

Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent

Sam Fisher goes undercover for his difficult fourth outing

The name's Fisher... Sam Fisher, ageing special operative and star of the mega-successful Splinter Cell series. Visiting exotic locales, skulking in the shadows and snapping necks like twigs may be all that he knows, but has it made him happy? Has it bollocks, and Double Agent sees further despair heaped upon his broad shoulders in brutal fashion.

In true Bond style, a dramatic

opening mission cuts to the title sequence, following which we learn that Sam's daughter has been killed in a hit-and-run accident. If you need your game characters to have a back story to justify their actions, then this is strong stuff. Following a period of alcoholic stupor, Fisher decides to take on his most dangerous job yet, promptly robs a bank and gets banged up the slammer.

STORY BOARD

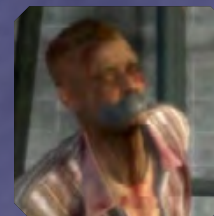
Follow Sam on his global adventures...



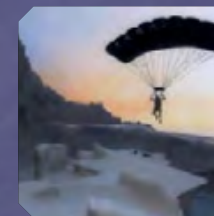
Sam saves the day in a dramatic opening mission. Unfortunately his partner is shot dead.



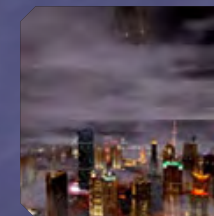
After six months inside having been caught robbing a bank, Sam speaks to the terrorist leader to plot their escape.



Having completed the terrorist training camp, Mr Fisher is ordered to kill an innocent man.



Parachuting into the frozen wastelands of Russia, Sam has to command a supertanker.

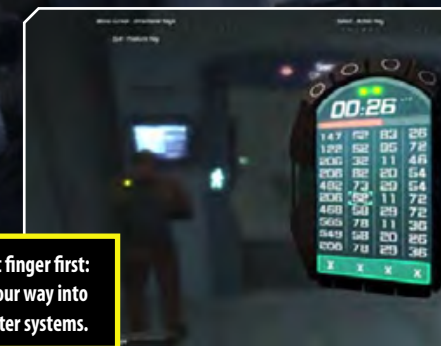


China is next on the menu, as Sam helicopters into Shanghai. What's that, the pilot's dead?

"If you need your game characters to have a back story then this is strong stuff"



It wouldn't be Splinter Cell without a bit of rope sliding.



Fastest finger first: hack your way into computer systems.



Splinter Cell continued

This is merely a precursor to the job itself, which involves integrating himself into a global terrorist organisation, hence the Double Agent of the title. Helping to spring one of the terrorist leaders earns the trust of the organisation, and they in turn send him on a series of jobs. All the while though he is of course still working for the NSA, and this presents a series of moral dilemmas. Clearly, preventing global terrorism is a good thing, but innocent people are going to get hurt along the way, and it's down to Sam's - and

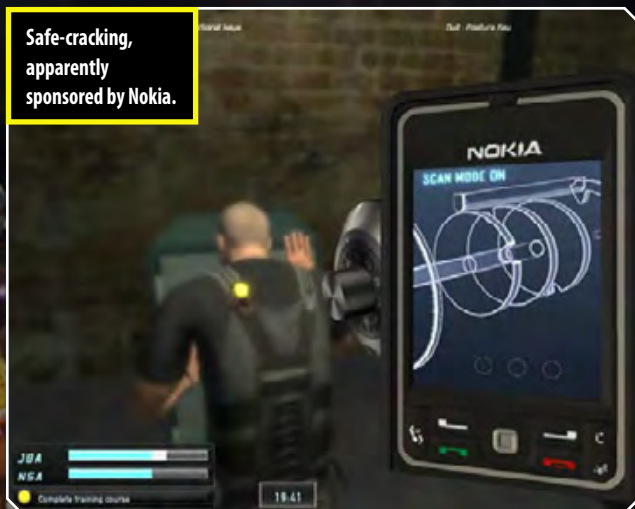
ultimately your - conscience to attempt to do the right thing. Is it worth slitting the throats of a few prison guards in the hope of ultimately saving thousands of lives? Mathematically, yes, but try telling that to their families when they come home in an oak cloak.

