

Reviewed!



KINGPIN



HEAVY GEAR 2



KINGDOMS



MIGHT & MAGIC VII

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 - Amazing
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 - Complete Crap
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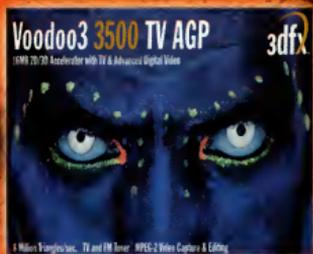


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Aliens probe John Romero! Wonder cure for *Football Pro 99*! All the tabloid truth, including Dear Gta, a nearly naked (female) developer, and the return of PCXL Classifieds



ON THE COVER

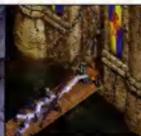
Just call this month's cover image *Star Trek: Voyager*, as we allow readers to leer and drool over the hottest robot ever, Jeri Ryan as Seven of Nine. We talked to Jeri's "people" about getting her to do a special photo shoot just for us, but her price range was slightly higher than the \$34.99 we could scrounge from crusty PCXL staff pockets once we realized she wanted to be paid for a cover shot. Paid? We thought a girl like Jeri would kill to get on the front of our mag, or at least do it just to get a chance make out with Gia

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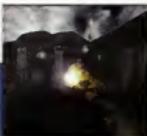


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CELEBRITY APPEARANCES

Juan Rivers, Dirk Benedict, Denise Crosby, Leatherface, John Wilkes Booth, Elizabeth Berkeley, Martin Lawrence, Jaime Somers (Lindsay Wagner, aka "Bionic Woman"), Kelly LeBrock (we hate her, but not because she's beautiful), Quake Marine, Marlon Brando, Tom & Jerry of Tom & Jerry fame, Carrie Shephard (we know she wants to come back), Ronald Reagan, Miley from the Life cereal commercials, Margot Kidder (exactly why was Superman attracted to her again?), Lee Harvey Oswald, Rosie the Robot from "The Jetsons," Iya from the first Star Trek movie (bold chicks are hot), Bill Gates, Gary Kasparov, QI Donagoo, Richard Nixon, Larry King

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Hands up, everyone who thinks the Editor's letter is a useless pile of crap! But the big guys upstairs say we have to have one, so Salmon really slacks off this time, and lets you write your own.

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Ass or butt? Shit or poop? A potty mouth and a choirboy debate the merits of swearing in games. Plus what's coming next month in PCXL — or is it?

THE DISCS

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As the finest bard of our time, LL Cool J, once said in a tender moment: "Don't call it a comeback! The discs have been here for years, assaulting your senses and bleeding your ears, with demos like *The Phantom Menace*, *Re-volt*, *Demolition*, *Mamma Said Knock You Out*!





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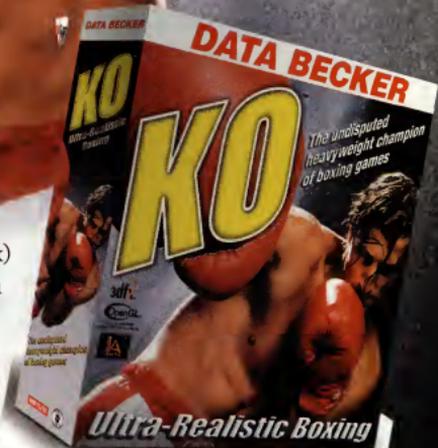
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Explosions, overpowerin'
Over the competition Disc's towerin'
Wrecking shop when it installs those demos
that'll make you call the cops
Don't you dare crash, you better move
Don't ever compare
Disc to the rest that'll all get sliced and diced
Competition's payin' the price
Disc's gonna knock you out
Mama said knock you out
Mama said knock you out

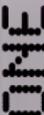
Now Disc's gotta new tour
It's going insane
Startin' the hurricane
Releasin' pain
Lettin' you know
You can't gain or maintain
Unless you say Disc's name
Rippin' — Killin'
Diggin' and drillin' a hole
Pass the Old Gold
Disc's gonna knock you out
Mama said knock you out (repeat) ...

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LEGEND

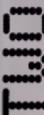
- DEMO
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DISC



	STAR TREK: STARFLEET COMMAND
	DRAKAN
	RE-VOLT
	HIDDEN & DANGEROUS
	RAGE OF MAGES II
	X - BEYOND THE FRONTIER
	INDEPENDENCE WAR DELUXE
	WARHAMMER: RITES OF WAR
	JEFF GORDON XS RACING
	CASTROL HONDA SUPERBIKE

DISC



	QUAKE II
	X-WING ALLIANCE
	TALES OF THE SWORD COAST
	OUTCAST
	ALIENS VS PREDATOR
	X - BEYOND THE FRONTIER
	STAR WARS: THE PHANTOM MENACE
	SIMCITY 3000
	GAMESPY
	ROGER WILCO



Our disc comes with a scrolling interface, which is operated by moving the mouse over the screen. If this is too complicated or you lack the motor skills, then the bar on the left can be used as well. Click left on the mouse to select items and click left again (on the image) to return to the previous screen. If you've ever installed a game, then the rest should be elementary.

REQUIREMENTS: WINDOWS 95/98, PENTIUM 133MHZ, 32MB RAM, DIRECTX 5.0, MOUSE, 100% SOUND BLASTER COMPATIBLE CARD

THE DISC MINI-FAQ

- Q:** So you picked the Knicks to win, eh?
A: Heh heh, who's laughing now? Bite me.
- Q:** So who's the disc Babe of the Month? Hey, you just used Catherine Zeta-Jones again! You lazy bastards!
A: Actually that's not C Z-J, it's her twin sister, Audrey Zeta-Jones. The resemblance is striking, isn't it?
- Q:** Come on, you guys were too lazy! Shouldn't there be some priorities?
A: Bite us.
- Q:** How tall is Lara Weller?
A: She's 5'6" — I saw her at the show.
- Q:** What color are her eyes?
A: Uh ... brown?



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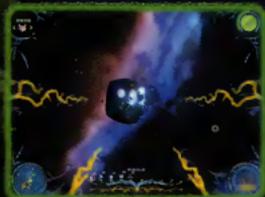
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The disappointing quality of most games based in the Star Trek universe is starting to get us down. Granted, there have been high points (Interplay's *Judgment Rites*, even Microprose's *ST: The Next Generation [ST:TNG]* adventure, *A Final Unity*, had its moments) but on the whole, being a Trek fan in search of a killer action game app has been much akin to Data trying to find his humanity — glimmers of hope, brushed with a darker side, and the ultimate realization that the holy grail is perpetually out of reach.

Star Trek: Generations teased us with potential but failed in the final assessment. *Klingon Honor Guard* wooed us with the promise of visual splendor, courtesy of the licensed *Unreal* engine, and then forgot to add game objectives, character animation, or level design worthy of its looks. It's a trap that Raven Software's *Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force* could be lulled into oh-so easily — if it wasn't for the developers' acute awareness of their forebears' failures. Perhaps most importantly, they also have the technology to do full justice to *Voyager*'s sleek design. The tech can finally match the Trek — and this is one that just can't be screwed up.

So, brimming with enthusiasm, we grilled Raven about their game plan and came away optimistic. Not only have they taken care of the technical side, but the design element also shows character and some fabulous twists designed to appeal to fans of all the Trek settings, from the original series to the eponymous *Elite Force*. *Voyager* encompasses all the elements that cause Trekkers to get goose-pimples at the mere utterance of that most immortal line, "Space, the final frontier ..."



THE BEST OF ALL WORLDS

After an inauspicious start, *Star Trek Voyager* has finally found an audience.

Within the Trekker community, die-hard fans didn't take well to Captain Janeway's voice, or the story concepts that saw the ship drifting through the unknown space of Delta Quadrant (in a seemingly terminal "will they/won't they" search for Alpha Quadrant). Where *D59* embraced the races and cultures familiar to fans of the series, *Voyager* went out on a limb to no man's land — no Klingons, Romulans, or Cardassians. Where are the bad guys? This also posed a problem for the game makers at Raven Software. But their plot line finds a circuitous path around this issue, bringing to life some of the classic villains.

It goes like this: A curious alien race sends probes throughout the galaxy on a fact-finding mission. When the probes encounter ships, they test them. If these nosey information gatherers are destroyed, it proves to the alien race that whatever they've found is technologically advanced enough to be of interest. The aliens then transport these specimens to a dimensional rift of inescapable space. Thus, the *USS Voyager* finds itself powerless, trapped in this spaceship graveyard.

Naturally, *Voyager* is not alone. Other ships have been caught in a

similar manner, including a Borg cube and Klingon Bird of Prey. But another alien race — the Scavengers — have been living in this space, scrounging ship parts from races such as the Malons, Hirogens, and Cardassians. The result is a bizarre hunk of junk that acts as a home to clans of different races trapped in the chasm.

Crucially for the "star" members of the *Voyager* crew, a new marine-like corps of troops has joined the ship, acting as the first line of defense in combat situations. This Elite Force is a long-needed realistic touch to a spaceship crew. As Ensign Alexander Munroe, you are a member of this elite force and, along with colleagues, you'll be travelling through the Scavenger's base, fighting the Borg and others in a race to get the ship parts needed to escape the chasm.

You'll also discover a Federation ship and its human crew. But, this Federation ship was snatched from the brilliant classic episode "Mirror, Mirror." Of course the plot device of an omnipotent alien race has enough cheese to threaten Wisconsin's industry dominance (and curiously, that's where Raven HQ is located). But this healthy heap of gouda is instantly forgiven, because it allows the developers to meld some of the most memorable villains from *Trek* history into one situation.



The amalgam of ships from different shows and eras allows for many cool and varied level design styles.



Various locations from the *Voyager* ship have been painstakingly recreated, importing the actual graphics for panels and computer screens from the TV series into the *Quake III* engine design.

BABE-TREK



Dax turned in the *Trek* for a role with Sam Malone

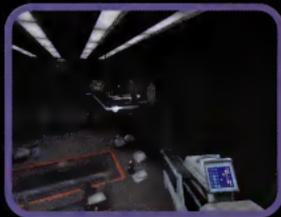
TOP TEN WAYS TO RESURRECT DEFOREST KELLEY IN THE NEXT STAR TREK MOVIE



- Use subtitles to tell audience that "The part of Dr. Leonard McCoy will now be played by a large urn of ash"
- Spock puts Dr. McCoy's consciousness into a bricklayer, a coal miner, a magician, and an escalator to launt him
- George Lucas will create a CGI DeForest Kelley. Hilarity ensues
- Use the animated Dr. McCoy from the old *Star Trek* cartoon series and let Ed Asner do the voice
- Take out a full-page ad in *Variety* announcing that Kelley gets top billing over Shatner and the babes. He'll come back on his own
- Dr. McCoy goes back in time, de-ages, and comes back as a 22-year old star of "Dawson's Creek"
- Rich Little, Master Impressionist
- The people at *RealDoll.com* make a realistic, anatomically correct DeForest Kelley. Nobody notices the difference
- Scottish scientists successfully produce a perfect clone. The new Dr. McCoy, nicknamed "Dolly," looks like a sheep but sounds exactly the same.
- To prove his acting range, William Shatner offers to portray both Captain Kirk's ghost and the 150 year-old Dr. McCoy in a bravura performance



THE ELITE FORCE HAZARD TEAM



While contracts are still in negotiation, Raven has completed the models of all the main characters, who will reprise their TV roles in this game. Raven also has access to Paramount's library of sound clips to further enhance the realism.

To pull this story together, with Paramount's blessing, Raven created the Elite Force Hazard Team. Though you play as a basic ensign, a semblance of support is given in a number of the missions, whereby you are a cog in a wheel, oiled by the "name" bridge crew.

Paramount has hinted during discussions with Raven that the Hazard Team concept is something that could be used in upcoming episodes, so we'll be watching.

Beginning with a trip to a Borg cube, the Hazard Team is armed with the legendary phaser, and a phaser compression rifle (complete with the now obligatory sniper scope) with a total of nine weapons planned, many being picked up from dead alien enemies. Fortunately for us, Seven of Nine plays a significant role, not only opping the polygon count in the creation of the .m3d models, but also developing the Infinity Modulator. This "I-MOD" device changes its frequency every shot, and therefore circumvents the Borg's immunity to weapons once they've been shot a few times. Now they're all fair game.

Missions are supplied by a number of characters from the main

cast as they direct operations. Currently Tuvok, Seven, and Janeway provide the bulk of the information, but Chatokay chimes in, as does The Doctor. Unfortunately, at press time Raven still hadn't finalized the contracts with any of the actors, so the balance of who is involved and who isn't is yet to be determined. (If an actor is unavailable, they'll use another to push along the story.) But all the characters will figure in some capacity since Raven has access to Paramount's massive library of sound clips from the show.

What's important, however, is that the in-between mission times are not dealt with in static report screens (though you do get a grade and a report to ponder).

You'll be able to move around the ship and talk to crew members, although in a limited manner. As Raven's Brian Pelletier told us, "On the bridge [the player is] ordered by Captain Janeway to go to engineering. When he steps into the turbolift the character will automatically say 'Deck 11, Engineering' and they'll now have access to that part of deck 11." From there you'll be helping B'Elanna when there's a red alert and you're ordered to the cargo bay to fight



off a Scavenger attack. Step in the turbolift this time and you'll automatically say "Deck 8, Cargo Bay." Try to use the turbolift before this, and you'll not say anything, so you won't go anywhere. Fail to follow any of these orders and you could get thrown in the Brig. There is also the chance for compliments from other crew members as you wander, being directed by the orders from on high (thus making a linear, limited movement progression seem more fluid).

Acting as Technical Consultant on the game project is Rick Sternbach, the current senior illustrator on *Voyager*, who is creating deck layouts (look at the TV episodes—different rooms haphazardly connect to each other). A stroll around the ship will be an option at the start menu, allowing you to watch the crew in action and observe daily life. But, unlike previous games, the *Q3A* engine makes the levels look more realistic than any other engine has managed.

PAST VOYAGES

The *Trek* franchise has run the quality gamut over its years in videogame service. For every cool old-series adventure, there's been a plinkball game so ball-bustingly bad, it's tragic. Here's a look at the ups and downs of some of *Star Trek's* computer and videogame incarnations.

ST: THE MOTION PICTURE

PUBLISHER—Sega
STARDATE—1982
SYSTEM—Arcade
LOWDOWN—Early vector-graphics effort where you flew around and fought Klingons. Control over

shields, photon torpedoes, phasers made you Captain Fanboy. Had an extra-cool sit-down version.

ST EQUIVALENT—Kirk bouncing off a wall and hitting an alien with his back—no sweet but stupid.

ST: THE REBEL UNIVERSE

PUBLISHER—Simon & Schuster
STARDATE—1988
SYSTEM—PC, C64
LOWDOWN—An Enterprise sim that tried to boldly go simply didn't at a time when computer-game tech was Earthbound. A for effort, B for execution.
ST EQUIVALENT—Original-

series directors urging Shatner to underact and be nice to the rest of the cast.

RESCUE!

PUBLISHER—Tom Spreen
STARDATE—1993
SYSTEM—Mac

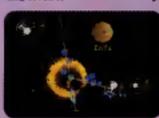
LOWDOWN—Awesome shareware game that sent you from planet to planet, beaming up colonists besieged by attacking Romulans. Limited phaser fire, shields, energy, and repair capabilities made it nearly impossible to save 'em all, but that just made you try again. Updates added a

Borg cameo, TNG sound bites, and more, but Spreen says he isn't posting the game anymore due to harassment by Paramount. (Those rotten bastards!)
ST EQUIVALENT—Picard's "The line must be drawn he-al" speech. It's quite rousing.

NETREK

PUBLISHER—UC Berkeley students
STARDATE—1991 as *Netrek*, 1982 as earlier incarnation
SYSTEM—PC, Mac, UNIX
LOWDOWN—Up to 16 players dogfight for control of the galaxy

in this multiplayer arcade/strategy game. Intense, but takes quite a bit of learning—but beware, the diehard players don't tolerate newbie cluelessness.
ST EQUIVALENT—Women on the Enterprise wearing skirts—our kind of retro.



IN ALL THAT GLITTERS...

In *Id's own Quake III Arena*, the addition of curved surfaces to level design is nothing more than an exotic gimmick. While that's still essentially the case with *Elite Force*, those curved surfaces make a huge difference to the realistic recreation of the familiar environments. It's little touches, like the curved shape of the walls, that gives the *Elite Force* settings a real leg up.

Given the variety of different looks that the plot line requires, the engine will be given its first real test in creating detailed single player set pieces. After defeating

an invading force of Scavengers in the cargo bay in mission two, the next Hazard Team project takes them to a bizarre alien vessel where they must download files needed to help the escape plan. You'll be given instructions such as to blow a control panel. If you refuse, there'll be a harder task ahead, with more enemies to face.

Back on the *Voyager* the next assignment introduces a dramatic, dynamic element whereby your actions can influence whether an NPC lives or dies. Entering a Bird of Prey, this stealth-based mission requires you and two more team members to act independently to



There's no doubting that adding the *QIII* engine to any game is going to give it an instant sparkle of credibility.



The final version should see the dark floor fogging that characterizes the Borg's environment.



retrieve three pieces of a power source. After losing contact with one team member you must recover their piece, and you'll find the person dead or alive, depending on how stealthy you were in the early part of the mission. Likewise, allow a team member to be assimilated by the Borg and he will return to be a thorn in your side.

While there are just eight full missions, each is broken into several levels — the Borg area spanning five levels, the Scavenger three, etc. — and later you will face humans from the "Mirror Mirror" universe and their Constitution class Federation ship. The missions also pull lore from cer-

tain *Star Trek* episodes — such as shooting disc nodes to break the Borg's communication, thus affecting their communication. Traditional threats such as a potential warp core breach sets a time limit for accomplishing another task — and should you fail, *Voyager* ejects the core and you with it (shown from a third-person in-game engine cut scene).

Judging from the recently completed shots of the ship's sick bay, the attention to detail is immaculate. Let's hope that dedication carries through to all the other areas as the game approaches its planned release date in the first quarter of 2000.



The bridge was reshaped by the level designers six times to make sure the scale was just right.

BABE-TREK



Uhura was another one of Kirk's "conquests," too.

ST: CROSSROADS OF TIME

PUBLISHER → Playmates Interactive
STARDATE → 1995
SYSTEM → Genesis, Super Nintendo
LOWDOWN → Action/Adventure where you pilot Captain Sisko and other DS9'ers against the Cardassians, series villain Gul Dukat, and even the Borg. Memorable only for its extreme averageness.
ST EQUIVALENT → *Voyager* before *Seven of Nine* slipped into that skin-tight suit.



ST: 25TH ANNIVERSARY

PUBLISHER → Interplay
STARDATE → 1993
SYSTEM → Mac, PC
LOWDOWN → Classic adventure where you guide Kirk, Spock, and other *Enterprise* crew on various worlds and in

arcade-style ship combat. Cool story, puzzles that weren't annoying, voiceovers from the original-series actors (in the pulp, CD-ROM version); still one of the best *Trek* games.
ST EQUIVALENT → An Orion slave girl (y'know, the green chick in the original series).

ST: JUDGMENT RITES

PUBLISHER → Interplay
STARDATE → 1994
SYSTEM → PC
LOWDOWN → This sequel to 25th Anniversary offered eight more missions, with an even

better plot that included a villain from the first game and an appearance by Trelame, that paizy-ass god who wanted to sword-fight Kirk. Oh, and the CD-ROM version was the first time the voice of the *Enterprise* slave girl (Roddenberry's wife,



WHERE NO ONE HAS GONE BEFORE

Rounding out the atmosphere of the *Voyager* universe is the music. While licensing the actual theme music was too expensive (involving payment to writers, musicians, etc.) Raven Circumvented this problem by buying the sheet music and letting their own sound people recreate the opening credits tune. All the other sounds in the game, such as doors opening, ambient machinery hums, and button presses come from Paramount's extensive library of sound effects.

In addition, "Okudagrams" (the graphic files for panels and transparencies, created by the show's artist Michael Okuda) are available to the level designers. This means that even the computer panels match those on the show (some of those panels can also be accessed to bring up blueprints of the ship and other information).

Of course, given the multiplayer focus of the Q3A engine, *Elite Force* will have an extensive multiplayer component of its own. You'll be able to play as any of the main nine characters from the show or any of the seven members of the Hazard Team (all of whom you'll become acquainted with during the between-mission dialogs), as well as Borg, Klingon, Hirogen, and Malons. All the various skins for these alien types will also be offered. What's more appealing than this general death-

match, however, is the cooperative option, whereby the levels of the single player game are used, with different objectives needing to be accomplished. Here, each character will have to use the talents that they have on the show — so the technician is the only one able to open alien doors, and the medic the only one who can heal others. While further details are sketchy at this time, there's certainly the potential for a greater involvement in playing the characters of the *Voyager* universe in a much more intimate way than ever before. So how many will be jumping to the rescue of Seven (or jumping on Seven) whenever the situation warrants?

We'll find out when *Elite Force: Hazard Team* brings the most significant technical advance ever to the Star Trek universe, backed by some fantastic gameplay concepts, and set pieces sure to excite the Trekkers and intrigue any action game fan.



Tuvok is currently scheduled to supply most of the mission briefings, with Chakotay also giving a couple.



Fortunately you're not a lone Hazard Team member, though your colleagues won't pick up too much of your slack.

The cargo bay fight with attacking scavengers will highlight the AI characters' ability to use the environment for cover.

Majeł Barrett) appeared in a Trek game.
ST EQUIVALENT→ Watching an Orion slave girl kicking Trelane's ass... slowly.

ST: THE NEXT GENERATION - A FINAL UNITY
PUBLISHER→ Microprose
STARDATE→ 1995
SYSTEM→ PC, Mac
LOWDOWN→ Graphics warped way ahead of those in previous efforts as you joined the Next Gen crew (and now mandatory cast voice) for an intergalactic adventure. This multi-faceted game let



players control the Enterprise in battle, assign and control away teams, and deal with various aliens, friendly and otherwise.
ST EQUIVALENT→ Data becoming human — a noble goal, but occasionally sleep-inducing.

ST: OCEAN SPACE NINE - HARBINGER
PUBLISHER→ Viacom New Media
STARDATE→ 1996
SYSTEM→ PC, Mac
LOWDOWN→ Sisko and Co. got an adventure with good graphics, decent arcade sequences, stupidly hard puzzles, and too much hall-wandering. (Well, if the crew had to do this much pointing-and-clicking, they'd have hit the airlocks.)
ST EQUIVALENT→ Being in a big-ass, beautiful space battle, but you're forced to watch all the other ships get the action because you're damaged.

ST: KLINGON
PUBLISHER→ Viacom New Media
STARDATE→ 1996
SYSTEM→ PC
LOWDOWN→ Viacom's first FMV game was a non-game view-and-click experience, albeit with solid production values and a Klingon language lab (yo!) for you to learn the geekiest language ever. It probably pleased some uber-geeky Trek fans, but they're probably not reading this magazine anyway, so who cares?
ST EQUIVALENT→ A Klingon scientist. Dude, grab that dagger and find a battle, already!

ST: BORG
PUBLISHER→ Viacom New Media
STARDATE→ 1997
SYSTEM→ PC
LOWDOWN→ In the same vein as *Star Trek: Klingon*, Borg had better production values and a brilliant setup, with ST-TNG's godlike Q offering you the chance to alter the past and save your father's starship from destruction by the Borg. Problem was, this game had the Dragon-on's Lair curse of all-see, little-do.
ST EQUIVALENT→ Picard not scoring with Dr. Crusher. The hero of the universe... rejected? Tell us it ain't so!



You are Locke D'Averam, a once proud warrior-prince executed for failing to perform a ritual sacrifice. 10,000 years later, you've been resurrected from the dead by a prominent warlord to rescue his kidnapped daughter.

You are now part of a very special breed of warrior. You are a revenant. In order to regain full strength, you'll need to practice the problem-solving ability necessary to unlock forgotten skills.



And though there may be the whole island of Ahkuilon to explore, and more than 40 monsters to destroy, there's only one Locke D'Averam. And however you choose to live as Locke, we think you'll agree: Life is better the second time around.

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- ④ Enjoy explosive spell casting effects unparalleled in any other CRPG game
- ④ Extensive NPC interaction enables you to discover who you once were
- ④ Multiple modes of combat include stealth, hand-to-hand, bow and weapon
- ④ Thousands of 3D animations bring the inhabitants of Ahkuilon, as well as breathtaking combat moves, to life
- ④ Choose from 4 character classes in multi-play mode



Check out the interactive demo at
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RED SHIRT APPLICATION FORM

Welcome. I am your test proctor, Mr. Spock. Thank you for your interest in the position of Red Shirt Ensign on the U.S.S. Enterprise, NCC-1701. Due to our high turnover rate, we have many spots to fill, so frivolous and illogical applications will not be tolerated. Answer all questions to the best of your ability in the time allowed. Good luck, and May the Force Be With You. Oops, wrong movie.

1. ARE YOU MALE OR FEMALE?

- Male
- Female
- Undetermined
- Neither
- Both

(IF THE ANSWER IS B, SKIP TO NO. 19)

2. WHY DO YOU WANT TO JOIN THE CREW OF THE ENTERPRISE?

- I want to serve with the best crew in Starfleet.
- I want to boldly go where no man has gone before.
- I want to seek out strange, new worlds. I have lost the will to live.

3. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING PHYSICAL DESCRIPTIONS MOST ACCURATELY DESCRIBES YOU?

- Thick-necked, dumb-looking white guy
- Middle-aged, dough-bellied white guy
- Too sexy for your shirt
- White guy, with unfortunate bulls eye birthmark on forehead

4. IF YOU'RE ASKED TO JOIN A LANDING PARTY WITH CAPT. KIRK, DR. MCCOY, AND MR. SPOCK, YOU WOULD:

- Jump for joy
- Call you parents and tell them you've been "made it"
- Cry like a little girl
- Record a holographic, and touching, personal goodbye message for each member of your immediate family knowing you'll never see them again

5. WHAT WOULD YOU CONSIDER TO BE YOUR MAIN ASSET AS A RED SHIRT?

- Can-do attitude
- A good set of lungs
- Ability to hold your lattered mini-skirt together with one hand
- Will emit sweet fragrance of daisies when vaporized

6. WHAT COLOR UNIFORM WOULD YOU PREFER IF YOU WERE ACCEPTED TO STARFLEET?

- Gold
- Blue
- White
- Red, like my gushing blood over the rocks of a strange alien world, clouding my vision as I gasp my last, dying breath.

7. DURING AN AWAY MISSION, YOU ARE ASKED BY YOUR COMMANDER TO SPILT UP, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD YOU HEAD TO?

- The Peaceful Meadow of Love and Harmony
- The Never-Ending Beer Geyser of Vulcan
- The Island of Bikini Clad Vixens (along with the Captain)
- The Fiery Temple of Painful Red Shirt Death

8. HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO DIE?

- In your home, surrounded by your friends and family
- After travelling back to 1986 and saving a whale
- While heroically defending your captain, crew and ship
- By being turned into a small, white cube

9. WHAT IS THE RIGHT TIME TO DIE?

- As a very, very old man
- In the middle of sex
- 8:30, sharp
- Before the first commercial break

10. IF YOU WERE EXPLORING BY YOURSELF, AND FOUND SOMETHING UNUSUAL, YOU WOULD:

- Back away cautiously
- Take a tricorder reading
- Alert your commanding officer with your communicator
- Scream at the top of your lungs, "Captain! I found something... aaarrgggghhh! proceed to die horribly

11. IN THE UNFORTUNATE, EXTREMELY UNLIKELY EVENT OF YOUR DEATH, HOW WOULD YOU EXPECT YOUR CREWMATES TO REACT?

- A formal dress funeral
- Scotty playing bagpipes
- Being shot out the torpedo tube into deep space
- A quick, sideways glance



12. WHO IS YOUR PERSONAL HERO?

- Kirk
- DeForest Kelly
- Kenny from "South Park"
- Small, white cube



16. YOUR PARENTS' REACTION TO YOUR APPLICATION AS A RED SHIRT IS:

- Beaming pride
- Bragged to friends and relatives
- Preparing your will
- Have another child to replace you

17. WHAT IS TOO MUCH PAIN TO BEAR?

- Getting a paper cut
- A Vulcan nerve pinch
- Having an alien suck away all your sodium, causing every cell in your body to implode
- As a small, white cube I will feel no pain

18. WHICH RUG IS MOST REALISTIC?

- Kirk
- Chekov
- Picard
- Tribble



19. WHAT FEELINGS DOES THIS MAN ELICIT?

- Intense loyalty and patriotism
- Pride and admiration
- Mild disgust
- Intense horniness

(WOMEN, IF YOUR ANSWER WAS ANYTHING BUT D, PLEASE TURN IN YOUR TEST NOW. YOU ARE DONE HERE.)

20. WHAT IS YOUR STARFLEET CAREER GOAL?

- Climb the ranks all the way to Admiral-ship after a long, distinguished career
- To orbit the Genesis planet in a space-coffin
- To abuse the red shirts under your own command
- To be turned into a small, white cube



* Starfleet is not responsible for any deaths that may occur during the duration of the test.

BARE-TREK



Yvonne Craig played the Green Woman and did Kirk.



She's signed for a seventh season—thankfully.



Troi got it on with Worf, Riker, and various aliens.

ST. GENERATIONS

PUBLISHER—MicroProse

STARDATE—1997

SYSTEM—PC

LOWDOWN—An action/adventure based on the sucky movie, when all we really wanted was a Trek shooter. Neat control over the show's characters and different devices (tricorder, phasers, etc.), but the excitement level really waned.

ST. EQUIVALENT—Uh, like, that episode that just sort of sucked and stult.



STARFLEET ACADEMY. CHEKOV'S LOST MISSIONS ADD-ON PUBLISHER—Interplay STARDATE—1997/1998 SYSTEM—PC, Mac LOWDOWN—Space-flight sim that made you really feel like a

cadet learning to pilot a starship, then launched you into some interesting, brain-taxing missions. Briefings by Kirk, Scotty, and Sulu and multiplay that provided unique alternatives to dogfighting, and let you fly Klingon, Romulan, Federation, and even Tholian ships added some nice variety. ST. EQUIVALENT—Watching the cadet with all the potential be persuaded away from the Federation plot to do what was right. And, damn who's interested in that?

