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PCGZine

Issue 26 | Jan 2009

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EXCLUSIVE #1 PREVIEW, VIDEO, SCREENS & INTERVIEW



Tom Clancy's HAWK X

Exclusive Interview, video and screens

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CRYOSTASIS
Are cryogenics really cool?

EXCLUSIVE #4!

MEN OF WAR
Could this be a CoH beater?

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EXCLUSIVE #2!

NECROVISION

Exclusive first review inside

PREVIEWED!

DAWN OF WAR II

PREVIEWED!

GHOSTBUSTERS

PREVIEWED!

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK DARK ATHENA

Welcome to PCGZine



Coo, talk about a good start to the year! We've got three exclusive reviews in this issue that you won't find anywhere else online, or in print for that matter, so you're already ahead of the game just by being here. Good on yer. Check out Cryostasis, Necrovision and Men of War now! We've also got exclusive HAWX footage for you to ogle plus a comprehensive Q&A with the devs, not to mention all the latest preview news on the top games of 2009. It's also Independent Games Festival time again so we're taking a look at some of the more intersteing entries in our round-up. Christmas is over but we're still giving, there's graphics cards and games to be won inside too!

James Carey, Editor
pcgzine@gamerzines.com

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

Don't miss! This month's highlights...



HAWX

Ubisoft take us on a highway to the danger zone with Clancy's latest.

QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away!

Ghostbusters	Elven Legacy
The Chronicles of Riddick:	Dawn of War 2
Assault on Dark Athena	Cryostasis
HAWX	Necrovision
Bionic Commando	Men of War
Battlestations: Pacific	Mirror's Edge
Demigod	King's Bounty



Dawn of War 2

A second dawn or has the sun finally set?



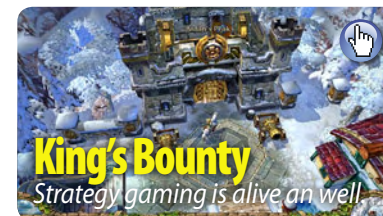
Cryostasis

Exclusive review! Cool!



Men of War

Reviewed! Has CoH met it's match?



King's Bounty

Strategy gaming is alive an well



Mirror's Edge

Who's the slickest of them all?

MEET THE TEAM

Probably the best games writers on the planet



Alec Meer

This month Alec moved to London. To see the Queen, nacth.



Jim Rossignol

Half robot, Jim doesn't have to move, he can FTP his entire brain.



Steve Boxer

Steve lives in geostationary orbit above London, so he can watch.

ALIENWARE

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



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Publisher: Atari

Developer: Terminal Reality

Heritage: Bloodrayne 2,
Metal Slug Anthology,
Monster Truck Madness 2

Link: www.ghostbustersgame.com
ETA: 2009

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



Ghostbusters features outdoor levels as well as interiors.



Ghostbusters

**FIRST
LOOK**

Who you gonna call...?

What's the story?

For a moment it looked as though what is surely the mostly hotly anticipated game-of-a-film ever would get canned in the fallout from the Vivendi-Activision merger, but Atari snapped it up. And although we hate to get over-excited about these things, this has the potential to be stunning.

What do we know?

Actually, it's not a game-of-a-film at all. Apparently we should think of it as the third instalment in the Ghostbusters series – it's set in 1991, two years after the events of Ghostbusters 2. On the plus side, the script is by Dan Aykroyd and Harold Ramis (the writers of the original), the original cast provided voice talent and likenesses, and you play a rookie recruit entrusted with the dodgy task of testing new ghostbusting kit. Alyssa Milano plays a new love interest, and you get to make a rare old mess of the destructible environments with your proton beam and slime-blower. Lovely.

Anything else to declare?

Plenty. You'll get to trap the Librarian – which was the one ghost that got away from the Ghostbusters in the original film – and deal with environmental objects which arrange themselves into golems. Terminal Reality promises six multiplayer modes in which you'll answer call-outs to infestations. And it may be a little bit late, but Ghostbusters is very timely in one respect as it's 25 years since the original movie.



WARHAMMER
40,000

DAWN OF WAR



PLAYBACK OPTIONS: ENHANCED

WWW.DAWNOFWAR2.COM

20TH FEBRUARY 2009



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"You even get a remastered version of the original game thrown in for free"

The first game was a critical success, here's hoping the sequel is too!

THE CHRONICLES OF
RIDDICK
ASSAULT ON DARK ATHENA

Publisher: Atari

Developer: Starbreeze Studios

Heritage: Chronicles of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay, The Darkness

Link: <http://atari.com/riddick>

ETA: March

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of The Chronicles of Riddick

Riddick resented the 'I've just had a brilliant idea' lightbulb mod.



Hmm, looking a little too F.E.A.R.-like? Send us your thoughts.

The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena

FIRST LOOK

Round two of Vin Diesel's sci-fi incarnation

What's the story?

Five years on from Escape to Butcher Bay, we return to the Riddick universe for more first-person shooting, third-person action and stealth, controlling a virtual Vin Diesel.

What do we know?

Starbreeze promises a 'Massive game, which is the most polished experience we've ever shipped'. There are new weapons, stealth-kills and counter-moves when in close combat, and Riddick can control robotic 'ghost drones' to solve puzzles and distract enemies. A meaty single-player experience – 20-plus hours, according to Starbreeze – will this time be augmented by a multiplayer aspect. Sadly, Starbreeze is remaining coy about that, merely muttering enigmatically that it will be unique to the Riddick universe.

Anything else to declare?

Only a remastered version of the original game thrown in for free, with Riddick's new moves and abilities retro-fitted, plus 2009 levels of graphical sophistication tacked on. Sounds like we'll get a lot for our money. But hip-hop fans will be disappointed that Xzibit (who voiced the first game) is absent.





PLAYBACK OPTIONS: ENHANCED



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Elven Legacy

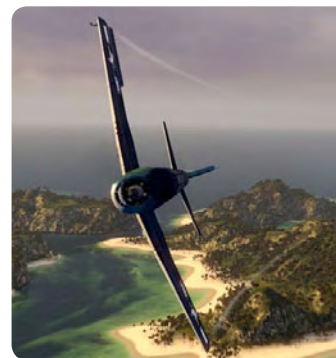
Publisher: Paradox | **ETA:** Quarter 1

There's the usual mix of Elves, Orcs and us puny Humans doing battle across a non-linear storyline here, and there's also a built-in editor to let you create your own missions for single or multiplayer sessions. Might & Magic clones are something of a niche outside Central and Eastern Europe, but it's good to see this under-exploited market given some love.

Battlestations: Pacific

Publisher: Eidos | **ETA:** March

Intriguingly, this innovative-looking RTS – in which you plan your campaign in detail, but can then jump into units for a more hands-on approach – lets you play as the Japanese as well as the Americans. Basically that means that you're free to rewrite history by booting the Yankee dogs out of the Pacific. It's fair to say that if you liked Battlestations: Midway, you'll love this.



Hearts of Iron III

Publisher: Paradox | **ETA:** Quarter 3

Previous Hearts titles have offered some of the most gruelling WWII strategy gaming to be had on PC, and this third outing looks set to offer more of the same. With 10,000 provinces to conquer, there should be enough to keep even the most bookish of armchair generals busy well into the autumn.



Bionic Commando

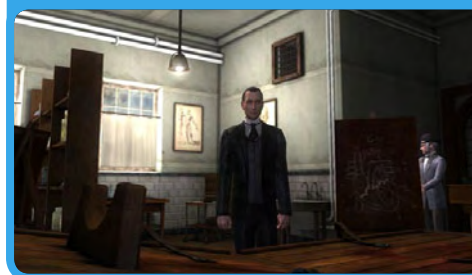
Publisher: Capcom | **ETA:** 2009

If you're no spring chicken then you may remember this from the 8-bit NES days. We reckon it'll be just a tad more sophisticated, though. Like the original, it will be all about taking people out with your bionic arm while hanging upside-down or swinging from things. Not out for a while, but it already looks stunning.

Sherlock Holmes vs Jack the Ripper

Publisher: Focus | **ETA:** March

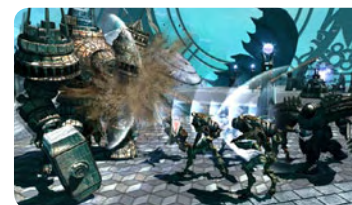
Alas, it isn't a beat-'em-up (think of the special moves), but neither is it a run-of-the-mill point-and-click adventure. It looks pretty decent, and you can play the whole game in first-person mode if you wish. Like CSI: New York, one for the less action-obsessed gamer.



