NEW!

PCGZine

Issue 2 | February 2007

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

DON'T MISS



1 **Vanguard**
Hands-on with Sony's MMO



2 **Armed Assault**
Exclusive review!



3 **World of Warcraft: TBC**
But, here at last!

PLUS

WIN! ATI Radeon GRAPHICS
ATI Radeon X1950 3D Cards Worth £600!

HUGE REVIEW



MAELSTROM
Is this the RTS of the year?

MASSIVE PLAYTEST INSIDE!

S.T.A.L.K.E.R
SHADOW OF CHERNOBYL

Gas masks at the ready - this game is deadly!

50 S.T.A.L.K.E.R beta slots up for grabs



EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW

LORD OF THE RINGS ONLINE
It's the MMO we've been waiting for... To Mordor we will take you!

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!

ENEMY TERRITORY QUAKE WARS
Paul Wedgwood reveals all

Welcome to PCGZine



Hello and welcome back. Assuming that is you saw the first issue of PCGZine. Like our sister title 360Zine, the response to our launch issue has been phenominal. So, like 360Zine, this issue marks the first of our outings as a monthly publication. Which is nice.

Now every month you can check out the latest and greatest PC releases. Whatever your PC gaming bag, we'll bring you the latest screens, in-depth previews and no-nonsense reviews, written by some of the best games journos in the land. We'll also do our damndest to track down top-drawer developer interviews and bag you a decent competition prize or two.

In the meantime, please let me know what you think of this issue. And if you like what you see don't hesitate to spread the word.

Enjoy the issue.

Dan Hutchinson, Editor
pcgzine@gamerzines.com

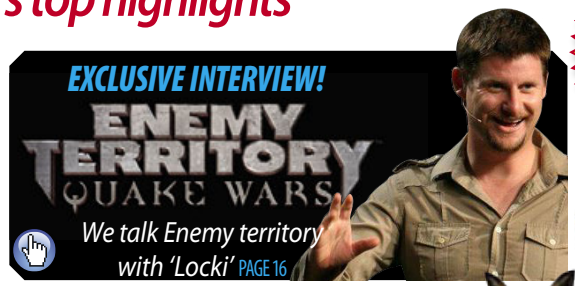
Don't miss! *This month's top highlights*



EXCLUSIVE HANDS ON PLAYTEST

S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Shadow of Chernobyl

It's nearly here and we're the first to play it PAGE 09



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!

Enemy Territory Quake Wars

We talk Enemy territory with 'Locki' PAGE 16



WIN! ATI Radeon X1950 3D Cards Worth £600



Lord of the Rings Online

Exclusive preview inside! PAGE12



Vanguard

Hands-on preview PAGE 22



Armed Assault

In our sights! PAGE 28



Maelstrom

Exclusive review of Codies new RTS PAGE 25

QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away!

Supreme Commander	S.T.A.L.K.E.R.
Crysis	Lord of the Rings Online
Silverfall	Enemy Territory: Quake Wars
Tomb Raider: Anniversary	Field Ops
World In Conflict	Vanguard
Runaway 2	Maelstrom
Trackmania United	Armed Assault
Penumbra: Overture	World of Warcraft
Warhammer Online	Star Trek Legacy



MEET THE TEAM

Probably the best games writers on the planet



Alec Meer
Goes where no other reviewer would boldly go. Find out what he makes of Star Trek: Legacy



Gareth Williams
A new addition to this month's PCGZine, Gareth dons his tin hat to check out Field Ops



Adam Oxford
Lost in another universe entirely, Adam checks out Vanguard and gives his verdict on WoW



Steve Hill
Lost in another country (but that's another story), Steve goes AWOL with Armed Assault

LATEST NEWS

Supreme Commander

Not good for your metal health

Publisher: THQ
Developer: Gas Powered Games
Heritage: Total Annihilation, Dungeon Siege series
Link: www.supremecommander.com
ETA: February

What's the story?

Don't be fooled by SupComm's adherence to the three-faction rule. The game is deep and innovative, even if you're reduced to a fairly uninspiring choice between guiding the brawn of the UEF, the fanaticism of Aeon forces and the techieness of the Cybran.

What do we know?

Tantalisingly close to review, Supreme Commander is shaping up to be the hottest RTS of the year.

Here you unleash waves of clunking units on land, sea and air in this epic conflict between automated units, guided by a mech-bound commander, the only fleshy creature involved in each sprawling battle.

Don't drink too much coffee before you crank up SupComm, mind. There's intensity to the action that is palpitation-inducing, even without a caffeine kick.

The usual sweat of balancing short-term objectives and your long term production strategy is multiplied by the scale, which sees you zooming out to survey all the threats on each vast map… then freaking out when you realise the enormity of the task ahead.

When do we get more?

We'll have the definitive review, and the opinion that counts, next issue.

Anything else to declare?

This game's hard, but promises incredible satisfaction for commanders happy to ruffle their lapels and eager to unleash some colossal battle units.





Rain down laser death like a crazed corrective eye surgeon.

It's no oil painting, but SupComm is epic in scale .





Another great result for the Scraphead Challenge boys…

"Supreme Commander is shaping up to be the hottest RTS of the year"

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JAMES BUCHANAN, ARLAN KHAN AND MARCUS O'NEIL IN "MAELSTROM" INTRODUCING SASHA ANTONOVA

12+ www.pegi.info

The Way it's meant to be played

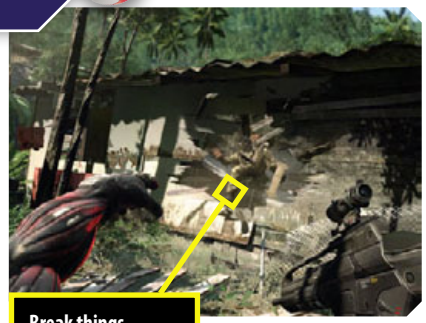
PC DVD-ROM
REALTIME STRATEGY

GAMES www.kdvgames.com

Codemasters®

WWW.CODEMASTERS.COM/MAELSTROM

Publisher: EA
Developer: Crytek
Heritage: Far Cry, Far Cry Instincts, Instincts - Predator
Link: www.crytek.de
ETA: Summer



Break things… using people.





"The levels we've seen are not for the fainthearted or trigger-shy"

Nano suits – great until you need to pee.

Unfair fights – our speciality.

Crysis

Packing tropical heat

LATEST SCREENS

What's the story?

It's your classic, near future, asteroid crashes to Earth and bursts open to reveal a 2km alien mothership affair. Only here, the aliens are in North Korean territory, sparking an unlikely partnership between the Commies and the US.

These new shots are a welcome reminder of the game's potential first-person majesty, great looks and that customisable nano suit…

What do we know?

Crysis kicks off with America and North Korea at loggerheads. You star as a covert operative and the levels we've seen are not for the fainthearted, or trigger-shy.

Once you've smashed your way through a North Korean encampment, shattering buildings as you blast your foes out of your path, for instance, you're faced with a snarling attack helicopter in one challenge.

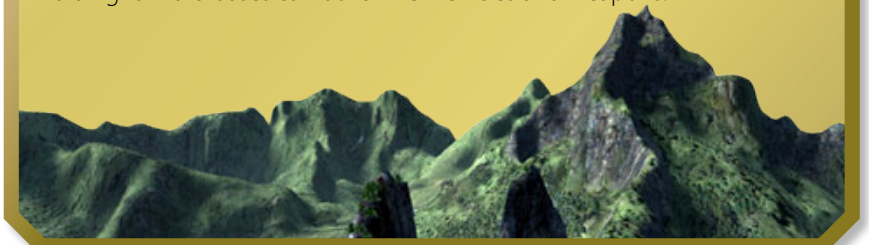
You'll have to make the most of your nano suit's finite energy if you're to survive such menacing assailants. Your armour enables you to cloak yourself, use super strength to lob scenery around or leap like a salmon (only with legs and a gun), toughen your armour or enjoy a burst of super speed.

When do we get more?

Expect EA to drip-feed info over the coming months with them making lots of the fact Crysis is the first DirectX 10 game for Vista.

Anything else to declare?

The game's multiplayer action enables 32 combatants to go toe-to-toe in straight Deathmatch and Power Struggle games. In the latter mode, teams holding forward bases can build killer vehicles and weapons.



7 UP

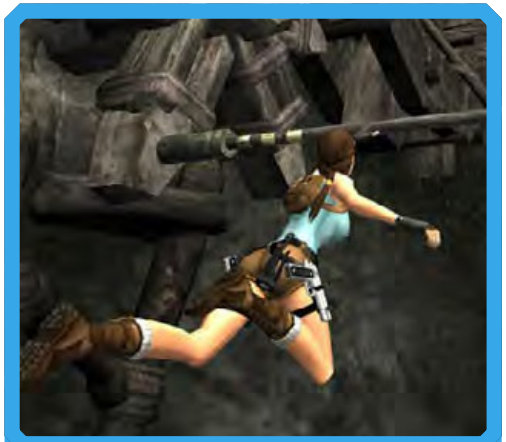
Our pick of the new releases coming in 2007

Silverfall

Publisher: Koch | **ETA:** March

Visually, Silverfall certainly has a style of its own, but this RPG isn't just about good looks. The backdrop is a mighty clash between science and nature, but it's the foreground action that counts as you make decisions that alter the course of the story. And it's all complemented by good old fashioned hack and slash play.





Tomb Raider: Anniversary

Publisher: Eidos | **ETA:** June 29

A novel idea this. Take an old game that was brilliant and ground-breaking... and remake it ten years later! Before you cry 'rip-off', note that it has been reconstructed by Crystal Dynamics to write large the brilliant bits and reinvent the boring bits in between.

World In Conflict

Publisher: Vivendi | **ETA:** Summer

An RTS in which you take various character classes and work together to plough the crap out of your rivals sounds cool enough… but World In Conflict promises such Earth-shattering satisfaction for us armchair gaming megalomaniacs that we are metaphorically jumping for joy.





Runaway 2: The Dream Of The Turtle

Publisher: Ascaron | **ETA:** March

Brian Basco and sexpot Gina Timmins return for a point-and-click adventure from the old skool. If you can see past the puerile and faintly offensive humour (ie. the bits we like) you're in for a treat with this warm-hearted puzzler. We've played the original, which wasn't released over here and it was good, challenging and endearing.

Penumbra: Overture - Episode 1

Publisher: Lexicon Entertainment | **ETA:** March 30

We're getting a whiff of Myth with this one, a first-person adventure that focuses on puzzling. A key hook of the game is that it provides you with highly interactive environments peopled by creatures you can smite with a swoosh of your mouse.



Trackmania United

Publisher: Ascaron | **ETA:** March

Trackmania United enables you to construct and share race tracks with other humanoids online. Varied locales, thousands of building blocks for your looping, manic tracks and the chance to humble the French, among others, makes this a darned exciting prospect.





Warhammer Online

Publisher: SEGA | **ETA:** Late 2007

It's still alive, don't worry. And apparently Thunder Mountain is smack bang in the heart of the action as whole realms unite to brain each other with hard sticks, spiky sticks and their fists. This imposing hillock will form the battleground as orcs and dwarfs go toe-to-toe.