STAR TREK PINBALL

PUBLISHER—Interplay

STARDATE—1997

SYSTEM—PC

LOWDOWN—Shameful use of Trek license, offering three tables with terrible physics and no enjoyment whatsoever.



A LICENSE FOR HIRE



In *Armada*, given that the license will likely encourage more casual gamers, the concept of 3D space will be simplified at first. Initially you'll be maneuvering the ships on a 2D plane, before progressing to the more complex strategic geometry of 360-degree freedom.

Star Trek fans keep your fingers crossed that the good times are coming. Aside from the two games here, Interplay has *Starfleet Command*, *Klingon Academy*, and *New Worlds* in its arsenal, while Simon and Schuster hope to erase the memory of *DS9 Horbinger*, with The Collective developing *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine The Fallen*

STAR TREK INSURRECTION

DEVELOPER → Presto Studios
PUBLISHER → Activision
RELEASE DATE → Fall '99

When Activision turned to *The Journeyman Project* developers Presto Studios, they were certain that *Insurrection* had to stand alone and not rely on the movie license. To that end, *Insurrection* takes place nine months after the end of the movie, but the Enter-

prise has not moved far (due to Picard's continuing affection for 300-year old Anji). The Romulans are the primary threat, having discovered the immortality properties of the planet. You get thrown into this threat as Ensign Sovok, straight out of the academy and assigned to pilot Picard's shuttle to the planet. The gameplay concept is to thrust the player in to the role of the new Ensign, armed with a tricorder and communicator, living out the fantasy of finding yourself dumped in to the midst of a Star Trek episode.

This third-person action/adventure uses set pieces involving Picard and Data. Despite being human, your character was raised by Vulcans and has been taught the famous nerve pinch. With that and a phaser in the armory, use of stealth and dexterity is required as much as a quick trigger finger.

Insurrection boasts some incredibly colorful settings, with gameplay elements that lend themselves to comparisons with *A Final Unity*. The voices of Picard and Data will surely enhance the setting and they'll be able to explain away how it is that a rookie Ensign finds himself in this me-versus-Romulans predicament.

With Presto Studios' history with the puzzle-driven *Myst*-like series, *The Journeyman Project*, expect plenty of mind-twisters in the adventure elements, though the developers promise that action gamers will still get their kicks.

STAR TREK ARMAADA

DEVELOPER → Activision
PUBLISHER → Activision
RELEASE DATE → Winter '99

In a manner that appears to mix the elements of the forthcoming *Starfleet Command* (based on the *Star Trek Battles* board game) and Relic Entertainment's spectacular *Homeworld*, *Armada*'s chance for RTS glory lies in its accurate recreation of epic space battles.

Five campaigns can be fought from the Federation, Klingon, Romulan and Borg sides before a grand Finale. These campaigns are structured in to five missions (and six for the Finale) that uncover a

story of galactic domination from each side's perspective. In the course of the game, resources and communication lines need to be managed as per any RTS, with all the sides having very similar approaches to building units and movement - even the Borg.

Both the Enterprise-D and -E will be featured in some capacity in several missions, but it's a fair bet that Paramount won't be allowing any destruction of their flagships. It's also planned that the multi-player element will feature a standalone storyline that won't focus on pure galactic domination.

While the early screenshots show busy spaces of nebulas and maneuvering space fleets, it doesn't seem to boast the level of detail of *Homeworld* (or even *Starfleet Command*). Still, Patrick Stewart again reprises his role as Picard, and Michael Dorn contributes his Inimitable Wolf patter and even Denise Crosby (formerly Tasha Yar) has been hired on as the voice of Commander Sela. A new 3D engine is on display, and we hope that the developers overcome the control issues that have raised question marks over *Homeworld*, and don't enlist too much time perfecting the (admittedly incredibly well-animated) cut sequences that intersperse the missions.



Presto's graphics engine will support some very high resolutions to bring detail to the adventure.

ST EQUIVALENT → Hapless red-shirt who deserves to die.

ST: THE GAME SHOW
PUBLISHER → Simon & Schuster
STARDATE → 1997
SYSTEM → PC
LOWDOWN → Sad, unamusing attempt to take Trek into trivialland. O, you're too good for this! ST EQUIVALENT → Tribble turds.

KLINGON HONOR GUARD
PUBLISHER → MicroProse
STARDATE → 1998
SYSTEM → PC
LOWDOWN → A shooter using the

Unreal engine - and a chance to play a ruthless Klingon warrior! This should have been amazing, but even the chance to swing a Bat'Leh can't compensate for monotonous missions and dull level designs. ST EQUIVALENT → Wolf in that Robin Hood episode: "I am not a merry man."

BIRTH OF THE FEDERATION
PUBLISHER → Hasbro
STARDATE → 1999
SYSTEM → PC, Mac
LOWDOWN → Turn-based strate-

gy lets you dominate the Alpha Quadrant with the Federation, Klingons, Romulans, Cardassians, or Ferengi. Some nice touches, but BOF didn't bring a whole lot of new gameplay. ST EQUIVALENT → Watching an episode where you've forgotten the beginning, and remembering half way through that you've seen this before.

BF SPECIAL NOTE
BEER TREK
Computer not working and you're actually watching Trek? Then go to www.planetofthegeeks.com and

print out the rules for Beer Trek, the only real way to view - and drink to - the show. Site rulers Mike Yacullo and Jack Paxton get our respect and gratitude for making Star Trek a hearty, glass-tipping experience. ST EQUIVALENT → Scooty getting an alien intruder drunk - a fine piece of engineering.

THE HUNDRED DEAD
SECRET OF BULCAN FURY
Despite some wonderful screenshots and critics' positive reviews, Interplay decided to do this adventure scripted by Classic Trek

writer D.C. Fontana. We'll miss the chance to see the perfectly modeled faces of Spock, McCoy, etc. - but then again, it was just an adventure game.

ST: FIRST CONTACT
Could've been the *Unreal* engine shooter that *Klingon Honor Guard* wasn't, but we'll never know. MicroProse robbed us of our chance to play the Next Gen crew in a vicious struggle with the Borg. We would've liked to see that cyberilious Borg Queen in multi-polygon detail, too, but it's dead, Jim.

THE QUAKE MARINE III: "SAVING JERI RYAN"

IN THE JULY ISSUE, QM SAVED PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON FROM THE INSIDIOUS DEER. IN THE FAR FUTURE, AN OLDER, WISER QUAKE MARINE REFLECTS ON HIS GREATEST CHALLENGE!!!



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JUST A D-DAY AT THE BEACH



AT LEAST NOBODY IMPORTANT GOT HURT

ONE THROUGH SIX OF NINE AND EIGHT AND NINE OF NINE GOT JACKED IN THE BATTLE. WE NEED YOU TO SAVE SEVEN OF NINE

WE WOULDA WON IF IT WASNT FOR THAT PEGO GUNGAN



MEANWHILE

IN EPISODE #134, WHAT WAS THE COMBINATION OF YOUR SAFE?

GET A LIFE!

E-H-H...



ABOARD NCC-1701

WE HAVE HER COORDINATES, KEPTIN

BEAM THAT... FOXY... SHE-BORG... ABOARD, SCOTTY



BEAMING UP

YO, JERI RYAN, I'M HERE TO SAVE YOUR PRIVATES

...SO YES, IT TAKES FIVE PEOPLE TO GET ME INTO MY OUTFIT - WHAT THE...



IN KIRK'S PAD O'LOVE

YOU ARE... THE LAST... FEMALE SPECIES OF BABE... THAT HAS YET... TO STROKE MY TRIBBLE™

THE QM WILL POP A CAP IN YOUR ASS FOR THIS GLOCK GLOCK!



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PART 1

IN ID WE TRUST

Deathmatching, deathmatching, deathmatching. It's all about deathmatching. It's *only* about deathmatching. PCXL was invited inside the hallowed Id Towers to grill the tight-knit team creating the most anticipated game of the year, and you get to come with us. This is the first in a series of hands-on previews that will take you behind the scenes of the legendary company. We'll look at their mechanics for creating hit games, their philosophies, ideals, sports cars, lifestyles, and anything else this nosey reporter can get his hands on. There'll be laughs, there'll be cries and shrieks of delight, there'll be fun and frolics, and possibly a few tears — all the elements that go into making *Quake III Arena*.

BY ROB SMITH

THE GAME: GETTING IT TOGETHER



Map 100 is a significant game because it's the first time the game has been released with a single, complete map.

Everyone's already fully aware that *Quake III Arena* is to be a totally online, multiplayer-dominated entity. Sure, it was a bold statement, but if any company is allowed to step out on a limb, it's Id Software. Indeed, it's going to be a death-matching game first and foremost, with the boxed version shipping with team deathmatch and a CTF mode created externally by Zoid, the original CTF mod developer. So just what is Id releasing? "The major emphasis of the game is technical innovation," offered Id CEO Todd Hollenshead. That simple statement really does sum up what *Quake III Arena* is all about — creating the perfect death-match tool ... the last, definitive say on deathmatch gaming ... the Zen of Deathmatch ... Deathmatch: Revelations.

Sensibly for this small company of just 14 employees, the decision to focus on multiplayer is as much a product of an insistence that the group remains small as it is the product of round-table brainstorming sessions on what game everyone wants to make. As keenly evidenced in both *Quake*

and *Quake II*, juggling the very different requirements of single player and online multiplayer results in a mish-mash of both. Graeme Devine, newly-hired project lead/designer at Id, having seen his former company Trilobyte (7th Guest) suffer at the hands of publishers Mindscape (not believing in the Internet — the fools), and Midway (renegeing on a buy out), told us that the multiplayer maps of both *Quake I* and *II* were mainly worked out on the weekends.

Id's goal is to perfect the weapon balance, player movement, speed, jump height, and level design styles. To this end, *Q3A* will also ship with Id's official rules for tournaments and one-on-ones. Deathmatching will have taken yet another step towards being considered a true sport (hey, if X-Gamers are considered athletes ... well, perhaps that's pushing the term ...)

It's completely fair to suggest that there's no point in coming up with newfangled weapons just for the sake of "newness," when it's evident that you just can't have a first-person shooter without, for example, a shotgun. So *Q3A*'s weapon list is familiar and vanilla, but will be balanced to perfection. Already, adjustments to the *Q3Tect* have seen an extra pellet added to the shotgun to give it more power and the virtually instantaneous hit of the railgun is back. Also, the smoke trail of the rocket launcher will be set as it was in the *Q3Tect*. Apparently, Id dropped the ball by not having the CLC check run through the .pak file, which allowed people to remove the smoke trail (and get a much clearer view, and therefore, an added advantage). That's now been fixed.

Of course, many of these decisions will be controversial among the hardcore community. But since it's currently Id's plan to release the *Quake III* source code before the product ships, the mod-makers will already be hard at work tweaking, rejiggering, and fiddling with everything they can get their hands on.

"THE MAJOR EMPHASIS OF THE GAME IS TECHNICAL INNOVATION"

THE GAME: DESIGNING FOR THE MASSES

"S Implicitly rules in game design," Devine explained, "creating places where people will fight, not snipe and hide." There are essentially three different types of maps. The arena type is based on one wide-open space, while the location-based style has one main area, with offshoots that all lead around to the central point. Finally, gimmick maps like *Q3Test 2* (The Longest Yard) are suspended in space, or have some other bizarre central theme, such as 3D modeler Paul Steed's concept for a fallen female statue dominating an arena, with her breasts acting as bounce pads and her outstretched hand as a platform. We can't wait.

Veteran deathmatchers will take to all these facets easily — again, it's nothing revolutionary, just the final evolution of the genre. But *Id* recognizes a huge untapped audience that has never experienced the adrenaline rush of a perfectly placed rocket turning an opponent into gibbed chunks of flesh (along with the attendant mist of blood that the new engine allows). However, this online multiplayer game will also have a single player component, built in a manner that mimics the progression of combat in a console beat 'em up (inspired by *Vf3* and *Power Stone* on the Dreamcast, which were heavily influenced by *Street Fighter* and *Mortal Kombat*). Still, that simple concept is being tweaked to ease newbies in and to avoid the annoyance factor of coming up against an unbeatable opponent.

John Cash is working on the AI of the bots you'll come face-to-face with in the ladder progression. The aim is to make the bots appear as human as possible. The hardest parts are having them miss convincingly and also to have their own personalities. "It's important not to have them cheat," Cash told us, "since it's easy to make them 'perfect.'" The

bots' varying abilities will be based on a number of factors, including an aggression level (the distance in which they're most comfortable fighting), reaction time, movement speed, horizontal and vertical field of view, aiming skill, and weapon preferences. They will run for ammo and health at times dependent upon those factors, but they won't be rocket-jumping. "If we can't do it convincingly, we won't do it at all," says Cash. It's also unclear how far the bots will react to subtle sound cues, which are an extremely vital element of the human multiplayer game. There's still a question mark over how human these human-like bots will be. Devine accepts that a solid single player game is important to consumers shelling out \$50 for the product, and as we said at the beginning ... In *Id* we trust.

Within this single player game, the abilities of the bots will vary depending on your success. So if you're doing badly, the next opponent (whether it's going to be a dumbed-down version of the one you're stuck on or an entirely new opponent is undecided) will be balanced to suit your ability. The idea is to allow every player, regardless of ability, to see all the levels in the game and play most of the opponents, without requiring pro-player skills. Boss bots (again, to be decided) will have their own distinctive personalities, and your route to them will be teased in an interface which will offer a hint of what they look like before actually meeting them. Your overall ranking will be calculated over the course of the 24 planned single player maps, which feature varying matches from straight head-to-head, to one-on-seven confrontations.

The first full playable build of the CTF mod was due to arrive at *Id* after our visit, so there had been little work done on getting the bots ready. It's possible that there will be only a limited CTF bot option in the shipping game.



Wide (and narrow) eyes: The game's AI will be tweaked to make bots appear more like real humans. (Clockwise from top left) *Id* is still working on the bots' personalities.

TO ERR IS HUMAN

WHAT IT IS → Humans tend to go hot and cold. Even the best *OM's* have their moments where they shoot like a stormtrooper.

HOT AND COLD STREAKS

WHAT IT IS → Humans tend to go hot and cold. Even the best *OM's* have their moments where they shoot like a stormtrooper.

WHAT IT ADDS → The game can completely change when a hot player goes on a tallgun roll — this makes no deal safe and every game interesting.

THE PHONE KILL

WHAT IT IS → A player standing perfectly still in your sights because they got a phone call, went for a beer, or needed to blink.

WHAT IT ADDS → The all-important easy kill is like a dunk in basketball, and it can start you on a streak.

DON'T GET MAD, GET EVEN

WHAT IT IS → Total disregard for score and ranking because one player really pissed you off. Now the whole match is spent hunting them down and killing them like dogs.

WHAT IT ADDS → The total human element, where you know you are playing against a person — a person who gets mad, and gets even.

TAUNTING

WHAT IT IS → Trash-talking and otherwise provoking players with comments about their mother, sister, or girlfriend.

WHAT IT ADDS → Personality. You begin to like or dislike players for how they talk and what they say. This completely changes the way you play and who you go after.

CAMPING

WHAT IT IS → The much debated, oft-used, technique of finding a good spot, a good weapon, and resting in the kills.

WHAT IT ADDS → Love 'em or hate 'em, campers are part of the DM landscape. You have to avoid them, hunt them down, and of course taunt them in order to win.



"IF WE CAN'T DO IT CONVINCINGLY, WE WON'T DO IT AT ALL."

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LEVEL DESIGN AS AN ART FORM



What the hell are these two new models staring at?



Since Brian Hook's departure from Id for the opportunity to live perpetually on *Everquest*, the core game programming is down to two people. There's John Carmack creating the engine and doing all the genius stuff, while John Cash is working on the bot AI and some networking issues (including implementing a new network protocol, allowing servers to be run safely behind a firewall). That's it. Four people work on level design, with friendly internal competition against each other for the coolest feature, or best use of a new technique. The results are assessed by everyone, including "Miss Donna" the receptionist, chipping in on what's working and what isn't. That means that there are plenty of inter-office death-matches, many for work assessment, and many just for sheer fun (and desire to oust Brandon James from his current position as internal ID champion).

The level design philosophy has seen a conscious decision to shrink things. With one-on-one fights a prominent focus, the corridors are narrower and space more constricted, creating some intense confrontations. "We want to make the architecture as unobtrusive as possible, with the single player levels designed to prepare players for battling online," explained Tim Willits.

"We definitely wanted to create a different look utilizing the curved surfaces," added Paul Jaquays. "We play with architectural ideas and then build out from there." Decisions such as determining which of the three types of maps the level will be

and how many players it's for are made up front. Then, as it takes shape, weapon, ammo, and health placement within the maps are decided. These are important not only for level balance, but also in the formation of sound cues (other ambient music will come from DJ Sasha who's contributing at least six tracks to the *Q3A* soundtrack). Even on levels that have obvious camping spots (such as Christian Ankow's spacey maps with levitating platforms that afford access to a high point, complete with railgun), there will be multiple entries to every location and just one elevator or jump point that, when triggered, provides an obvious location cue.

TO BE DECIDED

Aside from the "When's it coming out?" question (when it's done), there are plenty of other elements that have yet to be finalized during this, the last few months of development. While the engine is nearing final completion (compatibility issues are a big problem, which is why the Mac version of the *Q3* Test, with its standardized OpenGL driver, was released before the PC version), Devine and his cohorts must still make numerous game-play decisions. Here are some of the things we'll be following up on in the next issue.

NO. OF SINGLE PLAYER LEVELS →

Currently 24

NO. OF MULTIPLAYER AND CTF LEVELS →

TBD

NO. OF MODELS → 21 (of which 15 are currently complete)

NO. OF SKINS → 40 to 50

POWER-UPS, TO BE CONFIRMED →

Quad damage, invisibility, Teleporter, Medkit, Haste (increases your speed and fire rate), Battle suit, Regeneration

TO BE DECIDED → Dropping items in team play; inclusion of BFG (currently firing rockets at machine gun speed); number of Boss enemies; final interface; copy-protection code; Q3 final level design software on the boxed CD



The player goes for the bullet, feels the choke of death, and then gets turned into dog meat with his own railgun cannon.

WHAT'S CARMACK ABOUT?

A 20-minute interview with John Carmack yields enough information to justify a three page extension to this story. Whether he's rattling on about putting the finishing touches to the Linux version of the Matrox G200 driver ("Just for fun"), enthusing about those two Ferraris (and the GTO that's taken three years to build), or what gets him out of bed in the morning (or late afternoon), Carmack is nothing if not entertaining.

Given the deluge of universal praise he receives as an industry whiz, when asked who he most admires in the computer gaming industry, it takes a while for him to come up with a name. Finally, he settles on Peter Molyneux — "He's older than me and still doing this, so at least I know that I can keep going for a few more years and not explode."

But it seems that game programming is almost a chore to Carmack, that, when completed, allows him time to go away and research the various pet projects that are his true love. While most

of the industry marvels at the technical achievements of the Q3A engine, Carmack is less enthusiastic. "It's basically an efficient triangle pusher," he told PCXL. "I can't say it's anything revolutionary, but it's very good engineering work and I can be proud of that." And pride in producing a tangible end-product is also what pulls him back from a three month research break to the most mundane task of shipping a game. "Q3A is a game I'd like to play," he offers enthusiastically, "unlike *Duke Nukem 3D* which, though it sold more copies than *Quake*, was a patchwork of one-shot gags. It's not a program I'd be proud to write."

The theory goes that once Q3A is finished, the usual three month research period will begin. Carmack will then begin investigating computer vision technology and the ability to control PC's with a video camera attached to your machine — with possible interactive game consequences. Meanwhile, the rest of the team will rest before *Quake 4*. But that's another story ...



Damn, look at them guns!



We afraid of the bright blue shiny guy.

ANOTHER STORY

First, the id mantra is to not work on the next project until the current one is completed. That said, it's already confirmed that the next game will be a single player focused title and will use the Q3 engine. Graeme Devine will be leading the project, utilizing an engine waiting to take advantage of forthcoming hardware setups supporting 64MB video cards. This new game will be a chance for the artists and level designers to really go nuts. As Carmack commented, "We haven't leveraged all the graphic things [the Q3 engine] can do, since there are requirements in multiplayer of maintaining a set framerate, but huge set pieces can be planned for a single player game."

Artists like Kevin Cloud are already thrilled to be using the

24-bit palette, moving on to Photoshop from the Deluxe Paint work that served them so well in the 8-bit days. "[The next game] will take a different look artistically," Cloud told PCXL, "and it's all pretty exciting."

Hopefully, if the Q4 (or whatever) work is on time, Carmack should be spending much of the next 18 month cycle in research, throwing his talents in only occasionally, since the core engine is essentially done.

But whatever that future holds, the certainty is that Q3A will be a defining moment in PC gaming history. Once id writes the rules, and lays down the laws, it's hard to see anyone who can bitch at their dominance of the death-match genre. By then, however, there could be a whole bunch of people banding together in *Team Fortress 2* battles ...



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3D Geek News

What's Happening in the Big Business World
of PC Gaming Peripherals



S3 BUYS DIAMOND

Graphics chip manufacturer S3 (of, ahem, Virge Infamy) has made it public that they plan to buy Diamond Multimedia. The deal, which should go through in October, is seen as a move by S3 to broaden its current graphics market share by capitalizing on the strong brand awareness of Diamond's well-respected range of modems.

While the move could be seen to complicate S3's own graphics card market position, the company claims that the Diamond product lineup merely complements their existing range of boards. Led by the Savage4 (reviewed over the page), and sporting their proprietary new S3TC texture compression software (that's going to make *Unreal Tournament* and one or two other games look even better, without any performance hit), S3 has a market in the lower end of the accelerator field. Diamond's goodwill with the gaming community, based on excellent products and consistently good follow-up support, has made their name one of the strongest in the industry.

S3 has indicated that their primary interest in Diamond stems around Internet technology gaining market share through the SupraExpress line, and the increasing appeal of home networking solutions (like Diamond's HomeFree Wireless and Phoneline systems).

Despite S3 pushing its own graphic accelerator chipset, no plans have been announced to cull Diamond's involvement with Nvidia in producing their excellent TNT and TNT2 cards.

ADSL SET BY ITU

Yeah, yeah, a bunch of acronyms means nothing, right? Well, when ADSL is the current hot Internet connection option (available through your local Telco for \$40+ a month), allowing speeds of data transfer up to 1.5 Megabits per second (way faster than a normal 56K modem), gamers should sit up and take notice.

In the battle for the next generation in high speed Internet connections, the International Telecommunications Union finally agreed to standardize the ADSL systems so that all the Telcos will be working from the same specifications — basically this means a more worry-free decision for you, Johnny Hardcore Gamer-Consumer. Several months ago, the @Home network was making massive inroads with its cable modem option, capable of downloading 50MB files in seconds, to eager gamers located in the supported areas. And that's where @Home really started to come "unstuck."

While their package continues to be competitive with your telephone company's ADSL option, there are vast tracts of the country where the cable doesn't support @Home. In addition, in the rush for the high speeds, many high-tech areas saw the cable system swamped, leading to difficulties connecting and achieving the advertised connection speeds.

ADSL seemed to have the edge by running through the existing phone line network. It too has had its share of teething problems, however, because each household's proximity to the main center directly affects the quality of the service. The modems, which need to be installed by a Telco pro, could also be temperamental. But it's a price the hardcore gamers should consider paying, as ping times to the Quake servers match those of the Ipb's playing on their office LANs.

(OH NO) EXTREME BOARDING

Prepare to repel borders. Nothing could be scarier than the company who brought us the Titansphere (a huge, chunky plastic controller, pitched to be great for use with first-person shooters, but in actual fact being a pile of junk) announcing they had another revolutionary game input device to show off. We'll slap me silly and call me Mary if SGRL's (standing for Second Generation Research Laboratories) latest creation, The Board, isn't actually a pretty cool piece of craftsmanship. Really!

Essentially it's a snow- or skateboard device that comes complete with a hand-held controller. By standing on its familiar shape and rocking on the central pivot axis you recreate the sense of moving forwards, backwards, to either side, and even yawing. It's as effective as standing on a real board.

We tried a prototype of the board with EA's *ESPN X Boarder* game, and it brought the game to life. There's the potential to add buttons to the base so that experts can physically pull off impressive skateboard jumps by rocking back and triggering the button.

The retail price is to be \$100, complete with a software bundle to be determined (but may be Xtreme Ass). The Board will be in stores by mid September, and we'll have a full review then.

QUICK HITS



GRAVIS HITS LOW-END

Gravis, the joystick and gamepad manufacturer, has launched a new stick targeted firmly at the lower end of the market. The Destroyer is a simple stick, designed to be used equally effectively by left- and right-handed people, sporting two triggers and a throttle wheel centrally located on the base.

It certainly doesn't look like much, and there's a question mark over the comfort and use factor, given the limited number of buttons. But you can't expect too much for \$14.99.

CHEAP PCs

Of course AOL's now nearly as scary as big brother Microsoft, but this new eMachine deal they're offering doesn't seem so bad. By buying stock in eMachines, AOL has given itself the chance to let the cheap PC manufacturer essentially sell their systems for free. The catch is that in order to get the AOL \$400 rebate (on the purchase of a \$399 eTower PIII 360) you have to sign up for the CompuServe 2000 online service for three years at \$21.95 a month (total cost \$790 — but spread over those three years).

It could be an incredibly cheap and effective way of getting a new PC, but don't expect the eTower to be much of a speed demon, as getting the cost at this level means that the component quality won't match your selections from high-end manufacturers like Dell and Micron.



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Despite what you may have heard from your friends, Bleem! is not a PlayStation emulator ... or so its creator would like to have you think. Perhaps in order to avoid lawsuits from Sony, or alleviate user disappointment because not all PlayStation games are compatible, Bleem! is being marketed as its own fast-rendering gaming platform which just happens to enable your PC to play a large sampling of PlayStation discs.

Unlike most game system emulators such as MAME or even the short-lived UltraHLE where software images of games known as "ROMS" are used, Bleem! has the distinction of being able to play the games from their original formatted media. That means, with a little finesse, you can use PlayStation discs in your CD-ROM drive.

This remarkable executable file takes up a meager 450KB of memory, but it packs in a walloping set of features and options.

If you're quite comfortable playing Bleem! at its original PlayStation resolution, (though what's the point?) then it shouldn't require too much tinkering. However, harnessing your 3D card's power to increase the image quality of PlayStation games requires an extraordinary amount of trial and error. Some of the options include checkboxes for filtered polygons, filtered sprites, antialiasing, paletted textures, and a full selection of resolutions in 16-, 24-, and 32-bit color depth.

Sound is a similarly complicated matter. What was glaringly apparent when tinkering with Bleem! is that the program offers all the right technology to make PlayStation games run well on any PC, but the interface offers too much control to the user. Ideally, Bleem! would analyze a particular PC's hardware and software, and automatically adjust to it, choosing all the correct settings intuitively.

As it stands, it's still an extraordinary value, but don't expect all your favorite PlayStation games to run perfectly. Free downloadable

patches are available weekly, and the company is also working on force feedback support, and even LAN support for multiplayer games, though there's no set date for their availability.

THE GAMES

Bleem!'s website contains a list of compatible games, but many inaccuracies due to the non-standard setup of most PCs. Below are some games that don't have PC ports, and that exemplify some of the best gaming experiences available on the PlayStation.

PARAPPA THE RAPPER

OVERALL PERFORMANCE → C
The cinematics are hilarious, but they don't work through Bleem! Another thing, since this game depends on strategic timing and rhythm, the less-than-perfect audio detracts from the game's playability. Graphically, the colors and images are crisp, but in hardware accelerated mode, the text loses most of its formatting and is barely visible — again very important for this game.

GRAN TURISMO

OVERALL PERFORMANCE → B+
On faster systems, you can really crank the resolution up without much slowdown. For some reason, however, the colors (particularly on the road) are washed out in hardware mode, so it's playable, rather than perfect.



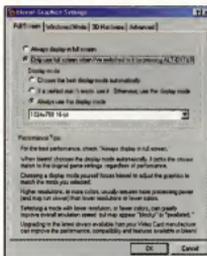
Notice the dramatic difference between hardware and software modes — also be aware that *Wild 9* is captacular in either mode.



Parasite Eve looks smashing in hardware-accelerated mode. The evening gown she's wearing's not too shabby either.



Crash Bandicoot Warped in software and hardware-accelerated modes. Notice the details on distant objects in hardware mode as well as the washed-out color on the mask's feathers.



The customization options can be intimidating.

CRASH BANDICOOT: WARPED

OVERALL PERFORMANCE → A-
Much of the backstory is lost because the cut scene sound and imagery is messed up. However, gameplay is excellent in both hardware and software mode. With hardware acceleration, the text is missing and the colors tend to wash out.

COOL BOARDERS 3

OVERALL PERFORMANCE → A
This is the only game I tried where the menus, movies, and gameplay are all visible in both software and hardware mode. In high resolutions, this game looks fantastic, but occasionally seams will show in the contoured polygonal snow (it also happens on the PlayStation too, however).

WILD 9

OVERALL PERFORMANCE → B+
There's a dramatic increase in picture quality from software to hardware mode. Unfortunately, in-game tips don't display properly in hardware, and occasional clipping and polygon drop-outs happen. No sound effects were audible, but the background music was loud and clear.

PARASITE EVE

OVERALL PERFORMANCE → A-
The graphics are really bad in software mode, but in hardware mode, this game looks fantastic, and plays perfectly. Cinematics, music, and sound effects worked perfectly. This game is a treat for PC gamers who may have been disappointed by the graphic quality in *Eidos'* port of *Final Fantasy VII*.



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The graphic accelerator market got a little more confusing with S3's planned purchase of Diamond. The video card stalwart has been churning out quality cards for years now, and even before this agreement had decided to pitch in with a lower-end option using S3's new Savage 4 chipset. Sadly, its

biggest selling point is a feature that has yet to see the software to take advantage. The much-touted S3TC texture compression ability has garnered attention from eager gamers marveling at the increased clarity of textures in games such as *Unreal* and ... well, only *Unreal*.

There's no doubting from the early demos that S3TC technology makes for a very crisp look that even surpasses that attainable with a high-end TNT 2 card. But *Unreal Tournament* is the first game to ship with fully S3TC support, and it ain't out yet. That means that right now, the S540 has to stand alone against the competition without its ace in the hole - and unfortunately it's like David meeting Goliath and forgetting his sling.

