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PCGzine

Issue 6 | June 2007

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

EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW INSIDE!

STARCRRAFT III

It's looking just a little bit special...

LATEST NEWS

CALL OF DUTY 4

Bringing the shooter up-to-date

FOOTBALL MANAGER LIVE

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!
Mile Jacobson tells how Football Manager is going online



PREVIEWS

ALONE IN THE DARK

Terrifying adventure

THE SETTLERS

Now with girls!

REVIEWS



1

Halo 2

Better than on Xbox?



2

Cell Factor

Finally, games with PhysX



3

Spider-Man 3

Spidey's back in black

PLUS

Tomb Raider Anniversary
Battles of Rome
Theatre of War

Welcome to PCGZine



You have to hand it to Blizzard. It's not only proved itself the master of creating the most polished games on the planet, it's also shown that it really does care about its fans by announcing StarCraft II in Korea.

The eight-year-old original game is still huge over there, with TV channels dedicated to professional StarCraft competitions and gamers. Rather than choosing to launch the sequel at a big Western games show, Blizzard held its own event in Seoul for the unveiling of StarCraft II. A touching reward for all those dedicated players.

Of course the best reward for everyone who's waited nearly a decade for this is how good it's looking. Take a gander at it on page 10 now.

Adam Oxford, Editor
pcgzine@gamerzines.com

READER FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of the magazine!

Don't miss! This month's top highlights

OUT OF THIS WORLD!

StarCraft II

Blizzard redefines the RTS **PAGE 10**

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!

Football Manager: Live

At last! FM goes online **PAGE 13**

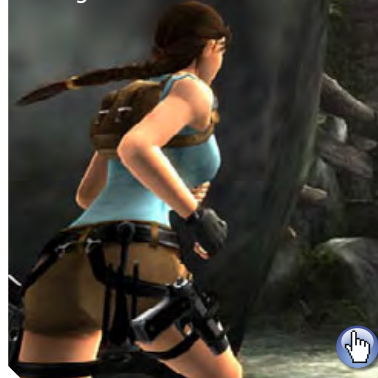
QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away!

The Settlers: Rise of an Empire	StarCraft 2
Alone in the Dark	Football Manager Live
Crysis	Halo 2
Jack Keane	Tomb Raider: Anniversary
Operation Flashpoint 2	SpiderMan 3
Half-Life 2: Episode 2	Cell Factor
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	Battles of Rome
Universe at War	Theatre of War
Circus Empire	Technical Q&A
	DirectX 10 graphics cards

Tomb Raider Anniversary

Lara goes back to basics **PAGE 20**



Call of Duty 4

For you, World War II is over **PAGE 8**

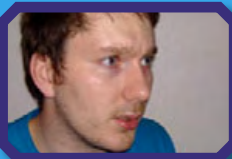


Halo 2
Master Chief returns on PC **PAGE 17**

Cell Factor
Getting physical **PAGE 25**

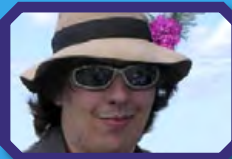
MEET THE TEAM

What they don't know can't be written



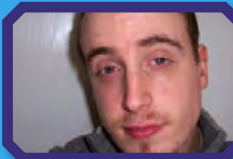
Lee Hall

Looked upon all the previews he had written and was glad.



Ian Morris

Was foiled in a brave attempt to review Shadowrun early.



Darran Hepworth

Took on the ancient world in Battles of Rome. Lost.



Steve Hill

Relived classic Lara moments, now with extra polys.

ALIENWARE

To experience games at their best PCGZine uses the Area 51-ALX from Alienware. Packed to the gills with cutting-edge power and technology, if a game can't perform on this it has to be a dud.



"It's a city builder with a soft side and endearing humanity..."

All new housing estates look the same to me...

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Blue Byte
Heritage: More Settlers than a pint that's been caught in a midge swarm
Link: www.thesettlers.com
ETA: September



Blackburn, Lancashire. AD 2007.

SETTLE DOWN NOW
 See how Settlers has changed...

No wheelbarrows, and yet the butcher has a clock...

LATEST NEWS

The Settlers Rise Of An Empire

City builder's sex secrets revealed...

What's the story?

Morning glory... a growing city peopled with lovingly-animated characters waking up to a world fraught with danger, knowing there's a benign force out to protect them – that's you, you clot.

What do we know?

The sixth Settlers game will be as cutesy and charming as its predecessors, offering you the chance to evolve a humble hamlet into a medieval Manhattan island.

It's a city-builder with a soft side and an endearingly simplistic approach to virtual humanity. You build walls to keep out bad guys and hire entertainers to spark romance between your settlers as girls make their pig-tailed debut. And we thought baby settlers grew on trees...

Trademark cartoon graphics are set to front a game of genuine complexity. In single player mode it's your long-term planning skills and grasp of mountainous build options that will test your mettle. In multiplayer mode you'll be battling the land-grabbing intent of furrow-browed humans.

When do we get more?

Since Ubisoft has rather sprung this one on us for a September release, we'll be going more hands-on than in a perve in a boob factory in just a couple of months.

Anything else to declare?


A mouse-wagging erection mini game is planned for Rise Of An Empire. Hang on – we misread the press release. It actually says there'll be "missions featuring noble knights". Our idea's better.

THE DEFINITIVE SUBMARINE GAME SERIES EVER

SILENT HUNTER 4

★ WOLVES OF THE PACIFIC ★



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AVAILABLE MARCH 07

★ WWW.SILENTHUNTER4.COM ★



"SILENT HUNTER 4 IS A KNOCKOUT."

"Blast your way past demons in 20 episodes – then come back for more"



Cliffhangers are taken to new and literal heights in AITD.



Publisher: Atari
Developer: Eden Games
Heritage: Test Drive Unlimited, V-Rally 3
Link: www.atari.com
ETA: Christmas



It seems you're not quite alone in the dark...



NO LONGER ALONE
 Take a peek at what to expect

NO LONGER ALONE
 Take a peek at what to expect

"I'll take it. When's the MOT due?"



LATEST NEWS

Alone In The Dark

Shedding light on the dead of night...

What's the story?

Reprising your role as Carnby in a modern day New York, an Earth-splitting evil stalks you. And it's very dark. Running and some mild crying may well be involved.

What do we know?

Taking its cues from TV series' such as 24, Lost and probably about 35 copycats in development, Alone In The Dark promises episodic gameplay in chunks of 30-40 minutes.

Switching from first- to third-person views, you'll blast your way past gruesome deamons in 20 such episodes, each linked with a teaser trailer and a catch-up clip to fill you in when you duck out of the action or return to the fray.

Point-and-click staples such as combining items to solve puzzles are set to be seamlessly incorporated into real-time gameplay that sees you swinging from cables, dangling from roofs and generally giving your medical insurers palpitations.

When do we get more?

The shots we've grabbed here are the first new snippets about the game for nigh-on a year, so we're hoping this atmospheric, ambitious and potentially ultra-accessible adventure will be previewable in the next couple of months.

Anything else to declare?

Survive the bundled episodes and Atari is promising you more downloadable chunks of gameplay. Here's hoping they don't want money in exchange – we're skint.

7 UP

Another well shaken can of gaming news



Crysis

Publisher: EA | ETA: August

It's been hovering in your most wanted list for some time. We should know – we keep getting emails about Crysis, all of which seem to feature the words 'must' 'have' 'it' and 'now' in close proximity. Crytek's stunning shooter is well on the way to being previewable – but do you have a PC capable of coping with massive, destructible environments and non-stop, whirling vehicle death?



Jack Keane

Publisher: Atari | ETA: Late 2007

An adventure game in the smiley tradition of Monkey Island and the first couple of Broken Sword games, Jack Keane casts you as the eponymous hero on a secret mission. In full swashbuckling garb you head off to Tooth Island, ruled by the mysterious Doctor T (no relation to the Mr of the same name). 'Romp', 'high-jinks' and 'tomfoolery' – all words apt for this cheery adventure.



Universe At War: Earth Assault

Publisher: SEGA | ETA: Autumn

Standing out from the crowd in the real-time strategy battle is about as difficult as pulling a double decker bus up Everest. Developer Petroglyph aims to achieve this feat with three wildly diverse factions, including megaunit-summoning Hierarchy. A Tactical Dynamics system will enable you to retrain units on the fly to intensify the thrill of battle.

Operation Flashpoint 2

Publisher: Codemasters | ETA: 2008

The grittiness of the original Operation Flashpoint makes a tour of duty in Iraq seem like a stag weekend in Dublin... Here's hoping Flashpoint 2 is every inch as ultra-realistic and brutal as its groundbreaking forerunner. We know it's set in 60s and 70s South East Asia, Central Europe and Africa, but we await further details from our spies.



WINTER 2007/08

- Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway Nov 1
- Age of Conan Nov 25

AUTUMN 2007

- Tabula Rasa September 1
- Tom Clancy's EndWar Dec 14

SUMMER 2007

- Lost Planet: Extreme Condition June 29
- Harry Potter and the Order Of The Phoenix June 29
- Colin McRae: DIRT June 22
- Transformers: The Game July 7
- Tom Clancy's GRAW 2 June 29
- Overlord July 27
- Halo 2 June 8
- Assassin's Creed September 1
- Hour Of Victory Dec 28
- Haze September 1
- The Wheelman Dec 28
- Grand Theft Auto IV Late 2007
- Warhammer Online Spring 2008
- Hellgate: London September 9
- World in Conflict September 9

ON THE RADAR

Half-Life 2: Ep 2

Publisher: EA | ETA: September

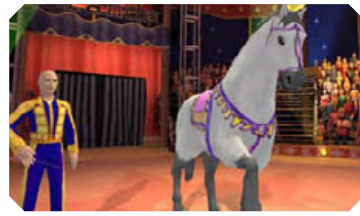
A nice trip to the country – just what we needed after all that death and destruction in Half-Life 2: Episode 1. And the good news is fair Alyx will be by our side as we reprise the role of Gordon Freeman – geek, freedom fighter and a hunted man. After the train wreck cliffhanger of the previous episode, you're legging it to a rebel hideaway pursued most notably by the Hunters, agile tripods that spit fizzing charges



Enemy Territory: Quake Wars

Publisher: Activision | ETA: June

It's nearly upon us, and anticipation is building as a new fan section of the official website recently opened its doors. Head over to community.quakewars.com and scope your opposition before battle commences.



Circus Empire

Publisher: Enlight | ETA: June

All the perversion and pain of the theatre of cruelty that is the circus is brought to life in this sim. We've seen monkeys dressed as bell boys driving tiny cars, bears dancing on their hands and a lion leaping over a prone lady. No Siegfried and Roy yet though.

MAN MADE HELL



[REPLAY THIS VIDEO](#)

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Publisher: Activision
Developer: Infinity Ward
Heritage: COD and COD2
— not COD 3, mind.
Link: www.activision.com
ETA: Christmas

FIRST PREVIEW

CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE

Go fourth and diversify...

We've been embroiled in this bloody conflict for too long – poured too much time, energy and manpower into fighting a seemingly endless battle, using primitive weapons against a determined foe.

Now Call Of Duty developers Infinity Ward have done what certain world leaders can only dream of – they're

pulling out of a gruelling war before the public turn against them...

It's not that they're sick of fighting – on the contrary, two WWII CODs (Treyarch did the third) only seem to have increased Infinity's lust for blood and the bitter bite of combat.

But they've done WWII to death, and the guys behind one of the most accessible and immersive shooter series

of all time have trained their itchy trigger fingers on new horizons.

Enter COD 4, a modern combat sequel that will enable developers and gamers alike to stretch their legs – literally as well as metaphorically as the environments look enormous.

COD 4 will enable us to grasp a whole range of new weapons as we spill crimson over locales that will deliciously contrast with the muddled battlefields of the 1940s Hitler-bashers with which we've become so familiar.

So far only snippets of gameplay have been revealed, with no official document to accompany the short, but tantalising trailer we've snaffled for your viewing pleasure.

It's clear from the atmospheric and busily peopled action sequences, however, that the game has lost none of its frontline feel – placing you on the cutting edge of battle like no other shooter can ever seem to manage.

And while the core appeal of the game will doubtless be camaraderie, stunning visuals and bitter close-

Yes, apparently he is a bit sensitive about his choice of shades.



What would happen if I pushed him out of the chopper?