Double jeopardy

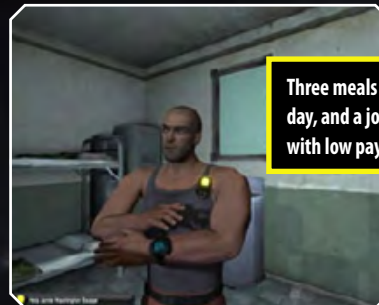
These dilemmas manifest themselves in the game's so-called trust system, whereby the confidence of either faction in Sam's actions is represented by a simple bar. The key is to keep both sides happy, so while you're performing atrocities on behalf of the baddies, you're also sneakily screwing them



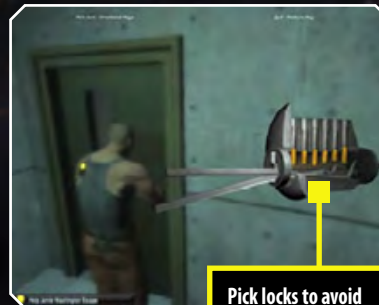
Safe-cracking, apparently sponsored by Nokia.



"While you're performing atrocities on behalf of the baddies, you're also screwing them over"



Three meals a day, and a job with low pay.



Pick locks to avoid raising the alarm.

SPY VERSUS SPY

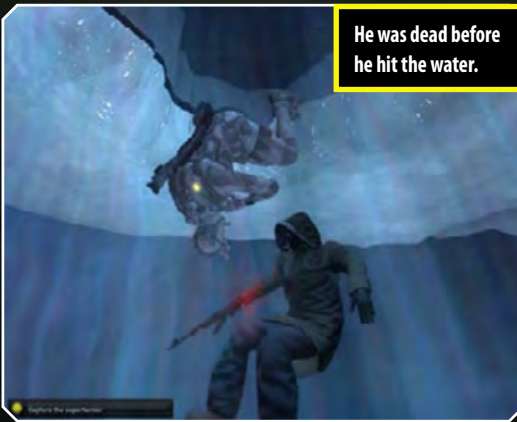
Multplayer mercenaries



The highly original multiplayer game sees three traditional Sam Fisher-style spies going up against three Upsilon Forces mercenaries, the latter controlled from a first person viewpoint. A supremely balanced affair, it's a matter of brute force versus stealth and cunning, and is arguably a lot more tense than the single player game.



Insert your own 'big chopper' gag here.



He was dead before he hit the water.



"As ever a slew of cunning gadgets are available"

→ **Splinter Cell** continued

over by planting bugs and so on. It's an interesting – if occasionally contrived – concept that makes for some varied missions, as you're constantly on your

toes attempting to balance your actions.

Simple Sam

Gameplay-wise, fans of the series will be familiar with the established stealth-based action. However, there isn't as much of the elaborate gymnastics as in previous outings, and you can generally get by without having to resort to the various special moves. This may irk the purists, who are happy to hang upside down waiting for an enemy to pass, but it does make for a more straightforward game, in a nod to its console roots. As ever, a slew of cunning gadgets are available, but unless you want to get particularly creative, you can largely get by without them, at least on the easiest level.



Capture the supertanker

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



With bite-sized missions clocking in at around the half hour mark, it's a highly absorbing affair, and one that will keep you playing, not least to see where you're being sent to next. He may be terminally depressed, but Sam has still got it in spades. ●

Steve Hill



This mission ends with a bang.

