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Issue 21 | August 2008

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WORLD EXCLUSIVE

AION

6 PAGE EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW

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MORE REVIEWS...

- DEVIL MAY CRY 4
- TUROK
- STRONGHOLD CRUSADER EXTREME

MEN OF WAR INTERVIEW

How the WWII strategy nearly became sci-fi!

FIRST SCREENS!



DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS

BioWare's new RPG!









Welcome to PCGZine



Using the Crytec game engine, Aion is without doubt one of the best-looking MMOs we've seen. It's also got some great gameplay mechanics behind its stunning visage. Introducing PvPvE, Aion will feature three-way combat between the human and demon factions and their mutual NPC enemies, The Balaur. We've been privileged to have exclusive in-depth access to Aion this month and have brought you a massive preview that gets right to the heart of its heavenly form.

Another feature not to miss this issue is the first reveal of BioWare's new RPG project, Dragon Age: Origins – an old-school RPG adventure with some very new ideas.

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 highlights…*





QUICK FINDER
Every game's just a click away!

Spider-Man Web of Shadows	Aion
Wolfenstein	Dragon Age: Online
Operation Flashpoint 2	Men of War
Alpha Protocol	Devil May Cry 4
Cryostasis	Turok
DC Universe Online	Stronghold Crusader Extreme
Fallout 3	Planet Defender
The Sims 3	Trials 2.0
Watchmen	Sims 2 Double Deluxe
Star Trek Online	Peggle













MEET THE TEAM
Probably the best games writers on the planet



Ian Morris
Made the Devil cry, but they're friends again now.



Dave Taylor
Wrestled with demons and walked with the angels.



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Publisher: Activision
Developer: Treyarch/Aspire
Heritage: Spider-Man series, Call of Duty 3
Link: www.seizecontrol.com
ETA: Autumn

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Spider-Man: Web of Shadows



The symbiote sticky stuff is everywhere.

FIRST LOOK

Spider-Man: Web of Shadows

The game that will really make your skin crawl

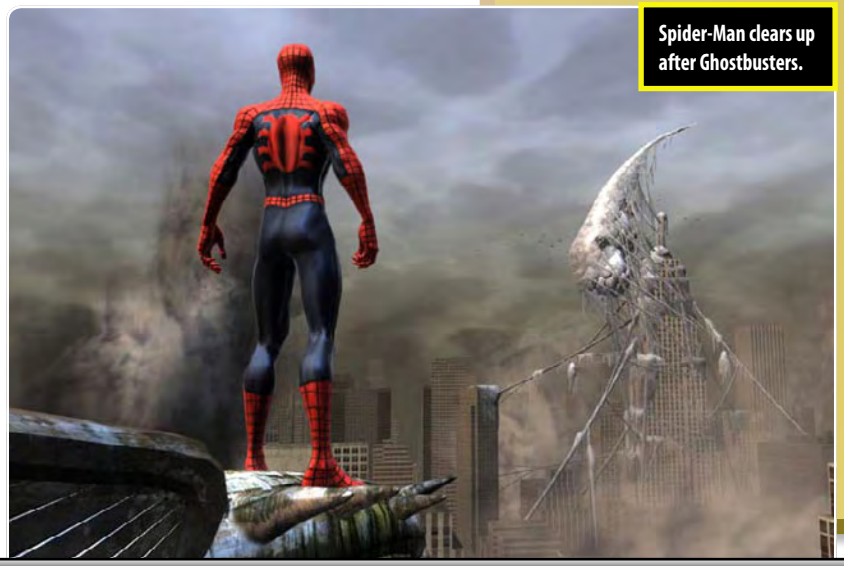
What's the story?
Poor old New York – perhaps the most game-ravaged city of modern times – is yet again under attack, this time by alien symbiotes. As Spider-Man, protector of Manhattan, you'll battle the symbiotes in either his agile red and blue suit, or his powerful black suit. Also, through your actions you can choose whether to ally with other Marvel heroes or villains, including Luke Cage and Vulture. There's great freedom in this open world game and we all know what that comes with, right?

What do we know?
Massive destructibility is promised in Web of Shadows, with Spidey able to use anything he can pick up as a weapon. Powerful attacks can smash shops, trash cars and turn busy streets into screaming war zones. His acrobatics are faster than ever, integrated into the new combat system for three-dimensional battles that can start in the street, climb skyscrapers and end up on the rooftop skylines.

When do we get more?
With any luck we'll be able to sling a playtest your way later this summer.

Anything else to declare?
There will be a new, Crackdown-style advancement system in this Spider-Man game, and as you improve skills in specific areas you'll be rewarded with upgrade points for the practised abilities. Essentially you'll be able to create your own custom Spider-Man to fight with.




Spider-Man clears up after Ghostbusters.



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Occult superweapons of Catholic Mass Destruction.

Wolfenstein

FIRST LOOK

Nazis, demons and the best BJ ever?

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Raven
Heritage: Soldier of Fortune 2, Star Wars Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast, Quake IV
Link: www.wolfenstein.com
ETA: Spring 2009

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

What's the story?

The original Wolfenstein arguably invented the first-person shooter and certainly paved the way for id Software's next hit series, Doom. Now in the hands of Raven, inheritors of other id franchises such as Quake IV, the game formerly known as Castle Wolfenstein will again star OSA Agent BJ Blazkowitz, the grizzled war veteran who specialises in combating the supernatural, especially when otherworldly nasties are summoned by Nazis.

What do we know?

Blurring the historical boundaries of World War II and extrapolating the established Nazi interest in the occult, Wolfenstein is Indiana Jones meets Call of Duty, no bad thing for action fans. While details are scarce, we know that BJ will again be battling conventional and supernatural forces and coming across dark Nazi science that bridges the two. On top of historical and occult weaponry, this time BJ will also be aided in some missions by resistance forces when dropped behind enemy lines to destroy the new Nazi bridges to dark parallel dimensions. We're promised a stronger plot in this game, with interlinked missions.




There are plenty of conventional troops too.

When do we get more?

There should be a lot more revealed at the upcoming QuakeCon, and we'll report back on this in the next issue.

Anything else to declare?

The online game was a massive hit when Return to Castle Wolfenstein was released in 2001, buttressed by 2003's Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory. It really helped class-based multiplayer establish itself as a popular mode and we're again promised class-based objective gameplay with this next iteration.



GUILD WARS

THE COMPLETE COLLECTION

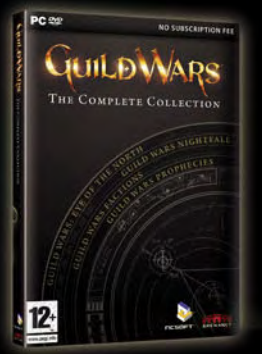
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REPLAY VIDEO

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WWW.DISCOVERGUILDWARS.COM

NCSOFT ARENANET

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Publisher: Codemasters
Developer: Codemasters Studios
Heritage: Operation Flashpoint
Link: www.flashpoint2-game.com
ETA: 2009

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of OF2: Dragon Rising



Character damage will be brutally realistic.

FIRST LOOK

Operation Flashpoint 2: Dragon Rising

Petrol prices cause international conflict…

What's the story?

On the Russian island of Skira, a massive conventional weapons war breaks out between US Marines and the Chinese PLA over some of the world's last remaining oil reserves. Infantry and armour will battle it out on a grand scale, the combat zone encompassing over 135 square miles of hard-fought territory that includes mountains, valleys, coastlines, towns, villages and the industrial sprawls of the oil industry.

What do we know?

This is hyper-realistic squad combat in an open conflict, unscripted missions allowing us to really choose our own battle tactics as we command platoons to use covering fire, make recon patrols and engage the enemy with infantry, tanks, APCs, attack and transport choppers. Weapons will range from knives, rifles and machine guns, right through to grenade launchers and laser-guided air strikes. With incredibly detailed battle physics the carnage will be terrible, with a character and environmental damage system that pulls no punches.

Anything else to declare?

A mission editor will allow the player to create unique single and multiplayer maps.




The island provides a vast battleground.

7 UP

More golden nuggets of gaming glory to come



Fallout 3

Publisher: Bethesda | ETA: Autumn

The nuclear winter is fast approaching and the makers of the super-popular Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion are now putting the finishing touches to their next RPG. With VATS targeting re-introducing a tactical turn-based element to the action and a deep system of bartering and NPC conversation, there's plenty to look forward to in this apocalyptic adventure.

Cryostasis

Publisher: 505 Games | **ETA: 10th October**

Selling itself as the Russian BioShock, this newly announced first-person action adventure is similarly set in the 1950s aboard a massive nuclear ice-breaking ship. As in Lost Planet, the cold will play a crucial role and you'll have to monitor the ambient temperature and your body temperature as you navigate the dark industrial innards of this spooky vessel, heating the rooms as you go.