The History Channel: Great Battles of the Middle Ages

Publisher: Slitherine | **ETA:** Summer

Nobody does historical accuracy like Slitherine – so much so that this one comes with the History Channel's seal of approval. It's based on the Hundred Years War, so, there should be no complaints about longevity...



Demigod

Publisher: Atari | **ETA:** 2009

Gas Powered Games, of Dungeon Siege fame, is branching out from RPGs with this epic number. Well, sort of, as it's an RPG/RTS hybrid. Which means, we think, that it looks like an RTS but you can develop your character. Whatever it is though, it sounds interesting.

SUMMER

Armed Assault II
Q2

SPRING

Champions Online
April

Overgrowth
Q2

FEB 2009

Wheelman
16th February

Dungeon Hero
Spring

F.E.A.R. 2
Project Origin
13th February

Sims 3
20th February

Heroes over Europe
Spring

Mafia 2
Summer

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FIRST LOOK

HAWX

Arcade-style air combat comes to the Clancy universe

Whatever your opinion of Tom Clancy (we too only ever encounter his novels while browsing in airport bookshops), his oeuvre seems to translate well to computer games. As Ubisoft acknowledged when it bought the licence to use his name in games in March 2008. Its latest use of that licence, HAWX, is something of a

departure for them: an arcade-style air combat affair.

As HAWX is set in the 'Clancy Universe', it will strike the odd chord for console owners who have already played Ghost Recon Advanced Warfare and EndWar, as it contains aerial missions in which you co-ordinate with ground units from those games. HAWX casts you as



Publisher: Ubisoft

Developer: Ubisoft
Bucharest

Heritage: Blazing Angels:
Squadrons of WWII

Link: <http://hawxgame.uk.ubi.com>

ETA: Feb/March 2009

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

> HAWX continued

David Crenshaw, an elite special-ops pilot whose squadron has joined ARES, one of the private military companies which has superseded conventional armies in the game's 2019 setting. ARES is embroiled in a South American war between Brazil and a new alliance of countries called Las Trinidad. Intriguingly, this means you will carry out missions against the US, which has sided with Brazil.

This perhaps tortuous premise means HAWX is free from any pretensions towards historical accuracy and can take place in some

exotic locations – such as in the skies above Rio de Janeiro.

We got considerable hands-on time with the game when Ubisoft held a splashy preview event at the RAF Museum in north-west London, and left impressed. It must be stressed that HAWX is designed primarily to make sense on consoles, so it's emphatically not a flight sim. Although it does contain 60 of the world's most exotic military aircraft, including the Eurofighter Typhoon, the Harrier and the F-117 Nighthawk Stealth fighter. While it does support all the flight sim joysticks (as well as keyboard and mouse), Ubisoft

You only get an "Ooo god that's pretty" with Typhoons. The Eurofighter is one of our favourites.



**EXCLUSIVE
SCREEN**

It's not a sim, but it doesn't mean it's dumbed down.



**EXCLUSIVE
SCREEN**

"It must be stressed that HAWX is designed primarily to make sense on consoles, so it's emphatically not a flight sim"

**PCGZine
EXCLUSIVE
VIDEO**



Use the Play and Stop controls to the left, or click here to see the enhanced version!




**EXCLUSIVE
SCREEN**

This looks like something you'd make out of three Airfix kits.

> HAWX continued

suggested that even on a PC, it's probably best played with a console-style gamepad.

Key features

Structurally, HAWX's most striking aspect is that the entire single-player campaign can be played by up to four people cooperatively, dropping in or out whenever they want – mission objectives change when someone enters or leaves. There's eight-player Team Deathmatch too, which will surely test your dogfighting skills to the limit.

Lead Game Designer at Ubisoft Bucharest, Thomas Simon, was keen

to emphasise that dogfighting is the core of the game, and HAWX has two gameplay mechanics which make the dogfighting enjoyable, even if you're not the reincarnation

of Baron von Richthofen. The first is the Enhanced Reality System (ERS), which is a head-up display giving you all sorts of info in various windows, such as a mission

It's been a while since we had so much air fun. Who needs MSFS?


**EXCLUSIVE
SCREEN**


Yeah! Flatten that highrise!

**EXCLUSIVE
SCREEN**

A FLYING LESSON

We feel the need... the need for speed!


**Assistance
needed**
Flying solo
**Incoming
missile!**

Assistance needed

This is what a novice HAWX player would see: although it's pretty much a third-person view, assistance is turned on, so you get all your ERS information. Note the red box showing that you're locked onto your target – in this case, an enemy plane.


**EXCLUSIVE
SCREEN**


The Harrier is a close second to the Eurofighter in our appreciation...

**EXCLUSIVE
SCREEN**
**ROLL OVER
THE BIG
PICTURE**


... but what's VTOL compared to this thing eh? Do want!!!

**EXCLUSIVE
SCREEN**


Head tracking with full TrackIR support will keep the sim-fans happy. Phew!

> HAWX continued

map, video from sources such as colleagues on AWACS radar planes or your wing-men, radar info and even gates that you can follow to intercept enemies in close-quarter fights (you have to opt to turn those on after engaging a plane and failing to shoot it down). No matter what aircraft you're in, the ERS looks the same, emphasising the game's prioritising of gameplay over authenticity.

The missions

The other mechanic is Assistance mode. With this on, you get a fully functional ERS, with vast amounts of data coming in constantly (although,

commendably, it never seems to get too confusing, a common criticism aimed at such games). But in Assistance mode your aircraft is subject to nannying safety systems which limit its manoeuvrability. Turn assistance off and the view moves out behind your plane and to the side and the ERS disappears, but you can chuck your plane around to an almost ridiculous extent. The move from first to third-person view took a bit of getting used to at first, but proved especially invaluable when evading incoming missiles (missile-confusing chaff tends to run out quickly) in the bigger dogfights.

The missions are agreeably long, multi-stage affairs. They start in



There's enough variation in missions and the aircraft to keep planespotters hooked.

EXCLUSIVE SCREEN

> HAWX continued

a relatively gentle manner in the Middle East, with you and your three wingmen protecting an oil refinery under attack from bombers with a sizeable fighter escort and some tanks on the ground. From the off, you learn techniques such as routinely dispatching two missiles at targets – just in case the enemy manages to evade the first one. Next up was a huge dogfight over Rio de Janeiro, which really showed off the game's stunning graphics and its properly constructed 3D terrain (constructed from real data provided by satellite imagery company GeoEye) – for once in an air combat game, you can fly between buildings and under bridges, rather than

looking down at a pancake with satellite photos superimposed on it. The Rio mission introduced another technique: the need to dive-bomb SAM missile launchers from an almost vertical trajectory. Other missions featured stealthily picking a path between areas covered by radar stations and protecting Air Force One from a full-on aerial assault.

Overall, we were very impressed by HAWX and look forward to playing it. It's sufficiently varied to have mass appeal – although its action takes place in the skies, it's very much a well-rounded combat game, rather than a flight sim. But even die hard flight sim-fanatics, once they finish sneering at any perceived lack of rigour obviously, will surely find it adrenaline-filled and compelling. ●



EXCLUSIVE SCREEN

All the cool and none of the fuss.

Roll over screen for annotations



PCGZine



HOW COMPLETE?



FIRST IMPRESSIONS?



Enjoyable, high-tech air combat



Publisher: Ubisoft

Developer: Ubisoft
Bucharest

Players: Many

ETA: Feb/March 2009

Flying High

We caught up with HAWX's Lead Designer, Thomas Simon, at a recent press event, and here's what he said...

What, for you, are the most important aspects of HAWX? What sets it apart from other air combat games?

I would say that it's the realistic setting. We added a high-stakes political thriller atmosphere, so it has a strong storyline. And in terms of gameplay, we have this assistance-off mode, which teaches you to build up your strategy and understand your plane. I think we are refreshing the experience, because you don't just need to be crazy about planes to play HAWX.

Are the missions different when played cooperatively?

