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PCGzine

Issue 14 | Jan 2008

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

MIGHTY PLAYTEST!

AGE OF CONAN

The barbarian hordes unleashed...

PLAYED & RATED!

FRONTLINES: FUEL OF WAR

Does it have Battlefield running scared?

WIN LINEAGE II THE KAMAE!
Collectibles & games!



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!
Pirates of the Burning Sea



FIRST LOOK!

SPACE SIEGE
Dungeon Siege goes sci-fi

ALONE IN THE DARK
There's evil afoot in Central Park

PREVIEWS!

TOMB RAIDER UNDERWORLD
Lara gets all slippery!

RAINBOW SIX VEGAS 2
Always bet on Rainbow!

REVIEWS

1



Universe at War
Cross-platform strategy for the Xbox 360 and PC!

2



rFactor
The ultimate racing simulator hits the road

3



Beowulf
Do the monster mash in the game of the film

PLUS
SunAge • PDC Darts
Imperium Romanum

Welcome to PCGZine



Well, 2008 is off to an exciting start, with big franchise announcements for the Tomb Raider, Battlefield and Command & Conquer series and plenty of tasty multiplayer treats in store with Frontlines, Age of Conan, Rainbow Six Vegas 2 and Pirates of the Burning Sea. Although there has been the usual January temperance in game releases, from next month all abstinence is right out, with releases such as Assassin's Creed, Turning Point: Fall of Liberty, Frontlines: Fuel of War and Devil May Cry 4. In the meantime there's plenty to get your teeth into with Universe at War's demanding strategy and rFactor can be strongly recommended as a real racing simulation for car nuts.

Steve Brown, 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

Age of Conan

The mighty King Conan smites challengers to the MMO throne **PAGE 10**

WIN! LINEAGE II KAMAEL

QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away!

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Alone in the Dark | Rainbow Six Vegas 2 |
| Space Siege | Tomb Raider Underworld |
| Battlefield Heroes | Frontlines: Fuel of War |
| Tiberium | Pirates of the Burning Sea |
| Duke Nukem Forever | Universe at War |
| Mirror's Edge | Beowulf The Game |
| Penumbra: Black Plague | PDC World Championship Darts |
| Jack Keane | rFactor |
| Codename Panzers: Cold War | Imperium Romanum |
| Age of Conan | SunAge |

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW! Pirates of the Burning Sea

The new Ahrrr!PG ready to board **PAGE 20**

Frontlines: Fuel of War

Oil's well that ends well **PAGE 17**

Rainbow Six Vegas 2

You can't get enough Sin City **PAGE 13**

Tomb Raider Underworld

Lara decides to get a grip in the new adventure **PAGE 15**

Universe at War

Planet Earth is under attack yet again! **PAGE 23**

rFactor

The ultimate race simulation **PAGE 28**

Alone in the Dark

Lurking horror **PAGE 4**

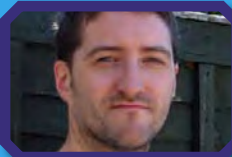
MEET THE TEAM

Probably the best games writers on the planet



Steve Hill

Declared war on the entire universe. He has issues.



Neil Mohr

If it's made of silicon, Neil will have his expert hands all over it.



Quintin Smith

Was sent to the Frontlines but came back unscathed. Sort of.



Ian Morris

Tried to keep the 'wulf from the door by doing mad dances.

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.



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ALONE IN THE DARK

Publisher: Atari
Developer: Eden Games
Heritage: Alone in the Dark 1-3 and Alone in the Dark: The New Nightmare
Link: www.centraldark.com
ETA: March



"Every conspiracy theory you can imagine"

Cars have a hot-wiring mini game.



Light will be one of your weapons against the dark.



Look down for your in-coat inventory!

New York's famous subway will feature.



Alone in the Dark

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Alone in the Dark!

LATEST NEWS

Park life that's more monstrous than municipal

What's the story?

New York's Central Park is being overrun by evil. And we're not talking muggers and litterbugs. Every conspiracy theory and mystical rumour you can imagine comes bubbling to the surface as the dark history of the massive park emerges to engulf the horrified citizens of the Big Apple. You are investigator Edward Carnby, once again thrust into the heat of the demonic action to shed light on the situation and purge the denizens of the ancient past.

What do we know?

Light and fire will be critical weapons for Carnby. The flame technology is looking as hot as Satan warming a poker in the sun, and spreading flame effects are absolutely stunning, combustible materials catching with real physics. There are innovative ways for Carnby to manufacture fire by combining items from his inventory. For instance, he can open his jacket and look down to select a flammable paint canister and tape, wrapping the canister to make a sticky fire bomb that can be attached to creatures, who then run around spreading the flames.

When do we get more?

We're hoping to have the full review in our next issue!

Anything else to declare?

The game will be structured in TV-like interactive episodes in a 24-style cliffhanger way.

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Publisher: SEGA
Developer: Gas Powered Games
Heritage: Dungeon Siege 1 & 2, Supreme Commander
Link: www.gaspoweredgames.com
ETA: Summer

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



Those guns look very Halo don't they?



The Armstrong is a big ship with vast environments.



"You'll have a customisable robot sidekick to help out"

We're going to need some bigger lobster pots!



The Hitchhiker's Guide says nothing good about them.

Space Siege

LATEST NEWS

Sci-fi adventure from the maker of Dungeon Siege

What's the story?

Chris Taylor of Gas Powered Games has escaped his dungeon and laid siege to something a little bigger – space. Aliens are attacking Earth and only one colony ship manages to escape before the planet is obliterated. You are combat engineer Seth Walker aboard the Armstrong and it's up to you to save what remains of humanity.

What do we know?

This is a combat-heavy RPG and you'll have plenty of weapons and armour to help you smash the alien threat. Combat tactics will allow good use of cover as well as setting up ambushes. Best of all you'll have HR-V, a customisable robotic sidekick to help out in a fight, or combine with for powerful combo attacks.

When do we get more?

We're hoping for a hands-on playtest next month.

Anything else to declare?

Gas Powered Games wants the game to ask the player what it means to be human. So expect experiences akin to getting up on a Monday morning and treading barefoot on a piece of Lego, burning the crust of every pizza you ever cook and deleting the browser history on your wife's laptop before she gets in. And probably some stuff about ethics, love and spirituality. Blah.



"Damn it, it's out of sugar and creamer again".

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7 UP

More golden nuggets of gaming glory to come

Codename Panzers: Cold War

Publisher: 10tacle Studios | ETA: Spring

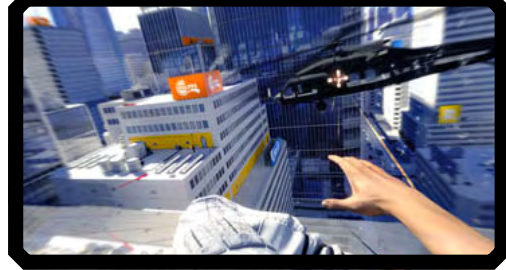
Set in an alternate version of the 1950s, this deep strategy sequel imagines what would have happened during the Berlin blockade if East and West had initiated a ground war after a Russian fighter and an American supply plane suffer a mid-air collision. The Cold War runs hot this Spring.



Mirror's Edge

Publisher: EA | ETA: Late 2008

This first-person action adventure from Battlefield developer DICE aims to revolutionise the way we control characters in FPS games, giving the player an enhanced sense of the body he's playing in when running, jumping and climbing. Guns will be present but DICE say that they want to put the person back in first-person. Sounds intriguing and we hope that it works!



Tiberium

Publisher: EA | ETA: Autumn

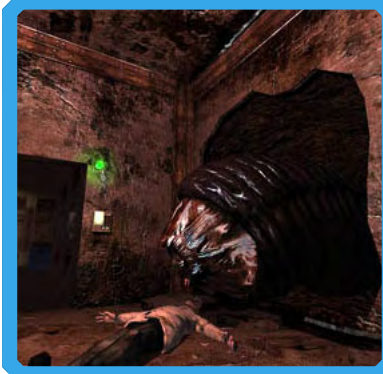
Standing in what was once the Mediterranean sea is an enormous Alien tower, whose dormant power is about to wake and signal alien invasion of planet Earth – the worst news for the Med since easyCruise started sailing. This Command & Conquer universe title will be a first-person squad shooter. We just hope that it's better than C&C Renegade was!



Penumbra: Black Plague

Publisher: Paradox Interactive | ETA: March

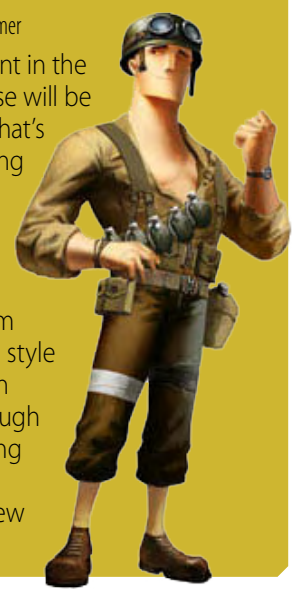
This creepy sequel is a first-person adventure that will call upon brain over brawn to solve fiendish puzzles as hero Philip struggles through a dark underground complex to discover the real reason for his father's disappearance. Apparently dad's sexy new secretary, the abandoned canoe and the tickets to Brazil were just false leads.



