

NAG

NEW AGE GAMING MAGAZINE

south africa's leading technology & computer entertainment magazine



made in south africa



Lazy Gamer's guide to the **Nokia N-Gage**

Previews of Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time & the next Battlefield 1942 expansion

NAG visits **ECTS** and the **PlayStation 2 Experience**

WarCraft III: The Frozen Throne strategy guide [part 1]

Reviews of Resident Evil 0 Pirates of the Caribbean and more

16 chips compared in our **H@rdc0r3 CPU Roundup**



LONDON GAMES WEEK 2003

gran turismo 4, prince of persia, metal gear solid 3, deus ex 2... ..and 24 other games



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Cover: We sent Priest to London and all he brought us was this cover... as well as eight pages of info about the London Games Week, which he attended.

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The following companies make the Cover CD possible every month...

without them we are lost.



COVER CD

DEMOS

Battlefield 1942 - Secret Weapons of WWII	165 MB
Commandos 3	265 MB
Freedom Fighters	76.1 MB
XIII	79.9 MB

MOVIES

Deus Ex Invisible War Intro Trailer	31.4 MB
Raven Shield Athena Sword Trailer	7.7 MB

PATCHES

Age of Empires Rise of Rome v1.0a	1.1 MB
Neverwinter Nights Shadows of Undrentide Version 1.31	6.7 MB

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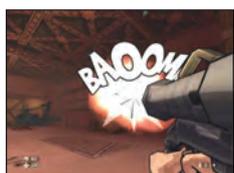
4T Tray Minimizer	0.7 MB
Avast Antivirus	6.4 MB
Coolbeans System Info	0.8 MB
Flashcatcher	1.2 MB
NAG CD Database v1.11	2.5 MB
QTracker 3.6	3.1 MB
System Cleaner	1.2 MB

CHEATS

Cheatbook Database	9.9 MB
May 2003 Update	1 MB
June 2003 Update	1.8 MB
July 2003 Update	1.2 MB
August 2003 Update	1 MB
September 2003 Update	1.3 MB

ESTIMATED TOTAL

681 MB



Welcome to NAG

Readers are outraged and the whole industry is crumbling at the corners. A recent report stated that many gamers really don't enjoy playing games but...

(Continued on page 788)

Scoring games...

Some background - our review scores have crept up again, there are more games scoring 90 during the last few months than ever before. This is a recurring problem that requires some adjustment, usually by the Editor of a gaming magazine, after he realises it's happening again, and that realisation always comes too late. That time has come again and I think it's appropriate to share with you the thinking process and invite comment on the new set of 'rules'.

How and why? I can guess at why our ratings have been creeping up over the last few months - a while ago we debated that a single score (instead of an average from a number of categorised scores) would force reviewers into making a hard call on a game instead of relying on an 'automated' system to give them a result. We also didn't want to be too anal about our scoring and also thought simplifying a rating down to one score would make our impression of a game clearer. So we duly did away with the multiple scores and replaced them with one final score... In spite of this the same thing has happened again... Sigh!

The proposed solution is to now, once again, include all those individual ratings in the review template we use for reviewing games but then only publish the final averaged score - this will then force reviewers to think about each category carefully and then do the sums to reach a final score - transparent to the reader but more accurate. You could argue that this is exactly the same as the single score system but at least this way the reviewer is forced to consider each element of a game separately.

Another reason for the creep is, despite what we keep saying, we're always basing new scores on old games i.e. how do you rate Half-Life 3 if Half-Life 2 gets 96%? Although you need to consider each game based in its own timeline and remember to not let how a game historically got to where it is influence your scoring - a difficult task. It's tough getting the balance right, which is why an experienced opinion is so important. In addition to all this we've also always had the policy of not editing our reviewer scores or adjusting ratings and reviews other than grammar or spelling or factual incorrectness. This will not change as our writers have been reviewing games for a long time and more or less know what they're doing - they are also kept out of all bribery offers (oh here's a weekend to Zanzibar if you give my sub standard game a good score). No matter how a final score is reached there are many factors that contribute to it. There is no such thing as a completely unbiased or correct score for a game. In addition if the culmination of a few years work by a team or developer plus all the money spent on marketing is always going to be reduced to a single number,

this is because this is what the gaming public and the industry wants - a single number. The mature

goal we should all be striving for here is a simple summary paragraph following a concise review with no score at all. I'd change our system to that tomorrow but I fear the implications of that action will cause a shudder in the industry that no amount of hot water bottles or blankets will ever still.

Some light at the end of the tunnel...

Also the attitude [which may surprise many of you] that the local game distributors and publishers have adopted is to not complain about low scores because they realise that our integrity and not favouring certain games based on advertising or exclusivity is why we have such a loyal and dedicated readership. The last thing they want is for us to compromise our values in this regard and start losing readers because we've sold out to corporate pressure or whatever they call it these days. This way everyone loses.

Anyway, thanks to everyone who took the time to write in and offer suggestions or comments, thanks to those who berate and criticize us on the forums [we need this to keep us honest] and thanks especially to everyone who buys and reads NAG each month - we slave away each issue and break our backs doing the magazine for one reason only... money.

Walter has a short bit on the awards page of the magazine [just before the reviews] that'll explain the entire rating system [all 10 categories with a brief explanation of what we look for [or should be looking for].

New readers

Thanks to rAge and the fact that we've increased our print run again [twice this year] I must remind myself that there are new readers discovering NAG for the first time... where the hell have you been? Seriously [as I get], if this is your first time consider this your welcome wagon and red carpet. Read the whole magazine once and if you have any questions please send mail to: ed@nag.co.za... Or visit www.nag.co.za for more information.

Michael James [Editor]



Don't forget

10 - 12 October 2003
at
The Dome @ Northgate

Read more in this issue...

next issue

November - yes, it's almost December again. This issue had few game reviews but tons of other content - next month things will get back to normal... we hope!

The November issue will be on sale: 30th October 2003

Winners

Neverwinter Nights Competition

Wesleigh Hall | Christopher Andrew
Michael Schwartz | Shaun

caption of the month



Bee fun knee

Each month we'll select a screenshot from

one of the games in the issue and write a funny caption for it, well... we'll try and make it funny...

Your job is to see if you can come up with an even funnier caption and send it to: ed@nag.co.za

Subject: **October Caption**

If you use the wrong subject in your e-mail it'll get deleted...

Your prize: Our sponsor for the screenshot of the month competition is Vivendi Universal Games. They said they'll give us something interesting each month... if we don't want it we'll be sure to send it along to the winner mentioned to the right of this... here...?



▲ 'two helicopters, a bulldozer, one plane and us on this cliff face just for a stupid caption' - **nag's best [10.2% lame] effort**

august winner



▲ 'This is Johnny Knoxville, welcome to Jackass!' - **Kevin Mitchell**

nag magazine

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tech news:



Tilting mouse wheels

Microsoft has introduced Tilt Wheel Technology, a system that allows a user to tilt a mouse wheel to the left or right. Essentially, TLT allows two additional functions to be issued via a mouse - the default use for TLT is to scroll horizontally, although many gaming applications spring to mind.



Logitech's new MX310 Optical Mouse is the first ambidextrous mouse in Logitech's new range. Not being wireless, it is considerably more affordable than the MX700, even though it uses the same optical engine.

MX310 Optical Mouse

HP DVD Movie Writer



HP's new DVD Movie Writer is a bundle that consists of a DVD burner, an analog-to-digital breakout box and video editing software.

LG 23" FLATRON LCD monitor

LG Electronics have released the L2320A, a 23" viewable FLATRON LCD monitor. Features include 25ms response time, 176° viewing arcs, 400:1 contrast and a full range of connectors, including a 2-port USB hub. Very nice - and expected to be very expensive!



Philips MP3 Key Ring Key004

This portable MP3 player is aimed at users who want a basic, simple way to listen to music while on the move. The device is relatively low on features, but is simple to use. Its controls are innovatively located in its neck-strap, and it plugs directly into a USB port, registering as a removable drive on any modern OS. The Key004 features 64MB of capacity and a battery life of around 6 hours.



news bits ...

Sony axe component suppliers

By March 2007, Sony plans to have cut its number of component suppliers for PlayStation products from around 4700 to 1000. The company plans to lower unit costs by increasing the workload available to the suppliers that are being retained.