Star Trek Online

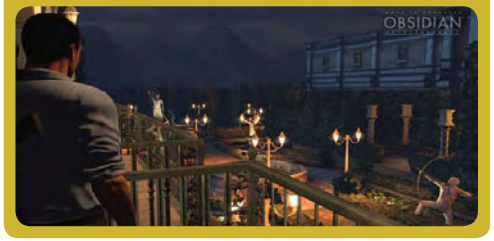
Publisher: Cryptic | **ETA:** TBA

It's great news for MMO and Star Trek fans this month, after the troubled title has been reborn to experienced developer Cryptic (responsible for City of Heroes and Champions Online) as previously rumoured. It will be set after all current Star Trek movies and series, making it a unique way to see what the 25th Century will bring.

Alpha Protocol

Publisher: SEGA | **ETA:** 2009

This secret agent RPG is taking a leaf out of James Bond's bumper book of bedtime stories by making sexual encounters with femme fatales a staple source of plot development, mission choices and of course pillow talk intelligence from lovestruck enemy agents. Mature-rated love scenes will bring you into close contact with some dangerous and sometimes completely unhinged agents with dangerous requests.



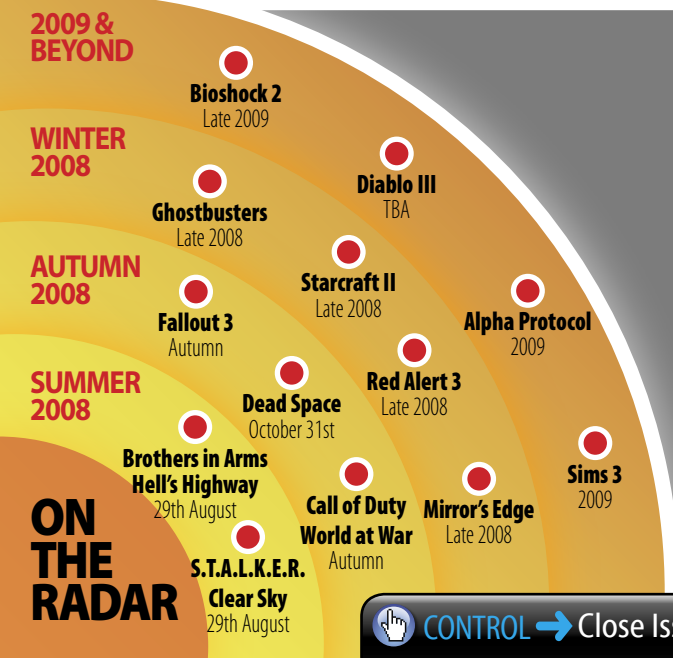
Watchmen

Publisher: Warner Bros. | **ETA:** 2009

The games of the upcoming film of Alan Moore's graphic novel will be episodic in structure and release, and will feature battles starring the unlikely masked duo of Rorschach and Nite Owl as they unravel a dark conspiracy to save the planet by bringing it to the brink of armageddon.



ON THE RADAR



DC Universe Online

Publisher: Sony Online Entertainment | **ETA:** TBA

Based on the artwork of comic book legend Jim Lee, this MMO will open up the DC universe to thousands of fans, allowing them to roam Gotham City, Arkham Asylum and many other famous locations, alongside characters from Batman and Superman to Blue Beetle.





SIMS 3

Publisher: EA | **ETA:** 2009

Customisation will be taken to an all-new level with this massive sequel, the most significant new development being custom personalities created from a massive range of traits – over 700 million potential combos are promised to make yours unique.



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EXCLUSIVE ACCESS

Aion: The Tower of Eternity

Exclusive playtest, exclusive video, exclusive screens, exclusive interview. Everything you want to know about the next big MMO from NCsoft.

PCGZine
EXCLUSIVE DESKTOPS

Click on an icon to save the image to your PC for use as a desktop background.

Sitting in an ex-board room in NCsoft's Brighton office (the company is growing so rapidly that it has long since relegated the room to a more mundane meeting room), we're treated to an exclusive look around the new fantasy world of Aion. Looking through several of the game's areas, its fight mechanics and its character creation, the first thing that strikes you is that for a new IP, it is a remarkably rich experience.

As you'd expect from a Korean-developed game, the world of Aion is steeped in backstory (see 'What's the story' below). It is, we are told, a very Eastern gaming expectation that the world be complete, but to this Aion brings the Western expectation >

> Aion continued

Publisher: NCsoft
Developer: NCsoft
Heritage: Guild Wars, City of Heroes, Lineage II
Link: www.aiononline.com
ETA: Spring 2009

of story, character development, and well, the RPG in MMORPG.

So, firstly the basics. You can choose to be one of two races, the light Elyos or the darker Asmodians. This however is not a choice between Alliance and Horde. Both sides believe that they are the righteous side and it is the other that is responsible for the problems of the world. Neither side is good or evil, simply one has evolved in sunlight while the other has evolved in darkness. You can customise the look of your character almost infinitely, with different heights, faces, hairstyles, colours, etc, all adjusted by slider.

Once you've chosen your race, you can choose one of four classes: Warrior, Scout, Mage or Priest. Only four classes? Outrage, you cry, but wait, Aion's character development system is more sophisticated than other MMOs and more akin to what many tabletop RPGs use. You choose your base class at the beginning, and they need no introduction, but then when you reach level 10, various things happen. Firstly, you get to specialise your class by completing a class change quest. A Warrior can become either a Templar or a Gladiator, a Scout may become either a Ranger or an Assassin, a Mage may become either a Sorcerer or a Spiritmaster and a Priest may become either a Cleric or a Chanter.

Secondly, and as importantly, at level 10 you get your wings. Literally. Anyone who has watched the Aion trailers will have spotted the flying characters. Until now it hasn't been clear how important or widespread flight is in Aion. It promises a whole new dimension to gameplay, if you'll pardon the play on words. You cannot fly in every part of the world, only in parts where there is concentration of Aether or in the Abyss, which is the centre of the globe. You also cannot fly for prolonged periods – there is a timer that counts down your remaining flight time, and you'd better be near the ground when you run out. With these restrictions in place, gamers will need to get their head around the new gameplay styles flight offers. Caught in a fight against a harder melee enemy? Take to the skies and blast it with ranged attacks while it waves its sword helplessly at you. Spy out the way ahead. Jump over mobs you want to avoid. It's a great gameplay innovation that makes both PvE and PvP more exciting.

You can improve your ability to fly as you progress by acquiring certain skills or items, which will extend your flight time. >

PCGZine EXCLUSIVE VIDEO #1

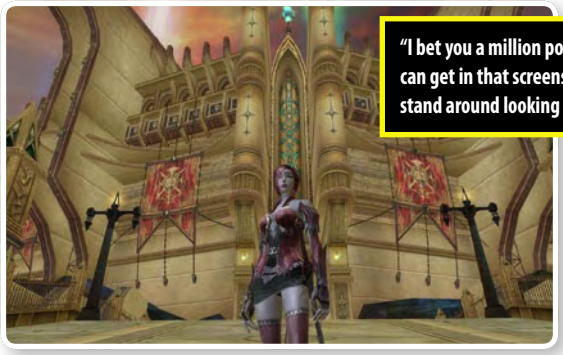


PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Aion: The Tower of Eternity

"The quest giver can actually show you on the map where you need to go"


You get to fight giant shrimp, and other deadly mollusc.


Other monsters have wings too, like this Gargoyle.


"I bet you a million pounds I can get in that screenshot if I stand around looking moody."


It's not just PvP, PvE, PvPvE, but EvE as monsters fight each other.

WHAT'S THE STORY

Like any good fantasy game, Aion has a rich backstory to give the game depth

A long time ago, the world was whole and everyone lived on the inside, watched over by the god, Aion, whose tower stretched up the middle as his physical manifestation. (Freud would have a field day here.) He created the Dragon Lords to maintain order, which they did, until they decided they could just usurp Aion and take control. Gods, it appear, never learn about pesky free will. So Aion created twelve Empyrean Lords, this time with unquestioning loyalty.

The "Millenium Wars" ensued, though Han Solo was nowhere to be seen, and the Dragon Lords were banished, but the Tower was also shattered. Ten of the Empryean Lords survived, conveniently split into five on each continent.

You can play as the Asmodians, who now live on the dark top half of the now broken world (see below) or the Elyos, who live below on the sunny bottom half of Atreia.

The Dragon Lords, meanwhile, formed the Balaur (NPC), with a new army of minions and are now back for revenge.