ON THE RADAR

WINTER 2007
- The Witcher — November

AUTUMN 2007
- Assassin's Creed — September 1

SUMMER 2007
- Unreal Tournament III — Summer
- Haze — September 1

SPRING 2007
- Hellgate — March
- The Sims 2: Seasons — March 3
- Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix — June 1
- Medal Of Honor: Airborne — March 3
- Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway — November 11
- World In Conflict — Autumn

MAN MADE HELL



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S.T.A.L.K.E.R.
SHADOW OF CHERNOBYL

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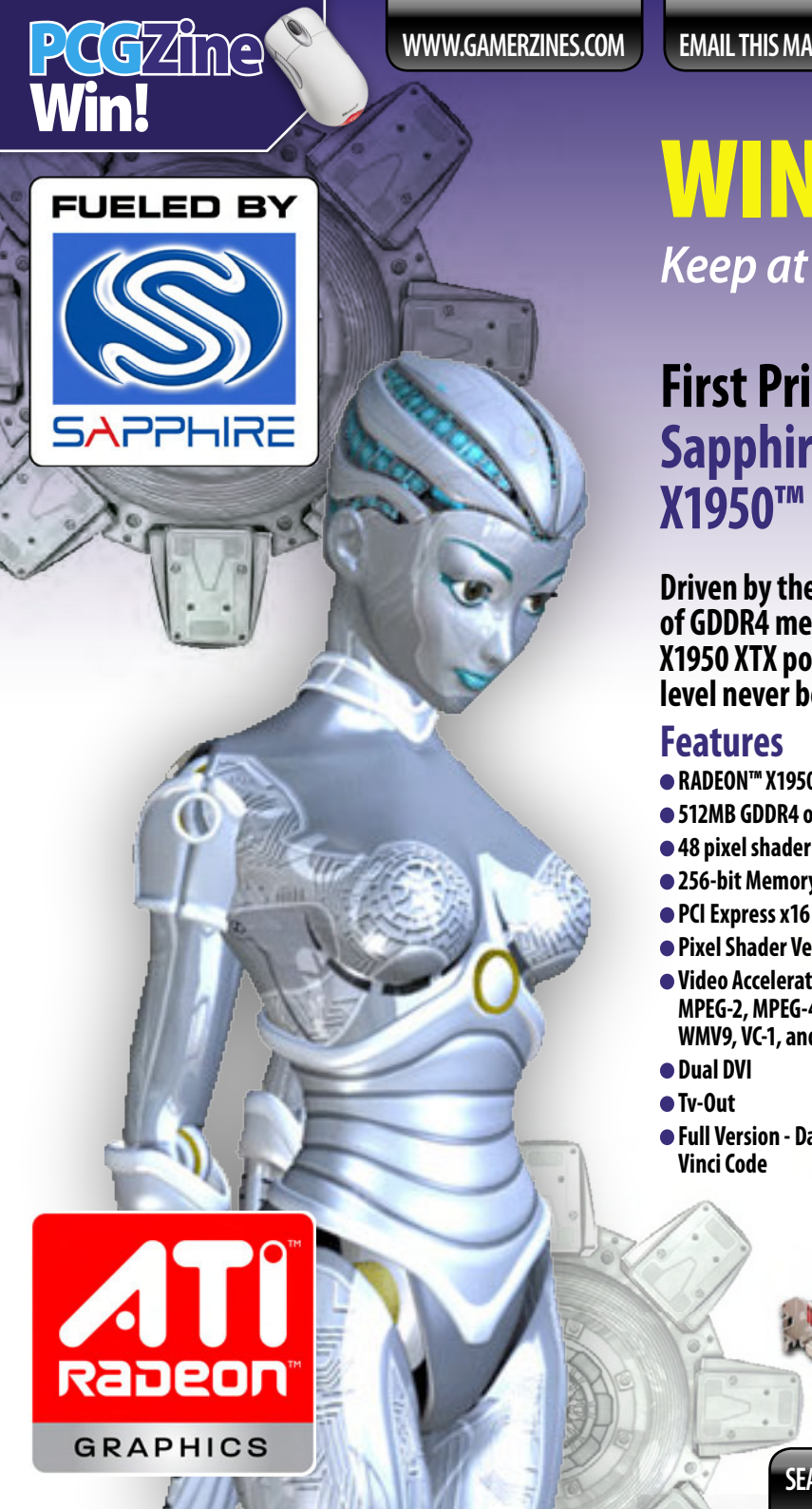
GSC GAME WORLD

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- Tv-Out



HANDS ON

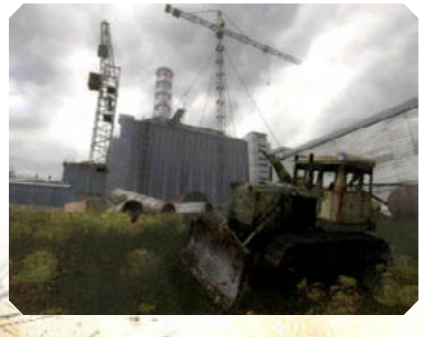
S.T.A.L.K.E.R. SHADOW OF CHERNOBYL

Didn't exactly creep up on us…

Publisher: THQ
Developer: GSC Game World
Heritage: American Conquest and Cossacks series.
Link: www.stalker-game.com
ETA: March 23



Post-modern industrial garden design taken too far?





This is about as cheery as Stalker's locales get.

"You need to be constantly alert to the danger that surrounds you"

The developmental half-life of this radioactive FPS-come-RPG is considerable indeed. S.T.A.L.K.E.R. has been throbbing away like a stubbed toe on a cold morning since 2001, and we've been internally raving about its potential the whole time.

Many delays later and the game is finally set to flash onto PC next month. Thankfully, it looks more than worth the wait.

Set in the near(-er than it was supposed to be when development started) future, S.T.A.L.K.E.R. is a game with a rich and emotive storyline set against the true-to-life backdrop of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster.

The game's alterative history sees the no go zone surrounding the nuclear power station that blew its lid newly contaminated by strange radioactive activity twenty years later. In the wake of a new explosion, government-employed stalkers are sent into the zone to retrieve artefacts and battle scavenging bandits.

You are one such stalker, crashed in the zone and nursed by an artefact dealer who you must repay by running errands. But why were you pelting through the zone in a truck, why is your skin strangely marked, and what the hell is really going on here?

Why? Why? Erm… what?

Well, you'll find out soon enough in a game that's RPG and FPS in not quite equal measure. In the single player game at least, combat here is a means to an end, rather than a raison d'etre. Trouble is your end is survival, so you need to be constantly alert to the danger that surrounds you.

>

COMPETITION

YOU BETA BELIEVE IT

50 slots in the S.T.A.L.K.E.R beta test!

We've conspired with THQ to provide you with the chance to get your hands on this radioactive potential masterpiece before any of your mates. Simply click here to open the competition entry form. The first 50 names drawn from therein will be sprinting through the Ukrainian countryside and kicking the hell out of their rivals in no time. Competition closes 8th Feb.

Click here now to enter!





250,000 miles on the clock? Still life in this Lada yet...



Trust us, you don't want to get this close to the plant.

>S.T.A.L.K.E.R. continued

Questing forms the basis of your itinerary as you meet 'x' or retrieve 'y', being careful to avoid the snarling beasties who want to tear you a new 'a'.

You see, it's not just scavenging humans you're battling in S.T.A.L.K.E.R., but mutated creatures – some of which are so hideous they make Jo from celeb BB look like Lindsay Lohan.

S.T.A.L.K.E.R.'s big selling point is its enormous, freeform environment, through which you can gambol at incredible speeds thanks to a realism-curbing, but boredom-busting, super-fast run command.

The environment is a canvas on which to paint your own gaming legend, thanks to open ended play and an adaptive game structure which we'll now explain in English…

There's plenty of fun in following mission briefs, unravelling the mysterious plot and whacking the right people at the right time with the appropriate firearm, but S.T.A.L.K.E.R.'s best feature is one you don't really notice at first: choice.

You'll only discover how much your decisions in the game affect the environment around you the first time you slump dead in a pile of your own guts and try a section again.

Replay some segments and you'll find some folk who were merrily chirping about, and very much alive, have been guzzled by nasties after you detoured on your second trip.

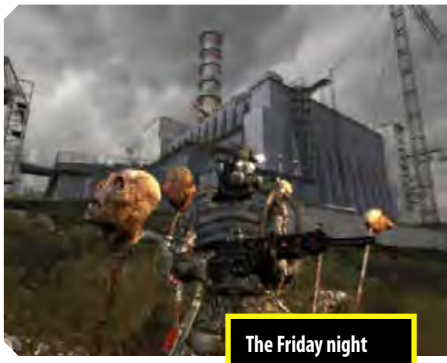


The reddish glow is your retina packing in.

Luckily, such profound gameworld schisms are absorbed into the narrative you're wending for yourself, and you can simply move on in a slightly altered story arc. The same goes for when you decide to shoot your guides in the face instead of pursuing a dialogue. Anyway, talking is - as we know - for wusses.

Of course, underneath all this airy fairy stuff is a game with enough weapons (30-odd), and sufficiently varied locations (everything from open tracts to villages and military warehouse), to spawn a great multiplayer option.

We spied nine maps in our preview version, though we'll have to wait until the beta testers join the party (see YOU BETA BELIEVE IT) to find out just how well the game translates as a multiplayer blast. If it's on a par with the single player game it should work very well indeed.



The Friday night hotties down the Chernobyl disco...

"S.T.A.L.K.E.R.'s best feature is one you don't really notice at first: choice."

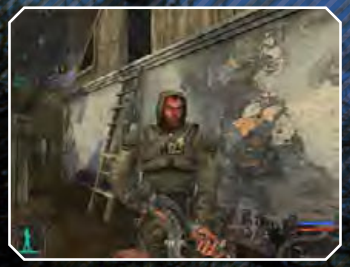
OUR FIRST TIME

A far from gentle introduction into a missionary position.

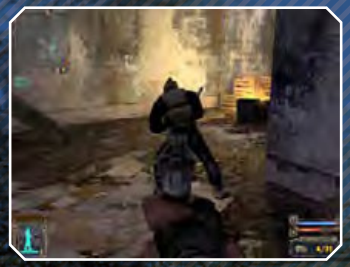
The game's first mission is far from a walk in the park. But who were we kidding expecting life in a post-nuclear disaster fallout zone to be easy…



We need to find this guy Nimble and grab a flash drive off him…



So we head off to find Wolf, who offers us kit and men…



But we'll have to get past seven or eight guards to reach our target.

PCGZine S.T.A.L.K.E.R.