The card we tested was the meager 16MB version (the more common 32MB option is available) and its performance ranked it ahead of the first generation of TNT cards (such as Diamond's own V550) but paled against everything else. Frame rates in OpenGL were playable, but that's all, and in the higher resolutions bordered on being playable at all. D3D performance was even more disappointing, with the image quality of the 3DMark tests lacking much of the color clarity of the TNT2s.

Despite a low price point for this particular model, we still can't recommend the S540 (and this in turn raises questions about industry-wide support for S3TC). We'll take another look at the technology with a more gamer focused card,

such as the full 32MB version when *Unreal Tournament* (and any others utilizing the technology) finally ship. Until then, hold fire on the Savage 4s.

BENCHMARKS

QUAKE II → 45.1 (800x600)
28.5 (1024x768)
3D MARK → 2106

RATING 4

+ **Pluses**

→ Potential of S3TC
→ TV out and flat panel display support

- **Minuses**

→ Poor overall performance
→ Questionable technology support

Turtle Beach Montego II Quadzilla

PRICE → \$99
WEBSITE → www.tbtech.com
BUNDLE → X-Wing Alliance special demo, Voyetra's Audio Station 32

Never underestimate the ability of a soundtrack to turn an average game in to an absorbing experience. Now sound has hit the 3D age and Voyetra Turtle Beach have created the, ahem, Quadzilla sound card that uses Aureal's A3D 2.0 API and supports four-speaker surround sound.

Installation of this card is not as straightforward as most. Aside from the main PCI-based card is a "breakout bracket" card that



A full music suite is also included with the package.



doesn't fit in to any bus slot, but still takes up a bracket. So you need an empty PCI slot, and then another slot next

to it in which to fit this second card. This second card then connects to the main card, allowing it to support four-speaker sets.

As we've come to expect, the software installation is a breeze. (But don't forget to save and remove old sound card drivers, as there is a real potential for conflict.) LucasArts' *X-Wing Alliance Imperial Engagements* is a nine mission extended demo that's a



John Williams' Star Wars music perfectly demonstrates the surround sound offered by the Quadzilla.

perfect demonstration of the card's abilities. The John Williams sound track sounds good on a bog standard SoundBlaster 16, but when cranked with the A3D support, it's spectacular. The card supports 3D sound through two speakers and headphones as well as a four-speaker option. With two Microsoft Digital speakers, the sound sent tingles down my spine in excitement over the Star Wars theme. If you have just two speakers, try using headphones instead to garner the full 3D effect (it's dulled when using two speakers as sound from the left speaker is still heard in your right ear). The whooshing of TIE fighters and the crackle of laser fire is incredible.



For other games, they really need to support the A3D 2.0 API in order to benefit from the full power of the card (*Quake III*, for example, won't be supporting 3D sound hardware).

3D sound hardware really can make a difference to games — but only the right games. *X-Wing Alliance*, and any with similar booming soundtracks, will really benefit. A word of warning for those with girlfriends: When trying out the card, don't crank the speakers for the Star Wars theme, whatever the temptation — especially if said girlfriend is sleeping in the next room.

RATING 5

+ **Pluses**

→ A3D 2.0 is the leading API
→ Perfect choice of game bundle

- **Minuses**

→ Few games taking full advantage
→ Separate bracket needed for four speaker support

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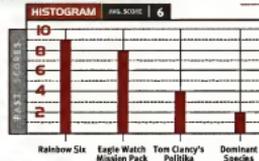


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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear

We prefer to call it *Rainbow 7* – it just sounds less gross

Red Storm really surprised a lot of people with *Rainbow Six*.

Not only was it a very good (if somewhat flawed) game, but miraculously, it also managed to sell. Some 500,000 units have shipped worldwide and the game's even made it to the Game Boy and is coming to N64. Of course, having a big-name attachment from one of the country's most prolific authors helped, but Red Storm's track record had hardly set the world alight before *R6* blew everyone away.

Now they're in the spotlight, with one of the most ravenous online communities picking at every part of their game design. Red Storm can't just "hope for the best" with *Rogue Spear*. To that end, they've actually listened to their fans in deciding which elements really needed the most

work. Since *R6* was still so much fun, despite its out-of-box extreme bugification, they were forgiven a pretty timid enemy AI and state-of-the-art 1990 graphics engine.

A whole new rendering engine debuts in *Rogue Spear*, featuring over 400 new motion-captured moves. These don't just cover death animations, but also the out-of-combat terrorist moves that will help to create far more realistic environments. Watch from a safe distance as they snooze at their post, scratch their own, ahem, "Rogue spears," and chat among themselves.

Fortunately, a completely rewritten AI engine backs these new realistic moves. Since the original enemy AI was something akin to capricious, it was deemed that a complete overhaul was needed, rather than just enhancements. Now the terrorists will call for reinforcements, get twitchy and waste a hostage, or simply be more cau-

tious should one of their colleagues get wasted.

These improvements also make a significant difference to the strategies adopted in the single player planning phase. Red Storm has done a lot of work on streamlining the Interface, supplying the mission objectives in a manner that better conveys the unfolding plot line, and making it easier to set your teams to their groups. The result is a planning procedure that can take longer than the actual mission itself. Go codes are still an important factor, but groups will now be able to hold certain areas, with their arc of focus set in the planning phase.

While the story in the original game kept your interest, the increased abilities of the terrorists appears to have allowed Red Storm to offer more variation in the mission objectives, beginning with a hostage situation in a well detailed, impressive



D. 50

FIVE QUESTIONS

ROGUE SPEAR'S PRODUCER CARL SCHURR RESPONDED TO OUR INCISIVE FIVE QUESTIONS WITH THE SARCASTIC THAT THEY MOST DEFINITELY DESERVE.

Q: What other Tom Clancy body parts were considered when titling, ahem, his "Rogue Spear"?

A: Uh ... no comment. Though it's certainly more, uh ... sprightly than the official military designation of "Bent Spear." What is it with these military types and their nuclear weapons, huh?

Q: Which one area received the most time and work to enhance it from the original game?

A: It's a split between rendering enhancements and the AI. Those are the areas we got hammered on most for *R6*.

Q: What was the single biggest user request for this game? And what did you do to accommodate it?

A: The single biggest user to suggest features to the game is Fat B*st*rd, weighing in at seventeen stone [24lbs to you yanks]. He asked us to ship a large turkey with his copy.

Q: Have you done any in-engine things to prevent TK-ing or make it more apparent who's doing what?

A: Player names are indicated on the map now, with a server option to turn them off (for *R6* purists). In addition, the post-game stats screen contains a "player-killing" icon so everyone can see who's being naughty.

Q: Are you going to license the Quake III engine for the next *Rainbow Six* game? Please.

A: No. We'd be licensing the original Q*bert code so we can implement the oft-requested jumping feature.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Red Storm Entert.
 PUBLISHER → Red Storm Entert.
 RELEASE DATE → October '99
 API SUPPORT → D3D, Glide

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

With over 500,000 units of the original *R6* sold worldwide, the sequel will be a big draw. The claim to be "as real as it gets" will have its sternest test.

THE HURDLE

R6's quality was in its new co-operative, one-shot kill design premise. But improvements in the engine quality and interface are desperately needed.

THE HIT

Technical frailties aside, it's the gameplay that counts, and particularly in multiplayer, that's what *R6* has in spades. *Rogue Spear* is only going to add to that.



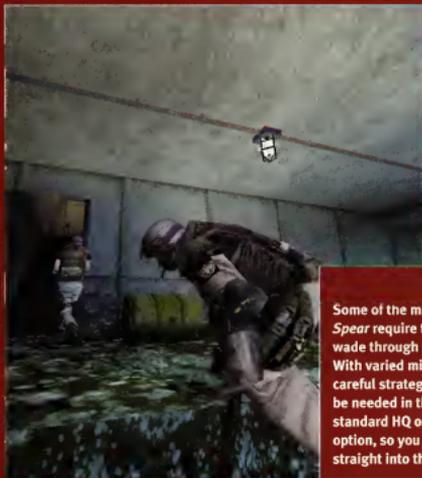
Weather effects have been added as a purely cosmetic enhancement, but it adds realism to the many different settings, as shown in this shot.



Rogue Spear Gallery

Between the improved animation and detailed character textures in the environments, *Rogue Spear* has the potential to create an even more impressive game world. The only problem is that games like *Soldier Of Fortune* look even better.





Some of the missions in *Rogue Spear* require the R6 squads to wade through gross waste. With varied mission objectives, careful strategic planning will be needed in the build-up. But, standard HQ orders are an option, so you can jump straight into the action.



(above) Apparently the sequel to *Rainbow Six* is going to feature finely-tuned games of squad leapfrog — no better way to nail terrorist scum. (left) The sniper is a welcome addition to *Rogue Spear* single player, but I have a feeling that I'm going to grow to hate him in multiplayer. It was bad enough having your mission (and life) ended from far away, but the new range of the sniper rifle is going to make it kinda ridiculous — unless you're the sniper, of course.



Planning out the storming of an airliner is evidently what *R6* fans wanted — kinda scary, no?

► **P. 47** museum of Egyptian antiquities. However, the graphics engine hasn't been improved in the way we'd hoped. Sure, the animations are better, and apparently the level of detail and some lighting effects have been enhanced, but the blocky look is very familiar. That said, we're promised no more random arms and legs poking through walls — and team members won't crowd into tight spaces and create bottlenecks when trying to pull off careful maneuvers. Since the gameplay was so damn compelling, most people didn't worry about that with the first game — let's hope that's the case with *Rogue Spear*, too.

THE NAME GAME

Whenever we utter the little Tom Clancy's *Rogue Spear*, it brings an evil chuckle to the *PCXL* staff. It sounds a bit too much like Mr. Clancy's personal name for his privates. During one of our many moments of useless conversation around the office we came up with a few more names in the same, uh, vein...

Tom Clancy's Wandering Harpoon
Tom Clancy's Deadly Dagher
Tom Clancy's Cunning Rocket
Tom Clancy's Infected Shaft
Tom Clancy's Limp Noodle
Tom Clancy's Probing Political Bullet
Tom Clancy's Terrible Trident
Tom Clancy's L'Vi Tom
Tom Clancy's Jack Ryan
Tom Clancy's Heat-seeking Missile o'Love



Set in the very near future, the storyline is uncovered gradually, with the first few missions following a traditional theme of elite force police against bad guys from impoverished third world nation. From storming a huge tanker in the South China sea, to rescuing hostages in the deserts of Oman, these openers get you accustomed to the planning issues — setting groups into demolition squads, electronics personnel, recon specialists and improved snipers. There was no real sniper in the original game. Now, responding to gamer feedback, a specific class has been created and armed with the powerful .50-caliber Barrett rifle. This could be a nightmare for multiplayer, but careful placement of your snipers in the computer missions can be crucial to a mission's success.

As the storyline opens up, it becomes apparent that there's a damn commie still insisting that the red flag fly over the world, so he's funding all manner of terrorist operations. Fortunately not all the missions are Rogue rescue or



search and destroy — mission six is crucial to the overall campaign, as you have to lead a team into Samed Vezirzade's Georgian dacha, plant a bug and hidden camera, and escape without alerting a soul. This sets the basis for continuing missions in a London TV studio where the heads of the European banks have been taken hostage (rescuing them with "minimal" loss of life — a tough proposition given the terrorists' rather nasty disposition).

One of the biggest requests (from allegedly hundreds of rabid fans) was for the inclusion of a hostage situation aboard a 747. Not wanting to disappoint, Red Storm is spending an inordinate amount of time planning a fictitious Aegean Airlines plane layout as it sits on the runway of Brussels airport. The 18 mission line-up draws to a close at a Ukrainian nuclear power plant where, once more, terrorists have taken over and are threatening to switch off the cooling filter, leading to a

meltdown. Given the staggeringly complex civil engineering feat of a nuclear power plant, these levels should have incredibly varied options for traversing their many corridors and walkways.

Other fixes include increased effects for special weapons like grenades and flashbangs, and movement options such as the chronically-overlooked ability to move while crouched. Also, you can now peek around a corner without being spotted (thus removing the necessity to hit third-person mode to get the "cheat" view). These factors will all play a part in the continued multiplayer success, with new arm patches added to better distinguish teams, and greater information supplied in the post-game report, including tagging for those who've been indulging in a spot of team killing. String the bastards up, that's what I say... well, at least they can be mercilessly ridiculed in the new chat rooms.

It's easy to look at *Rogue Spear* as merely more of the same, since the purely cosmetic overhaul is limited at best. But that does a disservice to the little elements that have been tweaked and fitted to further improve the gameplay. No doubt the multiplayer game will dominate the *PCXL* office matches, but this new single player ease-of-use is likely to add still further hours to our play time. It's refreshing to see a developer take their good concept and not completely rest on its laurels while reaping the benefits of its illustrious forebear (cough, *Tomb Raider*, cough). Let's see more of it. ►

— **ROB SMITH** won't answer any questions relating to the "*Rogue Spear*" incident



Set a group to watch specific areas in the planning phase.

The world will end in a firestorm of destruction.
Have fun.



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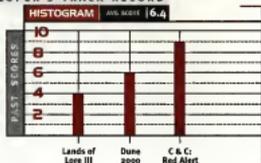


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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Nox

For those who always wanted to kill the elf in *Gauntlet*

"Come to me darling!" says a woman in dominatrix gear whose red eyes promise indescribable pleasure or unbearable agony, or, if I'm lucky, both. Unfortunately, just like my recent tryst with Neve Cambell and Denise Richards in a ski chalet in Stowe, the source of this flirtatious come-on, Hecubah, is not real. She is, however, what stands



out instantly in *Nox*, the isometric action/RPG that could easily be overlooked in the swell of *Diablo II* fascination. But really, it shouldn't be.

Nox is the brainchild and pet project of Michael Booth, a software engineer who developed the title over four years during his spare time, while working for a driving simulation company. While the game's graphics and effects were crude in their early state, Executive Producer John Hight saw the gameplay potential, snapped up the rights, and assigned a talented team to get the aesthetics up to snuff.

Although *Nox* has a single player campaign that details Hecubah's story, it's mostly a learning tool to get you accustomed to the interface and the concept of "chaining spells" before entering the extensive multiplayer arena. Begin by choosing from one of three character classes — Warrior, Conjuror, or Wizard — each sporting class-specific armor, weaponry, and spells that are available as pick-ups on

the battlefield. Up to eight characters (so far — Westwood is trying to increase the number) will be able to run around and blast each other in games of deathmatch, capture the flag, king of the hill, and scavenger hunt.

The real fun begins when you start mastering spell combinations. Like *Magic: The Gathering* cards, the spells in *Nox* are designed to work in tandem with one another. For instance, a choice combo of the Westwood people was to cast *Stun* followed by *Fire of Vengeance*, which stops an opponent's movement and then drops a big rock on its head. My

favorite moment was using a poison gas spell to force an opponent to chase me into a room filled with explosive barrels, casting *Protection from Fire* on myself and then watching as one explosive bolt turned the room into an inferno.



INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Westwood Studios
 PUBLISHER → Westwood Studios/EA
 RELEASE DATE → Winter 1999
 API SUPPORT → None

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

A game of savage combat and sneaky tactics in a land of discovery and deceit.

THE HURDLE

Likely to get lumped in with *Diablo II*, a battle nobody would relish, though there is little other real competition.

THE HIT

Eight players running around, tossing spells, and setting traps for each other is a blast, and don't forget — it runs great on low-end systems.



Goodness ... gracious ... great balls of fire.



FIVE QUESTIONS

PRODUCER JOHN NIGHT HAD TO ENDURE EXCESSIVE REQUESTS FOR HECUBAH'S NUMBER, BUT STILL ANSWERED THE FAMOUS FIVE QUESTIONS:

Q: Hecubah vs. Tanya from *Red Alert* — who wins?

A: Hecubah, no question. Fighting Hecubah is like a moth fighting a flame — she sucks you in, burns you up, and spits out your shattered husk.

Q: What was the inspiration for “chain-linking” spells and how are you working that into the game?

A: We've definitely taken a cue from *Magic: The Gathering*. We have a lot of spells that are specifically designed to be part of a chain. Using those spells in direct combination or setting up some elaborate trap deepens the level of strategy in an action packed game. We've tweaked the power of the spells and the interface so that using combos is the most effective, easiest, and fun way to win the game.

Q: Do you have a favorite combination?

A: Chain together Fumble, Confuse, and Fireball, and place it as a trap, just inside a doorway or near a healing potion. Your opponent shows up and triggers the trap. Fumble causes him to drop all his items, Confuse keeps him from moving in the right direction to pick them up, and Fireball blasts him to ashes. I sweep in and pick up all of his good equipment.

Q: If Hecubah met Xena, what would you most like to see — a big fight scene or lesbian sex?

A: I never thought about it much, but now that you've mentioned it, I'll have to ponder that for a while — possibly for the whole weekend.

Q: The woman who played Hecubah at E3 was very hot. Did anyone manage to bag her?

A: Her name was Michelle. She was very nice. But I think we were all kind of afraid of her.



A paladin re-evaluating his career choice.

Each spell has a counterspell that can be launched with a specific combination of keyboard presses (à la *Mortal Kombo!*), making the action fast-paced and quite intense. Just watching two players battle for control of a fireball as they launch counterspells, counter-counterspells and then counter-counter-counterspells is a strategic blast, enhanced by some visceral action as the spells fly.

The major hurdle that Nox has to overcome is convincing gamers that it's a fun and fast-paced mul-

tiplayer title. Though Nox is designed primarily for death-matching, the single player game may not be compelling enough for gamers to want to venture online and get the very different experience of Nox multiplayer. With a few online clans and a solid suite of mapmaking tools, though, Nox just might have the multiplayer world ... well ... knocked.

— ALLEN RAUSCH *has been very naughty and needs to be spanked by Hecubah, and is willing to pay*

BAD COMBOS

Nox is all about setting up good spell combos to toast your enemies. Not all combos work that well, however.

COMBO → Pamela Anderson and Tommy L-ve

RESULT → Beatings, divorce, re-marriage, divorce again, tragic breast reduction

COMBO → Pepsi and Pop Rocks

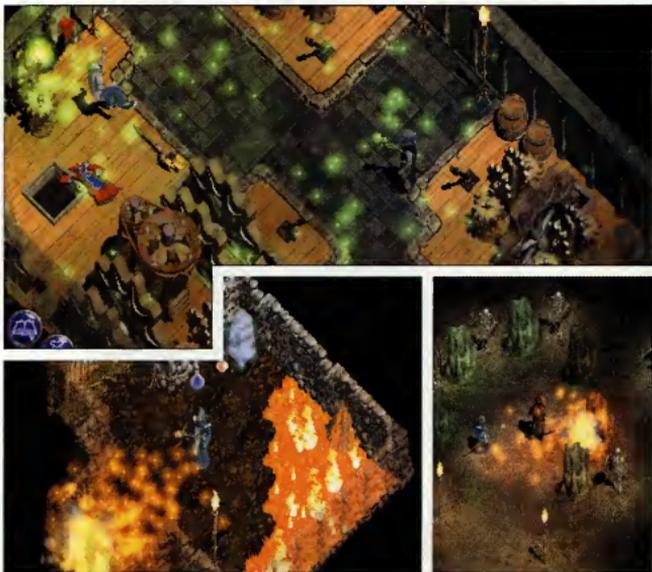
RESULT → Killed Mikey from the Life Cereal box

COMBO → Todd Porter and Jerry O'Slaherty

RESULT → *Domination: Storm over Cliff 3*

COMBO → Elizabeth Berkeley and nudity

RESULT → *Showgirls* — a movie so bad it managed to make naked strippers and lesbian sex with Gina Gershon unattractive — well, not entirely



When you can throw a fireball do you really NEED any other spells?

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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD

HISTOGRAM AVG. SCORE

BEST SCORE

10
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WHO ARE THEY?

Gearbox Software was founded in January 1999 by game developers from 3D Realms, Microprose, and Ritual. Most of them worked for the now-defunct Rebel Boat Rocker, whose project was *Prax War* for Electronic Arts. That game was canned, but many of them stayed together to form Dallas-based Gearbox. This is their first game.

Half-Life: Opposing Force

If it's only an add-on pack, shouldn't it be called *Quarter-Life*?

As a general rule, add-on packs normally don't deserve previews. Most are either collections of levels harvested from the web (and suffer all the hallmarks of amateur design) or they're just more of the same, with extra missions and a few new enemies and weapons. (*Unreal's Return to Na Pali* is a good example.) Taking an "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" attitude, few add-ons offer anything new. *Half-Life: Opposing Force*, an add-on pack requiring the full version of *Half-Life* and estimated to be about 40% the size of the original, is the exception. Currently being developed by Gearbox Software, whose only previous project was the cancelled *Prax War*, *Opposing Force* is set to break a lot of rules.

The best thing about *Opposing Force* is that you aren't stuck play-

ing Gordon Freeman again. Let's face it: He's a nerdy Charlie Sheen lookalike whose scientific know-how is limited to pushing shopping carts. *Half-Life* is a fantastic game but it's hard to get excited by a character with the skills of a baglady. Instead, *Opposing Force* is set during the exact same time as the events of *Half-Life* are unfolding, but this time you play as Corporal Adrian Shepherd, one of the marines sent in to neutralize Freeman. Once separated from his base unit, Shepherd discovers that a new alien species (tentatively called Race X) invaded Earth through the rifts Freeman created

when he transported to the border world of Xen. See, we told you that guy was nothing but trouble.

"Very early in *Opposing Force*, things don't go the way the soldiers expected them to," explains lead designer, Randy Pitchford. "You'll find yourself left alone, unarmed, and with a number of very scary things trying to eat you, capture you, or otherwise make your life very difficult." Including, as it turns out, Gordon Freeman himself. Says Pitchford, "Some of the crossover sequences are extremely cool, but I'm not going to spoil the surprise." Another surprise not worth spoiling is how the

reappearance of the government agent seen in *Half-Life* affects you, though he'll certainly make your official mission all the more ambiguous. And just because you've played through *Half-Life* doesn't mean you'll be retracing your steps. It turns out that the Black Mesa facility is very large, and while there are some familiar threats, most of the levels take place in areas Gordon never got the chance to explore.

Being a marine has its advantages, though. Remember how soldiers could rappel down ropes and call in reinforcements in *Half-Life*? Now, anything they could do, you

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Gearbox Software
PUBLISHER → Sierra
RELEASE DATE → October '99
API SUPPORT → OpenGL, 3D

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

What more hype do you need than to be the official add-on pack to the universally acclaimed best game of 1998, and the only game to receive a perfect 11 in the hallowed pages of PCXL?

THE HURDLE

The developer has no track record aside from one cancelled project, and add-on packs not done by the original teams usually suffer from extreme suckitude.

THE HIT

Unless the entire Gearbox team is on crack, it's hard to imagine them messing up such an original premise.



Black Mesa's new plumber had a short, but memorable, first day at work.

FIVE QUESTIONS

RANDY PITCHFORD, CO-FOUNDER OF GEARBOX AND LEAD DESIGNER OF OPPOSING FORCE, DISCUSSES PRISON CAGE MATCHES, MARTIN SHEEN'S MUTANT OFFSPRING, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING AN ARTIFICIALLY INTELLIGENT POSSE.

Q: Since Gordon Freeman looked like Charlie Sheen, will the marine look like Emilio Estevez?

A: Hal! Actually, I had forgotten that no one's seen our hero yet. So far we've been keeping Cpl. Adrian Shepherd's helmet and face mask on. He'll be unveiled soon, though.

Q: Will all of the new weapons (including the biological "grappling hook") be available in multiplayer?

A: Yes. And, all the old weapons are back as well. The player now has the option of cool-looking soldier hands in the view as an alternative to Gordon's orange hazard suit.

Q: Are there any elements from *Prax War* in *Opposing Force*?

A: Most of us learned a lot about designing games based on plot and scripting when we were at Rebel Boat Rocker (RBR). Some of the innovations we were creating at RBR were the same sorts of things Valve managed to deliver in *Half-Life*. So, we had plenty of experience thinking about design ramifications and developing content for scripted sequences. One of the influences from *Prax War* that is certainly visible is the inclusion of friendly squad type AI.

Q: Is making the only official add-on pack for what many consider to be the best game of 1998 more stressful or harder than creating a new game from the ground up?

A: Not at all. Working with the *Half-Life* game system has been an absolute pleasure compared to the struggles involved with inventing a new system and technology. We can focus our energies on new content, game events, and scripted sequences, since Valve created such a nice ground work to build from.

Q: Gearbox assembled a level design "dream team" to work on *Opposing Force*. Any big ego conflicts you can share with us?

A: Since we don't actually have to put all of the "All Star" designers in one room, we should be okay. However, ever sushi with the Levelord (the "All Star of All Stars") we discussed having a cage match with everyone — prison rules.



Meet Otis, *OpFor*'s comic relief with a rich, creamy, nougat filling.

can do better. To help learn your new skills, "boot camp" training replaces the holographic hazard course from the original, and comes complete with a drill sergeant based on the split-in-yer-face bad-ass in *Full Metal Jacket*. Best of all, there are plenty of other marines to call upon for help. Notes Pitchford, "Sometimes working with friendly soldiers is crucial. Some have the ability to use their torches to cut through steel doors, while others are medics who can heal your wounds. Less crucial, but much more fun, is working with them in combat situations. Going into a fight against a group of Shock Troopers with a couple of soldier buddies armed with M-249 light machine guns and grenade launchers is just plain cool."

Loosely based on the *Back To The Future II* concept, the same old scientists, aliens, and guards (including a doughy white guy named Otis) mingle with the

chaos. New aliens like the tiny spike-headed Pit Drone and the larger, smarter Shock Trooper are just two of the Race Xers making your life miserable. And new threats call for new ways to kill. Besides the usual marine accessories like the .357 Desert Eagle, heavy machine-guns, and the mighty ... umm ... pipe wrench, the seven new weapons in *OpFor* include the Barnacle gun (a "domesticated" alien that can be used as a biological grappling hook), and the experimental Dis-

placer (which can be used to teleport enemies or yourself).

With all the attention paid to the single-player story, it's easy to think that the multiplayer game might be crap. (Yeah, right.) Gearbox has gathered an elite group of "all-star" designers, including Ritual's Richard Gray (or as you may know him, "Levelord"), to guest-design at least 12 new multiplayer maps. There aren't any revolutionary play modes beyond the usual deathmatch and team play, but some additional deathmatch variations are planned. "As *Opposing Force* came to life, we realized we had the 'right thing,'" boasts Pitchford. Come fall, we think Gearbox will have a "sure thing," too. ▶

— **CHUCK OSBORN** is trying to find a cool nickname that doesn't hold the word "oss" in it



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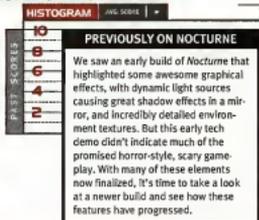
NEW WORLD COMPUTING

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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



Nocturne

The Stranger in a strange land

Technology is a wonderful thing. When you've got your hands on what seems to be some of the finest game engine wizardry, it should be a criminal offense to just slap on a game concept and ship it out the door. I desperately hope that Terminal Reality won't face these charges should *Nocturne* hit its current planned release of Halloween '99. But the danger of that eventuality is almost as pervasive as the hackle-tingling groan of legions of the damned out to thwart your plans for ... for what?

Nocturne (the technology, at least) is certainly advancing apace. In a fully-playable demo of the first level, the lighting and reflection effects are simply staggering. After a cutscene intro that introduces a helper in the form of one Scat Dazzle, the first task in this whole shooting match is to



This, ladies and gentlemen (and PCXL readers), is what you call lens flare. Pretty cool, huh? How original — for 1992.

retrieve a bottle of rum to bring the comatose Dazzle back to the land of the barely living. First things first ... you (*The Stranger*) draw your two guns, switch on the flashlight attachment, and ogle at the lens flare and reflections, as each solid object casts its own perfectly-formed dancing shadow on the magnificently-detailed environments. It's truly amazing.

Reminiscent of making silhouette shapes with your hands, it's easy to spend time simply playing with the shadow effects cast by the various light sources, most prominently the one attached to the end of *The Stranger's* weapons. The effect is, well, spooky. It's an excellent mood tool — one of many in the *Nocturne* engine's armory. Supporting this is the skeletal animation system and cloth simulator. Combined, these two features of the engine make your character move with incredible human-like preci-



These screens may look cool, but the deep ambient music will really give you the jitters.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Terminal Reality
 PUBLISHER → G.O.D.
 RELEASE DATE → November '99
 3D SUPPORT → 3D

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

A brand new engine, with gameplay influences derived from the classic *Resident Evil*, and various old-school horror movies.

THE HURDLE

Gameplay, gameplay, gameplay. Technological achievement loses its luster when the game it powers misses the mark. Hopefully the puzzles and trickery will match the spectacular effects.

THE HIT

The PC has yet to see its *Resident Evil*-like horror adventure killer app. *Nocturne* is by far and away the game most likely.



Smells like roasted, toasted ribs.



Don't they like the movie? Just shoot the projectionist.

► sion, and allows his flowing gray trench coat to hang realistically and sway in the breeze.

After the opening moments of awe-struck wonder at the full 32-bit graphical splendor (including support for a billion colors on screen), the enveloping mood of the situation puts all your focus on what's through the next door or around the next corner.

The gray, creepy town you've found yourself in has a real problem. As the priest who greets you so perfectly points out, it seems that the graves he dug to house the dead weren't deep enough. They're rising fast and react to your sound and the smell of your blood. So after finding the rum to revitalize Scat, the dark powers of The Stranger begin to emerge, with an in-engine cutscene conversation with a skeletal voodoo-like spirit called Baron Samedi.

This action/adventure is certainly trying to get the story line across, not only in solving the puzzles to defeat evil, but also

keeping your interest by slowly uncovering the hidden secrets of your own character. It's an interesting angle, since the third-person perspective is most often used to get you familiar with your character. That connection could be tough to pull off, since you know nothing about your character, and there are only hints at his background. It could also add a whole new depth to the mystery.

Nocturne uses the flip-screen method of switching between locales, with the camera viewing the scene from a fixed vantage point. While the effect certainly gives a cinematic countenance to each set piece, in this early build it was occasionally unclear where you were on the new screen. The Stranger would often be fairly small on screen, making it difficult to pick him out — his location is often given away only by following the direction that the shambling zombies were heading.