Johannesburg wasn't the safest choice for a family holiday.



So much for a silent infiltration under the cover of darkness...



"It's reignited our interest in a series that had become predictable"



36 hours without moving a muscle... I'm bursting for a pee.

> Call of Duty 4 continued

combat scrapping, it's also sure COD has had a shot of adrenaline powerful enough to turn a cowering wimp into a marauding Rambo...

There are hints at a character class system that will pit you as a stalking sniper or a spec ops hardass infiltrating enemy compounds, vessels and even terrorist-held aircraft. Screeching planes and skylines filled with swarms of

attack choppers suggest you'll be dropping into the fray a la Medal Of Honor: Airborne Assault.

Our intelligence officers haven't had much to work with, but we've pieced together some information about a game that has reignited our interest in a series whose tactics had become a little predictable...

Clearly the game will mimic real-life by pitting the US against, well – pretty much everyone else on the planet.



That's it – aim a little lower... now fire!

Middle East shanties and semi-urban landscapes that have a distinctly eastern European feel suggest that, like Battlefield 2 and a clutch of other shooters, COD4 will pit the sophistication and firepower of Uncle Sam against the guile and determination of terrorist organisations.

Plot-wise, it seems certain weapons of mass destruction will play a part. Aside from the ominous sight of what looks to be a long range missile delivery systems turret scraping open, scenes of melee combat are cut into barren wastelands watched over by hulking mushroom clouds.

And what about those squadrons of advancing troops? A hint of squad-based action? And are those tumbling walls part of embedded cut-scenes, because that scenery certainly looks destructible?

Ok. Ok. There's little doubt the snippets we've glimpsed of Call Of



I only came out to grab a cup of coffee... jeez...

"There's a whole range of new weapons to spill crimson with..."



Spec Ops hide and seek – one way to kill those lonely hours on a long plane journey.

Duty 4 raise more questions than answers, but they do confirm the news that the series is on the eve of a fresh dawn in a whole new era.

It's about time Activision slogged out of their Second World War comfort zone and put their boot through a modern combat genre that has overlooked the single player experience for too long.

We're certainly up for the fight. ●

ANSWER THE CALL OF DUTY
Click here to see COD4 in action

▶ ◻

PCGZine

HOW COMPLETE? **60%**

FIRST IMPRESSIONS **90%**

CALL OF DUTY 4 MODERN WARFARE

We're falling in love with COD all over again.

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of Call of Duty 4!

EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW!



Publisher: Blizzard
Developer: Blizzard
Heritage: Diablo series, Starcraft, Warcraft series, World Of Warcraft
Link: www.starcraft2.com
ETA: TBC 2008

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of StarCraft II!

To Zerg (verb). To overcome with numerical force.



STARCRRAFT II

Somethin magical up Blizzard's sleeve...

While much of their time has been spent feeding the World of Warcraft monster over recent years, there's clearly been an sci-fi ache nagging the wizardly beards at Blizzard.

It was with barely contained glee and a glint that said 'we're relishing every damn minute of this' that they announced Starcraft II and vowed to settle some unfinished business...

Since 1998, Starcraft and it's generous expansion pack, Brood War, have been carving up friendships as millions of armchair generals waged

"Zealots are religious nuts bent on warmongering and total destruction..."

war in a game tilted unashamedly towards multiplayer action.

For those who don't know, Starcraft is a far grittier, spacier RTS than it's stablemate Warcraft. Here it's your command of hundreds of twitching units that is likely to turn the tide of battle, not the lumbering destruction of super-powerful hero units.

It's a game characterised by the perfect balance of three warring factions – the Protoss, Zerg and Terran, all of whom return once more for this souped-up sequel.

Blizzard is retaining the symmetry of the armies at the core Starcraft, reimagining the battle weary universe in a rebuilt world for modern times.

To this end, we're promised an updated version of the Battle.net online gaming service that will make hooking up with rivals easier than scoring with the bridesmaid on a drunken hen party.

It'll probably be less messy too – thanks to smartened visuals designed



Expect to see even more varied terrains than these.



The Protoss use their technical advantage.

to showcase the mass brawls and ultra-fast gameplay that made the original Starcraft a bona fide legend, and which we only expect to be ramped up for this bold and relentless sequel.

Scratch beneath the surface paintwork of hissing units spewing hot laser death, and you'll find Starcraft II isn't short on depth either.

As well as a fully-fledged story mode, the game is being prised open for modification by those of us who like to tinker with map and unit design.

It's on the battlefield, however, that Starcraft II promises to deliver it's



Stalkers can blink forward for surprise attacks.

SEE STARCRRAFT IN ACTION
Find out why we're so excited



Protoss troops can reinforce quickly thanks to warp gates and phase prisms.



All Protoss warriors have some psychic abilities.

> **StarCraft II** continued

decisive blow to boredom. Blizzard is dusting off some familiar units, bolting upgrades onto others and has commissioned an army of new recruits to give us more playthings that Hugh Heffner enjoys on his birthday.

All three races are promised a major makeover, though Blizzard has only revealed details about the new, improved Protoss to date.

This advanced clan are in the know when it comes to manipulating time and space, powering their structure by forming a daisy chain of energy pylons (think Perimeter, RTS fanboys), beaming reserve units through gateways and straight onto the frontline.

Their roster of killing machines is diverse and intimidating, especially

when they come swarming in the general direction of your rearguard.

Ferocious Zealots, for instance, are religious nuts bent on warmongering and the destruction of all who stand in their way. Some of them can transform themselves into glowing fragments of pure energy, enabling them to dart through space and land a killing strike before their enemies can aim their weapons.

Immortals, while not quite as indestructible as their name suggests, are shielded veterans – broken bodies bolted into heavy-blasting exoskeletons, capable of fending off large units and providing covering fire for their niftier comrades.

Take the Stalkers, for instance, fast-moving units that hunt most efficiently in packs. Mind, given their ability to

“Starcraft is a far grittier, spacier RTS universe than its fantasy sibling Warcraft...”

‘blink’ from one location to another, they don’t always need brawn to protect their advance...

Check out the video on the previous page. These quick, early glimpses of the fighters willing to sacrifice themselves for the glory of their race in general should have you slobbering like a chained up child in a sweet factory. ●



“Don’t look down, don’t even think about falling off.”

	HOW COMPLETE? 	FIRST IMPRESSIONS
	<i>Same Starcraft values. Gunning to set new standards</i>	

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COMING SOON

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Beautiful game



How Football Manager is going Live

The dangerously addictive Football Manager series has merely dabbled with multiplayer action over the years with hotseat play and network games. Now SI has announced a full-on MMO, created from scratch to give you the chance to prove your managerial mettle against all the other Joses, Rafas and Fergies. We caught up with Sports Interactive's Miles Jacobson, who was waiting in the dugout to explain the developers' gameplan to us...

Why develop FM Live and not expand the multiplayer experience in Football Manager?

We are always looking to improve all areas of all of our games, but FML is a very different game to FM, made by a separate team, and while elements and areas of the game are the same to FM, the overall package is very different.

Would you say the FM Live experience is more of a high class fantasy football game than a

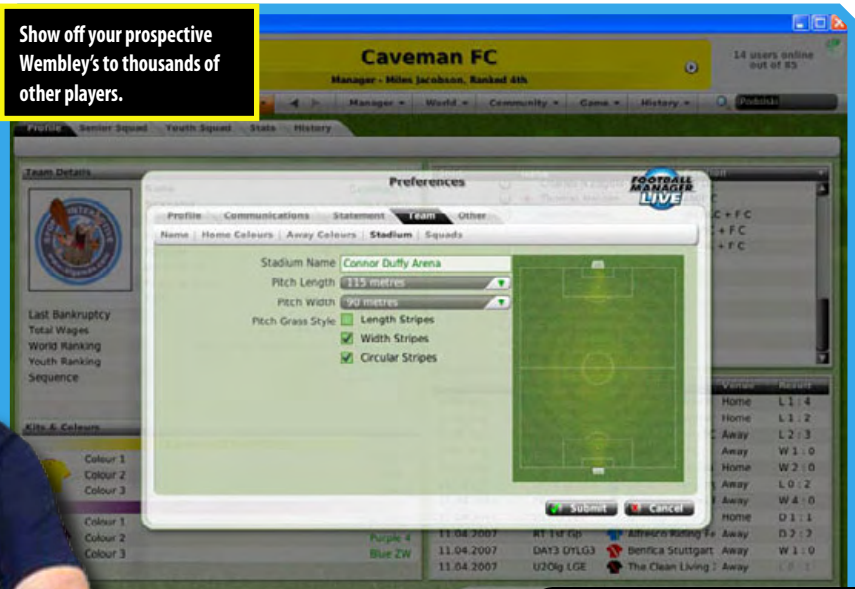


The match engine from FM2007 will be making a welcome appearance.



Lacking a players' bar, manager will have to stick to the built in IM for chat.

Show off your prospective Wembley's to thousands of other players.



traditional football management video game?

No, because traditional Fantasy Leagues are based around real world games. It borrows elements from there, and also the US Fantasy Sports games, which are very different to their European counterparts. The best description would be a cross between Football Manager, an auction site, fantasy sports and social networking.

Why did you opt for fictional teams rather than leagues of real sides?

Because leagues of real sides would have lead to incredibly empty game worlds, as too many people would want to be the big clubs, and having game worlds of 20 teams would have been rubbish.

"Real sides would lead to empty game worlds. Too many people would want to be the big clubs"

This is FM stripped of its bells and whistles – how did you decide which elements to leave out and does it keep the FM experience?

No, it's not. It's a game designed from the ground up that utilises elements



> FM Live continued

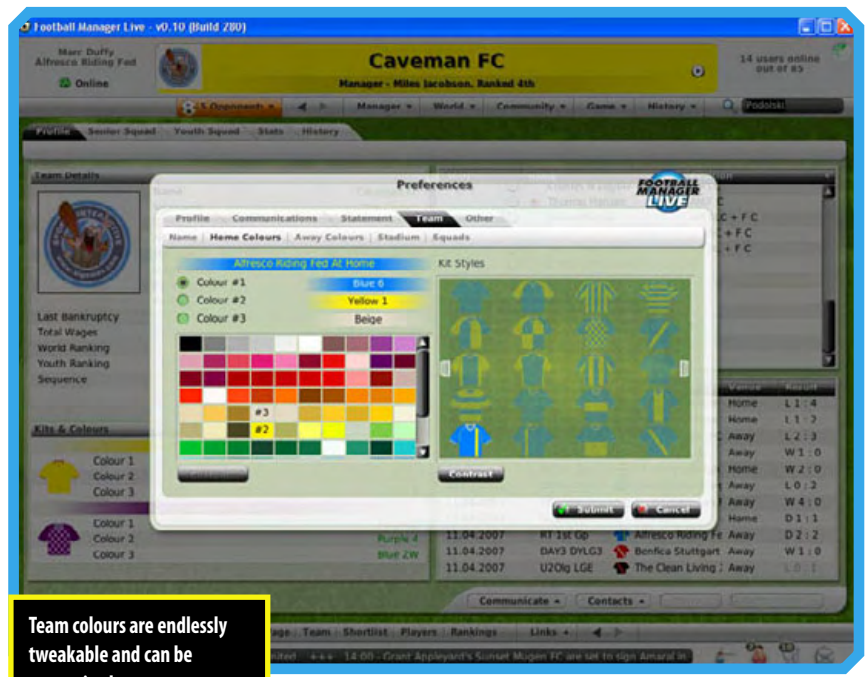
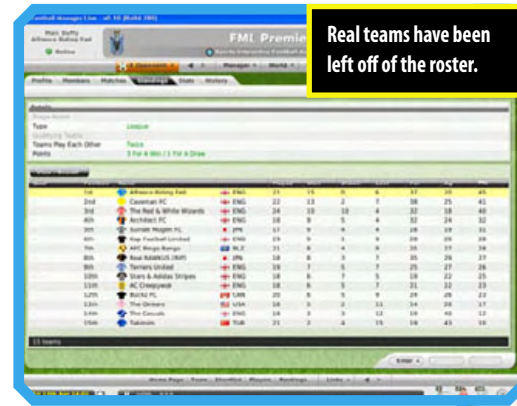
of FM. So it's more a decision making process on what to add into FML from the FM series. The match engine and tactical engine are taken straight from FM, but the rest is new.