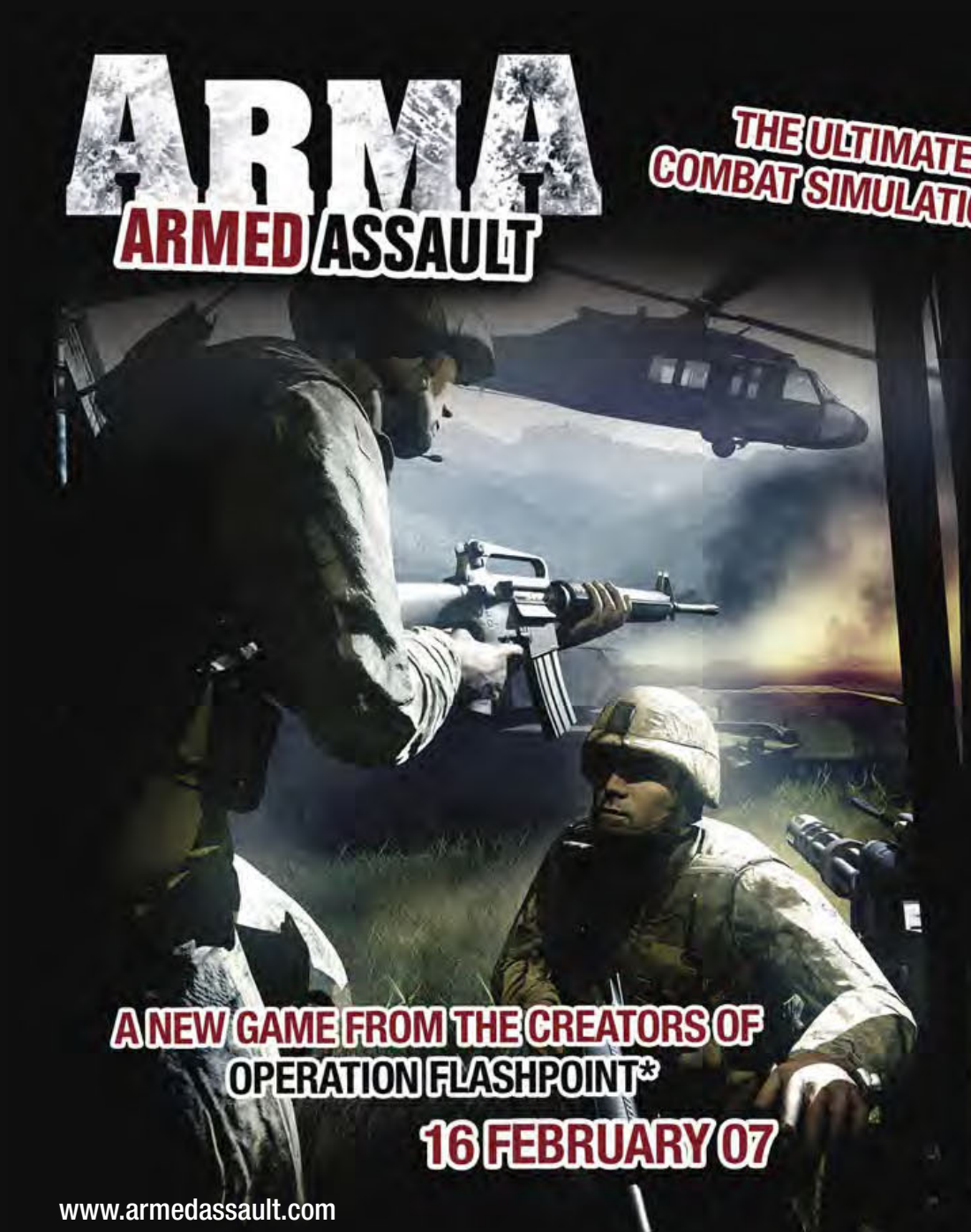
HOW COMPLETE? 90%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS 80%

Still being tweaked, but it should be worth the wait

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"Ball-gripping gameplay"
ign.com



"Bigger and better than Flashpoint"
PC Zone

"An incredidible experience" PC Gamer

"It's about making you feel like a real soldier" PC Gamer

"Something akin to the Second Coming" PC Format



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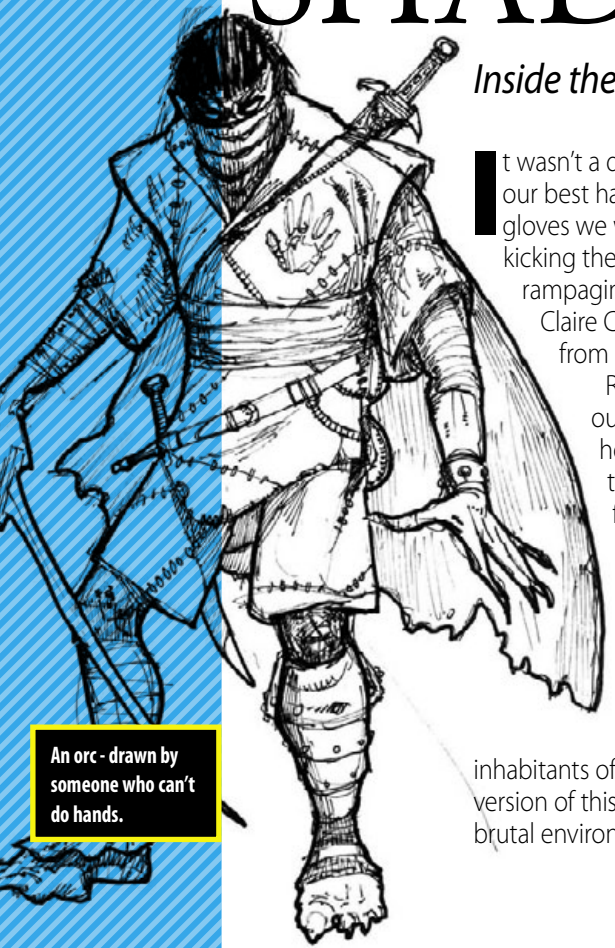
EXCLUSIVE HANDS ON

THE LORD OF THE RINGS ONLINE: SHADOWS OF ANGMAR

Publisher: Codemasters
Developer: Turbine
Heritage: Asheron's Call series
Link: www.lotr.turbine.com
ETA: 24th April



The Last Homely House in Rivendell. So romantic…



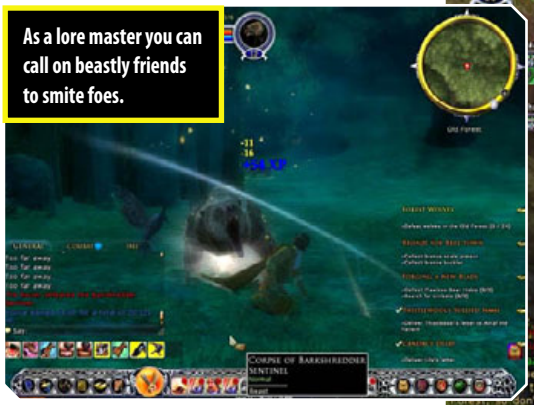
An orc - drawn by someone who can't do hands.

Inside the greatest game on Middle-earth…

It wasn't a date as such, but we put our best hat on and those green gloves we won as a reward for kicking the crap out of some rampaging creatures to meet Claire Chamielec, a key tester from Codemasters.

Rather than meeting outside the Cineplex, we hooked up at 2pm outside the Prancing Pony in Bree for a tour of Middle-earth, an already teeming massively multiplayer universe based on Tolkien's trilogy.

With the game due to go live in April we were among the very first inhabitants of a true-to-the-books version of this beautiful and sometimes brutal environment.



As a lore master you can call on beastly friends to smite foes.

Before we met Claire we'd already levelled up with a string of engaging quests that had us toing and froing in real-time between the towns of Archet, Combe, Straddle and Bree.

We'd already gorded ourselves on a persistent world of chirpy friends and menacing foes like Samwise Gamgee downing a few flagons of Gaffer's homebrew. And it tasted very sweet.

It turns out Lord Of The Rings online embraces every flavour of LOTR fan, enabling newcomers to create a >



Tom Bombadil's house is in there for the purists, as is the singing fella himself.

READER REQUESTS! Click here to tell us what you'd like to see in LOTRO

> LotR Online continued

Human, Dwarf, Elf or Halfling character before heading out on adventures that encompass battling, fetch-and-carry action and even a bit of investigative detective work.

Time to grow up

Those of us drawn to the darker themes in Tolkien's books, and the brilliant movie reworkings, aren't to be disappointed either. The game hugs newbies in the town of Archet and its lazy surrounding fields, but once you're ready to face the true challenge of LOTRO, the town is pillaged and razed... and so begins your encounters with the forces of nastiness.

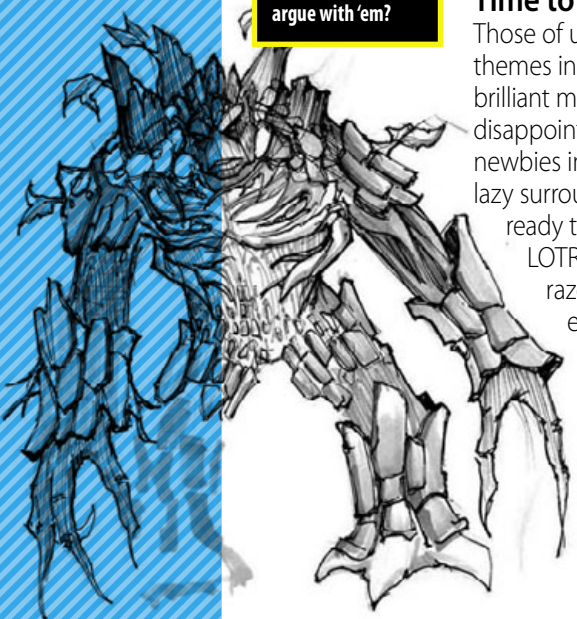
But this isn't simply some love-in for the terminally Tolkien-obsessed. There's plenty in the Shadow of Angmar for RPG lovers, familiar with the likes of World Of Warcraft and the single player masterpiece Oblivion as we found out when we cosied up with Claire…

The Prancing Pony turned out to be an excellent place to meet, as it gave us the chance to sample the first Instance Quest in the Lord Of the Rings Online. These actions take you away from the real-time world of the populous main event, enabling you to form a fellowship with pals and test your attributes against mighty foes.

Our quest turned out to be a fairly straight battling affair, with the presence of pure evil in the form of Amdir causing the same dizzying screen blur that rocks you for ten minutes after your morale is knocked to zero by rampaging enemies.

Our disorienting swirl was down to the dark powers of Middle-earth – it dulls your senses and intensifies the battles you face as you bid to rid the lands of general horridness.

For certain, you feel you're part of the wider battle of good versus evil, even as you falter through your first >



Mighty trolls will get in your way, but who are you to argue with 'em?





The Thorin Hall looks resplendent – and it didn't take us long to find the bar either.

HAIRY ENCOUNTERS

Our whirlwind tour of Middle-earth enabled us to genuflex at the (sometimes hairy) feet of some of the realms



1. THE BEARD
Gandalf wasn't speaking, but he does have a lot on his mind at the moment.



2. THE STUBBLE
Boozing in a back room at the Prancing Pony, Strider sent us on a quest.



3. THE PONYTAIL
Elrond was chilling in Rivendell after a moisture bath… probably.



4. THE FURRY-TOES
Little Frodo's the perfect height for resting your pint of ale on.







LORD OF THE DANCE

What better way to communicate with the residents of Middle-earth than by strutting your stuff? Here's out best moves:



The Flatley Refusal | Makin' Waves... | Camp David

> LotR Online continued

character-building quests. And that's a very deliberate ploy.

The grand idea behind Shadows of Angmar, to which extra playable lands will be added over the course of several years, sees the characters of the real Fellowship cropping up in areas appropriate to the journey to Mordor.

The whole Tolkien narrative provides an over-arching backdrop to your own personal battles. You'll even be able to help out in key battles and insodoing play your part in JRR Tolkien's epic fantasy tale...

In essence, LOTRO is finished, with only a few minor AI issues and frustratingly missing NPCs taking the edge off the experience to date.

Codies appear to have the scale of the game just right – there's already plenty of lands over which to spread your wings, a deep and satisfying-to-use magic system, and plenty of economic opportunities for those determined to make a virtual buck – be it as a seamstress, tin prospector, or crusading hired hard ass.

LOTRO represents a chivalric challenge to World Of Warcraft, and can count on one of the most compelling fantasy universes to draw the punters in. The signs are that the game will be both immersive and utterly addictive – thanks to the potentially neverending questing and levelling-up opportunities.

Over the next few weeks we'll only stop playing long enough to pen an in-depth preview, then a full-on review when Middle-earth fully comes to life in April. Even after that, we'll still be immersed... propping up the bar at The Prancing Pony.