Battlefield Heroes

Publisher: EA | ETA: Summer

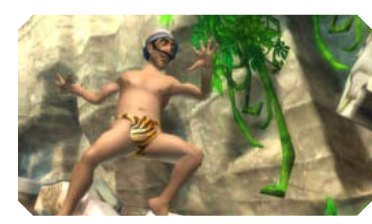
The next instalment in the Battlefield franchise will be absolutely FREE! That's right, EA is dumping down the hardcore team shooter for the mass market, introducing a Team Fortress 2 cartoon style and seeing if it can make money through in-game advertising and player micro-transactions for new in-game outfits.



Duke Nukem Forever

Publisher: 3D Realms | ETA: 'When it's done'

Now don't laugh, but there has been a development in the ridiculous saga of Duke Nukem Forever. There's still no release date of course, but 3D Realms head George Broussard has approved the release of the first trailer in six years. It's a minute long and reveals a new look, which Broussard says represents the tech restart of 2004 with all previously released media no longer valid. Bring it on! Before we're dead.



Jack Keane

Publisher: Kalypso | ETA: March

Very much in the spirit of Monkey Island, this comic point-and-click mystery follows the eponymous adventurer around the colonial globe as he takes on an assignment that brings him up against a mad scientist with an army of trained monkeys!

ON THE RADAR

LATE 2008

- Football Manager 2009 (October)
- Dead Space (TBC 2008)

SUMMER 2008

- Race Driver: GRID (Summer)
- Tiberium (Autumn)

SPRING 2008

- Rainbow Six: Vegas 2 (March 28)
- Empire: Total War (Summer)
- Mirror's Edge (TBC 2008)
- Devil May Cry 4 (February)
- Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Conviction (March)
- Prototype (June 27)
- Postal III (TBC)
- Turning Point: Fall of Liberty (March)
- Battlefield Heroes (Summer)
- Tom Clancy's Air Combat (TBC)
- Assassin's Creed (March)
- Alone in the Dark (March)

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HANDS ON



Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Funcom
Heritage: Anarchy Online
Link: www.ageofconan.com
ETA: May 20th

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of Age Of Conan: Hyborian Adventures!

Ye gods! What manner of unholy nasty is this?

AGE OF CONAN: HYBORIAN ADVENTURES

Out to crush enemy MMOs and hear the lamentation of their women!

Age of Conan is a very adult game, with brutal themes and bloody combat. Eidos warns that, "This is no cartoony fairytale, 'Conan' is made by grown-ups, for grown-ups, giving online gamers the chance to unleash the ultimate havoc and fury". It's unusual for an MMO to

close off its potential market this way, so what does Age of Conan have that gives it such confidence?

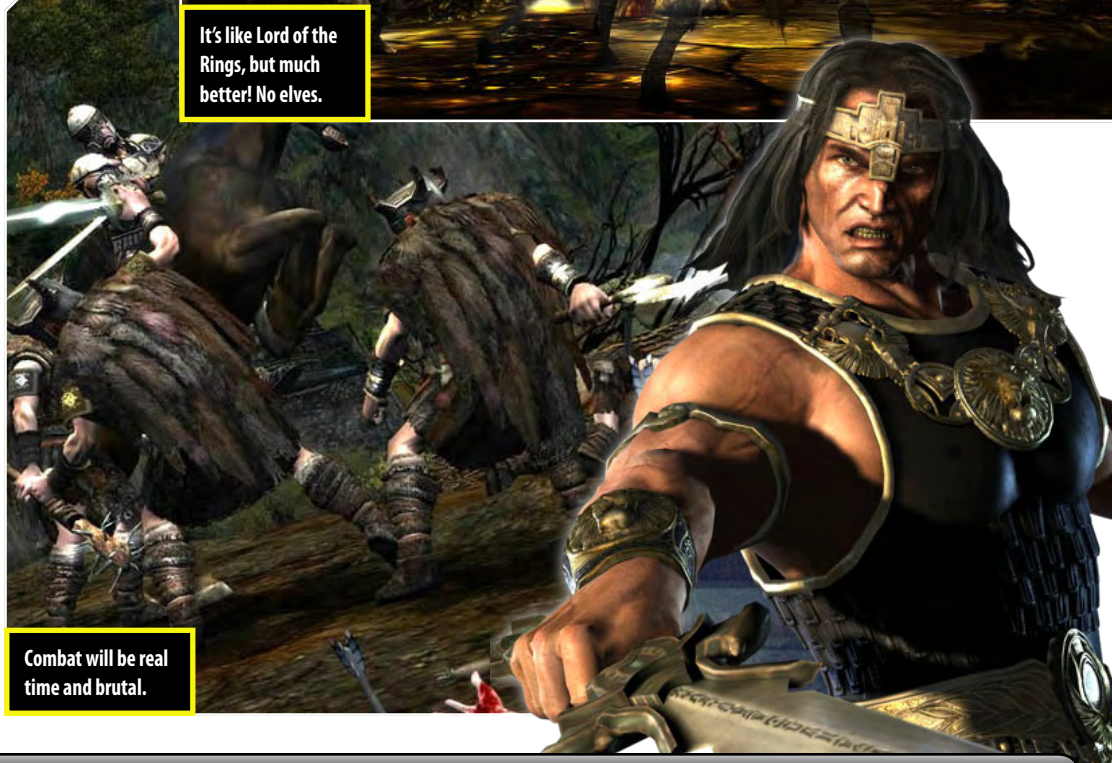
Well, the Conan licence for a start! You don't get much more confident than the mighty King Conan of Aquilonia, although we join the fray as his kingdom faces great evils and as his rule approaches the brink of chaos. It will be your task to become one of Conan's messengers of death and rid the kingdom of the malevolent gods and mythical creatures that threaten it.

Another massive bonus for Age of Conan is that it's not only a mature MMO, but also contains a massive and very strong solo RPG game. This foray deep into Hyboria has been scripted by an impressive array of writers with

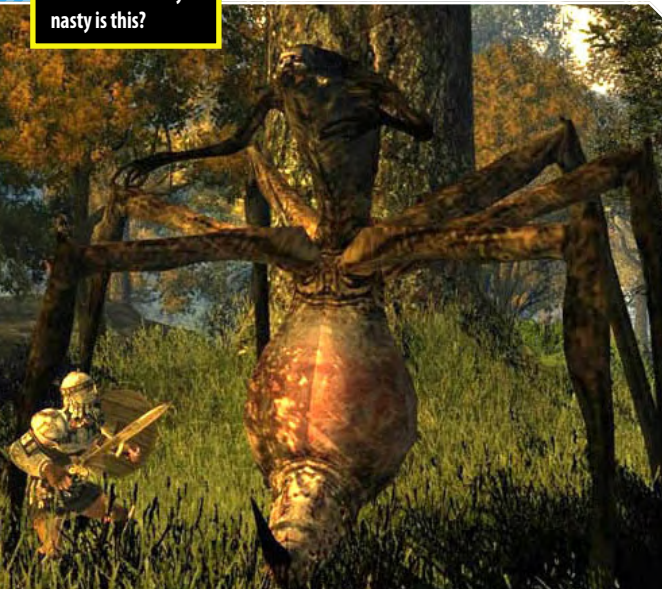
"It will be your task to become one of Conan's messengers of death"



It's like Lord of the Rings, but much better! No elves.



Combat will be real time and brutal.





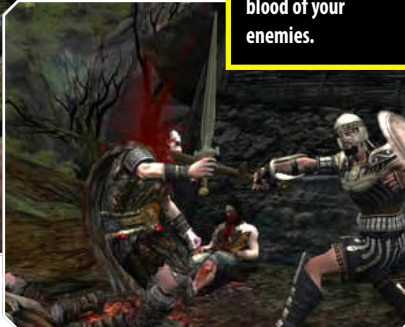
Magic will also play a part in combat.

"You may even be able to get drunk and punch camels!"



The scale of some enemies will be awesome.

The land will be drenched in the blood of your enemies.



Hack and slash on foot, or while mounted.

> **Age Of Conan** continued

previous credits on the acclaimed storylines of *The Longest Journey*, *Dreamfall* and *Anarchy Online*. So the player can emerge a hero and liegeman to Conan from the single-player game and continue indefinitely with even more open questing, plus PvE and PvP combat in the MMO. That's not a bad deal in anyone's ancient tome.

And the world of Hyboria is enormous (as it would need to be to hold men of Conan's size). Comprised of over 30 distinct regions within the three countries of Aquilonia (King

Conan's land), Cimmeria (the place of Conan's birth) and Stygia (a desert land), there's a bountiful array of geographies for exploration – from said deserts to frozen wastes, from lush jungle valleys to craggy mountains. Explore filthy old dungeons, or travel to see the wonders of gleaming cities. Who knows, you may even be able to get drunk and punch camels in one of the marketplaces?