Is it true matches are played out in real-time?

Matches are not in real time as in the matches are not 90 minutes. They are played out using the key highlights mode from FM, so last around 10 minutes on the slowest speeds.

You're looking at different timescales for different worlds – how will this work?

Some people like to play 10 matches a day. Some like to log in a few times a week, and play three or four matches while logged in. So different speeds of game world are essential as if you play 10 matches a day, you're going to have a lot of injuries if playing in a world where 1 season = 1 month, as it would



be the equivalent of players playing 300 games a season!

Any plans for real-life prizes for successful managers? Will there be community support, such as manager of the month awards?

There will be lots of community support, and lots of in-game rewards, but, initially, there aren't plans for real money prizes.

This game has Ov written all over it – is he the driving force behind it? If so, how close are you going to be able to get to his vision of a Football Manager MMO?

We've been very clear that FML is Ov's baby, and he is not only the initial creative force behind it, but is lead coder and lead designer on the project.

The team is very small, which is how Ov likes to work, and they've been working on the game for a few years now. However, we all realise that, when the game is out, the players will have lots of ideas of what they'd like to see in the game, so it will constantly evolve over time, with constant updates.

During testing how has the way people play the game surprised you? And how has it forced you to rethink the game?

At the time of writing, we're still in alpha stage, with beta due to start in mid-June. The alpha feedback has been invaluable, particularly at closing exploits. We expected most to play the game differently, and they are, but we constantly re-think things as the game evolves. It's the best way to work.

"It's a cross between Football Manager, an auction site and social networking"



Given your community focus, is the development of FM Live the most fan-driven SI game?

Initially, no, but once it out in the real world, yes, it will be.

Please tell us something about FM Live that no one else knows.

It was originally a massively multiplayer lacrosse management game. But that might not be entirely true.

Finally, do you expect managers to be open to bungs, with deals being done between friendly bosses during player auctions to hike up the wages a rival will have to pay?!

Bungs would lead to banning. People teaming up to hike up wages is already happening in the alpha, but has backfired on many occasions too!



> Inbox

Let your fingers do the talking – mail the mag at pcgzine@gamerzines.com

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

DIRECTING X
I'VE RECENTLY READ that someone has enabled DirectX 10 for Windows XP. Does that mean I no longer need to upgrade to Vista to play Crysis at its best?
> Arnie

> Well, we're a little skeptical about the claims made by the Alky Project (alkyproject.blogspot.com),

Don't miss Issue 7
Out June 28th
Sign up now!

which reckons it can get DX10 games running under Windows XP on older hardware. The test will be next month, when the first DX10 games come out, but as we say, don't hold your breath and keep saving for a new graphics card and Windows Vista.

DEUS NO LONGER EX?
PLEASE TELL ME IT'S TRUE! I've just seen a news story that Eidos is working on Deus Ex 3! It's the best game series of all time – I can't wait for another sequel. Where will they go with the storyline this time though? And will they have three separate starting points depending on the ending of Deus Ex 2 you chose?

> Markus

> The head of Eidos' Montreal studio has indeed claimed that it is working on a new Deus Ex game, but the question is, without Warren Spector at the helm, do you really want them to?

PORTAL PUNTED
PCGZINE, HAVE YOUR NEWS spies heard any more about Valve's next online shooter, Portal? I've been looking forward to it for ages, but haven't seen any news since it was first announced. Please tell me you have some more information about this great game.
> Pinhead233



The phenomenal Deus Ex. Is a third episode on its way?

> Patience, Pinhead. There's just a little longer to wait until your appetite is sated. The current plan is for a simultaneous release of Episode 2, Team Fortress 2 and Portal towards the end of the summer. We reckon September.

HELLO, HALO
IS HALO 3 COMING TO PC? Microsoft has announced it for the Xbox 360, but can we expect to play it on PC a little sooner than the previous ports came round? I really enjoy the adventures of Master Chief, but I don't want to have to buy another console.
> PCboi

> Given the shambles that is the port of Halo 2 (see page 17), we're not too bothered if Halo 3 comes to PC or not right now...



Master Chief. Not a good PC gamer.

ONE RING TO RULE THEM

MMO takes fans by surprise

THANKS FOR POINTING US IN THE DIRECTION of Lord of the Rings Online last month – I'd really given up hope on this game after playing the beta and reading a lot of the negative feedback on the test forums. But after reading your review (PCGZ 5, 90%) I decided to go out and buy a retail copy anyway.

It's amazing. I grew bored with WoW a long time ago, and this is just the game I was waiting for to start playing MMOs again. It's friendly and easy to get into, but every bit as addictive as Blizzard's monster. Plus, I get to be a hobbit (*Are you sure that's a plus? – Ed*). And to think I almost passed it by completely. Thanks PCGZ.
> Gordon Brain

> To be honest, we weren't convinced until right at the very end either. Still, Turbine came up with the goods and it's a great game.



An orc-ward pause at the tea party.

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colin mcrae

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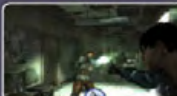
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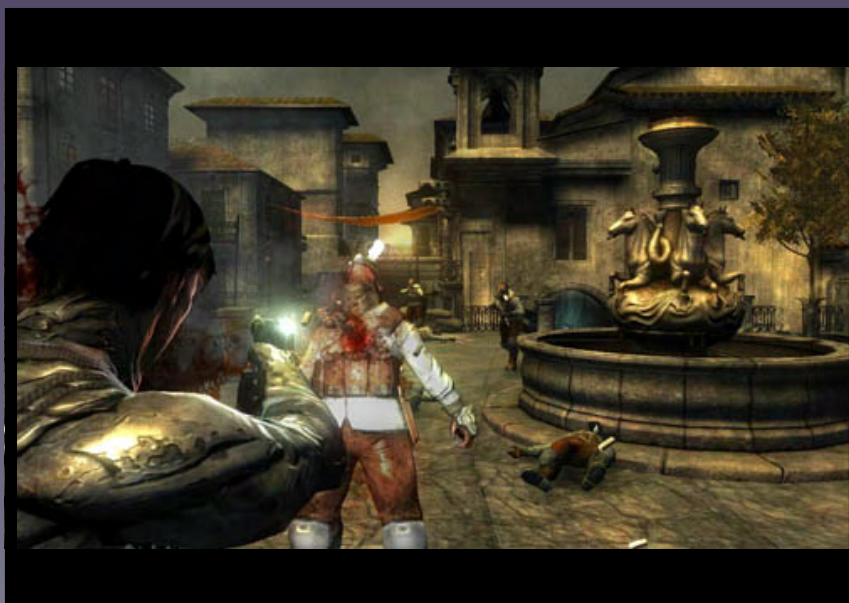
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Halo 2

The console shooter that taught a million kids how to smacktalk limps onto PC

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Bungie
Heritage: Marathon, Oni
Link: www.bungie.net
ETA: Out now

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
2GHz CPU, 1GB RAM,
DX9 video, Vista

Los Angeles, May 2003, and Xbox FPS sequel Halo 2 is unveiled to the world in an amphitheatre full of games journalists. The crowd goes wild. Grown men scream like teenage Elvis fangirls at sights like the game's star, Master Chief, dragging enemies off their vehicles and taking the wheel himself, or a giant spider-bot stomping through city streets. Then the Chief's shown wielding two guns at once, and these same men just lose it. They're

yelling "oh my god, oh my god," waving hands in the air like they've just been cured of blindness, standing up in their seats then immediately collapsing back into them, knees weak, eyes clouded with ecstatic delirium.

This, dear reader, was the exact moment Halo died.

Former glories

While the first Halo game defaulted to painful repetition in its twilight hours,

its first half was a triumph of faux-openness, scale, sci-fi imagination and thoughtful reconsideration of how an FPS should work. With such an unhinged response to the sight of dual-wielded weapons, it was clear that such things no longer mattered. Only the shooting mattered, the dumbest of action, and Halo 1's more cerebral achievements were abandoned. Meatheaded reviews and the first major online console FPS thrills bought

FREEZE FRAME

Please allow us to introduce Master Chief



20 MINS

Master Chief near singlehandedly fends off an alien invasion of Earth, which must make the other soldiers feel rubbish.



1 HOUR

The disgraced commander of the Covenant forces from the first game becomes a playable character.



2 HOURS

Space-zombies The Flood return, an exhausting, often infuriating foe in huge numbers.



4 HOURS

Return to the ringworld – you need to stop it going all Death Star on nearby planets.



7 HOURS

What? Over already? Time for some deeply pedestrian multiplayer while you wait for Unreal Tournament 2007, then.

The energy sword means instant close range kills. Shame it's kind of pink.

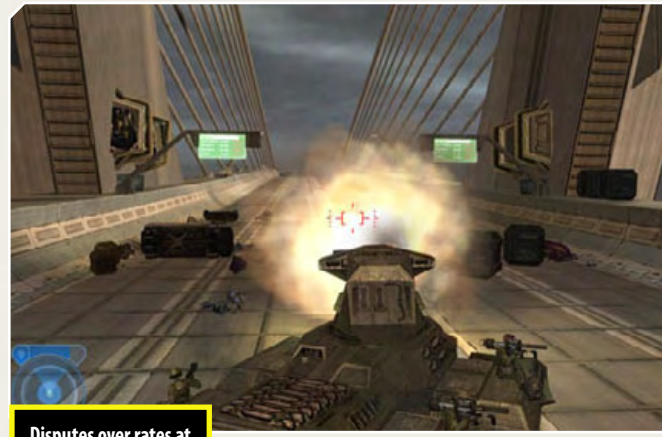


The skies: like the ground, but with a different texture.

"The game positively drips with self-importance..."



Disputes over rates at the toll bridge into Wales grew nasty.





Multiplayer is perhaps Halo 2's biggest draw; it's fun, but feels rather throwback.



TWO WEAPONS AT ONCE!
ZOMG!!!!!!111one.

> Halo 2 continued

Halo 2 to a massive audience. Three years later a barely modified version is being offered up to Vista-only PCs, and to gamers who now know full well the game's a bit rubbish and are spoiled by Half-Life 2s and STALKERS. Really, it's like offering a man who's just dined on the finest five-course meal a piece of dry, stale bread.
'Halo 2 For Windows Vista', to give it its ludicrous official name, looks and

plays like a game much more dated than the port of a three-year-old console shooter it is. Often incredibly ugly, it's an hilariously wrong-headed method of demonstrating Vista's gaming clout; its many warts are only worsened by the crispness of high resolutions. Yes, you can fire two guns at once (by pressing the left and right mouse buttons simultaneously, if you can bear the excitement), but only to access the next corridor full of unopenable doors a little more quickly. Most encounters are trigger-based, one of those doors unlocking only once you've gunned down every wave of mysteriously respawning enemies.

There's only ever one way to go, yet sparse and similar level design means it's nevertheless possible to get lost, hitting multiple deadends or accidentally backtracking.

Man and machine

The regular vehicle sections are just as limited – give a man a plane and he'll want to explore. Give a man a tank and he'll want to plough through walls. But no, you just get to follow this corridor, bucko. Even the outdoor areas are narrow canyons, bridges or high-walled one-way city streets, while a return to the hoop-shaped planet of the game's name is a huge disappointment.

EXCUSES, EXCUSES

Why Microsoft claims Halo 2 PC is better than on Xbox



Improved multiplayer

Live, kicking

Graphical improvements

Improved multiplayer

There's both dedicated servers and player matchmaking provided, so finding a fast, stable game should be easy. Also included are the two extra maps Xbox players had to fork out for separately, and an exclusive level-making app provided to create your own dated-looking masterpieces.

Remember the initial awe at just how big the surface of the ringworld looked in the first level of Halo? This has none of that.

"The wide range of weapons on the right side of silly"

It's generally a competent shooter, just rarely a thrilling one. There's a wide range of weapons on just the right side of silly, and it tries, sometimes successfully, to regularly rotate its half-a-dozen or so types of skirmish rather than overplay a single hand. Particularly interesting is the switch in perspective



You're often accompanied by entirely disposable soldiers of creepily identical personality.

