FREE!

PCGZine

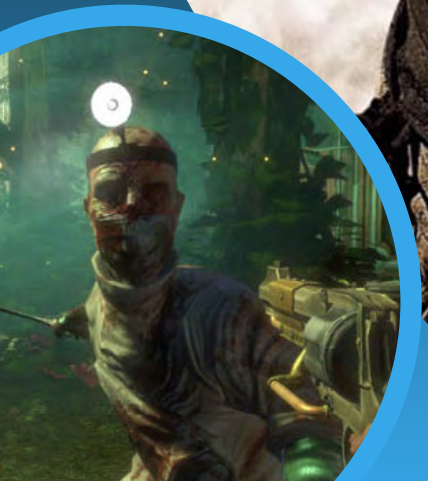
Issue 9 | Oct 2007

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

EXCLUSIVE REVIEW INSIDE!

MEDAL OF HONOR: AIRBORNE

Take to the skies with EA's latest WWII FPS



REVIEWED!

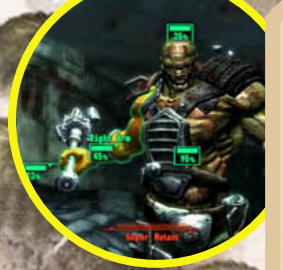
BIOSHOCK

In-depth and underwater: huge review of the deep sea adventure

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW! Football Superstars' Rik Alexander



★FOOTBALL★ SUPERSTARS



FIRST LOOK!

FALLOUT 3

Post-Apocalypse RPG from the Oblivion team

MYTHOS

Free MMO from the brains behind WoW and Hellgate: London

RAGE

Quake meets Mad Max in id's astonishing new game



REVIEWS



1

Medieval 2: Kingdoms

Inside the add-on



2

Civ 4: Beyond the Sword

The biggest Civ expansion ever



3

Loki

Hack 'n' slash adventure

PLUS

World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King

Welcome to PCGZine



It's been a fairly quiet start to the year in terms of big game releases. Thankfully, big Fall titles are starting to pour forth from the games publishers like water from the skies in June. To a visitor from Mars it might seem like summer has only just begun, but in the gaming calendar we've leapt straight into Autumn.

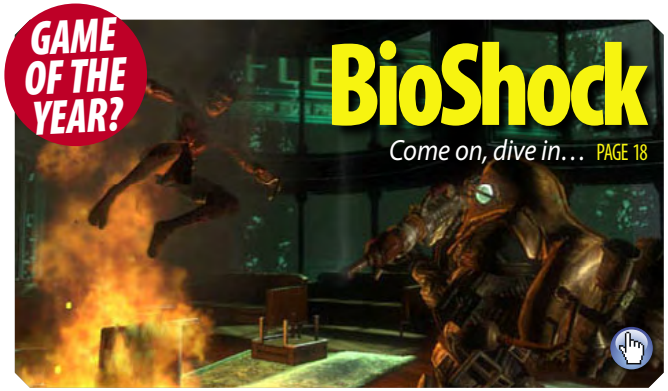
Which waffle means this is the best issue of PCGZine yet: Medal of Honor: Airborne, Medieval 2: Kingdoms, Civ 4: Beyond the Sword and, of course, the mighty, mighty BioShock. Not to mention all the news from the Leipzig Games Convention and QuakeCon.

Makes you proud to be a PC gamer, doesn't it?

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

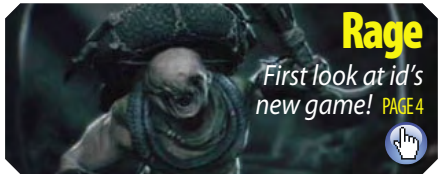
Adam Oxford, Editor
pcgzine@gamerzines.com

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

















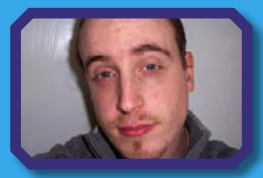
QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away!

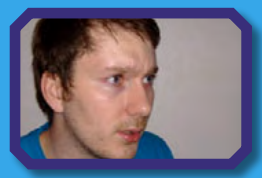
Rage	Football Superstars
WoW: Wrath of the Lich King	Inbox
Mythos	BioShock
Age of Conan	Civ 4: BTS
FEAR: Perseus Mandate	Loki
Saboteur	Sword of the New World
Conflict: Denied Ops	Medal of Honor: Airborne
Starcraft II	Medieval 2: Kingdoms
PROTOTYPE	Maple Story
Fallout 3	Technical Q&A

MEET THE TEAM

Probably the best games writers on the planet



Darran Hepworth
Found that Rage didn't make him angry. Quite the opposite in fact.



Lee Hall
Learnt how to bag a WAG in Football Supuerstar.



Ian Morris
Won his garter as a knight in Medieval 2: Kingdoms.



Steve Hill
Our crack commando reviewer paradropped in on Airborne.

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.



"A GLORIOUS FUTURE FOR ONLINE GAMING" – PC Zone

"THE MOST REWARDING TEAM-BASED SHOOTER YET" – Gamespot

"SOLID TEN ON THE RICTUS SCALE" – PC Gamer



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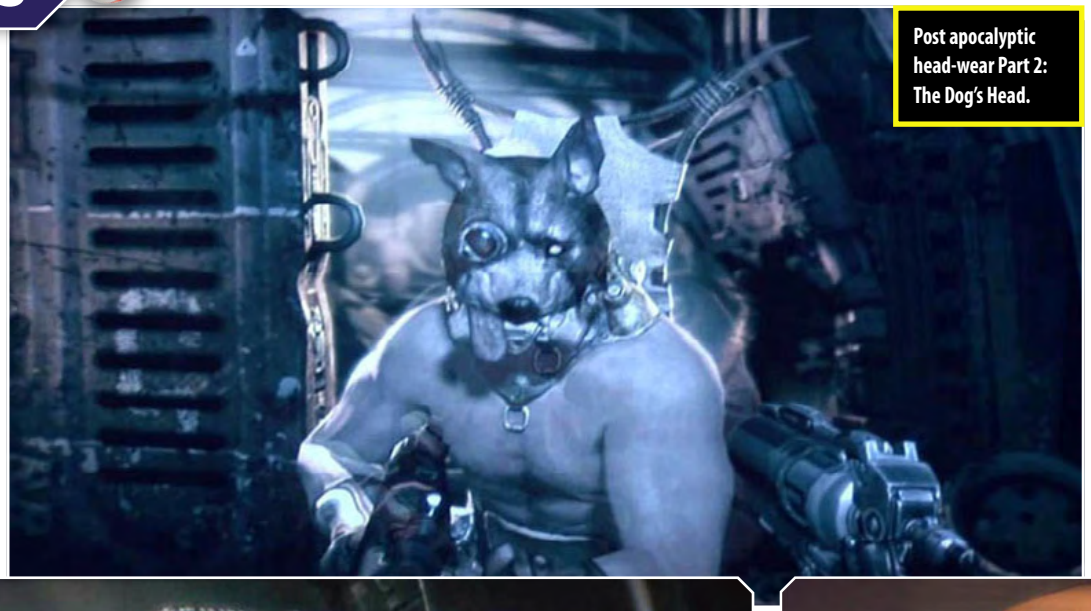
PC DVD ROM

M

RAGE

Publisher: id Software
Developer: TBA
Heritage: Quake, Doom & Commander Keen series
Link: www.idsoftware.com
ETA: TBA

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



Post apocalyptic head-wear Part 2: The Dog's Head.



Something tells us that his parents were related.



Post apocalyptic head-wear Part 1: The Canoe.



Silverstone, it's not.



Apparently Ford Fiestas won't be as popular in the future.



Not sure what the weapon is, but it's face-bound…

LATEST NEWS

Rage

The mighty id returns with a Mad Max-style FPS, and a touch of racing and role-play.

What's the Story?

75 years after an apocalyptic collision between a dirty great comet and our humble planet, survivors fight to rebuild society, and fend off the threat of an evil regime.

What do we know?

Recently announced at QuakeCon, id Software's first all-new property in ten years throws you into a post-apocalyptic world where there's more to surviving than emptying a magazine into everything with a pulse. In the same vein as S.T.A.L.K.E.R's satisfying blend of traditional first-person shooter, survival horror, and RPG, Rage is turning your everyday FPS on it's head and trading the usual offering of dark claustrophobic corridors, for a sun-baked wilderness. You can also expect the inclusion of RPG-type storylines, free-roaming, and weapon crafting.

Driving, racing and vehicular combat looks to play a large role in your quest to rid the world of evil too, and id Software have already stated that co-operative multiplayer will offer the option of inviting a friend to act as your turret-man while you grab the wheel.

When do we get more?

"When it's done."

Anything else to declare?

With Rage set to be released on either one blu-ray disk, or two DVDs, we're expecting this to be one huuuuge game.

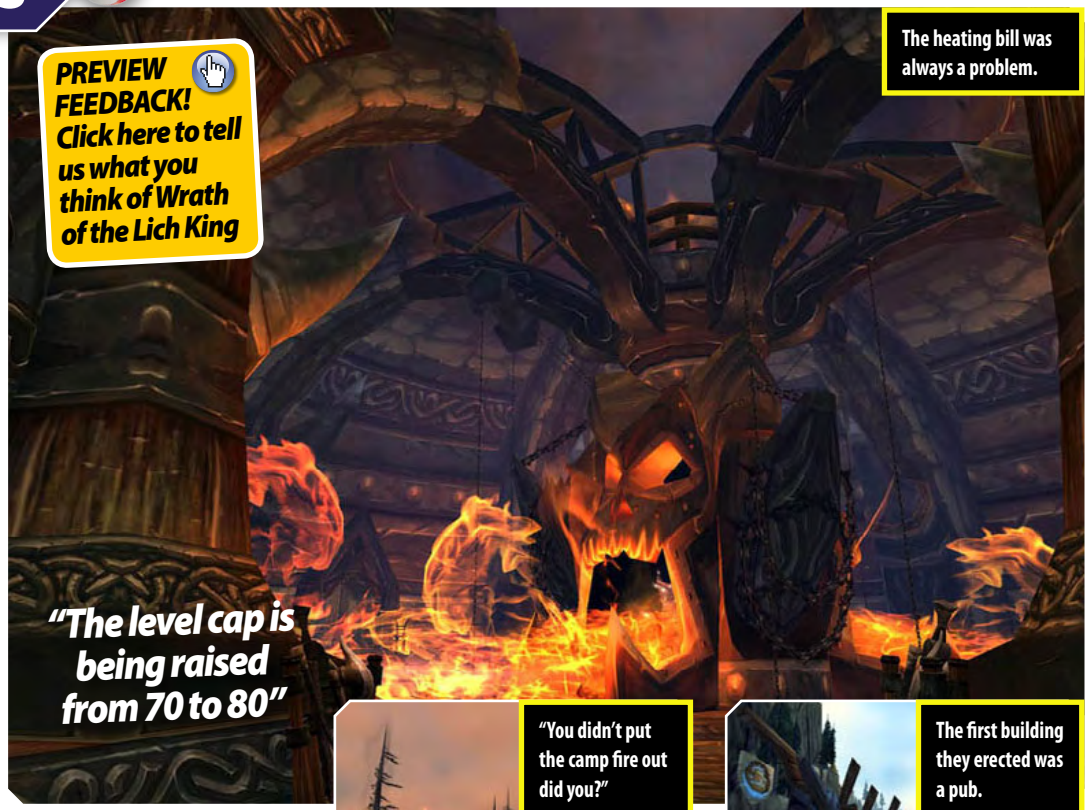
Publisher: Blizzard Entertainment
Developer: Blizzard Entertainment
Heritage: Warcraft series, Starcraft
Link: ww.worldofwarcraft.com
ETA: TBA

LATEST NEWS

World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King

Get ready to grind some more.

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Wrath of the Lich King











What's the story?
From the frozen Northlands, the Lich King Arthas unleashes a terrible plague throughout Azeroth. Only nine million players stand in his way.

What do we know?
Where do we start? Despite the fact that Outland is barely six months old, Blizz is treating its playerbase to another selection of fantasy goodness. The level cap is being raised from 70 to 80 (obviously adding new skills, spells and talents), new customization options finally enable the player to change the hair-do that they cursed their character with during creation, and a new profession, Inscription, will become available for training. Then there's the new PVP instances with the inclusion of siege weapons and destructible buildings, all new zones and, perhaps most importantly, the introduction of 'Hero classes' with the unlockable Death Knight class.

When do we get more?
As has always been the case with Blizzard, don't hold your breath. Aside from the broad brush strokes painted above, they won't be drawn further on detail. We'll get more when they're ready to give us more, and as usual, expect the release date to slip at least once or twice.

Anything else to declare?
Hopefully unlocking your Death Knight will prove to be an extremely difficult task. We don't want them becoming the new Night Elf Hunter now, do we?

Mythos

LATEST NEWS

Publisher: Flagship Studios
Developer: Flagship
Heritage: Diablom Warcraft. Starcarft
Link: www.mythos.com
ETA: TBA

Lashings of gremlins, but not a sniff of a mogwai

What's the story?