> Aion continued

Flight is not the only new idea Aion brings to the table though. As you level up, your character can train in both new skills and new levels of existing skills. So far, so WoW. When you get into combat though, you can actually create chain combos. It's a little like LOTRO's Bard tier system, where you cast a level 1 to be able to access level 2, etc. In Aion it works like this: you start your attack with a chosen skill, and then next to the mob will appear the icon (or icons) for the next step in the combo. For example, a level 20 Gladiator might first attack with Severe Strike, which deals average damage. They follow that up with Resolute Strike, which inflicts average damage and some more damage over time. They can then choose between Strike of Wrath, which inflicts high damage and has a chance of Stunning, or Strike of Rupture, which inflicts very high damage. If they choose Strike of Rupture, they can follow that with Reckless Strike, which inflicts very high damage and knocks back the target. As you can see, you would end up varying which part of the chain to follow depending on how hard the enemy you are fighting is, and who else is in your party, so that your attacks complement their skills. For an example of the skill tree, see the annotation above.

The aim is to remove the button mashing. In WoW, my main spells are all lined up and I simply trigger one after another from 0 down to 5, one button after another, the same in every fight. I could automate it even further by creating a macro, but then I really would feel like I was playing in Excel. Aion is trying to mix that up with different follow-ons, occurring depending on your initial action or spell casting.

The game features PvE, PvP and PvPvE (more on this in a later issue). The PvE action is broken down into several recognisable ideas. Firstly, grinding – if you really want to, you can go and kill boars in the forest for however many levels. Secondly, there are missions and quests. Missions relate to the main storyline in the game – they are basically



ROLL OVER SHOW ME HOW IT WORKS!

Roll over each of the icons, one at a time, to see how this skill tree works.

EXCLUSIVE SCREEN



"Tortoises – why did it have to be tortoises?"

ROLL OVER THE BIG PICTURE

> Aion cont.

LOTRO's Epic quests. Quests are more character centric and are more of the bog standard, 'go here', 'kill that', 'bring me this' kind. Both quest types yield you XP. Incidentally, the level cap for Aion is level 50, fact fans.

What is really smart is the quest giving dialog. Key elements and people within the quest text are hyperlinked to entries in a encyclopedia or, for people, to a location on a map. Hallelujah! No more wandering around for hours trying to find the quest mob (which, for any developers reading this, isn't a device that makes us love MMOs because we spend so long there. We like content to keep us in a game, not wander aimlessly). In effect, the quest giver can actually show you on the map where you need to go.

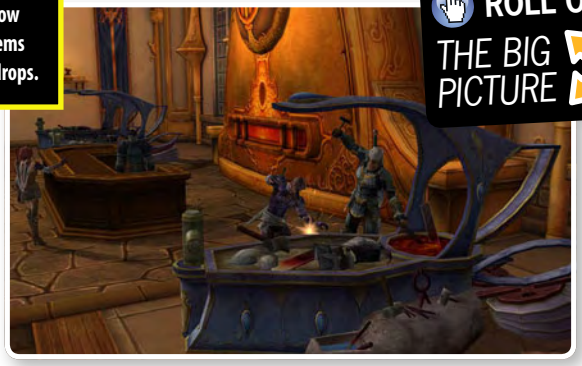
The game is still in early beta, so one area where we hope to see improvements is in the quest log UI. At the moment, it looks fairly ordinary, so we hope the developers take a look at the LOTRO quest log system, which was recently patched to offer the best in class-tracking and quest-sharing. Swapping back from something like that to something very one-dimensional would feel like a missed opportunity.

The rest of the interface is recognisable to anyone who has played a modern RPG or MMO, with slots along the bottom for skills, and various other info areas (like the flight timer). One area where World of Warcraft has managed to secure a huge community boost is by opening up the UI to third party development, allowing a simple interface to be expanded by armies of enthusiasts. It has meant that an interface which would look dated by now has been constantly upgraded with new features, so we asked if anything similar was being considered for Aion.

"Allowing third-party extensions to the UI has been a hot topic among the communities and is being considered, but we haven't confirmed anything yet," says Christian-Peter Heimbach, Product Manager for Aion. "There are many pros and cons to contemplate when making a decision on this; in terms of hacking, balancing, reliability and most of all: would it be in line with the experience that we want to give the players?

"For now the development team has focused on making the current UI highly customizable to an individual's liking. A few examples of what the user can do with it include changing objects' sizes, altering fonts and moving objects around."

We hope that they do find a way to let players expand the interface soon >



Crafting will allow you to create items that rival mob drops.

ROLL OVER THE BIG PICTURE



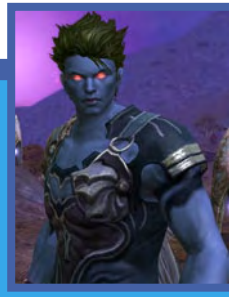
CLICK THEM SEE EACH CLASS CLOSE UP NOW

Click on a class to see it in detail.

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

AION MAN

We put our questions to Christian-Peter Heimbach, Product Manager of Aion





That's me being teleported. By a flying bird. Must be a new definition of the word "teleport" we've not previously encountered.

> Aion continued

after launch, not because the Aion interface is bad, but simply because it would be nice to see the creativity that WoW gamers have brought to that game extend to other MMOs.

Back to questing, and while soloing is fun, and they reckon you can make it all the way to level 50 that way, the game places an importance on groups and guilds. It seemed that you'd be able to solo quite happily to level 20, but enjoy the game more in groups beyond that.

At level 20, Aion introduces its next trick in character development and individualisation: Stigma Stones. You have five slots for these stones, with two becoming available at level 20 and then one more every 10 levels up to that level 50 cap. These stones allow you to use an ability that's not inherent to your own class, so for example, a mage might choose to be able to use heavy armour. This makes the gameplay more varied for PvE, but it also makes PvP more uncertain – is that really a warrior you're facing up to? On the lower levels the majority of Stigma Stones are for passive skills – for armour or weapon types – but as you level up you do get access to some of the actual skills of other classes.

PvP can occur in several areas. Most notably, it will occur in the Abyss, the central area between the two shattered hemispheres. However, from time to time, rifts will appear between the continents and teleport gamers to the opposing sphere for some home turf PvP action.

It's not the only place teleports exist in the game. For every other MMO's in-game email system, Aion has the equivalent of Instant Messaging. You can hire couriers in some towns to send items directly to other players and they will scoot off and find them – useful they say for getting potions to a friend after a fight, for example.

As you don't have permanent flight abilities, you can also buy teleports from one area to another. This takes the form of an ethereal bird that carries you between flight points. It looks great, but it's odd to call it teleporting when you're really being flown.

On the subject of graphics, Aion looks pretty good. It's based on the CryEngine (used in Far Cry, the FPS game). This means that for an MMO, the graphics are at the higher end of the spectrum (think above top-end WoW, below top-end Conan), but the game should play at its highest settings on any reasonably recent PC (within the last two years, roughly, they reckoned). It's DirectX 9 based, so most gamers should be fine.

As well as solid graphics, the >

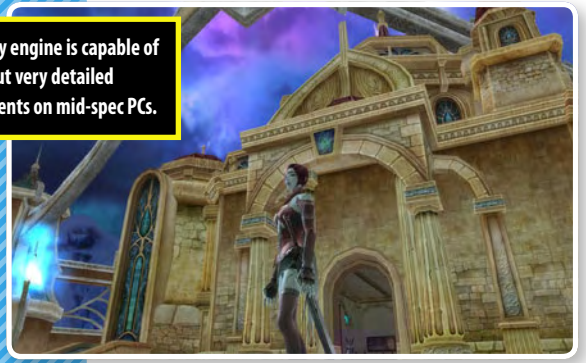
THE CLOTHES MAKETH THE MAN

Crafting in Aion should rival drops from mobs

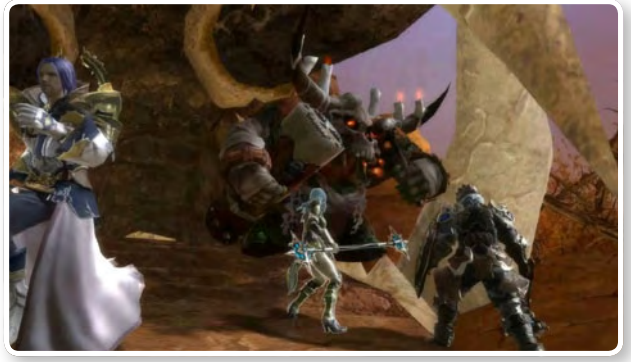
Crafting in Aion is going to be crucial we're told because you'll actually create items you want and need. They want to get away from the idea that you can only get a certain item from a rare drop on a certain mob, to allow players to craft powerful items as well. Currently there are six professions (though we have the sneaking suspicion that they plan to add more either before or after launch based on a sideways look we got):

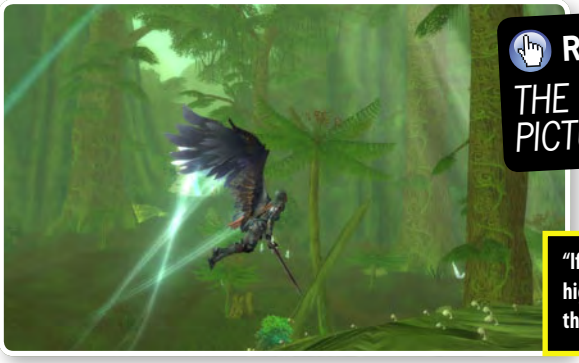
- **Weapons Crafting – dealing with the creation of all kinds of weapons.**
- **Armour Crafting – dealing with heavy armours with metal components.**
- **Handiwork – dealing mostly with jewellery and little trinkets.**
- **Alchemy – dealing with chemical compounds such as potions.**
- **Cooking – dealing with the many arts of the kitchen**
- **Tailoring – dealing with cloth armour.**

You craft items based on recipes, and each time you craft, you have a success and failure bar that determines item creation.