Game controller for cellphones

Later this year will see the release of the Gameboard EGB-10 from Sony Ericsson. Featuring an eight-way control on the left and four buttons on the right, this unit will connect to the Z600 mobile phone.

Future consoles and compatibility

Sony has confirmed that the PlayStation 3 will be backwards compatible with PS and PS2 software. Microsoft also have stated that its upcoming Xbox 2 will be backwards compatible, but will their move away from NVidia to ATI have impact on this?



Terratec HomeArena TXR 884

This 7.1-channel sound system provides 84W RMS total power, and supports Dolby Digital, Dolby Pro Logic and DTS. It is expected to be available by the time you read this.

Toshiba Gigabeat G20

Toshiba's Gigabeat G20 portable music player can store up to 20GB of MP3, WAV or WMA files, and carries a 160x86 LCD display. Its battery offers 11 hours of operation, and can be recharged while the unit is docked. It is available in two finishes - aluminium and sapphire blue.



Mouse, meet Star Trek



IOGEAR's new Phaser is a hand-held trackball mouse with a laser pointer. As such, it is ideal for presentation purposes, in conjunction with PowerPoint presentations and the like, for example. The unit is actually shaped like a Star Trek phaser, and its laser pointer emphasises this similarity. The hand held bit is powered by two AAA batteries, while the receiver connects to the computer via PS2 or USB port. The Phaser is precise and jitter-free up to a range of around 10m, and up to 256 of these units can coexist in a room without interfering with each other.
www.iogear.com

iAudio CW300 digital audio player

This stylish digital audio device from Cowon Systems is available in two versions, differing only in capacity: 128MB and 256MB. Virtually all of the device's functions are controlled by two side-mounted buttons. The package includes a USB cable and a CD with software to facilitate the transfer of files to the player. In addition to playing MP3s (the CW300 is not compatible with the WMA format) the unit is an AM and FM tuner and voice recorder. A single AA battery powers the CW300 for around 30 hours.



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DCR-IP1 MICROMV Handycam

Sony's latest camcorder is unbelievably small (9.2cm x 7cm x 4.1cm) and light. It makes use of Zeiss optics, and can capture stills at 1152x864 or video with 520 lines of resolution. A docking station charges the unit and connects it to a TV or PC. The LCD display features touch screen technology. The camcorder can also produce MPEG1 video and store it on Memory Stick Duo or Memory Stick PRO Duo. The DCR-IP1 is expected to become available next month.

Yamaha's wireless music network system



Yamaha's MusicCast, scheduled for launch late this month, is a wireless network system for providing music to various parts of a house or other premises. The system consists of a server unit that can hold up to 80GB of MP3 or WAV files, and up to five wireless client units that incorporate an amplifier each. The system can also connect up to seven wired LAN stations, and can provide CDDB information when connected to the Internet.

SL-CT710 portable CD players



Matsushita's new line of portable CD players support CD-R/RW media, as well as being able to play MP3 files with bitrates ranging from 32kbps-320kbps. The supplied battery provides an impressive operating time of 45 hours of continuous playback.

Philips and Nike team up

A range of portable CD and MP3 players for sportspeople is being developed by Philips and Nike. The line will emphasise easy, intuitive use by people engaged in physical activities.



news bits ...

Water-cooled CPUs...

A company called Cooligy has developed a cooling pump for computer chips that features no moving parts. Electro-osmosis is employed to move water. The advantages of the system include the fact that the pump is silent and less likely to fail, given that there are no moving parts. The potential disadvantage is the questionable wisdom of mixing electricity and water! Such a cooling system would be able to dissipate over three times the heat generated by current top-of-the-range processors.

ASUS Wi-Fi@HOME

ASUSTeK Computer Inc. (ASUS), the worldwide leader of motherboards and provider of high-performance networking solutions, have introduced the ASUS Wi-Fi@HOME platform for wireless home networking. It includes three elements - ASUS motherboards supporting the Wi-Fi slot, the ASUS Wi-Fi-b WLAN card and ASUS Software AP (access point). It has been designed to simplify the process of building a wireless home network.

NoteBook Cooler

Antec, manufacturer of PC cases, has released a laptop cooler that fits directly on the underside of a notebook and feeds air past the computer's surface. It is called the PS3 NoteBook Cooler, which fits PC-based and Mac-based notebooks, has such a discreet design, that it fits into a standard laptop case along with its host.
www.antec.com



Virtual Pilot Pro USB



CH Products have released a USB version of their Virtual Pilot Pro. The controller includes an eight-way point-of-view hat switch, six buttons, a four-way hat switch, elevator and aileron trim controls, adjustable clamps - and a three year warranty. It works with all current Windows and Mac OS versions. Virtual Pilot Pro USB should be available as you read this.
www.chproducts.com



New Logitech peripherals

By the time you read this, two new joysticks and a game-pad should be available from Logitech. The Extreme 3D Pro joystick is rendered in an industrial finish, and features 12 buttons, a twist handle, eight-way hat-switch and a throttle. The Attack 3 has an ambidextrous handle and incorporates 11 buttons and a throttle. The Dual ActionPad's design is much like that of the PlayStation 2 controller, with two analogue sticks, an eight-way D-pad, four triggers and six buttons.
www.logitech.com

DataTraveler

Kingston's DataTraveler is a portable drive that connects, as has become commonplace, via USB. It is available in 32 MB, 64 MB, 128 MB and 256 MB models, and can be easily attached to a keychain or such.



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Technology news from the other side

Spam to hit nail in coffin for e-mail marketing?

Internet marketing company DoubleClick has released its e-mail trend report for the second quarter of this year. The report shows that retailers earned slightly lower revenue from each e-mail advertisement sent out. The average revenue generated per e-mail sent fell to 28 cents from the 29 cents of the comparative quarter last year. Revenues peaked at 32 cents per e-mail delivered during the December holiday season. However, the company believes that this could reflect cautionary consumer spending. In the report, DoubleClick states that consumers could be purchasing less expensive price-point items. Of course, it will be bad business for an online marketing company to admit that spam could negatively impact e-mail marketing. The average order in response to an e-mail advertisement fell to \$98 from \$102 a year earlier. Retail e-mail saw an average of 2.65 purchases for every 1 000 e-mails sent out. E-mails dealing with financial services had the highest industry open rates of 48.1%, but their click-through rates were amongst the lowest at 5.8%. The highest click-through rates came from travel e-mails and measured 9.3%.

Sunglasses that monitor body temperature on the way

Giant Wireless Technology, a Hong-Kong based wireless and electronics telecommunications product designer and manufacturer, will commercialise the TempAlert technology developed by US-based General Medical Innovations. This is not as boring as one might think since TempAlert enables the manufacturing of temperature monitoring products for continuous and wireless temperature measurement. The company is planning to manufacture sunglasses that can conceivably alert athletes to drink water when their body temperature gets too high. However, the technology can also have benefits for your average Joe Soap. "With the recent severe acute respiratory syndrome experience, people are now more conscious about the importance of monitoring their body temperatures and overall health," says Max Loong, MD of Giant Wireless. "The thrust of the company is to focus on the application and commercialise it in daily lifestyle products," Loong continues. Dr Marc Abreu, president of General Medical Innovations and researcher at the Yale University School of Medicine, invented the technology. He identified an area of the brain that allows physicians to measure the body's core temperature by monitoring a special path of skin. Abreu's research has shown that a small area of skin near the eyes and the nose is the point of entry for this "brain temperature tunnel".

Office 2003 out this month (we hope)

At the time of writing, the Microsoft Office 2003 suite was on schedule for an October 21 release. Of course, since Office 2003 has already been delayed it is debatable whether the software company is going to meet this deadline. Apparently Microsoft has been testing the software for more than a year but wanted the extra three months to fine-tune the product. As with previous incarnations, Office 2003 features Word for creating documents, Excel for spreadsheet calculations, PowerPoint for presentations and Outlook for e-mail, scheduling and contacts. It has improved junk mail filtering tools that, according to Microsoft, improve with use by learning from the messages that users keep and delete. Office 2003 also has an added Research Task Pane. This gives users access to information in databases, on the Internet and their computers like electronic dictionaries, online research sites and the like. Office 2003 also features the new InfoPath product that allows for the creation of XML-based forms to make sharing and exchanging data over the Internet easier. Microsoft will launch several different editions of Office, including a standard edition for \$399, a professional edition for \$499 and a small business edition for \$449.