PCGZine Verdict

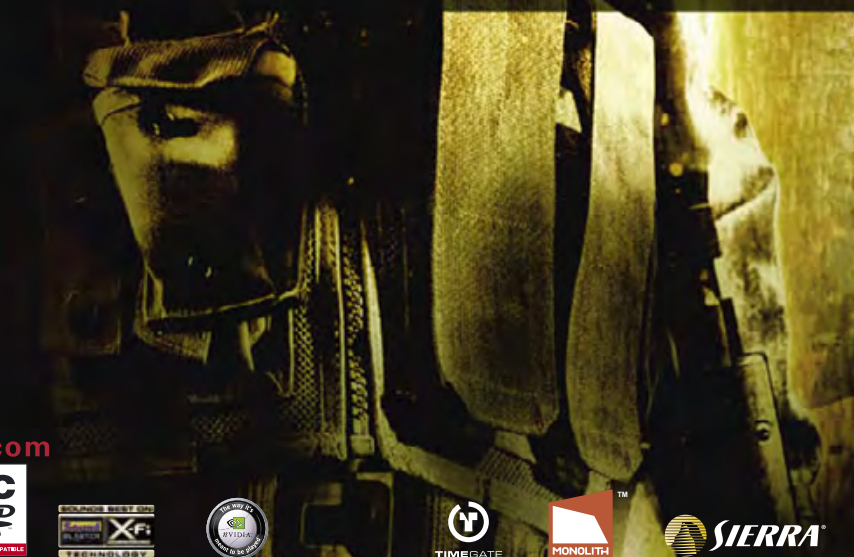
Wham bam, thank you Sam

- 👍 Raises questions of morality
- 👍 Varied locations
- 👎 Slightly disjointed story

85%



IN 2005, A SINGLE WORD IGNITED THE WORLD OF GAMING
LIKE NEVER BEFORE.

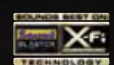


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FIRST ENCOUNTER ASSAULT RECON
FEAR
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Guild Wars: **Nightfall**

Get ready for a bout of African-tinged adventure

The Guild Wars plan was to create a massively multiplayer game that didn't require gamers to give up a subscription fee every month to play it. The idea hinged on players wanting to buy the latest episode packs, of which Nightfall is the latest. Each of the packs has had a different focus and brought different things to the fore. While Factions, the previous pack, worked hard to develop the player vs player aspects of the game,

Nightfall turns its attention to developing the single player experience. As a result, the Nightfall campaign is more complex and more rewarding than any of its predecessors since the original release.

The new campaign is set in a quasi-African realm, Elona, which is accessible from any of the other continents by boat. The events there pivot around the actions of a mad shaman chief, whose intention to raise a fallen god

Moody landscapes abound as Nightfall attempts a take on the Dark Continent.



will plunge the land into eternal darkness. Before all that kicks off, however, we're faced with dozens of quests in an 'instanced' world, meaning that you can play them on your own, or with just a handful of other real people. The quests are complex, occasionally funny, and always fairly challenging. The flexible Guild Wars class system means that nothing is beyond your basic character, thanks to the ability to change your skill 'build' to face different situations, and the option to sign up NPC henchmen to fill out the

Nefarious enemies, such as this giant floating root vegetable, stand in your way.



"The flexible class system means that nothing is beyond your basic character"

A fetching cape like this one is available only to those players who sign up to the titular player-guilds.



Group combat is made easier for the Dervish character thanks to his huge array of area-of-affect skills.



PEOPLE & PLACES

Click on the tabs below to see hidden depths



Out of Africa

Instanced Arenas

Character Building

Ground breaking

Nightfall is remarkable for having a purely African and Arabian theme. It not only defines the superb architecture, but also the racial make up of your party. How many fantasy RPGs feature a completely non-caucasian cast? We'll tell you: none. It's odd that this seems like such a coup, but it's a fine example of Guild Wars' thinking ahead.

 Guild Wars continued

party. One of the great delights of Nightfall is when you're charging along with a huge mob of henchfolk and allies thundering along behind you.

Level up

The henchman idea has been massively augmented by the idea of 'heroes'. Like a more traditional RPG in which the player controls a number of characters, Nightfall now enables players to have more control over these permanent henchfolk. Heroes level up with you, have their own quest branches, personalities and skill-sets. You'll be able to build up the heroes as you go and they're instantly a huge asset to your adventuring.

Thanks to new ideas like this, and some highly competent quest design, Nightfall is a remarkably proficient and beautiful fantasy adventure, making it another strong outing for Guild Wars. The African theme is artfully executed and the wide open maps are some of the most rewarding we've seen. Still, Guild Wars is not for everyone. The control system remains infuriatingly fiddly and the general lack of humour and solidity within the game world will

be off putting to gamers who have experienced World of Warcraft. In this way, it just doesn't feel like a full MMORPG and is the less for it.