We did the missions with the same flow, so you have the same objectives when playing single-player or co-op. But the pure level design evolves from the single-player to the multiplayer. So you really have to cooperate with your teammates. Enemy units will come from new directions, which you aren't anticipating, and will have to be intercepted in a different way.

How many missions does HAWX have in total?

There are 18 missions in total. In the first one you are in Mexico in 2014, where you support the Ghosts on the ground – it's a replay of a GRAW 2 (Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter) mission. Then you play in locations like Afghanistan and Central Africa until conflict arrives in South America. Then you go back to the US to protect the country from the attack.

What character do you play?

Your name is David Crenshaw, and you're a former HAWX squadron leader. When the unit gets disbanded

"There are 18 missions in total. The first one is a replay of one from Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter"

ROLL OVER
THE BIG
PICTURE



Why are Russian planes so much sexier than US and Euro fighters eh?



EXCLUSIVE
SCREEN



The cityscapes in HAWX are simply breathtaking.

Accessibility doesn't come at the cost of simulation say Ubisoft.





Fox two! You've had it matey...

EXCLUSIVE SCREEN



There are some pretty exotic aircraft in HAWX but they're all badass.

EXCLUSIVE SCREEN

Dogfights: Each mission offers new challenges.



EXCLUSIVE SCREEN

> Interview continued

because of budget cuts and the US focuses on different types of units, you join a private military company. Until you are reintegrated because of the massive conflict that starts, that is.

The assistance on/off is one of the most important game dynamics. How does it work?

There are definitely some situations that call for assistance to be on – if you don't have time pressures then you can do things in a slow but safe way. It's useful for giving you the trajectories which can allow you to intercept

enemies or make a surgical strike. You turn it off when you need to react quickly or when things start to get out of hand – when you have too many enemies to deal with, for example.

What system requirements will the PC version have, and does it support all the joysticks?

Yes, it does support all the joysticks – and the keyboard and mouse, too. The exact standard configuration is not stabilised yet. All I can tell you is that it won't be necessary to have a workstation to play the game. But you'll be able to enjoy HAWX without having

to get one of the latest generation of PCs, that's for sure.

The missions seem to be very varied, but can you elaborate?

Obviously you have dogfights, and they progress through the game with more skilled enemy pilots, different types of planes, etc. But we wanted the experience not to be repetitive, so you have different types of missions. You have missions where you upload new stuff for the ERS that you couldn't do before. You'll have escort missions, missions where you provide air-support, naval battles and so on. ●

PREVIEW

WARHAMMER 40K:
DAWN OF WAR 2

Publisher: THQ

Developer: Relic

Heritage: Homeworld and
Company of HeroesLink: www.dawnofwar2.com

ETA: March

**PREVIEW
FEEDBACK!**
Click here to
tell us what
you think of
Dawn of War 2*The Imperial Space Marines return. Turns out you're their newest recruit...*

The mantra of that thou shalt build vast networks of war factories before rushing the opponent has always been mumbled throughout the genre of real-time strategy and never quite been silenced. As has the rule that many of the options open to the armchair general are there from start to finish, piling tactics and weapons on your poor pressurised brain from the word go. Sure, different developers tweak the genre in different ways but the almost universal belief in the heads of the PC gaming fraternity is that real-time strategy is the most harsh of mistresses. So it was in the beginning, so presumably it shall be in the end.

Dawn of a new era

Relic, though, have made it their mission to slip a coasting genre out of neutral and back into universal acclaim with Dawn of War 2 (and, incidentally, the forthcoming Company of Heroes: Tales of Valor standalone expansion),

showing some remarkable diversions from convention that's intended to both widen the genre's appeal and satiate fans simultaneously. What's more, mercifully, having played the game, we can confirm that it does so without dumbing down.

The game begins in no-nonsense fashion. You are a badass marine (we called ourselves Humphrey) orbiting

**Eldar are sleek and lithe, filling the elf role in the 40k universe.****Never fear. Frenetic, constant, fit-inducing lasers blasts remain a part of the DOW firmament.****Some of the special animations you see in Melee combat are insanely bloody.**



The various capture points on multiplayer maps are great for funnelling the action into key areas.



Grenades can flatten your squad. As such, when one is lobbed you click like hell.

> Dawn of War 2 continued

the planet Caldarus upon which the Orks have become slightly riled. What follows is a sequence of short, sharp and entertaining levels in which feature-packed environments are traversed, efficient fighting presents you with more experience points for your squad members, and weapon-drops and rewards are commonplace. It's RTS as you know it, blended with the give-give mentality of an MMO.

Taking command

Your own character is a Force Commander, a melee specialist armed with that most treasured of Games Workshop delights – a chainsword. You

then choose three of a variety of different squads to fight alongside you – headed up by Tarkus (assault), Cyrus (infiltrating/stealth), Avitus (heavy-gunning) and Thaddeus (jetpack-assisted, instant-attack boot stomping). Squad commanders aren't killed outright on the battlefield, but their two cohorts are fully mortal – and as such, various posts on the map must be captured so that reinforcements can be beamed in from above. The strategic interplay between the squads is wonderful, as is the way that you upgrade them throughout the game and then bend them towards your favoured style of play.

Various different potential missions pop up that you can select, giving the



Vehicles are all the rage in multiplayer, but quite how they'll work in the solo campaign is still unknown.



There's no denying that the multiplayer is a lot harder to get to grips with than the solo campaign.



Crispy Tyranid.
Tastes like chicken.



Beneath that mess there's one worried Space Marine...

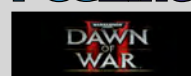
> Dawn of War 2 continued

game a vague sense of non-linearity, but you're still tumbling toward the involvement of the quasi-magical Eldar race and the rise of the fearsome xenomorphic Tyranids. It's big, daft and heavily shoulder-padded, but it's elegantly paced, extremely tense and far more addictive than before. In fact, the only real potential misstep that we've seen in the game is the inclusion of boss battles on different missions –

we understand the necessity of each level leading up to a big event, but all of the Ork warbosses and Eldar leaders we fought against were much of a melee muchness.

With multiplayer open to races other than the Space Marines, and retaining more traditional RTS stalwarts such as bases and in-game resources, it seems that the recent march of Games Workshop-based quality shows no sign of abating. We'll bring you the definitive verdict on this game next month. ●

PCGZine



HOW COMPLETE?



95%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS?



90%

Dawn till dusk enjoyment...

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Cryostasis

Anyone for an Arctic roll?

EXCLUSIVE
REVIEW

This slow-burning tale of monsters, megalomaniacs and mind-readers aboard an Arctic-stranded ghost ship is a game that will invariably be described as a first-person shooter. Understandable, what with the whole being in first-person and featuring shooting things. It is, however, a wholly inadequate summary of this high-concept oddity, and not just because you spend as much time waving an axe around as you do a machinegun. Rather, it's because this is an adventure game sporting shiny FPS shoes, hinged on puzzle-solving more than it is on monster-gutting.

Cryostasis is more well-intentioned than it is truly successful, but it is certainly a creepy game. For one thing, the sense of coldness is pervasive, a

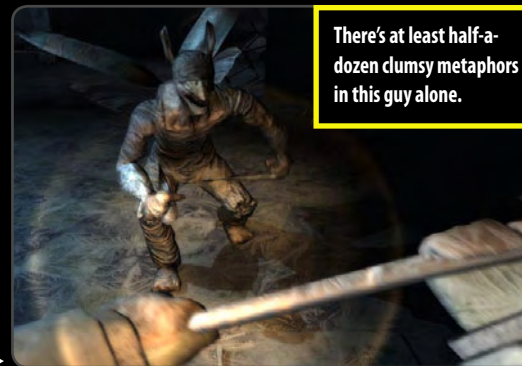
constant, invincible enemy. For another, it doesn't rely only on cheap pop-up fright (though there is plenty of that, too). The paranoia comes also from the fact the game will twist space and time without warning. Its plot's sketchily explained fusion of psychic powers and supernatural phenomena give Cryostasis free reign to drop a flashback cutscene on you out of the blue, which you wander through as an unseen ghost.

On a similar theme is the Mental Echo system, which allows the game's mind-hopping protagonist – sent to investigate the disaster that wiped out the ship's crew – to somehow travel back to the circumstances of certain unfortunates' final moments. Placed inside their skin, he's then able to alter the timeline and save them – a bit

Red means warm –
run for it!