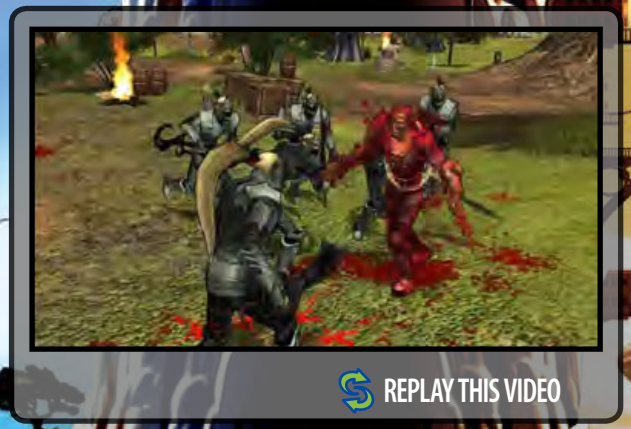
The A26 to Bree's closed mate - three wagon pile-up.

PCGZine — The Lord of the Rings Online: Shadows of Angmar

HOW COMPLETE? 95%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS 85%

At turns touching and dark, epic and homely.



Worlds Apart...

...Drawn together

Welcome to Silverfall - a rich and detailed world that constantly revolves and evolves, around YOU.

A once glorious city that lies in a fantastical Kingdom where the forces of Technology and Nature are so strongly opposed, that symptoms of the conflict have begun to manifest physically as melded cyber-biologic organics and living steam-driven automatons.

Evolve your own hero from the pits of this world into a mighty champion that can oppose the planet-choking Order of Nothingness.

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Depending on YOUR point of view.

OUT MARCH 2007

SILVERFALL

16+ www.pegi.info

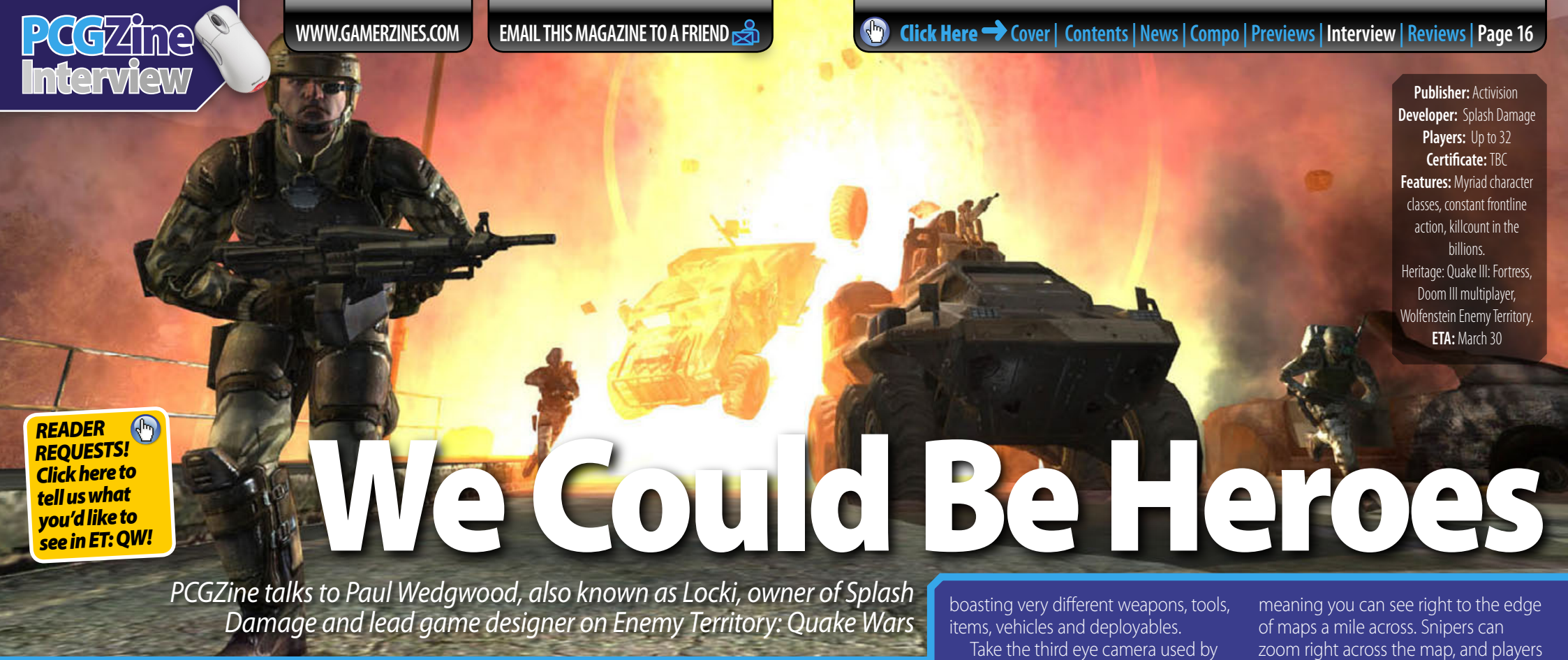
MONTE CRISTO

PC DVD ROM RPG



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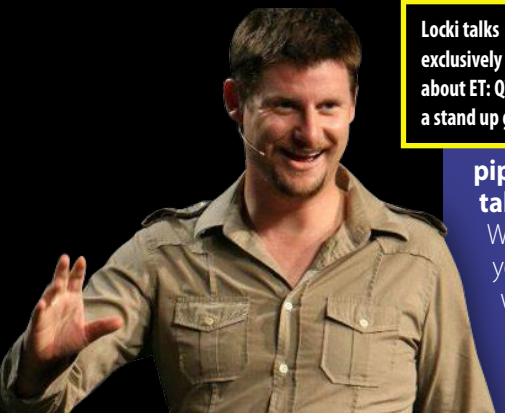
Publisher: Activision
Developer: Splash Damage
Players: Up to 32
Certificate: TBC
Features: Myriad character classes, constant frontline action, killcount in the billions.
Heritage: Quake III: Fortress, Doom III multiplayer, Wolfenstein Enemy Territory.
ETA: March 30

READER REQUESTS! Click here to tell us what you'd like to see in ET: QW!

We Could Be Heroes

PCGZine talks to Paul Wedgwood, also known as Locki, owner of Splash Damage and lead game designer on Enemy Territory: Quake Wars

ENEMY TERRITORY QUAKE WARS



Locki talks exclusively to us about ET: QW. What a stand up guy.

A team that ditched their boring proper jobs to conjure the superb Quake III: Fortress mod, Splash Damage was given free rein to create a multiplayer prequel to Quake II. It's almost done, and it's almost certain to be brilliant…

Enemy Territory: Quake Wars (ET:QW) has been in the pipeline for a few years, what's taken so long?

We could have put ET:QW out last year and made gamers happy, but it wouldn't have met with the critical acclaim Wolfenstein: ET (W:ET) received. The game would have been better than its rivals then – and I'm not being arrogant there… I just prefer our objective-based gameplay.

The comfortable PR response to your question would be that we wanted to spend more time on making the game look really cool, but the truth is it's just so complex to put together.

Enemy Territory has elements of combat action, real-time strategy and unique, objective-based missions.

There's also a lot of asymmetrical gameplay in there, with GDF (human) and Strogg (alien invading) forces boasting very different weapons, tools, items, vehicles and deployables.

Take the third eye camera used by the GDF, for instance, which can be positioned inside an enemy base and controlled remotely. It's comparable, though quite different to a Strogg intel-gathering flying device. Balancing weapons across the board like this, and polishing 12 maps, takes time.

But for a multiplayer game, a list of 12 maps sound a bit stingy…

Each map is four times as complex as Wolfenstein: ET, and thanks to their sheer size and the depth of gameplay we're really putting out the equivalent of a 24-map game.

Each of the maps is so detailed too, with our Brute Force rendering meaning you can see right to the edge of maps a mile across. Snipers can zoom right across the map, and players engaged in dogfights in our aerial vehicles can swoop across the skyline.

Isn't there a risk you'll get lost in these huge environments?

There are four campaigns, each with three very different maps that boast >



ENEMY TERRITORY QUAKE WARS



Tense internal sections echo Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory.



"Players will make use of the room on the maps by setting up 128-player games down the line"

> ET:QW continued

their own precipitation and climate – one minute you're battling in Norway in arctic frosts, the next you're in urban North Africa. They're unique and very recognisable environments.

There's such detail in the maps, down to oil slicks in the road and memorable bends in the terrain, that you can remember and revisit spots where you had fun. You'll feel maps are familiar and filled with landmarks.

You're always on the frontline too, which means the game feels as if many more players are engaged, even though we feel battles of 24-32 players are ideal. Incidentally, I have no doubt players will make use of the room on the maps by setting up 128-player games down the line.

You talk about a moving frontline. How does that work?

Basically, the multiplayer maps are objective-based and create phases of combat.

At the beginning of a level you may be blasting across a ravine as you try to construct a bridge. Once the bridge goes up you can tunnel through to the enemy's side and engage in battle in open areas. Then, in the Valley map I'm thinking of, you'll end up in Wolfenstein-style indoor areas, running down corridors and battling.

Spawn points move with you as you push the frontline forward, so you're never far from the action.



Varied character classes edge you into playing as a team.

And there are many different character classes in ET:QW. Can we assume they'll come into their own in different phases of the action?

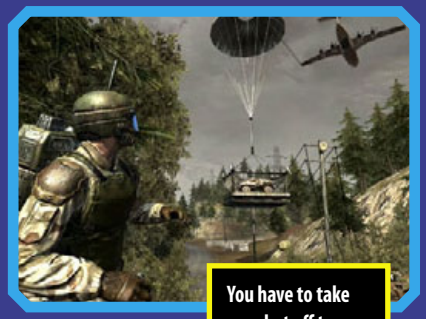
Absolutely. And the style of gameplay changes constantly thanks to the objectives on offer and even the terrain. When visibility is reduced due to snow, for instance, conditions will favour some classes over others.

You'll also get different objectives with each class too. Play as a covert ops troop, then spot a Strogg shield generator and you'll be offered the chance to take it out – in other words, you'll be guided to objectives that will help your team in its overall defend/attack mission.

Where are you now, in terms of development?

We're approaching beta for the game and have it in closed beta testing – this is for feedback, rather than bug-testing.

We also have eight production testers on high spec machines who are all clan players and ex-pros, experts in the likes of Tribes and Battlefield. They give us detailed feedback on the finest issues, such as whether a window is too high, or if cover is placed correctly in a level. In other words, we're fine-tuning the gameplay to the high standards we set ourselves now.



You have to take your hat off to Land Rover's delivery service.

Isn't there a risk you're catering for the hardcore to the exclusion of newbies with such an approach?

You have to assume that, if you capture newbies they will eventually become hardcore players and won't just play for a single weekend.

To make life easier for new players we've improved the interface and, besides, ET:QW works if you come

>

> ET:QW continued

into this frontline and shoot everything that's red. We've also got great visuals, special effects and mad alien weapons shooting at you. The game can feel like playing Command and Conquer on the ground. You can ignore the commander and get stuck in, unlock bonuses and achieve your goals.

The hope is that my dad can play in a team with eleven other dads, with only a basic knowledge of how to navigate a first-person shooter and gradually become part of a co-ordinated team.

Is there a risk, then, that chaos could reign with players battling for themselves at the expense of teamplay?

People are rewarded for teamplay in ET: QW, whether that's killing people or blowing things up, dishing out health packs or reviving fallen comrades.

And while players may at first run out and enjoy the game's sandbox feel, they'll get real satisfaction from working as part of a team.

There will be 'touchdown' moments where, as an engineer, you build a bridge to open the way for your team-mates, or as a medic you revive the engineer who can go on to build the bridge.