In subsequent levels you face ghouls, werewolves, and vampires



Lining up for a group photo.



Undead mobsters, like Al Capone, have been known to pop up and scare you to death (just don't ask Geraldo to show you the way).

armed with anything you can hide in a trench coat (including a shotgun, cross, and health packs that are scattered around the dank buildings). And not only do the monster types get more ferocious, so do the puzzles. Some monsters require you to manipulate the environment — bringing a mighty axe swinging down on a couple, for instance. Naturally, these decimated remains often shatter into a many pieces with a sickening

FIVE QUESTIONS

MARK RANDEL, THE BRAINS BEHIND THE NEW FLASH ENGINE, ONCE MORE CONSIDERED THE CONUNDRUM OF THE FIVE QUESTIONS.

Q: Since we last looked at *Nocturne*, the gameplay element has been cranked up. What's been the main focus of the gameplay design?

A: Enemy AI has had the most time spent on it. Enemies will be able to detect you by combinations of sight, smell, and sound. Werewolves have bad vision, but great hearing and smell abilities. You'll be able to sneak up on them from upwind. Also, we're adding pack behavior. Not all enemies might come after you — some may stay back until needed as reinforcements. We're trying to stay away from a key hunt.

Q: Is the engine scalable to the processor/video card technology? What visual benefits are you going to get for having a high-end machine?

A: *Nocturne* is scalable, but designed from the ground up to run on high-end systems to begin with. The target machine is a PII 450. So, if you have a 266, you can run in low res, or turn all graphics features down. If you have a K7 (the fastest machine yet), you can run 1280x8024 with all options on (provided that you have a G400 or Rage 128).

Q: Will the storyline for playing the two characters be different? Do they have different goals or is it just another game option?

A: Well, we've axed the 2nd character. You play The Stranger only now. But, you're never alone in any mission, you'll have an NPC teammate or two that you will meet up with that help out.

Q: Favorite horror movie?

A: The TV movie adaptation of Stephen King's "Salem's Lot." Since they couldn't use a lot of violence and blood, they had to use old-fashioned suspense.

Q: These undead-infested locations — they're not based on anywhere in Texas in particular, are they?

A: There's only one undead location in Texas. Redeye is inspired by *Night of the Living Dead* and Mesquite, TX. The game takes place in Texas, France, Germany, and Chicago.

squelch (though why zombies bled red blood is something I've yet to figure).

Much attention has been paid to atmosphere in this game, from the subtle breeze shifting The Stranger's coat to the mesmerizing groans of the undead legion. The level of immersiveness is enhanced by realistic touches, such as stray bullets in a firefight shattering the windows of a nearby building, yet handicapped by the requirement to put your guns away before opening a door. Let's face it, in this game you know there's going to be something around every corner, so you should be given the chance to be prepared.

The homage to PlayStation classic *Resident Evil* continues in to the death scene, when, after the zombies have pounced and bitten chunks of flesh from your neck to turn the health bar to red and then nothing, they continue to feast on your corpse. To borrow these elements from such an established classic is not a problem in itself. The only concern is that the tremendous graphical power of this engine is not exploited as fully as it could be by me-too design and puzzle elements.

But the signs are good — this game looks to be dark, brooding, and intensely effective. With the



"You stick your left arm out ..."



Realtime shadows and cloth require serious PC horsepower.

lights out and the 3D sound up *Nocturne* could very well prove to be one of the most memorable gaming experiences on the PC this coming year.

— *The more anyone inquires about the nocturnal habits of ROB SMITH, the more they don't want to know*

GOD'S GIFTS

In taking a look at the latest offering from G.O.D. (Gathering Of Developers) we pondered the omnipotent one's most crucial contributions to the joy that is humanity

(These are, in no particular order)

BEER
WHY IT'S GOOD → Sweet luscious beer. The big guy really outdid himself with this heavenly combination of barley and hops. Mmmm beer ...
FAILED ATTEMPT → Zins — er... God makes mistakes.

FOOTBALL
WHY IT'S GOOD → There is no better way to spend a Sunday in the fall than sitting back and watching "God's own game" while consuming copious amounts of "God's own bev. rag."
FAILED ATTEMPT → Soccer

WOMEN
WHY THEY'RE GOOD → Love 'em or hat. 'em our existence on this fine Earth would be pretty pointless (and physically impossible) without them
FAILED ATTEMPT → Most of the ones we've dated

INO MORE FOUND!
We're still waiting for God to produce something anything that can compare to these three ... still waiting ...



NOT AVAILABLE

How many commandos can you find below?

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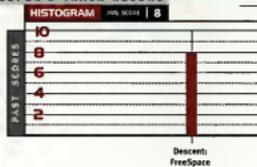
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DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD



FreeSpace 2

In space, no one can hear our giggles of anticipatory joy

There is something about a good space simulation that makes us singularly satisfied — even downright giddy. Maybe it's because as kids, gripping our plastic *X-Wing* fighters, we always dreamed of a game that would let us fight the space battles. We wanted to see, firsthand, Porkins disintegrate into a million Pork Rind crumbs above the surface of the Death Star, as we went on to become the hero.

Star Raiders for the Atari 2600 — even with the awful giant, rubber keypad — was one of the first glimpses of that, and 17 years after it first whet our appetites, comes *FreeSpace 2*. It's a game that has us grinning with anticipation, and has perhaps the best chance to realize our childhood space battle fantasies.

This game's predecessor, *Descent: FreeSpace*, was released last summer and was a welcome surprise for gamers still hurting from the disappointment of *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter*. It offered better graphics, cooler missions, and awesome, Marlon Brando-sized capital ships.

Set 32 years after the first game, *FreeSpace 2* looks to encompass all those benefits, with 30 new single-player missions, a new mission editor, and revamped, improved graphics (especially the textures on the capital ships). Nearly everything in *FreeSpace 2* takes place in various nebula (gas-clouded areas

that obscure your long-range view), a challenging new element of gameplay, and one that has yet to be explored in space simulations — until now. Ambushes are a distinct possibility, not only for you and your wingmen, but also for the various enemies lurking in this colorful space.

It's also the nebula environments that perhaps best show off *FreeSpace 2*'s enhanced graphics, with shadowy, pink clouds gently passing over your HUD, and weapons lighting the gas clouds with impressive flashes. New weapons also have their own gorgeous effects, including the TAG

(Target Acquisition and Guidance) missile, which lets pilots "paint" targets for guided weapons — helpful in the beautiful, yet sometimes difficult-to-target environment of the nebula.

Players will encounter more than 70 types of ships, and be able to pilot a bunch of them, including stealth fighters and Vasudan squadrons (who are still your pals, after allying to face the bigger threat of the Shivans in the first game). *FreeSpace 2* also allows you to command up to 11 teammates during battle with a variety of fairly simple function key-mapped commands.

INFO BOX

DEVELOPER → Volition Inc.
PUBLISHER → Interplay
RELEASE DATE → Winter 1999
API SUPPORT → Direct 3D

INTEREST GAUGE



THE HYPE

A sequel to the stellar *Descent: FreeSpace*, with improved graphics, bigger capital ships, and internet play that (cross your fingers) works.

THE HURDLE

Stiff competition from the new Erin Roberts game, *Starlancer*, and the lack of a big license like the *X-Wing* series may hamper sales. Playing constantly in a nebula might also seem constricting.

THE HIT

Stellar graphics and epic battles, which will see massive capital ships fighting against each other, could make this one of the best games of the winter.



Gorgeously improved graphics mean a space sim's most important feature — explosions — come to full, flaming life.

FIVE QUESTIONS

NOT CONTENT TO LISTEN FOR DETAILS ON *Freespace 2* WITH RADIO TELESCOPES, PKXL WENT STRAIGHT TO THE SPACE SIM SOURCE AND LAID DOWN THE FIVE QUESTION GAUNTLET TO JIM BOONE, INTERPLAY'S PRODUCER ON THE GAME, AND DAVE BARANEK, LEAD PROGRAMMER WITH VOLITION.

Q. The game will be set mostly in nebula. Have you ever had the nebulous feeling someone was watching you?

A. Jim Boone: We figure to have about 1/4 of the missions take place inside of a nebula. We want the missions to be special when the player is battling it out inside of a nebula so we don't want to overdo it with the nebula.

Q. Where do you see the genre going?

A. Dave Baranek: Over the last 1 1/2 years or so, a lot of space sims have popped up and quite a few more are in development. There have been quite a few which were very mediocre, but all in all I think the space-sim genre is breaking new ground all the time. *Freelancer*, *FreeSpace 2*, and *Killing Academy* all look to contribute many new ideas to the genre. I bet you'll see some very impressive stuff in the next four years.

Q. *FreeSpace 2* is said to feature more WWII-style battles: Where were you when we won the Big One?

A. Boone: There will be a very heavy emphasis on dogfighting in *FreeSpace 2*. Lots of fighters on screens at once, large capital ships battling against each other, general chaos.

Q. The first game shipped with serious Internet multiplayer troubles. What will Volition do to make sure that doesn't happen this time?

A. Baranek: We're currently running a beta, and we've gotten very good reports from players with some impressively bad connections (500 pings, etc). We've also got in-house QA now. All in all, the multiplayer code base is just more solidified and has had plenty of time to shake out all the bugs. The one thing we can't control is the availability of dedicated servers. The more people put up themselves (on good connections), the better perceived the multiplayer will be. Do you think *Quake* [1,2,3, etc.] would be considered "good for the internet" if the only servers around were run by players on modems?

Q. Why did the *Wing Commander* movie suck so badly?

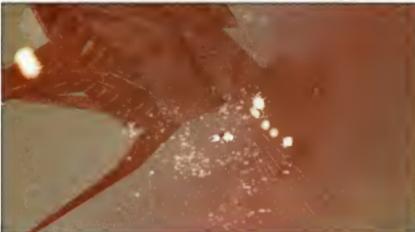
A. Baranek: Not enough Mark Hamill.



FreeSpace 2's scenarios put you right in the heat of battles, including capital ships that zap each other with nasty beam weapons.

Giant capital ships were one of the things Volition pounded its chest most loudly about in the first game, and the space giants have returned even bigger and more difficult to destroy this time around. The newest big boy is the Juggernaut, a six-kilometer behemoth with more than 80 turrets trained on you and your cronies. What makes fighting these new heavies a lot of fun (even if you can't destroy them with your puny one-man fighter) is the ability to disable the subsystems. Your little fighter can still have a huge impact on the battle by disabling everything from engines to gun turrets, and missile batteries to fighter bays. And while you're busy, your own capital ship is using missiles and beam weapons in a death fight with the enemy's giant — so far, it looks to add a gripping sense of scale and realism to the fights.

Volition also hopes to answer the biggest knock on the first *FreeSpace*, which was that it shipped with essentially non-functional Internet play. This time, the developer promises everything will be hunky-dory out of the box.



The sheer size of the big boys means you're resigned to a bit role in the fight against them — taking out subsystems like engines, turrets, and fighter bays.

The game will support up to 12 players in a dogfight, and eight players maximum in team vs. team and cooperative missions for LAN, Internet, and modem-to-modem connections. Throwing its hat in the growing persistent world online game, Volition will offer what it's calling SquadWar, a multiplayer battle that rages on and on until one side wins control of the entire universe.

Already, the game looks like a worthy successor to its excellent predecessor. If Volition delivers everything it's promising when the game ships this winter, expect us to rip into the box like an 8-year-old on Christmas morning.

— MIKE MORRISSEY *has perfected the "Marlon Brando Banana Dance" 'cuz chicks dig it*



GOING DOWN

Because: *FreeSpace* no longer exists. Descend name before its title... we felt a duty to pay homage to the now dead and buried prologue brand with a look at celebrity descents into insanity.

MARGOT KIDDER

PRE-CRAZY → Best known as a not-that-attractive Lois Lann, and the scary wife in *Amityville: Horror*
GOES CRAZY → Found in some bushes with a shaved head, missing teeth, and a mortal fear that Satan was telling people how to kill her through beepers
POST CRAZY → Hollywood friends helped her get several guest appearances on crappy TV shows, a fat mouse than in. In the bushes

MARTIN LAWRENCE

PRE-CRAZY → A foul-mouthed stand-up comic, and that crazy "Martin" on Fox
GOES CRAZY → Wandered around L.A. revving and screaming, tried to bring a gun on an airplane, and allegedly sexually harassed his female co-star
POST CRAZY → With the p-rectly acceptable explanation that Martin flipped out because he was "fired," the actor went back to co-starring roles in awful movies like *Nothing to Lose* and *Life*

LARRY KING

PRE-CRAZY → A radio host for years, and a respected TV interviewer
GOES CRAZY → Marries a new 18-year-old every other month, writes rambling columns for *USA Today* ("If there's one thing I know, it's that milk is white"), and kisses a Marlon Brando
POST CRAZY → Somehow clings to his latest wife, his TV show and his secret marriage to Marlon Brando

MARLON BRANDO

PRE-CRAZY → A 1950s sex symbol, and one of the '60s and '70s finest actors
GOES CRAZY → Begins replacing bread in his sandwiches with Pop Tarts, eats 12-pound turkeys for "snacks," and hides from the public in a futile attempt to make us believe he can still fit through doorways
POST CRAZY → Calls Larry King daily during his show, asks why "they don't cuddle any more"



MARGOT KIDDER



MARTIN LAWRENCE



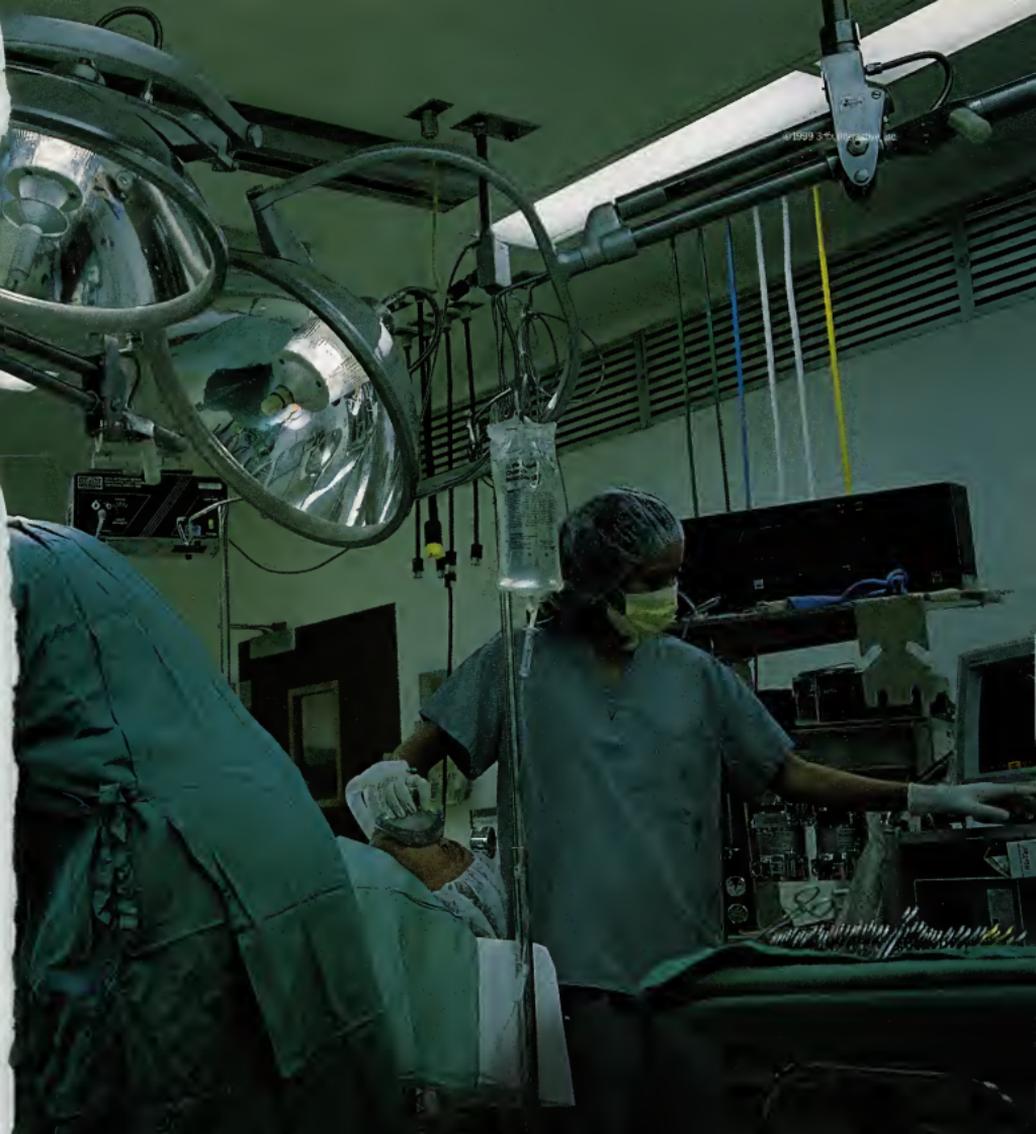
LARRY KING



MARLON BRANDO

A man in a white t-shirt with the '3dfx' logo is sitting in an operating room. He is holding and eating a slice of pizza. Two surgeons in full green scrubs and masks are performing an operation on a patient lying on the table. The room is lit with large overhead surgical lamps. The overall scene is surreal, contrasting a casual activity with a sterile medical environment.

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Gangsta Style

Inspired by the constant stream of obscenities flowing from Mike Salmon as he plays through *Kingpin* (or is he just on the phone with his mother?), this month's load of PCXL reviews is sponsored by a true American archetype — gangsters and the gangstas. These are the men, women, and asexual goons whose image and lifestyle maintain sky-high popularity with the masses, and who inspire more movies and television shows per capita than wacky doctors struggling against an uncaring system (see Robin Williams, any movie). PCXL recognizes the redeeming qualities of these people, who believe that good is good, bad is bad, and ass is ass. We pour a 40 on the ground as a promise to our dead homies: We will forever uphold the gangster integrity in this review section. An awesome game will be “made” a member of the family, and an ass game gets a cap in its... well... ass.



Bleep you, you bleepin' bleep!

WHAT THE NUMBERS MEAN

The *Goodfellas*/Godfather of games. A masterpiece that will put you in “I—king heaven” **10**

A classic that belongs on your shelf, next to the picture of you and Gotti at the Jersey state fair **9**

An all-around excellent offering with a few foibles, but certainly deserving of your gang **8**

The streetwise soldier you'd trust with your life. He just can't get you to the bigwig Mafia summit **7**

The John Gotti of games. Rises above most, but ends up not much better off than its cohorts **6**

The equivalent of Eazy-E (great rapper with a fourth-grade girl voice). Equal parts sass and ass **5**

A game possibly worth kissing, though you might later wish it was the kiss of death. **4**

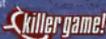
Like John Gotti Jr., this game usually has one thing going for it, like a last name **3**

Almost as bad as it gets. Few good qualities (like Coppola's daughter in *Godfather III*) **2**

True ass of *MAFIA!* proportions. Avoid this like that “invitation to a picnic in the swamp” **1**

KILLER GAME

Any game that receives a 9 or 10 from our rigorous scaling system warrants this nifty logo. If you see the PC ACCELERATOR Killer Game stamp, you know it's a game worth buying. Only the true classics deserve this elite status, so don't expect to see this symbol often.



SUICIDE

If we're going to create a stamp for the truly great, then it's only fair to label the unforgivable shit as well. It takes an abominable score of 3 or 2 to qualify for the noose around the neck of our warning: Stay away from these games at all costs.



“MADE” GAMES

These are the ones chosen for membership in PCXL's own version of Lo Cose Mafra, the games with the right heritage, the right look, and the right amount of slicked-back hair

KINGPIN

Publisher → Interplay
Developer → Xatrix
Rating → 7
How good is it? Though the single-player game has its flaws, Xatrix's manipulation of the Quake II engine proves masterful

ALIENS VS. PRECATOR

Publisher → Fox Interactive
Developer → Rebellion
Rating → 8
How good is it? A beautiful 3D engine and excellent multiplayer variety through the use of three different characters

MIGHT AND MAGIC VII

Publisher → 3DO
Developer → New World Computing
Rating → 8
How good is it? Though it's not the prettiest just at the dance, *MMVII* is as deep and rich as its predecessors

MECHWARRIOR 3

Publisher → Hasbro Interactive
Developer → Zipper Interactive
Rating → 9
How good is it? A gorgeous game through and through, with some of the most impressive graphics we've seen on a PC, not to mention some of the best play yet in a mech title

MAIO GAMES

These are the ones we'd leave out for the mild to toxic away—the loser games who'd like to join our family, but who instead must park our Cadillac and fetch us a sandwich

TOTAL ANNIHILATION: KINGDOMS

Publisher → Cav-dog
Developer → Cav-dog
Rating → 5
How bad is it? This baby is dotted-line-in-the-road mediocrity, with slow gameplay that doesn't fit the fantasy-gamed-up

LINKS EXTREME

Publisher → Microsoft
Developer → Access Software
Rating → 3
How bad is it? Extreme anything usually sets off our Ass Sensors, and this fun is no exception

STAR WARS EPISODE I

THE PHANTOM MENACE
Publisher → LucasArts
Developer → Big Ape
Rating → 5
How bad is it? Like the movie, we expected more. For an adventure game, this turkey is uninspired

APACHE HAVOC

Publisher → Empire Interactive
Developer → Empire Interactive
Rating → 5
How bad is it? We thought *Apaches* were supposed to fight stuff. After what seemed like hours of play, the most interesting thing we ran into was a mountainside

ACCELE-RATED >>

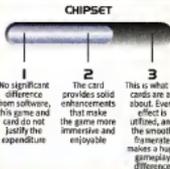
This additional rating provides specific information on how a game performs on a variety of competing 3D chipsets. We test games on up to four major 3D cards and report back with the true test for any 3D accelerator: how it affects the game. We base these ratings on graphic enhancements, framerates, and performance to give you a good idea of how a game will perform on your 3D card.

(Note: Performance may vary depending on the card and the setup of your system.)

RATINGS >>

Our rating scale is a simple 1 to 10 — no decimal points, no obscure percentages, just a straight score that gets right to the point. Before we score games, they undergo countless hours of testing on different systems, with different 3D cards — our reviewers even play the games under the influence of various narcotics. In the end we stamp a single score on the game, which is essentially a numeric value of the game's worth. We love games and always try to look on the bright side, but when a pile of steaming crap comes in, we won't hold back and allow our readers to waste their money on said crap. You can count on our reviews for honesty, insight, and maybe even a few laughs.

ACCELE-RATED



GRAPHICS

Rendering quality, framerates, and special effects all contribute to an immersive gaming experience.

SOUND

Visceral sound effects and appropriate music can help make a good game great.

DEPTH

How often you find yourself playing a game, and how long, are good indicators of its quality.

DESIGN

The backbone of a game is the overall vision behind it, from characters and weapons to levels and missions.

RATING



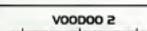
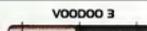
DEVELOPER →	Atrix
PUBLISHER →	Interplay
REQUIRED →	P233, 64MB RAM, 570MB hard drive, 30 Accelerator, stable miniset
IDEAL →	P11 333, 128MB RAM, TNT 2 or Voodoo 3, complete desensitization

Kingpin: Life of Crime

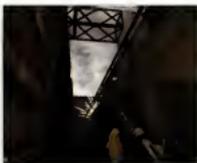
Morally bankrupt, brutally desensitizing, astonishingly gorgeous, and shamefully incomplete

ACCELE-RATED

If you don't have a 3D card then you can't hang with this gang. No matter how powerful your card or machine, *Kingpin* has serious technical issues. The game looks incredible, but the slowdown and enormous load times are present even on the super computers used by NASA (we assume). The TNT has brighter textures, while the Voodoo 3 deals the best frame rates. Definitely a showpiece, but the chugging is extreme.



API SUPPORT: OpenGL, 3Dx, OpenGL



Wander around saying "F-k" in a variety of gritty, urban dwellings, without any of the unappealing consequences.

Easily the most controversial game released since *Night Trap* (the awful FMV game starring the now-dead Dana Plato), *Kingpin* certainly grabbed our attention from a promising opening, right down to the sadly rushed ending. A gritty urban gangsta setting combined with a modified, and much better looking, version of the *Quake II* engine seemed like a combination that surely couldn't go wrong.

When the game arrived I settled down and prepared for some foul-mouthed, cap-in-the-ass, gaming action ... 30 minutes later I was the one swearing like a sailor because the game was still installing its *Sin-ful* 570MB total of bloated code. When I finally got the game up and running I was treated to a lame in-engine intro movie with dialog that featured the word f-k over 20 times, then it loaded ... and loaded ... and loaded. Most of the problems with *Kingpin* stem from this one major issue: It takes f-king forever to load each scene. Normally this isn't a problem since a good rest between levels is the perfect time for a cigarette and a run to the fridge for a cold one, but the way *Kingpin* forces you to enter the loading screen as you move backwards and forwards

through the levels is intolerable. According to my estimations, nearly half of the time I spent playing *Kingpin* (all the way to the bitter and disappointing end) was wasted waiting for the f-king thing to load.

In between loading screens, *Kingpin* dazzled, crashed, chugged, amazed, and desensitized. Any review of *Kingpin* that didn't talk about the moral implications would seem incomplete, and here is my take: The game is horrifically violent, gratuitously overuses the word f-k, and is not intended for children — it won't turn them into killers, just foul-mouthed little brats. The questionable morality behind *Kingpin* has not affected our rating. We rate games on gameplay — not morals.

The single-player *Kingpin* had moments that really pushed the

boundaries of the genre and impressed the hell out of me — the rest was pretty average. Every level looked amazing with architectural variety, crisp textures, and excellent lighting — the developers really pushed the *Quake II* engine to its limit. The core focus of *Kingpin* involves human vs. human combat and the AI is superb. At one point I ran into a room and with a rocket launcher blew away a guy — his partner then turned around and jumped out of a window to escape.

Also, when engaged in battles with enemies, they run around behind crates, duck, and generally act like a human really would. I have never seen battles with computer opponents that were this real or varied. The weapons and their effects are another high point, with the flamethrower being





In the future, the weather will always suck.



All aboard the last train to F---kville!

the pinnacle of a familiar bunch of shotguns, machine guns, grenades, and rocket launcher. And really, there just isn't anything quite like lighting a guy on fire and watching him run around screaming, is there?

!!!! WARNING !!!!

The most violent game PCXL has ever seen certainly deserves its warning label. We decided to take a look at other things that really need warning labels and what the effects would be:

KINGPIN LABEL →



THE EFFECT → More 13-year olds than ever will buy this game, and become desensitized to the brutality.

ANY KENNY G ALBUM LABEL →

BEWARE! Music on this CD is known to severely alter the estrogen levels in some females, causing uncontrollable fits of coddling, quality time, and often "the marriage ultimatum."

THE EFFECT → Men need to know this: facts before trying, to use this music to get a woman in the mood — it is invariably the wrong mood.

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD LABEL →

EXTREME CAUTION! Contents of this magazine have been known to cause extreme drowsiness, boredom, and may even cause you to grow a beard.

THE EFFECT → Thousands are freed from the shackles of CGW and allowed to enjoy a good magazine. — like PCXL

WAKING NED DEVINE LABEL →

GROSS OUT ALERT! This touching tale of a small Irish town contains extremely gross scenes of mixed old men on motorcycles. The long term effects are unknown — but they can't be good. **THE EFFECT** → Viewers will be prepared to turn their heads and won't have to live with the awful memory of old guy butt.

However the game isn't all good. The much hyped conversation system rarely comes into play, especially after the first couple of levels — essentially it's just an opportunity to hear your character say things like "Back the f---k off, bitch." Sadly, the game runs similarly to most other FPS games. You kill all the enemies in a few minutes, then spend the next hour trying to figure out how to get to the next area. Then you move on to the next level, where you'll kill all the enemies and repeat over and over again. The only difference is that instead of finding key cards, you have to go to the bar and talk to someone who gives instructions like "Kill those motherf---ers."

After you kill them, you come back to get a key from the foul-mouthed bartender. The main problem with this scenario is that in order to get into or leave the bar you have to wait forever for the loading screen. The Pawn-O-Matic (a store where you buy weapons) features the same annoying loads, which

meant I only went in when I desperately needed more health or firepower. The game elements rarely come into play either. At different points you can hire a thug, who follows you around (impressively he'll even take different paths to find you) and helps fight the enemies. However, if you're like me, you won't be able to resist killing the guy or accidentally light him on fire. The game also feels rushed. The first few levels have a wide variety of tasks (no matter how annoying) and take quite a bit of time to get through, but the last half of the game can be completed in just a few hours of straightforward shooting and killing.

What really saves *Kingpin* is a great multiplayer experience. The claustrophobic inner city levels and balanced variety of weapons make for some great straight deathmatch. The game comes with HEAT.NET support and Gamespy Light, making finding a game quite easy. However, without much support, I fear the multiplayer will be

short lived. I actually paid \$60 of my own cash for this game and it wasn't a complete waste. There is fun to be had, moments of greatness, and it is a great way to get rid of pent-up aggression — but overall, the game just isn't as good as it could have been.

— MIKE SALMON now wanders around the office telling people to "back the f---k off"

GRAPHICS

The *Quake II* game has never looked this good — lighting, textures, special effects, and characters all look amazing.

SOUND

F---king buggy and where the f---k is the Cypress Hill soundtrack we heard so much about?

DEPTH

The game takes 30 hours to finish, but 20 of those are spent waiting for the f---king thing to load.

DESIGN

The levels are astonishing to look at and the AI is f---king incredible. Too bad everything in the later game really f---king sucks.

RATING 7

+ Pluses

- Human vs. computer AI battles never been done better
- Multiplayer is a blast
- Senators disapprove

- Minuses

- Loading ...
- ... Loading ...
- ... Still f---king loading



Gaming magazines' #1 most overused and entirely generic photo caption: "That's gotta hurt."



'Mechs, Mo

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torcycles and Mayhem!



MECH WARRIOR 3

MELTDOWN

Let the battle begin!

DEVELOPER → New World Computing
 PUBLISHER → 3DO
 REQUIRED → P133, 32MB RAM,
 375MB hard drive space, X CD-ROM
 IDEAL → P11 266, 64MB RAM,
 560MB hard drive space, 3D card

Might and Magic VII: For Blood and Honor

If it ain't broke ...