There's at least half-a-
dozen clumsy metaphors
in this guy alone.

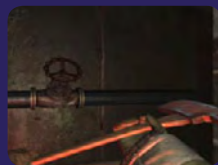


Yes, a sack. *That* will
keep you warm.



FREEZE FRAME

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



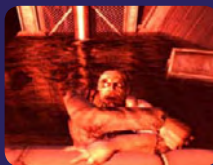
20 MINUTES

The early levels are quiet. You'll spend your time trying to activate heat sources and unlock doors.



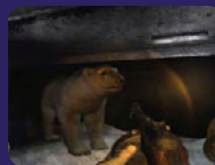
1 HOUR

As well as the tale of the crews' demise, you stumble across hints of something more metaphysical.



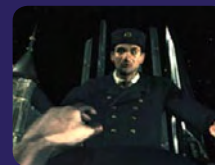
4 HOURS

One of the more harrowing Mental Echoes is steering a dinghy through dark, ghoul-infested waters.



8 HOURS

Okay, so just because he's a ruddy bear doesn't mean that he's not oozing psychic residue.



12 HOURS

Come the endgame, and things get proper weird. If you've played Stalker, expect similar oddness.



The only sane people you
encounter are ghostly echoes.

> Cryostasis continued

like Quantum Leap, but with more Russian sailors. Don't look for logic, because there ain't none.

Invariably, saving them means some exit is unlocked as a result, for the game rarely stretches its puzzle goals far beyond that. More importantly, the Echoes are a chance for the game to present you with something other than wandering around a deserted ship. In stark contrast to the lonely silence of your own exploits, they fill in the backstory with NPC chatter, and despite the logic breakdown, in a far more deft way than the artificial audio diaries that Bioshock – something of an influence here – used as an expository crutch. Oh, and at one point you get to play as a cowardly polar bear. That alone has got to add 10% to the score, right?

Echoes of time

Come the end of a flashback or a Mental Echo though, and you'll likely fetch up in a slightly different part of the ship or suddenly come face-to-face with a murderous ghoul in what was an empty room just seconds ago. Sometimes this is thrillingly disorientating – an effective suggestion that you're in an unpredictable, truly deadly world rather than trundling along an immutable train track of set-pieces and puzzles. Other times, it's simply irritating rug-pulling – any real sense of progress denied because the game takes so many decisions out of your hands.

As such, it too often feels like a scene-setting prelude to a crescendo that

never quite comes. It's glacially – and deliberately – slow, both in its pacing and in your character's movement, the ice-bound theme makes for relentlessly similar environments, and its puzzle ideas increasingly default to faintly turgid door-unlocking, monster-dodging and clock-racing. It's really not a game of adrenaline, which will disappoint anyone hoping for Halo on Ice, but that it sticks to a certain tone throughout rather than collapse into last-act wanton carnage is a rare and noble thing in these dark, focus-grouped times.

Presentation-wise, it's remarkably pared-down and subtle, and free from the rickiness and patchy humour so many Russian-made FPS titles suffer

The North Wind – the crashed nuclear icebreaker that's to be your home for the next 12 hours.



"It's not a game of adrenaline, which will disappoint anyone hoping for Halo on ice"

from. As with King's Bounty, this is part of a glossy second wave of former Soviet Union games that are now able to match the enthusiasm of the earlier wave with technical expertise and design experience.

Well, to a certain extent. It's still floundering in the dark ages of design in terms of difficulty. Too often, it suffers from a critical miscalculation of challenge and fun, piling on the sort of instant-death puzzles and fatal ledge-shuffling that anyone who played the



Big, strong, heavily accented men.

CHILL BANES

Fighting the cold war...



Getting warmer...

The chill factor

Gun-toting horrors

Getting warmer...

You need heat to survive – there are no medpacks here. The amount of health you gain is proportional to the heat source, so don't expect too much warmth from a lightbulb.



Fatty here is one of the key players – you'll find out his story as the game progresses.



If Wolverine were a locksmith...

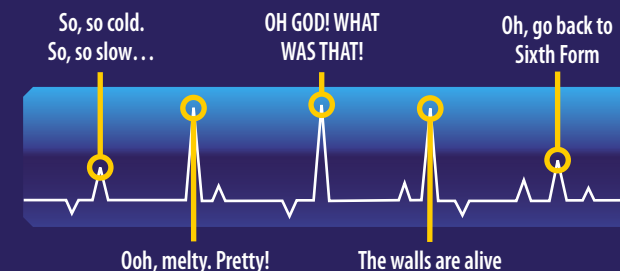
Roll over screen for annotations



> Cryostasis continued

early Tomb Raiders still has night terrors about. It also suffers from wearying inconsistency (this door won't open but that one will, this lamp will warm you but that one won't...) that means too much time is spent bumping up against stuff and pointlessly hitting the Use button. So it's not that it's too hard, but that it's so unsympathetic – there is, after all, little entertainment to be had from staring out a loading screen for 30 seconds because you accidentally dipped a foot in some water. Again. That you're allowed to instantly replay any of the Mental Echo puzzles until you get them right suggests some awareness of the fun/frustration ratio, but if only that kind of consideration had spread to the game as a whole, its fine atmosphere

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



wouldn't be quite so undermined by fevered quicksaying.

Which is the rub of it. Cryostasis offers a haunting and creepily beautiful game world, but mechanics that seem 10 years behind the rigorously playtested joyrides we've lately become accustomed to. It's too often a bit of a chore, but always a thoughtful one. Perhaps it just realises the danger and tedium of Arctic life a little too accurately. Still, that it never resorts to the meatheadedness of its peers makes it a game that bears investigation and admiration, a happy hint that technical spit 'n' polish need not come at the cost of Russian studios' enthusiastic inventiveness. ●

Alec Meer

PCGZine Verdict

Interesting ideas held back by glacial pacing and sadism

- Great ice and water effects
- A first-person shooter with a brain
- Often dreary and frustrating

70%

WIN! CRYOSTASIS AND AN NVIDIA 9800GTX+

But which one's cool and which one's hot?

● We've teamed up with 505 Games and Nvidia to bring three lucky readers a kick-ass 9800GTX+ and a copy of Cryostasis to show off it's potential. Ten other readers will also receive a copy of the game. Cryostasis makes use of cutting-edge physX technology to produce some of the most stunning and

dynamic game environments ever seen and with Nvidia's tip top GPUs driving the show, it's so cool you might get hypothermia. All you have to do to be in with a chance of winning is answer the simple question in the box opposite. Who knows? You could be freezing your bits off by spring!



Competition closes 26th February 2009. See website for full T&Cs.

EXCLUSIVE
REVIEW

Necrovision

Like Eurovision, only the participants are mindless, soulless monsters. Hey hang on...

Publisher: 505 Games
Developer: The Farm 51
Heritage: Painkiller
Link: www.1cpublishing.eu/game/necrovision
ETA: February

System Requirements:
Windows XP or Vista,
Processor: Pentium 4 at
2.4 GHz, RAM: 1GB, Video:
GeForce 6 Series with
256MB VRAM or better

Orange juice. Some people out there like the stuff with bits in. Most sane people go for the smooth stuff or, even more acceptably, freshly squeezed. But does that mean there shouldn't be any concentrated OJ-with-bits? Should we ban it and verbally abuse the people who consume it? In case you haven't worked it out by now, Necrovision is OJ-with-bits.

You need your big, square, 3D movie glasses on for this one, and B-movie glasses at that. This is a cheap zombie horror and proud of it. Sophistication is a dirty word, subtly a weakness, and character just something to hang a gun on. Instead of those things you have action, quite literally in spades. The setting is familiar, if utterly bizarre. We all know war is Hell right? Well what if

The Painkiller engine is pushed to considerable visual lengths here.

ROLL OVER
THE BIG
PICTURE



That's just disgusting. I mean ... I'm not squeamish.

Inconsistency frustrates. Some chains you can climb, others not.

"Soon an underworld of demons and vampires is revealed with you in the middle"

war really was Hell? Equally we all know WWI was the helliest of war Hells, so what if, right, the trenches of WWI became the battleground of Hell itself? What if the war between the followers of expelled and ASBOed Lucifer and God's chosen spilled out onto Flanders' fields? Now we're talking!