Such heroic moments will be broadcast, and that's where the buzz of Enemy Territory: Quake Wars will come from.



Artillery - like a giant's sniper rifle.

"We've also got great visuals, special effects and mad alien weapons..."

ENEMY TERRITORY TECHNOLOGIES

The game uses MegaTexture, which is a texture mapping technique developed to try and eliminate textures repeating within an environment. MegaTexture is the brainchild of iD's Technical Director John Carmack. It places one huge 32K x 32K texture (1024 Megapixel, hence the name) on an environment. Amazingly this is packed into only 8Mbs of video RAM.



No time for skinny dipping now, surely?



Quick, stick another quid in the meter before the lights go out...

Racing fans will be stunned...



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... so will everybody else.

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Publisher: Freeze Interactive
Developer: Digital Reality
Heritage: War on Terror, D-Day
Link: www.fieldopsgame.com
ETA: TBC

HANDS ON

FIELD OPS

Run-of-the-mill FPS, or is it RTS?


RTS mode often looks explosively dazzling


You can't just run in and shoot – planning is everything

Over the years, many games have tried and failed to change the way we perceive the different game genres. Field Ops is the next 'great white hope', offering you a new take on both RTS and FPS with the ability to change between each game type at the press of a button. Like us, you might be saying "Woah! There's a game attempting something new. Steady now..."

The concept itself though isn't all that new, with various games trying to bridge the gap, such as the excellent Full Spectrum Warrior. Although it lacked the ability to control your character down to firing weapons in first person, it did open up real time strategy to console and PC gamers with an immersive 3rd person perspective. Freeze Interactive decided to take this one step further with Field Ops. Design document in hand, Digital Reality were hired to bring the idea to life, having worked on a string of successful RTS over the years and a heritage stretching back to the days of the Amiga 500.

Delivery of the idea isn't always a simple task, but with a press of the 'Tab' key, RTS, FPS and TPS modes flash across the screen in lightning quick time and, technically, the game really has to be applauded in this area. The ease of switching at a moment's notice can make the difference between waiting for your fire team to take out that annoying gunner, or stealing the glory with a pin-point headshot – something we've always wanted to do with the likes of Command & Conquer.

While you'd expect the game to be >

"Technically Field Ops really has to be applauded"





Two of them want to go left, one wants to go right: it's always the same argument when you go on holiday.

> Field Ops continued

a poor comparison to fully fledged first person shooters, you wouldn't be completely on the ball. Although the RTS view looks by far the most polished, FPS mode compares quite favourably with modern shooters. Don't get us wrong, it's no Half Life 2, but it doesn't disappoint on higher-end graphics cards. The game sports a crisp, clear display, accompanied by some large and varied environments.

Where mode switching really bears fruit is in the multiplayer aspect. Combining FPS and RTS will add plenty to your campaigns, but sticking to one style of play will find you deep in the proverbial excrement, with the 'Tab' key your only saviour. And although we didn't get too much time looking at the multiplayer side of Field Ops, we're pretty excited about the possibilities it might afford, as should you be.

With a few months left of the development process, there isn't too much to stop Field Ops from delivering an impressive and refreshing change to what in recent years has become an overcrowded market. FPS and now RTS are fast becoming paint-by-number affairs, but Freeze are trying to stand out amongst an ever increasing pack. Field Ops is shaping up quite nicely and deserves applause for daring to try something original. Worthy of your attention, Field Ops is due for release later this year.


Your area of assault, learn it well


Don't lose troops, the game is hard enough as it is


While FPS mode seems sparse, it's by no means easy




When all else fails, bring on the trusty tank

"Combining FPS and RTS will add plenty to your campaign"

PCGZine

HOW COMPLETE?	FIRST IMPRESSIONS
72%	70%

Worth keeping tabs on

HANDS ON

VANGUARD: SAGA OF HEROES

Will Sony's new RPG place it back at the front of the assault?

Publisher: Sony Online Entertainment
Developer: Sigil Games
Heritage: Everquest
Link: www.vanguardsoh.com
ETA: Now



The final beta test for the latest high fantasy MMO to punch its +5 Sword of Smashing through Sony Online's doors has closed, and developer Sigil Games is read to send in its Vanguard. Unfortunately, there's no way for us to realistically start a preview of the game without saying this: it's a brave publisher who launches an online RPG within two weeks of the Warcraft expansion.

From the start, though, Vanguard has been pitched as a very different game to Warcraft. Where Blizzard takes a large brush and paints a world of in-jokes, straightforward design and primary colours, Sigil shines when it comes to ruggedness and fine details. Graphically, the Unreal engine gives Vanguard a grittier and much more realistic style than the OTT World of Warcarft. High definition textures and shiny shader effects are just the start though: this is a true role-playing game in which you can create a character as unique as you are.

There are nineteen races to choose from, and a total of 15 classes – although not every class is available to every race – and a character creation tool with over 50 variables for customising appearance, so that the chances of bumping into your online doppelganger are ludicrously slim. There are skill trees, crafting menus and attribute points to spend – all the things that Warcraft chucked out to reach the mainstream. And yet Sigil's CEO (and co-creator of Everquest, now there's a giveaway) Brad McQuaid is adamant that Vanguard is not a 'hardcore' game.

By comparison, though, it is, and should be celebrated as so. The world of Telon is the biggest yet in an MMO, and every bit of it is layered in authenticity; whether that's normal mapping on armour surfaces or complex skill trees. There is a massive community for a game that takes its universe more seriously than WoW, and Vanguard could be it. Experienced RPGers will love being able to buy houses in the major cities, and craft or buy furniture to kit them out with. And the mini-game of Diplomacy – a card game with which conversations are played out and reputations won - is an innovative challenge for NPC interaction.

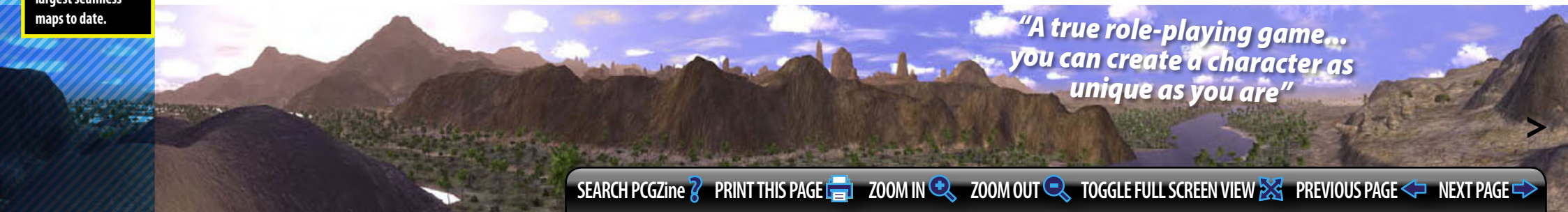


The rules of the Diplomacy card game are complex, but soon mastered.

Having spent some time in the beta test, we can say that there are still a few problems that Vanguard must improve. For a start, there's performance; while the Unreal engine is incredibly scalable for older machines, server lag has been a major issue throughout the beta.

>

Huge vistas with HDR lighting. Vanguard has the largest seamless maps to date.



>

"Vanguard must be careful not to take itself too seriously"



NPCs conversation trees may appear stilted by comparison to WoW, but there's plenty to do in the game world.



The combat system and interface are all standard MMO fare. Easy to get to grips with if you've played one before.



Mounts and horse armour appear early in the game.



The character customisation tool allows you to give your avatar a unique appearance. Foxy.

> Vanguard continued

Then there's the lack of instanced dungeons which may lead to overcrowding and quest camping; most of all, though, Vanguard must be careful not to take itself too seriously. At the moment – and new patches are arriving daily – things are just a little too functional, too devoid of character. The conversation trees are stilted and formal to the point of abstraction – early on you're forced to ask a Diplomacy expert the improbable "May I also see the table of contents for your glossary". The script doesn't have to be pun-tastic – like Warcraft – to be human, but it often feels like the developers have spent so long on the complex game mechanics they are afraid of hiding them, for fear of being under appreciated. Geeks like to get inside a game, but they need suspense of disbelief too. NPCs who don't address you by your first name, even after you've completed your fourth quest for them, have no place in a modern MMO.

Will the final game be able to balance the pen and paper austerity of Vanguard's heritage with the humanity expected in the post-Warcraft MMO world? We certainly hope so...

PCGZine VANGUARD

HOW COMPLETE? 90%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS 80%

Potentially, the thinking man's MMO

Unfortunately, as many of today's games use DirectSound they will be reduced to a very basic sound experience. However, Creative have developed a solution to this problem called Creative ALchemy

ALchemy is a free, downloadable application compatible with Sound Blaster X-Fi sound cards* that converts DirectSound instructions to OpenAL, restoring in-game audio to its former glory.

Play the demo videos to experience the difference a Sound Blaster X-Fi and ALchemy makes to the gaming experience in Windows Vista. To appreciate the full difference, these videos should be played using surround sound speakers.

More information
For more information or to download ALchemy, visit: http://preview.creativelabs.com/alchemy/
For more information on the X-Fi family of products visit: http://www.x-fi.com/whatis/

Did you know you lose surround sound and EAX effects in most games when you upgrade to Vista? This is because there's no hardware acceleration of DirectSound 3D or DirectSound. Instead, DirectSound 3D games rely upon the Microsoft software mixer, which delivers only basic audio support. **This means that your add-in sound card or motherboard audio device will not deliver the hardware accelerated surround sound or EAX effects you are used to in the majority of games.**

Games that support OpenAL such as BF2 / 2142, Q4 & UT2004 will continue to sound glorious with hardware-enhanced surround sound and EAX effects because OpenAL "talks" directly to the audio hardware bypassing Vista completely.

CREATIVE

X-Fi XTREME FIDELITY

No Surround Sound or EAX in Windows Vista?

Call of Duty on Windows Vista + X-Fi + ALchemy

Notice how the footsteps, gunshots and grenade explosions have atmospheric effects (EAX) applied, sounding as they would in an underground environment like a sewer. Now listen as the first grenade explodes in front of you and the audio reflects this with the sound coming from the front speakers. The second grenade explodes behind you and again the audio reflects this with the sound coming from the rear speakers.





Click here to hear it without ALchemy

PLAY THIS VIDEO

* Excluding Sound Blaster X-Fi Xtreme Audio



Publisher: Codemasters
Developer: KDV Games
Heritage: Command & Conquer, Warcraft III
Link: /www.codemasters.co.uk/maelstrom/
ETA: Feb 9 2007

SPECS
2.4Ghz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 64Mb 3D card

Maelstrom

An RTS with a bit of a difference




Terraforming isn't always done with noble intent.

It's hard to know for sure whether or not Maelstrom realises quite how silly it is. The graveyard tones with which its voice actors recite their delightfully earnest mumbo-jumbo suggests not. Not that it matters – the silliness is what gives Maelstrom the right to change from its grey, one size fits all Command &Conquer-clone uniform into something a little more distinctive.

At heart, it is indeed a straight down the line sci-fi RTS, with all the little men, factories and resource-harvesting that goes with it. However, it drags itself out of this quagmire by being spectacularly OTT. Set in a world that's both post-apocalyptic (turns out we all should have listened to more of Al Gore's lectures) and pre-apocalyptic (evil aliens want to turn the Earth into their own personal swimming pool), it's got free reign to do whatever it wants. And what it wants is to have three wildly >




The terrain deformation is really impressive, even if this is strangely non-fatal.