ACCELE-RATED

Though it's the same graphics engine, there's Direct3D support in *M&M7* for a nominal improvement over software rendering. For some reason, the game crashed more when using the TNT2 card than a dual Voodoo cards setup during testing.

RIVA TNT 2



VOODOO 2



VOODOO BANSHEE



VOODOO 3



API SUPPORT: Direct3D

Over the past few years, the *Might and Magic* role-playing series has garnered respect from both hardcore and casual dungeon crawlers for its deep and addictive gameplay, clean interface, and effective combat system. And you can thank the critical and commercial success of last year's epic *Might & Magic VI: The Mandate of Heaven* for helping resurrect the dormant RPG genre, as well. A year later, we now have the seventh

game in the longstanding series, and with a few minor exceptions, the formula is relatively unchanged. But, is this a good thing? You bet your goblins, baby.

Might & Magic VII: For Blood and Honor takes place in the land of Erathia (the same game world as the turn-based strategy game, *Heroes of Might & Magic III*) and after successfully completing a scavenger hunt at the beginning of the game, your party of four become lords of the small town of Hamondale. Little did you know before sailing to this newly-acquired realm that nasty elves have wreaked havoc on its residents. After a few assorted missions, a new arbiter of the lands must be chosen, ultimately deciding what path your party

will walk for the rest of the game. Ah, the good vs. evil deliberation once again ...

Regardless of your decision, the truth behind the happenings in Erathia will be unveiled, plus there are dozens of nonlinear subquests to perform, each suited to the chosen successor (the Keepers of Light or Keepers of Dark). For instance, missions on the evil side may be to kidnap or kill, while on the good side, it may be to rescue someone in distress or to retrieve a stolen item, and so forth

Fortunately, the gameplay remains the same as its predecessor. Your posse travels around in a first-person perspective, interacting with various NPCs (friendly and hostile) and finding money, weapons, armor, magic, with places to buy, sell, or trade these



Yes, this game is definitely in need of a new engine. Oh well, there's still fun to be had here.





Those animated images you get upon entering new areas are sharp, colorful, and overall excellent. Unfortunately the gameplay code is more 1995.



Are these freaky creatures part of a computer game or are they getting down to the latest Ricky Martin tune? And check out the dude on the right — “Hi, Mom!!!”

items in each town. In true RPG fashion, there are also guilds to join and new party members to pick up, each with unique skills. Unlike *M&M6*, your party can now include elves, goblins, and dwarves, as well as the usual human contingent.

When it comes to fighting, you have a choice of alternating between turn-based and realtime

combat, but this time around, the turn-based mode allows you to move between attacks. Some spells can be purchased in a shoppe or guild (if you're a member), while others require the character to achieve an appropriate skill level (expert, master, and grandmaster spell-casting). Some of the spells are pretty friggin' cool, too, including the Rock Blast (Earth magic), where a deadly stone is conjured and bounces around wildly; the Sunray (Light magic), which focuses the sun's beams on an enemy; and the Berserk spell (Mind magic), causing creatures to kill each other.

Very little has changed in the graphical department, despite the inclusion of 3D card support. In fact, there's very little noticeable difference in using the software rendering vs. hardware acceleration, except maybe some lighting effects and less-pixelated objects.

There's little argument that the graphics engine is quite outdated, and though visuals aren't as important as gameplay, it's puzzling when such a great game looks this passé in 1999. There are also a few other minor quibbles with the engine, such as tapping keys to look up and down (hopefully, the next incarnation will utilize a *Quake*-like “mouse look” function). Also, I experienced random crashes and freezes during the game (only with hardware support turned on), especially with the TNT2 card. In two strange instances, all the monsters were completely invisible until I rebooted in software mode.

One last addition to *M&M7* is a game within the game, dubbed *ArcoMage*. This clever *Magic: The Gathering*-style card game can be played in taverns throughout your travels. This fun diversion is also a surprise, as there is no mention of

it anywhere in the manual or readme.txt file.

In short, what *M&M7* lacks in technology, it makes up for with gameplay. Let's just hope New World Computing is building a new 3D engine for *Might and Magic VIII*, while preserving what makes these past few games so addictive.

— MARC SALTZMAN *couldn't stop playing long enough to write a bio*

SEVENTH SEQUELS

It seems the *Might and Magic* series gets better with age, but how would some of our other beloved games look in its seventh incarnation?

TOMB RAIDER VII: THE MENOPAUSAL LEVELS

Aging Lara doesn't look so hot in her skimpy clothes anymore. And, her sagging boobs make it more difficult to draw those pistols so quickly, so gamers have to hold down the space bar longer. Core Design and Eidos still haven't changed the game: cliche or either

DUKE NUKEM VII: TIME TO PEE (AGAIN)

Before killing aliens and flashing bills it Jugglers, our macho man must first collect various power-ups such as Viagra. Depends undergarments, and denture grips. Parkinson's also makes it tougher to aim his rock-tlauncher

TRESPASSER VII: THE GYRATING ARM SIMULATOR CONTINUES

Even less gam-play than its predecessors but gets more cover stories! Multi-player is added now so you can try to bitch slap your opponents if you can keep your arm still. Minnie Driver's boobs now require an extra 128MB of RAM if you want to see them bounce when you look down

DAIKATANA VII: BE ROMERO'S BITCH ADD-ON PACK

By the time the first one comes out, I could've been the seventh



Make sure one character in your group has a heal spell.

GRAPHICS

Unfortunately, the weakest link in the chain. Though slightly better than *M&M6*, it's sorely outdated.

SOUND

Identical sound effects as *M&M6*, but the music is new, and much better. The voice-over talent is a mixed bag.

DEPTH

M&M7's strongest feature. Expect incredible depth, yielding hours and hours of gameplay. High replayability with the good or evil path.

DESIGN

A fantastic “classic” role-playing game. Good combat, lots of areas to explore, lots of magic, high attention to detail.

RATING

8

+ Pluses

- Immersive story
- Deep gameplay
- Fun mini-game embedded in game

- Minuses

- Dated graphics engine
- Some bugs and glitches
- Still no multiplayer

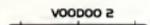
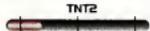
DEVELOPER → Cavedog
 PUBLISHER → Cavedog
 REQUIRED → P233, 32MB RAM,
 80MB hard drive space, 4X CD-ROM
 IDEAL → Pii 450, 128MB RAM,
 patience of a saint

Total Annihilation: Kingdoms

Two parts *WarCraft II*, one part *Age of Empires*, two parts *Total Annihilation*, five parts ass

ACCELE-RATED

OK, here's another beef with the game: It runs so helluva slow! It supports 3D accelerators for the terrain and special effects, but it doesn't seem to speed the game up any. Standard RTS functions like scrolling the map often causes some annoying stuttering.



API SUPPORTS Direct3D, Glide



My flying thingys can beat your walking sword guys any day.

Okay, so the above headline might be a little harsh, but the defining quality of this, what is it now, third generation realtime strategy game is sheer unadulterated mediocrity. And if there's one thing we absolutely can't stand here it's mediocre games. *TA: Kingdoms* is a shining example. We have a lot more fun with totally assified games (as you might have noticed from our Hall of Ass and "48 Hours in Hell" feature). So why is *Kingdoms* so flat? There's just no involvement, no inspiration, and most importantly, nothing you haven't seen before.

Kingdoms is a fantasy-themed RTS with four sides to play, lots of units, and a solid 3D engine inherited from its big brother *TA*. Its selling points look really good on paper. The races are based on the four elements — fire, earth, water, and air — with the units reflecting the element on which they're based... sorta. There is some effort made to differentiate each specific race — the Veruna (water) has lots of naval units, the Taros (fire) has none — but it's still a basic breakdown of cheap ground unit, cheap ranged unit, medium ground unit, medium ranged unit, etc. The races don't really differentiate until higher in the tech tree, where you've got powerful stuff like the Lich for Taros and the Stone Giant for Zhon.



Lots o' sparkly effects, but I liked 'em better in *Everquest*.

You build your troops with town halls — except for the Zhon (air), who build units with other units — and resource collecting is kept in the background, much like *TA*, with a steady perpetual income rate (think solar power) rather than a peon line. The idea here is to get the mundane stuff like collecting resources out of the players' way, freeing them to focus on tactics. This would be fine if the actual combat were interesting. But this is where the game dives headfirst into a sea of mediocrity, and where this review dives headfirst into an ocean of bad metaphors.

The previously-mentioned 3D engine, used in the original *TA*, added a lot to the overall atmosphere, with little tanks trundling over rocky terrain, and lobbing artillery at each other. So Cavedog kept the strong engine, and plugged in a fantasy setting with people and monsters, instead of tanks and planes. Except the little people in *Kingdoms* move and feel like, well, tanks. They rotate slowly, walk stiffly, swing mechanically, and are generally unresponsive and completely unconvincing. The clunky, mechanical pace of the combat reminds you of a tank battle, not an epic fantasy battle — it feels like an uninspired TC. But it's not all bad — the AI during the missions does some smart things in terms of where the weak spots in your defenses are, and the unit pathfinding has definitely been improved from *TA*.

Multplayer (up to eight) options include LAN, modem, and free match play on Boneyards, Cavedog's proprietary service. So what it is it about *TA: K* that is boring us? It's just that the RTS genre is starting to show its age. Regardless, we'd rather play *WarCraft II*.

— ED LEE is also known for being unresponsive and unconvincing

GRAPHICS

Supports resolutions up to 1024x768, but units tend to get lost, because they don't stand out from the background. Too bad...

SOUND

Crash, boom, bang... pretty average, nothing distinguishing at all.

DEPTH

Single player feels like a token effort and doesn't hold your interest. It's all about multiplayer here.

DESIGN

Like a half-hearted attempt at a TC for *TA*.

RATING 5

+ Pluses

- Lots of units
- Good multiplayer support
- 3D terrain engine

- Minuses

- Combat feels like a bunch of tanks
- Doesn't contribute anything to the RTS genre
- Sloooooo

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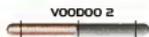
DEVELOPER → Microprose
PUBLISHER → Hasbro Interactive
REQUIRED → P133, 16MB RAM,
 150MB hard drive space, 4X CD-ROM
 DirectX compatible video card
IDEAL → P1 266, 32MB RAM,
 200MB hard drive space, 8X CD-ROM,
 3Dfx or D3D compatible video card

Star Trek: Next Generation Birth of the Federation

Hey you, get off'a my nebula

ACCELE-RATED

There are really no high-end graphic challenges here, with frame rates consistent even in the tactical combat mode on the most basic of graphic setups.



API SUPPORT: Direct3D



Spend time on research to develop better technology.



Work out your strategy on the finely color-coded star map. Just put in a new ream of paper before you print out the manual.

Wouldn't know a Ferengi if he bit your ass off and then tried to sell it back to you at twice the market value? No problem. Even if you're not a Trekker of any stripe, *Birth of a Federation*, a turn-based space empire builder, has the facets of inter-racial politics, diplomacy, and open aggression necessary to while away many hours in galactic conquest.

Trekkers may balk with dweeby outrage at the "Next Generation"-era ships and stylistic sensibilities when the setting is supposed to predate even Captain Pike's first trip to the stars. Still, the method-acting roles of the prime movers are oh-so-Trek. Fed ships seem to be designed to take punishment, but you'll actually gain bonuses by "liberating" star systems occupied by unpleasant alien overlords.

Contrariwise, the Klingons are rewarded for being total bastards — their so-called "colony" ships are armed with weapons, and some of their warships can employ cloaking devices. And the Romulans follow their traditional hoity-toity poiny-ness.

As your fledgling empire begins to expand, you'll encounter a number of races with whom to establish diplomatic relations and



The selectable views are pure fluff, but manual tactics do help.

mutual trade. *BoTF* employs a rewardingly rich diplomatic system that allows numerous levels of interaction, from stuffy non-aggression pacts to full-on alliances-for-life. Over 30 minor races are available for interaction here, as well as one not-so-minor one — The Borg, which could theoretically invade, threatening every race/player in the game.

Strategically, it's pretty stuff — pretty looking, and pretty familiar. The grid-based galaxy reveals the usual planetary systems, as well as some environmental surprises such as lethal neutron stars and unstable wormholes that can eliminate entire fleets. Construction of outposts and fleet docks gradually allows you to expand your galactic network from its limited early exploration capabilities. Another road to expansion-by-proxy is alliances, which can grow so intimate that the star systems and ship forces of other races become yours to control.

On a final note, *BoTF* lands exactly half on the curb and half in the gutter with its four-stage tutorial. Yes, the tutorials are thorough, but they require you to print out some 30 pages of docs. Still, this is an excellent-looking and well-playing strategy effort. If you're at all into Trek, this is a reasonably deep and stylish title; if you're only a so-

so Trekkie, it's only an above-average turn-based venture.

— CHRIS HUDAK has painty ears

GRAPHICS

Flawless (Next Gen) Trek look, with a GUI faithful to the TV series and films; combat ships are a bit small.

SOUND

Authentic control/interface sounds imported from the series, and reasonably close voice-acting.

DEPTH

Lots of options, but largely composed of improvements on existing schemes.

DESIGN

If you liked *Master of Orion*, you shouldn't have any major problems with this game.

RATING 7

+ Pluses

- Lots of minor races to liberate
- Reasonably hands-on Tactical Combat mode
- Possibility of Borg invasion

- Minuses

- Stylistically set in the "Next Gen" Trek universe, which makes no sense whatsoever
- Kinda bewildering interface
- No clear sense of which technologies one should be pursuing

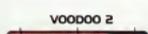
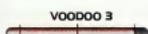
DEVELOPER → Legend
PUBLISHER → GT Interactive
REQUIRED → P46, 56MB RAM, 390MB hard drive space, D3D compatible video card, full copy of Unreal
IDEAL → PII 300, 128MB RAM, Voodoo 3 video card

Unreal Mission Pack: Return to Na Pali

I still know what you played last summer

ACCELE-RATED

Whatever worked for *Unreal* works with this mission pack. While it is D3D compatible, Glide is by far the better choice.



API SUPPORT: DirectX9, Glide



New combat assault rifle is similar to *Quake's* chaingun.



Your travel agent never mentioned how important live ammo would be on your vacation.

Dear Mom, Remember how I told you I spent last summer? To sum up, my prisoner transport ship crash-landed on the planet of Na Pali. Everybody died, and I battled alien invaders from Skaarj to get off the planet. And when I finally did find a lifepod, it got stuck in orbit for a year. Well, the good news is ... I was rescued! The bad news is that it was by the same people who imprisoned me in the first place. What luck! But they made a deal with me: If I could find the Prometheus (another crashed ship), I would be set free — or so they said. Since I was the only human to visit the planet of Na Pali and survive, they thought I would be the best (and most expendable) choice to go back. Anyway, here's what happened when I returned.

Well, Na Pali hasn't changed. The rocky cliffs, the waterfalls, the Skaarj warrior hiding behind a boulder ... it was all exactly as I remembered, but just not as impressive as it was a year ago. Don't get me wrong ... it's still a beautiful planet, but I've seen enough shimmering water to last me a lifetime. In fact, the first half of my "vacation" was pretty damn boring — like watching home movies of my first visit, but without the good parts.

For example, do you remember how scared I was when I walked

down that hallway and the lights started going out? Or how I heard fellow prisoners being wrenched limb from limb? There was nothing like that this time! Oh, I still ran across the bodies of Prometheus survivors slaughtered by the Skaarj, but their log notes didn't heighten my suspense so much as they heightened my disgust for people who make log notes. The closest I came to being surprised was my first encounter with Pack Hunters — fast, little dinosaur/crocodile things that hunt in groups. In response to your last letter, yes, the Nail people are still wusses. They know where all the weapons are, but won't defend themselves. On the plus side, they taste just like chicken.

Besides Pack Hunters, I also ran into a couple of new enemies — spiders (they spit green goo — yawn) and Space Marines (they have shields, but weren't as tough as the Skaarj Warriors). All my old "buddies" like Brutes and Titans were there, too. And those cheap government bastards only gave me three new weapons to fight with — a grenade launcher, a rocket launcher, and a combat assault rifle. I was expecting something more ... inspiring.

In case you bring some friends here, there are six new deathmatch maps and some new multiplayer variations you should know about. One has low gravity for jumping higher, another has players competing to find a cloaking device, and a third features only the three new weapons. One botmatch mode allows players to fight the new Space Marine bots in any map.



Everyone seems very happy to see you again.

Things picked up at the Velora Temple about halfway through. It actually made me want to continue, and I ended up enjoying myself. Too bad the first leg of my journey was so ho-hum. Anyway, gotta go. I'm going to a tournament. I'll let you know how it goes. XXXXXX

— PRISONER #849 dreams of electric sheep every night

GRAPHICS

Just like the original ... unreal. However, the new creatures aren't quite as detailed as the old stand-bys.

SOUND

The soundtrack is appropriately moody, but your formerly mute character now speaks like a Midwestern prep school student.

DEPTH

A skimpy and predictable story about being "sent back." Think *Rambo II* or any Chuck Norris movie sequel.

DESIGN

The first half is on par with the dulllest levels from the original *Unreal*. Luckily, it gets better.

RATING

+ Pluses

- Best thing done with the *Unreal* engine since ... *Unreal*
- Smarter, more robust bots
- Some cool new levels

— Minuses

- A stale retreat
- Unexciting storyline
- No cool scripted sequences



Do it alone, it's weird. Do it with others, it's a club.

Yahoo! Clubs



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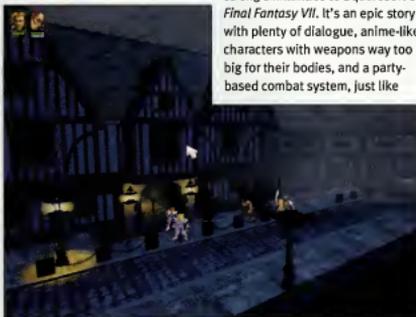
DEVELOPER →	Infragames
PUBLISHER →	Infragames
REQUIRED →	P56, 32MB RAM, BK
CD-ROM, 143MB HD space	
IDEAL →	PII 266, 64MB RAM

Silver

Console-style RPG Lite

ACCELE-RATED

Curiously, there's no 3D card support at all. What were these guys thinking?



Note the beautiful backdrops, then take a gander at the chunky, pixelated characters. What's wrong with these pictures?

Let's not beat around the bush here. The moment you lay your eyes on *Silver*, an action/RPG from the Infragames design team in the UK, you'll immediately recognize strong similarities to Squaresoft's *Final Fantasy VII*. It's an epic story with plenty of dialogue, anime-like characters with weapons way too big for their bodies, and a party-based combat system, just like

FFVII. This comparison wouldn't be a bad thing if *Silver* pulled off everything the original console version offered (rather than Eidos' barely acceptable PC release). But there are enough shortcomings that leave room for improvement in this category.

Assuming the role of David, a warrior in the land of Jarrah, your task, after an in-engine opening scene, is to rescue your beautiful wife from the clutches of the malevolent mage, Silver. After murdering his adulteress wife, Silver orders his son Fuge and other henchmen to roundup the rest of the women in the land so he can choose a new bride. It's not a terribly original concept, but it gets better, as our man David soon realizes he is somewhat linked to all this disturbing bedlam.

In true RPG fashion, David can swap members of his attendant posse (each sporting their own unique attributes), upgrade his armor and weapons, and use magic and potions to fight or heal. But don't expect tons of stats or hundreds of non-linear side-quests. This ain't no *Might and Magic VII* or *Baldur's Gate*.

Visually, *Silver* is a mixed bag. While the animated 2D backdrops are absolutely stunning, the 3D characters are blocky as hell. Not only is there no 3D accelerator support, you can't even bump up the resolution. Sorry, but this is 1999, and 3D support would've made a major difference.

The mouse-based interface works for the most part, especially during melee combat. Fighting begins with mastering the sword (with various moves like side-to-side slices, 180-degree backlashes, and forward lunges) to using arrows, knives, bombs, and of course, magic. Where the control doesn't work is when you must access the pie-shaped character menu to change spells or weapons during realtime combat.

The biggest problem with *Silver*, however, is the lack of a logical saved-game function. Instead, you

have to find floating genie-like characters in the vein of 2D side-scrolling platformers of console lore. When will game companies learn PC gamers are not console gamers? We all have better things to do with our time than repeat 20 minutes of gameplay.

Though far from perfect and not ideal for hardcore role-playing fans, *Silver* does make for a well-balanced combination of action, adventure, and RPG elements that should satisfy many casual players. It's just too bad that after three years in development, they didn't spend more time fixing these minor annoyances and graphical shortcomings to polish *Silver* into a triple-A title.

— MARC SALTZMAN reckons *o Silver II would be good if they addressed these issues*

GRAPHICS

Frustratingly inconsistent. Beautifully drawn and moody, but the characters are rendered very poorly.

SOUND

One of the biggest strengths. Excellent voice-acting and over two hours of killer music.

DEPTH

The somewhat linear quest is a fun, tight, 30+ hours of solid gameplay — the perfect length and difficulty for casual gamers.

DESIGN

As with many European adventures, the mood and cinematics in *Silver* are inspiring, but there are distinct design flaws.

RATING

+ Pluses

- Good atmosphere
- Incredible voice acting, sound effects and music
- Awesome 2D backdrops

Minuses

- Can't save where you want
- Some bugs and crashes
- Characters are ugly, no 3D card support, can't change resolution

Tom Clancy's
RAINBOW SIX
ROGUE SPEAR

www.redstorm.com

MISSED ME?

Team Rainbow is back in full force. Rogue Spear, the sequel to PC Gamer's 1998 Action Game of the Year, immerses you even deeper in the explosive action of an elite multinational strike force.

Rogue Spear feels so real, you'll be yelling "Tango Down!" in your sleep for weeks. And the multiplayer action is to die for. Remember, when stalking the enemy: Walk softly but strike like a thunderbolt. You only have one shot to save the world.

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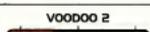
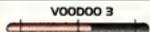
DEVELOPER →	Activision
PUBLISHER →	Activision
REQUIRED →	P166, 64 MB RAM, 500MB HD space, 4X CD-ROM, 3D accelerator
IDEAL →	P11 450, 128 MB RAM, 700MB space, Voodoo 3 card

Heavy Gear II

We're number two! We're number two!

ACCELE-RATED

The terrain engine is well suited for both the Voodoo 3 and the TNT2's rendering ability, but if you play this on a previous generation card, it's gonna hurt when things get hairy.



API SUPPORT: Direct3D

Competition is what pushes any game genre to greater things, and there's always room for two or three heavyweights battling it out. Right now, first-person shooters are all about *Quake II* (soon to be *III*), *Half-Life*, and *Unreal*. Contenders in the giant robot category include *MW3*, and, uh ... well, you basically have a lot of try-to-bes. Now you can probably pencil in *Heavy Gear II* into one of the other two spots right here.

In *Heavy Gear II* you find yourself inside giant robots again, but this game is more anime-inspired

than the traditional *MW* series. The Gears are more agile and can emulate human tactics like crouching, jumping, rolling, and even crawling. The gameplay reflects this as well, so *HGII* is more arcade and shooter-like than *MWIII*. Certainly this game will draw comparisons to *Shogo*, which aped some of the elements from *HGI*, such as the ability of your Gear to transform into a fast vehicle mode. That's more than enough comparisons, so back to the business at hand ...

While the feel of *HGII* is important, you also need to know about the strong tactical elements, too.



The funky tactical mode is good for setting ambushes.

By this I mean the customization options, which allow for lots of creativity and flexibility in how you can outfit your Gear. Different loadouts change your entire approach to a mission or combat situation, as well as the combat itself. The depth of this customization is pretty good, with lots of different weapons for starters, including your usual assortment of rockets and lasers, with twists like hand-to-hand weapons and rail-guns. Then you've got five different ratings in Gear mechanics like sensors, maneuverability, armor, speed, and fire control.

There's also a perks 'n' flaws system ("borrowed" from ... ahh, never mind) which give your Gear unique strengths and weaknesses ("Jump jets" is a perk, "Defective fire control," a flaw). Your gears emerge from the setup with a personality, or at the very least, a uniqueness. And instead of using a weight limitation system, *HGII* uses the more abstract "Threat"



"Get a load of this sniper rifle, you giant robot suckal!" (Repeat using different weapons.) If you really wanna get creative substitute "fool" for "sucka." (But not every time, because then it's no good.)



rating, a quantitative assessment of how powerful your Gear is. So missions have threat limits, and multiplayer games can be set up with threat limits too, which give an even greater strategic edge to the Gear customization.

Two elements make up the combat tactics. First you've got your squad level tactics (up to four squadmates), and *HGII* sports an ambitious system with an on-the-fly overhead map whereby you can issue waypoints, set formations, and give general orders. This is a good thing, but really, you find little reason to use it during combat except to get a view of terrain. Since enemy locations won't be that well scouted until you enter sensor range, it's hard to set up coordinated attacks or ambushes that will be worth the time and effort of setting these complex order patterns.

Secondly, you've got Gear-to-Gear tactics, which is where the game really feels more like a shooter, and this is my biggest beef. Unlike *MW3* and even in some shooters, the precision and strategy of targeting individual body parts is not emphasized here; it's more "shoot your biggest guns as fast as you can at the enemy until they drop" (aside from the inevitable sniper mode, of course). But it's still good fun, and the faster battle scenes go along with the overall arcade feel of the game.

If the tactics are the game's weak point, the graphics engine is

The missions are often designed with time-based triggers, such as "Destroy x amount of turrets in x amount of time, or "Set up an ambush point by x time." It's fun, but occasionally aggravating.

its strength. The *Dark Side* engine renders terrain as well as any I've seen, and I found myself wishing *Rogue Spear* were using it too. Great environmental effects like snow and fog, plus a far-clipping plane, make for one solid, fast engine. But, with lots of effects going on at once, there was some chugging, even on a PII 333 with 64MB RAM and a TNT2.

Multiplayer is also quite good, and much, much, more robust (I

hate using that word) than *MW3*. You've got your one-on-one deathmatch, team deathmatch, Steal the Beacon, CTF, and Strategic, whereby you defend your base while trying to destroy your enemy. With the many different modes, threat limits imposing lots of strategy, and faster, shooter-like gameplay, *HGII* seems more suited for multiplayer fragging than for single player, which is still quite good on its own terms.

Basically, *HGII* is fast, fun, and a heck of a lot better than I thought it would be. Too bad we won't have a chance to use the headline "Heavy Ass II."

— If ED LEE never plays a giant robot game again after this issue, it'll be too soon (kidding)

GRAPHICS

Dark Side engine does terrain exceptionally well, overall quite solid.

SOUND

Good attention to detail. Environmental sounds are good.

DEPTH

Challenging single player and lots of multiplayer options.

DESIGN

Having more of a shooter feel suits this game well.

RATING

+ Pluses

- Solid engine
- Good weapons effects
- Pretty good tactical options

- Minuses

- Too many tools in missions
- Gear-to-Gear tactics not that complex
- Doesn't feel like a true giant robot game



Mr. T captions (see left) can only be used once an issue. They are most effective when used with a completely unrelated game.

The mirror has two faces

Because we love Barbra Streisand (and also enjoy jabbing rusty needles into our eyelids), we're proud to name this month's section after our favorite Barbra movie ever. It's a touching epic about an ugly duckling (the real Barbra) who later in life turns into a beautiful rich woman (also, apparently, the real Barbra — if you make it a habit of drinking Liquid Plummer). Actually we've chosen this headline because there are only two hockey games headed for the PC this year. *NHL 2000* and *NHL Championship 2000* are the two contenders ...

NHL 2000

DEVELOPER → EA Sports
PUBLISHER → EA Sports
RELEASE → Fall

THE HISTORY → From the moment it took the Genesis sports game scene by storm, the NHL series from EA Sports has remained atop the heap. Everyone expects them to continue to dominate.

THE NEW STUFF → New big hit and big deke buttons, a revamped control scheme for fighting, and scads of new motion-captured animations. But perhaps the most impressive new feature is the "Import a Face" option. Player mugs now look even more realistic, with moving eyes, mouths and cheeks as the athletes talk, yell, and scream during game action. The real highlight is the

ability to take any photo or graphic file, then use the in-game editor to map the image onto a newly-created player. Way cool.

POSSIBLE PENALTIES → EA Sports tends to heap on the features, leaving only the most well-endowed gamers (we mean system-wise, perv) to fully enjoy the NHL experience.

STANLEY CUP CHANCES → Excellent. Early peeks reveal that it looks even better than last year, with the highly detailed player faces providing another layer of realism.

Fox NHL Championship 2000

DEVELOPER → Radical Entertainment
PUBLISHER → Fox Sports Interactive
RELEASE → September

THE HISTORY → Radical previously did the *NHL Powerplay* series for Virgin, and this game was originally going to be *ESPN National Hockey Night* until EA bought out their competitor. They look to be up to the daunting task of challenging the current sports market boss EA Sports.

THE NEW STUFF → Fox is looking to stiff the game with details, from jerseys to down-to-the-last minutia arenas. *NHL Championship 2000* will show off all the sights and sounds of a Fox Sports Net broadcast.

POSSIBLE PENALTIES → No career mode will be included, which could limit long-range playability, and limit it to gamers who will probably compare it to *NHL 2000*.

STANLEY CUP CHANCES → Stronger than you might think. Despite reservations, we were very impressed with the look, feel, and gameplay. Though the game may not provide the depth of *NHL 2000*, it looks able to compete evenly on its action and graphics merits.

OTHER FAMOUS FACES

With so many face clichés to pack into one page, PCXL would be derelict to not find more ways to celebrate "famous" faces. And so we continue ...



ROCKY FROM MASK

A touching story about a grumpy-looking boy who triumphs over the odds and dates a hot blonde chick. We hate this movie for giving us hope as young losers ("All I need to do is hang around the special school to find a girlfri...nd")

LT. TEMPLETON 'FACE' PECK
 The coolest "A-Team" member, best known for his disguises, pick-up artist, and funny faces: after taking a swig of booze. He was also very successful at getting Mr. T to drink milk, which makes the "Got Milk?" people are missing a potentially brilliant poster boy.



LEATHERFACE

The leader of the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* family, best known for his mask made of human skin. He's actually a misunderstood sensitive type who'd prefer fluffy kittens and long walks on rainy days to the horrific slaughter of naked teenagers. But hey, a job's a job.