So far so derivative, but without giving too much away, things rapidly take on a more fantastical/SF element as you plunge deeper into the bowels of the earth. Soon an underworld of demons and vampires is revealed with you in the middle. Anyway, all this WWI Theomancy poppycock is just window dressing for killing lots of dark things in lots of ways. The one-two mouse combo of gunplay and melee combat are now de rigeur for shooters but



Think this guy looks big and menacing? Trust us it gets worse...

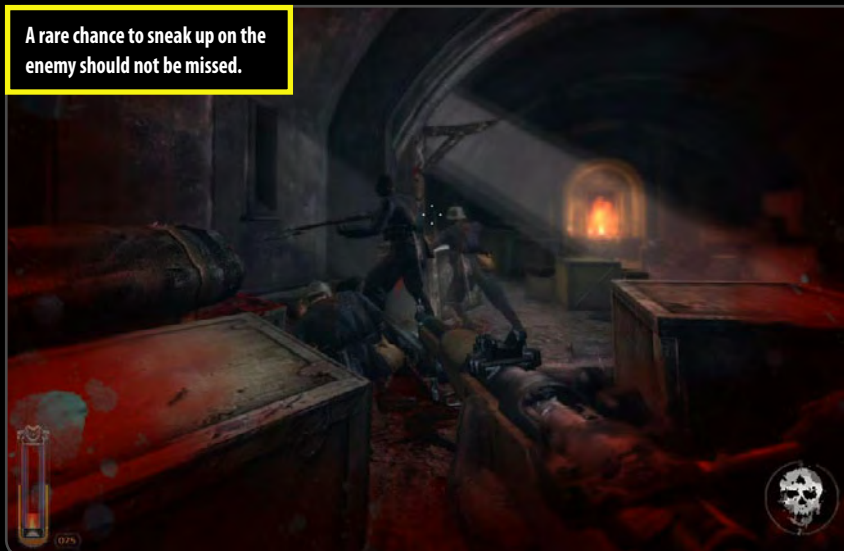
We're guessing that's not an umbrella stand he's holding.



> Necrovision continued

Necrovision goes a couple of steps further. It took us a while to come to terms with the madness of this but in Necrovision you actually have to juggle four or even five combat buttons to play effectively. You have left and right-hand attacks in which you carry guns or melee weapons, but you then also have the option to bludgeon with firearms, and then there's a kick move. Now, add onto that secondary and even tertiary fire options for some weapons, the ability to throw grenades (another button) and also lob all these weapons at the enemy Naked Gun style (another button) and you'll quickly see Necrovision requires the dexterity of a concert pianist. The attack choice

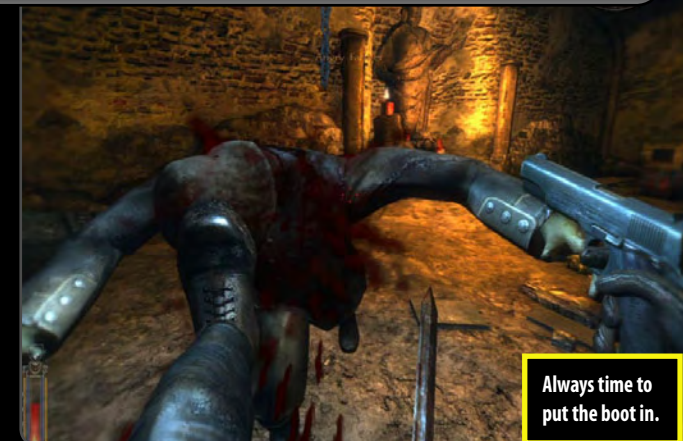
A rare chance to sneak up on the enemy should not be missed.



confusion is lessened somewhat in later stages when you collect the Vampiric weapons and Wolverine-like Shadow Hand, but it doesn't end there. Much of

the joy of Necrovision appears to be about mastering the special attacks and fatality moves that this insanely complicated combat system makes possible. There are scores of these moves, some straightforward and logical like 'Double Stab', and some deeply obscure with names like 'Angry Farmer'. It's a beat-'em-up of fighting complexity housed in a very Eastern-European shooter.

If you get that, and it turns you on, then the rest of Necrovision starts to make sense. You forget the inconsistent, paradoxical plot. The Bumper-Book-of-One-Liner quips delivered by the Bruce Campbell-alike protagonist go all the way through tedious and back out into funny (eventually). As you merrily hack, slash and blat your way through the comedic, demonic hordes then there are dim shades of Serious Sam, Doom or Halo even. To begin with it looks like it should be a cross between



Always time to put the boot in.

ONE VISION

Hell ain't a bad place to be...



What's in a name?

Dancing demons

Power to the people

What's in a name?

Combos are where Necrovision's at, even if they do have some odd names. In our experience, all farmers are angry...



There's no mistaking that mustard yellow in the distance. Time to find a gas mask...



Any game where a Dragon dogfights a Fokker has to have *something* going for it.

Roll over screen for annotations



> Necrovision continued

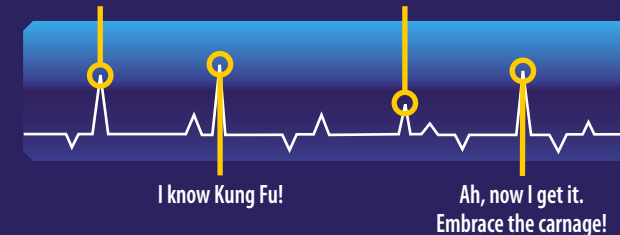
Wolfenstein and Call of Duty but it plays like that other Vampire/Demon/German mincer Bloodrayne.

But this is all starting to sound too positive. Even when viewed in the right light, Necrovision is a flawed game. While developers The Farm 51 have done some very impressive things with the ageing Painkiller engine, there's the whiff of feature-creep about it, as well as the stench of corpses. The bells and whistles of a limit-break rage meter, bullet time and Adrenaline boosts feel more a like a checklist of must-have features rather than a focused set of tools for the job at hand. Likewise, flying a dragon sounds good on paper but the execution just feels like NoClip has been toggled on. Also the frequent, overly long cutscenes that go to great lengths to expose the twisty plot seem at odds with the design choices

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*

So far, so Wolfenstein

Becoming a bit of a slog...



"If you want explosions and action then there's definitely that here"

mentioned above, and the level design can be shocking. A locked door can bar your path but the keys will be on a table less than two feet away. What, the proverbial, is the point of that?

Necrovision is enjoyable but only if you're forgiving. Take it seriously even for a second and things break down. It's not everyone's glass of OJ but if you just want explosions and action then there's definitely that here. ●

Andrew Alcott

PCGZine
Verdict

Broken it may be, but it's worth some perseverance

Fast and furious

Unfocused

Unwieldy

65%



Men of War

EXCLUSIVE
REVIEW

This intricate Russian wargame will blow your Red Army-issue socks off

Men of War is not your typical realtime strategy, as it's a vast World War II epic that puts almost all others to shame. Here's just one example: every single soldier has his own inventory. It's *that* detailed.

To understand the true nature of Men of War then you have to look at the other games from the same stable. The Soldiers games are not trying to replicate the base-building carnival of

"Men of War is a vast World War II epic that puts almost all others to shame"

the Command & Conquer series, rather they are far more like simulations than standard realtime strategies. The second level of Men of War's Russia campaign illustrates this brilliantly. It features a huge attack on a factory by Nazi forces. You, as the Russian commander, have to defend it. But the truth is that you need do little more than make a few tweaks here and there. The semi-autonomous troopers, already spread across the map, generally look after themselves. You become a kind of helpful spectator, watching a vast battle play out.

It does get very tricky in places, especially when you're tasked with taking on a tough military situation with a mere handful of troops. While your chaps will look after themselves to an enormous degree, the more specific the task at hand, the more you have to micromanage. If you only have one tank, for example, you have to be incredibly careful about how you use it, and fastidious in repairing it in the field.



Tank battles are amazingly violent, and on-screen prompts will tell you exactly what damage has been caused.

SMALL WONDER

It's the little things in Men of War that seem to have impressed us so much...



The little details

Cover me!

The right position

The little details

Men of War's game engine is one of the most detailed an RTS has ever seen. Every structure in the game, including massive ones like this Orthodox church, come apart realistically as they are hit by shells and gunfire.