MONSTERS, CREEPS AND HOBOS WITH GUNS

Meet Maelstrom's unusual suspects



Remnant Binmen | Robo-executives | Geiger won't notice

Binmen

The Remnants are yer bog-standard RTS army pretending to be a bit different by apparently building stuff out of garbage. They are pretty good when it comes to blowing things up, though.

"Set in a world that's both post-apocalyptic and pre-apocalyptic"

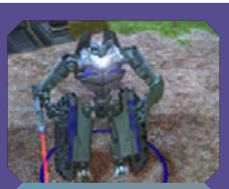
"So much fun you can't help rooting for them to wipe out humanity"

Each of these buildings can be collapsed into a truck, then rebuilt as something else.

FREEZE FRAME
Strategic points in time



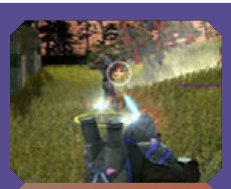
20 MINS
Clunky but fun FPS control of your first hero – a Russian lass with an invisibility trick.



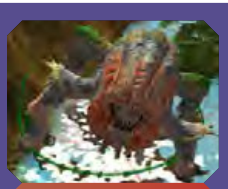
3 HOURS
Have Ascension's vehicles transform into offensive or defensive weapons.



5 HOURS
Having fun with the Hai-Genti – they eat dead bodies to gain building materials.



8 HOURS
The plot ties together. Dark secrets are revealed. Allegiances are changed. Etc.



10 HOURS
At last – the biggest, baddest, bestest units arrive. This one's the Alien Titan.

> Maelstrom continued

different factions up against each other. One's a pretty standard soldiers and tanks guerrilla setup, one's a bunch of greedy businessmen who build transformers, and one's a race of resurrecting amphibious aliens who hatch their units from space-eggs. See? Silly. Gloriously silly. It's all set in a graphics engine that allows for some top-notch destruction, and there's even terraforming in there – though it's more of a toy than a useful tool.

Heroic

An initial problem is that the first race, the Remnants, are a bit too straight to really be interesting. They have nothing that we've not seen many times before, and they're only likely to be a popular choice in multiplayer because they've got a generous unit cap and fast build times. Ideal for blitzkrieg tactics, essentially, but not a huge amount of fun during the singleplayer campaign. They're Maelstrom's heroes though, and the guys you play as for the first few hours. Perhaps it's trying to break you in gently, or perhaps it's because Codemasters wanted a commercial game after its last outing with the absolutely bonkers Perimeter.



What a mess those nomadic Remnant make. If you're homeless it's hard to be houseproud, presumably.



The mighty Colossus. Like a giant robot, but gianter.

The Ascenion (robots) and the Hai-Genti (aliens) are immediately more compelling, and laden with intriguingly alternative abilities, but it'll be a while before you get to them. Even once you do, the final outcome isn't up to you – the story only concludes one way. It's a shame there aren't three entirely alternative campaign branches, so that if you wanted to claim ultimate victory with a specific side you could. The Hai-Genti especially, despite being boo-hiss baddies of the highest order, are so much fun that you can't help rooting for them to wipe out humanity. They're an entirely organic bunch, building networks of connected hives that grow giant monsters rather than tanks and planes. They are able to flood parts of the map to aid their movement and >

> Maelstrom continued

poison their enemies. That is approximately twenty-eight times more interesting than a jeep with a gun on the back.

The convoluted storyline is reasonable, again depending on whether you take the regular cutscenes of blocky characters with silly voices bickering with each other as charmingly silly or as misguidedly po-faced. It's fairly long-winded and stingy when it comes to dribbling out new unit types, and lacks bravura set-piece moments, so it's particularly hard to resist the temptation to just dive right in to skirmish mode and play around with the really big guns straight away.

When you do, what Maelstrom's actually trying to do becomes much clearer. Though it's all restricted to a sizeable degree by the RTS groundrules laid down by Dune 2 so many years ago, the three races are hugely different – much more so than in any of Maelstrom's recent contemporaries. Even playing through every campaign won't grant total mastery of any one faction – if multiplayer's your thing, this is a game where you pick a favoured team and stick to it until you know it inside out. If Maelstrom finds an audience (which it may not, as launching so close to Supreme Commander and C&C3 could mean suicide), there's a whole lot of scope for it to offer some really fascinating online scuffles. It's hard to tell just yet whether the wild diversity of the factions means they're completely balanced, but it certainly seems as though they're artfully arranged to each have specific strengths and weaknesses against the other sides.

For all its ideas though, Maelstrom mostly plays it just a bit too safe. Given that Company of Heroes and Supreme Commander have performed some fairly dramatic surgery on real-time strategy in recent months, this often feels a bit of a dinosaur. It is, however, one with Technicolor skin and a funny hat.

Alec Meer



Heroes seem a tad overpowered in direct control mode, but kamikaze assaults are still a dumb idea.

What a mess those nomadic Remnant make. If you're homeless it's hard to be houseproud, presumably.





PULSOMETER *Signs of life*

Tiny red men with popguns.

Optional first-person control of Hero units

Schizoid difficulty can mean insta-death

Flooding the Earth with poison is fun

Now that is a really big robot…

"Pick a favoured team and stick to it until you know it inside out"

Well, if you will go fight robots in second-hand jeeps…

PCGZine Verdict

Both deeply conventional and heroically experimental

- Two truly impressive factions
- Massively destructible environments
- Ropey cutscenes and over-familiar

80%



Armed Assault

The first casualty of war is fun…

Publisher: 505 Games
Developer: Bohemia Interactive
Heritage: Operation Flashpoint
Link: www.armedassault.com
ETA: Feb 16th

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
2Ghz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 128Mb Graphics Card

Back in the day, there was a game called Cannon Fodder, which was advertised by the catchy tagline: 'War has never been so much fun.' While Armed Assault technically covers the same subject matter, a more appropriate tagline would be: 'War has never been such little fun.' Unless of course your idea of fun consists of lying under a hedge for two hours before having your head blown off as soon as you glance in the general direction of the enemy. Geared strictly towards the more hardcore end of the market, Armed Assault is billed as 'The ultimate combat simulation.'

It's a reasonable description, as along with writhing around in the dirt you get to pilot some 30 vehicles, traversing land and sea in tanks, boats, choppers and even fighter planes. Having more in common with a flight sim than your common or garden Medals of Honor and Calls Of Duty, it is to all intents and purposes a war simulator. As such, you're not going to be able to survive eight bullets to the upper torso without a scratch, and there are no handy health packs to restore you to full fitness every two minutes. This is war, and brutal death is rarely more than inches away.

However, for all the realism, the war itself is imaginary. Set on the fictional island of Sahrani, American troops


Insert large chopper gag here.


"This is war, and brutal death is rarely more than inches away"

He never liked cars.

DO IT YOURSELF

Fancy yourself as a game designer..?



Modding made easy | **Island life** | **Meat & two veg**

Up the Mods

Armed Assault is packed with missions and multiplayer options, but if you fancy yourself as a game designer it also comes with an extremely comprehensive editor. There's even a separate small island that you can use to create missions on, which also ensures that the game runs smoother.


Graffiti is punishable by death.



...that depends how you define fun.

Cut scenes appear in the form of news reports.



> Armed Assault continued

have already begun their exit strategy from the south when the shit hits the fan in the shape of an invading army from the north. Unfortunately, you are one of the remaining few and your free holiday in paradise is suddenly shattered by the very real threat of instant death.

Take control of a machine gun, until you're killed.



Boot camp

Unlike countless gung-ho war games, you're no kind of hero. In fact you're not really anyone, simply assuming control of whichever infantryman, driver or pilot is relevant to the mission, a mere cog in the grinding war machine. And it really is a grind, with the training missions alone lasting longer than some entire games. Time can be sped up by up to a factor of four, with the side-effect that vehicles become uncontrollable and soldiers walk like silent movie stars.

When you finally get into the meat of the battle, you have to do it by the book. Simply running at the enemy with your finger on the trigger will have you riddled with holes like Gorgonzola.

"Running at the enemy will have you riddled with holes"

The antithesis of a pick up and play game, it comes across more like a military training program then a commercial release. It's a tactical affair, with orders given to fellow troops via the largely arcane interface, and relayed via the largely arcane graphics. The 'spiritual successor' to the six-year-old Operation Flashpoint from the same developer, Armed Assault uses a modified version of the same engine, and frankly it shows. But Armed Assault isn't about wowing you with its pretty graphics – it's about providing a crushingly realistic experience for those who would love to go to war, but don't want to die.

Steve Hill



Spy on people, then kill them.

PCGZine Verdict

This is hardcore. Gritty reality doesn't leave huge room for fun.

- Massive and real
- Dated engine
- Unwieldy gameplay

76%

360Zine Issue 2 Out Now

★★★
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MASSIVE REVIEWS
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World of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade

PCGZine GOLD


Taking a pummelling in the orc camp. Ouch.


Beautiful, Nagrand. Weird, wonderful and home to a new type of PvP. City capping.

Publisher: Sierra
Developer: Blizzard
Heritage: Warcraft, SpaceCraft, WoW
Link: www.wow-europe.com
OUT NOW

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
800Mhz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 32Mb 3D card

Einstein reckoned our universe is expanding. The World of Warcraft is burning up.

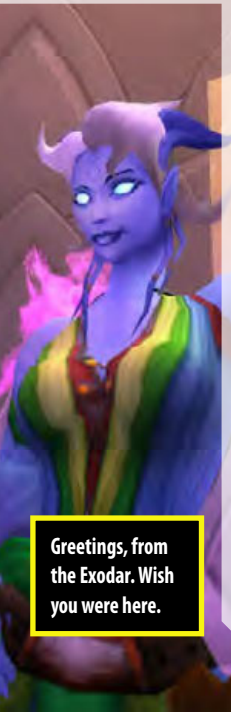
There's a scene in Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy in which Douglas Adams devises a method of torture so horrendous, it is guaranteed to turn the recipient into a quivering mass of jelly for the rest of their life. The concept is simple – show someone the whole of reality and their insignificant place within it, and the brain will simply be overwhelmed by the sense of scale.

Anyone who logged onto Burning Crusade within the first couple of days of launch may well recognise that vertiginous feeling, as they joined the kinds of queues to fight bosses and complete quest goals that haven't been seen since the initial rush of players when the game itself first went live. Wandering into one of the new areas feels like being the last one to arrive at a party – even though it's only been going for a couple of hours and thousands of guests are yet to turn up. World of Warcraft is the biggest thing in gaming ever; and your place within it is very small. And yet, in so many ways, it still feels like the whole beautiful, colourful, welcoming world has been crafted just for you and your friends.

Blizzard's biggest problem with developing an expansion pack for WoW is that there are three kinds of 'endgame' player – the folk who carry on developing their character after they hit level 60 in the original WoW. To keep each happy means specific content tailored to their needs, and a lot of very careful balancing of the general stuff.

Firstly, there are the RAID players, who go back into dungeons over and over again to complete specific armour sets and hope for weapon >


As happened every year, the office party quickly spiralled out of control.


Greetings, from the Exodar. Wish you were here.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Don't miss these amazing sights...



Worms | Dragons | Outlands

Worms

In the early part of Burning Crusade, at least, the quest structures are generally of a very high standard. It takes itself even less seriously than the original – here we have to hunt subterranean worms by following the churning earth above them, then fight them as they emerge. They can be spotted from a distance by bursts of flames farting through the topsoil.

>WoW continued

drops with crazy stat and damage bonuses. Those who preferred fighting others stuck to the PvP Battlegrounds, slowly working their way up the honour tree for similar rewards.