Yet another Diablo-inspired MMO, albeit with a bit of a twist. This time, it's being developed by the guys who actually brought you Diablo in the first place. Randomized dungeons, instanced grouping and critter culling with a bunch of mates, and all for free.

What do we know?

The ancient world of Uld has recently emerged from a terrible and far reaching war, now all that is left is a land without a history, but a whole load of potential for adventure.

With it's free-to-download and free-to-play fantasy MMORPG, Flagship Sudios (a large proportion of which are ex-Blizzard employees) are hoping to capture a decent chunk of the ever growing massively-mutliplayer playerbase. Going back to their roots, and pilfering all of the best bit's from their critically blessed masterpiece, Diablo, you'll be point-and-clicking your way through a world of multiplayer magic, monsters and mulah.

The choice of Human, Satyr or Gremlin (strangely enough) at the character selection screen is perhaps a hint that Mythos is steering clear of the usual middle-earthy fodder of elves and dwarves, in favour of a more unique fantasy experience.

When do we get more?

Currently in the early stages of closed beta, we're hoping for a wider reaching open beta in the coming months, with a commercial release to follow later this year.

Anything else to declare?

Is the gaming industry's efforts to produce a Diablo-killer finally going to be delivered by the Diablo guys? We hope so.



The monsters in this dungeon had been 'pimped'.

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



Gremlins, not your standard fantasy fare.



Now that's what I call a weapon.



Like WoW, graphics are simple but well designed.

"Free to download and free to play, it's after a large chunk of MMoers"





"THE most stunning RTS engine we've seen to date"
PCZONE

"One of the most beautiful visions of warfare you're likely to see."
PCFormat

Winner Best Strategy Game

Winner Best PC Strategy Game
Winner Best Strategy Game (All Platforms)

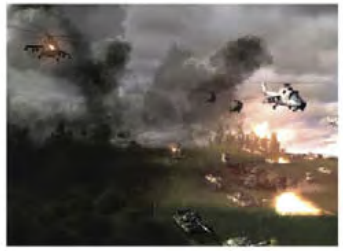
Winner Best Strategy Game
Gamespot e3 2007 Awards

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7 UP

All the latest news from the world of games.



Age of Conan: Hyborian Adventures

Publisher: Funcom | **ETA:** March

It's been delayed until March, but Age of Conan doesn't look any bit like a game that's been brushed under the carpet or hurriedly fixed. Possibly the most mouth-watering feature of this epic MMO – after the graphics – is a siege warfare system that sees rival guilds knocking ten bells out of their rivals' strongholds. Can't wait.



F.E.A.R Perseus Mandate

Publisher: Vivendi | **ETA:** November

Oh the adaptive AI, the stunning slow motion action sequences, the thundering foes… we'll never tire of the good loving FEAR gives us. Luckily there's an expansion pack slated for Christmas stocking time feature another standalone storyline, new weapons such as the chain lightning gun and grenade launcher and fearsome new enemy – the Nightcrawlers.

Football Superstars

Publisher: Cybersports | **ETA:** TBC 2008

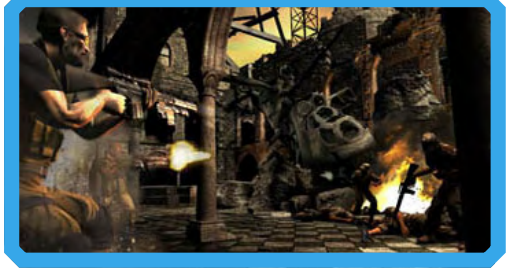
It might just be the most bizarre hybrid of playing styles in history, but then again Football Superstars might just work, you know. Part MMO, part football action game, it casts you as a fledgling starlet desperate to make it in a alternate footballing reality. Your prowess on the pitch will earn you cash to splash in a lifestyle world. Grab a WAG and go.



Conflict: Denied Ops

Publisher: Eidos | **ETA:** Spring

The new name for the buddy game formerly known as Crossfire, Conflict : Denied Ops is a two-player co-op shooter. In single-player mode you can flit between two covert operatives who seem more focused on the end result than staying covert, our nameless heroes blast their way across South America, Russia and Africa. Expect big bangs and ultra-destructible scenery.



ON THE RADAR

2008
- **Democracy** – January
- **Devil May Cry 4** – February
- **Splinter Cell Conviction** – March
- **Spore** – March
- **Far Cry 2** – March
- **Mirror's Edge** – March
- **World Of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King** – May

WINTER 2007/08
- **PES 2008** – October 26
- **Call Of Duty 4** – November 2
- **Sim City Societies** – November 11
- **FIFA 08** – September 29
- **UT III** – November 16
- **Half-Life 2 Orange Box** – October 5
- **Frontlines Fuel of War** – October 12
- **Fantasy Wars** – January

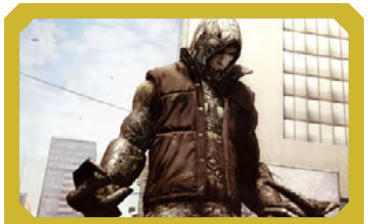
AUTUMN 2007
- **The Settlers VI** – September 29
- **Stranglehold** – September 29
- **World in Conflict** – September 29
- **Enemy Territory: Quake Wars** – September 29



Saboteur

Publisher: TBC | **ETA:** TBC

There may be more questions than answers about Saboteur, like when's it out and who the hell will publish it? One thing that is for sure is that this stealth action stunner is the handiwork of Pandemic, the Full Spectrum Warrior folk. You play a regular Joe who hones his skills as he tackles invading Nazis in World War II Paris and beyond.



PROTOTYPE

Publisher: Vivendi | **ETA:** TBC

It's a 'completely new type of game', promise Vivendi. Prototype is an 'open world' affair in which you can turn lead character Alex Mercer into a living weapon, by absorbing enemies to take their skills.

Starcraft II

Publisher: Blizzard | **ETA:** March

God love Starcraft, the RTS that has the gall to be as thrilling, explosive and instantly gratifying as it is epic and infinitely detailed. As Blizzard gradually lift the veil on their forthcoming sequel we've seen plenty to convince us this game is going to be huge. Transforming units, myriad add-ons for your battle bots, a wealth of building types…



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ONLINE GAMING WITH NO FEES*

NCSOFT ARENANET

FALLOUT 3

Publisher: Bethesda
Developer: Bethesda
Heritage: The Elder Scrolls IV. God love 'em.
Link: fallout.bethsoft.com
ETA: Autumn 2008

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Fallout 3!

PREVIEW

FALLOUT 3

Bringing OTT to your PC

Sinister, subversive, hilarious and addictive – Fallout 3 has some pretty meaty adjectives to live up to after its top-down RPG predecessors captured the blackened hearts of PC gamers. But Fallout 3 certainly looks up to the job…

Set in the same post-nuclear alternate reality of its forebears, F3 casts you as a lone hero on a quest to find out what happened to your dad.

The papa in question is voiced by Hollywood human Liam Neeson, and the universe is a seething wasteland where 1950s kitsch met modern day living, until the whole thing was buggered in a nuclear holocaust.



A butch cowboy… lovely.



I like the car, but it's a touch dilapidated.

"Portable nukes need aiming like Paris Hilton needs publicity"

All his/her life our protagonist has lived in a nuclear shelter, Vault 101. Here he/she was guarded from the mutated horrors and scavenging humans that scrape an existence above ground.

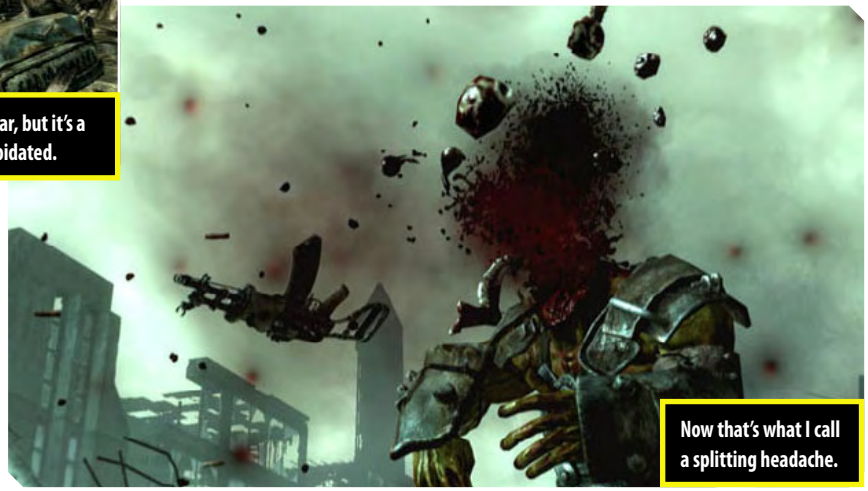
With the disappearance of dad, it's time our hero escaped to the devastated cityscape of a wrecked Washington DC in search of answers.

What a bloody mess

Fallout 3's broken landscape looks stunning, allowing you to play in first- or third-person views as you pick your way through the debris.



Inhospitable? You don't know the half of it.



Now that's what I call a splitting headache.

Things only really get icky when the shots, and as a result, limbs start to fly.

In a game that celebrates comedy violence with the same glee exhibited by a spoilt child on Christmas Day, gore is splattered liberally on every screen.

So central is unnecessarily grim death to the tongue-in-cheek tone of Fallout that one of your RPG special abilities is Bloody Mess. This skill increases your chances of blasting an enemy's eyes out of their sockets, squishing their head like a melon under an elephant's foot, or leaving them worryingly short of limbs.

And chance, as ever in the series, plays a key role in Fallout 3. It may feature action battling, but you can still halt time to take close aim at your foes.

True to the spirit of the original Fallout, the Vault-Tech Assisted Targeting System (VATS) lets you store >

FALLOUT 3

> Fallout 3 continued

up some shots at specific weakpoints on your enemy which are played out as a quick AI-controlled sequence.

You've got plenty of weapons to wave at your foes too, from a bog standard collection of shotguns and rifles up to full-on portable nuclear devices than need careful aiming about as much as Paris Hilton needs publicity.

To Oblivion and beyond

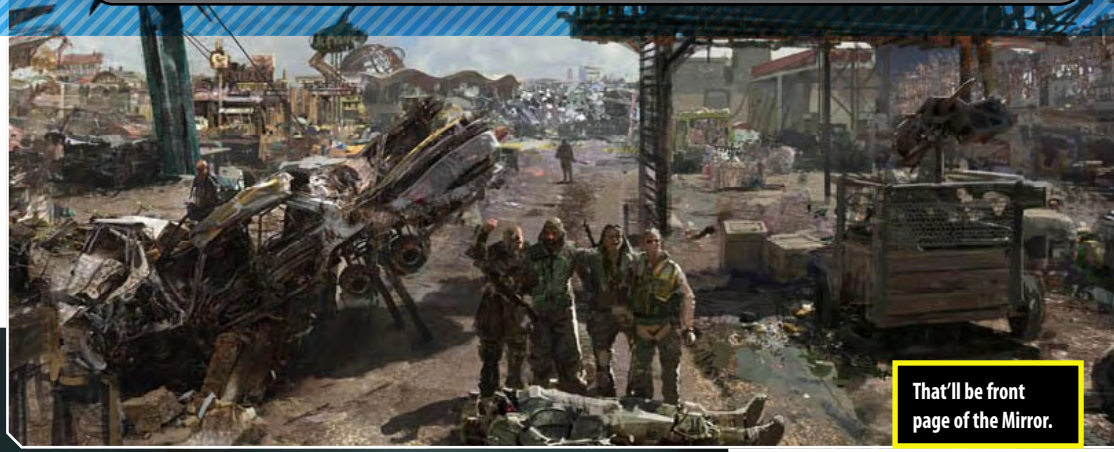
So far we've managed to avoid the fact that Fallout 3 is being developed by the Elder Scrolls IV genii at Bethesda.

Why? Because F3's rich heritage should be respected and Fallout 3 looks brilliant in its own right.