Maxtor's new external hard drive

The Personal Storage 5000DV is a 7200 RPM ATA-133 hard drive with 8 MB cache, and it's compatible with PC and Mac. The hot-swappable unit is available in 160 GB and 200 GB models, and connects to its host via USB2.0. An innovative feature allows an automated backup of one's internal hard drive to take place in the background at the touch of a button, even while the computer is being used.

Crucial CompactFlash Card Reader



This device is a very conveniently sized CompactFlash card reader that connects to a USB port, either directly or via a cable, depending on one's PC configuration. It is ideal for transferring data between computers, laptops, digital cameras, music devices and PDAs. www.crucial.com

FancyLogic USB Flash Drive/MP3 player



FancyLogic has released the Techno Series 101, which is a 128MB USB Flash-drive that can be configured to act as a MP3 player and voice recorder.

pc news:

Ultima X: Odyssey



Origin Systems, a subsidiary of Electronic Arts, is working on Ultima X: Odyssey, a massively multiplayer online role-playing title which will make use of the latest version of the Unreal engine. Players' actions and levels of decisiveness will play a large part in their characters' development. It should go live early next year.

Search and Rescue 4



Search and Rescue 4, from Just Flight, casts players as Coast Guard helicopter pilots, charging them with the task of retrieving survivors from various natural and unnatural disasters. An innovative aspect of the game is that, rather than being supplied a mission briefing and having to stick to it, players have to actually plan each mission, taking various variables and random factors into consideration.

Club Manager 03/04



Just Football has released 18 versions of Club Manager 03/04. Each of these is specific to one football club, and will feature accurate information that players will be able to update online. The following clubs are represented: Arsenal, Blackburn Rovers, Bolton Wanderers, Chelsea, Everton, Hearts, Hibs, Ipswich, Leeds Utd, Manchester City, Norwich City, Portsmouth, Reading, Sheffield Utd, Southampton, Sunderland, West Bromwich Albion and Wolves. These titles are already available in the UK.

Take Two acquires TDK Mediactive

Take Two has bought TDK Mediactive for almost \$23 million, and will rename its new subsidiary in the near future. The deal adds a number of family-friendly titles to Take Two's repertoire.

Warhammer 40,000: Fire Warrior delayed

THQ's upcoming Warhammer 40,000: Fire Warrior, under construction at Kuju Entertainment, has been delayed until sometime in the third quarter, so expect to see it by the end of the year. This delay pertains to both PC and PlayStation 2 versions of the game.



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Battle Engine Aquila



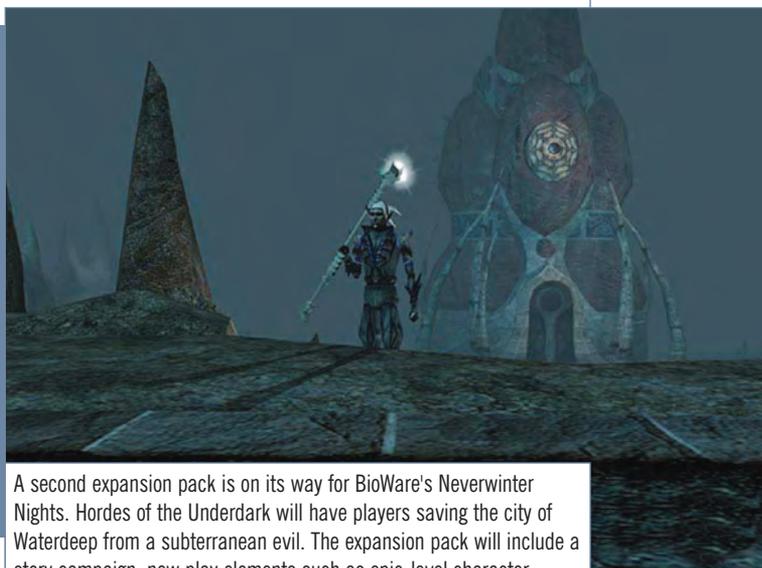
Encore's mech-based game Battle Engine Aquila will appear in a PC version by the end of the year. The game, which was released for Xbox and PlayStation 2 earlier this year, features a branching storyline with multiple endings, and the action takes place both on the ground and in the air.

Ostrich Runner



Russian game developer Geleos is at work on an arcade racing game called Ostrich Runner. The farcical, preposterous "story" involves a mad scientist out to take over the world with genetically modified ostrich super-soldiers. Players need to not only complete courses in the fastest time possible, but must also collect ostrich eggs. Besides a LAN multiplayer facility, the game will feature a split-screen mode for two players. The game is tentatively scheduled for release later this year.

Hordes of the Underdark



A second expansion pack is on its way for BioWare's Neverwinter Nights. Hordes of the Underdark will have players saving the city of Waterdeep from a subterranean evil. The expansion pack will include a story campaign, new play elements such as epic-level character support, new character voice sets (good!) and the to-be-expected plethora of new spells, classes, weapons, feats and creatures. The Aurora toolset will benefit from added content. Atari expects to release Hordes of the Underdark next month.

Syberia 2



Upcoming adventure title Syberia 2, from Microids, has been delayed till early next year. This move was motivated by the company's desire to release the games simultaneously on all the planned platforms - PC, Xbox and PlayStation 2.

Silent Hill 3

As you read this, the PC version of Silent Hill 3, from Konami, may be available. The game features much higher resolutions, and is not restricted to saving the game only at designated save points.



KnightShift

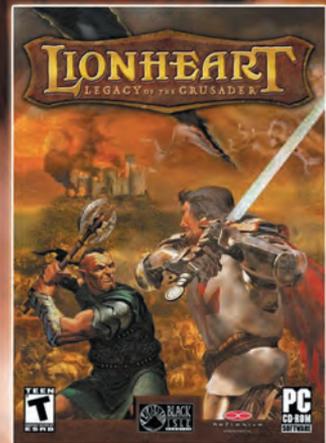


Atari has released KnightShift, also known as Once Upon a Knight (depending on location), a humorous medieval strategy role-playing game designed by Reality Pump Studios. The main resource in the game is milk, and units include the usual soldier types, as well as the likes of broom-riding witches!

Train Sim 2 now by Microsoft



Microsoft has bought the entire Train Simulator 2 project from Kuju Entertainment, ending the latter's involvement in its development.



Lionheart: Legacy of the Crusader

In the year 1192, Richard the Lionhearted, King of England, ventured across Europe during the Third Crusade. At the height of this aggression the lines that define our reality blurred, allowing a short but devastating influx of magic and spirit-kind to be unleashed across the Earth. Occurring some 400 years after this cataclysm, Lionheart diverges from traditional high fantasy by placing the player in 16th century Europe where the Renaissance has halted, casting a shadow over civilization by keeping mankind in an enduring Dark Age.

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BlowOut

Next year will see the release of Kaos Kontrol's upcoming BlowOut, a 3D side-scrolling shooter featuring character design by Yasushi Nirasawa, who was involved in films such as Final Fantasy and Men in Black. Players will lead a mercenary commando company on a mission in a Xenomorph-infested US Marine Space Force facility. The game will be available on PC, Xbox and PlayStation 2, and will feature an extensive level editor.



Half-Life 2



Half-Life 2 will be released in a variety of versions. A single-player only version, a single- and multi-player version and a collector's edition will be released. Furthermore, a subscription version will be available, most practical for users of broadband connections.

Celtic Kings: The Punic Wars



A sequel is being developed for Celtic Kings: Rage of War, from Haemimont Games, titled Celtic Kings: The Punic Wars. This game will revolve around the three Punic wars between Rome and Carthage from 264BC to 146BC. The sequel will feature new nations, units, terrain types, custom maps and sound effects, to name a few. No release date has been put forward as yet.

Unreal II multiplayer



Unreal II XMP is the working title for the upcoming free multiplayer add-on for Unreal II, currently in development at Legend Entertainment. The expansion is team-oriented, and incorporates a heavy emphasis on tactical play. Battlefield control is a strong theme, and three classes will be on offer to allow teams to build combat-effective squads. Rangers are stealth units with medical capabilities; Techs will be able to repair armour, hack electronic equipment and deploy materiel on the battlefield; Gunners will be the main fighters, making use of heavy and close-assault weaponry. The game will also include a range of vehicles that can be commandeered. The scoring system will be modifier-based, and fairly reminiscent of role-playing experience systems, rewarding support functions as well as kills, rather than the traditional frags system.



console news:

EyeToy: Groove

Sony introduced EyeToy: Groove at ECTS in September, a dancing game that makes use of the EyeToy USB camera. The camera captures the movements of players as they dance to any of the 25 licensed music tracks, which include artists like Madonna, Sister Sledge and Misteeq. A couple of competitive modes are available, as well as an in-game calorie counter that estimates how much energy is being spent dancing, for those who wish to use it as a method of exercise.