The Far Cry engine is capable of turning out very detailed environments on mid-spec PCs.





ROLL OVER THE BIG PICTURE

"If I can just get a bit higher, I'll be able to knock that coconut down…"

> Aion continued



developers have put a lot of time into the environment. There are day and night cycles with certain mobs only spawning at particular times, and weather systems too, though these don't affect mob spawning in the same way. Also, there's real attention been paid to the character animation. Different idle animations play depending on location, for example, with the avatar wiping the sweat from their brow and fanning themselves in deserts, or deftly catching a fish with their hands if you're stood around in water. Even non-aggressive mobs have been given some behaviour too – so standing around in the aforementioned lake will attract fish who will swim around you, being nosy and even follow you if you walk around, though you do have to wonder why they wouldn't swim away from, rather than towards, a big warrior stamping around their pond.

Despite seeing the game in depth, where we couldn't draw the developers at all was on the financial model for the game. They say that the decision on how Aion will be charged is yet to be decided. But, we reckon a recent announcement that micro transactions were going to be an important part of all new games points the way. Our hope would be a Guild Wars type software purchase, with no monthly fee, but micro-transactions to allow you to buy some in-game items. However, it's clear now, months before development has finished, that Aion has had a huge amount of development thrown at it, and it's hard to see a one-off purchase paying off the cost of this sort of development, so maybe a monthly subs-based system, but mixed with the micro-payments?

So there we have it. Aion is still in early beta, so there's plenty of time left in development, but already there's a rich world environment, a deep gameplay mechanic and a large world. If there are enough quests to ensure the content is there at launch, the localisation is good and the price is right, then we think Aion could, and should, attract a loyal following.

David Taylor

PCGZine EXCLUSIVE VIDEO #2



DON'T MISS OUT ON MORE AION INFO!

In the next issue of our free MMO magazine, MMOZine, we go back to Aion for an in-depth look at The Abyss. Join over 40,000 subscribers by filling out the box below and we'll email you as soon as the issue is published. All for free...

PCGZine AION

HOW COMPLETE? 70%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS? 85%

Lavish world. Recognisable, but innovative gameplay

PROLOGUE

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

clear sky



NO MORE FAMILIAR ROUTES THROUGH THE ZONE,...
NO MORE RULES YOU USED TO LIVE WITH...
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FIRST SHOTS

DRAGON AGE: ORIGINS

Publisher: EA
Developer: BioWare
Heritage: Baldur's Gate, NeverWinter Nights, Star Wars: KOTOR, Jade Empire, Mass Effect
Link: www.dragonage.com
ETA: Spring 2009

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Dragon Age: Origins

"BioWare's new adventure is being heralded as a spiritual successor to Baldur's Gate"

BioWare breathes fire on the role-playing field…

Baldur's Gate still remains one of the most iconic role-playing games ever, and BioWare's new adventure Dragon Age: Origins, is being heralded as its spiritual successor – a dark fantasy RPG returning to the roots of the genre with cutting-edge modern gameplay and visuals.

BioWare GM and CEO Ray Muzyka tells us: "We're thrilled to be returning to BioWare's fantasy roots, with Dragon Age: Origins being the culmination of over a decade of experience. Dragon Age: Origins is a dark heroic fantasy that doesn't pull any punches. Our fans are in for the most emotionally intense gaming experience we've ever created, and we hope to surprise them with just how dark and gritty it gets!"

And the background to the old-school fantasy plot is dark indeed. A blight has descended on this world, brought about by man. Human Mages attempted to make themselves divine, >



There's always one who spoils the party.



Prince Adam and Cringer enter town.



She's watched too many He-Man cartoons too.





Spells can be combined for emergent effects.



> Dragon Age continued

but these corrupted powermongers were cast out of Heaven, returning as the Darkspawn. These twisted monsters inhabited cave complexes that once housed the Dwarven Kingdoms and it's here that the Darkspawn awake one of the Old Gods, a sleeping archdemon in Dragon form that seizes upon the Darkspawn as acolytes and leads them in a full-on attack on human lands.

The last blight of this kind occurred over 400 years previously, but ever since humans fought that one off, a warrior race has kept watch for its return. The Grey Wardens knew that until the last of the Old Gods reawakened, the threat was merely dormant, and although most humans have forgotten even that the Grey Wardens survive, they will come to rely on these warriors to save humanity from the Darkspawn.

But the humans initially present far less than a united front and Dragon Age: Origins will be a fairly open game politically, where your choices affect the shape of the world around you depending on which allies you choose, which enemies you crush and how you wield power. Two central human characters will be Teyrn Loghain and King Cailan. Loghain and Cailan are Fereldan allies, Loghain the veteran and tactical genius of a war that drove out the invading Orlesian Empire, and Cailan the inexperienced leader who inherited a freed kingdom from these efforts. From this new and shaky alliance the Ferelden army must be led against the threatening Darkspawn.

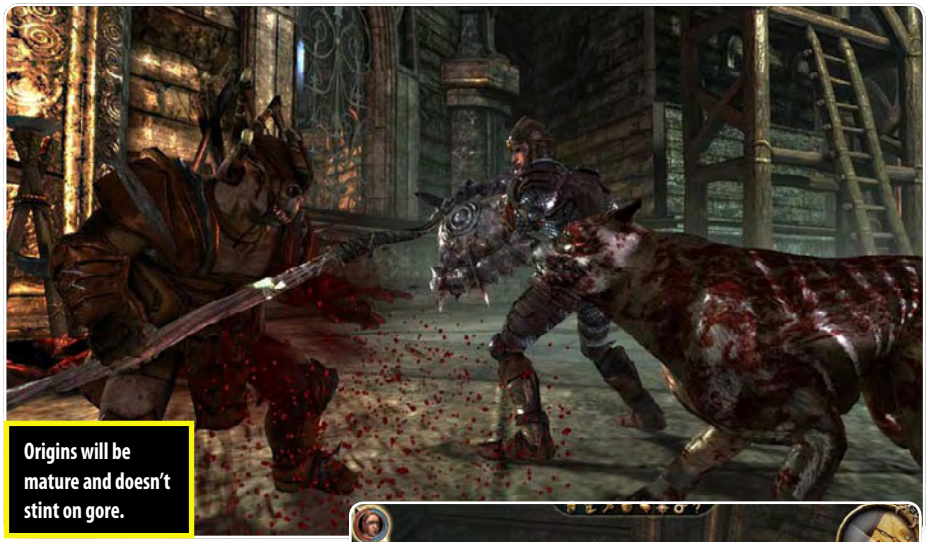
The combat of this final battle will be classic party-based, although BioWare promise the combat system itself will be innovative and scalable. You get to control up to four party members, which is down from the six available in the Baldur's Gate series, but an increase on the disappointing Neverwinter Nights. Bioware reckons four is a reasonable compromise between giving you enough "pieces" to control and retaining the fidelity of the amazing graphics. What's more, hardcore RPG fans can rejoice, for gone is the realtime combat of the likes of Mass Effect. Instead we step back to the pausable combat of yesteryear (by which we mean BG again) where you can queue up actions and attacks for party members. Innovatively, this will also allow you to control multiple simultaneous battles, so your party may be split up and fighting in two locations at once.

And with control of multiple characters again, you get to ensure that your party's complimentary skills are used to the best advantage, combining magic skills from one character with weapon skills from another. We're promised this goes further than just the melee fighter holding off the enemy while the magic user bombards though. You'll need to use all of your characters individually and as a team, using spell combos that are part of an emergent gameplay that creates unique effects through experimentation. In one example shown, a grease spell on the floor was ignited by flaming arrow from another character.

>



Ogres are just one of the massive enemies the Darkspawn use.


Origins will be mature and doesn't stint on gore.


You'll be able to customise your party to a high degree.

"Although a rare sight, Ogres will be devastating under Darkspawn control"

> Dragon Age continued

You'll need to experiment for heavier hits too, because there will not only be hordes of Darkspawn and their followers to take on in massive battles, but huge monsters such as Ogres. Although a rare sight, Ogres will be devastating under Darkspawn control, charging like giant bulls with enough power to break through stone walls.