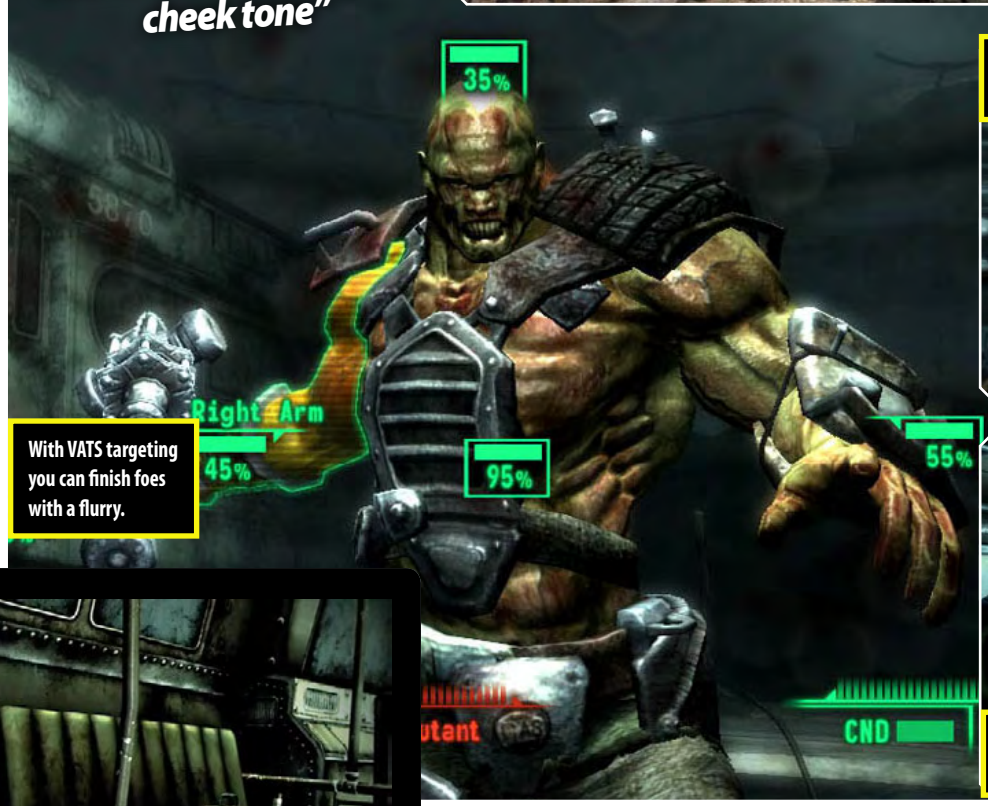
But it has to be said that the vast – if not quite Oblivion-esque – landscapes for your exploration complement that sinister Fallout vibe perfectly.

And it's clear in the smaller, but far more individual cast of characters that the Fallout world will teem with life, even as it reeks of death. Bethesda are clearly desperate to create a game that does more than live up to reputation: they're gunning for their own RPG crown, with both barrels blazing… ●

"Unnecessarily grim death is central to the tongue in cheek tone"



That'll be front page of the Mirror.



With VATS targeting you can finish foes with a flurry.



Your dad. Handsome chap.



Life in the vault is a bit sterile.



A VERY, VERY MAD WORLD… Dodge the Fallout by clicking here.

PCGZine FALLOUT 3

HOW COMPLETE? 65%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS 91%

One year off, but one exciting prospect.

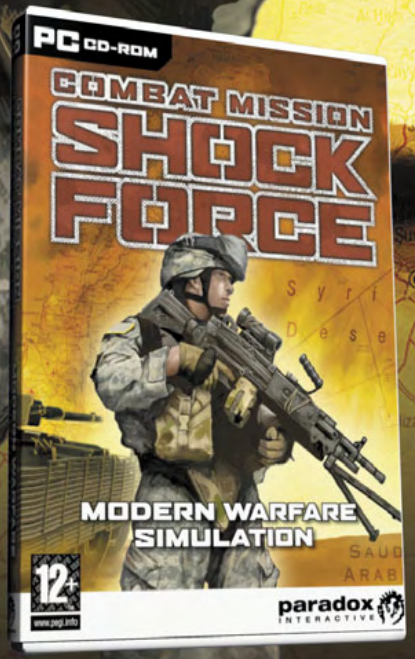
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Publisher: TBC
Developer: Monumental
Players: Thousands+
Certificate: TBA
Features: You're one player in a footie MMO, huge lifestyle world, scouting system.
ETA: October 2008

"Live the football dream"



We shouted questions from the dugout at Rik Alexander, top of the bods behind Football Superstars.



Create-a-superstar.

The guys at Monumental Games, under former Climax online supremo Rik Alexander, are creating a massively multiplayer football game. And they'll be giving it away for free. It's either utter madness, or pure genius…



Rik Alexander is offering you the chance to be a football superstar.

Football superstars - what's it all about?

It's a free-to-play football game where you take the place of one player. You create one avatar and take him from grass roots to superstar status.

Along the way you'll learn many skills, interact with many different clubs, and exist in a lifestyle way. It's your chance to be David Beckham, to own the bling and the cars. You can live the lifestyle and live the football dream.

So there are two distinct elements to the game – football action and lifestyle – are they very separate?

The game is about both and each revolves around the other. The halves tie-in together.

We are creating a Utopian environment, an environment much like a town where the church is at the centre of things, only here a football stadium is at the centre. everything you think about in the lifestyle world – from getting new trainers and boots and a new suit – relates back to the game.

"Superstars is primarily a footie game between 19 players: the goalies are AIs…"

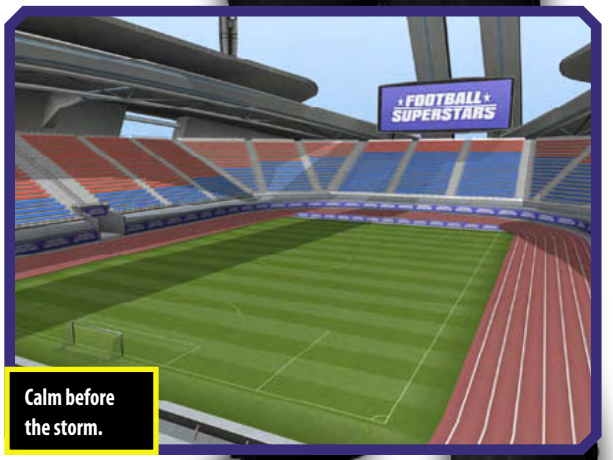
But how?

You gain rewards after each match in the form of fame, money and attributes that you can use in the lifestyle side of the game.

It sounds like an RPG where the football is just the 'level grind'…

Superstars is primarily a footie game in which you play against up to 19 other players – the goalies are AI. It's all about football, even though it has RPG elements. There are ways of upgrading your character and traditional MMO elements such as social networking.

In fact both aspects of the game are key – that's why it's so unique. There's a beauty in FS' simplicity in >



Calm before the storm.

> Interview continued

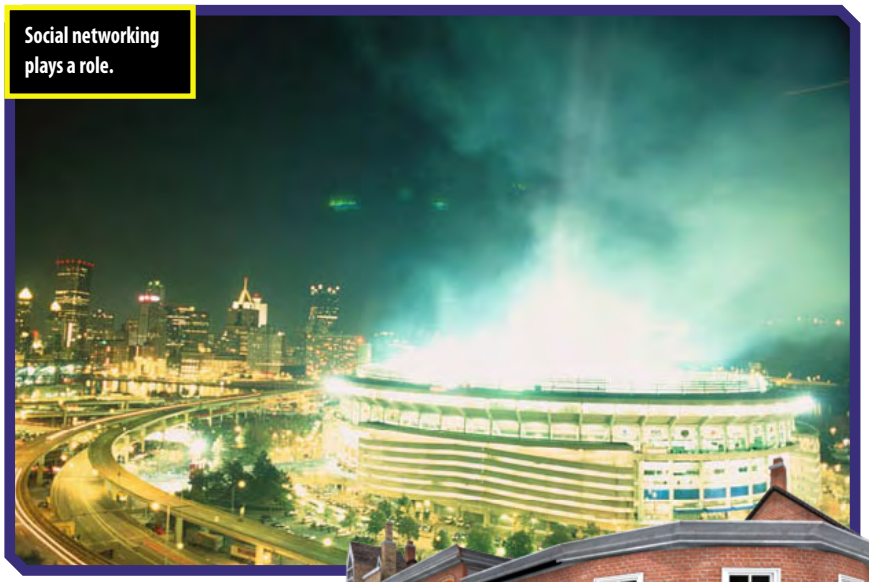
which you enact things that you already do in a social context, such as joining teams.

You talk about upgrading your character, is this through learning tricks such as Ronaldo's stepovers or Ronaldinho's Elastico?
Yes – we're going down that route. We want to put in as many feints and tricks so players can customise and define themselves. As it's all about football, just as real players become known for great crossing, for instance, you'll have traits that define you.

I understand the control system basically operates on the mouse and one button. Why?
We have a unique control system. We've taken football from first principles and applied our knowledge of game controls.

There's enough depth and skill involved to mean you can improve your ability with the controls too.

But how can it be like playing real football in the same way the multiple button approach of the likes of PES and FIFA sort of is?
We've captured as many elements as we can and I think we're doing a really good job. We will be refining the controls over the next twelve months and beyond. We're playing ten-a-side games now and it always ends in a clap so we're happy with how things are going.


Social networking plays a role.


The in-game engine is looking as sharp as Beckham's suits.


Don't expect wins if you play post-pub.

Tell us more about the lifestyle element of the game…
As I mentioned, at the end of each game you get experience and attribute points, fame points and money. You can then go into the lifestyle world, buy character customisations, train, even buy the Hand of God skill from Maradona.

You can also use fame awards to buy interviews and interview space. As your overall fame level rises you'll be able to access certain bars and open up more content, more cool stuff and get into more exclusive areas.

"FS is designed to be open. We've implemented a kickaround system before club play"

Sounds like there's plenty to distract players. Any chance of real life-style scandal?
We're not going to comment right now, but there's so much scope to add that stuff. We have thought of ways of incorporating scandal.

Surely clubbing all night isn't going to be great for your training regime and will have at least a short-term effect on your stats?
Well, it's certainly not great for your training regime. The cool thing about playing an MMO is that your reactions won't be as good after a night of drinking.

Sounds like for every Ronaldinho there'll be a George best?
Absolutely.

So how will you get the rag tag of players together, pull them out of pubs and into a game at the right time for each match?
FS is designed to be fundamentally open. Many management sims have gone down the route of fixtures at certain times so you have to revolve your life around a game. We thought that was the wrong thing to do: that's why we've implemented a kickaround system and a sponsorship system before you get to a player-managed club. Here you can see who's online and even play 3- or 5-sided games so if you want to play football you can.

Player-managed clubs? What's that all about?
Fundamentally, you're able to set up a club within a league, generate matches and recruit players. We have a scout system with Web 2.0 features. You can be on or offline, search for players by position, attributes, goals and so on. You can even download replays of a player's last five games.

If you like a player you can offer them a contract or move on.

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Emotional about Rage? Hot about Hellgate? Mail pcgzine@gamerzines.com

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Fighting cogs in Epic's hit, Gears of War.

ALL GEARED UP

GEARS OF WAR announced at E3 for PC is old news. Months of many speculations and rumours of this game coming to PC floated around, the announcement at E3 just sealed the deal that predictions were dead-on; so, it didn't come much of a surprise. Still, it's good and exciting news for dedicated PC gamers. The conversion coming a year behind its X360 counterpart with extra new content (both in single/multiplayer and a level editor) makes this worthwhile.

Since I already have X360 GoW, I will not be coughing up another $60 for the PC version, though – I'd rather spend on Unreal Tournament 3. Nevertheless, enthusiastic PC gamers will be getting much love from Epic with UT3 and GoW this fall – these games should complement each other well.

> Ndositwe Chizimbi

> It may not have been unexpected, but it's certainly news since the game has been confirmed for PC now. You're absolutely right about UT3 too – expect a big preview in an month or so's time.

MORE ON GEARS OF WAR

ALMOST BOUGHT THE XBOX 360 just to play this game, but now that it's coming to PC, I can't wait to get my hands on it.

> Narasimha Baliga

> As good as GoW 360 there's no doubt a keyboard, mouse and DX10 will make it better on PC.

FEEL THE LOVE

HI GUYS, IT'S A GREAT JOB you are doing. I don't miss any of your mag issues. I'm mainly a PC game lover. Please tell me if there is any news about a new Redline game. That game really had the "kick" – a great game it was.

Again, I have to say thanks for what you do!

Stay cool!

GamerZines Rocks!

> Dilan

> Thanks for your support Dilan, always nice to know we're appreciated. If you're talking about the classic bike game, Redline Racer, there's no news about a follow up I'm afraid. MotoGP 2007 looks mighty tasty though.

WHITHER WARHAMMER

WHY HAVEN'T YOU PREVIEWED the excellent looking MMO Warhammer Online yet? It's going to be the game that gets me off of Warcraft for sure. I'm really looking forward to entering the Games Workshop universe for real – I've been table top gaming with their stuff for years and was really disappointed when I thought Warhammer Online had been cancelled.

> Aaron C

> PCGZ says We're looking forward to this too. Expect more on WO and Age of Conan next month.

FAR CRY 2

HI PCGZ, I'M CONFUSED. Is Far Cry 2 it going to be as good as Far Cry? Or should we still be looking to Crysis as the spiritual successor to one of my favourite first-person shooters of all time?

> T_Goodyear



Warhammer Online feels Orc-ward.

BIOSHOCKING

Yes, it's as good as we'd hoped…

Hi PCGZ, JUST A QUICK WORD TO THANK YOU for writing about BioShock in previous issues. I rushed out and bought it on the day of launch, and it's absolutely brilliant. I had a few technical problems, but they seem to have been solved now – although I do hope games publishers learn from the music industry and start releasing software without DRM.

The game is amazing though – I haven't been this gripped since Deus Ex. The atmosphere of Rapture has had me playing until the small hours every night since I got it.

Thanks again for bringing this to my attention – I don't follow games that closely and think I might have missed it by accident.

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BioShock

PCGZine GOLD

Already hailed the saviour of gaming, can this possibly live up to the hype? Well, like, obviously.