New Evangelion title for PS2

November should see the release of Bandai's Evangelion 2: Shinseiki Evangelions for the PlayStation 2. The game is about half complete at Alfa Systems, and is based on the Evangelion anime series. The game will be fairly free-form, allowing players to experience Evangelion characters' daily lives, as well as more dangerous situations. Non-player characters are being outfitted with unique personalities, and the game will trigger events and introduce antagonists at certain times to advance the story.

F-Zero to air on TV

Nintendo's F-Zero game franchise has been ported to television, to be aired in Japan and, presumably, become available on video or DVD. The story takes place in 2201 and revolves around a very dangerous racing event that draws competitors from all over the galaxy, mixing in some elements of intrigue. The series is being produced by Dentsu and Ashi Productions, who were responsible for Vampire Hunter D, among others.



Xbox Platinum Hits

The second wave of Microsoft's Platinum Hits for the Xbox is on its way. The list includes the following titles: Dead or Alive 3, The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind, Hitman 2: Silent Assassin, The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, Medal of Honor: Frontline, Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4 and Unreal Championship. Some of these titles are already available.



The Temple of Elemental Evil

"Greyhawk: The Temple of Elemental Evil" finds adventurers in a fight for their lives as a simple rescue mission uncovers a much more sinister plot with far-reaching implications. As the story unfolds, adventurers will travel the world of Oerth, discover the besieged village of Hommet, survive the filthy shire of Nulb and ultimately penetrate the ruins of the Temple of Elemental Evil, a beacon of darkness and despair in a world without hope.

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October

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ATARI

Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 2



Based on the anime series of similar name, Atari's cel-shaded Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 2 will include a new single-player mode that will allow players to team up with computer-controlled characters in order to seek out the seven dragon balls. Various single- and multi-player modes will be available, and players will be able to fuse two characters to create a new one. The game is expected to be released on a variety of console platforms.

Threat Con Delta

Metro3D's upcoming Threat Con Delta will cast players in the roles of attack helicopter pilots. The setting is the currently popular one of anti-terrorism warfare. It is expected to be available on PlayStation 2 in November.

N-Gage Arena

October 7 marks the launch of Nokia's N-Gage Arena, an online gaming service for the hand-held hybrid. A global network will allow players to access hints and tips, as well as allowing players to post "shadow characters", which are essentially recordings of a player's performance at a game, challenging other players to beat it. No word yet on whether this service will be available locally.

Xbox Platinum Hits

The second wave of Microsoft's Platinum Hits for the Xbox is on its way. The list includes the following titles: Dead or Alive 3, The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind, Hitman 2: Silent Assassin, The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring, Medal of Honor: Frontline, Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4 and Unreal Championship. Some of these titles are already available.

DOOM 3 Xbox developer



Activision and id Software have announced that DOOM 3 for the Xbox is in development at Vicarious Visions.

PS2 peer-to-peer software

A Japanese company by the name of MultiTerm has released peer-to-peer software for the PlayStation 2. Named MassPlayerSystem Dynalink, the application aims at facilitating the implementation of online multiplayer gaming on the console, rather than to promote file sharing and other uses that PC peer-to-peer packages are designed for.



Plague of Darkness



Namco and French developer Widescreen Games have announced an action adventure game tentatively titled Plague of Darkness. The game is in development for the Xbox and PlayStation 2, and will support online play on both platforms. Plague of Darkness is set in medieval Europe, during the time of the Black Plague, and will include eight environments divided into 58 sub-locations, each presenting its own objectives and opponents. Players will need to master the use of various weapons, tools and magical methods to overcome a terrible demon that has been feeding on souls in order to resurrect itself.

EA games for the N-Gage

Titles from Electronic Arts's EA Sports and EA Games labels will start becoming available for Nokia's N-Gage in time for this year's Christmas season.

Bomberman Racing

Konami are paying homage to the old classic Bomberman by releasing Bomberman Kart, a racing game featuring the characters from the original. It is available for the PlayStation 2, and supports up to four-player multi-play.

Sony Online at work on two new titles

Two studios, Lodestone Games and SolWorks, are currently developing titles for Sony Online Entertainment. At this point, nothing further has been announced.

EyeToy: Groove

Sony introduced EyeToy: Groove at ECTS in September, a dancing game that makes use of the EyeToy USB camera. The camera captures the movements of players as they dance to any of the 25 licensed music tracks, which include artists like Madonna, Sister Sledge and Misteeq. A couple of competitive modes are available, as well as an in-game calorie counter that estimates how much energy is being spent dancing, for those who wish to use it as a method of exercise.



Enclave

In the fantasy world of Enclave the people of Light and Darkness are divided by a bottomless rift that split the earth many millennia ago. The lands of light are prosperous and rich, an Enclave of truth and order surrounded by the twisted and barren lands of the dark, war ravaged plains known as the Outlands. Over the centuries the rift has started to close, and skirmishes along the border have become more and more frequent. It is only a matter of time before these altercations turn into a full scale war. Take the side of light or dark as you prepare for the imminent war.

Available
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scores, charts and release dates:



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PC Web Scores

Title	New Age Gaming	gamespy.com	gamespot.com	pc.ign.com
Midnight Club II	77	88	7.2	8.8
MS FS 2004	79	84	8.8	9
Pirates of the Caribbean	47	55	7.6	7.2
Aqunox 2	65	n/r	5.6	n/r
Majestic Chess	90	n/r	n/r	8.5

CHARTS

- 1 PS2 Crash Bandicoot 5
- 2 PS2 Grand Theft Auto III Platinum
- 3 PS2 GT Concept 2002 Platinum
- 4 PS2 Tomb Raider Angel of Darkness
- 5 PS2 Tekken 4 Platinum
- 6 PS2 Gran Turismo 3 Platinum
- 7 PS2 Eye Toy
- 8 PC Sims Ultimate Collection
- 9 PS2 World Rally Championship Platinum
- 10 PS2 Grand Theft Auto Vice City
- 11 PC Sims Superstar
- 12 PS2 EA Sports Rugby Platinum
- 13 PS2 WW Crush Hour
- 14 PS2 Enter The Matrix
- 15 Psone Grand Theft Auto Collectors Edition
- 16 PC Delta Force 4 Black Hawk Down
- 17 PC Midnight Club 2
- 18 PS2 Def Jam VENDETTA
- 19 PC Grand Theft Auto Vice City
- 20 PS2 Final Fantasy X Platinum

Chart information supplied by Musica for the period 1- 31 August 2003

Console Web Scores

Title	New Age Gaming	ign.com	gamespot.com	gamespy.com
Futurama [PS2]	65	6.7	4.9	n/r
Speed Kings [PS2]	75	5.5	7.6	n/r
RTX Red Rock [PS2]	70	5.6	4.9	45
SX Superstar [PS2]	65	n/r	n/r	n/r
Resident Evil 0 [GCN]	64	8.2	8	n/r
Dead to Rights [GCN]	90	8.1	7.6	80

PC Release Dates

Northland	Strategy	Oct 6
Psychotoxic	FPS	Oct 7
Bionicle: The Game	Action	Oct 7
NBA Live 2004	Sport	Oct 7
Conflict: Desert Storm II	Action	Oct 7
XIII	FPS	Oct 9
No Man's Land	Strategy	Oct 10
Korea: Forgotten Conflict	Strategy	Oct 13
Breed	FPS	Oct 14
Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic	RPG	Oct 14
Railroad Tycoon 3	Strategy	Oct 14
Galidor: Defenders of the Outer Dimension	Action	Oct 14
Space Colony	Strategy	Oct 14
Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas	Action	Oct 14
Silent Hill 3	Action	Oct 14
Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne	Action	Oct 15
Curse: The Eye of Isis	Adventure	Oct 17
One Must Fall: Battlegrounds	Action	Oct 20
Fire Warrior	FPS	Oct 20
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Action	Oct 20
Hidden & Dangerous 2	Tactical	Oct 21
Warlords IV: Heroes of Etheria	Strategy	Oct 21
Battlecruiser Generations	Simulator	Oct 21
Empires: Dawn of the Modern World	Strategy	Oct 21
Rollercoaster Tycoon II: Time Twister	Strategy	Oct 21
Harpoon 4	Strategy	Oct 28