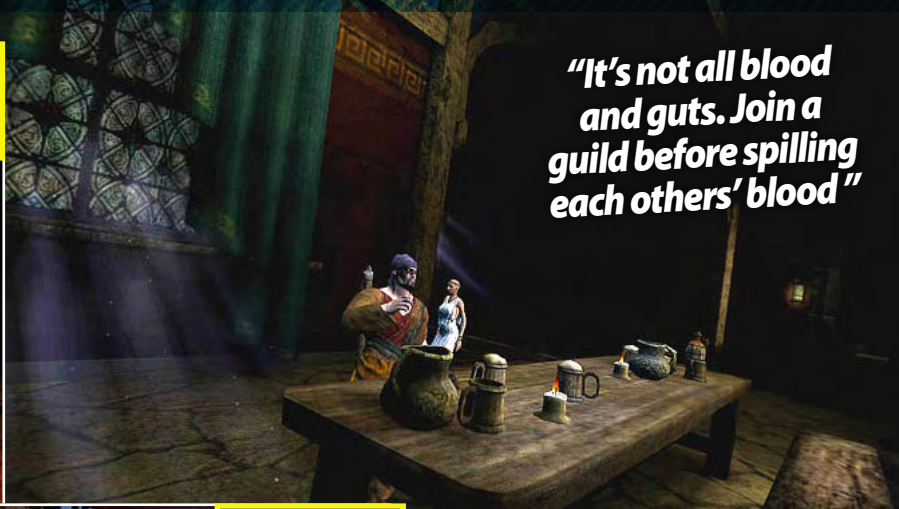
Thanks to the official licence, *Age of Conan* has over 70 years of regional history to draw upon, so there's a rich tapestry of adventure waiting for you to tear it off the wall and wipe the blood from your sword. Brutal combat

uses an innovative engine for an MMO, with a multi-point melee system that dispenses with traditional RPG formulae for a far more visceral and realistic approach. Swing your weapons exactly where you direct them in real time, from the ground, or while mounted. But the Real Combat engine goes even further, allowing not only head-to-head fights, but also far wider battle formations for epic assaults in multiplayer, giving a command structure you can apply to other players and NPCs if you're leading your side's assault.

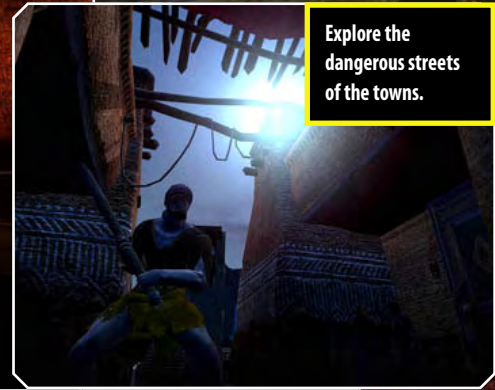
As mentioned, combat is both PvP and PvE in *Age of Conan*, so you can fight alone, or in groups against monsters and demons as well as fellow human opponents. The scale of fighting ranges from mini-game skull-crushing contests, through organised gladiatorial arena fights and less organised drunken street brawls, right >



Arena matches will be a real test of combat skill.



"It's not all blood and guts. Join a guild before spilling each others' blood"



Explore the dangerous streets of the towns.

Interiors are extremely detailed too.



"Why did I build on the volcano, why?"

> Age of Conan continued

up to massive city sieges, which employ towering battlekeeps, cavalry and catapults.

But it's not all blood and guts. There's also an extensive guild system, allowing players to group together before spilling each others' blood and guts, as you surround and tear down rival guilds' carefully constructed castles, hack them to bits and pillage their wealth. This must be the "large range of social gameplay opportunities" Eidos refers to! A high

degree of character customisation is also promised, although we bet there will be an awful lot of Conan clones strutting around Hyboria to start with. With the ultimate custom option of player-made cities, along with crafting, the opportunities for the community to make this MMO their own are manifold.

In sound and vision Conan is no weakling either. Graphically the game uses all the very latest bells and whistles to provide one of the best-looking MMOs we've ever seen, and if surround sound is your thing, then hear the lamentation of the widowed

women in glorious 7.1. This is going to be a blockbuster experience such as the MMO community has rarely enjoyed and for once we could be looking at a real epic. "It is time for the gloves to come off," says Game Director Gaute Godager, and we can assure you that Conan is going to bare-fist punch your camel right on the nose. ●

| | | |
|------|--|------------------------------------|
| | HOW COMPLETE? 90% | ANTICIPATION? 90% |
| | <i>Cracking the skulls of other MMOs</i> | |



Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft Montreal
Heritage: Sixth Rainbow iteration and sequel to Rainbow Six Vegas
Link: http://rainbowsixgame.us.ubi.com
ETA: March

◆ HANDS ON

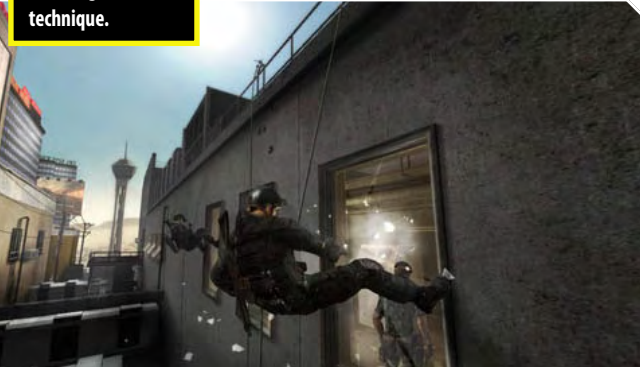
TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX VEGAS 2

"They've been on the terronet and ordered new gadgets"

This time we're really going to get that pot of gold!

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Vegas 2!

Breaching windows is still a great technique.



Rainbow Six Vegas ended with unresolved revelations and a job still to be finished. Betrayed by one of Team Rainbow's own squad members, Gabriel Novak, the game ended with the initial terrorist missile threat thwarted, but the defected Gabriel still at large after his chopper was shot down near the Hoover dam. Rainbow Six Vegas 2 will pick up the plot and pursue the less than angelic Gabriel and his terrorist backers.

The action heads straight back to Sin City and we're promised an even bigger battleground in this sequel that

will bring in more Vegas hot spots (or approximations of the real sites) and the dirty backstreets behind the glitzy facade. We've been to the Sahara buffet room and we can tell you that there's a side to this ultimate pleasure town that no-one needs to see! But hopefully Team Rainbow will skip lukewarm hash browns and tuck into the sequel's vastly more intelligent and tooled-up terrorists instead.

This time you won't have such a technological advantage over the enemy organisation. They've been on the terronet and ordered a next-day delivery of new military gadgets that will make them twice as deadly. In Rainbow Six Vegas you wore them down with riot shields, thermal goggles and night vision, but in Vegas 2 these will all be available to your foes as well, making darkness more of a colleague than a friend and headshots far more challenging when the shields are up.



It's all gone a bit Club Trtropicana.

We imagine that grenades will have to be used far more tactically this time to really negate enemy defences. And AI has been revamped to match the new hardware, with many more tactics for the terrorists to employ than the patrol, defend and attack of the last game. Expect to be pinned down, flanked and surprised by the new breed, making this already challenging shooter an even more nervy affair.

Customisation of your clothing and >



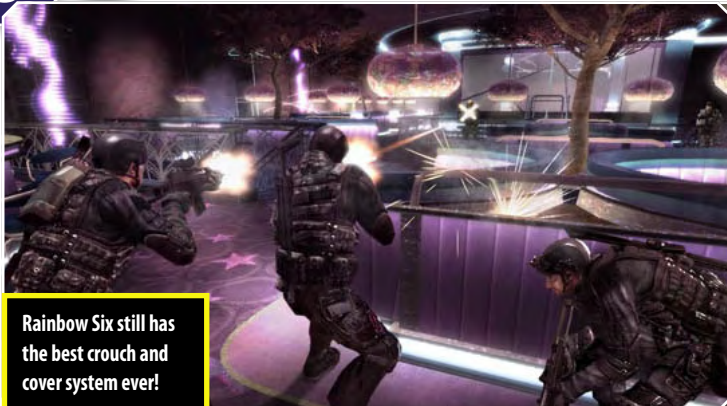
The terrorists now use riot shields too.



Last night a DJ gave his life.