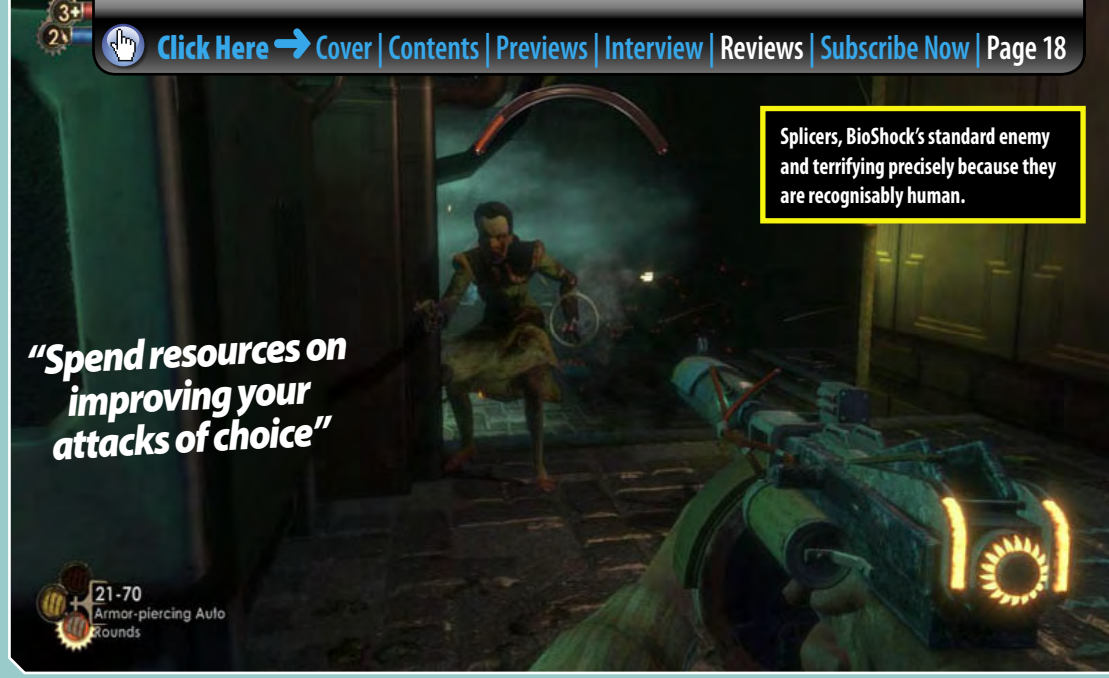
Publisher: 2K
Developer: 2K
Heritage: System Shock 2
Link: www.cultofrapture.com
OUT NOW

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
2.4GHz CPU, 1GB RAM, 128MB 3D card with Shader 3.0 support, internet connection

BioShock is an FPS. BioShock is a satire of an FPS. BioShock is the bright future of the FPS. BioShock is the forgotten past of the FPS. BioShock is incredible. BioShock is, also, disappointing.

BioShock is many things, but most of all, BioShock is very, very important, more so than your lover, your mother, or even your dog.

Were this a crass and stupid publication, perhaps we'd say something like "it's the Martin Luther King of mainstream videogames" (and we've only written it there to see just how crass and stupid it does look in print). It's more like early Elvis, only without the offending-middle-aged-TV-presenters element. What it does it get the kids dancing in ways they didn't even realise existed, ways that free them from the stiff and closed-minded shuffle they'd been told was the only way it could be done.



Splicers, BioShock's standard enemy and terrifying precisely because they are recognisably human.

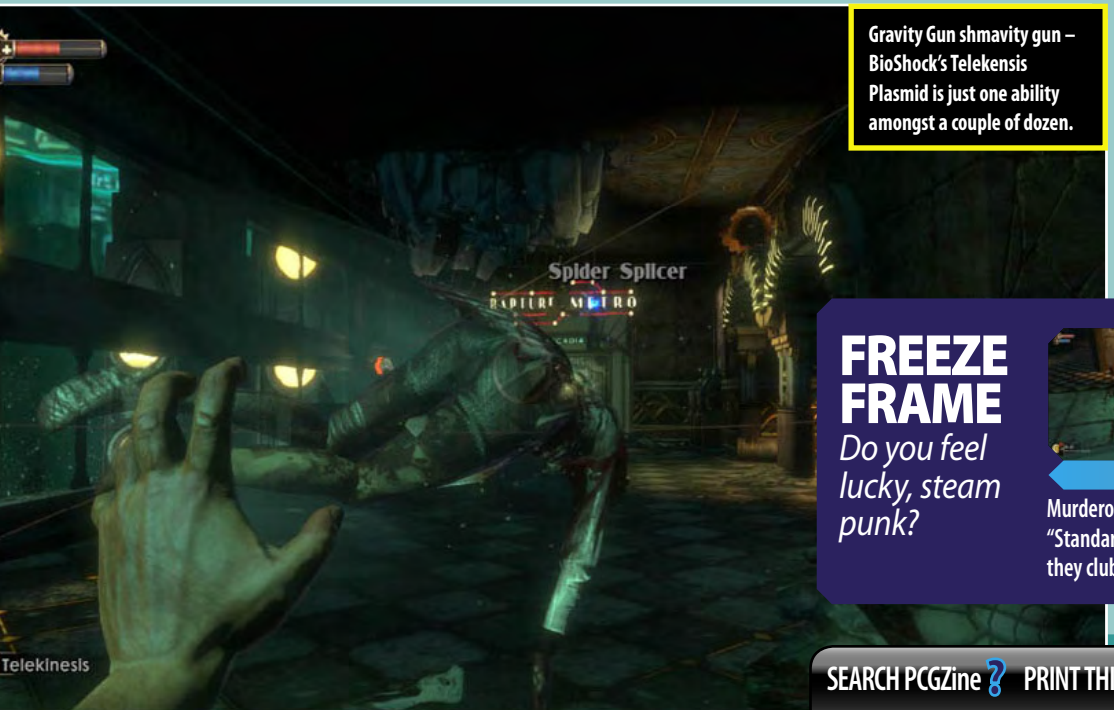
"Spend resources on improving your attacks of choice"

What does he mean?

Leaving aside all talk of the intriguing plot setup (and if any of this review seems to lacks detail, it's purely to prevent spoiling any of the experience), what makes BioShock such a revelation is a design-is-all ethos and a lack of rigidity to its combat. Its setting, the crumbling, underwater city of Rapture, is a triumph of Art Deco ideas. It melds the gleaming futuretropolis imagined by early sci-fi, the jolly naivety of the same era of cinema and advertising but sinisterly twisted, and, thanks to the >



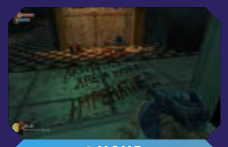
This Big Daddy is called Rosie, which doesn't sound at all like a name for a daddy.



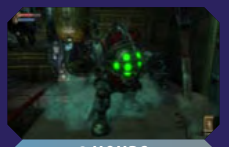
Gravity Gun shmavity gun – BioShock's Telekensis Plasmid is just one ability amongst a couple of dozen.

FREEZE FRAME

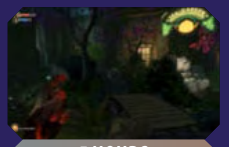
Do you feel lucky, steam punk?



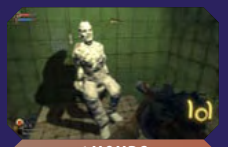
1 HOUR
Murderous doctors shout "Standard! Procedure!" as they club you.



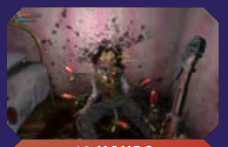
2 HOURS
Say hello to Daddy. By 'hello' we mean 'get stamped on'.



5 HOURS
The garden under the sea – and the source of Rapture's oxygen.



6 HOURS
A reclusive artist waits for you in BioShock's best level.



12 HOURS
Find out how a little girl becomes a Little Sister.



That's a surprisingly sharp suit for a insane, gene-twisted homicidal maniac.



Plasmids are advertised based on their ability to kill – no wonder the city collapsed.



The masks prevent the same faces repeating – and are also really creepy.

> BioShock continued

ever-flanking oceanic depths, something entirely its own. Now plunged into ruin and mutant-infested anarchy, only some of its former glory remains, resulting in a unforgettable setting that's equal parts wonder and threat. Thanks to an unprecedented degree of unique art elements, no other shooter so successfully offers an overwhelming sense of place, as opposed to a sequence of similar steel corridors here or a bare-walled warehouse there. While your Half-Life 2s and Doom 3s just repeat the same styles and textures again and again, BioShock is lead by its ever-changing but always in-keeping art.

Applaud rapturously

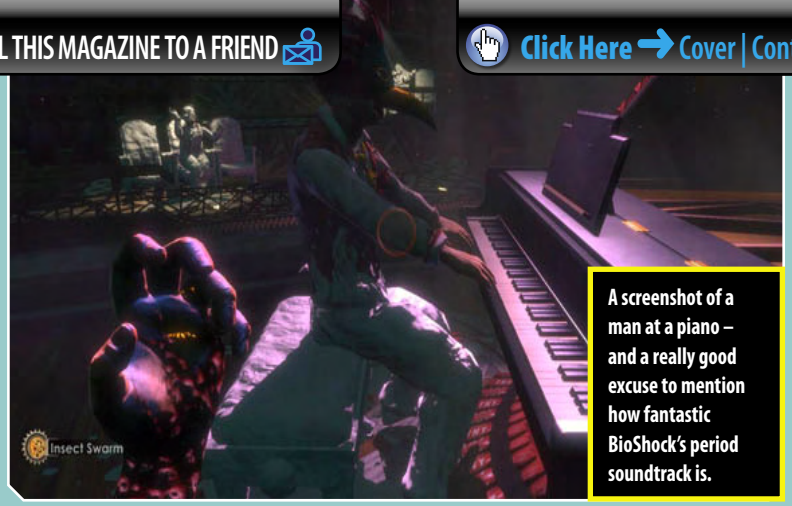
Rapture is the kind of place just made for exploring. But while its geography is incredible-looking, the largely linear zones don't feel linked into a true cityspace, and that's something of a shame. The journey is never less than worthwhile, though, and usually more so – breathtaking visual ideas and sly, smart nods to the conventions of the genre persist – but the final third lacks the polish of the first two, repeating itself more often and building up to a mortifyingly stereotypical and unchallenging boss fight that feels dropped in from another, far lesser game. The main narrative collapses during these closing acts too. There's an earlier encounter upon which the plot hinges, which is as shocking, as powerful and even as moving as any game has ever managed: but it's like the writers are so stunned by their achievement that they entirely give up trying to equal it in the few hours that follow. It's not even slightly a reason to leave BioShock on the shelf, but given the hit rate of remarkable moments in the first two thirds, such unexpected entropy will break the heart of anyone who was in the game for its plot. Treat it more as a game of artful vignettes and you won't suffer that wound.

> *"The crumbling underwater city of Rapture is an Art Deco triumph of ideas"*

The path you tread is always one of often shockingly violent combat, and it's BioShock's other great success. There's a surfeit of weapons and Plasmids – gene-spliced superhero abilities – and, with the exception of

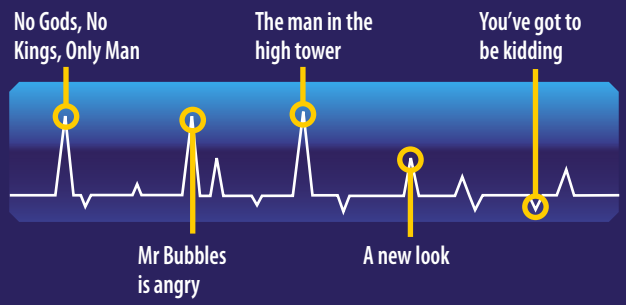


Red means angry. Red is bad.



A screenshot of a man at a piano – and a really good excuse to mention how fantastic BioShock's period soundtrack is.

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



IT REALLY SHOULDN'T WORK…

…but it does. BioShock's bizarre minigames explained.



Snapshots | **Pipe dreams** | **Some like it hot**

Snapshots

Taking pictures in the middle of a bloody battle is an oddity – but reveals enemies' weaknesses, eventually granting massive damage bonuses and occasionally new abilities.

> BioShock continued

the occasional mandatory semi-puzzle, you're never forced into using or losing any of them. You can spend your resources on improving your attacks of choice and on buying or constructing their ammunition, which means those abilities you favour less are simply less powerful. It's as videogamey as self-expression can be, certainly, but the difference between "I like to kill baddies with the wrench so I'm going to make my character really good with the wrench" and "I have to kill baddies with the wrench because there's no shotgun ammo in this room" is enormous, and very satisfying.

And what of BioShock's chief marketing tool – the cute and sinister Little Sisters and their monstrous protectors, the Big Daddies? The option to save or kill the ghoulish pre-teens has been well-documented, but really, what's important is less what you choose so much as whether you think the choice even matters. Their appearances and their story constitute many of the game's most incredible scenes and, though they're almost an incidental detail to the core plot, they are what have earnt BioShock some of the most – aheh – rapturous acclaim it's received.