Console Release Dates

MLB Slam!	NG	Sports	Oct 6
MotoGP	NG	Driving	Oct 6
Pandemonium	NG	Action	Oct 6
Puyo Pop	NG	Puzzle	Oct 6
Puzzle Bobble VS	NG	Puzzle	Oct 6
SonicN	NG	Action	Oct 6
Super Monkey Ball	NG	Action	Oct 6
Tomb Raider	NG	Action	Oct 6
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater	NG	Sports	Oct 6
Virtua Tennis	NG	Sports	Oct 6
Backyard Wrestling: Don't Try This at Home	PS2 Xbox	Sports	Oct 7
Bionicle	GC	Adventure	Oct 7
Conflict: Desert Storm II - Back to Baghdad	PS2 Xbox	Action	Oct 7
DemiKids: Dark Version	GBA	Role-Playing	Oct 7
Hot Wheels Highway 35 World Race	PS2 GC	Driving	Oct 7
NBA Live 2004	GC	Sports	Oct 7
Time Crisis 3	PS2	Action	Oct 7
Viewtiful Joe	GC	Action	Oct 7
XIII	PS2 Xbox GC	Action	Oct 9
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II	PS2 Xbox	Role-Playing	Oct 15
Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu	PS2 Xbox GC GBA	Action	Oct 15
ChopLifter: Crisis Shield	PS2	Simulation	Oct 15
Corvette	Xbox GBA	Driving	Oct 15
Curse: The Eye of Isis	Xbox	Action	Oct 16
DroneZ	Xbox	Action	Oct 16
Dungeons & Dragons Heroes	Xbox	Role-Playing	Oct 16

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A Sign of the Times?

It is on the very relevant subject of game reviews that I've noticed the emergence of an interesting phenomenon. Not just on the pages of this magazine, but also inside almost every other game-related publication and, especially, on online gaming websites... game scores are getting higher. I'm

▼ Not a NAG reviewer...

sure I'm not the only one who has made this particular observation, and I certainly cannot be the only one who believes that it's a problem which is getting out of hand. In times long ago, if a game managed to score over 90% in a review, only the second coming of Jesus Christ would be able to top its brilliance. Nowadays, at least one game a month is slapped with the NAG Award of Excellence while most of the others all receive awards of Merit. Of course you will get a few seventy percents, maybe a sixty or two and, if you're lucky, something will herald 50%. Woe betide all consumers because that fifty percent is really going to suck, but by review indication, it is supposed to be average. If this was a situation confined to New Age Gaming alone, fixing it would be bread-and-butter. However, if you are a well-read individual, you will have realised that it is actually a worldwide occurrence. Top gaming websites such as Gamespot, Gamespy and pc.ign.com (with which NAG compares scores every month) are perfect examples of this. The

same is true for PC Gamer Magazine and others in print which also reflect largely inflated review scores. I cannot speak for the other NAG reviewers, but before submitting a finished review I like to check my score with online websites. If there is a major difference I'll load up the game again and take a very careful second look. But, so far I've never had to rewrite anything, since the games have usually all received ninety across the board. How are consumers, who perhaps don't bother reading all of the text, supposed to know what is worth purchasing and what isn't? Especially when everything is getting "excellent" reviews and the difference between a good game and a poor game is only a few points. Before trying to reach a solution, the problem must be analyzed. Because the world is so ridiculously well-connected, we have the ability to compare scores with all the other reviewers out there. And, unless we have a very strong opinion contrary to what we see internationally, our scores generally tend to follow theirs. Yes, we are sheep, the rumours are indeed true. Well,

"In times long ago, if a game managed to score over 90% in a review, only the second coming of Jesus Christ would be able to top its brilliance."

it's a subconscious thing. And it's far easier to give a bad game a decent review than to give a good game a crappy review, so collectively our scores start to rise. It usually takes a formal reminder from the editor to get the independent thought going again. (I guess he needs something to do...) Another factor contributing to lenient reviewing is an annoying mental block we all have. Every single person on earth struggles to think of the figure "50%" as average. If you don't understand what I'm getting at, then you obviously never went to school, university or any formal education institution. "50% is bad, mmkay?" That's what we're told by our teachers, lecturers and parents from the day we step into the education system. Because of that being drilled from such an early age, we start to regard 60's and 70's as

average instead. The final reason for overrating games is that, when we find something awful, we usually cancel it out with something decent, rather than punishing the game for its drawbacks. Right, so how do we fix this? For starters we at New Age Gaming Magazine are making renewed efforts to ensure our scores are kept realistic, fair and critical. (At least, that's what I'm told). Hopefully we will be able to break away from international trends, which are currently handling the situation as poorly as we have been. I would also like to remind all readers to discard their preconceptions about what "average" should be, and to remember that in the world of game reviews it has been designated as 50%. If scores suddenly start falling to all-time lows - you now know why. Another possibility to look at would be the adoption of a completely different rating method, such as a "star system" (out of five or ten), which is practically identical to our current percentage method except for the fact that the bad associations with school are no longer there. Of course, there is also the option of rating a game in literary terms such as "earth-shattering", "very good", "above average", "average", "below average", "poor", or "the-worst-game-since-Counter-Strike-God-help-us-all". Send your comments on these possibilities, and any new suggestions or ideas you might have, to letters@nag.co.za.

There is very little in this world as thrilling as watching a horde of zerglings descend upon a squadron

The Death of the Intro Movie

of marines, held up in a rain-flooded trench, their air support soaring away overhead (making one beauty of a roar on a good subwoofer, I might add), leaving them defenseless as the carnage begins. For those of you who have played StarCraft Broodwar, you will know precisely what I mean - what I have just described is from the introduction cinematic. It set the mood of the game perfectly, got adrenalin flowing and pushed excitement levels high. But with the advances in real-time 3D rendering technology, good old fashioned intro movies have fallen by the wayside. There is only one reason for this, and it isn't even an acceptable one. Quite simply, developers are getting bloody lazy. The only reason they put work into the movies before was because the gameplay was 2D.

Now all we get are the poor excuses for intro movies known as "in-engine cinematics". And it isn't only introductions that are suffering. I won't even begin to rant about how terrible the ending movies have become since developers started to believe they could get away with doing it all in real-time. Real-time rendered graphics are infantile

finger-paintings in comparison to what can be pre-rendered. Where the crucial story points would formerly unfold in hours and hours of breathtaking splendour, we

are being forced to suffer through low-polygon, flat-textured, aliased in-game graphics with unrealistic physics. Not to mention how slow everything runs because, let's face it, the majority of us don't have the cash to put out for a Radeon 9800. (Another wonderful facet of pre-rendered cinematics is that they ran well on even the lowest end systems. But no, developers don't care).

Even Blizzard Entertainment, who were once the champions of great cinematics, have become lackadaisical and produced only a few seconds of computer generated animation for only two cutscenes in an entire game during which absolutely no action happens (The Frozen Throne). The most important part of the story was handled in-engine and was over before you could blink.

Where will it end?!

I cry out in the hopes that, somewhere, a developer will hear my pleas, wake up, and start making gripping cinematics again. It is guaranteed to boost sales of just about anything - I think we're that desperate.

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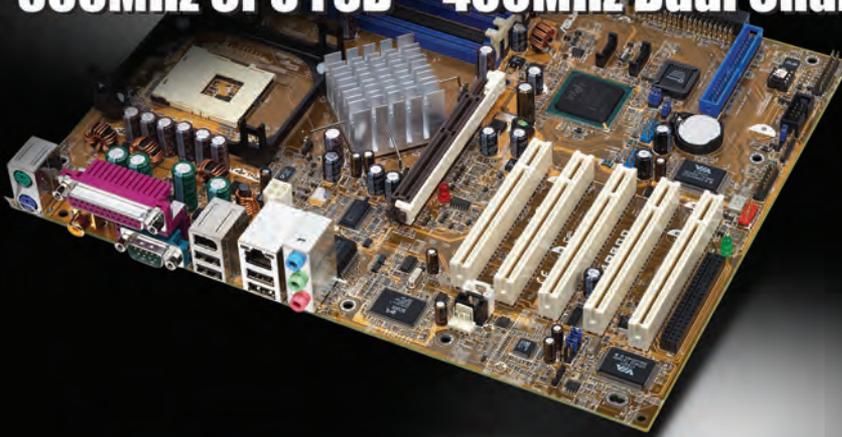
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By Randy Wilhelm, Vice President and General Manager of the Intel Chipset Division

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I have, of late, been hanging around with a lot of people who like to do the whole organisational thing. Well, actually, I haven't really been hanging around with them, but I have been doing a lot of eavesdropping, and I have noticed something that makes me alternately angry and amused. It seems that there is no pleasing anyone - especially not hardcore-gamers...