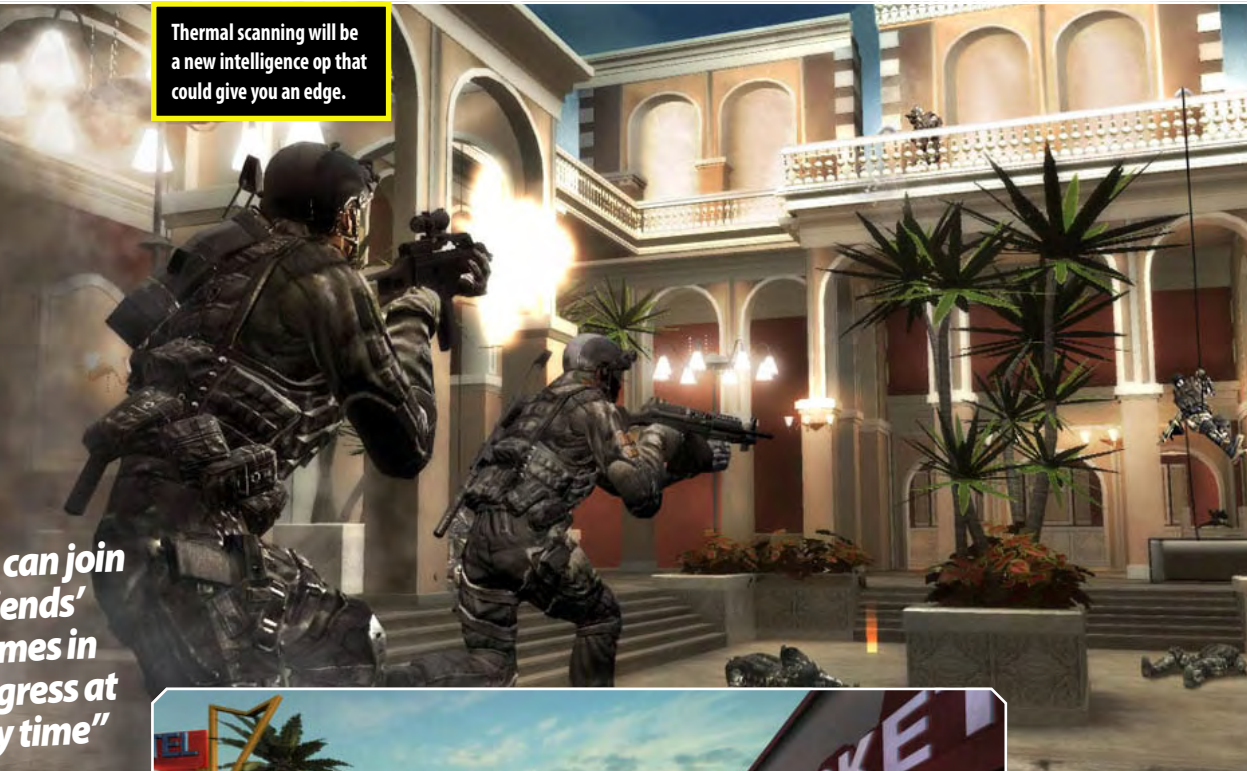
Poles means dancers, but where are they?



Rainbow Six still has the best crouch and cover system ever!



Co-op play will remain one of the biggest draws.



Thermal scanning will be a new intelligence op that could give you an edge.

"You can join friends' games in progress at any time"

> **R6 Vegas 2** continued

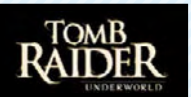
kit remains a bonus of experience and achievement-related promotion in Vegas 2, but this time your single-player as well as multiplayer rewards will put points in the gear bank to customise and camouflage your online and offline persona. This now works both ways so that your multiplayer gains feed back into the solo game as well. 11 new weapons have been added to the already extensive armoury of real-world guns (who says war doesn't bring progress) and as you rank up you'll be able to customise sights, mags and silencers until you have your perfect

personalised kit. Online play is much improved too, with 13 new maps, two new versus modes and a far better matchmaking system to find games that suit your specifications. Co-op play also sees fresh ideas and instead of having to construct somewhat artificial groups of levels from the solo game to play with human team mates, you'll now be able to join friends' games in progress at any time, something long asked for by the R6 community and now provided. We're very excited about this sequel, although slightly worried at how tough it may prove now that the terrorists have all the good gear too. No fair! ●



Jungle camo? They were asking for it!

| | | |
|------|---|-------------------------------|
| | HOW COMPLETE? | FIRST IMPRESSIONS? |
| | <i>Adding even more colour to the tactical spectrum</i> | |



Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Crystal Dynamics
Heritage: About 20 multi-platform TR games since 1996
Link: www.tombraider.com
ETA: Winter

◆ HANDS ON

TOMB RAIDER UNDERWORLD

Lara becomes a Mexican calendar girl!

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of Tomb Raider Underworld!

The next instalment in the Tomb Raider adventures will head to Mayan Mexico (also visiting Australia, Easter Island, the Vatican and Mesopotamia), drawing on the ancient mythologies of the southern region to pit Lara Croft against the evil gods of the Underworld in an all-new mystery. Five days of the Mayan calendar have

gone missing. We know what that feels like – Christmas and New Year are but a blur and we’re still trying to piece together what happened from the empty bottles of Baileys, Advocat and Sloe Gin that unleashed the malevolent spirits Ha’g’novar and Indig Esti’on.

The missing days represent a time of apocalypse that dissolves the barriers

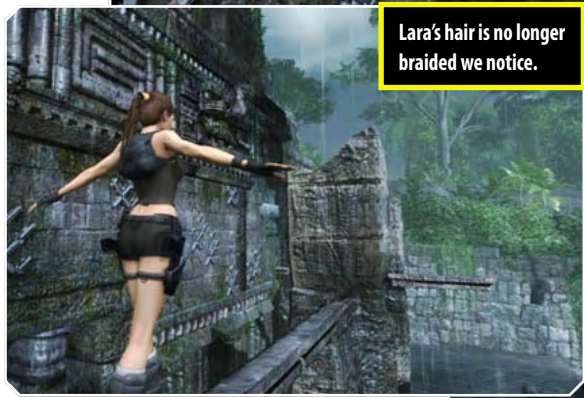


Lara’s movement will be even suppler now.

Wet ledges will now be more slippery to grip.



“Five days of the Mayan calendar have gone missing”



Lara’s hair is no longer braided we notice.



Environmental damage will be persistent.

between the human and spiritual worlds, allowing the bad gods to walk the earth. Maybe it’s best they stay down the back of the Mayan sofa for all eternity. But no doubt there’s a rival time team involved who think they can turn the evil powers to their own ends and it’s going to be down to Lara to save Mexico and probably the planet from the end of days.

But the environment will be as malicious as the mortal and deific enemies in Underworld, with massive

progress in realistic weather effects. Graphically stunning, the new wind, rain and storm effects will pound Lara with apocalyptic lightning maelstroms, buffeting her with high winds, lashing her with slippery rain and throwing sudden cracking thunderbolts around ➤



Mayan environments are absolutely vast.



Use captured weapons with the environment.



Is the Sun God on strike or something?



The lighting of textures is simply stunning.

> **Tomb Raider** continued

her. Foliage thrashes with the real-world weather effects, lightning snaps frozen landscapes and the overall sense of a truly wild and dynamically lit environment is nothing short of awesome.

Lara herself will sport new technology that gets her wet, sweaty and muddy. Steady now. With dozens of such layers to her skin tone and texture, she'll outdo the chassis of a SEGA Rally Subaru in terms of accumulated filth. And to take the skin state even further, Crystal Dynamics has built Lara so that she slowly dries when wet and can wash off mud by standing in the rain, or plunging into a

pool. Never mind those lost calendar days, we're going to spend most of our time soaking the poor girl and watching her roll in mud. To research the limits of the new graphics engine you understand.

Lara's movement has been upgraded significantly too and her motion-captured acrobatics are now aided by the ability to climb walls and shimmy corners in a fully fluid and non-rectilinear way. But hazardous creatures are more nimble now as well, with large spiders able to scuttle along floors and jump to bite at her from walls and swinging poles. Lara can also use her massive environments far more intelligently in Underworld, taking weapons such as fighting poles off

dead enemies and lodging them in rock walls to access new areas (as well as using them in combat herself).

With optional difficulty settings allowing you to tailor on-screen tips and hints to your skill level and puzzle-solving prowess, everything about Underworld suggests an unprecedented level of thought about how we like to play and how to retain challenge while easing frustration. Underworld could well signal a breakthrough game for Miss Croft. ●

| | | |
|------|---|--------------------------------------|
| | HOW COMPLETE? 50% | FIRST IMPRESSIONS? 80% |
| | Wet and wild. An impressive leap forward. | |

HANDS ON



Publisher: THQ
Developer: Kaos Studios
Heritage: Battlefield 2: Desert Combat, Splinter Cell
Link: www.frontlines.com
ETA: March

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of Frontlines: Fuel of War!

FRONTLINES: FUEL OF WAR

Get ready to start cooking with gas

It's the day after tomorrow and oil is finally running out. Nations are bickering, entire cities are rioting and and humanity has been brought to its knees with a crash. It's the worst disaster in our history. So thank heavens there's still good ol' war to help sort things out again.

"So plausible, it's hard to stop things from getting a bit spooky"

Frontlines' near-future setting is surprisingly bleak and creepy for a large scale, team-based multiplayer shooter, but that wasn't Kaos Studios' aim. Their cutscenes are 100% stock action movie, it's just that when you deal with subject matter as plausible as this it's hard to stop things from getting a bit spooky.

No matter- if Frontlines is ever going to be competition for EA's Battlefield series then Kaos need the kind of strong, contemporary setting that Battlefield 2142 mistakenly decided against. And Frontlines' setting is very, very cool indeed.

It seems in the year 2024 the average soldier



It's all fun and games until someone flies an explosive drone through the window.