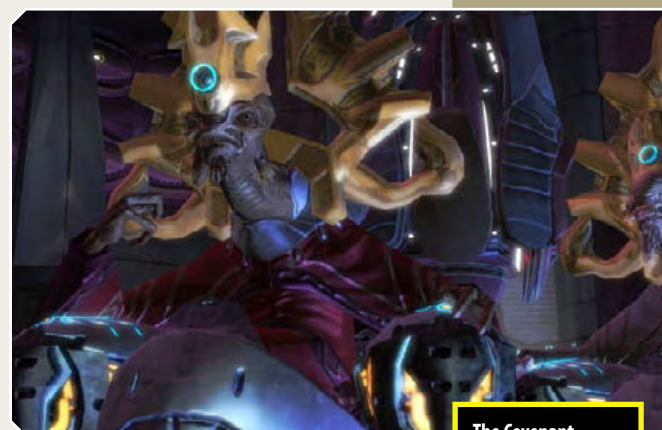


"The Arbiter lacks the grating sass of the human comrades"

The pro-hunting lobby had grown increasingly militant by 2020.

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*

- Recreating the Doctor Strangelove missile scene
- Finally getting to use the Energy Sword
- You call that an ending?
- Future-Earth feels like Milton Keynes
- Oh god, not another tedious tank bit



The Covenant Priests – big, chanting meanies, whoever's side you're on.



> Halo 2 continued

on occasion from the Master Chief to the Arbiter, a disgraced member of the Covenant aliens that constitute the game's main baddies. While his abilities are essentially identical to the Chief's – he's even fighting the same enemies most of the time – he adds some much needed depth to what was formerly a faceless, jingoised foe.

Plot lines

Most of all, his cutscenes lack the constant, grating sass of every single character in the human storyline. The Covenant come off as gruff and stoic.

making them a blessed relief from the smart-arse marines.

Throughout though, the game positively drips with self-importance, convinced it's telling an epic sci-fi story but entirely lacking tension and drama – just that perpetual macho smarm. Even the nuking of an Earth city feels inconsequential, perhaps because your time playing in it reveals it's just one long, featureless road with no-one living there. The abrupt, uninspiring cliffhanger ending has been the stuff of infamy for years now, not enough to keep gamers thirsting for closure for three months, let alone the three years it might be until Halo 3 (due later this

year for 360) hits PC shores. Developer Bungie has repeatedly hinted it's learned from its mistakes – which must make the release of this as embarrassing for them as it is for us. ●

Alec Meer

PCGZine Verdict

Granddad can just about still dance, but lord, he's embarrassing

- Well-polished weaponry
- Entirely lacking a soul
- Looks like bum

60%



Tomb Raider Anniversary

Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Crystal Dynamics
Heritage: Legacy Of Kain, Lara Croft Tomb Raider: Legend
Link: www.tombraider.com
ETA: 1st June

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
PIII 1.4GHz, 512MB RAM, 64MB 3D card

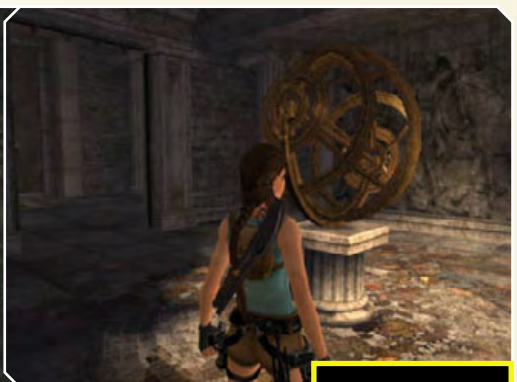
Tonight we're gonna party like it's 1996...

That it should come to this. Barely a decade after the original Tomb Raider changed the face of gaming forever, we're staring down the dual barrels of a remake, released to celebrate the game's, er, 11th anniversary. So is it a worrying portent of a dearth of originality, or a welcome tribute to an iconic heroine?

As is the modern way, it's being billed as a 're-imagining,' the term

coined by Tim Burton when he did a great big monkey shit on the memory of the already peerless The Planet Of the Apes. Games are a very different beast though, and whereas a 40-year-old film is still perfectly watchable, the early Tomb Raider games are little more than glorified cave paintings, which makes the lascivious response to the pneumatic Lara Croft character all the more baffling now.

You can genuinely claim to have made Lara wet.



Always with the ancient artefacts.



The iconic dual pistols.

"Keyboard gymnastics mean leaping away and firing at the same time"

This time round she does at least look vaguely human, albeit forged from the hormone-fuelled mind of a priapic teenager. Trapped inside her trademark aquamarine top, Lara's heaving breasts vie for attention like a brace of liberty-seeking blancmanges (albeit minus a cherry on top). Her improbably slender legs protrude from tiny shorts, the paucity of which has not been seen since the 1984 FA Cup Final. Facially, it's like a pick 'n' mix at the plastic surgeon's, with Lara's huge cow eyes seemingly augmented by Jagger's lips and Jackson's nose. The trademark grunting is present and correct, with the pervert's handbook completed by Lara's new wet look – after a quick dip she comes out absolutely sopping.

New Lara, New Danger
Thinly-veiled titillation aside, new old >

WHEN ANIMALS ATTACK!

Lara reacquaints herself with the wildlife...



Wolves

Bears

Dinosaurs

Wolves

It's not long before Lara comes across a pack of poorly animated wolves, whose bite is considerably worse than their bark. A couple of bullets to the head usually sees them off. And they're scared of water.



Thin legs, big boots.



She's not without her knockers.



The most famous arse in gaming.

> **Tomb Raider** continued

Lara has a couple of fresh moves in her canon, namely the perch, whereby she teeters precariously atop a pole, and the wall-run, which is executed with the aid of the ubiquitous grapple hook, as introduced in Legend, her comeback game in the hands of new developers Crystal Dynamics. Lara's legions of fan boys have already been spitting hate over the fact that she never used a grapple hook in the original game, although Crystal Dynamics have countered this argument by pointing out that she is briefly seen using one in a cut scene.

And the end of the day, it's their game and they can stick what they like in it. In the event they have been largely faithful to the original, without hampering themselves with the barely-formed gameplay constraints of the day. As such, it's almost like playing the nostalgia-tinted version of Tomb Raider that resides in your memory, as opposed to the twitchy, ponderous, frustrating reality that renders it all but unplayable to anyone but the most hardcore of devotees.

Using the Legend engine, it's a largely identical experience, with all the ledge-hanging, pole-swinging gymnastics that entails. And while it



As usual, you can clamber round Croft Manor.

gives the impression that you're instinctively marauding through the tombs, the reality is a little more linear, with negotiable areas clearly marked. In many ways it's a great game to watch, as it appears that Lara could plunge to her death at any time, despite the fact >



"This time round she does look vaguely human"

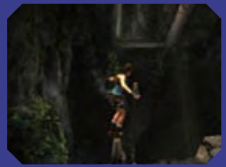
Anyone fancy swapping places?

SHOW US YOUR TRICKS!

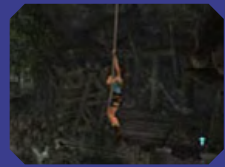
Lara has a few moves up her non-existent sleeve...



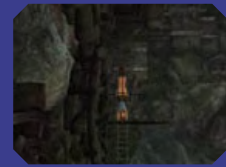
She loves to wrap her legs around a solid bit of wood.



Keep your balance long enough to leap from pole to pole.



Haul yourself up any old rope, and swing when you're winning.



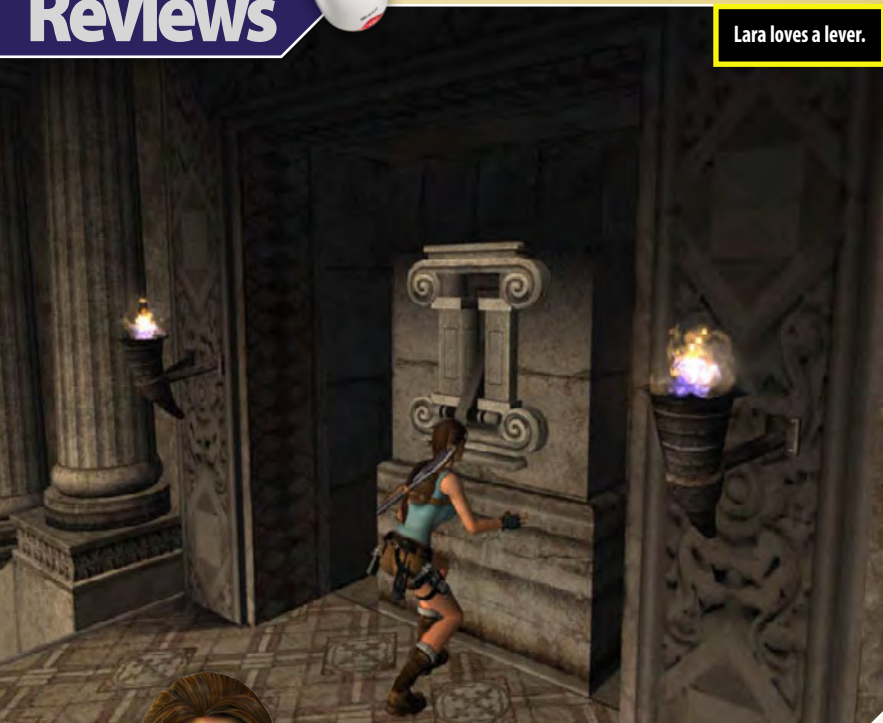
All those gymnastic lessons weren't wasted as Lara somersaults with aplomb.



Lara loves a ledge, utilising her fingerless leather gloves for extra purchase.



Another day, another tomb.



Lara loves a lever.

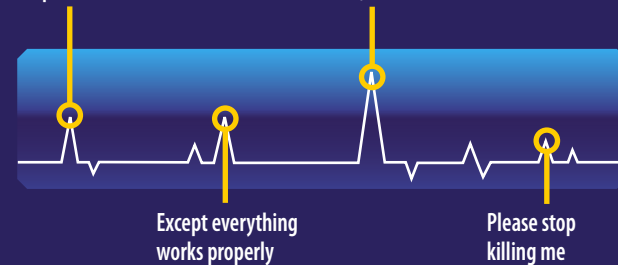


Clever girls... and one very violent and dangerous creature.

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*

Step back in time

Wow, it's the T-Rex!



> **Tomb Raider** continued

that if you know what you're doing there's no real risk.

20th Century Girl

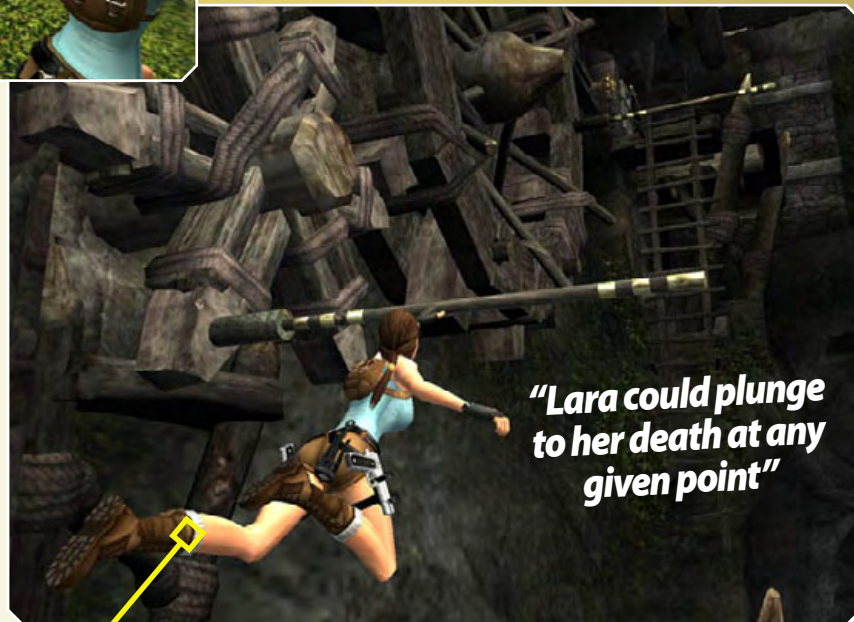
One area where you are genuinely imperilled is at the behest of the local wildlife, which comes at you with little regard to realism or artificial

And she never won Olympic gold... a bit odd that.

intelligence. Most of the time the traditional method of frantically circling while pumping lead into the poor critter's cranium is effective. However, some of the bigger beasts require a new technique whereby you enrage them (by shooting them in the head) to the extent that they charge at you. Some keyboard gymnastics then enable you to dramatically leap out of the way while unloading your weapon between their eyes. It's not particularly effective, or indeed enjoyable, and to be honest after about ten unsuccessful attempts to take down the famous T-Rex, all the drama of the situation had been reduced to trial-and-error key pressing. By the way, purists may wish to plug in a joypad, but the game is perfectly playable with a mouse and keyboard.