The whole idea of "cyber-athletes" was, at one time, a bit ridiculous to me. I didn't see the point to it, really. But I admit defeat on that point. The world trend has shown that slacker, game loving geeks can actually make money from their hobby and, I am very surprised to say, a large number of these people are incredibly dedicated to their, err... sport.

The world of international cyber-competition is, for all I can see, a vibrant and exciting one, with many huge events catering for these Information Age athletes. Locally, too, this trend can be observed, as more and more gamers start taking part in a growing number of serious events.

But all in not well. In fact, my eavesdropping has lead me to one conclusion - South African hardcore gamers are a bunch of whining brats that don't appreciate a thing that is done for them. And nothing is ever their fault. Never ever ever. Lost a game? It had to be the supplied PC, right? Because there is in no way any chance of their arrogant, pig headed, self involved, over inflated, adolescent egos accepting the fact that they might actually not be God's gift to gaming. Not a chance.

Cash prizes? "We want hardware... WAAAAH!"
Hardware prizes? "We want cash... WAAAAH!"
"I can't take a sponsored, all expenses paid trip



REAL letters (wow):

To My Dearest Beloved Rampage I admit it, I'm a huge fan of yours. I can't get enough of you. I've even seen you around town a few times (stalking is such a nasty word). I really like the clothes your mom dresses you in. That Quake III bib is da bomb! And I wouldn't worry about that speech impediment - I've heard that it goes away after you have sex for the first time. That type of acne only leaves scars until your 40, so nothing to worry about there. As for any other concerns that you may have about your appearance, emergency reconstructive dental surgery and insoles can fix them in no time. So you're just perfect. I love the way I can smell you from over a block away. I'll write again soon. Don't forget to wash behind those cute satellite-dish ears!
All my love
Morgue[FLB]

I may be ugly, but at least I am not stupid. And the name is RamJET, you intellectual train wreck!

Wow.. i have got to say, since your letters have

come back to NAG, i have been getting a good laugh. No offence to the rest of the reviewers who do write really funny articles, and yes they do make me laugh.

But you just say it how it is. Btw, who does those art works for you, or where do you get them from. Because they are very well done.

Ultra Lord

Stryke does the drawings for this page.

I just wanted to say people(idiots who call themselves gamers) don't have comon sense anymore. I just read ramjets MATURE article on reviews all people have differtnt personalitys,likes and dislikes, its what makes us human.then u come apon some nutcase like THE_BASILISK and EVILKING who think everything they believe is right. OH and by the way INTEL is the BEST and I just put a INTLEL sticker on my moms BMW unknownsoldierx2003

I think I should say thanks, but I am not too sure... And I use an AMD machine.

overseas as a prize because I have exams... WAAAAH! It's your fault that I was dumb enough to enter this competition, knowing that I was in Matric... WAAAAH!"

My question, which I pose to the organisers of these events, in this country at least, is this: Why bother? Why put up with the constant, infantile whining that these people deluge you with? I have no idea if the international community is anything like the snivelling "hardcore" gamers in this country, but I seem to think that the complaining is our epidemic. Or is it a prerequisite for these people to be arrogant, ungrateful, offensive idiots the world over.

I hope the people who organise these events in this country throw in the towel. I hope they move on to satisfying and wonderful things. I hope organised competitive gaming in South Africa comes to an end, because you "hardcore" geeks DESERVE it!

Grow the hell up! The world owes you nothing, kiddo...

suckermail:

the truth, at last

We get quite a lot of these types of letters. I decided to respond to one, so you guys get the real truth. And I have mercifully left the name of the guy who sent it out. However, you know who you are...

excuse to not get a real job.

1) What is your typical day like?
Wake up. Slack off. Sleep.

8) What's the hardest part of your job?
Coming up with the rubbish I write every month.

2) Of all the things you did to prepare for this job what helped you the most?
My second lobotomy.

9) What do you think the future looks like for this kind of career?
I never think about the future. Live for today, I say.

3) What two or three skills help you the most in doing your job?
Arrogance, narrowmindedness and a good dose of stupidity.

10) What kind of salary can I expect?
Don't make me laugh.

11) If you had a chance to do things over again, what would you change?
Not much. Except I think I would prefer rich parents...

4) How did you learn these skills?
I hung around with the_basilisk for a couple of weeks.

12) What motivates you in your job? What makes you feel really excited about it?
The fact that people actually take me seriously. It's amazing, really.

5) What kind of education did you need for this job?
It's not the education that counts. It's how well you lie on the application forms.

13) What kind of personality does well in a career like this?
As little personality as possible.

6) What kind of courses should I take in high school to prepare me for this job? What kind of education will I need after high school?
See above.

14) Is there a question you think I should have asked to better understand this career?
Yes. Why?

7) What do you like most about this career?
I wouldn't actually call it a career... it's more like an

15) Is there any other advice you'd like to give me?
Get a real job. And don't eat the yellow snow.

Disclaimer: The letters printed as part of this article are real (believe it or not) and are printed verbatim, with only a little selective editing. Makes you think, doesn't it. In fact, it really points at the fact that there are people out there who shouldn't be allowed to write with anything but wax crayons. That includes Ramjet, by the way.

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GET READY TO PLAY...



alt.gaming:

Welcome to our new look role playing section... although calling it a role playing section will no longer really be accurate. From this month onwards, we add two more alternative interests that have proven popular with PC gamers.

Firstly, we welcome Magic: The Gathering back to the magazine, and look forward to some intuitive, informative and interesting articles about the world's biggest trading card game. Additionally, we present a section on comics. Written by true experts, this section will look into the complex and entertaining world of the modern comic.

So, without further ado, we present you with our new section, called alt.gaming...

universalis

There are many ideas that have entered the realm of role playing games, and it seems that quite a number of them are trying to be as original as they can be. But seldom do new games come along that are quite as original as this...

Enter Universalis. This is the freshest concept in role playing that I have seen in many a year. Instead of using the age old "Game Master and Players" approach,

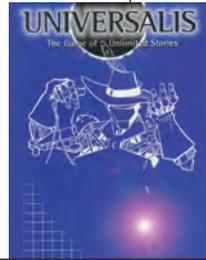
Universalis does something entirely different. This game has no game master as such - rather, the players all contribute to creating the story using a system of coins to bid for the right to affect the game. It is a novel idea, I must admit, but call me old fashioned... I don't know how well it will work. Universalis will require a special kind of role playing group - an ideal group, in fact, to work the way it should.

That said, after having given the game a

try, I must say that it's great fun for something different. It can lead to a vast variety of oddities and weirdness, particularly if you play with the kind of people I play with!

It's a game that you will either love or hate. You'll

have to give it a try to find out.



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PRICE: R165.00 average
E-MAIL: adams.west@saol.com



This year is the 10th anniversary of Magic: The Gathering (MTG), a collectible trading card game which has over one million players worldwide. MTG is a game of strategy, based in a fantasy world where players are wizards who use powerful spells to overcome their opponents.

How does it work?

MTG is a turn based game, similar to chess. The difference is that it is resource based, plus you have more than 3000 pieces from which to choose. There are 5 basic schools of Magic. Each school use their own resources, called lands which produce mana to cast spells (cards).

School of White Magic: The forces of good. Knights and Soldiers. This school uses lands called plains as their source of white mana.

School of Black Magic: The minions of evil, zombies and disruption. The black school uses lands called swamps to produce black mana.

School of Blue Magic: Water based magic based on manipulation and control. Blue magic being based on water use islands to produce blue mana.

School of Red Magic: Fire, brimstone, Goblins and Chaos. These forces use the power of red mana, which comes from the mountains.