Publisher: 505 Games
Developer: Best Way/
 DigitalMindSoft
Heritage: Soldiers: Heroes
 Of World War II
Link: www.digitalmindsoft.eu
ETA: February

ROLL OVER
THE BIG
PICTURE



System Requirements:
 Windows 2000/XP/Vista,
 1.7GHz Processor, 512MB
 RAM, nVidia GeForce 3/
 ATI Radeon 9600 video
 card or higher,
 DirectX 9.0b

FREEZE FRAME

Guiding you through the game, one step at a time...



10 MINUTES

The Russian campaign is the touching story of two friends who fight through the war together.



30 MINUTES

After learning to repair a tank and flank your enemies, you go on to liberate a Russian village.



2 HOURS

Battle scenarios feature snipers, so we recommend that you keep a close eye on the rooftops.



3 HOURS

Hold off the vast Nazi hordes and your train full of supplies escapes to help the war effort in Russia.



[Roll over screen for annotations](#)



> Men of War continued

Everyone is rather fragile too, so deaths are all too common. The net result of all this is that Men of War is incredibly challenging, and requires genuine commitment to play.

Commit and you find yourself immersed in a game that amounts to a close study of combat in World War II. The physical simulation itself is ludicrously realistic. Armour piercing shells will punch through buildings to strike their target, while your unit details will tell you just how hard you can hit an armoured target at a specific range. Combine this obsession for realistic ordnance with the completely destructible scenery, and you have battlefields onto which stunning carnage can be unleashed.

The problem with War

As awesome as all this is, there are still problems with Men of War. Path-finding, for example, is basically non-existent. Tell a tank or a mounted gun to drive somewhere and they'll just crash straight through the nearest scenery, no matter if that is a bush, tree, wall or wrecked vehicle. Nor is the game adequately explained. There aren't enough pop-ups or hints to really push you forward into a game that is formidably complex. With a little more polish, this could really be a top-notch title. As it is, we will have to settle for one of the most ambitious and forbidding wargames ever created. Just don't expect an even break, as this is game that kneels for no man.

Jim Rossignol



PCGZine Verdict

Too much for most, this is as tough as a tour on the Eastern Front

- [Amazing detail](#)
- [Totally destructible levels](#)
- [Niggling design flaws](#)

85%



Publisher: EA
Developer: DICE
Heritage: Quake, Half-Life, etc.

Link: www.mirrorsedge.com
OUT NOW

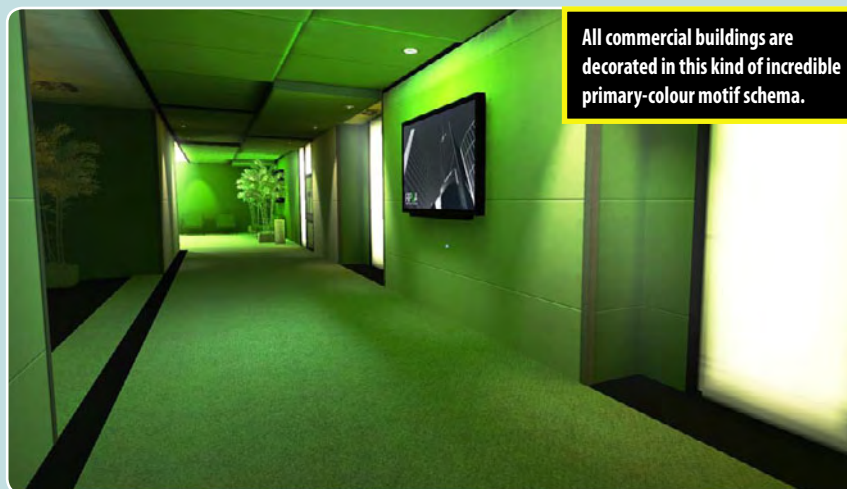
System Requirements:
Windows XP or Vista,
Processor: Pentium 4 at
2.4 GHz, RAM: 1GB, Video:
GeForce 6 Series with
256MB VRAM or better

Mirror's Edge

Free-running in a clean, fascist future? Count us in...

The big idea behind Mirror's Edge is actually a pretty simple one: movement. What if a shooter wasn't so much about the killing of enemies, but about how you moved?

What if you traversed the world with a full range of human agility? Leaping, climbing, vaulting, sliding, crawling... Well, you'd have something a bit like this. The focus in Mirror's Edge is purely



All commercial buildings are decorated in this kind of incredible primary-colour motif schema.

"The big idea behind Mirror's Edge is actually a pretty simple one: movement"

on moving across the environment, and it explores the full range of our arm and leg locomotion via the gift of free-running, to achieve this aim.

Free-running or 'La Parkour' is that hyper-athletic extreme sport of running about on buildings; making crazy leaps and death-defying drops in urban locales. Like Assassin's Creed, Mirror's Edge takes its cues from these real-world athletes and creates a game where swinging, sliding, leaping, rolling, tumbling and climbing are the main activities. It does this brilliantly. No other first-person game gets the feeling of human motion so right, nor does anything make falling to your



Helicopters provide a regular threat but can be rapidly out-paced across the rooftops.

LIFE ON THE ROOFTOPS

Get ready for a night on the tiles



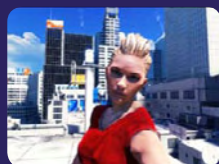
Caught by the fuzz

Leaps and bounds

Future shocks

FREEZE FRAME

Guiding you through the game, one step at a time...



2 MINUTES

Your fellow runner takes you through the tutorial, and she shows up regularly throughout the game.



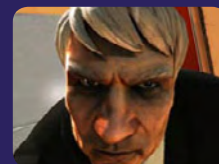
20 MINUTES

Much of the exposition plays out through a series of very stylish animated cutscenes. Like this one.



1 HOUR

Once you're finally in control of your faculties you start to take down some of the police.



2 HOURS

This guy is a baddie – can you tell? He might need dealing with in a fairly harsh manner.



3 HOURS

By this stage you're fully into all the running and jumping, but fighting enemies is still annoying.

Caught by the fuzz

Staying up on the rooftops is *de rigeur* for the runners, because down on the street they're more likely to be bagged by police. So what if the occasional runner falls to their death, it's better than being banged up. Isn't it?

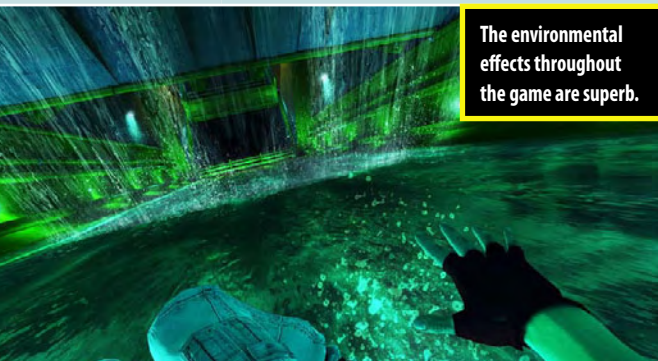


The city is fantastically detailed, but perhaps not quite open enough to be enjoyed.

> Mirror's Edge continued

death so completely thrilling. This is a game where inertia is everything, and the astonishing impact of bursting through a doorway into the glare of sun-baked rooftop is stunning. This is a game that ties modern visuals to a completely new and fresh way of tackling first-person gaming, and the results are genuinely impressive.

Of course it isn't *just* about that stuff, there's a world in the making too. It's the near-future story of a young runner



The environmental effects throughout the game are superb.

whose sister has been set up by the villains of a super-clean metropolis. Where a city should be down and dirty, here things are speckless and shiny. The spectre of control is everywhere, and the slightest hint that you might be involved in something criminal sets the Feds on you, big time. This means there's some fighting to be had, and it's at this point that the game starts to show its failings. It should have avoided making combat mandatory. When you're simply able to run away then your enemies just become an extra motivation to make that perfect leap, but when you have to fight, things start to frustrate. One fight section saw us repeat it perhaps a dozen times, because the split-second moment where we had to grab a gun off an enemy was never enough. This disarm move is so utterly vital to effective combat that it blows the mind that it should be so difficult. There's even a bullet-time mode to help make it easier, but that doesn't fix the problem.