In fact, perfectly playable is as good a description as any for the game as a whole. While it offers little new for space year 2007, it's a shiny repackaged slice of 90's Lara. ●

Steve Hill



"Lara could plunge to her death at any given point"

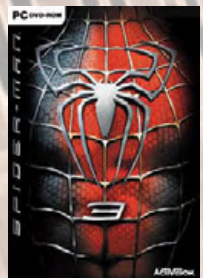
Look before you leap Lara

PCGZine Verdict

Something old, something new...

- 👍 Improved controls
- 👍 Dramatic scenery
- 👎 Thin end of the wedge

80%



Publisher: Activision
Developer: Beenox
Heritage: PC ports of Over the Hedge, Marvel : UA
Link: <http://sm3thegame.com/>
OUT NOW

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
P4 1.2GHz, 256MB RAM,
128MB 3D card

Swinging through the city, Spidey was completely care-free. Until he found himself flat on a bus' windscreen.

Spider-Man 3

He can do everything a spider can. Still.

And people say Peter Parker has it hard. In the latest Spider-Man film, everyone's favourite photojournalist simply has to battle with the symbiote, tackle Venom, beat up the New Goblin, lamp the Sandman, and he's saved the day. That's easy. Maybe Parker would be a bit more appreciative of his situation if he'd ever tried to play the game. Fighting those

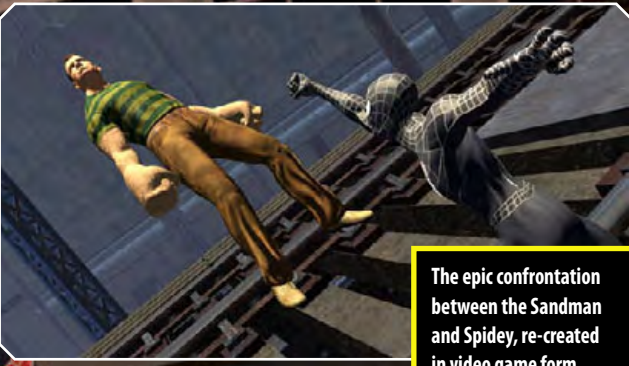
same super-villains while trying to deal with the world's worst frame-rate, a terrible camera, and numerous other glitches is not an easy task.

Joking aside, we have to say that Spider-Man 3 (a port of the 360 version) is one of the buggiest we've ever seen. Whether you're swinging your way across New York, fighting super-villains in the underground, or taking your girlfriend on a thrill ride (stop sniggering at the back), you'll be lucky if the faction moves at more than 10 fps for any length of time. Even with all the details set to low we had expansive slowdown, so if you have anything less than a top-of-the-range PC, you'd be best off just not bothering at all.

If you *are* lucky enough to have a super-computer in your house, what we have here actually isn't too bad,



"Everything has a layer of authenticity that'll please the movie fans"



The epic confrontation between the Sandman and Spidey, re-created in video game form.

DRIVE IN SATURDAY

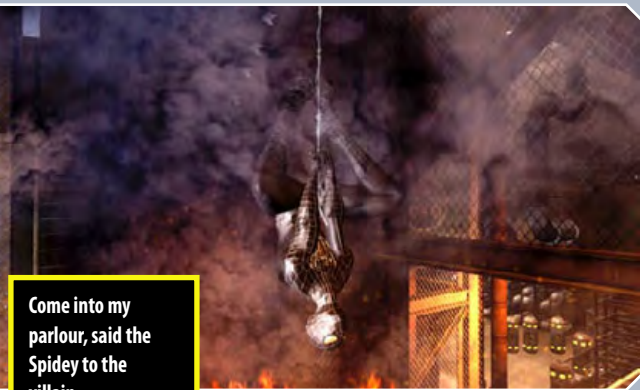
It's just like the movie, and then some



- Stories
- Lizards
- Swing

Stories

Spiderman 3's storyline mirrors the film perfectly, while going above and beyond the original story. Although you will get the chance to beat up the New Goblin, Sandman and Venom, there are plenty of game-exclusive sub-plots, which feature villains from the comics, as well as the game's own "original" gangs. However, like all good sandbox games, outside of the storyline, New York is full of interesting things for a Spidey to do.



Come into my parlour, said the Spidey to the villain.

"The city is full of secret passages and sewers to explore..."



At times, Spiderman 3 can look quite good, but most of the time it just looks average.

New York can look pretty spectacular - if your PC can run it.

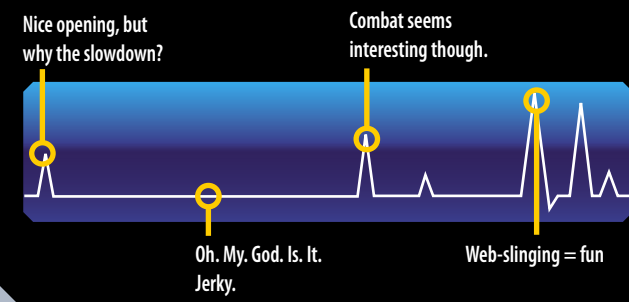


manner of fancy moves with ease. However – as seems to be a recurring theme throughout this review, I'm afraid – the controls only begin let you down when you really need them to work, like when you're web-slinging through the city quickly. Trying to direct where you want to go is a nightmare, let alone when the camera's shaking and spinning around more than a 94 year old woman with a caffeine addiction.

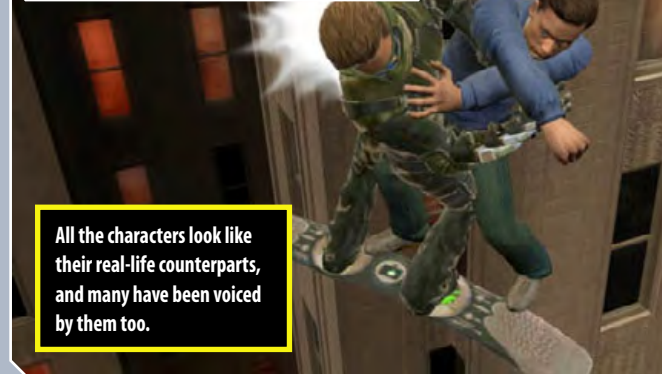
As a movie tie-in, Spider-Man 3 does its job well. Featuring the voices of Tobey Maguire and J.K. Simmons, there's a real Hollywood feel to proceedings, and everything has a nice layer of authenticity that's sure to keep fans of the movie involved. It's just a shame that technically, the game is abit of a shambles. ●

Ian Morris

PULSOMETER Signs of life



Your webs are the most useful part of your arsenal: good in battle, good for moving round the city.



All the characters look like their real-life counterparts, and many have been voiced by them too.



> Spiderman 3 continued

secret passages, sewers, rooftops and other areas to explore. In the brief moments everything comes together, Spider-Man 3 can be quite a lot of fun.

When things boil down to fisticuffs, initially, Spider-Man 3 manages to hold its own quite well. Although it's best played with a gamepad, the controls have been nicely mapped to the keyboard, allowing you to pull of all

FREEZE FRAME

How the wicked web is woven...

5 SECONDS

The story begins with a mysterious bloke aboard a chopper.

15 SECONDS

Suddenly, you're inside a burning building, and the tutorial begins.

SPACEBAR

3 MINUTES

The slowdown's so bad it's nearly impossible to get the keys in time.

15 MINUTES

"You can push the left stick to aim your webline." The narrator says. We're about ready to give up.

30 MINUTES

You get to see the map of New York for the first time. It's huge! Maybe this won't be so bad...

PCGZine Verdict

Good game, crap port

- Expansive city
- Ridiculous minimum specs
- Glitch ridden

64%



Publisher: Ageia
Developer: Turbine
Heritage: Immersion Games/Timeline Interactive/Artificial Studios
Link: www.cellfactorrevolution.com
OUT NOW

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
1.8Ghz CPU, 512Mb RAM, 64MB 3D card (But these truly ARE minimum settings)

The Guardian and the Black Ops get to drive a few roboty vehicles, which unfortunately aren't much harder than frail flesh.



Cellfactor: Revolution

A free game with groundbreaking physics – what's not to like? Almost everything, sadly.

We find it a little hard to take Cellfactor seriously. Originally billed as the game to really demonstrate what the Ageia PhysX physics processing card could do, it rather lost its edge when enterprising hackers modded its beta to perform its Newtonian tricks without a PhysX board. Now, it's rather like a stage magician who got rumbled, with the mundane secrets behind his greatest stunt revealed to the world. Everyone knows it's all trickery done with wires and magnets – why should we believe him this time?

The Great Suprendo

They were great tricks, though. Mountainous piles of crates and boxes sent tumbling like dry leaves in the wind. Physics! Limp-as-jellyfish ragdoll

“Physics! Vortex effects that suck down scenery and smash it to pieces”

bodies grabbed and flung with telekinetic powers. Physics! Vortex effects that suck up surrounding scenery, breaking it down into hundreds of tiny fragments. Physics!

And all, as it so happened, entirely possible on a mid-range CPU. Oops. Which is quite possibly why this finished version of Cellfactor is so sadly unfinished. To have any expectancy of it all is perhaps spiteful, as it is being offered for free. However, its full five (rather than three) maps and the more advanced physics gimmicks – cloth and liquid effects specifically – are only



Cellfactor has a smash and grab approach to other games' ideas.



Marvel at the realistic cobweb effects. Hmm.

available if a PhysX card is detected. The card will also relieve your CPU of some strain in the standard maps.

It's an FPS based around gravity gun-style physics. One of the three playable classes can even grab the bodies of living foes and then hurl them off to some sudden death. There's a somewhat ridiculous number of interactable objects, mostly in



The pixel shading's slapped on with a trowel – it needs a decent 3D card to run well.



> Cell Factor continued

depressingly crate-shaped form. It's initially impressive, but quickly becomes an annoyance – nothing ever goes away, but rather piles up or regenerates, creating constant obstacles. Though the physics is extensive, it's not realistic – be it a slab of wall, a robot suit or just a box, the objects react to interaction like ping-pong balls being chased with a

hairdryer. Briefly, it's a fun playground to experiment in, but it's soon apparent that it's just crudely rubbing the physics in our faces, like an unruly toddler trying to win attention by being loud and obnoxious.

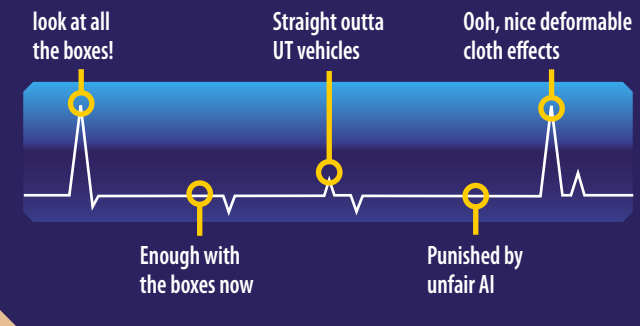
Game over

It's really still a tech demo, as evidenced by the game structure itself. Single player is a string of cheerless and looped arena matches again foes with unsound AI, while multiplayer is LAN only. This last, despite claims that the physics involves too much data to share online, seems greatest proof that the game has been abandoned in an unfinished state – who makes an offline-only FPS these days?

It's sad that what was supposed to be a stunning showcase for an

intriguing new piece of technology has come to this. Though PhysX has not been a commercial success, this was a fine second chance to prove its worth. The cloth effects especially are truly impressive, a hint at the ways PhysX could transform a game fully designed for it, left as an incidental background detail in a patchy, half-game they mean nothing. Cellfactor is the last gasp of a dying man. Nice ragdoll effects on his final spasms, though. ● **Barry Hall**

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



PHYSICS TEACHERS

Cellfactor's trio of Einstein-bothers



- Guardian
- Black Ops
- The Bishop

Guardian

The Guardian class is most akin to a standard FPS grunt – he's all big guns and brawn. He is also blessed with a super-jump ability; it's not really employing PhysX, but it's a neat trick.