Before you set off with your gang of world-savers, you'll begin with Origin Stories, an introduction to the world that helps you to shape who you are and where the adventure will begin. Origins intends to be a highly customised opener that will affect the rest of your game, not only introducing you to the game world, but also showing you how the world sees your new character.

You can choose between Warrior, Wizard and Rogue as base character classes, which will then be customised by choices through the game. Later you'll be able to further hone the magic and weapon skills of all your party, developing spells, talents and skills and locating more and more devastating weapons.

Interestingly, there's no alignment system in Dragon Age, unlike previous BG games. Instead, your character and the world will be shaped by the decisions you make. Very Fable.

Gone also is the first person dialogue. Unlike Mass Effect, your character will be mute, with you choosing your responses to NPC dialogue, but never hearing your avatar speak. Classic RPG indeed.

With truly stunning visuals, a deep engaging story, frenetic combat, innovative customisation and BioWare's emphasis on credible NPC acting and personalities, the old-school RPGing of Dragon Age: Origins is being brought into a modern era of gaming by the best team possible. PC gamers should enjoy Origins' exclusivity while they can because Bioware has acknowledged "there is a console future for the franchise" (as was also the case for the Baldur's Gate games, of course).

We'll bring you more on Dragon Age: Origins soon.

PCGZine

HOW COMPLETE? 50%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS? 90%

A new term for old-school adventure

Publisher: 505 Games
Developer: Best Way
Players: 1-16
Certificate: TBC
Features: Authentic units, direct control, online ratings
OUT NOW

Third World War

Men of War launches the third front in this tactical trilogy

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



Night battles will require new tactics.



Maxim Kamensky, Game Producer, Best Way

How important is historical authenticity to Men of War, and how did you set about achieving that?
Actually, we were tempted to go beyond the boundaries of World War II and create a game set in an alternative history. But we restrained ourselves and managed to concentrate on doing some extremely detailed research of real historical facts, and this became the basis of the game. Men of War isn't entirely authentic but its storyline is based on real occurrences in World War II and the memories of war veterans.



Basically, this is toy soldiers on a massive scale.

Men of War spans conflicts all over the globe (Europe, Africa and the Pacific) during WWII – won't so much diversity mean less depth?
Primary actions take place in Europe and North Africa, so Men of War embraces a huge territory. Locations differ one from another in each mission, and the time of the year will change too. But that doesn't mean there's less depth –in fact, we made weapons and equipment for each side based on their real prototypes. In total there are more than 200 models of highly detailed weapons. Likewise, the models of soldiers are hugely detailed too – the amount of characters is more than double than in Faces of War.

There's a lot of depth when playing too, as the player will end up becoming a great military leader whose actions will influence the lives of hundreds of soldiers and the outcome of battles. They will build up defences and create incredibly detailed offensive manoeuvres. Our mission designers did their very best to present the whole spectrum of tactical opportunities and military situations that took place in World War II.

We also made a direct control option. By choosing this option the player can directly control specific military units. We think this feature really gives a sense of war. You control movements, choice of weapons, when to reload, targeting and so on. When aiming in direct control mode the player receives >

"Men of War isn't entirely authentic, but its storyline is based on real occurrences"



The authentic detail is stunning.



Africa is one of the major theatres.



That's one tooled-up fighter!



You're going to need a bigger sandbag.

> **Interview** continued

information about the target, shooting distance and also the weapon's characteristics. In fact, when you control a specific soldier, you can even calculate how long it will take for a grenade to detonate.

Can you tell us what are the main advances since Faces of War to the engine and gameplay?
The engine was improved in several directions: mechanics (damage and interaction system, unit's movement), interface and controls, and a reworking of the AI system and graphics.

We also improved the damage system, too. From now on every player can use their knowledge of vehicles and arms of World War II.

While the gameplay in Faces of War was dynamic and fun, in Men of War we wanted the player to feel like they were making substantial tactical decisions. So we've got a more complicated damage system, more tactical characteristics, new units, improved fire distances and sight. The size of the game maps is also bigger and we think we've got gameplay that's more mature. But while we think we've got an good mix of tactics and action, there will still be a lot of adrenaline.

Can you tell us about how you have expanded the online experience with Men of War?
Everyone who will purchase Men of War will receive a key to play in multiplayer mode via the Internet. The key is linked with the player's profile. Every profile has its own statistics based on online experience and that data will be accessible for everyone. You can choose any player in the menu or in game and see his achievements.

We're interested in the new ratings system. Can you explain this to us? And was Call of Duty Modern Warfare an influence here?

"In Men of War we wanted players to feel like they were making substantial tactical decisions"

Rating is calculated upon a modified ELO system, which is also used in chess tournaments and other games (e.g. World of Warcraft Arena). When playing in multiplayer mode for the first time, the player receives a basic non-zero rating. The main principle is that the player needs to beat opponents with higher or equal rating to score more points, and receives practically nothing when he defeats weaker gamers.

Will this franchise ever step out of the WWII theatre and enter a modern conflict zone?
We do like the World War II setting very much, but nothing is forever. And the day when we will make games on other battlefields will come.

WIN! 10 COPIES OF MEN OF WAR

This game needs you! Sign up today for free conscription…

To celebrate the release of the tactical WWII masterpiece Men of War, 505 Games has generously sent us 10 copies of the game to give away. As you'll read in our interview this issue, Men of War is the third release in this acclaimed series and will be the deepest yet in terms of authentic WWII detail, hundreds of real units and weapons, plus innovative multiplayer modes and rankings. Oh, and look out for our review in the next issue!

To be in with a chance of winning one of these 10 game prizes, simply answer the question opposite…



Competition closes 25th September 2008. See website for full T&Cs.

>Inbox

Let your opinion be heard. Mail the magazine at pcgzine@gamerzines.com

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

SKY NEWS

I'VE FINISHED MASS EFFECT now and although there's definitely still plenty of replayability and I haven't by any means explored the whole game, I was wondering whether we'll be seeing more content soon, as the Xbox 360 version did with all of that extra downloadable content?

> Tobes

> PCGZ says… You're in luck Tobes, as Microsoft is now providing the Bring Down the Sky content as a free download for PC. The extra content supplies an hour-and-a-half of new gameplay – a new uncharted world introducing the Batarian race. Continuing as Commander Shepard, you'll have to save the Terra Nova colony from the alien extremists. Download it from http://masseffect.bioware.com/downloadablecontent right now and enjoy!

Don't miss Issue 22
Out Sept 25th
Sign up now!



Handsome chaps, the Batarians.

SIEGE THE DAY

WHEN IS SPACE SIEGE coming out now? I loved the Dungeon Siege series and have been looking forward to Gas Powered Games' next release for a long, long time. I thought it was supposed to be finished by now?

> Jim

> PCGZ says… It's really not long to wait now, as we're assured that Space Siege will launched on 22nd August, and we'll have a review for you next issue. There's also a Space Siege demo now available, so if you can't wait, download that and get a taste of engineer Seth Walker's quest to save humanity. You'll also be interested to hear that Chris Taylor's next project, Demigod, is also ready to reveal, and we'll have a first look at that next issue too.

ALL'S FAIR IN WARFARE

I'VE JUST HEARD THAT Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare may be getting some new game modes soon. Do you know what these are and when we can expect them to become available?

> P3t3r

> PCGZ says… There has been an announcement of new playlists that are planned for Call of Duty 4 multiplayer, but they're still very much in the planning stage and not even confirmed for PC yet. One fan site suggests that the first of four new modes, Bare-bones Team Deathmatch, will definitely be coming to PC in a future update. This mode strips away any advantages of the perks system, removing kill opportunities from things like Martyrdom and Juggernaut, and even kill streaks. Other modes also supposed to be in testing are Hardcore HQ (increased damage, no HUD and friendly fire on), Multi-bomb Search and Destroy and Hardcore Free For All.

ALL POINTS MEAN PRIZES

APB may not be the only game from Realtime

I know GTA IV will probably come to PC somewhere down the line, but to be honest I'm more interested in Realtime Worlds' All Points Bulletin, which will finally do what GTA has still failed to do – take the open world crime fest into the massively multiplayer arena. However, I'm worried that there's been nothing much on it since first announced in 2005. Is it still happening?

> Squid

> PCGZ says… It's definitely happening, and at the Develop Online conference recently, Realtime Worlds' Colin MacDonald even went so far as to say that it's not that far away and that there would be a beta test fairly soon, which is very exciting progress. He also hinted that Realtime is working on another unannounced title simultaneously.



Her parents must be so pleased with how she turned out.