It's a game that compromises its greatness with almost inexplicable foolishness at times, but is only disappointing in the context of how casually BioShock otherwise renders all contemporaries irrelevant. ● ***Alec Meer***



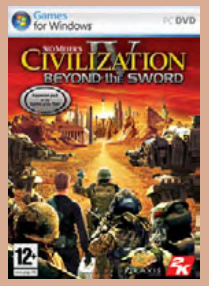
The scariest Splicers attempt to relive earlier parts of their lives on loop, turning on you the second you interfere.

PCGZine Verdict

There's everything new under the sea

- Visually and sonically astonishing
- Gaming's most dramatic moments
- Narrative stumbles at times

93%



Sid Meier's Civilization IV: Beyond the Sword

The biggest – and best – Civ expansion pack ever

Publisher: 2K Games
Developer: Firaxis
Heritage: Civilization, Alpha Cetauri
Link: www.2kgames.com/civ4/beyondthesword
OUT NOW

System Requirements: 1.8GHz CPU, Sid Meier's Civilization IV

Having played Civ IV quite intensively, we were looking forward to Beyond the Sword for some new mod content and extra doodas. And we were justly rewarded. You can build the internet, and Abe Lincoln can rule all of Babylonia. Random events have been introduced to keep you on your toes.

The new features build on and energise the core game, adding to its "just one more turn" addictiveness. There are 10 new civilizations and 16 new leaders, plus the ability to combine any leader and country. Automatically pick Bismarck for combat games? Why not try seasoned campaigner Charlemagne or despot-with-a-heart Boudica instead? Combining an aggressive or expansive leader with another country's unique unit can be a powerful strategy. But beware: the AIs are also much more sophisticated – you may even need to step down a level for the first few games to save face.

New techs, wonders and units help you placate whinging cities and build >

"Jealous, vengeful and downright spiteful gods call down disaster"



A lot of new features affect the end game, as things hot up.



10 new civs and 16 new leaders keep things interesting.



Ecology will help keep corporations in check.

> Civ 4: BTS continued

towering armies. The random events are often bad – earthquakes, querulous citizens and ruined harvests – and can sometimes (though rarely) clean out your treasury or hit an important resource. Corporations can be used to win Diplomatic victories, and play out like late-game religions. The Space Race victory is now much harder to achieve (you have to make it as far as Alpha Centauri), and the much-needed Advanced Start pre-game setup option lets you pre-select cities, resources and techs so you can jump in at the interesting part. All this breathes unpredictability and freshness into already ace Civ 4, and will keep you playing 'til 3am.



Giant soldiers are not a new wonder. The Statue of Zeus is, though.

The meat

There are eight official and three fan scenarios: Charlemagne demands your very best – scheming, lying and treacherous, with a massive medieval army, battling for favour and land with four other warring states. It'll test your diplomacy and battle skills, and the addition of "Papal Favour" (remain in the Pope's good books and he can crown you winner and "Holy Roman Emperor") makes the tricky build choices early in the game even trickier.

"Corporations can be used to win diplomatic victory scenarios"

Brilliant. Gods of Old plays like standard Civ IV but is ruled by the Mesopotamian deities – jealous, vengeful and downright spiteful gods who call down disasters on your enemies. Combat scenario World War II: Road to War is a satisfyingly old-school tactical game that offers a variety of scenario-specific units.

In fan scenario Fall from Heaven: Age of Ice, you're tasked with retrieving the legendary Godslayer sword, but there's little time to settle a city or two before all hell breaks loose. What few resources and buildings you manage to scrape together will likely be destroyed by blizzards. And don't linger on the ice, for god's sake: it's full of bad stuff.

Setting the scene

Some of the scenarios, such as Final Frontier, left us cold. We really wanted to like it, but the graphics are off-putting and we couldn't get past move 15 – we were making random build choices and didn't really care. Same goes for eagerly awaited squad-based tactical scenario Afterworld: the gameplay is so far from the original that we just couldn't hold out for the zombie attack.



Paratroopers can be airdropped in to hotspots.

Some of the scenarios you'll love and some you'll only play once but they, along with the mods, add variety to every part of the game and offer lasting playability. If you love, or even only like, Civ IV then you should buy this. We only wish they'd brought back Leonard Nimoy as God: Sid doesn't quite cut it. ● ***Rose Brandle***

BEYOND CIV

Beyond the Sword introduces a number of new features to re-energise the core game



Espionage | New Leaders | Corporations

Espionage

Espionage, like research and culture, offers another way to tailor your civilization towards victory, and depending on your tactics can be pretty much ignored or employed as a powerful weapon against enemies. Do nothing, and you'll gain occasional insight into rivals' tech research; plough some resources into it, and you may be able to sabotage crucial developments and cripple a rival's imminent victory. However, spies are often discovered before they can do anything really sly, and it is possible to entirely forget Espionage without it really hindering your game.

PCGZine Verdict

Biggest isn't always best, but it is in the case of Beyond the Sword

- Big
- Compulsive
- Essential expansion pack

88%



Loki

Mythology and magic meet machetes and munitions in this ambitious RPG slash-fest

Publisher: Ascaron
Developer: Cyanide
Heritage: Chaos League, Pro Cycling Manager 2007
Link: www.loki-game.com
OUT NOW

System Requirements:
2GHz CPU, 512 MB RAM
64MB 3D card


Purification rituals involve violence in Loki.

Certain games and franchises are inescapably synonymous with a particular genre. Think Flight Simulator, Quake or Football Manager. More of a stretch are Oblivion and World of Warcraft. All of these are titles that have withstood the tests of both time and cynical journalists alike. So the gazillions of other games also released at around the same time as these have a real job to get noticed. And they have to be good. Enter Loki…

Unlike Oblivion or WoW, this action RPG uses the 'classic' (or more accurately, 'dated') top-down view, rather than a natty first- or third-person perspective. As a consequence, playing the game often feels more like playing Golden Axe on the Megadrive than an all-new role-player.

That not necessarily a bad thing, though. Loki's big hook isn't its playing perspective – it's the different approaches you can take to playing. We like free-roaming, non-linear designs here at PCGZ, but how much choice does Loki really give you?

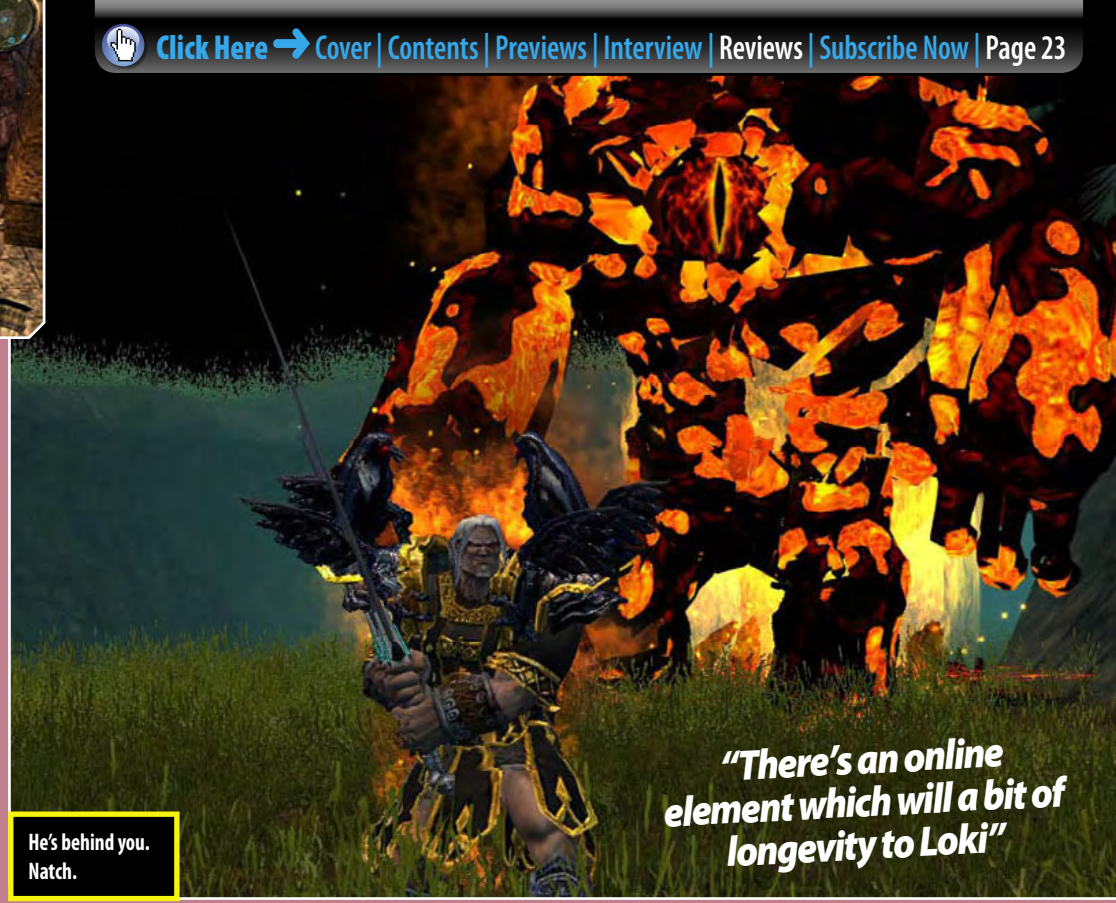
For starters, you can pick from four characters, each one plucked from the annals of popular mythology. Rather obviously, you'll make your decision based on the differing skills of each character. There's a scary Norse fighter, an impressively macho Greek warrior, an Egyptian magician or an Aztec shaman who has mastered secrets of the spirit world.

Bash, repeat

Once you thrust your character into the single-player mode, the story unfolds and it generally involves beating up baddies and casting spells. You'll also have to communicate with other in-game characters but it's not so free-form that you can stop have a chin-wag with any passer-by.

That wouldn't be so bad, but there aren't all that many character models so people of a particular type, be they innocent fellow villagers or rough and tough baddies all look the same as their neighbours and fellow thugs respectively. And without going all Daily Mail on you, we'd prefer to see some of the female characters a little more modestly attired.

Like the female nudity cliches which are rolled out, Loki feels a little bit uninspired and, dare we say, repetitive. Yes, we understand that the very essence of an action RPG is to hack down some goons, chat to some old fella and wander off somewhere else casting spells. But it's been done much better than this many times before. These types of games are supposed >


He's behind you. Natch.

"There's an online element which will a bit of longevity to Loki"


The high walls don't really facilitate non-linear gaming.





Well, it wouldn't be an RPG without a character called Seth.

Roll over screen for annotations



FANTASY JOURNEY

Epic and full of fights, but Loki treads a well worn path for a fantasy RPG



Cover up | God sized | Axe of gold

Cover up

We're all for games featuring strong women, but why do they all insist on being semi-starkers? True, the level of clothing builds up alongside the level of armour, and the men don't exactly start out in tailored suits but we can't help feeling that Loki missed an opportunity to do something different here. As things stand, the game simply follows the well-trodden path of innumerable similar titles.

> Loki continued

to provide escapism and a desperate urge to fulfil each quest just to see what's coming next.

There is an online element to Loki, which will prove a little more longevity and fun. But not as much fun as, say, digging out your old copy of Diablo and teaming up with some friends. Or sitting tight and waiting for Hellgate: London next month.

Disappointment is the order of the day here. That's the bottom line. We do admire Cyanide for their ambitious

"The story generally involves beating folk up and casting big spells"

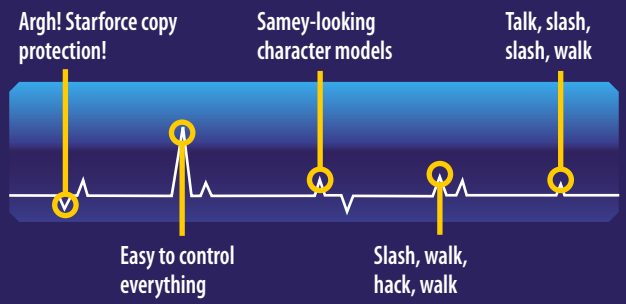


At least his ankles will be snug and warm.

fusion of mythologies, and some of the larger character models look quite good. But neither the story nor the way its played out smacks of the kind of excellence that this kind of game needs in order to get more enoticed.

Andrew Sutcliffe

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*





What you need is a *really* big stick with a fork in it.

PCGZine Verdict

Ambitious, but ultimately flawed

- Admirable ambition
- Repetitive fighting
- Limited interaction

69%



Sword of the New World

Conquistadors, at the ready. Attack.

Publisher: IMC Games
Developer: K2 Network
Heritage: Global MU Online, Knight Online
Link: www.swordofthenewworldcom
OUT NOW

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
1GHz CPU, 512MB RAM, DX7 3D Card, internet

Up until now, MMORPGs have been a strictly multiplayer experience. Sure, you might be able to take down "Rabid Rat Lvl 1" on your own, but if you want to get the sparkliest treasure, or defeat the biggest bosses, you have team up in a group. This caused something of a problem for Billy no-mates, and all your far-right friends, who ended up either offending everyone on WoW, or having no-one to speak to in the first place…

Keeping this in mind, we were somewhat confused when we found that Sword of the New World lets you create your own party of adventurers when you first begin the game. Seemingly going against the whole concept of an MMORPG, this effectively lets you play through the whole game (or at least, gives you a better chance of surviving), by playing on your own.