Finally there's player versus player combat. The two new character classes that come with Nightfall mean that there's some new content to play with,

and new tactics to develop. However, if you're interested in the competitive side of the game it's worth considering the 'PvP Unlock' sets, which you can now purchase so you don't have to play through the single player game to open up the full range of skills.

Jim Rossignol



A scythe might traditionally have been used to cut crops, but here it finds rather more martial use.



This giant insect might look a bit Starship Troopers, but it's useless without its buddies.

It looks like a giant budgerigar, but the chimera is not an adversary to be taken too lightly.



PCGZine
Verdict

Gilt edged

-  Beautiful vistas
-  Beautiful people
-  Floaty mechanics

85%

"A remarkably proficient and routinely beautiful fantasy adventure"

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Written by the best in the biz

★★★

REVIEWS



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Issue 1 | November 2006

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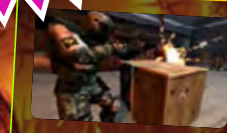
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The Darkness

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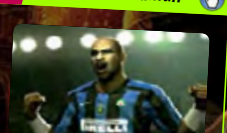
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How scary can you go?



2 NEED FOR SPEED
Drive like a madman



3 PES 6 v FIFA 07
Football fever returns

Here's what other readers are saying...

Shayne: "What a great idea! I have just read 360zine and I love it. Great to have slide shows and video footage running in the mag. Really enjoyed it and it had a good easy to read layout, I look forward to the next issue. Keep up the good work!"

Daniel Smith: "I just want to say thank you very much guys for producing an excellent game magazine. It's a God send! It's short, but OH so sweet! The thing I love the most about this emagazine is the interactive aspects that the reader can check out... definitely something hardcopy magazines can't do! So I just want to take the time to congratulate you guys and thank you once again! Can't wait for the next issue! Cheers! :)"

**"I just
subscribed. Looks
bloody awesome.
Thanks a lot for the
mags. They rock!"**

Daniel Zackon

Michael Pillay: "Wow... what a great magazine! Free of charge... it feels like daylight robbery and I ain't even wearing a mask! Great layout, fantastic reviews and bang up to date. Welcome Welcome Welcome!"

David Learmont: "I would like to congratulate you and the team on creating 360zine and can't wait for the next issue. One of my main problems with magazines is that they cost too much, but this is completely free and matches the others in quality. It was witty and well written, with good scores for the games. I hope you will carry on delivering the goods"

Inside issue 1...

MASSIVE PREVIEWS

**PGR 4 | Halo Wars
Lost Planet | The Darkness**

MASSIVE REVIEWS

**Gears of War | F.E.A.R. | Need for Speed
WWE SmackDown vs RAW 2007**

Download it free from www.gamerzines.com!

FIFA Manager 07

If your team's season has already faltered, there's always this...

Football management games: as a rule of thumb you either love them or entirely ignore them. Done correctly, it is arguably the most addictive genre there is, drawing you – often unwillingly – into a mind-numbing alternate universe. Witness Sports Interactive's epic Football Manager series, renowned for sucking the life out of its users. Elsewhere, there is Championship Manager, something of a tribute game to its former namesake, providing a comparable if less compelling approach.

Then there is FIFA Manager, which at least does things a little differently. Instead of the action being represented by an overhead view of two teams of

coloured dots going at each other, FIFA Manager actually features live action, as replicated by some version of the FIFA match engine. It's fairly flexible, and can be speeded up to suit your tastes, or you can simply opt to watch the last ten minutes live, by which stage half the crowd will be making a beeline for the car park.

All the usual tactics are included, and with a bit of goodwill you can convince yourself that they are making a difference. What indisputably makes a difference is the bizarre option to actually control a player of your choice using either the keyboard or a pad. With a rudimentary control system, it's a frustrating experience, highlighting

"FIFA Manager features live action using the FIFA match engine"

how little of the ball one player actually sees, and ultimately you end up running around like a headless chicken.

The other key difference compared to its rivals is geographical. For all its shiny EA Sports licensing, FIFA Manager is developed in Germany, with all the quirks and foibles that long-time aficionados of the genre will have come to expect. Sometimes more of a football manager's life simulation than a straightforward management game, ultimately they might have been better off concentrating on the football. ●

Steve Hill

FOOTBALL MANAGERS' WIVES

Now you can simulate life on and off the field



One of the strangest aspects of the game sees you delve into the manager's personal life in some detail. Selecting a girlfriend (or boyfriend), you can bestow gifts upon her, propose, and even impregnate her, with your offspring shown on a family tree. And you thought it was a football game...