Clobbering someone with a psychically-manipulated object nets a kill, though there's no sense of impact.



The Guardian can run so fast he flattens people, which is a cheap trick the AI persistently falls for.

"Single player is a string of cheerless arena matches with bad AI"

Lava's handled by the PhysX card, but looks like floaty jelly.



PCGZine Verdict

Not the answer to the physics riddle; no-one really knows the question yet...

- 👍 A knot of good ideas...
- 👎 ...in a mess of a game
- 👎 Doesn't justify PhysX

50%



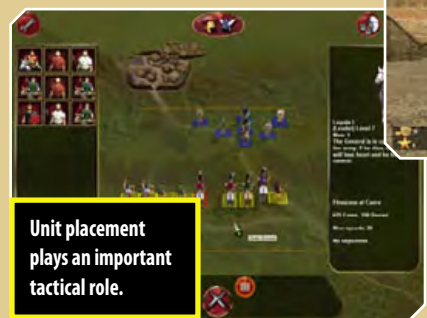
The History Channel Great Battles of Rome

They didn't build Rome in a day, the same may not be true of Great Battles

As if movie tie-ins weren't bad enough, over the past few years we've seen a slew of tv shows vying for a stake in gaming's prosperous tie-in territory. The Sopranos, 24, even Desperate Housewives have joined a cash-in culture that rarely creates a game worth removing from the shrinkwrap. Great Battles of Rome follows the spin-off tradition of being a very basic genre title. In this case a very uncomplex RTS. Position your army on the battlefield, charge, leave victorious, upgrade or buy new units, and it's back

to the battlefield. Hardcore strategy fans will find little to keep themselves busy, but in all fairness it seems as though Slitherine's target audience here is largely History Channel viewers who aren't necessarily accustomed to a great deal of gaming. The tutorial is simple but informative, and there's a pretty gentle learning curve which eases the newcomer into RTS basics. One of Great Battles of Rome's main tactical considerations is that of terrain. Unfortunately, while it's obviously apparent when you're fighting within

woodland, it's not so easy to distinguish rough ground from open ground without mousing over the terrain, an inherent problem with the game's already aging graphics. **"The target audience aren't necessarily accustomed to gaming"**



Unit placement plays an important tactical role.



The Romans were famous for throwing coloured numbers at their enemy.



Long neck or short legs?

Publisher: Blackbean
Developer: Slitherine
Heritage: Legion Arena, Gates of Troy, Spartan
Link: www.greatbattlesofrome.com
ETA: 1st June

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
PIII 600MHZ,
128MB RAM

covering the factual basis for the game that covers everything from the Samnite period to the invasion of Britain, it's probably not a terrible educational tool. But then again, neither is Rome, Civ, Empire Earth or any other historically-based game. **Darran Hepworth**

THE RISE OF ROME

Strengthen your units or weaken your army

As you progress through the campaign your units acquire experience depending on how many battles they've fought, and how many enemies have succumbed to the business end of their weapons. Once a given unit gains enough experience you're able to promote them. With each new promotion they are granted the choice of new abilities and stats. Anything from better armour to advantages against certain troop types can be selected. On top of that, the cash you earn from winning battles can be used to further enhance armour and weapons.



Uglus Maximus
As easy as it is to adopt the "it's gameplay that counts" approach, there's no getting away from the fact that Great Battles of Rome is visually rather disappointing. In fact, it's difficult to see any great visual advancement over the likes of Shogun: Total War, a seven year old game, something of a relic these days. While we're at it, gameplay-wise, Great Battles of Rome isn't even in the same league as Shogun: Total War, and generations behind Rome: Total War. To be fair, this is a budget title and considering the 50-odd minutes of footage from The History Channel,

PCGZine Verdict

More Caesar salad than Roman feast

- 👍 Educational... ish
- 👎 Extremely basic gameplay
- 👎 Poor graphics

65%



Publisher: Battlefront.com
Developer: 1C Company
Heritage: IL-2 Sturmovik, Pacific Fighter
Link: www.battlefront.com/products/tow-OUT NOW

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
P4 2.6GHz, 1GB RAM, DX8 3D card

Theatre of War

Historically accurate, but at what cost?

As an RTS from the makers of IL-2 Sturmovik, Theatre of War is as niche a game as you're likely to find. Taking the same approach to the RTS genre as they took to the flight sim, the team at 1C Company have tasked themselves with producing the most accurate WW2 RTS ever seen. Only problem is, their strategy (pun intended) hasn't worked quite as well as we'd have hoped.

If you're a fan of statistics and number crunching, Theatre of War is the RTS of your dreams. Every soldier, tank, gun emplacement and vehicle has numerous statistics and properties that affect their every move, giving Theatre of War a level of historical

accuracy that other games can only dream about. With five individual campaigns to play through, and a whopping 40 missions in total, each of which is based around a historical battle, from Operation Overlord to the crushing German defeat at Kursk, there's more than enough to keep your average armchair general happy.

But sadly, despite its emphasis on realistic combat, there are just too many times when Theatre of War manages to provide the exact opposite. For a game that prides itself on realism, there are certain things you expect – like your soldiers engaging the enemy, taking cover, and, you know, generally trying to stay alive. The problem is, in

Vehicle models are all pretty detailed, and animation is top notch.



Trenches pose few problems for tanks.



The grass really helps to make the game look impressive.

It can get pretty tense at times, when the snow starts falling.



“For fans of number crunching, ToW is the RTS of your dreams...”

Theatre of War, those three things typically don't happen. In one battle, our tanks decided it would be a bright idea to turn around, and reverse towards the enemy emplacements, exposing their weakest armour to the guns. Realistic, or what?

Although there are plenty of positives to Thunder of War, the reliance on the player to hold your soldier's hand through everything they do is a crippling flaw. With battlefields the size of the ones on offer here, micro-management to that level just isn't possible, and this leads to a few too many unfair defeats.

Ian Morris

ARTIFICIAL STUPIDITY

The thinking man's game

When it comes to combat, the AI in Theatre of War can be fatally flawed. On far too many occasions, we've seen soldiers who're getting shot at just stand there and take it, patiently waiting for you to give them an order. Equally frustrating is the way we've seen soldiers shooting at a tank using their rifle, even though they have a bazooka in their inventory. That's like trying to stop a rhino with a pea-shooter.

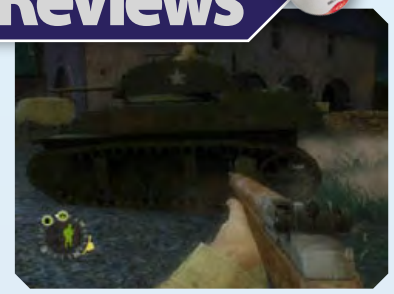


PCGZine Verdict

Great detail for stat-heads, but shocking troop AI

- 👍 Loads of well researched stats
- 👍 Huge fields of war
- 👎 Terrible AI

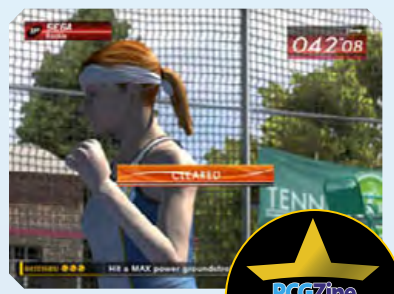
70%



Brothers In Arms Earned in Blood

Developer: Ubisoft
Publisher: Focus Multimedia
Price: £9.99

At a time when there was an excess of WW2 shooters (and to be fair, there still is), Brother in Arms was a game that stood out from the crowd. Attempting to open people's eyes to the harsh realities of war, BiA was more than just another FPS, giving each member of your squad a unique personality to make you think twice about sending them to their death. Placing the focus on strategy rather than action, Brother in Arms plays out a lot like Commandos in 3D with an emotive storyline behind the action.



Virtua Tennis 3

Developer: Sumo Digital
Publisher: Sega
Price: £29.99



The most enjoyable game of tennis you'll play outside of a real court, Virtua Tennis 3 is polished, smooth, and incredibly fun. Graphically, the game looks stunning, managing to run smoothly on even an average PC, while the many modes on offer are sure to keep you hooked for hours. The career mode has been expanded above and beyond the previous games, allowing you to create your own tennis player, before taking him or her on a world tour, playing mini-games in-between matches to increase your skills. The lack of online mode is a forgivable oversight.



Invasion Earth

Developer: Sigma-Team
Publisher: Dusk2Dawn
Price: £9.99

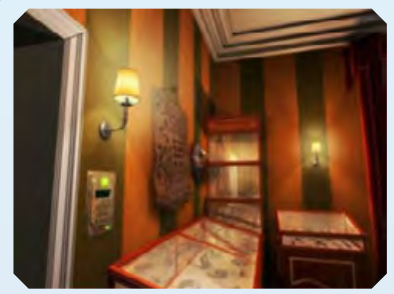
Set in the near future, where an underground laboratory is under attack from a mysterious alien threat, Invasion: Earth is an action packed isometric shooter like Diablo with guns. Although the old school graphics may get put some off, when hundreds of enemies start to flood onto your screen, and you're backed into a corner, guns blazing, you won't have time to worry about how things look. The ability to upgrade your character's stats and weapon load out pre-mission helps to add some much needed variety to proceedings, but ultimately can't save this from getting repetitive.



Neverend

Developer: Mayhem Studios
Publisher: Dusk2Dawn
Price: £9.99

Generic in every sense of the word, Neverend is an RPG that's marred by mediocrity. Although it may have a few interesting ideas (its battle system is eerily reminiscent of the Active Time Battles from Final Fantasy 8), the game's presentation lets it down tremendously. With some of the worst voice acting ever heard, and a script that's been so badly translated it makes even the simplest dialogue feel incredibly awkward, Neverend gives the distinct impression that the developers simply couldn't be bothered. Question is – if they can't be bothered, why should we?



Safecracker

Developer: Kheops Studio
Publisher: The Adventure Company
Price: £14.99

More than a true adventure game, Safecracker is a game designed for the Mensa candidate inside you. Putting you in the shoes of a world-famous safecracker, the game tasks you with finding the will of a recently deceased billionaire with a fetish for safes. There are 35 safes for you to crack, and rather than just having to twiddle a dial, each one has a unique puzzle to solve. From code cracking to mercury blob guiding, the puzzles are all intricately detailed, intelligent and incredibly challenging to solve. This is one to make your head hurt.

- Compelling story
- Original gameplay
- Combat is a bit hit-and-miss

An emotional ride **82%**

- Fantastic fun
- In-depth career mode
- Great Port

Game, set, match **90%**

- Inventive shooter
- Fast and furious
- Great price

Diverting **73%**

- Looks OK
- Awful dialogue
- Impossible interface

Neverstart **49%**

- Intelligent puzzles
- Hours of gameplay
- Respectable Price

Better than Suduko **79%**



360Zine Issue 6 Out Now

★★★
360Zine

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Passionate about Xbox 360
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Written by the best in the biz

"I was impressed with the quality of the writing, content and layout of this publication."
MajorNelson.com

INSIDE ISSUE 6

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW #1
Revealed: The Spring Update for 2007 and video marketplace for Europe this year?
Read the interview & listen to the full audio!

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW #2
Football Manager Live bound for Xbox 360?

MORE OF THE BEST XBOX 360 GAMES
Mass Effect | Half-Life | The Club | Shadowrun

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Welcome

It's our new column devoted to multiplayer and online gaming on the PC.

MMO games are at an all time high. Barely a week passes before we hear about another, but what games deserve your hard earned? With Codemasters recently dropping its monthly fee for ArchLord to compete with the likes of NCsoft's Guild Wars, why would anyone actually choose a subscription based title?

Dan Muir, Community Editor



Click here to nominate a fan site for PCGZine site of the month



You can do it

We catch up with the clanmeisters at GamersNation

GamersNation started back in January 2006 and since then, the site has gone from strength to strength. Since its humble beginnings, the site now has over 4000 active members, regular tournaments and up to date coverage of gaming, patches and hardware news. We caught up with one of its founders, Michael Holding to find out more.

PCGZ: Can you give me some more information on yourself (name etc, as well as your nick and members) and on www.gamersnation.co.uk?