Devil May Cry 4

Pleased to meet you – hope you've guessed my name

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
Heritage: Devil May Cry, Lost Planet, Resident Evil
Link: www.devilmaycry.com
OUT NOW

System Requirements:
Window XP/Vista, P4, 512 MB RAM, 256 MB Direct X 9.0c, Shader 3.0 GeForce 6600 or higher, 8 GB HDD

PC gamers often approach console ports with mild trepidation. Plagued with memories of awful graphics, disappointing resolutions and appalling control systems, the word 'port' has almost become code for 'a game you should never consider playing, unless you gouge your eyes out with a fork first'.

Looking back at Capcom's history, it's even easier to see why any self-respecting gamer could be ready to give Devil May Cry 4 a wide berth – the keyboard-only port of Resident Evil 4 was among the worst conversions ever, and Lost Planet wasn't much better. But we're pleased to say it's time to drop those preconceptions, as Devil May Cry 4 is an awesome game, made even more awesome by the quality of its port.

Devil May Cry 4 is one of the most unashamedly bombastic games we've ever played. From the moment you take control, it's in your face, larger than life action, and to be honest, it's completely and utterly great. There's something strangely satisfying about riding your enemy around like an overgrown surfboard, before grabbing his stupid friend around the head, leaping fifty foot into the air, and slamming him into the ground below.

Even watching the opening cutscene (once you're past the opera bit) is like watching a Jackie Chan movie on fast forward – bullets fly, people are thrown halfway across a room, pillars collapse – everything's completely over the top, and while lesser games would just feel tacky,



The red seal on the door means you have to beat all the enemies to continue.



Outlandish environments are the norm in Devil May Cry.



Bosses can take some beating.

FREEZE FRAME

Taking you through the game, one step at a time…



ONE MINUTE
First things first – hit the benchmark. Nice score.



FIVE MINUTES
The opening cutscene is truly stunning.



10 MINUTES
After getting a bit confused with the keyboard controls, we switch to the 360 pad.



30 MINUTES
Much better. The action flows and the graphics are pretty. This is nirvana.



90 MINUTES
Annoying fixed camera moments begin to grate, but it's still mostly brill.



Easy now. Nice doggy…



That's gonna make for one hell of a combo.



Prepare to be overrun in the PC-exclusive Legendary Dark Knight mode.



You can't say they don't provide you with plenty of cannon fodder.

> Devil May Cry 4 continued

Devil May Cry 4 pulls it all off with an air of stylish cool, leaving you to scrape your jaw off the floor and regain some semblance of dignity. It's like the Fonz of gaming. Cool is too small a word for it.

And though the action is truly phenomenal, it looks stunning and runs well too. On our 8800 GTS, Devil May Cry flew, in both DX9 and DX10 versions. One of the few games to support DX 10, it's kind of surprising to a see a port support Vista's much maligned graphics technology, but Capcom have done it, with the lighting and shadowing getting a reasonable boost – thankfully not at the expense of the frame rate – though the difference won't be immediately obvious to most gamers.

"Though the action is truly phenomenal, it looks stunning and runs well, too"

The story of Devil May Cry 4 largely serves as a backdrop for you to kick some demon butt, but we'll fill you in here. If you've never played a DMC game, you'll be fine, as there's not really that much to understand. You start off the game as a member of the Order of the Sword, a demon hunter called Nero (presumably bearing no relation to the CD-burning program), who witnesses his leader get killed by the leading man in the last games, Dante. From there on in, it's up to you to pursue Dante, to find out the reasons behind his actions.

Control of the game switches between Nero and Dante as you progress through the game's immensely stylised levels, though the two characters aren't really that different to control. Each level has been beautifully designed, with all sorts of >

DEVILISHLY DEVIANT

Demon days indeed



Power to the boss | **Comin' atcha** | **Optimised**

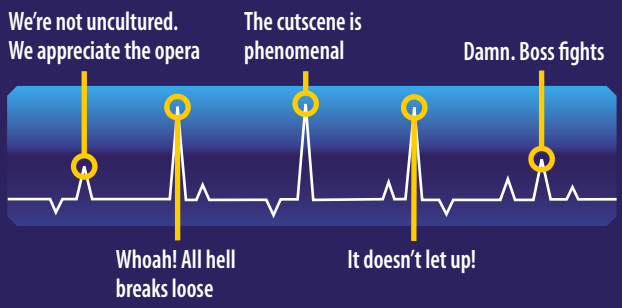
Power to the boss

If there's one thing DMC games have always had, it's spectacular bosses, and DMC 4 doesn't disappoint. These gigantic creatures often fill the screen (and occasionally are even larger), leading to some epic fights.



Handily, the game ships with a nice Benchmark, letting you see how well your rig'll handle DMC's gorgeous graphics.

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*





You're awarded style points, depending on how big a combo you can link together without getting hit. It's tough.

> Devil May Cry 4 continued

stunning gothic architecture lining the streets. Progress feels a lot less linear in this one, as exploring the area will often lead you to hidden secrets – special areas, missions and items await those who stray from the beaten path, and when the game looks this gorgeous, it's well worth exploring.

We'll make no bones about it – DMC 4 is very much a hack-and-slash beat-'em-up, but luckily the combat's effective enough to stop this from ever feeling repetitive. Awarding you a style rank for how spectacularly you kill the enemies, you're rewarded for linking together huge combos without getting hit. Brilliantly, these combos are both super effective and surprisingly easy to pull off, meaning you actually do push yourself to try out the fancier moves, rather than just relying on the standard hacking and slashing.

All in all, Devil May Cry 4 is one of the most adrenaline-pumping games we've ever experienced. It may be a console port, but it's a damn good one – when played with a gamepad (we'd recommend the 360 pad and advise against using a keyboard), there really is nothing else like it. ● ***Ian Morris***

"Devil May Cry is one of the most adrenaline-pumping games we've ever experienced"

PCGZine Verdict

A fantastic conversion of an excellent console game. Highly recommended.

- Stunning gameplay
- Great battles
- Occasional dodgy camera

87%



Turok

Monster smash or monster mush? Let's find out…

Publisher: Avanquest
Developer: Propaganda Games
Heritage: Turok
Link: www.turok.com
OUT NOW

When Acclaim was declared bankrupt a few years ago, it wouldn't be phenomenally unfair to say no-one really batted an eyelid. Most of Acclaim's franchises were, for the most part, worthless, but there was one game among the ashes that we actually cared about. A game which even had people named after it, thanks to a bizarre competition – no really, that actually did happen. And that game was Turok.

Turok fans, and those people named 'Turok' need worry no more though, as fans of the series Propaganda Games have brought the Indian… sorry, Native American dinosaur hunter back for a new game. Although, to be completely honest, this is nothing like any Turok you've ever played.

For starters, the iconic Turok weapon, the Cerebral Bore isn't in there. This is as much a heresy as it is a disappointment, but at least the other weapons are still suitably meaty and pack a decent punch. Secondly, however, Propaganda thought it best to completely restart the Turok storyline, taking the game back to basics, and starting afresh.

Roll over screen for annotations





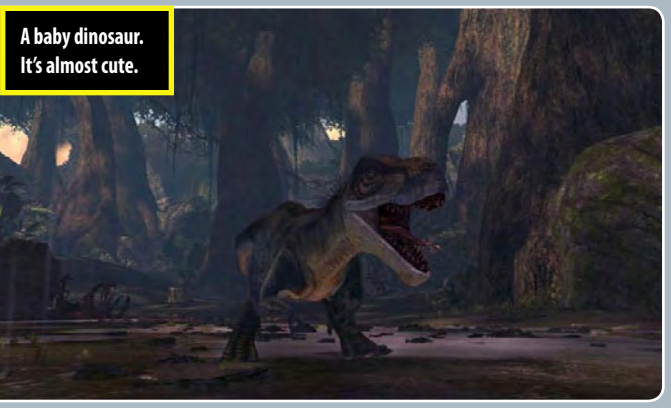
"The gameplay in Turok doesn't begin to live up to its predecessor"

To this end, Turok is now a regular soldier, being sent on an intergalactic mission to take out the leader of a black ops group called the 'Wolf Pack' – the twist being that Turok was once a member of the Wolf Pack until he had a falling out with the organisation. While this has the potential for an interesting storyline, the game's a mostly standard sci-fi romp, with few surprises along the way, and an overly gruff and confrontational script making things considerably worse.