GASFACE

A way of expressing displeasure, shock, remorse or, um, gas. Take the worst shape you can twist your face into and mix that with a disgusting face, like Joan Rivers. You are now demonstrating a Gas Face. Former PCXL staff member could do them on command.



FACE-OFF

An action flick with a puffy John Travolta and Nick Cage, in which the two switch faces in *A Friday Friday* or *Life's a Party: Likie Sons*. All this: model's gas: us hope of actually getting a date in high school ("All I need to do is get my face switched with the captain of the football team")

LEADER BOARD

Even with three new contenders in the field this month, year-old *Links LS 99* maintains a one-stroke lead on the competition, a testament to its excellence.

GAME TITLE

SCORE

Links LS 99	-6
Jack Nicklaus 6	-4
PGA Championship Golf 99	-5
Tiger Woods 99	EVEN
Goldent Tee Golf	+4
Pro 18 World Tour	+5
Links Extreme	+32

GOLF



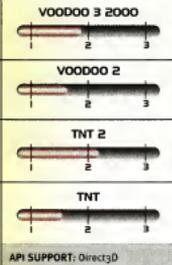
EA's *NHL 2000* graphics just keep getting better, with more realistic faces.

For a newbie, Fox's *NHL Championship 2000* is already threatening EA.

DEVELOPER → THQ
 PUBLISHER → Mirage
 REQUIRED → P166, 16MB RAM,
 5MB hard drive space, 2x CD-ROM
 IDEAL → P200, 32MB RAM,
 40MB hard drive space, 3xD accelerator

ACCELE-RATED

While a 3D card smoothes out some edges, gives some shading to the balls, and a clean look to the backdrops, it's not going to overly tax your shiny new Voodoo 3 or TNT's fill rates or speed. We would've liked to see some smoke effects or exploding balls.



Jeanette Lee, reviewer Chris Hudak's dream girl.



Ultimate 8-Ball

Do the hustle

Having had my ass personally walloped several times in pool by Jeanette "The Black Widow" Lee (wicked pool champion and mind-numbing hottie to boot — an unfair advantage if ever one existed), I can distinguish a decent pool sim from a lame one from six paces off, distractions or no.

No question, *Ultimate 8-Ball* does contain a fair amount of superfluous, barely-realized crap, but the core game is solid and the environments are cool (if tragically unexplorable). Plus, if you're an attentive boy or girl, you can walk away from it with some new games and new trick shots in your head.

It features 14 different types of games (okay, 13, because the Brits still have their own perverted delusions about the rules of barroom 8-Ball). In addition to the familiar 9-Ball, 8-Ball, Straight Pool, Rotation, and Cut Throat, you'll also find challenges such as Bank Pool (where every shot must be banked, or bounced off a rail), One Pocket (a surgical game wherein the players attempt to maneuver target balls to a single "owned" pocket), Three Ball (a quickie back-room gambler's favorite) and even the three-person classic, Killer. This plethora of options is approached via three routes — a formal Tournament, a more free-form Hustle mode that allows you to pick and choose opponents, and a School of



Ultimate 8-Ball can teach players a few useful real-world trick shots through the course of the game, even if you are playing Candy Girl.

Pool that offers games rules as well as trick-shot "tutorials." On the virtual felt, *Ultimate 8-Ball* is smooth, convincing, and gorgeous. Naturally, the physics engine allows for shot adjustments to english (the particular spin put on the cue ball) and cue elevation, though there's no easy way to tell just how jacked-up your cue is from the first-person viewpoint. Optional training lines highlight where the balls will go, and a right-click on the mouse will offer a quick ESPN-style direct overhead view for planning your strategy.

The attention to detail is such that each of the game's 10 distinct environments sport different styles, colors, and grades of table. My particular favorite, a cyber-punk-ish poolroom called Neon City, sports a translucent and gridded table where the balls make a cool muted electronic thrum when they drop in the pocket. There are also such weirdo types as Square Eights, Hexagonal, four-pocket diamonds, and even an L-shaped, 10-foot "dog-leg" table, like two standard 8-foot tables fused at a right angle. Neat.

But alas, the detail in gameplay is hamstrung by the "tutorials" that simply offer an automated display of the shot in question, followed by the shot set up for you. Also, the hip, eerily lit environ-

ments need a bit more life than the simple ambient music. Your own persona, by the way, is an unalterable, silent lame-o. It's little touches that make good games great ones, and many little touches were sorta blown off here — which is why *Ultimate 8-Ball* impresses, but fails to dazzle.

GRAPHICS

Rich, detailed, realistic tables; standard, wooden, 3D character models.

SOUND

Excellent collisions ring true. The droning music is another matter...

CONTROL

As close to real pool as you can probably get with a mouse.

REALISM

If the realistic physics don't grab you, there's no real world pool hall personality to get you interested.

RATING 7

+ Pluses

- Faithful pool physics engine
- Cool fantasy pool tables
- Less known game rules explained

- Minuses

- Interactive tutorial is poor
- No story or custom characters
- No hustling or Jeanette Lee

DEVELOPER → Headgate
 PUBLISHER → Sierra Sports
 REQUIRED → P133, 32MB RAM,
 80MB hard drive space, patience
 IDEAL → P11 266, 64MB RAM,
 120MB hard drive space, aggression
 management classes

ACCELE-RATED

No real 3D acceleration is required, as most current 2D cards coupled with relatively fast systems will do this game justice. But we wish someone in the golf game-making industry would at least consider 3D, especially with the amount of time it currently takes to redraw the screen after each shot.



Course environments are impressive throughout.



PGA Championship lets players choose from three types of swing control: Traditional Tri-Click, or two types of TrueSwing.

PGA Championship Golf 99

Getting closer to Links

Talking golf games and not bringing up the *Links* series is like telling your friends about this great new stand-up comic, and not comparing him to Carrot Top. Seriously, how can you compare a contender and not stack it up against the best ever?

With this (and Carrot Top movie *Chairman of the Board*) in mind, we began playing Sierra Sports' *PGA Championship Golf: 1999 Edition*, Sierra's big push for golf game dollars, and an impressive attempt to swing for *Links*, the market leader for years now. Does it succeed? Like many before it, in some ways, yes, and in others, not really.

Graphically, the game is very close to *Links*, with gorgeous renderings of fairways, greens, and background horizons. Animations are excellent too. However, on the default setting, the ball is sometimes difficult to see, though game options let you enlarge the ball's appearance. About the only knock on PGA's graphics is the decision to use a rendered golfer instead of a photo-realistic one. The golfer animates fine, but once you've seen the realism of the *Links*-style golfer, it's tough to accept the computer-generated person.

PGA's swing mechanics uses either the Tri-Click swing meter or



Replays of your best (or worst) shots are available from multiple angles, so you can gloat (or swear) as many times as you like.

the more arcade-style TrueSwing, which requires players to actually pull and push the mouse (horizontally or vertically) to hit the ball, adding the randomness of the golf swing to the experience. Tri-Click is like most other golf games out there, though PGA's choice of swing meters is a touch more confusing at first than the traditional crescent-shaped meter.

The game's interface works fairly well, but is a little convoluted. Switching clubs and figuring out your distance to the pin seemed more work than it was worth sometimes, though the longer we spent with the game, it became slightly less annoying.

Putting is straightforward, if a bit difficult. Moving the swing direction of your golfer doesn't seem as precise as *Links* and others, resulting in a lot of three-, four-, and five-putts in our first few rounds, and an accompanying disgraceful display of foul language.

If you feel the need for human competition, the game allows free Internet play via WON.net, with an unlimited number of participants for each tournament, and getting into an Internet game is simple enough. Game options are deep, from completely customizable golfers to 15 nifty user-definable camera views.

PGA Championship is an excellent game with a cornucopia of features. If it were sold in a market vacuum, it would rake it in. Unfortunately, it still has to compete against market-leading *Links*. Does it beat *Links*? The answer? Right now, probably not.

GRAPHICS

Beautiful courses and backgrounds, but rendered golfer is distracting.

SOUND

Sounds are fine, though the announcers get annoying after a few rounds.

CONTROL

Neither TrueSwing nor Tri-Click is perfect, but at least you have the choice.

REALISM

Good, though the first few rounds can be somewhat frustrating.

RATING 7

+ Pluses

- Beautiful course graphics
- Highly customizable play options
- Course Architect

- Minuses

- Rendered golfer distracting
- Interface slightly confusing
- Still not as good as *Links*



DEVELOPER → Access Entertainment
PUBLISHER → Microsoft
REQUIRED → P200, 32MB RAM,
 60MB hard drive space
IDEAL → PII 266, 64MB RAM, 80MB hard
 drive space, an intact receipt to return game

ACCELE-RATED

No 3D acceleration is required for this game, since *Links Extreme* is completely 2D. But make sure you have a 3D card handy, so you can resume playing a good game when you stop playing this after 30 minutes.



You know what would be funny? Zombies on the course! You know what would be even better? A good game.

Links Extreme

In your face ... crap

To explain exactly how this travesty unfolded, PCXL has obtained an actual transcript of the meeting during which *Links Extreme* was conceived...

CEO: We need to expand the *Links* brand.

Business Guy No. 2: We need in your face! Attitude! Jumping out of planes and swinging into rivers!

Marketing guy: We can call it *Links: Attitude Adjuster!*

CEO: We'll use the *Links* graphics engine, but make it wacky — funny-looking golfers, zombies, and other objects on the course, and exploding balls. And we can have a feature called Demolition Driving range where you don't just hit for practice, but also use explosive balls to blow stuff up!

Marketing: It'll be called *Links: Rod Sk8ter Supreme!*

B-Guy No. 2: We can add death-match, a skins-style game where you use five kinds of balls — grenade, mortar, etc. — to kill your opponents before they can finish the course. And we'll put in a Poison stroke play, whereby players can either shoot for the green or destroy opponents.

Marketing: *Links: Take That, Mr. Curious Cat!*

Developer: The graphics are okay and the controls are as good as *Links*, but, um, will it be fun?
CEO: (blank stare)

B-Guy No. 2: (blank stare)
Marketing: (humming Ricky Martin)

CEO: So anyway, on the box, it'll say "Golf with Attitude!"

B-Guy No. 2: Kids will love it.

Marketing: I know! We'll call it *Links: Hello Up Yours!*

DEVELOPER → Hypnos Entertainment
PUBLISHER → Activision
REQUIRED → P166, 32MB RAM, 400MB
 hard disc space, 4X CD-ROM
IDEAL → PII 300, 64MB RAM, 8X CD-ROM,
 D3D Accelerator

ACCELE-RATED

So it supports D3D? *Jack 6* is a great example of a game not really needing the accelerator, even though the 3D player may get some minor performance boost out of its presence.

A history of the Jack Nicklaus Golf franchise: *Jack 4* is a real winner, *Jack 5* comes out less than a year later with a 3D golfer that manages to take away some of the style and substance of its predecessor. Then developer Accolade sells the rights to Activision and new developer Hypnos does a great job bringing *JN6* up to speed.

With six fantastic courses including Muirfield Village and Cochise, the course layout and detail in *Jack 6* is fantastic. Setting up your own golfer, with his (or her) own traits and pitching them against Jack himself in any of the variety of golf games is incredibly simple (and endearing — that chase to bring the handicap down can become downright obsessive).

Jack Nicklaus 6

Like the man himself, another fine title

Importantly, the ball physics continue to be tweaked. The ball responds admirably when bouncing down the fairway or disappearing into shrub, brush, desert, or pond (accompanied by that dreaded splash noise). But on the green, the putting motion of your golfer is dreadfully weak and the backswing never changes. In such a "touch" area of the game, that's a shame. A patch fixes some of the ball bobbling physics encountered

in long putts (and fixes numerous other issues) but you're not going to be too disappointed out of the Golden Bear box.

Fortunately the course editor has made the trip from Accolade to Hypnos, and a limited guide in the manual takes you through the basics of this fantastic side-product. You think *Quake III* level design is for artists? Try creating golf courses. Multiplayer play is available on The Zone (and there were plenty of com-



Move the free-floating camera to view shots from any angle.

GRAPHICS

Graphics as good as *Links*, but some animations poorly drawn.

SOUND

Adequate for golf, okay for wacky occurrences like exploding balls.

CONTROL

Excellent *Links* swing controls — as if it mattered.

REALISM

None, considering this extreme disappointment of a game is based in a parallel marketing universe.

RATING

+ Pluses

- Same excellent *Links* interface
- Perfect to make fun of
- Clever jewel case keeps CD clean

- Minuses

- Moronic detraction from *Links* brand
- The title
- Not even slightly fun

petitors taking part in ladders, so casual games were hard to find), and there were few lag issues.

It's great to see this franchise continuing some fine form — and it's good enough to make you forget that *Links 2000* is just around the corner.

GRAPHICS

Incredibly lush scenery, and even the 3D players now have a touch of realism in their animation.

SOUND

Decent commentary (with tips from Gary McCord).

CONTROL

2-click, 3-click, and mouse swing. Mouse swing just ain't fun.

REALISM

Beautiful courses backed by excellent dynamics.

RATING

+ Pluses

- Numerous gameplay options
- Good record and score keeping
- Excellent physics

- Minuses

- Weak putting stroke
- Over-the-top ambient sounds
- Occasional commentary bugs

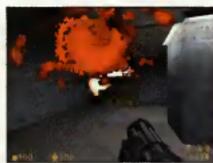
Dictator killing in five easy steps

With the release of *Team Fortress 2* looming on the horizon, we thought we'd give you a quick *Team Fortress Classic* Hunted primer to use as a nice foundation from which to build. After all, when everyone's playing the hot new game, you want to be up to speed, right?

IDEAL TEAM

GETTING THE PREZ HOME

Those damn revolutionaries — always fighting to establish crap like democracy, freedom, and individual rights. Of course, you'll put an end to their plans by getting the Prez home in one piece. Remember, your life means nothing: If need be, you'll have to sacrifice yourself for the greater good. It assumes a team of 3 soldiers, 1 HWGuy, and a Medic (plus the Prez).

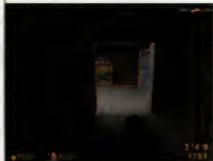


BUILDING 1

The first two soldiers enter Building 1 and check for Snipers by firing under the ramp and behind the crates; one Soldier covers the entrance to the alley while the other covers the ramp. The HWGuy enters next, followed by the Prez and the Medic; all three hide behind the crates in the corner, with the HWGuy providing cover. The third Soldier covers the other door.



The ruins provide nice cover. Use the small dark room to allow the Prez to rest.



LEAVING THE BASE

A "sure-fire" plan: Two of the Soldiers go to the top of the ramp and secure the Main Road. The Medic and the Prez go halfway up the ramp while the third Soldier and HWGuy cover the vent and sewer entrance, respectively. Once the Main Road is secure, the entire team advances into Building 1, with the HWGuy and Medic providing close support.



Always check the sewer — you can hear the doors open.

EXPERTS' GUIDE

SLEAZY TACTICS

While some may decry these as unethical and cheap, there can be no denying that they are effective:

Rocket-jump to the top of Building 1; from this vantage point, clear out the alley.

At the beginning of the map, rocket-jump first into the small vent, and then up to the room above. This will place you behind the snipers and quickly shift the balance of power.

Simply rocket-jump the Prez onto Building 1, over the alley, and then, with one final blast, send him over the wall that separates the Ruins from the Field.



Head up to the roof and surprise a few snipers.



EXPERTS' GUIDE

THE CLASSES

The first thing you need to know is exactly what each of the different characters do and how they perform in certain situations

THE PREZ

With only 50 health, the Prez excels at getting his head blown off. Keep your ass down, stick close to your boys, and use your umbrella only as a last resort

HEAVY WEAPONS GUY

Armed with a Huge-Ass™ machine gun and tons of armor, the HWGuy is all about close escort; never stray more than a few feet from the Prez. The machine gun takes a second to spin-up, so keep that in mind when a Sniper rushes you. The HWGuy is also armed with grenades, which make excellent rear defense; toss them behind you as you advance through the level

SOLDIER

The primary weapon here is a rocket launcher, which holds four rockets at a time; make sure your rocket is always fully loaded. The Soldier is best as an advancing unit, heading out to flush Snipers from their hiding places. In close-quarters combat, don't try to hit the Snipers; instead, fire at their feet or switch to the quick-pump shotgun. The Soldier also carries grenades and a small mine that shoots numerous rounds at multiple angles

MEDIC

The best Medics are the ones that stay right on top of the Prez. Follow the Prez closely, constantly beefing up his health. If there is a lull in the storm, attend to the other bodyguards, but never leave the Prez for more than a few seconds. The Medic is armed with a shotgun and small machinegun, as well as poison. A good Medic can quickly shift the balance of power in any match

SNIPER

Speed and stealth are the keys for the Sniper, so be sure to stay in the shadows and use your speed to race past slower enemies. The primary weapon is the sniper rifle — when you press on the fire button, a red dot will appear. (The gun fires when you release the button.) The longer you hold down the button, the more powerful your shot. The key is to never lose the Prez and save your kill shot for when he pops his head up. The Sniper is also armed with two types of machine guns for some brutal rush attacks

THE ALLEY

This is the trickiest point on the map, since there are multiple firing angles for the Snipers. It's safe to assume there will be Snipers at the end of the alley and in the dark alcove. Move the Prez as close to the alley doorway as possible and then send all three Soldiers out into the alley, one firing into the alcove, the other two toward the end of the alley. Once the alley is clear, the entire team moves into the Ruins where the Prez, Medic, and HWGuy take up residence in the small room.



What a sorry sack of shit! At least his check's cleared.

THE RUINS

Two of the Soldiers double-back through the Warehouse, while the rest of the team proceeds through the Ruins (this will help confuse the Snipers), with the Soldier covering the high ground. Once at the Ruins exit, the Prez backs into a corner, with the Medic and HWGuy in front of him. The third Soldier heads out to the Field, where he meets the other two Soldiers. Two of them hold off the Snipers while the third opens the door.

THE FIELD

Once the door is open, the Medic and the Prez run for the door — the HWGuy stays back to cover the Ruins Exit. The Soldiers fire at anyone they see. The crowd cheers and that damned Despot lives another day.



REAL LIFE ASSASSINS

ASSASSIN →

John Wilkes Booth

TARGET →

Abraham Lincoln

RESULT →

Dead Ab. Lincoln



ASSASSIN →

John Hinckley Jr.

TARGET →

Ronald Reagan

RESULT →

Reagan is still alive (and still a), and The Greatest American Hero (Ralph Hinckley) is forced to change his character name to Ralph Hinckley



ASSASSIN →

Vladimir

TARGET →

Radio Star

RESULT →

The Backstreet Boys and Ricky Martin are the best-selling artists this year — the worst tragedy of them all



ASSASSIN →

Ed Lee

TARGET →

That idiot at KFC who screws up his order every damn day.

RESULT →

I said potato wings, is you fool, not macaroni and cheese!

ASSASSIN →

Ed has learned to love the ways of mac & cheese



ASSASSIN →

Lee Harvey Oswald

TARGET →

None

RESULT →

— he was a potty

ASSASSIN →

Lyndon B. Johnson

TARGET →

John and Bobby Kennedy. Almost got Ted on that bridge.

RESULT →

Became the most forgettable president in history



ASSASSIN →

Richard Nixon

TARGET →

Too many to list here

RESULT →

"I'm not a crook" (just a liar, a cheat, and a liar)



DON'T TAKE THIS LITERALLY, OF COURSE...

SPLATTERING THE PREZ'S BRAINS

Once in a while it's necessary to freshen the tree of democracy and knock off a leader or two. To help all you would-be revolutionaries, we present this brief assassination tutorial. It assumes you have a team of five assassins.

BUILDING 1

There's no point in even going into Building 1; if there's a HWGuy, you'll be cut to ribbons.

ALLEY

Control the Alley and you control the game. Position one sniper in the dark alcove, one in the door above the Ruins, two at the end of the alley; the fifth sniper will act as a floater, relaying the Prez's position to the other snipers. Pick off the bodyguards as they enter the alley; fight the urge to rush and wait for the other team to get impatient. When they rush through, take out the Prez. He'll never know what hit him.

MAIN ROAD

The entrance to the Prez's base is a great place to make a stand. Position one sniper on top of the door on the far end of the Main Road, one on top of the Building 1, and one on the ledge to the left of the ramp. These snipers will pick off the bodyguards and keep everyone occupied; the other two snipers go through the sewer and the vent. If the Prez gets through, then regroup at the Alley.



Always try to get the Prez early. The sewer and the windows to Building 1 provide two great opportunities to do just that. Don't miss your chance.



This doorway provides a good firing angle — pick off those fools as they enter the alley.



RUINS

Once the Prez is confirmed in the Ruins (watch for double-backs), have one sniper go high and send two toward the Field, covering the Ruins Exit; the other two come up from behind.

FIELD

This is the final stand. All five snipers should have wide firing angles — don't bunch up. Have one sniper behind the red crate, one firing from the warehouse, one from the windows above the warehouse ramp, and the other two rushing the Prez, whether he is in the Ruins or the Warehouse.



YOU TOO CAN ACT LIKE A REAL PRICK

22 ANNOYING THINGS TO DO ONLINE

OR, HOW TO PISS OFF A BUNCH OF PEOPLE

As you know, here at **PCXL**, we are masters of every multiplayer game known to man. On any given day we come, we kick ass, we taunt, and then head off to Taco Bell for a celebratory dinner. Unfortunately, there is a downside to our skill — we get bored with most games. That's why we've thought up "alternative" playing methods, which we present for your consideration.

RAINBOW SIX

While playing on The Zone, look for someone who talks a lot of smack. Add this person to your Friends folder and then follow him from game to game, TK-ing him every chance you get. (Be sure to keep changing your name in the process.)

- Join a large game on The Zone and quickly assume the same name as someone else on your team; during the game, TK everyone on your team. Now the host has a real problem — which person does he kick? You'll both get the boot, but at least you'll drag someone else down with you.
- If the host starts up Road Ambush, hang back and snipe your entire team. Road Ambush is for sissies, and not worthy of your time (same with Airport).
- When a game starts, hide somewhere and use the Talk All feature to give the enemy your team's location and strategy.

QUAKE/QUAKE II

This takes a while, but it's well worth the trouble... Go into the Config file and type the first chapter of Moby Dick, or some other huge-ass old book, and bind it to a key. Then, whenever you get a kill, hit the bound



This camping spot is guaranteed to piss off lots of people.

key and taunt everyone with archaic literature no one will ever be able to read. This will get you kicked in 30 seconds or less, guaranteed.

- Camp by a respawn point with a railgun. Never overlook the classics.
- Just before someone is going to kill you, jump into the lava or blow yourself up. You lose the point, but your enemy just wasted time and ammo and didn't get a kill.
- Constantly complain about how Quake II sucks — while playing Quake II. When playing Quake I profess to the greatness of Quake II.
- If you're good enough, then this is the ultimate annoyance: Just before you are about to kill someone, type in prophetic statements like, "Lookout behind you, Deathmaster 2000" or "Say hello to my rocket, Evilavator." The downside is that missing the shot results in gross humiliation.

STARCRIFT

Join a game where people are playing against the computer, 4 vs PC, etc., and play as Terran. After a few minutes, send one of your SVCs into an ally's base and start building bunkers near key structures. (If questioned, tell them you are "fortifying" their base.) Fill the bunkers with Marines and once your "ally" goes off to attack someone, un-ally, and watch as your boys reduce the idiot's base to rubble.



Hal! You should've seen the chat room after this!



Follow people from room to room, day in and day out. Pretty soon they'll never want to play Rainbow 6 again — until Rogue Spear.

- Start a game called "1 vs 1 vs 1" with a buddy. Tell whoever joins that the game is a Free For All, when actually, you and your buddy are allies. Build your forces and attack the sap.
- Before the game starts, use the chat feature to maximum benefit by rattling off a string of obscenities the likes of which have never seen.
- Use whatever hacks and cheats you can get your hands on. All's fair in love and war.

EVERQUEST

- Enter an area and continually shout the following: "EverQuest is nothing more than one big rat killing simulation and anyone playing it is a f—king idiot. You are all mindless drones sucked in by the promise of a massively multiplayer roleplaying game that is actually a massive piece of shit. Give me a quest, bitch!"
- Find a huge-ass monster, like a Griffon, and shout out that you are giving away platinum pieces to the first five people who reach you. Once the fools are close, attack the Griffon with a long-distance weapon and run into the crowd. Sure you'll get killed (unless you can Spirit of Wolf yourself), but so will everyone else.
- Find a person walking alone. Get in front of them and keep blocking their way, refusing to let them pass until they pay a "toll."
- Ask everyone you meet if they'd like to see your "secret friend."
- Go to Blackburrow and get a nice train of elite gnolls, now go to the top where others are resting peacefully.

Cast invisibility on yourself and watch the suckers get taken out by your train of death.

TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC

- Join a Hunted game, play as a Soldier, and always stay close to the Prez. When the Prez is hiding, use your rockets to blow him out into the open, making him easy pickings for the assassins.
- In zFort, go in as either a DemoMan or Soldier and head up to your Battlement. Use your explosives to knock your snipers off the ledge; if you use the DemoMan's detpack, they'll fly all the way across the map. Soon the game will degenerate into a free-for-all of sheer carnage.
- If engineering is your thing, build an auto-sentry right in front of your team's supply room exit. They'll be trapped inside and unable to destroy the cannon. What fun!
- In the Hunted, rocket-jump the President and all team members onto the roof. It immediately ruins all of their ambushes and really pisses 'em off to boot.



Knock out arrogant snipers with a well-placed explosive.

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MECHWARRIOR 3

DEATH AWAITS YOU ALL, WITH BIG NASTY, POINTY TEETH

MechWarrior 3 is one of the deepest games of its kind, ever. With crazy tactical options as well as a Mech customization lab to obsess over, *MW3* has it all. Here's a semi-organized look at the whole thing.

PART I:

LOADOUTS

Designing the perfect Mech will take time and experimentation to find out what chassis and ratio of firepower/speed/armor most suits your playing style. For all the great tactics there's always a loadout and strategy that can beat it. Some players like to play super aggressive and pick the lighter, faster Mechs loaded up with lots (let me repeat — lots) of small weapons and blow the shit out of an enemy's legs. The defensive players will pick the heavy assault Mechs and blow holy hell out of people at the maximum range of their linked large lasers and mis-



"Had enough? Look you stupid bastard, you've got no arms left!" "It's just a flesh wound."

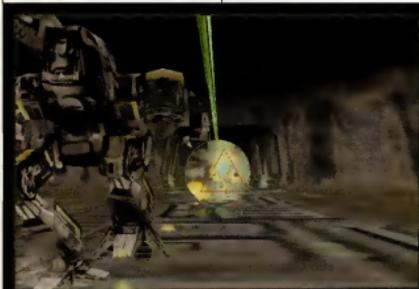
sile packs. This gives just an inkling of the room for tactical creativity which this game allows.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

TORSO → Put your most essential weapons in your torso, particularly the center, since it is the most

heavily armored and rarely gets destroyed. This goes for the left and right torso areas, which will be shielded by the arms. The abundance of crits in the torso means you can put most of your weapons here without a potentially crippling design weakness.

ARMS → Putting essential weapons in the arms is a bad idea, as they have an annoying habit of getting blown off. Thus arms are well suited for auxiliary weapons like extra lasers, or particularly light projectile weapons like SRM's and autocannons. Don't for-



"What are you going to do, big boy? Bleed on me? Don't forget ... I'm invisible!"



"All right, let's just take a break and call it a draw."



get heat sinks, and even jump jets if you have any extra spots.

LEGS → The logical place for jump jets, because when you lose a leg, you die. (Hopefully will be fixed in a patch). Putting jump jets anywhere else seems a bit redund-

ant. It's also good place for heat sinks as well. Make sure your legs are armored to the max in multiplayer games as "leggers" will go after them with a vengeance. Putting weapons in the legs is possible too, but you won't see us doing it.



PART II: TACTICS

You've just defeated a Mech way over your tonnage, but it was a costly victory.

Down to your last few shots from your autocannon, you limp over a ridge only to spot a fresh Annihilator bearing down on your position — what do you do? Ahh, easy ... Jump over his head, spin around, and shoot him in the head, right?

All the stuff about loadouts aside, many people enjoy playing stock Mechs in multiplayer because it eliminates a lot of "cheesy" tactics like boating, which is to load up your Mech with 4000 missile packs and nothing else. Playing with stock Mechs, especially ones with the same chassis, is also a good way to

equalize the battlefield to see who really is the best.

LONG RANGE

At the most extreme range of your armory, you should always have your weapons ready to go, whether it's a missile lock or a tricky ER laser shot. Even at long range, you should never head straight at your enemy but rather approach from an angle, or weave in order to avoid an easy shot. In a variation of the famed DFA (Death From Above), you can jump while far away and fire off your LRMS while in the air, which will make them curve downwards at your target and possibly score you a quick headshot kill. Not bad. LRMS (15's and up — don't

MECH-ALICIOUS

We asked the *MW3* team for some of their favorite loadouts and tactics...



SHADOWCAT

MAIN FEATURES → MASC and Medium Pulse Lasers

This Mech runs a little hot, but it's very fast and hard to hit. The Medium Pulse Laser is effective from a variety of ranges and is nearly impossible to dodge.



ANNIHILATOR

MAIN FEATURES → LRMs and linked ER-PPCS with a targeting computer

I install the smallest engine I can, and use the extra space for

more ammo and armor. The Annihilator's tall stance makes it an excellent Mech to engage enemies at long range, but if the enemy gets close, you're pretty much toast with this setup.

TACTICS

Heavy and assault Mechs should camp in water to cool down, but light and medium Mechs should avoid water because it slows their movement, taking away a smaller Mech's only really important advantage — speed.

Head shots are the quickest way to take out a Mech. They also give you the most salvage in the Campaign game. Head shots are tough to get because the

area you need to hit is very small. Learn where this spot is on the different Mechs and you'll be much more successful.

Heavy and assault Mechs are hard to maneuver, so try to

attack them from behind. If you are piloting a large Mech, keep your back to a cliff or building so the enemy is forced to attack you head-on.

Always attack at an angle, as this makes it hard for the enemy to get hits on your center torso. If you're very skilled, you may want to armor only one side and use the extra weight for more weapons.