Michael Holding: My name is Michael Holding (yes, same as the famous Cricket player!). I'm co-webmaster of the gaming community website GamersNation. You can find me on the GamersNation forums under the nickname "Red", or when gaming, "Redh3lix". I'm 32 years of age, married with three kids and have what the wife calls an unhealthy obsession with gaming.

GamersNation was built by a small team of gamers who simply enjoy everything gaming. GN continues to evolve as does our support for games other than the FPS genre, for example we've recently expanded into Command & Conquer 3 territory by setting up a dedicated GN subsite and supporting possibly the most professional C&C3 clan out there; Lords of Tiberium (LoT). We're always looking at ways in

which we can further accommodate the wants and needs of our community either with the help of our own sponsors resources, www.Multiplay.co.uk, or our own internal developments from forum games to entire competitions.

A good example would be the recent addition of our newest competition module developed by our resident coding expert and co-webmaster, Kendle. This will allow anyone within the community to set up their own competition leagues in whatever format they wish, be it small or large scale.

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

What's the most popular clan game your players currently play?

Undoubtedly the answer would be Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory. Although looking old when compared to modern day FPS titles, Enemy Territory still holds it's own as possibly the most satisfying FPS available. Kendle (co-webmaster of GamersNation) once described a good game as providing "moments" of satisfaction. Taking



Enemy Territory as an example, this could range from defusing the dynamite with seconds to spare while the rest of your team fight off the opposing teams attack, or simply calling in an air strike and wiping out the enemy entirely. Enemy Territory is full of these "moments". I'd also like to mention Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory is FREE! (and available for download from GamersNation).

Do you take part in any tournaments or leagues?

GamersNation isn't a clan as such, so we avoid external tournaments or leagues. Given the large number of gamers within our community, we generally host internal events as much as possible, be it a simple gathering for a private match organised through the forums (Forum Game) or a full on tournament. We do encourage new members of our communities to wear a "[GN]" tag and use our Multiplay sponsored Ventrilo comms when gaming, thus encouraging people to meet fellow gamers. Online gaming

among friends is the ultimate online gaming experience in my mind and we promote this as much as possible. Be you a noob or pr0 g4m0r, everyone is welcome to join in.

With so many clan based games scheduled for this year, what are you most looking forward to?

As an old school Enemy Territory player, the obvious answer would be Enemy Territory: Quake Wars. Coupled with the fact I play BF2 and BF2142 - with their large open maps - I'm very much looking forward to it. I've kept a close eye on a few other titles and their development such as Parabellum, currently in development by Acony and THQ's upcoming title (autumn 2007) Frontlines: Fuel of War.

Do you have any forthcoming events you'd like to inform our readers about?

We will be running a Command & Conquer 3 series cup very shortly.



What's hot in the MMO gaming world?

For all fans of skintight spandex and large helmets.



City of Heroes | City of Villains

Since the game launched, players have had a total of nine new issues that not only update and bug fix the game but add whole new content, islands and enemies. Issue 9 has just been released (see opposite) and it promises to bring a new level of game play to the game. <http://uk.cityofheroes.com>



Lord of the Rings Online: Shadows of Angmar

It's official, LOTRO is the number one selling PC game not only in Europe but North America too. Congratulations to Codemasters for converting a new generation of gamers into being elves, dwarves and hobbits!
www.lotro.com

What's not?



ArchLord

Having recently ditched the subscription fee, there have been no real updates or patches since November 2006! Come on Codemasters, don't leave your loyal ArchLord players in the lurch.

Updates & Patches

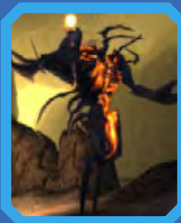


City of Heroes | City of Villains Issue 9

Heroes and villains rejoice issue 9 is here! With this latest update you're able to use an innovative crafting system which allows players to craft items (recipes are dropped by enemies). These then allow the player to use them, pass them onto fellow group members or take them along to designated auction houses and sell them for a pretty penny.

Issue 9 also includes new missions including a new Statesman Taskforce and an updated version of the super-taskforce and also an update of the Hamidon Encounter.

For more information on Issue 9 visit the official site:
http://www.cityofheroes.com/game_update9.html



Guild Wars Update

May 10th saw an update and various bug fixes for the free to play MMO.

Miscellaneous

Added observer mode categories for Top GvG Tournament Battles, Top 1v1 Tournament Battles, and Top 1v1 Battles.
Made preparations for the Heroes' Ascent Double Fun Weekend.

Automated Tournaments

Added tournament start time and round totals to the Automated Tournament list.
Changed Automated Tournament registration time from two hours to one hour.

Bug Fixes

Fixed a bug that caused tournament token refunds to be reported incorrectly.
Fixed a bug in Diessa Lowlands that prevented some players from vanquishing the map while in Hard Mode.

HGZine PSP & DS games

Download Issue 4 now!



www.gamerzines.com



SONY PSP

WipEout Pulse : EXCLUSIVE HANDS ON!
Burnout: Dominator Champ Man 2007

NINTENDO DS

Zendoku
Worms: Open Warfare 2

PLUS! LOADS MORE...



The main image is the cover of HGZine magazine, Issue 4, June 2007. The cover features a large, glowing green and blue spaceship. Text on the cover includes: 'FREE! Handheld Gamer Magazine', 'WWW.GAMERZINES.COM', 'EMAIL THIS MAGAZINE TO A FRIEND', 'Issue 4 | June 2007', 'THE 10 BEST GAMES YOU'VE NEVER PLAYED!', 'EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK WipEout Pulse', 'The development team tells all', 'THEY'RE BACK! Worms: Open Warfare 2', 'SOCOM The U.S. Navy SEALs strike again', 'MGS: Portable Ops Miniature Metal Gear mayhem', 'FULL REVIEWS! DS Zendoku When puzzle games attack', 'PSP Burnout: Dominator Let's go for a spin...', 'PSP Champ Manager 2 Can you manage?', and 'PLUS! The latest mobile games revealed and rated'. A yellow starburst graphic at the bottom right of the cover contains the HGZine logo and the text: 'Completely free of charge', 'Passionate about videogames', 'Dedicated to handheld', 'Written by the best in the biz'. At the bottom of the magazine cover, there are navigation controls: 'ZOOM IN', 'ZOOM OUT', 'TOGGLE FULL SCREEN VIEW', and 'NEXT'.

Tech Support

We've received so many emails asking for advice, we thought we'd better open up a dedicated help desk. Send your questions to help.pcgzine@gamerzines.com



Russell Barnes is a freelance computer and technology journalist. He has spent 10 years specialising in PC gaming and troubleshooting hardware and software problems on the PC.

SOUND ADVICE

I've just joined an online gaming clan and have invested in a head-set so we can chat via Team Speak. I'm having a hell of a job getting it working properly – any tips would be greatly appreciated.

> Tom

> Setting up your headset is a bit like being a rock band roadie – testing the mic and getting the levels right is all part of



Choosing the right headset is just the first part of chatting in online games.

the job. The first job is to ensure your headset's microphone is enabled within Sounds and Audio Devices in the Control Panel. Click on the Audio tab and under Sound Recording click the Volume Button. If microphone doesn't appear in the Recording Control box that pops up click Options and then Properties to tick its box from the list. Ensure the volume is set up to a reasonably high level and make sure you tick the Select box directly underneath to enable it. Note that below that is an Advanced button. You can use this to access the Mic Boost box if your microphone is still quiet once you're set up – it really helps especially if you're using a budget end microphone. All being well your friends should now be able to hear you once you've powered up your chosen voice communications software.

Beyond this it's also worth ensuring you've got the latest sound drivers installed on the off chance it could be a driver issue. You'd be amazed at the number of PC gaming related problems that can be fixed by keeping your system drivers bang up to date.

Finally, and rather annoyingly, by default Windows sets the microphone to play back through your own speakers.

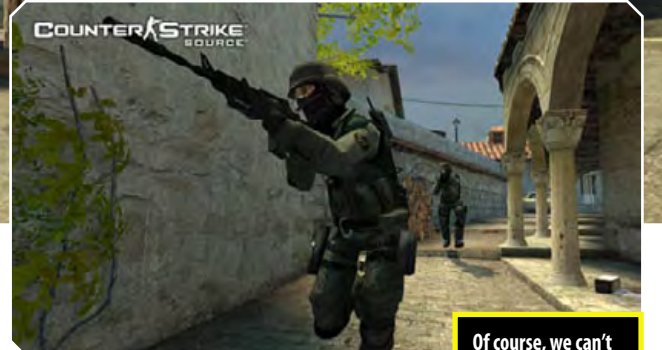


Check your rate and other CVAR commands for the best CS framerates.

This is easily remedied with another quick trip into Control Panel again however. Re-enter Sounds and Audio Devices, go back to the Audio tab and this time click on the Volume button under Sound Playback. Simply drag the volume slider to zero or click the mute tick box underneath to sort it out. If – once you're online and chatting – you're still experiencing problems with sound quality it's worth checking through your sound hardware's dedicated control panel. Many offer some more advanced options like noise suppression, which can make quite a surprising difference to the overall sound quality by filtering out background sounds and chatter.

CS:S CONSOLE COMMANDS

A friend of mine tells me that faster frame rates in games like Counter-Strike: Source can lead to better performance. The problem is my system specification



Of course, we can't help you with shooting straight.

leaves a lot to be desired. Are there any sure-fire tweaks to help get my frame rate up into the triple digits?

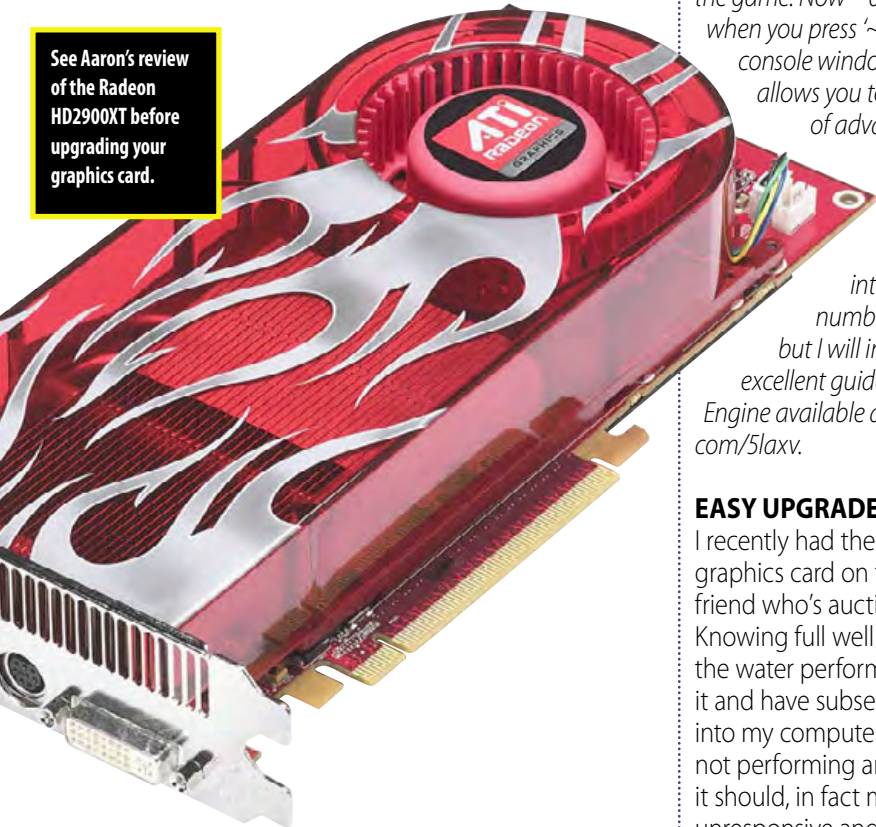
> James Hambel

> The most obvious things you can do include lowering the screen resolution and tweaking the advanced graphics options to lower settings. Most framerate problems are caused by client side problems. There are a number of more

"I'd strongly recommend removing all traces of the old graphics hardware..."

Tech Support

See Aaron's review of the Radeon HD2900XT before upgrading your graphics card.



> advanced tweaking techniques should you need them, but to get the ball rolling you need to turn on the developer console in the options menu.

Go to keyboard tab, then click advanced options. Tick the box titled 'Enable Developer Console' and return to the game. Now – during gameplay – when you press `~` key (above Tab) a console window will appear which allows you to tweak a whole host of advanced game options on the fly – most of which are for improving your connection to the server. I won't go into detail on the vast number of tweaks out there, but I will instead direct you to an excellent guide written for the Source Engine available at <http://tinyurl.com/5laxv>.