Sadly, the gameplay in Turok doesn't even begin to live up to its predecessor. Gone is the innovation and thrill that accompanied the first two games in the series, instead replaced by sparse environments, linear progression, dull textures, and a graphics engine that's sometimes reminiscent of the N64 games that started the series off. And while they might have been impressive to look at 10 or so years ago, they don't stand up compared to the first-person shooters we're seeing these days. >



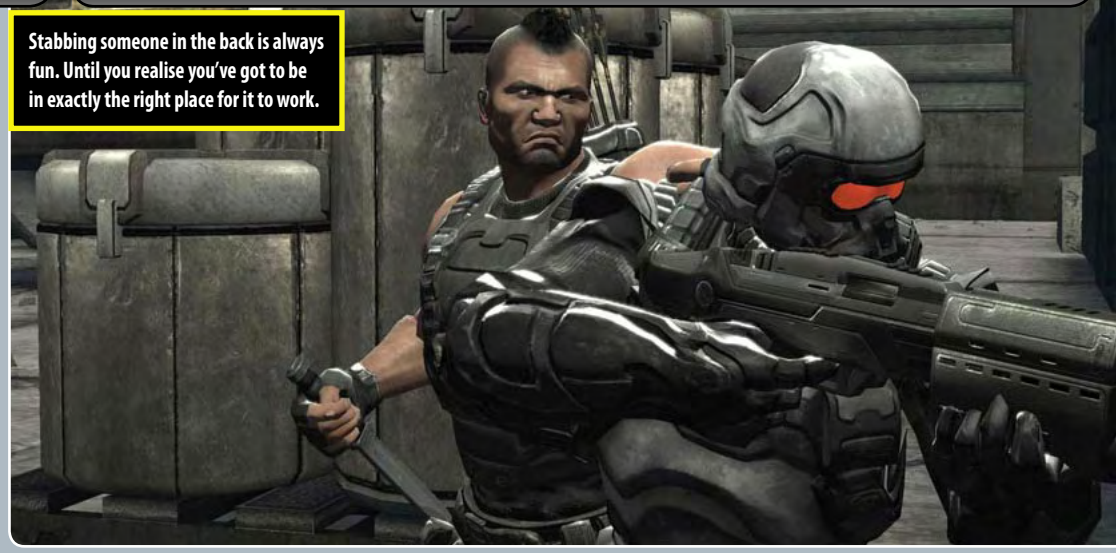



A baby dinosaur. It's almost cute.

> Turok continued

The whole game isn't totally devoid of quality and Turok does have some good moments. Trying to spot a velociraptor running towards you through the thick undergrowth is a real nerve-wracking experience, as you spray bullets everywhere in the blind hope that one'll connect, but sadly, moments like this are few and far between. Much more regular are the moments like when the T-Rex first appears. First, the game pulls your view to look at the dinosaur (which isn't great to begin with), but then, as you sit cowering away from the dinosaur as the huge beast walks past, you somehow die. There's no explanation for it, but somehow a dinosaur walking past you is enough to kill you.

With disappointing graphics, wholly linear gameplay, and a few too many glitch deaths, Turok ends up being a disappointment. While running with the dinosaurs is a really cool experience to begin with, the inclusion of dinosaurs alone is not enough to make a great game. It'd need rocket-launching monkeys in top hats for that to happen. ● ***Ian Morris***


Stabbing someone in the back is always fun. Until you realise you've got to be in exactly the right place for it to work.

THE GOOD BITS

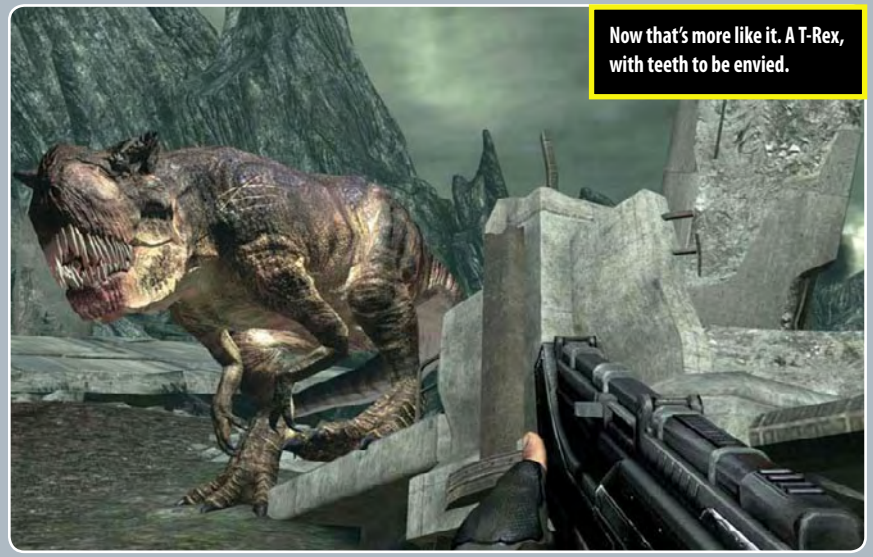
Looking on the positive side…



The dinos | **The sci-fi** | **Erm…**

The dinos

There may be a lot of bad to Turok, but there is some good to it too – the first being the awesome scale of the dinosaurs. If there's one thing Turok does well, it's pulling you into an environment where the dinosaurs, not the humans rule, and *you've* got to stay out of their way.


Now that's more like it. A T-Rex, with teeth to be envied.

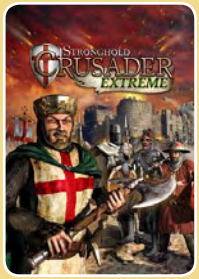

Not the kind of end you want, really.

PCGZine Verdict

Sorry to say it, but Turok is a game that's on the path to extinction.

- It has dinosaurs
- But little else
- Rubbish graphics

61%



Stronghold Crusader Extreme

It's all just a little bit of history repeated

Publisher: Gamecock
Developer: Firefly
Heritage: Stronghold, CivCity Rome
Link: www.fireflyworlds.com/shce_index.php
OUT NOW

System Requirements: P3 500 Mhz, 128 MB RAM, 850 MB HDD space, XP/Vista

If you've think you've heard the name Stronghold Crusader before, it's because you probably have. Originally released around six years ago, Stronghold Crusader Extreme is essentially the same game, with no graphical updates and very few refinements. Well, at least that explains why the screenshots around the page look so retro.


Fighting your way onto an island is usually a good tactic.


Arrows rain down from the sky, and, brilliantly, actually kill the things they hit.

But never ones to judge a game purely on its graphical prowess, it'd be unfair to write off Stronghold because it doesn't look as good as, say, Age of Empires 3. It's the gameplay that counts, we always say. And it's here that Stronghold's a rather mixed bag.

With a formula that crosses Age of Empires with the city building of Sim City, Stronghold is almost a siege simulator at times, as you build up your defences, fortify your stronghold and repel enemy attack. Of course, you've also got to manage your troops, keep your populace happy, harvest raw materials, hunt for food and keep an open trade with the rest of the world.

So it's somewhat disappointing that Stronghold Crusader Extreme offers so little extras – the only addition of any real worth being the new Extreme mode, which is, for all intents and

>


Battles can get pretty crowded…

NEW CASTLES, NEW RULES

We're the kings of the castle…



This is extreme! | 20-20 | Living in America

This is extreme!

When we say the new extreme mode's hard, we mean it. You often start out with half (or less) of the resources of your opponent, and have just a few minutes to build up a few defences and a makeshift army to defend yourself.



We're guessing the guys in black are the baddies.

> Stronghold continued

purposes, a chain of unlinked skirmishes against ridiculously tough opponents. When we say tough, we mean 'you don't stand a chance in hell unless you have the brain of a super computer'. Your average guy really doesn't stand a chance.

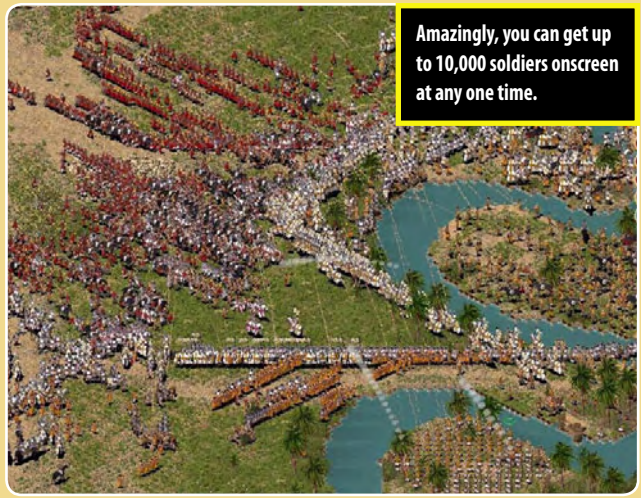
Having said that, it's not as if Stronghold doesn't have a few nice touches. The original Stronghold has withstood the test of time well, and in places still shines. For example, when your archers fire a flurry of arrows, anyone standing directly beneath where they fall will be killed – it's not like other games where innocents can roam around the battlefield quite happily without getting killed, or troops take several hits.

However, partially because of its age, Stronghold isn't without its graphical problems, which certainly help shatter the atmosphere. Seeing your hapless hunters scare a group of deer into stampeding through your town is scary enough, let alone when the deers are all running in single file, merging into one huge, caterpillar creature.