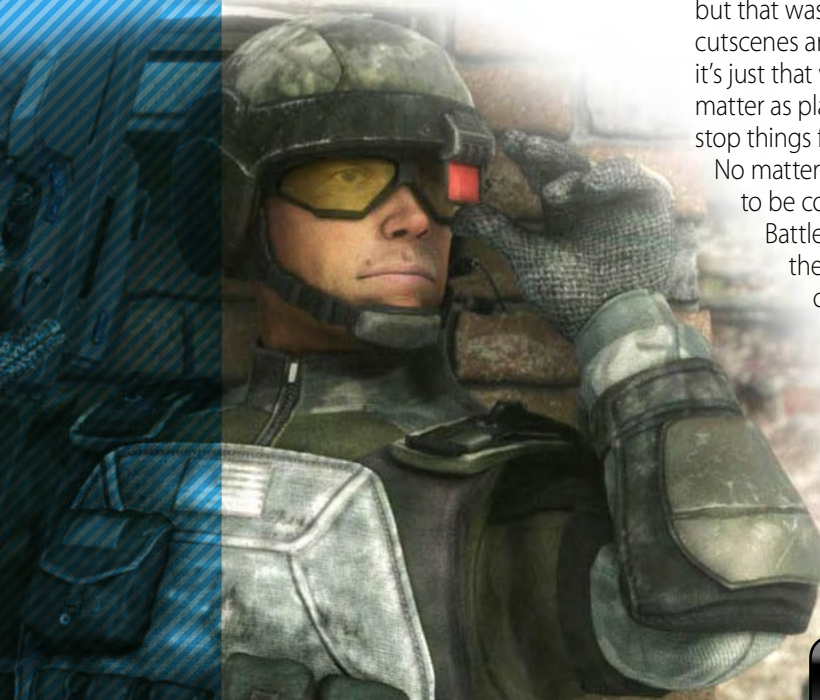
Ahh. Lovely trees. Who said this was a violent game, again?

No medics here. Everyone fights, no one quits.

has a lot more toys to play with. Advents in robotics mean lots of soldiers carry remote control drones that range from rocket-equipped helicopters to C4 charges on supercharged wheels. Then there's the EMP technology that allows specialist

soldiers to operate invisible to radar, or fire rockets and deploy transmitters that shut down any vehicle or computer in the area.

What's brilliant about these abilities is that they slot perfectly into the existing framework of modern





A crowded gunfight in an oil refinery is definitely either the best or worst idea ever. We're not sure which.



You know you're having fun when you can't tell the difference between sunsets and explosions.

> **Frontlines** continued

shooters - Frontlines also features the same airstrikes, tanks, missile launchers, turrets, grenades, jeeps, attack choppers, fighter jets, plastic explosives and knives that you might be hoping for. Neither drones or EMP supersede or are made pointless by any of this, they just sit on top of it like a dollop of ice cream on a hot brownie. A hot brownie of WAR, with over 60 vehicles and weapons.

Urban worriers

Judging from our playtest the result is a game that's that bit more involved than its peers. Every player has that many more options both in the game and on the loadout screen, and whether you pick Ground Support, EMP Tech, Drone Tech or Air Support, you've got more to worry about, too. If you work as a sniper you need to keep an ear out for the low buzzing of flying bomb-drones, a tank driver will need to watch for the vehicle graveyards that indicate a hidden EMP station, and so on.

And when you're dealing with a



"The explosions, grudges, duelling and heroism are intense"

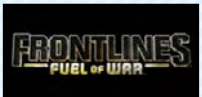
game that handles up to 32 players in one match, all those little options add up to a whole lot more chaos. Anyone who thinks 32 players is superfluous should be convinced otherwise by a packed Frontlines server - the sheer quantity of cool stuff going on, of explosions and grudges and duelling and heroism, makes for a glorious, intense multiplayer experience.

So you've got all this gear and you're ready to kick a huge and varied amount of ass. Now what is it you actually do?

Frontlines maps are all won the same way - by pushing the map's front line past your enemy's base while making sure it doesn't happen to you. >



10,000 kills unlocks the Delorean. Really! (Not really).



"The fuel air bomb scares everybody with its sinister hissing"

Part of an attack like this, you'll never feel so small and so manly at the same time.

Got to admit, we never saw tanks flipping in our preview build...



"Anti-missile defenses include flares, and stealth modes for helicopters."

> **Frontlines** continued

You do this by capturing the objective points scattered across the map, holding the territory around them or accessing a local computer. Two or three of these link up to create an artificial 'frontline', and once you've captured enough, the frontline shifts forwards and renders the next row of objectives ready for capture.

Action Man

Big as some of the maps are, no one ever has to hike across them because

each objective point you capture can act as a spawn point. Everyone's in the thick of the action, all the time. Which brings us onto Frontlines' other trick to keep things fast and fun - levels.

Whichever role you choose, capturing objectives and making kills quickly levels you up. Now this isn't like Call of Duty 4 because your levels are taken away at the end of a match, and this makes a balancing mechanism - the longer a match goes on, the more ludicrous everyone's abilities and the quicker the frontline moves.

For example, air support on the Red

Star Alliance side (the EVIL side made up of Russia and China and differs only slightly from the Western Coalition) starts with small, quick, precision airstrikes. Ten minutes later you'll unlock carpet bombs that clear whole streets, and finally you'll get your trembling hands on the fuel air bomb, which scares everybody with its sinister hiss

before obliterating everyone, indoor and outdoor, over a wide area.

Frontlines might not share the ambition of a lot of next-gen multiplayer games, but then it's not like this is a particularly crowded genre. Until we find out what DICE are scheming with Battlefield 3, Frontlines could prove just what the medic ordered. ●

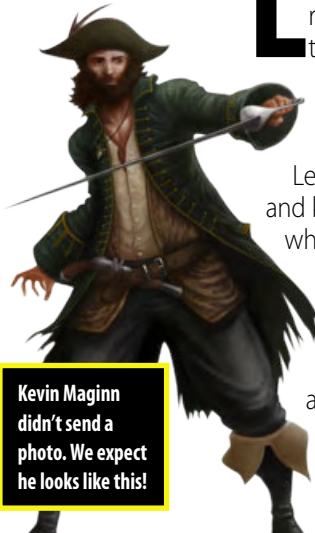
| | | |
|------|--|--------------------------|
| | HOW COMPLETE? | ANTICIPATION? |
| | <i>More explosions-per-second than we've seen in forever</i> | |



Publisher: Sony Online Entertainment
Developer: Flying Lab Software
Players: MMO (thousands)
Certificate: PEGI 12+
Features: Solo, group and PVP gameplay, English, French, Spanish and Pirate nations, sea and land action.
ETA: OUT NOW

“We began by trying to define swashbuckling”

Pirates of the Burning Sea sets sail imminently. We suggest you get on board...



Kevin Maginn didn't send a photo. We expect he looks like this!

Life on the main is tough but rewarding. Even if those rewards tend to be someone else's booty ending up in the hold of your schooner after a deadly sea battle. Kevin 'Isildur' Maginn is Lead Designer on this salty MMO and kindly took time out from whittling a new peg and grooming his parrot to hahh ahhhhsner some questions, me lad! Don't miss Issue 3 of MMOZine where we'll have the full review and an exclusive PotBS in-game item to give away to lucky readers – see www.gamerzines.com for details.

What does swashbuckling mean to you and how will our swashes be buckled in PotBS?

We actually began the design process with a document trying to define 'swashbuckling' to ourselves, so that we could measure our combat against a fixed set of expectations. In short, we believe swashbuckling has three important components: cinematic swordplay, a hero against impossible odds, and environmental interactions. We've focused on the first two as part of our initial strategy; we've spent a lot of time ensuring that our animations tie together correctly, and the system is designed to allow and encourage a single player to take on groups of enemies and cut through them like a hot knife through butter. As for the third part of the definition, we're still discussing the best way to approach it. Something to look forward to.

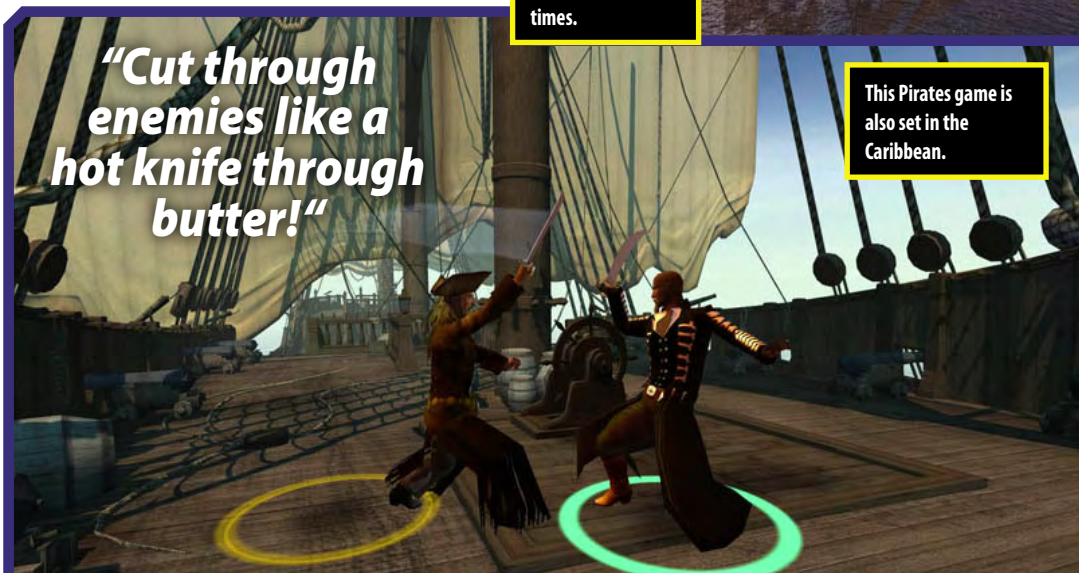
How did you research classes for PotBS and which are you most pleased with?



Must be an evangelical service.