You control the player with a red triangle over his head.

A household name, in his own home.

PCGZine Verdict

The beautiful game, but not as we know it

- Passable match engine
- Decent Motson/Gray commentary
- German

68%



"Without Sky TV
this is as close as
you're going to get
to the live action"

Spot the ball.



URN VICTORY

Play out The Ashes on your PC



Cast your mind back to that heady summer of 2005, when everyone and his wife became a cricket fan, despite not knowing any of the players or indeed the rules. Or if you were too drunk to remember it, replay key scenarios on your PC as England secure a glorious victory...

EA Sports Cricket 07

The Ashes are under way, so here's something to help keep you awake

It's not like EA Sports to miss out on a marketing opportunity, and, true to form, Cricket 07 hits the shelves barely a few innings into The Ashes. And while it may carry only a generic Cricket title, this is to all intents and purposes the official game of the series. As ever, if there's a license to be signed up, it's in the game, and if you haven't got Sky TV this is as close as you're going to get to the live action. The stadiums have been replicated in exceptional detail, the commentators are seamlessly integrated, and even some of the players are vaguely recognisable from their real-life

cricketing counterparts.

So far, so EA Sports. Never mind the authenticity, we hear you cry, what about the gameplay? In many ways, it's hard to think of a sport less suited to a PC game than cricket. For starters, test matches last for five days. Surprisingly though, it has worked before (after a fashion), and last year saw Brian Lara Cricket and the predecessor to this latest release both proving to be moderately playable.

The main problem with Cricket 2005 was the batting, which proved so tricky that single figures were not uncommon (and that's for the entire team). This

issue has been addressed for Cricket 07, hence the so-called Century Stick control system, which uses the dual analog pad to move your batsman and take a shot. While this works perfectly well on the PS2, there's no point even attempting to play the game using the keyboard, so a decent pad or ideally a PS2 adapter is essential. As for the bowling, it's a slightly less refined affair, although with practice you should be able to master both aspects of the game. Which, at the time of writing, is more than can be said for the England team down under. ●

Steve Hill



Kevin Pietersen,
with it all to do.

PCGZine Verdict

Requires patience.
Like cricket.



Authentic

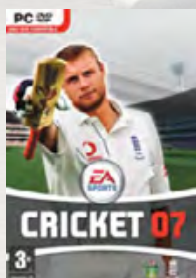


Improved batting



Frustrating

70%



Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Sports
Heritage: Cricket 2005
Link: www.easports.com
OUT NOW

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
1GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM,
32Mb 3D card



Flight Simulator X

(Deluxe version)

Flight without the carbon footprint

Publisher: Microsoft

Games

Developer: ACES

Heritage: Flight Simulator

2004, Combat Flight

Simulator 3

Link: www.

flightsimulatorx.com

OUT NOW

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

1GHz CPU, 256Mb RAM,

32Mb 3D card

The penny has finally dropped. After twenty-odd years Microsoft has produced a version of Flight Simulator that contains both scrupulously accurate recreations of civilian aircraft *and* compelling reasons to fly them. A new drama-rich mission selection is the stand-out feature of this tenth installment. Challenging aerobatic displays, dicey oil rig rescues, eventful cargo runs, difficult approaches... the atmospheric, plausible, non-combat aviation comes in 60 different skill-graded varieties.

For series loyalists - those that prefer to choose rides and routes themselves - motivation for mothballing FS2004 can be found in new aircraft types like

the Airbus A321, Beaver floatplane, and Maule M7-260C Super Rocket (a Cessna-like prop-plane that can land and take-off on a dime). Though the new airliners lack some of the flight deck gizmos you'd find on their real-life inspirations, the quality of the majority of the ten debutantes is top-notch.