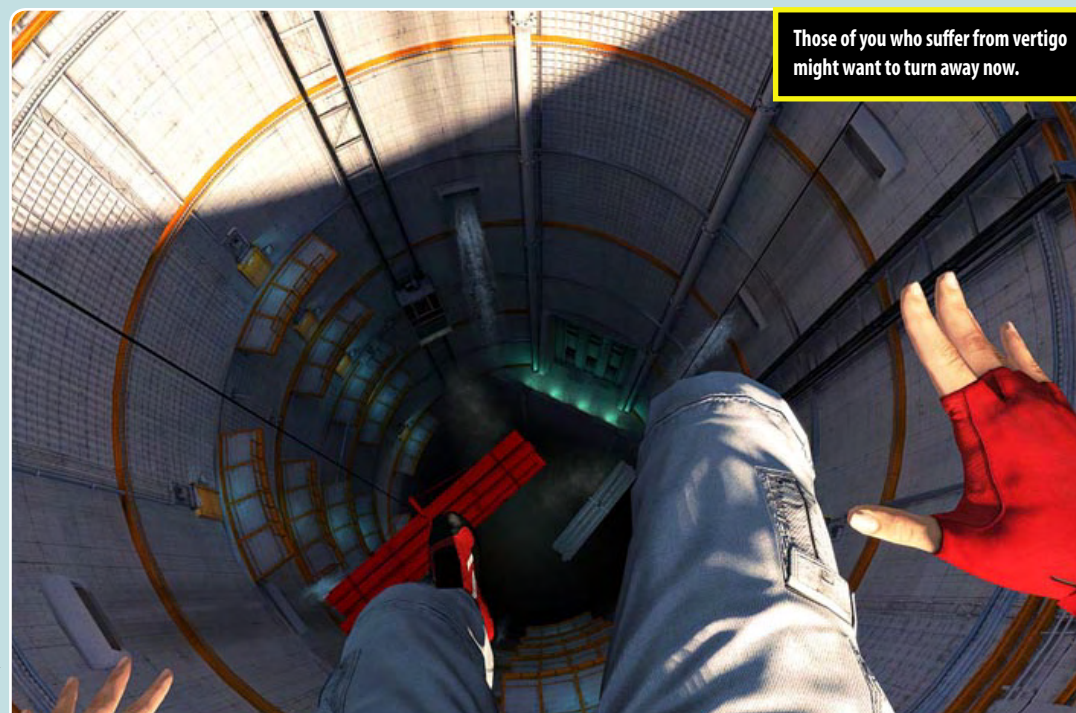
Fight and jump

Things get worse when you hit sections with both mandatory combat *and* a really tricky jump. When more than one thing can insta-kill you and send you back to the last checkpoint, it would be great if the checkpoints were all really close together. Sadly they seem randomly distributed, meaning there's a few sections you'll be repeating over and over again.

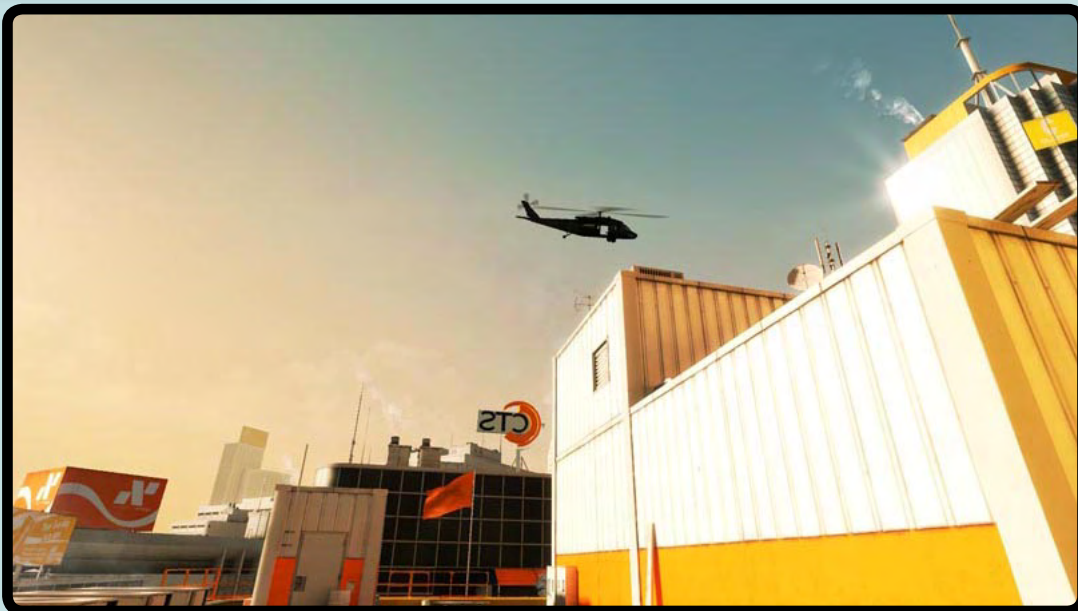
Mirror's Edge has one core problem, then: a dependence on inertia. When things are going smoothly – and you're hurtling through its primary-coloured >



Seeing dead people usually means that there's a plot about to happen...



Those of you who suffer from vertigo might want to turn away now.

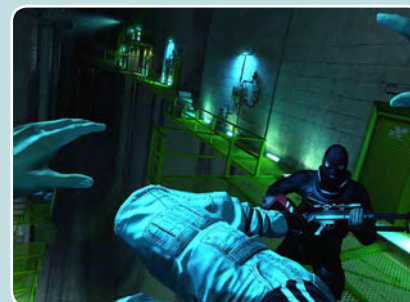


> Mirror's Edge continued

future world – it's brilliant. As soon as you get stuck, or have to repeat yourself, the magic is broken. This is true of all linear games we suppose, but it seems particularly true here.

If the game had been one, long, fluid rooftop chase then it might actually have been a masterpiece, but there's too much to break up what is best about the game to allow it unto greatness. It's a little too short too, and although the Race mode – where you can time-trial against yourself across the various maps – is one of its highlights, it would have been even better if you'd felt satisfied by the happenings within the story itself. Sadly, that story is weak, lacking a compelling curve or a worthwhile conclusion. Not

only that, but it's over rather too soon – a concerted day of play will put the story behind you, and leave your wallet



"If the game had been one long, fluid rooftop chase then it might have been a masterpiece"

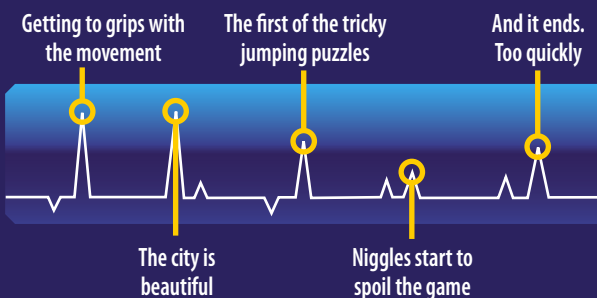
feeling a little too light.

But let's not finish on a downer. This is still one of the most interesting games of recent months, and it plays far better on mouse and keyboard than it did on the console controllers. Not only that, but it's utterly beautiful. Not since Bioshock has a game studio

Roll over screen for annotations



PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



realised such a perfect, esoteric vision of a gaming environment. Even if DICE didn't get it quite right this time, they've created a brave and bold vision of where gaming can go in the future, and that has to be respected. ●

Jim Rossignol

PCGZine Verdict

It's a hop, skip and a jump away from being a total gaming masterpiece

- Beautiful beyond belief
- Better on PC
- Impossibly frustrating and short

75%



King's Bounty: The Legend



Publisher: Nobilis

Developer: Katauri Interactive

Heritage: Space Rangers 2

Link: www.kings-bounty.com
OUT NOW

System Requirements:
3Ghz CPU, 1Gb RAM,
256Mb Graphics card

ROLL OVER
THE BIG
PICTURE



The funniest game to come out of Russia?

Ah, choices, choices. To marry the zombie or the frog? Of course, first you'll need to raise enough money to buy Undead Lady off her current husband, or locate the requisite magics to turn Amphibian Hottie into a

woman. Moral dilemmas don't get more profound than this.

This insane, brilliant strategy-RPG is the best game of 2008 that you didn't play. Honestly. That it's only just managed a retail release in the UK is criminal. In name only, it's a remake of the 1990 turn-based game that later birthed the increasingly dreary Heroes of Might & Magic series – sorry folks, but you have to admit it. In practice, it's... well, it's something else.