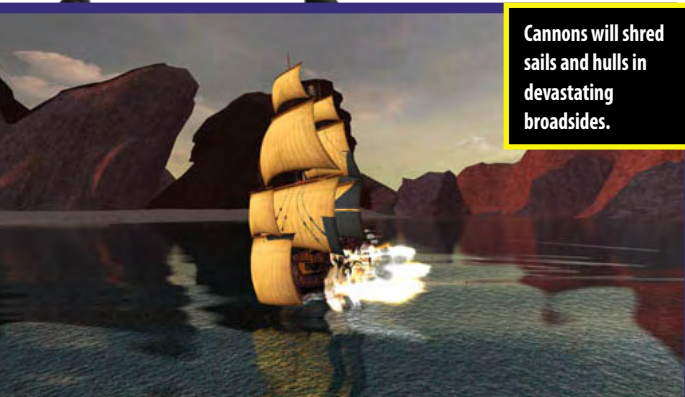


PotBS is also a very beautiful game at times.



“Cut through enemies like a hot knife through butter!”

This Pirates game is also set in the Caribbean.



Cannons will shred sails and hulls in devastating broadsides.



> Interview continued

The process of creating the careers was a long, convoluted one. Initially, we separated the idea of the 'career' from the game functionality of a given role. So you might be a 'naval officer' and also a 'scout'. The former would determine your reputation with different factions, and provide access to missions and other career-specific content; the latter would determine your skills.

As we worked with this system, though, we were dissatisfied with the flavor of the resulting game experience. It didn't feel interesting to be an officer versus a privateer versus a pirate. After a lot of discussion and a lot of

brainstorming, we shifted focus to the idea of the career as game functionality – the traditional 'class' mechanic you're familiar with from other games. As soon as we did, the rest of the design worked itself out almost immediately.



Forget gold. Guard the dried fish – pirates love it!



Combat includes Fencing, Florentine and Dirty Fighting.

You'll also be able to design custom sails and import them.



"I hadn't heard of Captain Pugwash before now, but Wikipedia has filled me in"

I'm happiest with the Freetrader career, because it has enormous strengths that are not immediately apparent. Played correctly, the Freetrader is potentially the toughest career in the game. A determined Freetrader is nearly impossible to sink.

We think everyone is going to want a hook hand – how do you go about getting one exactly?
I can't tell you that. Yet.

What is the maximum scale of a sea battle? How many ships can be involved at once?

Currently in the open sea battles are restricted to 6 versus 6. However, in the port conquest battles that are the climax of a nation's attempt to seize a port from another nation, the scale increases fourfold to 24 versus 24. Nearly fifty ships going at each other at once is a fairly impressive sight, especially when most of them are large warships with massive broadsides.

Who is your favourite pirate from film, game, literature, or even reality? Ours is Captain Pugwash – have you ever heard of him?

I'm partial to Bully Hayes. I hadn't heard of Captain Pugwash before now, but Wikipedia has filled me in. ●

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GETTING STEAMY

I'M A BIG FAN OF STEAM and download a lot of games that way, but will there ever be massively multiplayer games available on the service? I think it's an area that's really lacking and I don't really understand why.

> Mark Saunders

> PCGZ says... You're right, this is an area of Steam (Valve's online

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Eve Online is the first MMO to be found on Steam!

game delivery system) that hasn't been exploited at all, although we hear that the superb spacefaring MMO Eve Online should now be available on the Steam network, the first of many MMO client downloads we hope. Check it out now at <http://steamgames.com> and give it a trial.

SAVE THE DAY

I THINK THEY SHOULD very quickly create a CGI [Ghostbusters] film just like they did with Ninja Turtles. However, unlike Ninja Turtles I want the game to be awesome. This has the potential to be truly brilliant as long as they keep the gameplay simple to control, challenging and not repetitive – see ghost, capture ghost, funny cutscene, then more busting! There need to be plenty of challenges. Bring on the Ghostbusters!

> Andrew Higgins

> PCGZ says... Yes, let's hope Ghostbusters the game is a league ahead of the Ninja Turtles. From

what we've seen already, we think that the scale of the project alone suggests this will be far more than a lazy film licence cash cow. The age of the original film release may actually help the quality of the game, because it has to be critically acclaimed to succeed commercially. Ghostbusters is a great film and still a strong brand, but the game won't have a fresh film to ride on for mass market sales.

BATTLE AXED?

PLEASE, PLEASE REASSURE ME that Battlefield Heroes, the free release coming this summer isn't the new direction for the entire Battlefield series. It looks fine and everything, but it's clearly for casual gamers and I'd hate to think this dumbed-down version is all the hardcore fans are going to get now. That would be a betrayal worthy of court martial and a firing squad!

> Captain Concerned

> PCGZ says... Don't worry

THE CRUSADISTS

Assassin's Creed stabs older PCs in the back

Oh! My! God! Have you seen the specs you'll need to play Assassin's Creed when the PC version arrives next month? Let me just casually drop in THREE GIGABYTES RECOMMENDED RAM, or mention in passing CORE 2 DUO 2.2 GIGAHERTZ RECOMMENDED PROCESSOR. Why is it that a game that can run well on the now ageing Xbox 360 hasn't been optimised properly so that those of us without the very latest in cutting-edge super-PCs can run it properly? This makes Crysis look like a lightweight!

> Nick Forbes

> PCGZ says... It surprised us a bit too Nick. We'd have thought that the massive success and prediction-beating sales on console would have meant enough resources for good optimisation.



Optimisation clearly not a priority here!

Captain, Battlefield Heroes is indeed just an experimental release for EA to test new revenue models in the mass market. EA has already been keen to state that Battlefield Heroes is not the game that will be Battlefield 3. We expect the next Battlefield game for PC to be due at the end of 2008 and rumour has it that it will be a modern day shooter for up to 80 players!



Universe At War: Earth Assault

Publisher: SEGA
Developer: Petroglyph Games
Heritage: Star Wars: Empire At War
Link: www.petroglyphgames.com
ETA: OUT NOW

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:
2.8Ghz CPU, 1GB RAM, 128MB Graphics card

More illegal immigrants...

Conspiracy theorists will have you believe that aliens are already here, quietly living among us. Nonsense this might be, but were those aliens to take the shape of those found in Universe At War, there would be no doubt as to their existence. Great big stomping walkers firing death from all angles are a world away from the 'greys' of The X-Files et al, and their intentions are anything but friendly.

The mildly clichéd storyline is set out in the game's playable prelude, in which you are briefly in charge of the marines, tasked with keeping the president alive while all hell rains down from our unfriendly visitors, known as

the Hierarchy. Tanks and guns are scarcely a match for advanced alien technology, but fortunately help comes in the unlikely form of another alien race, the Novus, who have been at war with the Hierarchy for Aeons. And don't even get us started on the Masari, a sentient alien race that have been here all along, last spotted when Atlantis was a mid-price holiday destination.

It is of course



This lot can knock up a building quicker than a bunch of Poles.



"Tanks and guns are scarcely a match for advanced alien technology"

The US army are no match for aliens. Stick to defenceless Iraqis.



The battle view puts you in the thick of the action.





RACE RELATIONS

Three's company...



Hierarchy

Novus

Masari

Hierarchy

This lot started the whole fracas by attacking Earth. With an emphasis on the size of their units, they definitely believe that bigger is better

A Novus recycling centre, obviously.



> UAW continued

codswallop, but a real time strategy game featuring three distinct races may remind genre aficionados of the recent Command & Conquer outing. And while accusations of mild plagiarism could be levelled at developer Petroglyph, you can't be too harsh as they are staffed by former employees of Westwood studios, who effectively invented the genre with the original Command & Conquer.

Command & Copy

Apart from comically badly acted cut scenes, the comparisons with C&C 3 are valid, and if you've played that, then this will be familiar fare. Build a base, construct an army, attack the enemy, realise that you are grossly under-equipped to do so, build some more troops, have another stab, leave your base woefully undefended, get overrun by the enemy in a humiliating defeat, retry the mission in an attempt to find a manageable balance between attack and defence, eventually get it right and move on to the next mission. Repeat until bored...

It's a formula that works, and as ever it initially seems a daunting task, or more accurately multi-task, as you click all over the map attempting to manage your war. The interface is bog standard stuff, although being able to zoom out a bit further would help, with the default close-up perspective giving you a good view of the pyrotechnics, but not a great deal by way of strategy. And if you want to gawp at the graphics further, there's a bespoke battle view >

Click on stuff. Click on more stuff!



Robots in disguise...



"The close-up perspective gives you a good view of the pyrotechnics"



Fight fire with fire.

> UAW continued

whereby you can't control the action but you can watch it pan out in resplendent movie-style. And as the box says, increased performance will be noticed on more powerful systems.

If you can miraculously get Windows Live to work, you can theoretically take on Xbox 360 users online. Elsewhere, a slew of game modes are available, including a Risk-style affair in which you

attempt to take over territories. Should one of those territories be disputed, instead of resolving it by throwing a dice you'll be thrown into the usual RTS mode to play it out in real time, using strategy, of sorts.