When shooting guided missiles, you can achieve a better likelihood of a hit if you angle the shot based on cover and your enemy's movement.



Tips courtesy of MechManDan (Dan Henley, Zipper Interactive)



This is really the best place to fight an Annihilator — as far away as possible.

bother with the wimpy 5's and 10's) and ER Lasers will be your best bet here; PPC's aren't that great at long range (some might



Come and see the violence that is inherent in this, the most kick-ass system you'll ever play on.

argue at all times) because of their slow projectile speed. Chain firing lots of ER lasers is a good idea because your accuracy will be hurt to begin with, why waste all the recharge time from a group-fired miss when you can just improve your chances of hitting and your long range efficiency? It's all about doing as much damage as you can while your enemy is far away so he goes down faster when the fighting gets up close.

MEDIUM RANGE

Gravity: It's not just a good idea, it's the law. So defy that law by jumping, early and often. It's perfect for dodging that incoming



It really is just a flesh wound if you don't put any vital weapons in your arms.

salvo of 40 LRM's heading right for your head, and for closing that last stretch of ground between you and a badly injured Mech with its back turned. All of a sudden you have a much better option than circling and firing at the enemy with torso twist. Once you get good at it, your overall agility and evasiveness will skyrocket, and you can jump over and around more cumbersome Mechs picking away at their armor with surgical precision. Always, always put at least two (ideally four) jump jets in your Mech. Another movement-improving device is the MASC, which will provide you with brief bursts of speed. Good weapons here include the

ever-popular Streak SRM's, take four to six of these for maximum efficiency. Medium pulse lasers are a good bet too, and if you like the heavy hitters like the AC20's, LB-10X's, and the PPC's, this is where you want to think about using them. The idea at this range should be to cripple or knock down your opponent, so you can close in for the kill.

SHORT RANGE

You probably won't want to do most of your fighting up close, unless you're in an assault Mech or are an insane legger. Short range fighting is always intense and frantic, with so different things to keep



"We fire arrows on the tops of your heads and make castanets out of your testicles."



I've just been informed that we need some actual tips in these captions, so here goes ... if it moves, shoot it.



"Oh Lord, bless this thy hand grenade, that with it Thou mayest blow thine enemies to tiny bits in thy name ..."



"... Once the number three, three being the third number, is reached, then lobbest thou thy Holy hand grenade of Antioch towards thy foe."

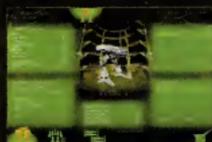
track of, not the least of which is the ever-present threat of overheating. For this reason and the numbers factor, many players like to load up their Mech with small lasers for short range combat. Ten ER's or regular small lasers is a good solid number. Some people take it to the extreme and will load their Mech with 30 to 40 small lasers. With small lasers on group fire, you can hit weak parts of the enemy Mech with great accuracy and a decent fire rate. Another option is the standard machine gun. One or two of 'em might not hurt that much, but if you group-fire four or more, you can chew through armor damn quick if you're standing toe to toe, with no heat buildup. Your weapons should be grouped in order of range, so you can quickly cycle from long range to medium and short range guns.



"Now guys, let's not bicker and argue over who killed who, ok?"

MECHTACULAR

SOME OF OUR FAVORITE MECHS AND THEIR STOCK CAPABILITIES:



SHADOWCAT →

45 tons

The best all-around light Mech. It's fast, has jump jets, and a well-balanced default loadout. It's become really popular with lots of players because of its overall versatility. So, if following the crowd's not your thing, you'll want to pick something else, but heck, if you like winning, you should give it a shot. One of its weaknesses is its bulky profile, the center torso will end up taking a lot of the damage.



THOR →

70 tons

A great well-balanced medium Mech, it's got a pretty arse-kicking stock arsenal, and it can move well. You'll want to be wading right in the thick of fights with this puppy. The LRM will start fights, then LB-10X will knock 'em down, and the PPC will finish 'em off. The autocannon will be helpful for tagging smaller faster Mechs like the Shadowcat because of its large margin for error.



MADCAT →

75 tons

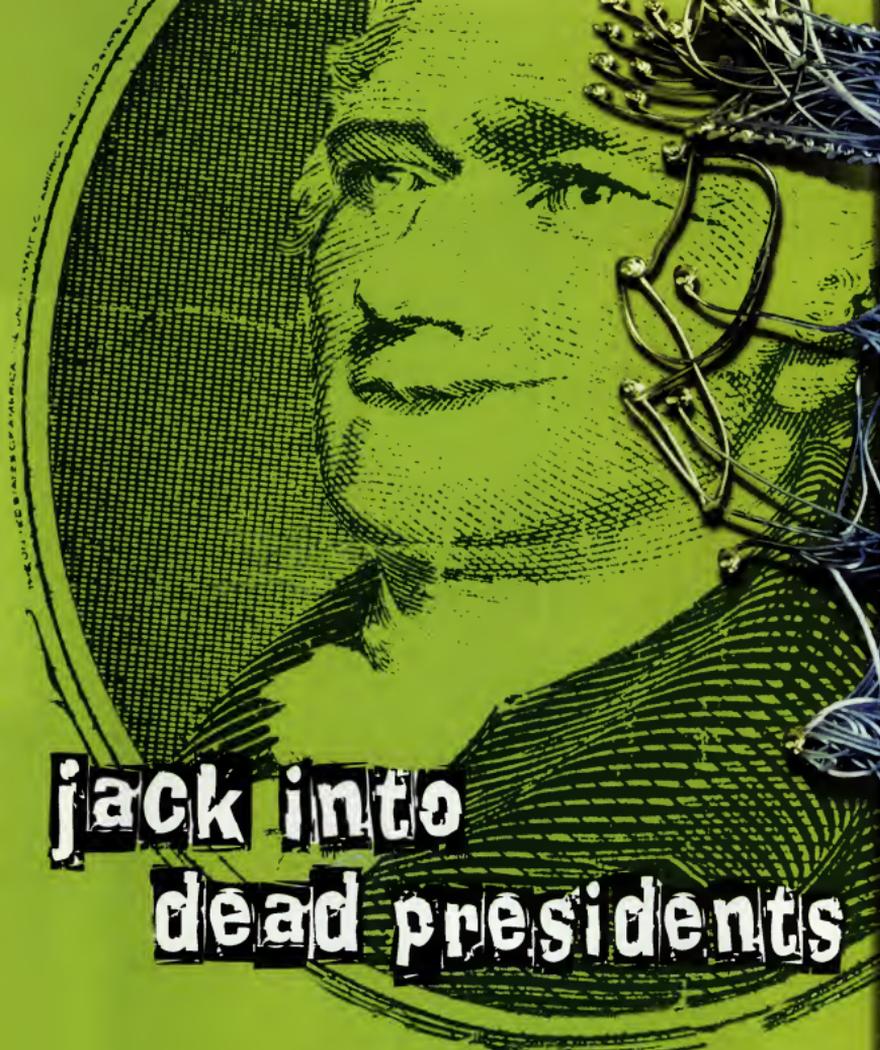
The old standby, this is still one of the most popular Mechs going, and deservedly so. It's well designed, balanced, fast, and it just looks cool. It's main strengths are middle to long range engagements. The machine guns will help in close range situations when there's a chance you're about to overheat.



ANNIHILATOR →

100 tons

For sheer intimidation factor, nothing beats this hulking brute. In single player, nothing's more likely to make you go "oh shit ..." quicker than seeing one of these appear in your radar. Multiplayer arenas can be different, because lots of Annihilator players will let their superiority in size and firepower get to their heads and will be overconfident. Use this to your advantage and jump a lot. Make them waste their precious autocannon ammo while you jump like a flea on crack.



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WEEKLY WORLD

X-TRA

September 1999

A Mag Within a Mag

**STUNNING DISCOVERY
PROVES THE KING OF
LATE GAMES MAY
STILL BE ALIVE! EVEN
IF DAIKATANA ISN'T!**

ROMERO DUG UP — & IT IS HIM!



**BOMBSHELL AT
ION STORM!**

**DNA tests prove
corpse in coffin is
Romero's!**

**BUT WHO IS
MASQUERADING AS
JOHN ROMERO NOW?**

www.pcx1.com

Microsoft Stops Psycho Kids

Makes 'Em Play
Nice Games Instead

Grateful parents will soon have Bill Gates to thank for turning the tide of violent game flossam. The fat-cat billionaire's company, Microsoft, will embed commands in the next release of its Windows operating system to keep out-of-control brats from playing bad games — by not letting the killer code load!

The Windows Game Manager will allow concerned parents to block games laden with excessive violence, sexual content, or exple-

tives. Worried moms and pops just have to choose an appropriate rating for their wild child (like those in the existing game rating sys-



Here's a totally untouched photo of the man himself ...

tem) and the computerized marvel does the rest.

Game manufacturers will need to embed rating information into their software for the new technology to work — but you can bet powerhouse Microsoft will make 'em do it! Besides blocking games, the manager can also enforce time limits set by fretful parents, automatically configure joysticks, and sense needed drivers. The next version of Microsoft Windows is slated to ship sometime next year — about the time Bill Gates begins to sprout horns. ➤

Rascally Russian Battles Earth ...

... And Plans To Win
Using The Internet!

NEW YORK — Crazed Ruskie Garry Kasparov hasn't said "nyet!" to world domination — he's taken his quest online! The spunky chessmaster has challenged chess players all over globe to face him during the Kasparov vs. The World match on the MSN Gaming Zone.

"I invite people from all over the world to play me in the ultimate chess match on [MSN.com](#)," spouted the plucky Russian. "This match will be fun for everyone from grand masters to casual players, no matter who they are or where they live. Where else but on the Internet can you play the reigning world champion?"

Before voting on its moves, the World Team is advised by a band of defiant chess experts. After a move is made, Kasparov has 24 hours in which to respond — making each pair of moves a whopping 48 hours! At that rate, this pseudo-soviet superpower showdown should last all summer! ➤

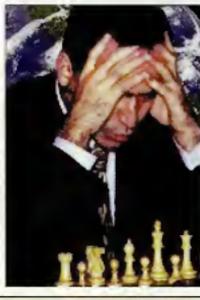
FANTASY FRAG

MARTHA STEWART

WHY WE HATE HER → She is a filthy rich, annoying, neurotic, hagfish control freak. Can you imagine a more horrible combination? The stupidity of her mindless television show is topped only by the seemingly endless array of artsy-craftsy knowledge she spews forth in a never-ending line of coffee table books and magazines, obviously purchased by hordes of trailer park-dwelling imbrods who are gullible enough to believe that any normal human being would have that much time and energy, that is, unless that person were a crackhead, which Martha clearly is.

HOW SHE SHOULD BE FRAGGED → Despite our penchant for crackheads (we hire 'em left and right around here), we have no patience for this one. Martha should be abandoned by her staff of blathering minions that make

her look good every week, leaving her only with a hot glue gun and a souvenir coke spoon from Betty Ford. Once people realized that her entire career had been a facade, "Martha Stewart Living" would be over once and for all. And, that, dear readers, would be "a good thing."



Every we kid on our website we frag whatever the heck makes us angry, and occasionally we frag some thing just because it needs it. Find out what we fragged today on [www.pck.com](#). You'll come for the frags, but you'll stay for the CRAZY NEWS AND BARES.

THE POWER METER

Here's our monthly rundown of the hottest companies in the gaming biz, along with our own special thoughts on them.

THIS MONTH'S HOTTEST

1 -

2 4

3 6

4 1

5 2

6 9

7 5

8 3

9 -

10 -

BILL GATES → The man is worth 20 billion dollars and is clearly the most powerful "being" in the entire world — undisputed. **GOD** → The omnipotent being and the up and coming publisher both rank just below King Bill — on the seventh day God rested and Bill didn't. But let's face it, second place sucks.

HASBRO → *MatchMaker 2*, *Rollercoaster Tycoon*, and *Birth Of A Federation* are selling like mad. Revamped classics will suffer from extreme suckitude, yet sell even more. **SIERRA** → More good games than any other publisher in the industry, but ambitious development

always means missing release dates. **INTERPLAY** → *Kingpin* better comes out amidst much fire from Senator types — but will this help or hurt sales?

LUCASARTS → The Force is still strong and not showing signs of letting up. LucasArts proved that perfect timing + the best

license in the work makes sales = big surprise, huh? **ACTIVISION** → *Star Trek Voyager* and *Soldier Of Fortune* are two of the best games on the horizon. **EA** → Top secret *Quake III* engine-based games mixed with dominant sports lineup keeps EA in our minds and their games on our hard drives.

ID → *Quake III* isn't even done yet, and already we've heard rumors of nearly a dozen games buying the engine.

VERANT → Everquest has reached *UD* proportions, with characters selling for thousands of dollars on [\(ge\)K-Bay](#).

MATROX → The *G400* surprised us all with the best image quality of any 3D accelerator.

3D REALMS → We didn't realize that the name Duke Nukem Forever also described the amount of development time.

OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

NOVEMBER IN SIGHT

ADVICE AND SCORN FOR THE SAD AND LOVELORN

Now that I've settled into the plush PCXL headquarters, I've had a chance to dive headfirst into the piles of e-mails I receive every day. One thing I've learned is that you readers have a lot of questions — and some serious issues.

IM SO FUNNY. GIRLS DON'T NOTICE HOW UGLY I AM

Dear Gia: When a girl says you are SO funny, does it mean they like you, or think you are a geek? Please reply.

Dear Funny looking in Florida: I think Robin Williams is SO funny — still wouldn't be caught dead with the holy freak.

WOMEN HATE ME

Dear Gia: If you like someone that will probably hate you, should you tell them that you like them or should you just keep it to yourself? Please help. **Dear Self Esteemless in Seattle:** With positive thinking like that, how

can you go wrong? The worst thing that could happen is that she will, in fact, hate you. But you knew that to begin with, so go for it.

SHE SLAPPED MY PRIVATES!

Dear Gia: Last week my girl told me, "F—k you, don't you ever touch me," and then she slapped me in my private parts. A friend told me that this was a sexual insinuation. Is that true??? Please help me ...

CONFIDENTIALS

Dear Priories: A Out of Whack in California: if you keep choosing Quake over women, then the only woman you'll be able to get is Real Doll. Lean and she runs around \$4,000 (slightly more for the "deluxe" model). On a positive note, though, at least she won't complain.

Dear Cherlie Sheen in Los Angeles: For the last time, I will not dress up like a cheerleader, wear a stimpson, or pretend to be your "Daddy." Now leave me alone, you freaky loser.

Dear Lonely in Cyberspace:

Since your only communication with human beings is through email and chat-rooms, the least you could do is learn how to spell, punctuate, and make some attempt (no matter how feeble) at having a fucking point. If you can't manage this, then expect a long life alone with your pathetic, jumbled thoughts.

Dear Chuck in Editorial: The answer is no, it will always be no, now go play some Everquest you geek.



PCXL'S MOST OUTSPOKEN ADVICE COLUMNIST

Dear Disillusioned in Dallas: Has anyone ever called you "bassface"? How about "shit for brains"? Or maybe the term "serial rapist" has been mentioned? No means NO. No + a slip = no f—king way. Get a clue, freak.

TO THE BEST OF YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Dear Gia: To the best of your knowledge, how often does a girl masturbate a week?

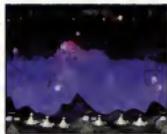
Dear Master Bates in Fantasyland: The dirtier of my species will "hide the power tool" up to seven times a week but the frequency, duration, method, and tool vary greatly from woman to woman. The only thing that is certain is that they'll never be thinking of you.

GAMESCAN

FROM THE U.S. OF A, DAMN IT!

By Chuck Anger, America's foremost authority on everything — and don't you yahos forget it!

(Editor's warning — Mr. Anger's opinions do not in any way reflect the views of this fine publication. And if you're too much of a sissy to agree with him then you deserve to be offended, you moron!)



MISSILE COMMAND

Developer → Hasbro

Publisher → Hasbro

Release Date → November '99
Product → Yet another in a long line of updated classics "rendered in a rich 3D environment," Missile Command sees you protecting six cities from incoming missiles by firing anti-ballistic weapons. Hasbro's formula of mixing classic play with casual features is usually a winner with casual gamers and the overly nostalgic. **Chuck's Take** → "This has me more upset than a long-tailed cat in a rocking chair factory! Real me like myself shouldn't have to become a slack-jawed geek to play old games. And if I wanted pretty explosions, I'd turn the channel from TNN to CNN!"

BEST GAMES OF E3 FOUND!

... SAY TOP GAMING EXPERTS

Weekly World X-TRA has uncovered exclusive evidence that good games really do exist!

The games were discovered at the recent Electronic Entertainment Exposition (E3) by 32 renowned experts (including a few of our own ... cough ... experts) drawn from the gaming press. After disclosing their findings, they quickly awarded the games prizes at the annual E3.net Game Critics' Awards.

These are the shocking results:

BEST OF SHOW

Freelancer (PC, Microsoft)
Runner Up → *Giants: Citizen Kobato* (PC, Interplay)
BEST ORIGINAL GAME
Block & White (PC, Electronic Arts)
Runner Up → *Giants: Citizen Kobato* (PC, Interplay)
BEST GAME (PC)
Freelancer (PC, Microsoft)
Runner Up → *Block & White* (PC, Electronic Arts)

BEST ACTION

Team Fortress II (PC, Sierra)
Runner Up → *Giants: Citizen Kobato* (PC, Interplay)
BEST ACTION/ADVENTURE
Oni (PC, Bungie)
Runner Up → *Dino Crisis* (PSX, Capcom)
BEST FLIGHT SIM
Jane's USAF (PC, Electronic Arts)
Runner Up → None
BEST RPG
Vampire: The Masquerade — Redemption (PC, Activision)
Runner Up → *Deus Ex* (PC, Eidos)
BEST NEW PERIPHERAL/HARDWARE (PC)
Riva TNT 2 (Nvidia)
Runner Up → *Voodoo 3500TV* (3Dfx Interactive)
BEST RACING
Driver (PC and PSX, GT Interactive)
Runner Up → *Gon Turismo 2* (PSX, Sony Computer Entertainment America)
BEST SIMULATION
Freelancer (PC, Microsoft)
Runner Up → *The Sims* (PC, Maxis)

BEST SPORTS

NFL 2000 (DC, Sega of America)
Runner Up → *NBA Live 2000* (PC, Electronic Arts)
BEST STRATEGY
Homeworld (PC, Sierra On-Line)
Runner Up → *Block & White* (PC, Electronic Arts)
BEST PUZZLE/TRIVIA/PARLOR
Um Jommer Lommy (PSX, Sony Computer Entertainment America)
Runner Up → *Austin Powers Operation: Trivio* (PC, Sierra)
BEST ONLINE MULTIPLAYER
Team Fortress II (PC, Sierra)
Runner Up → *Quake III Arena* (PC, Id Software)
Special Commendations
OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN GRAPHICS
Freelancer (PC, Microsoft)
OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN SOUND
Outcast (PC, Infogrames)
Um Jommer Lommy (PSX, Sony Computer Entertainment America)



HYPE — THE TIME QUEST

Developer → Ubi Soft
Publisher → Ubi Soft
Release Date → September 1, 1999
Product → What started as a medieval Playablembo adventure has turned into the PC's answer to *The Legend of Zelda*. The graphics, combat, and character interaction are all eerily similar to *Zelda*'s. Add in the *Dragon*-like ability to ride dragons and Hype may be the game adults continue playing after the kids have gone to bed. **Chuck's Take** → "Of fashioned wooden Lincoln Logs were good enough for it! Chuck Anger and, by God, they're still good today. My snot-nosed kids still play with 'em — or else!"



SUPREME SNOWBOARDING

Developer → Housemarque
Publisher → Infogrames
Release Date → Fall '99
Product → Perform wild tricks on the hills of Alpine, Forest, or Ski Resort locations (three courses each). Choosing from six distinct characters and three types of snowboards, players recreate the sensation of high-stakes competition. And we thought all the good powder was found up Rob's nose.
Chuck's Take → "I'm madder than an Olympic athlete at the X-Games over this snowboarding malarkey. If sniveling wimps can go snow sledding and call it a sport then my boy, Chuck Jr., should have a multi-million dollar contract"



MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE

Developer → Dhruva
Publisher → Infogrames
Release Date → Fall '99
Product → The real Mission: Impossible belongs to Dhruva in porting a lackluster N64 game to the PC. Billed as a spy simulator, *Mi* casts you as Ethan from the IMF team in a series of 3D adventures using dart guns, field scanners, and other gadgets to complete top-secret missions. But the secret we really wanted uncovered: Why the hell couldn't it have been Goldeneye instead?
Chuck's Take → "I'm so hoppin' mad I feel like a rabbit in a Vietnamese slaughterhouse. Boys today shouldn't be copying that prissy Tom Cruise. Hey, Infogrames, where's your damn Chuck *Anger* game? Now *that* would sell a mint — guaranteed!"

THE WOMEN WE LOVE TO PLAY



ROBOT BABES

Admit it, you've wanted to make it with a machine ever since the vacuum cleaner "accidentally" touched you where it counts. PCAL explores five mech-girls whose oil we'd like to check:



BLAKE BORGWALD

ROBOTIX → Blonic legs, am-fright ear, and her brainic dog, Max
WHY SHE'S HOT → C'mon, this is Lindsey Wagner we're talking about
OUR PICK-UP LINE → "Hey, baby, would you like to go sky diving sometime?"



SARA

ROBOTIX → Turned into a machine-woman by V-ger in the last Star Trek movie
WHY SHE'S HOT → She's bald and wears super-short skirts. Mostly the skirts, really
OUR PICK-UP LINE → "I've got a room full of wigs — er, um ... fur girls"



ROSIE

ROBOTIX → She works as a maid for the Borgs. And she's a robot. Duh!
WHY SHE'S HOT → she'd clean up after us, in a motherly kind of way
OUR PICK-UP LINE → "So, can you introduce me to Judy?"



LISA

ROBOTIX → Created by Anthony Michael Hall and a computer in *World Science*
WHY SHE'S HOT → All her outfits in *World Science*, and because we don't hate her because she's beautiful
OUR PICK-UP LINE → "Your leading men have been Anthony Michael Hall and Gene Wilder. It's time that you move up to men most people would consider 'not hideous'"

SEVEN OF NINE

It's fitting that perhaps the hottest girl ever on a Star Trek series or movie is half-encased in metal, since geeks like us might not be able to handle the sight of her in super-tight Federation outfits. Seven of Nine is a Borg with cybernetic implants (roughly equivalent to Jeri, who has implants of the silicon variety). She's now a goody-goody member of the *Voyager* crew, but used to be in with the evil Borg. And what's hotter than a half-robot, nanite-blooded babe who used to be a bad girl? As a Star Trek fan and gamer, that might be as good as it gets — as long as you've got a lifetime supply of batteries.

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*As rated by Computer Gaming World and PC Games.

Check it out at www.talonssoft.com or call 1-800-211-8504 to pre order

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CAT CREATURE FOUND IN CALIFORNIA CUBICLE

Developer by day — sex-crazed cat creature by night!

Back in the spring of 1992, one of the most amazing discoveries in gaming folklore was made in a small development studio. A group of journalists found a mythical creature never thought to exist — a female pro-

grammer! Now, seven years later, an even more exotic beast has been discovered deep within the cubicles of Bungie West in San Jose. During the daytime, Quinn Dunkl is a senior engineer on *Oni*, responsible for AI programming. But when night falls this little vixen takes to the dark alleys and utilizes her penetrating stare to lure unsuspecting victims into a hypnotic trance!

"There may be thousands more just like her" says scientists

Back in 1997 a team of scientists managed to capture this feral real-life "Catwoman" and performed a variety of cruel and demeaning tests, prior to her dramatic escape. The only scientist to survive was Dr. Antioch who commented, "I hardly know what to make of her. On one hand she is an intelligent, fully functioning human being, but when she transforms, she becomes a ferocious feline!" The myxixish man-eater, standing at nearly six feet tall, is on the loose again and authorities

urge extreme caution when approaching this pugnacious pussycat. Bungie officials had no comment, except to say that her AI programming is excellent and they don't really want to know what their developers do when they aren't working.



▶
GAMESCAN



NERF ARENA BLAST

Developer → Hasbro

Publisher → Hasbro

Release Date → Fall '99

Product → Based on real Nerf toys like Super Soakers and Nerf Blasters, kids (and skittish adults) can enjoy guilt-free first-person shooting action without getting a grass stain. Move around high-tech arenas shooting targets and other players to get the best score. Will probably be perfect for those not ready to move up (or down) to the gory world of *Kingpin*.

Chuck's Take → "This is why the great U.S. of A. is going down the septic tank faster than a skinny supermodel can stick a finger down her gullet. In my day, kids didn't play with namby-pamby Nerf toys — we played with stones and sharp sticks! Kids back then had character ... and a glass eye or two."



THE NEXT TETRIS

Developer → Hasbro

Publisher → Hasbro

Release Date → October '99

Product → Tetris has become the Jason Voorhees of video games. How much more can be done with this game? Do we really need another Tetris? Those questions aside, this latest offering has more of the same classic strategy but adds new sticky and break-apart Tetris pieces and "gravity" effects plus plenty of head-to-head competition.

Chuck's Take → "Next Tetris gave me more mixed emotions than Rosie O'Donnell in a lesbian commune. It's simple enough for my dingbat wife Thelma Lou to play, but anything a Rusklike made can't be good for red-blooded Americans."

FREE STUFF WE LOVE

LIQUID BREAD GOES STRAIGHT TO YOUR HEAD

In a constant effort to make our lives better without doing any work, we continue to offer you the opportunity to shower us with gifts. Send us your beer, send us your electronics — hell, send us your wives and girlfriends.

This month Oregonian Ted Holmes sent us two six packs of different Oregon beers. As a service to beer connoisseurs the world over (and another reason to drink during work hours), we have prepared an exhaustive review in

case you ever venture into the woodlands of Oregon (it could happen).

Send us your free stuff and become world famous!



BLACK BUTTE PORTER

"If you like Killian's Red then you'll love Black Butte Porter"

PLUSES → Nice bouquet, smooth texture, nearly 8% alcohol by volume — powerful shit!

MINUSES → It's called "Black Butte" — not very appetizing, typical microbrew aftertaste, it's really powerful shit!

SCORE → 8

PCXL BREW REVIEW CREW →

CHUCK OSBORN → "It caresses my tongue like a sweet lover"

MIKE MORRISSEY → "The bubbles make me giggle, not the giggle of a full-grown man, but the giggle of a dainty little school girl!"

ROB SMITH → "Much sweeter and fruitier than most porters (think something along the lines of Todd Porter)"

MIKE SALMON → "It's called 'black butt' and is brewed in 'Bend,' Oregon — get it?"

NOR'WESTER RASPBERRY WEIZEN

"If you like Boo Berry Crunch then you'll love Norwester Raspberry Ale"

PLUSES → It was free

MINUSES → It tastes of Raspberry ash, mixing fruity flavors with beer is just wrong, Weizen is hard to pronounce sober, let alone drunk

SCORE → 2

PCXL BREW REVIEW CREW →

CHUCK OSBORN → "It was okay — not a sweet lover — but ok"

MIKE MORRISSEY → "It didn't make me giggle, but it made me want to feel up a school girl"

ROB SMITH → "Obviously designed for girls or some bloody yank who can't handle lager the way King George intended it"

MIKE SALMON → "All the pure evil of wine coolers mixed with the worst parts of beer"

(Special note: Scores given are not valid if beer is free — free beer is always a 10)



MADDEN 2000

Developer → Electronic Arts
Publisher → Electronic Arts
Release Date → Fall '99
Product → If you need a description of a new Madden football game, then you've been living under a rock for the past 30 years. Aside from the usual stat updates, the biggest change is an increased framerate and better player speed, plus the morbid suspense of seeing how many pounds John Madden has packed on since last year's so-called update.
Chuck's Take → "If you're playing football on a computer, then you are a commie bastard L-O-S-E-R. That's why we're a nation of pasty-faced flabby nerds instead of rough and tumble he-men like none other than yours truly!"



SUBMARINE TITANS

Developer → Megamedia Australia
Publisher → TBA
Release Date → Q4 '99
Product → An aquatic RTS set in a future where the Earth has been immersed in water, *Submarine Titans* focuses on three civilizations battling for dominance. Includes 3D graphics, an adaptive AI, and multiplayer support for up to 24 people. We imagine that any similarity to Kevin Costner's *Waterworld* is purely coincidental — at least if they want it to sell, that is.
Chuck's Take → "Aussies may think they have us fooled with their fancy-schmancy accents, but Momms Anger didn't raise no dummy. That island of jallbirds is just waiting for America to drop the soap — so watch your ass!"

MAD AS HECK FORM

Yes it's back, the place where you — our readers — can express just how much you were offended by what you read this month. After a year's worth of careful analysis, we have come up with a new feedback system to serve you better. Next to the following items, write a number from 1 (not at all offended) to 5 (completely offended). Help us help you!

- ___ The fake ad
- ___ The phrase "old guy butt"
- ___ Gratuitous use of "f—k"
- ___ Gratuitous use of the dash in the word "f—k"
- ___ The suggestion that Cowboys and Indians be played with real Indians
- ___ The image of Marlon Brando saying "Why don't we cuddle any more?" to Larry King
- ___ The suggestion that lesbian sex with Gina Gershon is bad
- ___ The image of Rosie O'Donnell in a lesbian commune
- ___ DeForrest Kelley memorial
- ___ Gia's responses in her column
- ___ The Quake Marine's family
- ___ The thought that appearing on our cover would help Jeri Ryan's career
- ___ The phrase "rogue spear"
- ___ Fragging Martha Stewart
- ___ The Redshirt application
- ___ Black Butte Porter Beer
- ___ Putting Bill Gates at #1 on the power meter
- ___ Putting Hasbro at #3 on the power meter
- ___ Mentioning *Dominant Species* again
- ___ Calling Carrie one of "the guys"
- ___ Making fun of Abe Lincoln
- ___ The railgunning of fat, washed-up actors with bad toupees
- ___ The word "Pants"
- ___ Not showing any nude pictures of a well known video game vixen from a well known men's mag

Thank you for your time,

x

Send your forms to:
 Mad as Heck!
 c/o PCXL
 150 North Hill Drive
 Brisbane, CA 94005

Or email us at
easilyoffended@pcxl.com

OFFICE QUOTES

"People are Idiots"

→ Eric Smith after hearing that people liked Goofus & Gailant

"Well, I've done it"

→ Dan Egger's declares after the fourth of July weekend

"What, did you finally take a shower?"