The third type is what we could call the casual player. They've probably only just hit level 60 after 18 months of play and are content to carry on questing and doing the occasional instance. Or they've developed two or three alts and experimented with character class, race and allegiance. Or they've left the world altogether and are reading this review to see if they should venture back in.

Everyone's a winner

For the first group, there are six new dungeons and a new feature for setting the difficulty level to 'Heroic' to provide more of a challenge on replay. Once the difficulty level has been upped, the drops become a lot more powerful. For the PvPers there's a new style of gladiatorial combat, in which small teams compete in ladder tournaments (which will start in a couple of weeks time), as well as new control zones in all of the areas of Outland – and, in Nagrand, a neutral city which can be owned by the most powerful military force in the area.

For everyone, though, the real attraction of Burning Crusade is that it shows Blizzard has been listening – there's a huge amount of new content which all three player types will love. One of the frustrations of Azeroth was that the endgame quests, from level 50 upwards, felt so much more polished than the rest of the game. Conversations with NPCs were better scripted, objectives were more consistently challenging and there were fewer 'kill 20 of this, gather 60 of that' quests.

Everything we've seen so far in Outland – and no, we haven't reached level 70 yet, not by a long way – has been given that kind of polish. There's a quest that involves calling in bombers mounted on griphons, another which requires you to burn down enemy siege units, and still another that sees you hunting giant worms, all within the first few yards of the first base camp in Hellfire Peninsula. The new races – the extra-terrestrial Draenai and the evil natured Blood Elfs – also benefit from this attention to detail. Both boast starting areas that are big enough to take you to level 20 before you move over to the original story arcs, and the Draenai quests in particular are worth the asking price alone. And as for the new areas themselves – just look at the screens to get an idea of the stunning vistas Blizzard has created as an addendum to an already vibrant world.

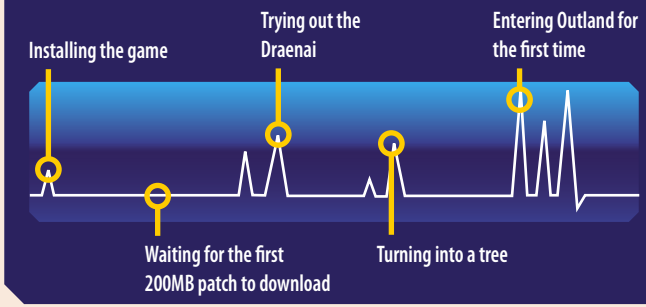
Blizzard aren't fools. They've taken all the best bits of an enormously successful game and filled the expansion with as much of that quality of content as possible. Yes, at its heart it's still an overly-addictive and often unsatisfying grind; but there's plenty in it that's refreshing even for the most hardened WoW player, and more than enough to entice lapsed subscribers back into the fold.

Adam Oxford



Remember Hemet the Stranglethorn hunter? He's left his Expedition behind and set up by himself in Outland.

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



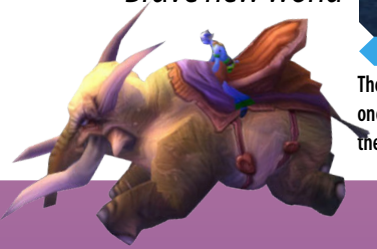


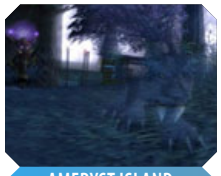
"The real attraction of Burning Crusade is that it shows Blizzard has been listening"

The fauna of Nagrand includes Clefthoves – clearly modelled on the Banthas of Tatooine.

Lord Summerisle is just out of shot.

FREEZE FRAME
Brave new world

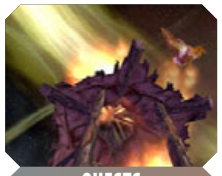




AMERYST ISLAND
The shapeshifting quest is just one of the original ideas in the Draenai story arc.



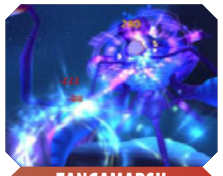
OUTLANDS
Step through the dark portal and you'll land in the middle of an all out war.



QUESTS
An early quest sees alliance characters sent to direct a fleet of griffon bombers.



SHATTRATH CITY
A troll vendor in Shattrath City. Would you buy a used necklace from this guy?



ZANGAMARSH
Fighting the translucent tripods in Zangamarsh is eery, but colourful.

PCGZine Verdict

It's like Warcraft, but better.

- Excellent range of new content
- Two new starting races
- Blood Elfs are boring by comparison

92%

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SONY PSP

Sid Meier's Pirates Chili Con Carnage
Rainbow Six: Vegas Champ Man 2007

NINTENDO DS

Mario vs. Donkey Kong 2: March of the Minis
Pro Evolution Soccer 6 Theme Park

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Publisher: UbiSoft
Developer: Mad Doc Software
Heritage: Freelancer
Link: startrek.bethsoft.com
OUT NOW

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
2.66Ghz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 128Mb 3D card

Star Trek: Legacy

Boldly going where far too many have gone before

Funny story. Well, sort of. A few years back, Activision, the then-publisher of any and all Star Trek games, brought court action against Viacom, owner of the rights to the good ship Enterprise et al. Basically, its complaint was that the general rubbishness of recent Trek film and TV efforts (a fair comment, as anyone who's seen Enterprise or Nemesis will agree), was such that any spin-off game it could make wouldn't have much of a chance on the shelves.

Fast forward a few years and Legacy (pointedly not published by Activision) is the first high-profile Star Trek offering in quite some time. And, well, it's a bit of a stinker itself. So, given that there's finally a new film in the offing, with reportedly an entirely fresh approach, could Viacom take a vengeful pop at this game's publisher for further poisoning the ailing franchise before it gets a chance to reboot?

So near...

And it really is a disappointment, given how many stars have aligned to give it huge potential. Forty years of Trek Captains (including the Shat) are on board for vocal duties, as is one of the original writers, and it's supposed to be an all-action evocation of the show's gloriously silly ship-to-ship combat. Sounds exactly like what the people want. Unfortunately, in practice it's basic, clumsy and one-note.

Even before the repeat-and-repeat-and-repeat combat begins, all sense of >



Klingon ships can cloak. This is almost exciting.



Unfortunately, you can't ram into planets at warp speed, even if you're playing as a genocidal race.



"Forty years of Trek Captains are on board for vocal duties"

STAR TRICKS

The things that must be in place, no matter how poorly



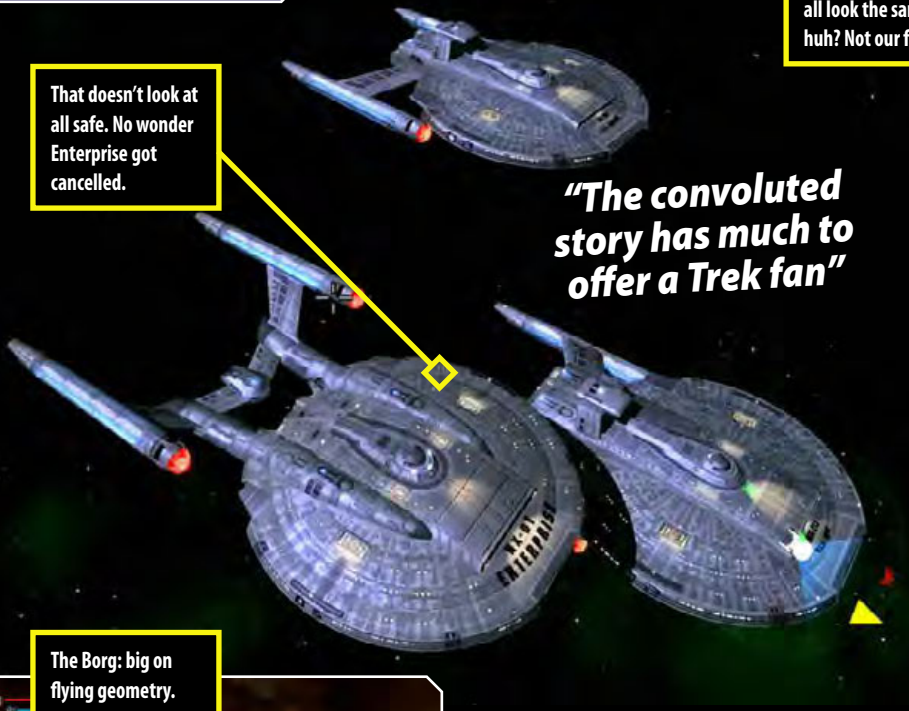
DIVERT ALL POWER
You can't miss the clumsiness of holding down E and moving the mouse in a crazy circle to choose whether your energy's reserved for guns, shields or speed.



SHE JUST CANNAE DO IT
Summon tiny, invisible men to very slowly repair huge, gaping holes in your hull during combat, or fly to a ship yard for faster fixing, but sitting-duck status.



ENERGISE
In some missions, you need to use your transporters to send an also invisible Away Team somewhere. It's very rare that you ever pick them up again.



"The convoluted story has much to offer a Trek fan"







> Star Trek continued

atmosphere is shattered. The game might have rights to the actors' voices, but it doesn't seem to have bought their faces too, so each of the long, exposition-heavy cutscenes is visually filled only with wildly jumping shots of stationary ships floating in space apparently talking to each other. With the exception of Him From Quantum Leap, at least the actors are accustomed enough at spouting this stuff to be reasonably convincing.

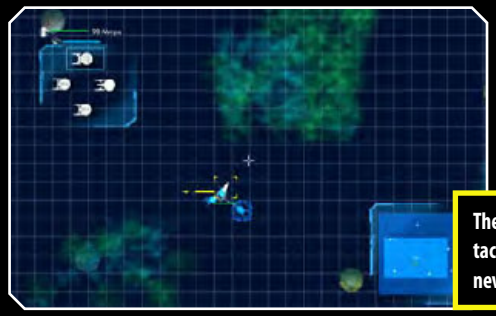
So far

The same can't be said of the fighting, which consists only of getting your ships close enough to an enemy vessel (either Romulan, Klingon or eventually Borg) to fire phasers at it for a while, before launching a couple of torpedoes to finish it off. Weapons lock on rather than require aiming, so there really isn't an awful lot to do, and very little need for any skill. Some missions are slightly different in that you'll need to run away for a bit to recover or click a slightly different button to hail rather than shoot something, but that's about it. Failure nevertheless comes more often than it should, largely because the controls are illogical, can't be reconfigured and are clearly designed for an Xbox rather than PC, to the point where thumbsticks and 'A' buttons are mentioned in the game menus.

Still, the occasional against-all-odds battle manages to be vaguely exciting, multiplayer lets you control Borg cubes and the convoluted story has much to offer a Trek fan (although it will be nonsense if you're not). Legacy does seem to have some dim awareness of what the Star Trek game everyone actually wants to play is, but is too stilted and hollow to ever be it.

Alec Meer





PCGZine Verdict

Captain's logged off

- Shatner!
- Feels limited and rushed
- Dodgy controls

59%

>Inbox

Thanks for all your feedback to the first issue of PCGZine - your response has been so positive that we've decided to take it monthly. Like any magazine we need you to tell us when we've got it right… and when we've got it wrong. So, please send any thoughts, ideas and suggestions to me at **dan@pcgzine.com.**

(And if you like what we're doing don't forget to tell all your mates about **www.gamerzines.com**).

Cheers,
Dan

Don't miss Issue 3
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SPECTACULAR. BESIDES THE UP-TO-PAR writing about up-to-date games, PCGZine reaches an area no other electronic press has ever set foot upon. Its innovative design with embedded interactive content and theatrical trailers take full advantage of modern technology. PCGZine is sure to bring a new evolution in electronic journalism.