School of Green Magic: The magic of nature, growth and beasts. This comes from the forests of the world, which produce green mana.

In the game you build a deck of 60 cards, made up of lands (resources) and spells. You can choose to play a single colour or make a deck with multiple colours. To start a game you shuffle your deck face down to randomize your draws. The game starts with each player drawing a hand of seven cards from their own deck. You then draw one card at the start of each turn. Turn by turn you build up your strategy to win the game. The objective of the game is to reduce your opponent's life total from 20 to 0 before he can do the same to you. You do this in one of two ways; attacking him with fantastic creatures (Creature spells), which you summon to your aid, or with spells which can deal damage directly to your opponent. There is also another win or loss condition, which is seldom reached. That is, a player will lose when they have no more cards left in their deck. This rule limits the game in time really, allowing for a win condition in stale-mate situations.

However it does get more fun as there are other types of spells, which can aid in the process of beating your opponent. There are sorcery spells that can help draw you more cards, or kill all your opponents' creatures. There are also instant speed spells that allow you to manipulate situations to your own advantage during your opponents

10 years of Magic

turn, for example making your creatures stronger than his, or by giving them a protective shield, or even gaining some life back, or even countering an opponents spell. Over and above Creature Spells, Sorcery Spells and Instant Spells there are powerful artifacts and enchantments, which can aid your cause or even combine to create powerful combinations that if left un-stopped will win the game. The beauty of the game is that there are endless combinations that can be created to make for exciting and changing environment of play. Due to the random shuffling of cards and playing with your deck face down, you will be guaranteed never to have the same game twice.

So what attracts people to play this game?

This is the cool part. The game attracts people for many reasons.

The first reason is the artwork and presentation of the cards, this catches most people's attention. The game is rich in its fantasy base with cards like dragons and angels having awesome artwork. It captures the imagination of beasts fighting men. MTG is also a very dynamic game, which you can play many ways. One-on-one or multiplayer. You can also form teams. This allows for hours of social fun with friends. You can play decks which must be 200 hundred cards or 60. An average single player game usually lasts for about 30 minutes.

It is of course also a collectable trading card game so the collection aspect also plays a part. You can collect all the cards of a specific set. New sets of cards are released periodically to keep the game changing and challenging. There are also premium cards which can fetch a nice price for collectors. Cards range in rarity, you get common, uncommon and rare cards. Some of the better rare cards can be worth up to R100. The other aspect of the game which attracts many players, is the sanctioned competition. There is an international body called the DCI who regulates all sanctioned play worldwide. There is official prize support for local events. In South Africa there are regular tournaments held every weekend in all the major cities. There are also pro-tour qualifier rounds. In the event of winning one of these tournaments you get a sponsorship to help you attend a pro-tour stop. Each pro-tour stop has \$200 000 prize money! So to get a chance at winning a first place \$30 000 cheque is great incentive to play the game. (Note: there will be one of these qualifiers coming up at rAge 2003!)

The game is also heavily based on statistics. So if you have a thing for statistics you could enjoy the game. One player even did their statistics thesis on the probabilities of drawing out a certain combo in their deck!

That all being said the best way to learn about that game is to see it being played. The game is sold and played at hobby stores around the country. There will also be demo stands at rAge 2003. Plus websites have loads of info where you can learn more about the game: www.wizards.com the manufacturers; www.geon.co.za the local distributors; or less formally www.magicthegathering.com; or locally www.thegathering.co.za or www.molimosoutpost.za.net. Join the Gathering and have some fun!

What are comics?

Comics are one the youngest mutations of popular amusement. Although the process of sequential and serial layering of stories in picture form, has been described and codified for many years before the invention of the printing press, such as the famous Tapestry of Bayeux. The Tapestry of Bayeux shows the Battle of Hastings with Haley's Comet in the sky and it displays the form, execution and even the speech bubbles showing us comic sensibilities that have been lurking in classical art.

Anatomy of Comics

Comics are a visual description of process. The process need not follow chronological accuracy, but rather a contextual layering of information limited by a book's dimensions - a cover to cover capsule. Comics are not just pictures with words, nor are they the mixtures of movies and novels. The closest approximation of the comic medium is to the movie storyboard with added dialogue balloons. But, the difference is that the storyboard frame sets up details and specific highlights of what needs to be filmed. The spaces between a comic's panels are critical in the timing and execution of a comic's story. It is the place where the reader subconsciously inserts her own continuity in the blind spot between what he/she is told in the panels.

History

Comics, as mentioned above, have roots of progression within history. Comics parallel the growth of commercial art and graphic design from the mid-to late 19th century. When the mechanical process of reproduction became faster and cheaper, so did the comic medium flourish. Graphic design and comics are hydra heads of the same field of exploration of art through experimentation and techniques. Comics and commercial graphic design almost incestuously dip into each other's creativity.

American Mainstream Comics

Comics are divided into three geographical buds. American, European and Asian comics are the main mutations of the comic formula - methods of storytelling and interpretation of modern myths. American comics are the most recognisable and prolific outside America and so are concentrated on in this article. American comics revolutionised the early comic ideal by re-introducing ancient, archetypal god-, magician- and hero-forms forced from Olympus or Valhalla to protect

or exploit the mere mortals on earth. As education improved, science replaced magic as the epitome of reality's creative drive, and the heavens and hells become uniformed with technology and space travel.



The Americans restyled gods into the commonly recognised superhero motif. Unfortunately 99% of American comics still paint with the same brush. The speculative creativity has dwindled to a few gems located within papery mountains of tedium. By far the majority of superhero comics have characters that are untouchable with amazing abilities and staggering technology, and paradoxically display infantile urges of rage, physical dominance and invasions of demarcated territories.

Alternative Comics

The American social engine is noted for showing disapproval of dissident thought. This is also strong in comics. Most of American comics either display the glut of superhero forms or simple day-in-the-life-of stories. There is evidence that alternative comics borrow from much more refined European tastes. This can be attributed to the fact that a few enterprising American companies have head hunted these European artists who put new spins on superheroes to remarkable mainstream success.

Despite supposed intellectual superiority, the American alternative comic industry is divided into two categories: those that are dissidents opposed to the incumbent political machine, and those that are opposed to the market glut of superhero fixation.

Finale

This is the very basic introduction to the comic medium. In future issues, specific genres, titles, writers and artists will be profiled.

(Special thanks to E. Myburgh)

everquest rpg

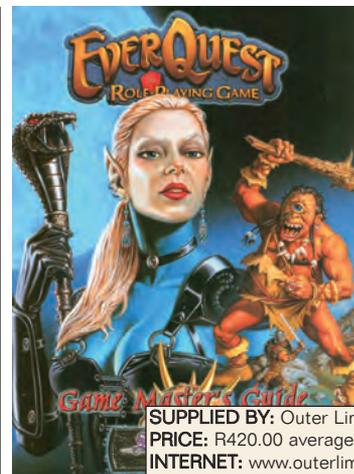
There has been quite a cross pollination between pencil and paper role playing and computer role playing. With games based on D&D, Vampire: The Masquerade, Deadlands and Call of Cthulhu, the computer gaming industry certainly draws a lot from the world of role playing. Every now and then, though, things work the other way round...

Everquest is an incredibly popular persistent online universe, set in a fantasy world and visited by thousands of players every day. Everquest has never been huge locally, due to no local distribution of the title, but there are those in South Africa

who do play the game.

Designed to mirror the online game, the role playing game from Sword and Sorcery Studios presents a new view of the world of Everquest.

Here we have a solid game, with a good system and a very detailed setting. However, there is a point where it becomes "just another fantasy game." Taking a PC fantasy game and turning it into a role playing title is not necessarily going to result in a good game, and the stiff competition out there means that only true fans of Everquest will even take notice of this one. It should, for all intents and purposes, have stayed on the PC.



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INTERNET: www.outerlimits.co.za

by Anton Lines

Learning Japanese, Part 6

We have been looking at Japanese for a little over half a year now, and hopefully all you budding linguists have been rewarded with some valuable insight. There are many reasons to be interested in learning the language fluently, not just being able to watch anime without the subtitles.

Japan is one of the more influential nations on earth, and represents a large portion of the world's business and artistic culture. Not to mention the language is a particularly beautiful, lyrical and expressive one, and as I have said before, it is relatively easy to learn. The next step would be to lay your hands on a good Japanese textbook and dictionary (as I have done), or take a course, either privately or through a formal institution. Last I heard, the University of the Witwatersrand is offering a (non-degree) Japanese language course.