→ Mike Salmon after hearing Dan's declaration

"No, I proposed"

→ Dan's reply

"You mean, to a real person this time?"

→ Chuck Osborn after hearing Dan's answer

"And she said 'Yes?'"

→ Eric's question about the recent news

"Oh F—k!"

→ Rob Smith, upon hearing Dan's news

"Gosh Darnit, guys, stop using those swear words"

→ Dan Egger, at least 20 times per day

GAME KILLER

EXTREME TORTURE FOR AN EXTREME DISC

Around these parts the word "extreme" has become synonymous with the word "ass." *Links Extreme* proved our theory right once again. At PCXL we are judge, jury, and executioner, and like any fair dictatorship, we make sure that the punishment fits the crime. Just burning or maiming this disc would have been fun and cathartic, but we decided to take this one to the "extreme."

The first step was to extreme-ize (PCXL definition: The act of making something extreme) the disc. A couple of tattoos and several piercings later, our disc was as extreme as a disc could possibly be. Next up we took out the game for a little frisbee golf. After

nine holes, several Mountain Dew's poured on the disc, a minor collision with a car, and lots of screaming, we had rendered the disc useless. In the process we discovered that *Links Extreme Frisbee Golf* is far more enjoyable than the interactive version the developers meant us to play.



DEVELOPER SPOTLIGHT

id Software

It's oh-so laughably ironic. Near the top of the Dallas skyline, in the downtown area of this steamy Texan city, Ion Storm sits in its penthouse suite, fraught with internal strife and a public perception beyond ridicule. Meanwhile, in tiny (painfully tiny) Mesquite, just east of Dallas, in an inauspicious black-windowed office block sits Id Software — you may have heard of them. While Ion Storm's contribution to the gaming industry is source material for thousands of PCXL gags and *Dominion* (sales: 15,000), Id's less-than-plush office has seen the birth of *Doom*, *Doom II* (sales: c.1.8 million according to PC Data), *Quake*, *Quake II* and, of course, the much-heralded *Quake III: Arena*.

Their office space perfectly symbolizes their attitude. Id is a small company — never bigger than the 15 employees who, until Brian Hook's departure to the cash-cow

of Verant, have occupied this space since moving out of Apogee's offices in nearby Garland in the days before *Doom*. While the walls are decked with games posters and shelves are stuffed with the myriad of awards from magazines, there's no real brash statement of the wealth that Id's gaming resume has generated (except perhaps the top to one of John Carmack's Ferraris, tucked away in a storage room).

Some people have their own offices, but John Carmack shares his space with artists (and co-owners) Adrian Carmack (no relation) and Kevin Cloud. A modest conference room is more likely to be used to entertain journalists than for officious meetings to discuss the latest game project. That said, they are moving into a slightly more luxurious space (complete with one whole office each, a shower, and nap room) sometime later this year.



(Top left) Paul Steed watching Brian Hook head off into the distance. (Top right) Todd Hollenshead adopting CEO pose. And Tim

STATUS

- NO. OF EMPLOYEES → 14
- NO. OF EMPLOYEES NOT DRIVING "FLASH" CARS → 1
- OFFICE SUITE NUMBER → 666
- NO. OF FERRARIS OWNED BY JOHN CARMACK → 2
- NO. OF FERRARIS BEING BUILT FOR JOHN CARMACK → 1
- COST OF SODA FROM KITCHEN FRIDGE → 50
- NO. OF BEERS IN FRIDGE → 0
- NO. OF PEOPLE WHO REALLY KNOW WHAT JOHN CARMACK IS DOING → 0
- FIRST THING RECEPTIONIST DOES WHEN ARRIVING AT WORK → Plays Quake III

Id is all about getting on with the thing that they do best — making games. Thrust into the media spotlight by such high profile products, the intrusion of eager journalists could easily be deemed just that — an intrusion — and therefore something to deal with reluctantly, rather than embrace.

Fortunately, Id's patter for the press is as finely tuned as their gameplay. There's a relaxed atmosphere among the staff, seemingly unfazed by any potential pressure of being the only creators of a true *Quake* killer. Part of that is certainly due to a total, complete, undying, unquestioning, absolutely rock-solid belief in the talents of programming wiz John Carmack. *Quake III Arena*, whatever its controversial direction, will be a surefire hit, and everyone will benefit greatly. Despite those assurances, there's still a pride among the level designers, modelers, and artists, who are the ones vested with creating the gameplay around the technology. There's competition to make the most playable, most popular maps — and that's a good thing for everyone reading this magazine.

It would be easy for id Software to be the Kennedys of the gaming industry — to look out at the rest of us from behind bulletproof, one-way mirrored windows. But there's a maturity and experience in dealing with these pressures that gets the community what it wants — the only problem is, that's only likely to be "when it's done."

GAMESCAN



OUTLINE

Developer → Continuum
Publisher → TBA
Release Date → Q3 '99
Product → Continuing the post-apocalyptic future RTS theme, *Outlive* is set in the second half of the 21st century where the planet has evolved into chaos. The World Wide Council (isn't that a wrestling league?) attempts to re-establish totalitarian control using robots ... and you know how well that always works out.
Chuck's Take → "I've already got the perfect labor-saving device for my home — my ever-lovin' wife, Thelma Lou. She fetches my beer, scrubs the floor, and raises our tough-mouth kids — just like I trained her! And she's a helluva lot better looking than a dad-gummed tin-plated bucket of bolts."



NBA LIVE 2000

Developer → EA Sports
Publisher → Electronic Arts
Release Date → Fall '99
Product → The sixth in the series adds player voices, better facial animations, a rookie draft, an on-court referee, and even a real salary cap in season mode. Scenario mode lets you create close calls (like beating the Pacers with 10 points down and 2 minutes to go). Unfortunately, there are no plans to include a coach-choking mode.
Chuck's Take → "I'm madder than Larry Johnson at an Aryan Nation rally over the sky-high salaries these so-called 'athletes' make. Those eight foot freaks should be glad they're not hunted by mobs of torch-wielding normal folk — not winning about money!"

NOW PLAYING



HOT WHEELS STUNT TRACK DRIVER

Developer → Mattel Interactive
Publisher → Mattel Interactive
Release Date → Out Now
Product → Elaborate layouts, real-life obstacles like cats, mice, and discarded cars, and a track editor make this game a real delight for Hot Wheels collectors and kids who still enjoy playing with the real thing. A lack of 3D hardware support and multiplayer play are its main flaws, though the software-rendered graphics are colorful and well done.

Chuck's Take → "Hot Wheels are as American as my dearly-departed mom's apple pie. Just don't let the gals anywhere near this one — no matter what those bra-bunch women's libbers say, they can't drive a lick!"



ANIMANIACS A GIGANTIC ADVENTURE

Developer → SouthPeak Interactive
Publisher → SouthPeak Interactive
Release Date → Out Now
Product → A strong start with a genuinely comic into transmogrifies into ho-hum hop-n-bop platform formula gameplay. The only bright spots are the occasional video clips from the TV show ... so why not just buy an "Animaniacs" tape instead?

Chuck's Take → "These pansy-ass cartoons can't hold a candle to Anger Family wholesome entertainment like "Wart" and "Smeat The Querc." And playing "Cowboys and Indians" with real redskins is a treat without unlocking my big ol' gun cabinet for!"

The Heat-O-Meter

SUMMER FUN EDITION

WHAT'S HOT

BUY ATHLON → Discarding the K7 name, AMD's recently announced Athlon processor is touted as a "Pentium III Killer." With the way the company's been losing money, AMD should hope it's a "Bankruptcy Killer" as well.

VIOLENCE BILL STRUCK DOWN → A proposed bill banning the exposure of "violent media" to anyone under the age of 17 under penalty of imprisonment was voted down by the House of Representatives. A sigh of relief was expressed by those most likely to be affected — high school history professors.

HOW MUCH FOR A RAIL GUN? → Id programmer Brian Hook has bailed on making *Quake III* to join Verant Interactive, developer of *Everquest*. On the bright side, we hear that rocket-jumping will be a new feature in the *Everquest* add-on pack.

MAKING MR. WRIGHT → *Entertainment Weekly* put *SimCity* creator Will Wright on their annual "Hit List" as one of the 100 most creative people in entertainment. The person responsible for naming its sequels was one of the 100 most creative.

WHAT'S COLD

GOT BACK THAT LITIGIOUS FEELIN' → 3Dfx is in a suing mood — again. A new suit against Creative Labs claims that the company's Unified technology, which allows Glide-only games to play under Direct3D, violates 3Dfx's copyright. That must be the copyright on screwing gamers who don't buy Voodoo cards.

GOOD SPORTS? → The publisher of the *Frogger* 3D remake has announced that it is jumping into the sports game market. Umm ... you guys know that *Pong* wasn't really considered a sport, right?

LICENSE TO ILL → Ancient TV shows and movies like *Caddyshack*, "The Dukes Of Hazard," and *Planet Of The Apes* are making a comeback in upcoming games. It just goes to prove the old game marketing mantra: Good games come and go, but crap is eternal.

LUSTY R US → Action figures based on *Austin Powers* and Disney's *Tarzan* have come under fire for "lewd" behavior. The International Doll Of Mystery asks "Do I make you horny, baby?" while the loinclothed one appears to "stroke the vine" (if you know what we mean). We're not offended ... we just don't like the idea that our toys get more action than we do.

PCXL CLASSIFIEDS

Jobs the game industry just might be advertising

PUBLISHER NEEDED! Slightly-used game with Nazi-shooting theme and provocative cover art needs good home. Too ununny for new French owner — must sell! Potential to become next big hit for loving company. For information, contact Mortyr c/o Ubi Soft.

Money Making Opportunity

Make loads of cash every week from home! Learn the secrets of metal-smithing, jewelry-making, and enchanting for fun and profit. Send SASE and \$10 to "How I Sold All My Everquest Crap On eBay For \$50,000." Guaranteed Results!

AMAZING NEW PSYCHIC PROPHECIES

Love! Romantic! Corporate backstabbing? Master internet psychic BlitchX sees all! Find out who's been canned — before they do! For your free psychic reading, call 1-900-SCREWYOURCREDITCARD.

Needed: Scapgoat Everyone else has one — so why not us? If you've been accused of being a bad influence on impressionable youth, please call. The Videogame Industry

Government Jobs Available

Looking for useless bureaucrats to investigate game industry for clueless national leader. Must possess absolutely no knowledge of games, sociology, or common sense. Get paid millions to investigate hot new games like *Doom* and *Mortal Kombat*. Shoddy research and overspending are essential. Please contact Bill Clinton — and bring a cigar!

FREE LAW ADVICE

Are you a 3D hardware manufacturer worried that you may be infringing on a competitor's copyrights? Let us help! Our crack team of attorneys will root out minor infractions before anyone else does. Call the 3Dfx Legal Department today!

New Hiring Layers

Business booming! Overlapping 3D technologies produce hundreds of potential lawsuits every day! Get in on ground floor of new firm dedicated to copyright infringement. New resume and proof of annual retentiveness to 3Dfx Legal Department.

WANTED: OLD GAMES

Looking for "classic" arcade games released during late '70s to early '80s for translation into rich 3D environment. No fun necessary. Sluggish control and tedious gameplay helpful, but not required. Please hurry — our current supply is running out! Contact Hasbro with best offer.

ADDED TO CRACK? EVERQUEST'S PORN?

The PCXL Home For Wayward Editors is here to help. Our facility was created and funded by game journalists ... just like you ... who lost control of their lives. Did you write that *Dokotono* would be Game Of The Year? If yes, call us immediately.

PHOTOSHOP ARTIST WANTED

Sports developer/publisher looking for graphics artist adept at Photoshop for creating screenshots of new games. Similarity to released product not important. "Extreme" creativity and lack of ethics a must! Contact EA Sports for more information on this highly-lucrative position.



TRUE STORY SHOCKER!!!

FREAKS ENDURE 12 MONTHS OF NON-STOP COMPUTER GAMING!

One year ago, a few geeks in Brisbane, California, sat down to drink a few beers and play a few games. Amazingly — they haven't stopped yet!

For 365 days, these guys (and one girl, for a while) left their computers only to retrieve food and more beer. Attempts to communicate with the outer world were made at a conference of sorts in Los Angeles, but after months of sensory deprivation, a lack of social and physical skills resulted in an embarrassing display of drunkenness and a bizarre series of semi-erotic phone calls.

However, in between games and beers, they've managed to produce a magazine — 12 whole issues, in fact. They call it *PC Accelerator*. It's supposed to be about the games they play, but the sex-deprived staff just can't seem to get their minds off the female of the species. (According to our sources, the species is human.)

To prove that this tale of unimaginable torture is true, here's a look at the first issue of *PCXL*, and see what has changed in the 12 months since.

The Guys

MIKE SALMON

CLAIM TO FAME THEN → Reject model for Diesel
CLAIM TO FAME NOW → Reject model for Home Shopping Network

ROB SMITH

CLAIM TO FAME THEN → 124th in the world in *Game, Met and Match*
CLAIM TO FAME NOW → Developing "the de-cather" (a mechanism that allows *Everquest* players to urinate without leaving the computer terminal)

DAN EGGER

CLAIM TO FAME THEN → Created "Cone of Tragedy"
CLAIM TO FAME NOW → Social life is a tragedy

CARRIE SHEPHERD

CLAIM TO FAME THEN → Ability to edit copy to the sounds of *Quake*

CLAIM TO FAME NOW → Ability to laugh at new Managing Editor editing copy to the sounds of *Quake*

ED LEE

CLAIM TO FAME THEN → Average arrival time is 10:18 a.m.

CLAIM TO FAME NOW → He actually arrives at all

O DOROQUEZ

CLAIM TO FAME THEN → Unlimited access to strange and disturbing QuickTime movies

CLAIM TO FAME NOW → Seemingly unlimited amounts of free time at new job to e-mail former co-workers strange and disturbing QuickTime movies

KYLE LEBOUFE

CLAIM TO FAME THEN → Created a logo for a pile of steaming crap
CLAIM TO FAME NOW → Makes a pile of steaming crap copy look purty each month



Quake II Killers

This story covered the games that *PCXL* believed would have the best chance to knock *Quake II* off its first-person shooter throne. Did they? You be the judge.

PREY

THE SCORE → 50 (out of 60)
WHAT'S HAPPENED SINCE? Let's face it, they missed big-time on this one. A full page was dedicated to what was supposed to be the best hope to knock off *Quake*. Simply put, 3D Realms couldn't get the damn thing to work and have since canned the whole project with no plan to ever pick it up again.

PCXL SAYS → "We still say the game was going to kick ass, it was just ahead of its time."

HALF-LIFE

THE SCORE → 47
WHAT'S HAPPENED SINCE? Of the five games spotlighted in this feature, *Half-Life* was the one that pulled off the "coup de tas" on *Quake II* and snatched the throne while nobody was looking. Now the mostly undisputed King of the First Person Shooter, *Half-Life* will go down as one of the most

inspired games to ever garner a spot on our hard drives.

PCXL SAYS → "Told ya so! Now bow to the kings, you peasants!"

SIN

THE SCORE → 46
WHAT'S HAPPENED SINCE? At least this one actually made it to the shelves. Though the super sexy heroine managed to get us excited for a few moments (especially the hidden self-love scene), overall, this game was a flaccid loser that took up too much drive space.
PCXL SAYS → "*Sin* got swallowed up by *Half-Life*. Nothing looks good when compared to one of the best games ever made."

DAIKATANA

THE SCORE → 47
WHAT'S HAPPENED SINCE? Duh ... If you haven't heard this one by now, then why the hell are you reading this magazine? The constant delays, firings, and overall trouble have made this game the joke of the industry. A sloppy demo and a poor showing at E3 don't bode well for Romero's highly touted game, either.
PCXL SAYS → "This game will rock when it comes out — really!"

DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

THE SCORE → 51
WHAT'S HAPPENED SINCE? The jury's still out. Though this game is still very likely to happen by Fall 2000, a change to the *Unreal* engine set 3D Realms back a bit. The big question a year ago was "When is this game going to come out?" Nothing's changed since.
PCXL SAYS → "Told ya! The prospects still make it one of the most anticipated games ever, even if it won't be out in our lifetime."



MIKE SALMON



ROB SMITH



DAN EGGER



CARRIE SHEPHERD



ED LEE



O DOROQUEZ



KYLE LEBOUFE

letters@pcxl.com

FEEDBACK

→ Ah, it's letters time. This is where the editors kick it with our homies and really get to know you, the reader. This month we've got a little bit of everything, from dirty old men and guys who play with dolls, to our usual condescending shtick and a brand new PCXL song. Feel free to drop us a line at letters@pcxl.com. You'll be glad you did.

JUST SQUINT

I have been gaming since the 16K machines and at the age of 54, I find your magazine to be sexist, rude, irreverent, and without any socially redeeming value. Keep up the good work and I will renew my subscription. Could you also enlarge those postage stamp babe pics? Even with glasses, it's hard to see detail.

The Loup Garous

You'll be happy to know that we're considering a special large text 'n' breast edition of PCXL for senior citizens. We'll be sure to put you on the mailing list.

WE USED TO BE CALLED CRACKWHORE QUARTERLY

We are a public library and have received a magazine called *PC Accelerator*. Is this a brand new magazine or was it formerly called *PC Gamer*?

—The Denver Public Library

Neither — we're really your worst nightmare come true.

THAT'S "MR. ASS" TO YOU

Dan "Bubba Smith" Egger (I thought) presented a very well-written argument in the First Person in the July '99 issue. However, Rob Smith's horribly-written rebuttal made him seem like an ass. My question is, is he an ass or does he just pretend?

PsiKoBoB

Oh, we can assure you — he's not pretending. [Rob's response: "Chuck's fired, right?"]

BUT CAN YOU WRITE?

Your mag is definitely the best thing out there! So, let me work for you guys. I'll take out your garbage, drive you home when you're drunk, absorb insults and

pot shots at my mom all day. I don't care! You could even send me over to other game mags and I will pee in the drinking water and jam the soda machines, then steal their doughnuts. They won't know what hit 'em!

—Steve

We're sorry, that position is currently filled. But we'll let you know if anything opens up.

BUT AT LEAST SHE DIDN'T DO TOMMY LEE

You guys make gamers look like a bunch of undersexed, mindless pigs who actually consider Pamela Anderson Lee to be attractive. You could do a lot better and you know it. (Whatever happened to Denise Crosby's Tasha Yar?)

Steve Nyland
Aka Squonkomatic of the
AquaQuake Vault

So, your complaint isn't that we're undersexed, mindless pigs, but that we're piggish towards the wrong chick? Let's review: Denise played a mannish security officer who made it with androids on



There's really no contest, is there?

"Star Trek" while Pamela was on "Baywatch." You need glasses more than The Loup Garous (see first letter) does.

WILD WILD PEST

What would a letter section be without the musical stylings of self-proclaimed official PCXL lyricist H.E. Pennypacker? Here is his tribute to the sexiest covermodel in the biz, Mirna Blankenstein-whateverhernameis

The Mirna Blank Song
(Sung to the tune of "Wild Wild West" by Will Smith)

Blikky-blikky blonk, blikky blonk, blikky blikky

Blik blik Blonk, Mirna Blonk, What a hottie, gettin naughty, so beautiful who wouldo thoughty? Bustin ass, do it in a flash, with o fire blast, Just to be as hot as Rynn, yo, it's gotta be o sin. Mirna Blonk is the top of the line, I can't get over how she's so damn fine.

One sec, now go check her pic, ond no lies, No luck, you'll be stuck, in those deep green eyes, Mesmerized, can't get her out of yo head, Now I'm gonno think about her even after I'm dead. Heaven-sent, now my money's spent, buyin' her game,



Ms. Rynn, lovely thing, now remember the name. Now who yo gonno call? (She's o real jem) Now who yo gonno call? (R-Y-double N) Count this as o vote for the hottest girl alive, WATCH OUT! No one else is gonno survive, Against ...

(Chorus)
Mirna Blonk (When I think about) Mirna Blonk (When I talk about) Mirna Blonk (When I dream about) Mirna Blonk

I wanna be ... with Mirna Blonk, I wanna be ... with Mirna Blonk

PRETTY IN PINK

If, in the future, you feel the need to disrespect any one of the numerous Barbie titles, please give the credit where it is due. We here at MATTEL MEDIA worked long, hard hours on *Barbie Fashion Designer*, as well as all of the other fine Barbie titles, and we do not take it lightly to be referred to as "Mattel Electronics." So, for future reference, refer to us by our proper name. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter of utmost importance.

— Craig Forrest
Lead Project Engineer
Mattel Media

We apologize for misidentifying Mattel Interactive. Thanks for cranking out all those Barbie titles for us to disrespect.



Gaming 411

These sponsors make it possible for PC ACCELERATOR to exist. Without them we'd just be a bunch of loud-mouthed fools. We appreciate their advertising, but if they make a game that sucks, we WILL kill it. Nobody owns PCXL, but PCXL

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- 1 Go to: <http://www.pcxl.com/gaming411>
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YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT WE'LL DO NEXT
 (BUT, THEN AGAIN, NEITHER DO WE)

DAILY NEWS

THE WAY WE SEE IT

November 17th, 1999
 Updated Daily (M-F) by 1PM PST

Pool Game To Include Actual Pool
 FANZINE

PCXL Previews Your New Own Website
 Check out the new features of our new website - your own page that will be up and online for you.

Follow Up To Omaha II Game Detectives In The Works
 The new sequel is going to be the ultimate experience.

DEMOS

DEMO'S	SELECT A CATEGORY
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BABE-O-RAMA

RATINGS

WWW.PCXL.COM
WHAT'S NOT TO LOVE?

FIRST PERSON

It's just doggone-diddly too much!



"How could you say there's too much f—king foul language in *Kingpin*?"

O just finished the big, bad *Kingpin* and frankly I'm not so impressed. This game was supposed to be the "mature" title of the year with its graphic violence and harsh language, but when I played it, "mature" was not the word that sprung to my mind. Exactly how "mature" do you have to be to throw in the F-word every six syllables?

Playing through *Kingpin* is like getting stuck in the puberty-addled brain of a 12-year-old boy. You know — the time in your life where you know a new word is bad, but you aren't sure what it means, so you use it anytime you can. At times I could imagine the developers snickering as they played the game ... "Dude, he said @#\$%, hehe ... he said it again ... hehe, this is excellent." Sure, the F-word has impact, but when it's used 43 times in a minute, that impact is lost.

I imagine that my esteemed colleague will applaud *Matrix*'s "brave" decision to release this game as is, say how enlightened a society we live in, and even comment that it mimics real life. The truth is that the concept behind this game is just as cheesy as those "extreme" games we love to ridicule. Replace a Mountain Dew swiggin', snowboarding punk with an F-word spouting mook and you get the picture. In *Kingpin*, the swearing adds absolutely nothing to the gameplay (or even the lame excuse for a story) — it's just a blatant marketing device.

Look, I've got nothing against the occasional swear word in a game, but if *Kingpin* is the first in a wave of "shock videogames," you can count me out. Every time this industry looks like it may evolve towards real life "mature" games, something like this comes along. How many more brain-dead games am I going to have to sit through before I get to see something honest and "mature" like *Godfather: The Game*?

— NO ONE IN THE OFFICE HAS EVER HEARD DAN "FLANDERS" EGGER USE ANY OF THE "GOOD" SWEAR WORDS

SECOND PERSON

Dan you moronic mama's boy f—k. If you weren't such a f—kin' wimp then maybe the occasional four-letter word wouldn't make your pointy little ears burn. Grow the f—k up and join the rest of us in f—kin' reality. What the f—k did you expect the gang-banging thugs in *Kingpin* to say? "Gosh darnit, you better move away from me you big meanie!" That would be real believable I suppose?

The swearing in *Kingpin* is over the top, but completely necessary to set the mood of inner city violence. Can you imagine *Scarface* or *The Godfather* without swearing? *Kingpin* is meant to take a slice of life most people will never experience and deliver it right to their desktops. I'll readily admit that the story in this game could have been better, but the sheer violence, brutality, and mood (thanks in part to the sailor-like talk) in *Kingpin* make it an unforgettable, if somewhat flawed, experience. Now get out of our lives, go cry to your mommie, and shut the f—k up.

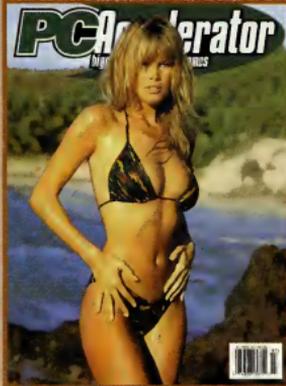
— MIKE SALMON NEEDS HIS MOUTH WASHED OUT WITH SOAP, GOSH DARNIT

NEXT MONTH?

RAINBOW SIX:

World Exclusive Review and Strategy
PCXL will be the first and only magazine to give you the lowdown on one of the best games coming out this year. Look for women in camouflage, dirty TK-ing tactics, and every morsel of *Rogue Spear* information known to man. Buy this issue before or after you buy the game, as long as you buy the issue. Please.

TOM CLANCY'S ROGUE NYMPHETTE UHH SPEAR



Northwest Pilot Simulator

The PCXL staff takes to the not-so-friendly skies — and they're bringing the liquor! See Chuck blow a .18, watch Mike slur his words, and find out if any of this makes a flight simulator fun. If it's possible to have fun with flight sims we WILL find it.

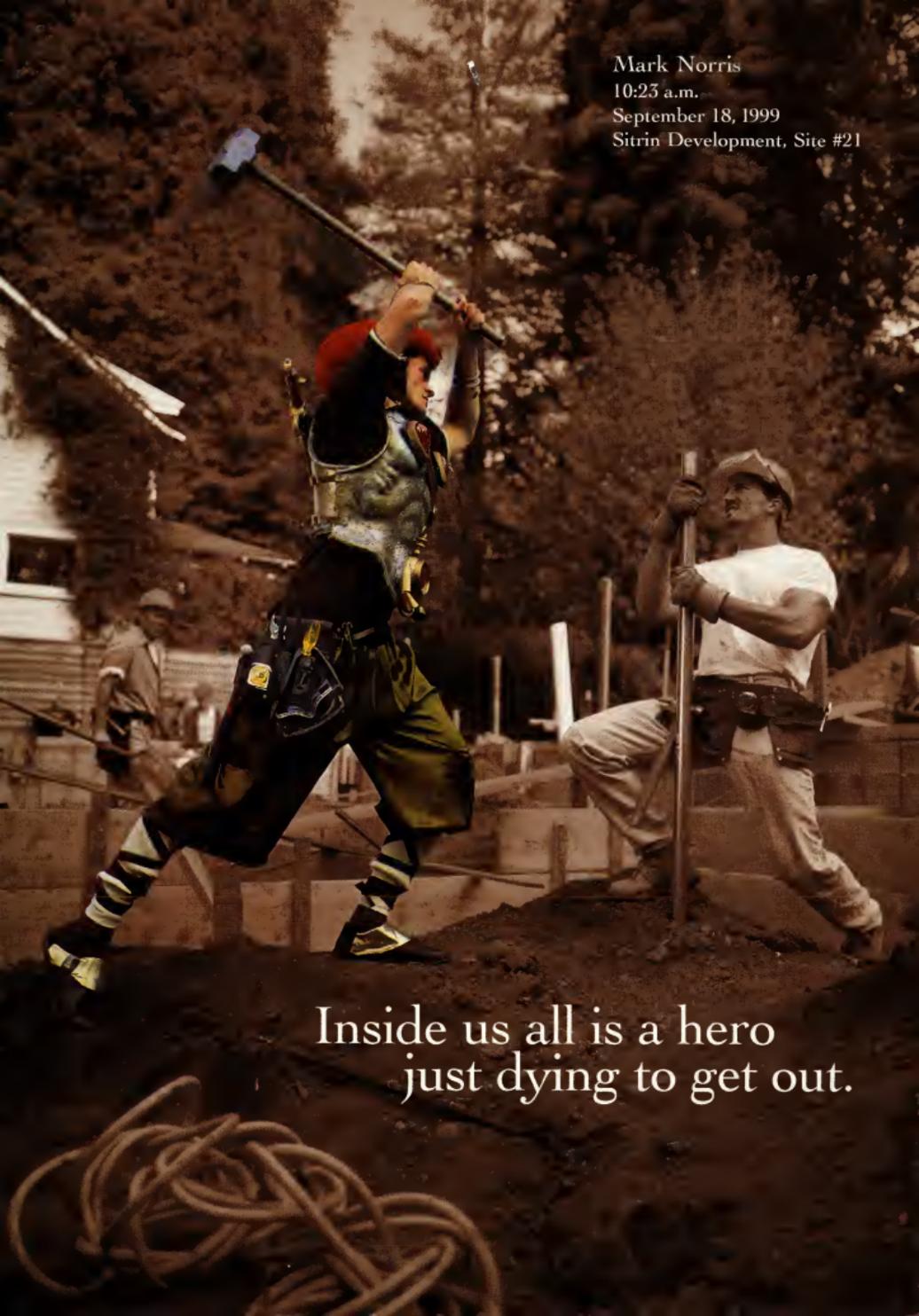
Real World Kosovo

Enjoy the drama, tension, and hilarity as a team of bitchy, publicity-hungry mercenaries are forced to live together and have their lives filmed. See who cries the most, who ends up sleeping together, and who gets sent home. If anyone doesn't do the dishes in this "Real World" it could cost them their lives.

PCXL Masquerade Ball

In the true spirit of Halloween, PCXL rents out a dingy cabin and one by one they go to see "what that noise was." Plus we test out some of our favorite Halloween costumes on random women of the Internet. We predict that costumes like Sexy Girl, Mostly Naked Girl, and Hot Girl (all shown below) will be all the rage.



A construction worker is dressed in a silver and black superhero costume, complete with a red mask and a utility belt. He is captured in a dynamic pose, swinging a sledgehammer over his head. The background shows a construction site with wooden forms, rebar, and other workers in hard hats. The scene is bathed in a warm, golden-brown light, suggesting early morning or late afternoon. The overall mood is one of heroic effort and physical labor.

Mark Norris
10:25 a.m.
September 18, 1999
Sitrin Development, Site #21

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just dying to get out.



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