Still, for the armchair Lord, there's plenty of fun to be had here. Stronghold Crusader will provide many hours of fun, even if you won't be able to touch the 'Extreme' section, because it is as the name says. While £20 may be a bit much for what is essentially a budget re-release, if you haven't touched the game before, it may be worth a try.

Ian Morris


Flaming arrows are cooler than their normal brethren.


Amazingly, you can get up to 10,000 soldiers onscreen at any one time.


The most deadly of medieval weapons – the bad curry.

Roll over screen for annotations



PCGZine Verdict

It's an oldie, but probably worth checking out if you've never played it before.

- Still with strategic depth
- Gameplay stands up
- Extreme mode = FAIL

64%



Peggle

Publisher: Focus Multimedia
Developer: PopCap
Price: £9.99

If you've never been near one of those new fangled digital delivery platforms like Steam (and we can't really imagine that there are many of you that haven't done that yet) then you can now get your hand on a bit of Peggling goodness thanks to Focus Multimedia.

For those who don't know, Peggle is an addictive pin popping game, where you fire a ball and, much in the same way as a Pachinko machine, it drops down, destroying the various pegs as it goes on its merry way. A simple concept, with great execution.

PCGZine GOLD

- Great concept
- Really addictive
- Simple, but loads of fun

Can't get enough **90%**



Sims 2: Double Deluxe

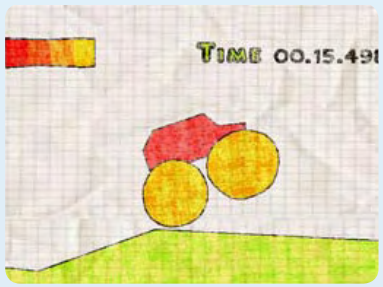
Publisher: EA
Developer: EA
Price: £29.99

Bundling the Sims 2 with an expansion, a 'Stuff Pack' and a bonus DVD into the same box, Sims 2 Double Deluxe is a decent enough offer, even if it does have a totally illogical name. While the original Sims 2 took the living dolls house concept, and expanded on it, the Nightlife expansion lets your Sims strut their stuff downtown, whilst the "Celebrations Stuff" pack comes with everything you'd need for a wedding.

With a few pounds shaved off the price, this would have been more highly recommended. At £30 though, it's for the fans only.

- Decent mix
- Stuff Pack is effectively free
- Too expensive

Good, but expensive **75%**



Jello Car

Publisher: http://walaber.com
Developer: http://walaber.com
Price: Free!

It wouldn't be the PC reviews round-up without a natty bit of Freeware, and here's one to sink your teeth into (Jello? Jelly? Sink our teeth into? Oh, we kill ourselves sometimes, we seriously do).

Jello Car, as the name may suggest, is a game based around a car made out of Jelly. Guiding your car through over fifteen wobbly levels, it's up to you to bounce, blob, and flip your way around the intricately designed puzzles. Much like crayon physics, this is one of a new breed of indie games, using physics to make the game, rather than as a nice addition. And hey, it's free, so what have you got to lose? Nothing, that's what.

- Wobbly
- Physics
- Cars

Mmmm, jelly **84%**



Trials 2.0

Publisher: www.redlynxtrials.com
Developer: www.redlynx.com
Price: £4.99

Trials 2.0 is easily one of the most enjoyable budget games that we've played in months. Putting you in the saddle of a stunt bike rider, it's up to you to navigate your way through one of 40 courses in the game, without letting your rider become flatter than a pancake.

Graphically, it's more than good enough for the price, and the gameplay is truly compulsive stuff. There's a thriving community already built up around this game, vying to strip milliseconds off the world's best times – you could do a lot worse than joining them.

PCGZine GOLD

- Great fun
- Passionate community
- Even great graphics

A genuine classic **94%**



Planet Defender

Publisher: Share Games
Developer: www.share-games.com
Price: £10

If you've ever seen the Millennium Falcon bit in the first (fourth, technically) Star Wars film – you know, the bit where they're escaping from the Death Star and shooting at TIE fighters – then you'll know what to expect from this.

Planet Defender puts you in the seat of an invisible turret, defending a planet from alien attack. You can rotate round 360° to get the best shot at your opponent, but you probably won't need to, considering how slowly the enemies move. This is a decent enough concept that's let down by a distinct lack of fun. This one's a disappointment.

- Good idea
- Repetitive
- So slow…

Don't get cocky, kid **53%**

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

PRINCELY PROBLEMS

I'm trying to install Prince of Persia The Two Thrones on my Vista Ultimate 64-bit computer. Even though the installation goes well, upon reboot I get a BSOD. The system complains that it doesn't find or can't verify the signature for \windows\system32\drivers\sfsync02.sys. The code the system displays is 0xc0000428.

> *The file mentioned is part of the Starforce copy protection system. From what we know, only the latest versions of this are compatible with Vista 64-bit, which we'd imagine is why you're having problems. Head to www.star-force.com/support/drivers and get the latest version.*



We sort out all your regal problems in our own inimitable style.

BLOCKED GATES

A while back I removed Baldur's Gate 2 – using the uninstaller – and everything seemed to go well. But recently I wanted to replay it and tried to install it, but the installer seems to think it's already installed. I've tried to run it myself manually but with no effect.

> *It sounds to us that some settings have been left lying around the Registry. Try running Regedit and search for Baldur's Gate-related items and remove them. If you don't fancy that we can recommend trying CrapCleaner from www.ccleaner.com, which should do the trick for you.*

SOLITAIRE DENIED

I've just got Vista and I can't open any of the original games that are in the Games Explorer folder. I can see the icons but none of them will run. If I right-click any I see a list of options but can't play any of them.



Revel in all of its 2Dness.

> *This sounds like they aren't installed correctly. In the Control Panel click the Programs link, select Turn Windows features on or off and choose uninstall then reinstall.*

VERY SPECIAL

I'm left-handed and I like to use the mouse switched to left-handed mode, but every now and again it'll automatically revert back to its default right-handed operation. I can switch it back but I was wondering if there was something I could do to stop this from happening in the future?

> *Insert the following command into his logon script:*

Rundll32 User32.dll,SwapMouseButton

This will reverse the mouse button actions. To restore the normal mode, use the Control Panel.

TOO MUCH EXPERIENCE

I'm playing through Diablo 2 again and I decided to make a necromancer and power my way through the acts. The problem is I think my strategy has >



Some call them left-handed, we call them minions of Satan.

Tech Support

backfired, I'm level 25 and on Chapter IV and my golems and skeletons are getting crushed really easily. But I can't get back to Act III. Is that it, am I stuck?

> *From what we've read – and contrary to typical RPG mechanics – fighting monsters more than seven or eight levels above you is totally pointless. Take a gander at www.battle.net/diablo2exp/basics/experience.shtml you'll see creatures nine levels above or below you only provide 5% experience, the sweet spot is five levels either way.*

To go back through chapters you can use waypoints, there are numbered tabs on the top of the waypoint interface.

TERRIBLE EFFECTS

I'm playing my through Mass Effect and my gun keeps overheating and won't cool down. Is this a bug or am I missing something obvious?



Do you know the way to San Jose?

> *We believe this is a game bug that affected both the 360 and PC version of the game. While it is annoying it shouldn't be too much of a problem. There are two things you can try: the first is saving the game and reloading or try pressing the Use button instead. It's not a great thing to happen and hopefully a forthcoming patch should fix this.*

MASSIVE FAIL

Should I get more RAM for my computer, or a new game? My PC has 1GB of memory, is a 1.6GHz dual-core processor and has Intel GMA950 graphics. I know you're laughing at my poor specs but I'd be upgrading mostly for TF2 and the Orange Box.



A crayon and notepad would render TF2 better than the Intel GMA950 can.

> *What you really need is a new graphics card, as any Intel-integrated graphics such as the GMA950 are pitiful for gaming. Even a £40 card such as the AMD Radeon 3650 would be better. As it is if you're running Windows XP, stick with 1GB and get a game, however Vista users need 2GB of memory as it's a real hog.*

MORE LIKE STUMBLING

STALKER refuses to run stably now for more than 30 minutes. Every time I 'update' the renderer there's a chance it'll crash with a Callstack error in NV_disp.dll. I'm using the 175.16 Forceware drivers and every other game seems fine. I'm running an Intel E6420, 2GB of RAM and a GeForce 8800 GTS on XP.

> *There always were a lot of issues with STALKER and not just with the graphics. You should head to www.stalker-game.com and the get the version 1.0005 patch for starters. Secondly, it seems that there are general problems with NVIDIA cards and STALKER. Most people report the most stable versions are the now ageing v162 drivers. Head over to http://tinyurl.com/6rd9o3 and grab it from here. This will inflict a small performance hit in other games but nothing you'll notice.*

"There always were a lot of issues with STALKER and not just with the graphics"

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