A time for heroes

As is often the case with the genre, ultimately the core gameplay is a

"You can theoretically take on Xbox 360 users online"

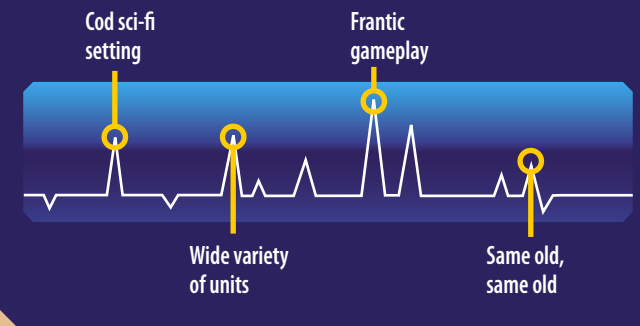
glorified hi-tech version of Rock, Scissors, Paper, with various units proving stronger against others. The concept of Heroes makes an appearance in UAW, essentially super-powerful units that must be kept alive. It's been done before, and for all the difference it makes you might as well be trying to keep Caesar alive in the battle of Thermopylae.

Whether prancing around in sandals, taking on the Hun, or, as in UAW, playing through a cod sci-fi story, it's all largely abstract. It's undeniably a formula that works though, and great swathes of time can pass by as you attempt to nail the correct way of tackling a mission. Often a case of trial and error, you learn as you go, with only a tentative nod towards actual strategy. That's not to say it isn't wholly absorbing, and has the tendency to turn you into some kind of feral being, with a fastest fingers first approach

You can probably pick up Freeview on one of those.



PULSOMETER Signs of life



"What in the mane of Bejeezus is that?"

seeing you frantically clicking all over the map in an attempt to gain some kind of edge over the inexorable advance of your current enemy. There are a few original touches, but if you're craving an old-school RTS featuring great big aliens then look no further. They're here... **Steve Hill**

PCGZine Verdict

Playable sci-fi nonsense

- 👍 Absorbing gameplay
- 👍 Varied races
- 👎 Finicky controls

80%



Beowulf The Game

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft
Heritage: Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell : Pandora Tomorrow
Link: www.beowulfmovie.com
ETA: OUT NOW!

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:
CPU: 3GHz P4/AMD,
RAM: 1GB, Graphics:
128MB DirectX 9
compliant card

Now that's really
in-your-face
gameplay for you.

Like the monster, mostly 'armless

To answer the question on everyone's mind, yes, Beowulf the game, much in the same way as the film, does indeed feature a naked Angelina Jolie. While this fact alone means it'll probably find its way onto a huge number of teenage boys hard drives, the rest of you will no doubt be wondering whether it's worth it.

Beowulf is a game with an obvious console heritage, and it's certainly not afraid to show it. From the disappointing default control scheme, to the ever-so-helpful "Press the Carnal Fury key to unleash a Carnal Fury", it quickly becomes obvious that Beowulf



Life's a beach, and then you kill fishy headed monsters.



"It does indeed feature a naked Angelina Jolie"



Shiny graphics do work well for armour textures.

isn't just a console port – it's an average one to boot. The graphics are overly shiny, in a vague attempt to hide the lacklustre gameplay, and the game itself isn't actually all that much of a game – instead, it sometimes seems more of an interactive cutscene.

You're Bard

With a cutscene : gameplay ratio that could surely rival any Metal Gear Solid, you're often left drifting off to sleep as you simply watch the action unfold behind your eyes. Even worse, when the game eventually does decide to hand control back to you, you're often left wishing you had fallen asleep, as

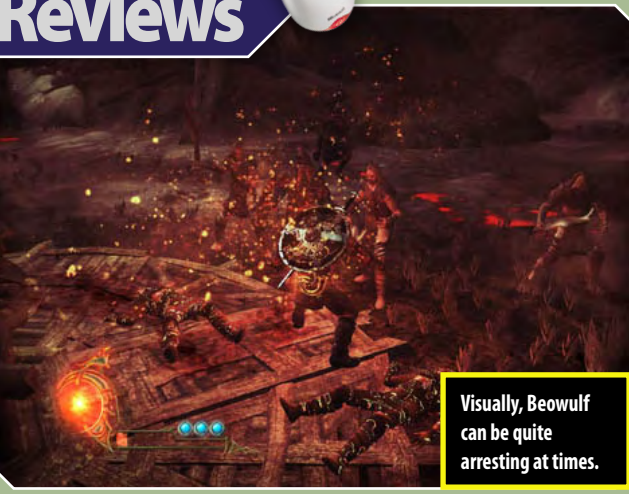
some of the gameplay ideas are as bizarre as we've ever seen.

Beowulf is a massive, strong strapping chap, right? He can rip a man in two with his bare hands, right? So why on earth, when you finally get control of the game again, does it fling you straight into a rhythm action game, with your bearded hero flailing his arm up and down in time with the beat? This isn't what we wanted to see – he's a barbarian, not a ballet dancer!

But even on the few occasions where the game actually decides to let you play through a proper level, things don't get a lot better. While the actual gameplay itself isn't a

Roll over screen for annotations





Visually, Beowulf can be quite arresting at times.



Not a game for anti-fur protesters.



Textbook swordplay from the Norse.

DANCING STAGE

Beowulf learns the rhythm method



Gate Dance

Boss Dance

Sword Dance

MAN MUSIC

Here's an example of what we're talking about with the dancing – your men find a giant gear, which they have to turn to open a gate. As you order your men into place, instead of helping out yourself, this wheel pops up, and you have to press the right button in relation to the length of line, all of which is set to some rousing hard-man music. Brilliant.

>Beowulf continued

complete write off, the uninspired level design, repetitive audio tracks, and practically non-existent puzzles are a turn off for even the most dedicated Beowulf fan.

On one level, you merrily slay the creatures in your path, until you come across a giant stone slab that's blocking a gate. It's too big for one man to move, so you're left in a conundrum? What do you do? You guessed it – it's time for Beowulf to strut his stuff again, as you're tasked with keeping time to the

rhythm of a song as your soldiers dance their merry dance. What's scary is we're not even bending the truth.

At times, it's simply embarrassing. Hearing your troops yelling "have you any last words?" as they put the finishing blow to a crab is ridiculous.

Unfortunately, much like the disappointing film, Beowulf The Game is a bit of a flop. **Ian Morris**



Punch him in the knackers then!



PCGZine Verdict

Occasionally fun, but certainly not an epic

- Acceptable graphics
- Redundant Gameplay
- Too. Many. Cutscenes

59%



SunAge

Publisher: Lighthouse Interactive
Developer: Vertex4
Price: £19.99

Developed by a team of just four people, SunAge is a surprisingly competent RTS that could put a lot of efforts from larger software houses to shame. With some impressive visuals, thanks to its 2D graphics engine, this feels a lot like a more strategic version of Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun – and that’s no bad thing. However, the game is unfortunately plagued by a few glitches that interfere with gameplay just that little bit too much – such as the way your units will stop dead in their tracks when you tell them to attack a unit who’s just out of range. Still, at this bargain price, we can wholeheartedly recommend it to hardcore strategy fans.



PDC World Championship Darts

Publisher: Oxygen
Developer: Oxygen
Price: £24.99

Coming with all the glitz, glamour and pzazz of a real darts tournament (we can’t believe we just wrote that), PDC is a poor attempt to cram a Wii game onto a PC. Utilising a rubbish “pretend the mouse is a dart” system, where you pull back, and push forwards the mouse, releasing the mouse button at just the right time, this may well give you a few minutes of enjoyment, but only before you realise that playing the real thing would be a lot more enjoyable, with less cheating AI.



rFactor

Publisher: Sniper Entertainment
Developer: ISI
Price: £24.99

While popular racing games like Gran Turismo and Forza may claim to be the “real driving simulator”, compared to rFactor, they’re about as realistic as Jordan’s breasts. An incredibly detailed, complex, and at times, unforgiving game, rFactor is less of a driving game, and more a racing sim. While it may not have the same amount of licensing as other games, each and every car in here has thousands of accurately modelled attributes, and there’s a thriving community providing extra tracks, cars, and even lawnmowers. If you’re really serious about your racing, then you won’t find any game that is so close to the real insane difficulty.



Imperium Romanum

Publisher: Kalypso Media
Developer: Haemimont Games
Price: £24.99



In a nutshell, Imperium Romanum is one of the most polished, and enjoyable strategy titles we’ve played this year. It offers an enthralling blend of civilisation building and battles, along with a stunning graphics engine. Every single thing about this game is polished almost to perfection. Setting you numerous challenges to complete as you progress through one of the game’s three modes, you have to draw tablets from a pile as you progress, letting you take on the challenges you want, when you want. A top class title, that’s well worth a whirl.



American Civil War

Publisher: Ascaron Entertainment
Developer: AGEOD
Price: £19.99

The very prospect of American Civil War is enough to make hardcore strategists froth at the mouth and polish up their muskets. With a bare minimum of graphics, and equally a bare minimum of control over each raging battle, American Civil War is a game that puts strategy before everything else – sometimes including gameplay. While your average strategy gamer won’t find much to their liking here, this is the sort of game that history buffs, and “grand strategy” fans will be having wet dreams over for months, whether they hail from the North, or the South.