Multi-party battles can get a bit insane.

Solo mobs FTW

Set in the "New World", which is loosely (and we mean, loosely) based on the exploration of America by the Europeans, Sword of the New World is one of the better MMORPGs we've played. Graphically, the game looks amazing, and the art direction is solid throughout, providing some breathtaking vistas for you to behold. Quests, too, have been well designed, and each character has a fair bit of personality, making the tasks that much more involved. Even the translation from the original Korean has been done with care and consideration.



Stabby stabby.



Who said romance wasn't alive in gaming?

"The game looks amazing, and the art direction is solid"

The party system, however, is by far Sword of the New World's greatest strength, allowing you create a perfectly balanced team, that are all equally equipped. This means that both MMORPG veterans, and novices alike can pick up and play the game in the same sort of manner as an offline RPG, like Icewind Dale. And this is a very good thing. Sword of the New World is infinitely accessible to anyone, and there's no monthly sub either. It's unusual: an MMORPG we'd highly recommend you try. ***Ian Morris***



A perfectly balanced party.



It's a kind of magic.

PCGZine Verdict

Sword, meet butter.

- Best of both worlds
- Very accessible
- Free to download, free to play!

83%

360Zine Issue 9 Out Now

★★★
360Zine
Completely free of charge
Passionate about Xbox 360
Dedicated to the biggest releases
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 9

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 4
Now with bikes! Read the hands-on preview and see the latest screens only in this mag!

MASS EFFECT PREVIEW
Bioware's Xbox 360 epic is about to be unleashed. We play it and report back.

WORLD IN CONFLICT INTERVIEW
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Medal Of Honor: Airborne

Showing that you really can teach an old franchise exciting new tricks

Publisher: EA
Developer: EA LA
Heritage: Medal Of Honor: Pacific Assault
Link: www.electronicarts.co.uk
ETA: September

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
2.8 GHz CPU, 1GB RAM, 128MB 3D card

The Medal Of Honor franchise has now lasted almost as long as World War II itself, eking numerous games out of the conflict on a slew of different platforms. The PC is still its natural home though, and the original Allied Assault was widely hailed as a masterpiece. Follow-up Pacific Assault is rarely accorded the same accolade, so the honour falls to 'difficult third album' Airborne to get the war effort back on track.

As the name suggests, it does of course involve the utter madness of launching yourself out of an aeroplane over enemy territory with little more than an oversized duvet cover strapped to your back. As well as making for a dramatic entrance, this also opens up a plethora of opportunities as regards gameplay. Instead of starting each mission where the designers want you to, you begin at the point where you manage to land, steering your parachute towards a prime spot, or not.

Safe zones are marked by green smoke, and will generally contain a surfeit of health, ammo, and hopefully a bunch of your fellow soldiers. From there you can carefully pick off the various objectives in a strategic manner, working your way round the map as carefully as possible. Alternatively you can simply parachute right into the thick of the action with all guns blazing. Most of the time you'll end up like a piece of Swiss cheese, but if you pull it off you'll have balls bigger then King Kong. As ever, there's a third way, the self-explanatory skill drop,

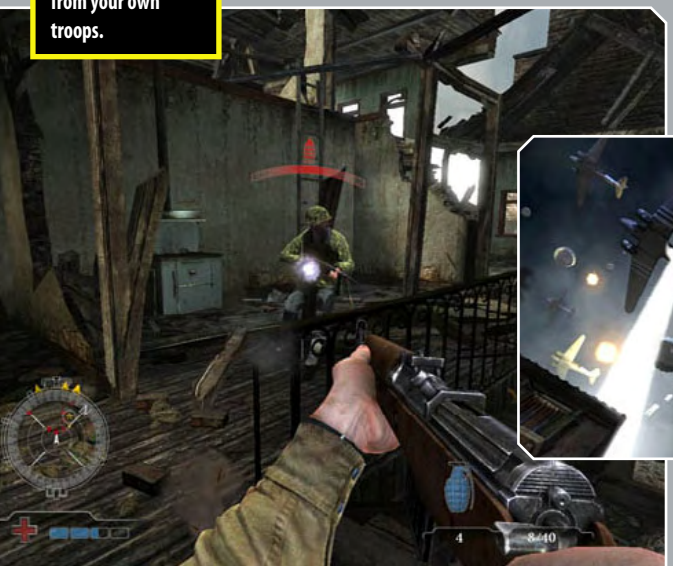
> **"Bodies are crushed by tanks, but you never see a drop of the claret"**

whereby you land in a strategically opportune spot such as on top of a church steeple, ideal for popping German heads with a sniper rifle.

Safe European home

When you inevitably die, you get to parachute in again and continue the mission from wherever you want, at least in the early stages of each campaign. Further on, the objectives bottleneck into a more linear route, and you simply respawn in the traditional fashion. As for those objectives, they're the Medal Of Honor staples of blowing shit up, clearing trenches, securing bridges; and six campaigns take you from Sicily, through Italy, Holland and finally Germany itself, in what we can only assume is an accurate historical context.

You are Private Boyd Travers of the 82nd Airborne, and while >



Enemies are often indistinguishable from your own troops.


It's amazing they don't all crash into each other really.

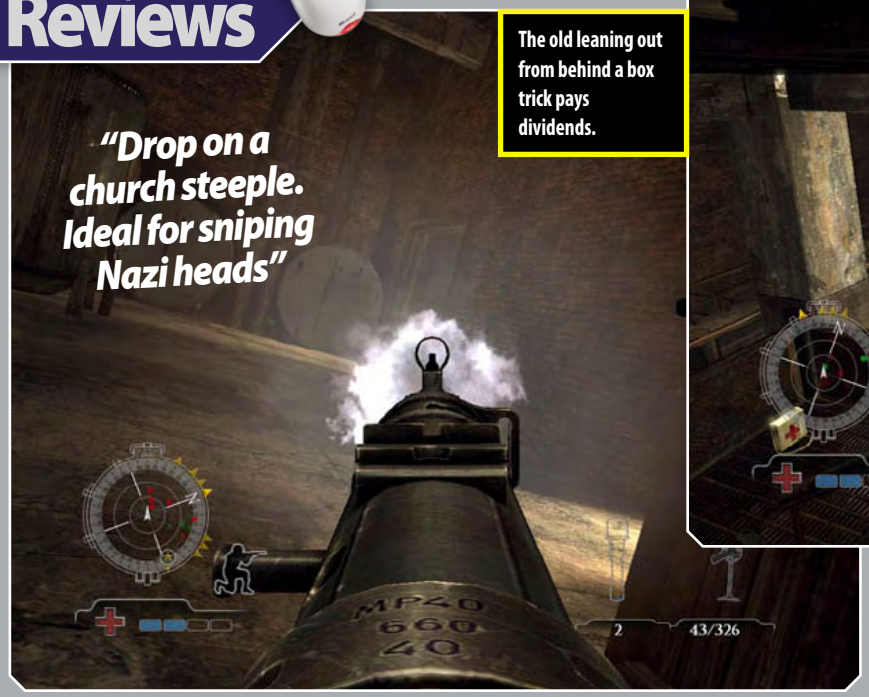

Popping a Nazi's head off with a sniper rifle is uncommonly satisfying.



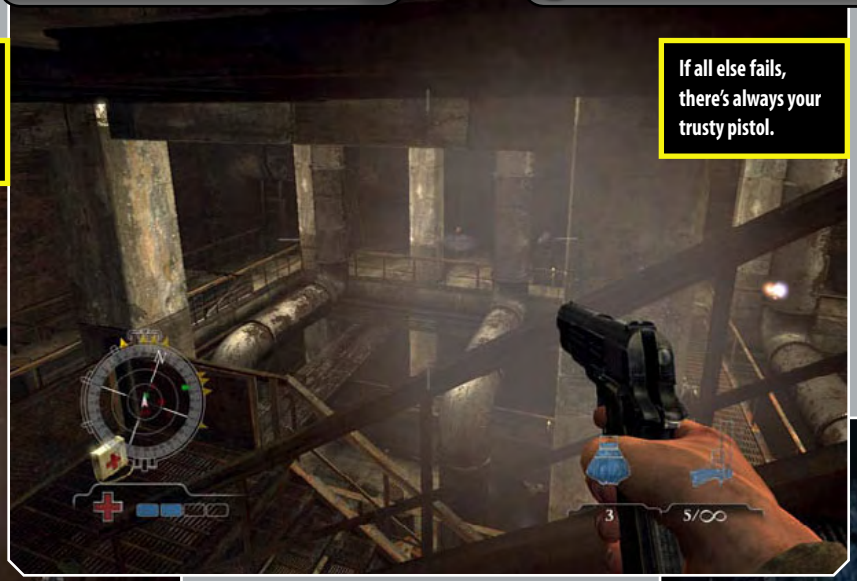
Grenades, swastikas, searchlights: there's a war going on.



You'll need a bigger gun for that. Luckily there's one nearby.

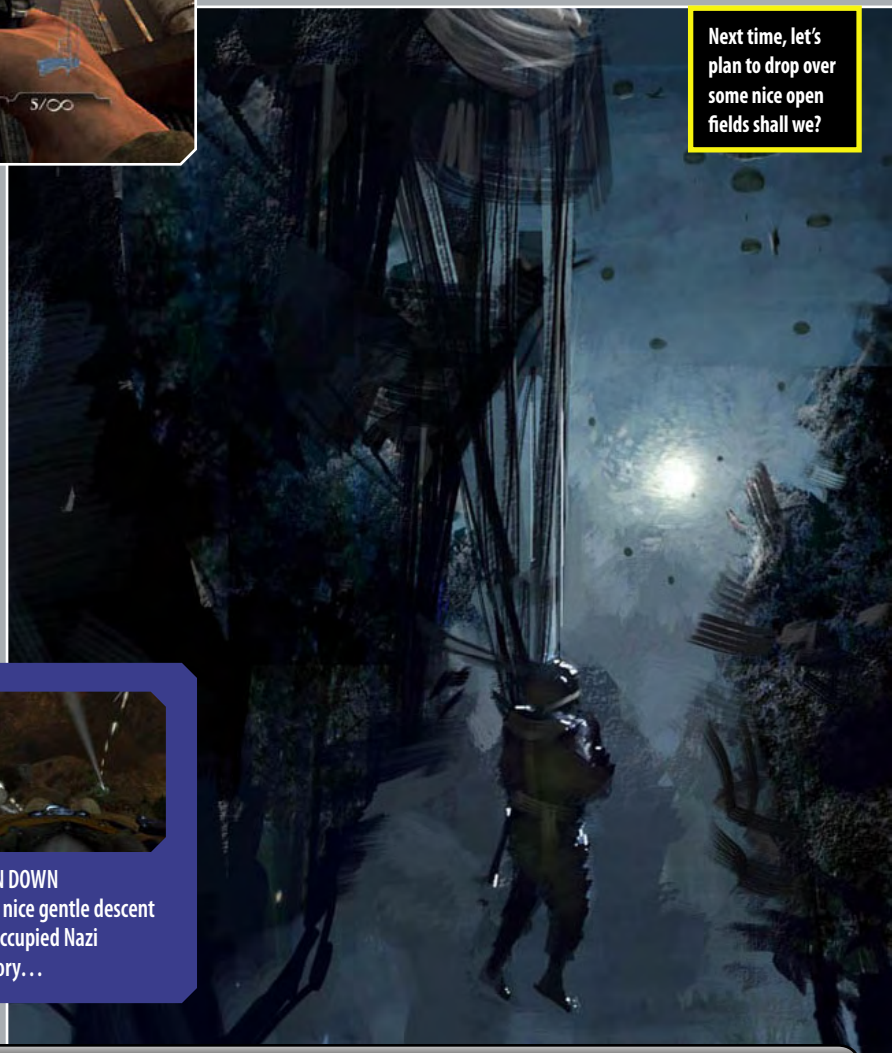


The old leaning out from behind a box trick pays dividends.



If all else fails, there's always your trusty pistol.





Next time, let's plan to drop over some nice open fields shall we?

> Medal of Honor continued

you are simply a name and a number, by necessity the war does tend to revolve around you (otherwise you could spend the whole game in the foetal position sobbing). Key events are inevitably triggered by your presence, and there are some impressive set pieces. As well as choosing the order in which you complete the objectives, selecting your weapons loadout also offers a lot of freedom: choosing the sniper rifle makes for a very different game than dual machine guns, for instance. Weapons also automatically upgrade – in dramatic slow motion – the more you use them, from subtle changes like quicker loading to full modifications such as being able to launch grenades.