While it'll be its glorious madness that makes headlines, it's worth noting that it's genuinely a great example of its genre, and not simply an explosion of

weird gags and irreverence. The likes of Might & Magic and Disciples have made this kind of open-world light role-playing and hex-based fantasy battles very, very dry. King's Bounty is celebratory: fielding an army of men and monsters should be joyful, not stern and inflexible. Its look is glossy and cartoonish, rather than grimly realistic, though it definitely owes a huge debt of gratitude to Warcraft in that department. Still, it treads its own path. An average KB force might consist of a few dozen giant snakes, some cackling imps, a hundred flapping land-fish, a few lumbering tree-men and a couple of skeletal dragons for good



ALL THE RAGE

Earn more bounty with The Spirits of Rage



The spirit world

Great balls of death

The right position

The spirit world

The Spirits are four god-creatures who can activate uber-powers on the battlefield. They level up separately to your own progress, depending on how much you use them. They're critical to success, and spectacular to look at.

FREEZE FRAME

Guiding you through the game, one step at a time...



10 MINUTES

The tutorial grants you your first armour – including a bucket to use as a helmet. Obviously.



1 HOUR

Each area's non-linear – expect to revisit early zones later on to mop up the harder quests.



10 HOURS

At this point, you're about a quarter of the way through the game, if you're lucky.



20 HOURS

So where did the weekend go? Just the land of the dead left to go and you're done and dusted.



King's Bounty is split into a bunch of heavily themed kingdoms – Human, Dwarf, Elf, Demon and Undead.

> King's Bounty continued

measure. When you recruit a new beastie to your army, you desperately want to see what it can do.

Of course, you also develop favourites, which leads to convoluted quests across KB's huge world to locate the precise store from which you can replenish the fallen. If there's a major failing to KB, it's that the long journey times do get wearying as the game goes on – something that's being addressed in the upcoming expansion pack, the unsurprisingly excessive Armoured Princess.

Also, the inventiveness dribbles away as it reaches its later areas, but it's entirely forgivable – it's fired such a glut of mad ideas at you by that point that it's no wonder it starts to run out. Quests include fighting city-sized turtles, a quick tour of hell, summoning a cyber-entity from the future and being teleported into your own clothing to fight the demons that have possessed it. King's Bounty uses traditional fantasy as a springboard for ideas, not hard 'n' fast rules. Its good cheer and good humour shines through, despite a fairly wobbly translation from its native Russian.

Importantly, it being Russian doesn't carry the usual negative connotations of quality control and bugginess. This is very much part of the second wave of Eastern European gaming: young developers who've already cut their teeth on inventive but crude projects, and can now match their boundless enthusiasm with much-needed experience. The PC might be short on

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



triple-A FPS exclusives these days, but it's so hard to care when we're treated to games as joyful, engrossing and inventive as this one. Buy this game. We promise you won't regret it. ●

Daniel Williams



Don't fear the hexes. Honestly, it's dead easy to grasp.

PCGZine Verdict

A true gem that proves that strategy and humour aren't mutually exclusive

- Deliciously inventive
- A true RPG-strategy fusion
- Gets a bit of a slog in its later stages

90%



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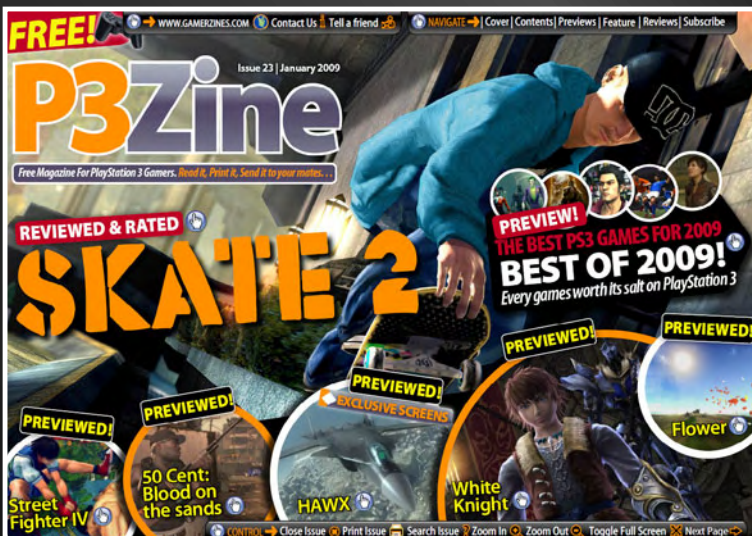
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Dyson

Website: www.dyson-game.com
Developer: Rudolf Kremers, Alex May
Price: Free

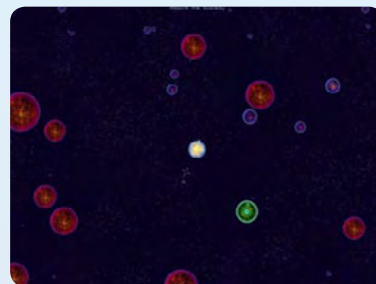
It's independent Games Festival time again, that yearly tipping of the cap to the bedroom coders. Up for this year's Grand Prize of \$20,000 is Dyson, an ambient strategy game that looks like it should be a hippy love-in of a game but is actually very taxing. By sending seedpods to neighbouring 'asteroids' you overwhelm defences and then set up shop yourself. The trade between growing enough seed, building defences and having enough spare to launch assaults is really all there is to it, but god it's addictive. The minimalist resource management is elegant, and considering you can download this version for free, you can't argue with the price either.



Crayon Physics Deluxe

Website: www.crayonphysics.com
Developer: Petri Purho
Price: \$19.95

One of last year's IGF winners was the excellent Crayon Physics, which is now finally available as a complete game. Crayon Physics Deluxe has its roots in The Incredible Machine series but it's much more charming. The simple goal is to move a ball to the star on each level by drawing various shapes which then become physical objects in the world. With over 70 levels plus a level editor, there's an endless supply of puzzling fun to be had here. If you've got a graphics tablet then things become even more enjoyable. Sadly though, it is a tad overpriced in our humble opinion.



Osmos(alpha)

Website: www.hemispheregames.com/?page_id=17
Developer: Hemisphere Games
Price: Free (alpha 'demo' version)

Another IGF finalist for 2009, Osmos is available to download now but is as yet incomplete, still it's up for an award at the festival and perfectly playable in its alpha state. Akin to Asteroids in that you control an object with inertia, trying to avoid objects that are hurtling through the void. The twist is that you can absorb any objects smaller than yourself, so it becomes a game of cat and mouse played out with trajectory and mass. Thrusting depletes some of your own mass – which can then be absorbed by the other bodies – so it's a constant game of patience, judgement and timing. All in all this is a very satisfying game to play and very worthy of its nomination.



Incredibots

Website: <http://incredibots.com>
Developer: Grubby Games
Price: Free

Like Crayon Physics, Incredibots' heritage can be traced back to The Incredible Machine series, but where CPD favours cartoon charm, Incredibots goes for hardcore functionality. You can build virtually anything your imagination can conceive with the powerful toolset found here. From simple wheeled vehicles and counterweight contraptions to fully articulated caterpillar tracks that power vast robots, it's limited only by your engineering ingenuity. The scope of this sandbox game is unbelievable, and spending a few minutes on the site you can play with everything from tank games to vast Domino Rally rollercoasters. Simply superb.



Abel Gravity Bone

Website: <http://blended.planethalfife.gamespy.com/gravitybone/>
Developer: Brendon Chung
Price: Free

The last game in our round up is based on a modified version of the Quake 2 engine so don't expect sumptuous graphics but that doesn't mean it's lacking artistic style. The game itself is a kind of espionage infiltration platformer where you are given a task for each level. This could be assassination or theft or sabotage but it's always achieved through a mix of classical platforming and item-based puzzle solving. It's somewhat unstable, (we crashed a little too often for our liking, even if this isn't a paid-for game) but it's certainly worth a look.

- Pretty
- Elegant
- Enthralling

Dyson will Hoover up your time

80%

- Childish
- Creative
- Pricey for what it is

Clever but pricey

75%

- Absorbing
- Great music
- Could have better effects

A twist on a classic

70%

- Insanely flexible
- Easy to use
- Endless fun for free

Limited only by your imagination

85%

- Funny
- Clever
- Unstable

Original styling and fun, too

75%

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