- 👍 Strategic
- 👍 Good graphics
- 👎 Bugged

Most impressive **74%**

- 👍 OK in multiplayer
- 👎 No “One hundred and eighty!”
- 👎 Cheating AI

Missed **49%**

- 👍 Fantastic community
- 👍 Very realistic
- 👍 Expandable

More realistic than the real thing! **85%**

- 👍 Gorgeous
- 👍 Polished
- 👍 Challenging

This! Is! Rome? **91%**

- 👍 Very strategic
- 👍 Functional graphics
- 👎 Not for everyone

Strategy rocks **70%**

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

UNREAL TROUBLE

I've found that my system is completely locking up when I play Unreal Tournament 3 online, mostly on the level DM-DECK but it does happen on others. It tends to happen when I respawn but has also happened near the bottom of the map. I've got a relatively standard system: Core 2 Duo E6400, ATI X1900 512MB and 2GB of memory. Any idea what the cause is?

> We've seen a lot of complaints about this problem with people running a whole range of ATI X19xx cards and there's not much consensus as to the solution or the cause. It seems to mainly plague those running Core 2 systems and graphics card driver updates don't seem to help.

The first obvious advice is to remove any overlocks you might be running. The only other advice that seems to help is to turn off the Hardware OpenAI audio settings in the game menu, but even this

Big men, doomed to die and respawn.



"Unreal Tournament 3 does have a number of issues with online play"

doesn't entirely fix the problem. Some more advice is to click Start > Run > Type MSCONFIG and use that to remove all startup items. That's unfortunately as good as the advice gets at the moment.

FAILURE TO TOURNAMENT

Apparently Unreal Tournament 3 is great online, not that I'd know, as I can't connect to any online servers. Whenever I try to connect to any servers but the official UMG ones I simply get a "connection failed" message. The ports are open on my Firewall and router but I still can't figure out the problem.

> The internet is fraught with problems not the least of which is trying to get on and use it. Unreal 3 does have a number of issues with online play. The most obvious is if you're using a pirate or stolen key, doing this will generate a "connection failure" message. Presuming you have a legit key there are two really common problems. The first is if your PC takes too long to load the level, it'll time out with

the server and disconnect. Other than getting a whole new system the advice is to turn off Custom Characters in the settings menu.

The other known issue for this problem is primarily with ASUS motherboards, but it could effect others. A problem with the network driver causes the problem and can be fixed by getting the latest driver from your nearest motherboard manufacturer's support site.

MODERN CRASHING

I've been playing COD4 flawlessly on my rig for about a month, but when I started playing online after five

Get awf my car's stereo!



This is the last time I take a budget flight.



Tech Support

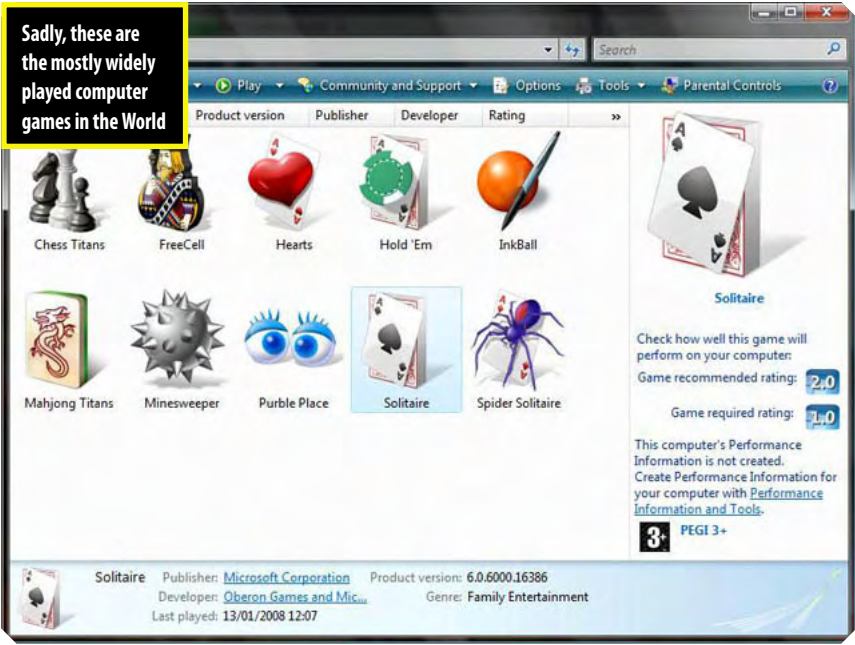
> minutes I get a blank screen with the error "iw3mp.exe has encountered a problem". My system is overclocked but I don't think that's the problem. I've patched the game and my drivers are up to date. My rigs is: MSI K9A, Athlon X2 5000+, 3GB of memory and a 1GB HD2900XT.

> That's a fairly generic error and Infinity Ward has a raft of possible causes, but let us say if you have any problem dump the overclock. Even if it seems stable, it can cause tricky timing issues.

On the whole Realtek onboard sound seems to be the issue. One solution is to open the Volume Controls > Options > Recording and select Stereo Mix. Oddly plugging in a microphone in the Mic port has also fixed problems. You may want to try disabling the onboard sound completely and see if that fixes the problem you're having.

For Vista users it's advisable to uninstall the drivers completely and allow Vista to

Sadly, these are the mostly widely played computer games in the World



detect and reinstall its own driver. Finally if you had an Athlon XP we'd advise you to rename the "mssmp3.asi" file to "mssmp3.bak" in the COD4/Miles folder, but that only affects Athlon XP processors.

WORKING GIRL

I've just bought a laptop with Vista Business and I've noticed none of the default Windows games are installed. Can I get these back? I need my Solitaire!

> We're guessing Microsoft is trying to help World productivity by leaving these out as standard. To get them back open the Control Panel > Programs > Programs and Features > in the left column select Windows features on or off and tick the Games checkbox.

STILL IN CRYISIS

I have a dual core processor, 2GB of memory and NVIDIA GeForce 7600GS is this good enough to play Crysis smoothly?

> No. Frankly nothing is good enough to play Crysis smoothly, but a low-end, last generation graphics card isn't going to perform at all well. The new Radeon HD 3870 and HD 3850 are the best budget



Only the latest and greatest can play Crysis smoothly.

"There's a problem with Games for Windows titles ported from the Xbox 360"



Who do I have to hit around here to get a game?

options, or if you have more cash to hand grab an excellent NVIDIA 8800GT.

VIVA VISTA

Whenever I try and run Viva Pinata I immediately got an error message about compatibility issues. I uninstalled and reinstalled the game with the same problem. This is the only Microsoft game I have and I've never had a problem with any other manufacturer's games.

> Apparently there's a problem with Games for Windows titles ported from the Xbox 360, which so far only includes this and Gears of War. But if you try and launch the game from the Desktop icon, it'll crash. With Vista you'll need to launch it from the Games folder within the Start menu.

GOT A PROBLEM?
Send us your technical questions and we'll try and help you out
Click here now!



WIN! LINEAGE II: THE CHAOTIC THRONE – THE KAMAEEL

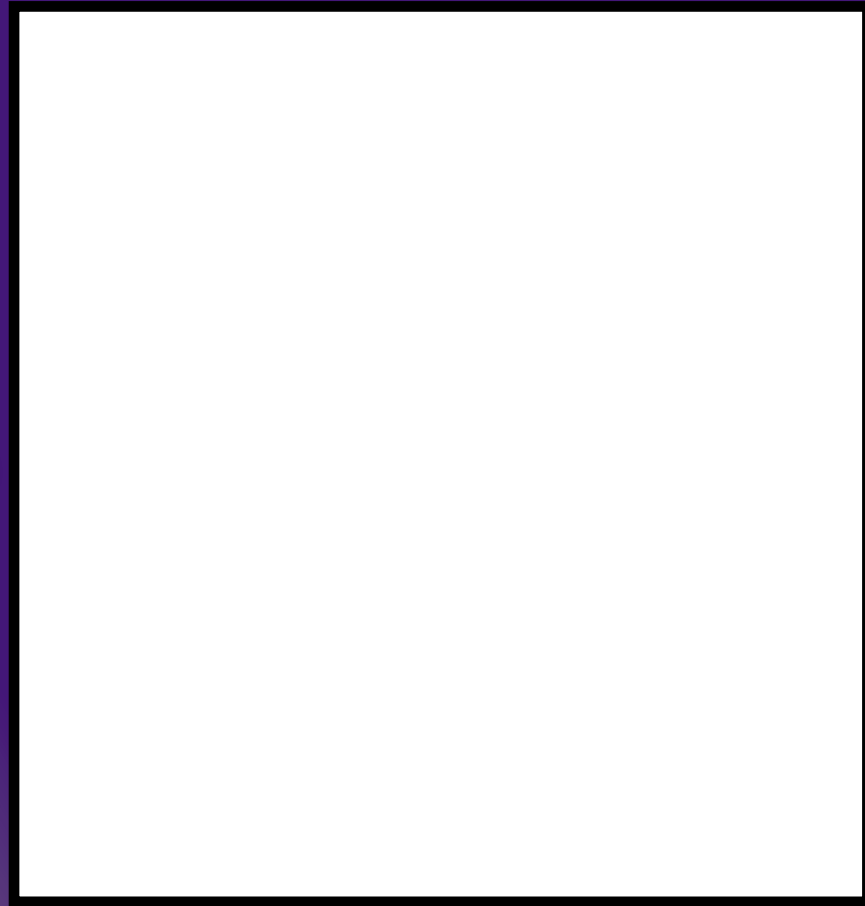
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