Sadly the biggest draw for hardcore fans - the enriched global scenery - hits frame-rates mighty hard. If you want your highways and waterways crowded with traffic, your airports bustling with service vehicles, and your landscapes draped in new high resolution textures, then you'll need to be playing on a seriously potent system. ●

Tim Stone

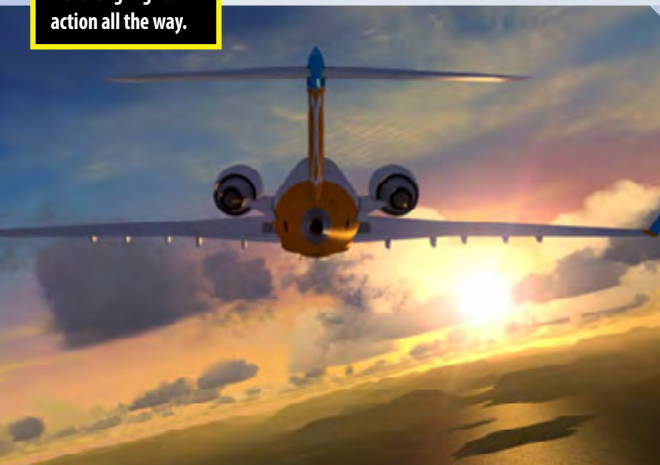


"How are you getting-on back there? Enjoy that last loop?"



Every mission success adds a new award to your logbook.

Headlong flight sim action all the way.



"Atmospheric, plausible aviation comes in 60 skill-graded varieties"

**PCGZine
Verdict**

Still the best gun-free flight-sim around

More imaginative activities

Livelier landscapes

Frail framerates

80%

Nvidia's poster girl
for DirectX 10.



Aaron McKenna is the
editor of Tom's
Hardware Guide UK &
Ireland, a site for tech
enthusiasts of all
persuasions.
www.tomshardware.co.uk

**"Direct3D 10 will
bring bigger and
better game titles"**

Should you buy into **DirectX10** now, or wait?

*The PC's "next-gen" is here, but need you
shell out £400 for it before Christmas?*

When Nvidia launched the GeForce 8800 in November, it was not just releasing a new beefed up graphics card with a few more MHz on the clock to achieve a few extra points in 3DMark. The company was marking the official entry of the world's first DirectX 10 hardware, bringing to an end almost four years of gaming via the delights of DirectX 9.

DirectX 10 should actually be referred to as "DirectX for Windows Vista", as that is precisely what has warranted the leap from 9c to the big one-oh. Direct3D 10 (the part of DirectX concerned with graphics) adds new features to deal with existing graphical problems, and tools to take on new rendering challenges. It also simplifies the 3D pipeline, which will

help move bigger and better game titles out of the developers' studios and onto your PC.

High five

The five key changes in Direct3D 10 allow for: improved programmer expressiveness; tighter specs; improved overall performance; (by having lower command cycle counts for every frame you see on





A close up from the Crysis DX10 demo. When graphics start to consciously make people look ugly we must be getting somewhere.

"Should you jump onto the DirectX 10 bandwagon now?"

Feature continued

screen) unified instruction sets; and Stream I/O, which allows for Geometry Shader to write to memory. All rather high-level stuff which, basically, addresses many of the complaints developers have had about DirectX 9 since 2002.

Upgrade or die?

The upshot of all this is that developers will be able to put new and cool graphical features on screen. But, right now the GeForce 8800 (in its high-end GTX and the £100 cheaper GTS versions), are the only two DirectX 10 cards available... with ATI's R600 cards expected for Q1 2007. The question for

gamers planning their Christmas upgrade is should you feel compelled to jump onto the DirectX 10 bandwagon now?

The answer is a resounding "No". The fact that ATI has not rushed its DirectX 10 cards to market to compete with Nvidia's offering pre-Christmas should be a subtle hint that having "DirectX 10" on the box isn't that big a deal. Yet.

A new vista

DirectX 10 is – or will be – useful for two things. Firstly, Windows Vista will be hungry for some of the new features. That's great if you plan to buy Windows Vista on release (another article on that next time); and if you're going to actually use all of the graphical eye-candy, which will surely only be a drag on performance.

Secondly, DirectX 10 will be required if you want to see all those great new features that developers will be pumping into their games. The only problem with this is that even the early adopters among developers, such as Valve, won't have much to tax the DirectX 10 portions of your £400 graphics card until Spring 2007. The majority of DirectX 10 games won't be out until next Autumn / Winter, at which point the GeForce 8800 will be approaching its first birthday and quite probably starting to look its age.