Shaving Ryan's privates

As in the original MOH, the shadow of Saving Private Ryan hangs heavily over the game, providing not only visual and aural pointers but seemingly entire scenes. It's a comparably terrifying affair, with bullets whizzing past your ears, a constant sense of panic, nauseating shellshock effects from grenades, and an uncompromising >

JUMP! FOR YOUR LIFE

Another day at the office…



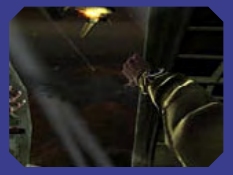
SITTING COMFORTABLY
It's not exactly Club World, and you have to bring your own food.



OPEN THE DOOR
This looks like a nice spot to launch yourself out of an aircraft.

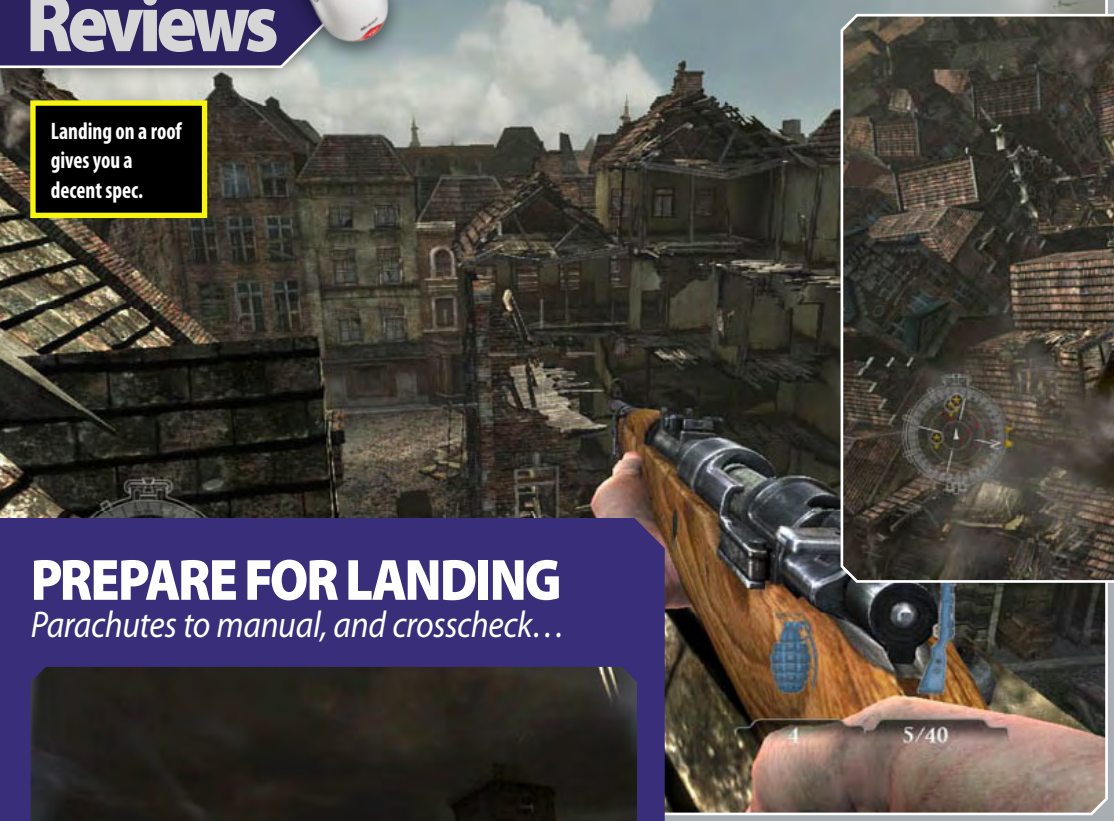


ON YOUR FEET
The red light may be on, but unfortunately that doesn't mean stop.



YOUR TURN
This isn't Gatwick. If you don't jump, you will be pushed.

DOWN DOWN
And a nice gentle descent into occupied Nazi territory…

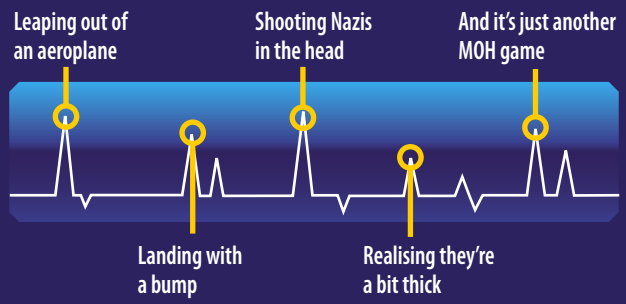


Landing on a roof gives you a decent spec.



Now that's what you call war-torn.

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



PREPARE FOR LANDING

Parachutes to manual, and crosscheck…



Greased | **Flared** | **Botched**

Greased

A greased landing is smooth and shallow and ensures that your equipment is intact and you are instantly ready to fight the Nazi oppressors.

> Medal of Honor continued

insight into the ugly brutality of war – all of course without a drop of blood being spilled. Bodies are crushed underneath tanks, soldiers thrown across rooms by explosives, and soft flesh pumped full of lead, but you never see a drop of claret. By the time you kill your thousandth Nazi, it almost becomes abstract, not helped by the slightly cardboard cut-out look of the character models, which is at odds with the graphical – and system draining – splendour of the surroundings.

Critics will claim that Airborne doesn't 'advance the genre' and ultimately you are still running around killing occasionally stupid Nazis and picking up health packs that go 'plop.' This time round, the running is lifted from Gears Of War, and the 'hold your breath' function while sniping is from Sniper Elite. Ultimately though, it's still a recognisably epic Medal Of Honor romp, with a decent multiplayer game to boot.

Steve Hill



"The shadow of Saving Private Ryan hangs heavily over the game"

"Dont' look up. Don't look up…"

PCGZine Verdict

No revolution, but a worthy addition to the Medal Of Honor canon.

- Breathless gameplay
- Pseudo-freeform approach
- Short

85%



Medieval II: Total War Kingdoms

Publisher: SEGA
Developer: The Creative Assembly
Heritage: Shogun: Total War, Rome: Total War
Link: www.totalwar.com
ETA: 31st August

System Requirements: 1.5GHz CPU, 512 MB RAM, Medieval II

It's Total War, Jim, and just as we know it… but bigger

On PC, there are expansion packs, and then there are expansion packs. On one end of the scale, you've got rubbish like the H&M Accessories tosh for the Sims, cluttering up the shelves by adding absolutely nothing of value, but at the other, decent end of the scale, you have packages like Shivering Isles, providing hours of new gameplay, and lots of original things to do. Medieval 2: Total War Kingdoms sits firmly at that end of the scale.

With four entirely new campaigns to play through, and a whopping 13 new factions, the Kingdoms expansion pack could easily have stood up on its own as a stand-alone, full price release. However, it's not just quantity over quality either, as the new additions make some pretty significant changes to the battles.

"You're forced to rethink tactics depending on who you're fighting"

Same but different

Fans of the Total War series will immediately be familiar with what they're up against here, as the core of the campaign remains pretty much the same. Faced with a territorial map of wherever you're waging war, it's up to you to manage your cities and armies, defend your provinces against attack, and push into enemy territory whenever your opponent's looking a tad weak.

There's a new campaign for each new region of the game, meaning you can play through wars in the New World of the Americas (which was discovered towards the end of the first game), the Holy Lands or the Teutonic wars. There's also the jingoistic favourite, a "magnifying glass" campaign of Britannia, which offers a much more detailed map of the British Isles, allowing you to attempt to fend off four other factions as you struggle to conquer the country for your own. As well as seeming much more balanced this time round, the campaigns are also less biased, with no one true defending or invading faction, letting you make your own moral decisions as to how you play.


"Fetch a shrubbery, mate, or else."


Few games can boast a cast of thousands.

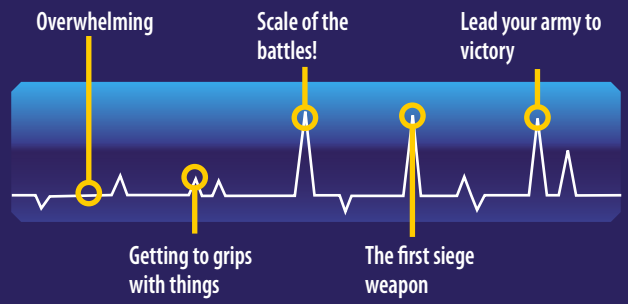

The graphics engine in Medieval 2 is truly spectacular.


Your troops all carry banners to allow you to easily spot where your men are.




"Are you sure this is the way to Parliament Square?"

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



New campaigns add new maps and levels of scale to the fighting.


He's got the only firepower, but the odds aren't good.

Different armies require different tactics to play.



> Medieval II continued

The new factions you can choose to play as are as varied in their design as they are in the gameplay stakes. Native Americans, for example, are skilled bowmen, but lack the technology of, say, the Spanish Conquistadors, which can lead to some interesting confrontations when the two completely different technology trees collide. The difference in armaments and various strengths and weaknesses of the new factions really adds some extra depth too, forcing you to rethink your strategies depending on your opponent. There's no more sit in the treeline and wait for them to attack one size fits all tactic here.

With four brand new campaigns, over 150 new units (including a flamethrower) and hundreds of hours of gameplay, this is one of the largest Total War expansion packs ever.

If you were a fan of Medieval 2, and let's face it who wasn't, it's time to board up the windows, get in the tinned food and top up your tan for one last time, because you won't be seeing much light in the next few months. It'll tide you over until Empire: Total War at the very least. ***Ian Morris***


The mini-map is also useful for giving you the location of enemy troops.

PCGZine Verdict

Proving you can't have too much of a good thing

- So much new stuff
- Lots more depth
- Bloody hard

87%

Publisher: Nexon
Developer: Wizet Corporation
Link: www.maplestory.com
OUT NOW

Maple Story

The world's only side-scrolling MMORPG. We can see why…

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
A PC. It really doesn't need much.

In concept, at least, Maple Story sounds appealing. A free to play, free to download MMORPG with a quirky cartoony visual style, the game already has some 67 million players worldwide (or so the press release says) – surely that many people can't be wrong? Can they?

Misguided fools

Unfortunately, it would seem they can, as Maple Story is one of the most tedious and mind-numbing MMO RPGs we've had the misfortune to play. For starters, you can't even change the resolution above a bog-standard 800x600, which is a heresy itself in this day and age. Worse still, the combat (ie. the central part of the game) is nothing more than "hold control until the enemy's dead", making levelling up, and completing the majority of the combat based quests an incredible chore. Then there's the game's love for dodgy Engrish translations which makes understanding what's going on equally tedious. One character told us to go and collect the monster's droppings, when he actually meant the items the monsters drop after you've topped them. The upshot is it's intermittently fun: but not really for the right reasons.

"One character told us to collect the monster's droppings…"

If you look hard enough (and we're struggling now), there may be some good in here, shining out from under the heaps of rubbish. The quests that involve collecting items, or delivering things to different people are at least playable, and then there is the overwhelming factor that it's free: all you pay to play is your time. And possibly your soul.

If you're willing to invest the time, you may find a tiny amount of fun here, but as it stands, the game is a complete mess. Badly translated, incredibly boring, and altogether not worthy of your time. ● ***Ian Morris***



Maple Story is not as sweet as maple syrup. Sadly.




Inspiringly, this chap is 'Grendel the really old'.


Form parties to defeat enemies.


Ghosts are scary. But not as scary as playing this again.


Just hammer Ctrl until the foe is dead.

PCGZine Verdict

Like maple. Syrupy.

- Reasonable soundtrack
- Awful Combat
- Awful Game

41%



Bone: The Great Cow Race

Developer: Telltale Games
Publisher: Xider
Price: £9.99

Picking up where the last game left off, Bone: The Great Cow Race is pretty much more of the same. With the same emphasis on emphatic character design, a hefty dose of humour and intelligent puzzles, Bone: The Great Cow Race is a thoroughly enjoyable adventure game from start to finish. Coming complete with harder puzzles than Out From Boneville, and a longer storyline to boot, the game even takes quite a bit longer to complete, making this even better value for money than the original.

- Same great characters
- Plot develops nicely
- Harder puzzles

Tickles our funny bone **83%**



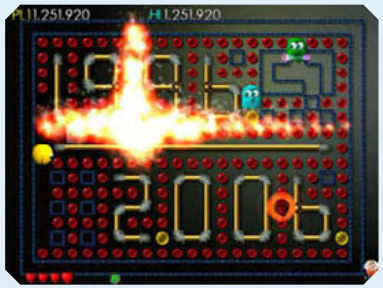
Mr. Smoozles Goes Nutso

Developer: Juniper Games
Publisher: www.juniper-games.com
Price: £5.99

Based on the online comic strip, Mr. Smoozles, this is a charming top-down 2D indy adventure game with an emphasis on humour. The plot revolves around a cat named Mr. Smoozles, who gets zapped with a mind altering ray when aliens invade the world, and, well, "goes nutso". Playing as his friend, Ed (who's also a cat), it's up to you to go around the world solving puzzles, and engaging in conversations with other characters who try a bit too hard to be funny. While it won't win any awards for originality, what remains is a fairly enjoyable romp, even if the puzzles are all a bit banal.