> Shyh-Woei "Wilson" Sun

We couldn't have said it much better ourselves. Erm, yup, that's pretty much what we were aiming for.

WHAT A GREAT READ! RELEVANT, interesting stuff. The advertising? Pure genius having clips embedded in it. More than I'd expect from something I'd pay £4-£5 on.

> Harry Cooper

THANKS FOR THE FIRST ISSUE OF PCGZine. I was stunned by the use of multimedia and the quality of the writing was first rate. And best of all it was completely free. I can't wait for the next issue.

> Renton

I JUST READ THE PCGAMEZINE!! Aw man, I couldn't believe it! You maintained the quality of the 360Zine and just hammered it down!!! It was frikkin' awesome!!! Keep up the good work!!

> 'Energy'

FANTASTIC! SCREENSHOT SLIDE SHOWS and trailers make reviews and ads far more interesting. I love the layout and the ability to easily navigate. I am eagerly awaiting the next issue - hopefully with even more content ;->) I wish that all tech / game magazines offered content like this.

> Mike Lane

Glad everyone is enjoying the magazine so much. As with 360Zine, the response to the inclusion of video and multimedia in the magazine has been really pleasing. We've worked hard in this issue to extend its use, so let us know what you think of the quiz on Enemy Territory: Quake Wars and the brain teaser on Lord of the Rings Online. In fact, you can use the built-in feedback form on this very page to let us know! Click on the icon on the right.

GREAT MAG, I'M SURE EVERYONE HAS told you that already. I want to make sure that I don't miss future issues. Do you have an RSS feed I can subscribe to or anything similar?

> John Crouch

We don't make a massive use of RSS yet, though we have plans for a revamp in the future. However, we do run subscription lists for the different games platforms. If you click on the "Sign up now" button on the left, and add your email address to the platforms that interest you, we'll email you when we release something of interest and we don't sell our email lists to anyone.



You can download Issue 1 of PCGZine from www.gamerzines.com

READER FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think!



Got an Xbox 360? Then get 360Zine...

SHOULD I START PLAYING WORLD OF Warcraft or wait for Lord of the Rings? I've put off playing WoW, but your preview in issue 1 reminded me about it. Love the new mag, btw.

> Danny Crisp

We assume you mean "Which is better?", or "Is everyone going to stop playing WoW when LOTR comes out?" You can read our preview of LOTR this issue, and our review of WoW: TBC to help decide the former, but in answer to the second question, I think it's safe to say there's room for both games. LOTR is likely to draw new people in to the MMORPG genre because of its background.

PC Gaming and Windows Vista: The Lowdown

In case you hadn't noticed Windows Vista is here - find out what it means for gaming!

As of January 30th the great unwashed masses can now buy boxed copies of Windows Vista and go wild; and whether or not you plan on buying the OS itself or just a new computer at some stage in 2007, you need to know what impact Vista will have on gaming.

The good news is that Microsoft has made gaming "a first class citizen of Windows Vista", and gaming will benefit from quite a few enhancements in the OS.

The hardware

Much has been made of the new system requirements for Windows Vista which will basically see 2GB of RAM become the standard minimum in the next few years. Any hardcore gaming machine should be Windows Vista Capable and then some; and any machine Vista Capable will also be fit for gaming.

The sheer basic requirements are 512MB of RAM and a 600MHz computer, but that's running Vista without some of its coolest features like Aero. The basic requirements to use the high end features is 1GB of RAM, a 1.0GHz processor and a 128MB DirectX 9 graphics card. The 128MB card can support resolutions of up to 1920x1200, and for higher resolutions such as 2560x1600 a 512MB card will be required.

Being a 64-bit OS, Vista will address a lot more RAM than a 32-bit OS like XP; and so if 2GB becomes the "standard" amount of RAM in a decent system then gamers can expect to have to at least double that in their systems.

The software

On the software side, Vista's new Windows System Assessment Tool is basically a built-in benchmarking tool, which allows the OS to analyse your system, from the CPU through memory, graphics and hard drive performance; and give you easy access to the data required to properly tweak a Vista system for maximum performance.

This streamlines a lot of manual work gamers have had to perform in the past by downloading third party benchmarking software and trawling through the depths of the Control Panel. The tool will also work with third party software, such as system performance tweakers and videogames themselves. For example, a game will be able to communicate with WinSAT in order to determine the optimum graphical settings more precisely than has been done in the past.

The Windows Vista Resource Monitor has also been upgraded along these lines, providing far more

The Windows Vista Resource Monitor will keep tabs on you PC





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

In Vista, no one can hear you scream

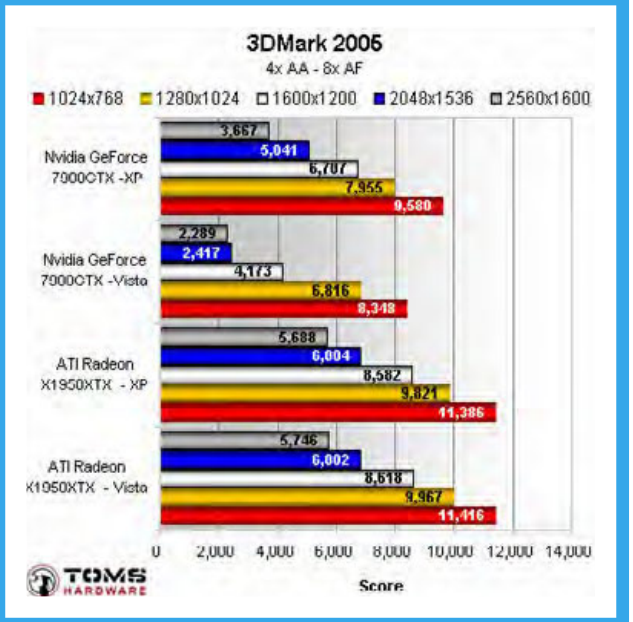
What's that you say? No, sorry, I can't hear you; I'm using Windows Vista, you see. Continuing from the driver issues outlined here there has been some worry that sound in current and previous games running in DirectX 10 (AKA Windows Vista) won't work.

The reason for this, like the graphical issues, is that Vista has its own ideas on how to handle sound. This is a positive step in some areas, but not in gaming; because Microsoft has decided to remove the hardware abstraction layer for Vista cards without OpenAL (err, most) won't be able to use EAX or DirectSound 3D.

Creative's top of the line X-Fi card will be fine in Vista, but for the rest of us it looks like a sound card upgrade is in order, or else we'll be working with stereo audio. Patches and workarounds may be our only savour going forwards. Or expensive upgrades. Corporate conspiracy types may mount their soapboxes now.

Benchmark spectacular

Get Windows Vista... Get a performance hike, or a performance hit?



3D Mark 2005 High Quality

3D Mark 2005 Low Quality

3D Mark 2005 Drop High Quality

3D Mark 2005 Drop Low Quality

"The ultimate aim is to (finally) allow console and PC gamers to play against one another online"

> Vista continued

detailed information on the performance of individual components; and allowing for much better identification of bottlenecks in software applications while improving load balancing.

The Xbox 360

Next up comes compatibility with Xbox 360 gamers. Microsoft is converging its gaming vision of the universe, and the ultimate aim is to (finally) allow console and PC gamers to play against one another online. Say what you will about how we PC gamers are going to pw0n their asses with our keyboards and mice, it'll be an interesting sociological experiment to put these two groups onto the one server and see what new expletives they can invent.

This integrated gaming isn't ready yet, with Microsoft telling Tom's Hardware at CES in early January that "It's a priority, but probably won't be ready for another while." Vague? Yes. Vague for a reason? Quite probably, but given Microsoft's overall strategy there's a good bet we'll see this implemented sooner rather than much later.

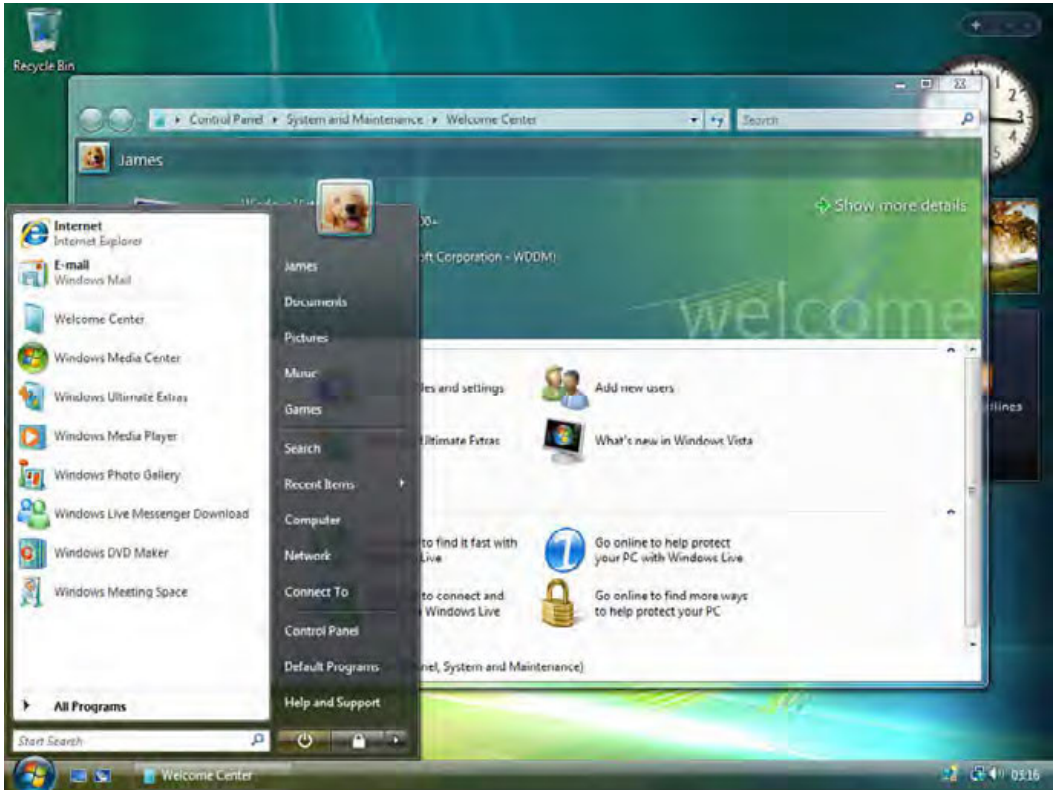
The bad News

All is not perfect in the Windows Vista world though... Microsoft has explicitly stated that it would not be uncommon for graphics performance under Vista to come in 5%-10% behind that of the same system running on Windows XP.

Why is this? Basically the graphics drivers and Vista aren't yet optimised for one another. Graphics cards are now more complex than CPUs, and Vista has some of its own ideas about how to handle them which, on paper, look very positive – in the past when your graphics card has tripped up the entire system crashed, but with Vista this will be less of a problem.

However the graphics cards themselves have very complex drivers – Catalyst 6.12 for Windows XP is 34.6MB, remember! Right now the drivers and the OS are tripping over one another in their attempts to control the GPU, and it will take a little bit of time for Microsofit, Nvidia and AMD (formerly ATI) to get to grips with one another. At the moment Nvidia seems harder hit by this than AMD cards.

At the end of the day Windows Vista looks like it will be a positive gain for gamers, though as with all new operating systems the most prudent upgrade option might be to do nothing for now. Give Vista another year to mature so that you're not suckered into an expensive beta testing program.



The Windows Vista Desktop in all its graphical glory

READERS' VIEWS! Click here to tell us what you think of Windows Vista

PCGZine issue 3
Download it for free on 28th Feb



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