The only reason to buy the GeForce 8800 now is for its raw performance. The thing is a beast which is well able to compete in both benchmark and real-world stakes. If you're the type of

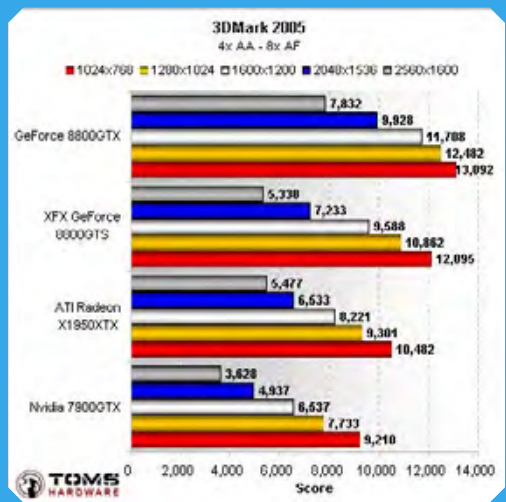


On the left, DirectX 10. On the right, DirectX 9. Detail baby, that's what's at stake here.

performance geek who absolutely must have the best system going then the GeForce 8800 GTX is worth dropping £400 for. The GTS is 20% cheaper, with a 20% - 35% drop-off in performance, depending on the situation; but frankly if you're in for £300 then you might as well be in for £400 and stump up for the GTX.

If you want to upgrade now, a more sane option though, is to look at existing high-end DirectX 9 cards like the Radeon X1950 XTX or GeForce 7950 GX2 in the £200 arena. Or better still, save your pennies until next Spring. ●

The ability to put more models on screen at any one time is another big feature of DirectX 10. In this ATI demo we see 1000 models on screen at once.



Benchmark spectacular

The results speak for themselves. Across this slew of DirectX 9 tests (we don't have any DX10 benchmarks to work with yet) we see the raw performance power in the GeForce 8800. It's for performance reasons, not future proofing, that you would buy the 8800 now. The question is whether performance is worth as much money to you now without the bonus of DX10 games? Click on the tabs below to see how the cards fare when it comes to pure graphics grunt...

3D Mark 2005

Oblivion

F.E.A.R

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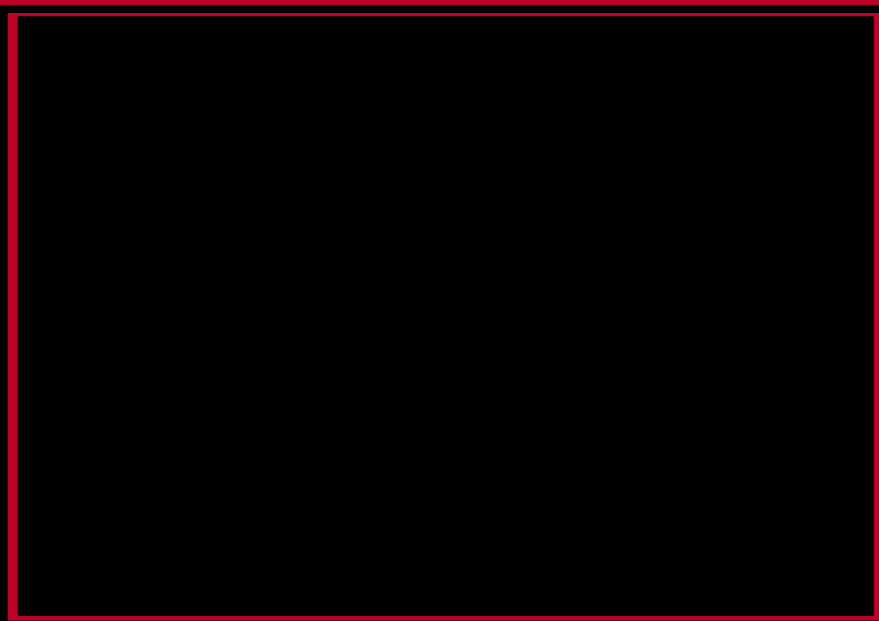
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