EASY UPGRADE

I recently had the opportunity to buy a graphics card on the cheap from a friend who's auctioning off his old kit. Knowing full well it blew mine out of the water performance wise I went for it and have subsequently installed it into my computer. Unfortunately, it's not performing anywhere near the way it should, in fact my computer is pretty unresponsive and occasionally crashes out when trying to run games.

All I did was straight swap the cards over and install the driver disk that came with his card.

> Dan

> Before you even take out your old graphics card you should uninstall all associated software and drivers by going



Microsoft's Xbox 360 controller is now fully PC compatible.

to 'Add/Remove Software'. Once it's been completely deleted download the latest graphics driver available online from either Nvidia (www.nvidia.com/content/drivers/drivers.asp) or ATI (<http://ati.amd.com/support/driver.html>) and put them to one side. With all trace of the old card wiped – along with the chances of a driver conflict – you can now swap out your cards and install the latest driver that you downloaded earlier.

Given your situation, and assuming the two cards are from different manufacturers, I'd strongly recommend wiping all trace of all the graphics related drivers and utilities and install the latest drivers for your new card after a fresh boot. All being well this should sort out your performance related woes.

NICE PAD

I want a game pad for my PC, but can't

seem to find anything even remotely worth using. Either it's cheap tat, or expensive force feedback joysticks with brass knobs on – I just want a comfortable, sturdy pad!

> Nick White

> The quick and easy answer to this is to use one of Microsoft's wired Xbox 360 controllers (or any of the third party derivatives). Assuming you're connected to the internet you can simply plug it in, let Windows take care of the driver download and installation and Bob is your Aunties live in lover.

GOT A PROBLEM?

Send us your technical questions and we'll try and help you out



Click here now!

"If you're experiencing sound problems, have a look in the control panel"



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

ATI Enters The DX10 World With R600

It's (finally) here: ATI's answer to the GeForce 8800

Six months ago NVIDIA unveiled its DirectX 10 series G80 in the form of the GeForce 8800 GTX and GTS. In the interim ATI has delayed its answer again and again, fooling even NVIDIA into launching spoiler attacks with their 320MB version of the 8800 GTS in February, figuring that ATI

was ready to launch R600, which ATI again delayed into May. Last month, NVIDIA made its third DX10 offering in the form of GeForce 8600 and 8500 cards. Having struck first, NVIDIA has a hat trick with G80, G84 and G86, and it seemed to be game over for AMD/ATI. Today, we finally get to see ATI's counter strike against NVIDIA after the long hiatus.

Enter the Radeon HD

ATI is launching three distinct graphics chips for desktop and three for the mobile space. There will be different versions for each product with identifiers like Pro and XT. The moniker for each will depend on clock speeds and memory densities. The first card to hit shelves is the Radeon HD2900XT based on the R600 processor.

In time to come we will see the HD2600 and HD2400 in the desktop space for June, and parallel mobile products. The HD2600 and HD2400 products are based off of RV630 and RV610 processors respectively.

As with the G8x series from NVIDIA, R600 marks many technical departures,

innovations and improvements for ATI as their new architecture is primed to take advantage of DX10.

For example, according to ATI, the command processor (CP) for the R600 series is a full processor. Not that it is an x86 processor but it is a full microcode processor. It has full access to memory, can perform math computations and can do its own thinking. Basically what this means is that rather than having the driver do all of its math on the main CPU, it will perform the number crunching on the graphic cards own CP. This will take roughly 30% of the driver load off of the CPU, apparently.

That does not mean applications will run 30% faster, it simply means that the typical overhead of a driver in the CPU will be decreased. Still, it's a good step in the right direction.

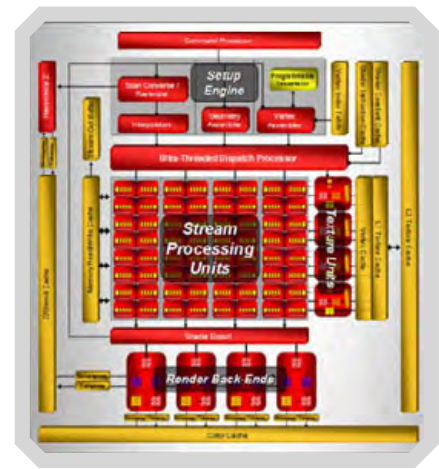
Another area getting a makeover on R600 is AVIVO, which will see the R600 cards giving us better video performance with HDMI in particular.

We could explain all of these minor and major tweaks at length, but at the



The geeky guts and glory shot.

"Consumers now have a wider range of choice in graphics cards..."



The really geeky guts and glory shot.

It's here! It's here!





	ATI Radeon HD 2400	ATI Radeon HD 2600	ATI Radeon HD 2900
Stream Processing Units	40	120	320
Clock Speed	525-700 MHz	600-800 MHz	740 MHz
Math Processing Rate (Multiply-Add)	42-56 GigaFLOPS	144-192 GigaFLOPS	475 GigaFLOPS
Pixel Processing Rate	4.2-5.0 Gigapixels/sec	14.4-19.2 Gigapixels/sec	47.3 Gigapixels/sec
Triangle Processing Rate	262-350 MTRI/sec	600-800 MTRI/sec	740 MTRI/sec
Texture Units	4	8	16
Render Back-Ends	4	4	16
Typical Board Power	~25W	~45W	~215W
	ATI Radeon HD 2400	ATI Radeon HD 2600	ATI Radeon HD 2900
Memory Frame Buffer	256MB GDDR3, 128/256MB DDR2	256MB GDDR4, 256MB GDDR3, 256MB DDR2	512MB GDDR3
Memory Interface Width	64 bits	128 bits	512 bits
Memory Clock	400-800MHz	400-1100 MHz	825 MHz
Memory Bandwidth	6.4-12.8 GB/sec	12.8-35.2 GB/sec	106 GB/sec
Transistors	180 million	390 million	700 million
Process Technology	65G+	65G+	80MS
Outputs	sVGA + DVI + V D (HDMI adaptor)	D+DL+DVI (HDMI adaptor)	D + DL + DVI w/HDCP (HDMI adaptor)

Meet the new DX10 family.

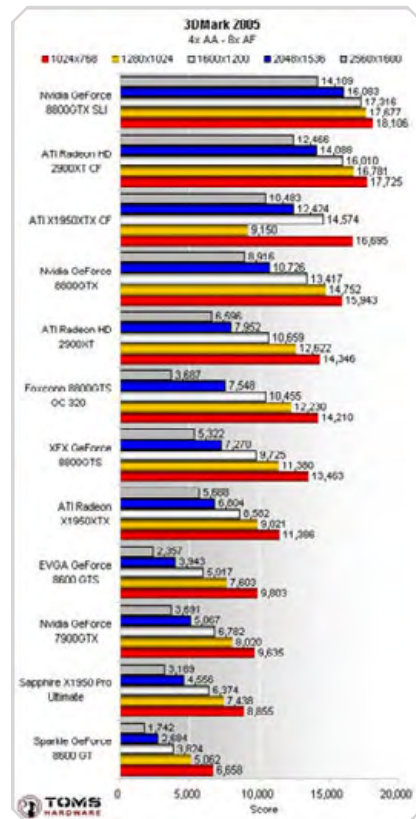
> R600 continued

end of the day how does the HD2900XT perform and compare to its GeForce companions? Well, the short answer for now is that HD2900 is largely on a par with the £250 GeForce 8800 GTS it is priced to compete with. We see some performance increases with CrossFire over SLI, but individually the cards are largely neck and neck in the benchmarks on Windows XP.

The future

Windows Vista raises some issues for both ATI and NVIDIA. These cards are DX10, designed specifically for

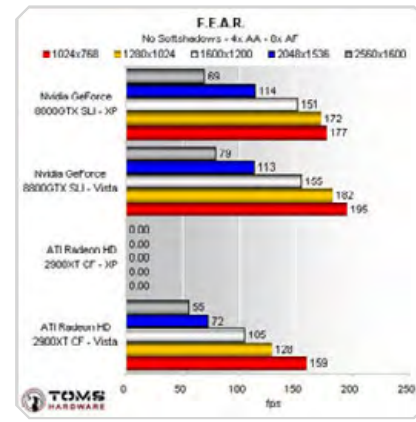
“These cards are designed for Vista, yet they run 10% more slowly on it...”



In the synthetic benchmark, the R600 appears to do quite well against the GeForce competition.

Windows Vista, yet any card being benchmarked on Windows Vista takes around a 10% performance hit, sometimes more – NVIDIA lost 40fps in F.E.A.R. on Vista compared to XP.

Under the hood of the HD2900XT, things are very different to the G80. On paper, at least, it looks a lot like ATI should blow all competition to away with ease. A 750MHz core, 320 stream shader units (compared to NVIDIA's 128) and a massive 512Mb of memory bandwidth to play around with. On top



Getting on top of Vista drivers remains a goal which eludea both graphics companies.

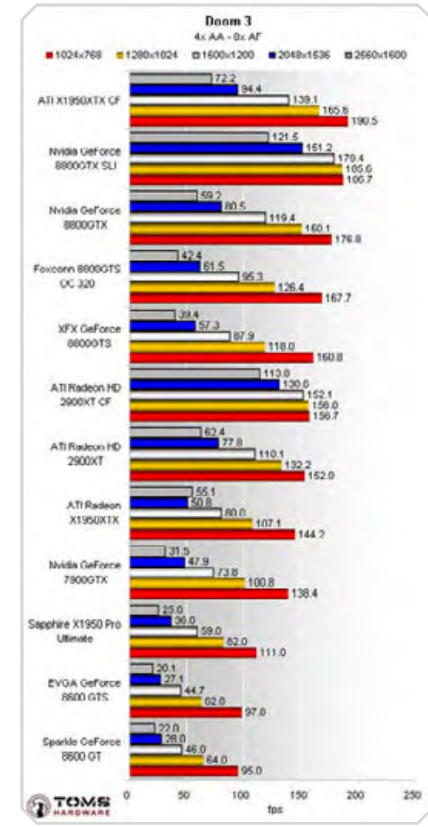
of that, the card draws enough power to kickstart a dead sun.

Overall, HD2900XT is more forward looking than GeForce 8800 and it should be; it took an extra six months getting it to market. If you are leaning towards longevity of a card, R600 looks more attractive with a dedicated tessellator, programmable filters, high-clock speeds and crazy amounts of bandwidth.

Doesn't deliver

Unfortunately, those last two paragraphs also translate as the card running very hot, and requiring a lot of noisy cooling. Hot and loud are always best avoided.

What's worse, though, is that despite the greater complexity of the R600 over G80, the fact AMD couldn't make it compete with the highest end 8800GTX doesn't bode well. Looking ahead, and there's a die shrink in the near future which may help to make up



the difference, but who knows what NVIDIA's response will be by then?

Right now, NVIDIA already has a spread of GeForce 8x00 cards on the market, and will be able to react to ATI in terms of pricing and performance by releasing different models into all the low, mid and high-end product segments. ATI has the advanced tech and NVIDIA has the market lead... At least consumers will now have a wider range of choice when deciding on DX10 hardware, but certainly there is no crowned "King of the Hill" out of the R600 launch. ●

Traditionally the Radeon's weakpoint, OpenGL scores are very favourable.



PCGZine Issue 7
Download it for free
on 28th June

REVIEWS

Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2

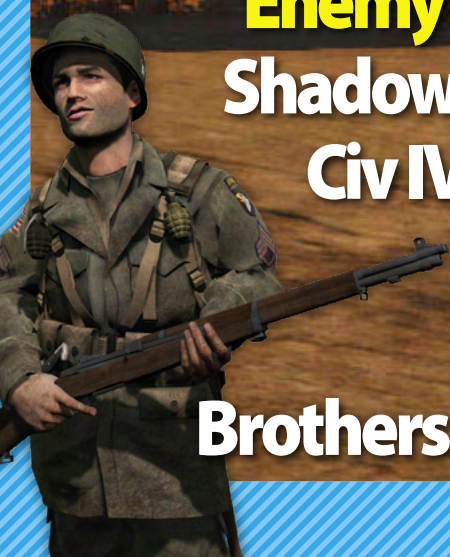
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars
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