- Well designed characters
- Some humorous dialogue
- Really basic puzzles

Not a catastrophe **65%**



PocMon

Developer: EMV Software
Publisher: www.warblade.as/pocmon
Price: £10

PocMon. Sadly, it's not a new Pokémon game (as my spellchecker seems to think), but rather a clone of Namco's aging Pac-Man, with a few features hastily bolted-on. There are some pumping techno tunes playing in the background, to put you off your pill popping, and even a four player mode, that lets some people play as ghosts. However, no matter how much extra the game claims to add on, the basic stuff is the same, even if it does take place in some all new mazes. If you were tired of Pac-Man 25 years ago, you need not apply. For £10, we don't see that many will.

- Multiplayer's all right
- Not enough variety
- Pac-man clone

Wakka-wakka why? **54%**



Frets on Fire

Developer: Frets on Fire
Publisher: fretsonfire.sourceforge.net
Price: Free!

If you've ever picked up a Guitar Hero game before, you'll know how much fun they can be, but isn't there always a song you want to play that isn't included? Frets on Fire is answer to all your problems – a freeware guitar game that's Guitar Hero in everything but name, that lets you create your own songs, and is even playable with the 360's Guitar Hero controller. It does suffer from a few problems (random crashes and the like), but there's a thriving community already out there at the official fan forums that have tabbed and coded pretty much every song that has a guitar in it, so all you need to do is get browsing, and start jamming.

- Lets me play Killswitch
- 360 Guitar Compatibility
- Glitches

Freeware Freebird **88%**



Ricochet Infinity

Developer: Reflexive Entertainment
Publisher: Reflexive Entertainment
Price: $19.99 (~£10)

Although it may look a lot like ancient arcade hit, Breakout, the gameplay in Ricochet: Infinity is actually a whole lot deeper. One of the game's most unique features, the ability to alter the angle of your ball mid-air by using a pseudo-aftertouch technique, really adds a unique feel to what's already an incredibly accomplished game. Each level has been fantastically themed, and there are hundreds of new puzzles available for download (for free). With an achievements system that pushes you to get the most from each round, Ricochet Infinity is a casual classic.

- Aftertouch is cool
- Loads of free extra levels
- Achievements system

Explosive **81%**

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The Darkness Lair



Welcome one & all

All the latest news from online and competitive gaming.

Professional gaming is growing at such a phenomenal rate. Every year the prize funds increase and we see more and more coverage featured in the various forms of media around the world. This month we catch up with the Four Kings World of Warcraft Arena guild, Affliction, for an insight into the global phenomena but the question is, how long will it be until professional gaming events are taken seriously by televised media?



CLAN INTERVIEW

Kings go forth

The UK's best known clan joins WoW Arena



4K in WoW. More of them than you'd think, huh?

Being the only pro gaming team in the UK to emphasise on PC titles, Four Kings (www.four-kings.com) are globally seen as a force to be reckoned with. With the Four Kings WoW Arena guild, Affliction, kicking ass in various tournaments world wide, we caught hold of David Meckin, aka Zhodo, in a brief break from Dreamstalker and Blink Dragon bashing.

Four Kings have been around for a decade now going from strength to strength, how long have you been with the UK's only pro PC gaming team?

I've had two stretches with the Four Kings team. Firstly I played Return to Castle Wolfenstein with them about 3-4 years back attending and winning various LAN events as 4K^Vash before getting hooked on the MMORPG scene and burying myself in Star Wars Galaxies. World of Warcraft came out and just about everyone was playing it which lead me to cross paths with some of the Four Kings guys again and reigniting the great chemistry we had with them: it was inevitable that when Warcraft became as big as it was now we'd be the guild to represent them. A lot of us used to play FPS professionally for Four Kings. To answer the question literally, two years.

Could you give our readers some information on yourself and your guild?

My name is David "Zhodo" Meckin I'm from the North of England and I've been gaming a good eight years now, playing mostly first-person shooters and now MMORPGS. Other than gaming, I'm an avid football fan religiously watching my team, Arsenal, whenever I can. My guild, Affliction, was originally formed in the alpha stages of the US beta, before there was any Horde faction in the game at all. We were all friends from the FPS community and WoW was the next best thing coming out so we all got into one guild for it. It united us with several rival teams so it was pretty cool. From there we've snowballed and transformed a lot over the last three years a lot of old players stopped playing but we've gone from strength to strength culminating in our recent pickup by Four Kings. The hierarchy (Guild Master and officers) of our guild is all British which is a very rare commodity in a game that the Europeans generally dominate.

"We've snowballed and transformed a lot over the last three years of playing WoW"

With professional gaming attracting quite hefty payouts for the winning combatants, do you think we'll see more pro clans materializing?

There aren't many professionals left to pickup Warcraft teams now. Every big pro gaming team I can think of has a WoW team already and I see this only getting better with Blizzard vowing to support the scene and the general ease of running a WoW arena tournament means we'll see a whole lot more tournaments very soon.

A list of Professional teams with Warcraft teams are:

Four Kings (Affliction/Nashwan)
Schroet Kommando (Warders)
Mousesports (Nihilium)
Mob Gaming (Multiple teams)
Fnatic (Insurrection)
Pandemic (Power Trip)
United 5 (United 5)
Meet Your Makers (Log/Curse)
Evil Genius (HUKS)

Competing in various tournaments around the world isn't cheap, how does your guild manage to pay for all of the flights etc?

We're sponsored amazingly well by Intel UK who have been supporting us for many years now. They're very tuned in to the gaming scene which makes them very easy to work with. They generally know about events and results before we do, and seem to be big fans of the professional gaming scene which is fantastic for us because we're their team.

So what's next for your guild? Are you recruiting?

The PvE side is always recruiting. The PvE side of Warcraft is a perpetual battle and eventually your soldiers will get tired and you need some fresh blood to bring in to invigorate your team. The nature of PvE raiding requires you to always be taking people for this reason although we do have very strict filters on who we allow in.

The PvP arena team is not recruiting and never will be. It is a very small team (6-7 vs the PvE's 30+) so they never need to recruit anyone. It's a close knit team for maximum teamwork and camaraderie.

Find out more about the Four Kings' activities in WoW and other games at www.four-kings.com.

What's hot in the MMO gaming world?

MapleStory Europe



Having recently launched in Europe, Nexon have unveiled their latest addition to the MapleStory world, pets! In a recent update (after our review was written), players became able to buy their pets that aren't just super-cute but they also accompany and help players throughout their adventures. The first two introduced are the Brown Puppy and Brown Kitty but please be warned, you do have to feed, nurture and give them some attention.
en.mapleeurope.com/Maple.aspx



Archlord

Codemasters have finally released Episode 2: Season of Siege and it's available now. Not only content with adding a whole new chapter, you can now download and play the game absolutely free. Give it a go, after all you don't have to open that fat wallet do you?
www.archlordgame.com

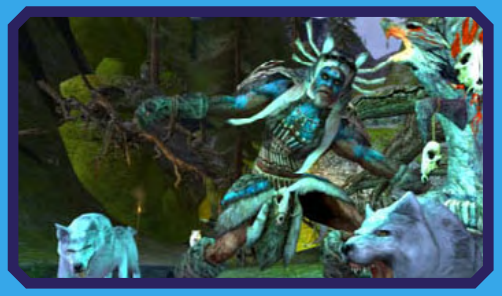


Red Stone

K2's episodic MMO has now entered beta and is open to whomever so wishes to download it. Featuring eight unique transforming character classes, strategic missions and countless hours of game play, Red Stone's certainly shaping up to be one interesting title.
www.playredstone.com

Lord of the Rings

The LOTR universe continues to expand with the launch of Book 10: The City of the Kings (the second free update to the game so far), which adds a whole slew of new features. The major additions include a new reputation system, which allows players to earn both positive and negative ratings and a bartering system. Players can trade trophies earned in battle for new armour sets, mounts and items. Over 100 quests have also been added where players will encounter new monsters, dungeons and more.
www.lotro-europe.com





Updates & Patches

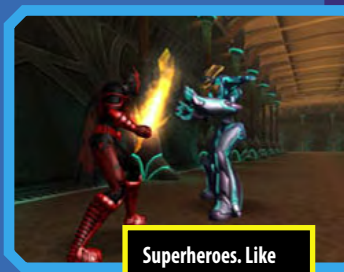


Vanguard: Saga Of Heroes



Developers do listen to their community and with the latest update for Vanguard: Saga of Heroes it goes to show that voicing your opinion works. The game has been made more user friendly, by request. It's now also easier to look for a group to join that includes more functionality and a more intuitive process for the player. Quest journal and tracking layout has also been modified so that more information is shown at once, allowing you to see your list of quests on the left, and the information on the quest you have selected's on the right. For more information, visit the official Vanguard: SOH website.
www.vanguardsoh.com

City of Heroes & City of Villains



The latest update irons out some problems experienced with Issue 10. Rikti ships now move in a more of a standardised manner, stealth powers are now available to use in PvP areas and the temporary power Power of Hamidon's can now be deleted. Characters below level 47 are not be able to select a Hamidon (or Synthetic Hamidon) Enhancement as a reward, although anything else can be selected. For the full release notes, visit the official COH/COV site.
uk.cityofvillains.com



HGZine PSP & DS games

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★★★
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★★★

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



Neil Mohr has been playing with and playing on PCs for over a decade.

COMPANY OF WEIRDOS

After loading a Company of Heroes saved game or watching replays I'm getting a load of purple squares with the odd text "BAD SPLASH" written inside of it. What is this rubbish and how do I get rid of it? I'm running a Radeon X800 Pro.

> *This is a relatively early problem with Company of Heroes that only effects ATI cards – even the latest HD2x00 generation. Supposedly the CoH v1.4 patch and upwards should have fixed the problem but we've still heard of people suffering. It's produced by a rouge place-holder explosion damage texture turning up. If the latest 1.71 patch doesn't fix problem nor the latest ATI Catalyst drivers then try reducing the texture quality to medium as that should force it to use a different texture pack.*

Bad textures are usually the fault of the game, but not always.



STALKED

In STALKER if I go to save a game or the options page the program freezes and I can't do anything. I have used this copy of STALKER without a problem in the past and currently everything else will run fine. I'm running a Windows XP PC with 1.5GB of memory and a GeForce FX 5700 with the latest drivers.

> *There is a known 'freeze on save' issue with STALKER and Windows Vista but as you're using Windows XP it's more likely to be a driver issue, as the game is relatively sensitive to these, particularly if you have an older graphics card. Our advice is to grab the latest driver from NVIDIA, uninstall the old one and then run a program called Driver Sweeper from www.guru3d.com/index.php?page=driversweeper. This handy program will remove all remnants and settings of your previous driver. Once done reinstall the latest one, you'd be surprised the number of problems it can fix.*



STALKER hasn't been the best bug free game launch.

ALL WOWED OUT

Every five to 15 minutes WoW just freezes, I can still hear sound and in full-screen mode I can't Alt-Tab out and have to restart my PC. I've updated all of my drivers and even attempted to revert them but that's not cured the problem. This is the first problem I've ever had with WoW!

> *Quite a number of people seem to be reporting a similar if not identical problem with few having much luck*

"Every five to 15 minutes WoW just freezes and I have to restart my PC"



It's unusual but WoW can fall over from time to time.

Tech Support



Protect your sensitive bits from surges with the right equipment.

> *with a solution. The only indications we've had of a fix is forcing WoW to use OpenGL. To try this; right-click your WoW shortcut, select Properties and in the Target box add -OPENGL after the final quotation mark make sure there is a space before it.*

MOBO AWARD

So there I was playing WoW with my girl and bang, all the power goes out in our home. When it came back on her PC was fine but mine stuck on the pre-BIOS Intel branded screen. I tried removing a few components, change the PSU and reset the CMOS but with no effect. So I assume the motherboard is fried. I don't fancy paying £200 on a new set of upgrades but I can't find a motherboard with AGP, which will support my socket 478 3GHz processor.

> *We did find a single ASRock P4I65G model over at Ebuyer, though we'd imagine other retailers will have the odd model in stock. This is also where EBAY is a life saver as people can be offloading all manner of out-of-date kit that you won't find for sale. As an aside we'd recommend you invest in some surge protected power strips, these cost as little as £15.*



Your Sony laptop might look sexy but if Vista won't play ball it's not going to be of much use for anything.

VISTA VIEWS

Help! I've got a VAIO AR31S Vista laptop and I can't get Quake 4 to run properly. I can get it to start but there's no mouse control. I tried updating it with hacked drivers and now it won't load!

> *Oh dear. We'd suggest you use the Vista Roll Back Driver feature that can be found in the Device Manager. As for the original problem as the mouse works perfectly with Vista it sounds like Quake is having trouble identifying it. Vista has a compatibility mode that can cure many of these types of problems. Right-click the Quake 4 shortcut, click the Compatibility tab, tick 'Run this program in compatibility mode' and make sure the menu option is on Windows XP and click OK.*

"The only fix we know is forcing WoW to run in OpenGL mode..."

GOT A PROBLEM?

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

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World in Conflict

Enemy Territory: Quake Wars
Guild Wars: Eye of the North
Stranglehold

PREVIEWS

Half-Life 2: Episode 2
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