Next month will feature the first of several articles entitled "Anime Legends" - people in the industry who have taken the art form to new levels and are generally regarded as the best at what they do. But to end off the language series I will leave you with more anime-related words, phrases and sentences you can either look out for in the shows or use to confuse / insult / compliment people in everyday conversation.

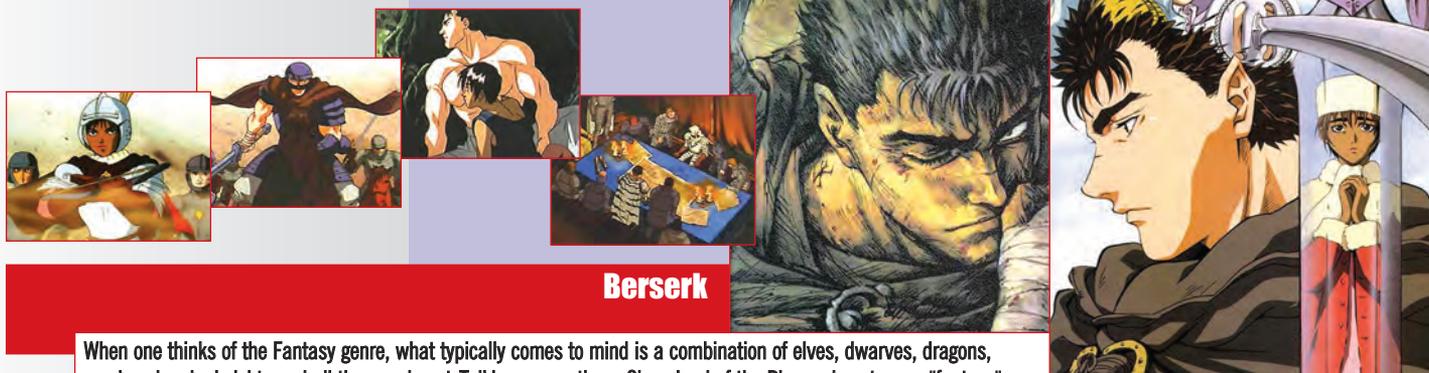
Japanese

Akemashite omedetou
 Chotto mate
 Daijoubu desu ka?
 Dou itashimashite
 Itadakimasu

 Kareshi / Kanojo
 Koko made oide!
 Kono anime wa ikura desu ka?
 Masaka!
 Moshi moshi
 Suki da
 Sumimasen
 Wakatta

English

Happy new year
 Wait a bit! / Wait a minute! / Wait up!
 Are you all right?
 You're welcome
 Expression of gratitude before eating.
 Literally: "I begin to eat".
 Boyfriend / Girlfriend
 Come and get me!
 How much is this anime?
 Impossible!
 Hello (used over the telephone)
 I like you / I love you
 Excuse me
 I understand



Berserk

When one thinks of the Fantasy genre, what typically comes to mind is a combination of elves, dwarves, dragons, magic, wizards, knights and all the usual post-Tolkien conventions. Since Lord of the Rings, almost every "fantasy" storyline has followed the same path, forsaking that ever-important little quality called originality. So it was an absolute breath of fresh air to come across Berserk, which takes a wonderfully inventive approach to alternate-world fantasy, combining it with fascinating politics and characters that display the utmost depth and feeling. The animation and soundtrack are both of exceptional quality and leave the audience with a compulsion to keep on watching for days straight. In short, the creators of the show did just about everything right.

A shadowy figure known as the Black Swordsman has arrived in town. (The grim tone of the series is set almost immediately by a wagon that rattles past him in the street, carrying a group of frightened, captive children). The news of his arrival spreads quickly, eventually reaching the castle and its not-quite-human ruler. This ruler has been expecting the Black Swordsman, and prepares to give him a warm welcome - the gratuitous slaughter of all the city's denizens. After the resolution of the impending conflict (a truly fascinating introduction to the main character, his abilities, and his situation), we are taken back to before it all started. From there on, the life of Gatts (the warrior who will someday be known as the Century Slayer and eventually the Black Swordsman) unfolds before our eyes. Still in his youth, Gatts is already a powerful warrior who attracts the attention of the leader of a mercenary band who, by virtue of a challenge, convinces (or forces) Gatts to join him. The man, Griffith, has his sights set on becoming more than just a mercenary and, using the combined skill of himself and Gatts, he goes about working towards his own kingdom. There is something strange about Griffith though, symbolised in a rather paranormal amulet he wears, called Behelit.

All throughout the series there is an underlying thread of fear and anticipation, as if something terrible is always about to happen, but never does. When things eventually start to heat up, the audience is pulled in plot directions the likes of which I have never seen before. If you are even partial to the genre of medieval fantasy, Berserk will not let you go until the very end. An interesting piece of trivia: Gatts is often incorrectly referred to as "Gatsu". This happens because his name is phonetically the closest to Japanese out of all the European names used in the series. Griffith is also sometimes called "Gurifisu" by the other characters (due to the Japanese pronunciation of the voice actors), but the mistake is not made with him, since "Griffith" is fairly common in the western world, where "Gatts" is not.

Genre: Fantasy
Year: 1997
Producer: VAP
Format: Series
Episodes: 25
Language: Japanese with English subtitles
Availability: Uncommon

Concept	9
Story	10
Soundtrack	9
Characters	9
Animation	8
Translation	7
Total Score (out of 100)	95

An Otaku Outing to Chinatown



We've all watched an anime and said to ourselves "Man I wonder what Ramen tastes like?" or

perhaps "Where can I get some real good Japanese Sake? I'd really like to try that stuff" ...

Well we here at Black Blade got sick and tired of not knowing where and how to get hold of these much craved Japanese and Asian foodstuffs here in our country where Boerewors and Braai vies reign supreme, so we went on a local expedition.

We had always known that there was a large Chinese community somewhere in and around the Bruma Lake (JHB) area... the next step was to find out where they got their supplies.

After a little bit of asking around we were told that

there in fact was a Chinatown in the Cyrildene area, not far from Bruma Lake itself. It was time to investigate!

Elin and myself jumped into the Pontiac and headed off in the general direction of Bruma Lake, and after some driving around were surprised to find a street lined with Asian stores; a whole range of goods were on offer, from hairdressers to electronics... and of course many a Chinese Supermarket offered their intriguing and mysterious wares. The next step was to find Japanese foodstuffs (Anime is Japanese after all).

Amongst the rows and rows of interesting and



unidentifiable Chinese wares we started to spot products with signature Hiragana and Katakana Japanese characters printed on them. We had found what we'd been looking for; not only did we find good quality Sake, but we had found a treasure-trove of Japanese snacks, sweets, sushi ingredients and various other items from Japan (including sake serving flasks and instant noodles). Another store that caught our attention was a store packed with Manga, we'd never seen so much Manga in our lives... we were even more surprised to find out that it was not for sale, but for rent.. (sorry guys it's in Chinese only). Chinatown has now become one of our frequent destinations, one can enjoy a real Chinese meal in one of the many restaurants lining the main street (be warned, these places may not cater for the average western palette) and there's always something new and interesting to sample.

What do you know about manga style art? the transition of black blade

While sitting here at work with nothing better to do, my thoughts turned to anime and manga, as they frequently do, and I got onto thinking about the manga styles that I like the most. Well, one interesting thought lead to another, and I got to thinking about all the wholly different styles of the manga artists which look completely different, and yet are unmistakably Japanese.

What is it that makes Japanese comic art so different from American comic art? It's a rock solid fact that artists follow certain trends, so there must be something that links all artists of a certain type. Perhaps a bit of history. As many of you well know, if there's one thing the Japanese can appreciate, it's the simplicity of things in general. This side of the Japs may have been more apparent back in feudal times, where it could be seen in their decorating methods, their clothing designs and, indeed, in their artwork. They came to the realisation that drawing a circle with two dots and a curved line it could more easily give the impression of a face than the most lavishly detailed portrait. And though this trend has evolved over hundreds of years, the basic idea is the same. Compare your average anime character's face to your average western comic character's face. See which one is more detailed? Yep, the western one. In manga faces, complicated emotions can be clearly displayed by appropriately adjusting the lines making up the eyebrows, eyelids, nose and mouth. A lot of the time, the outfit a manga character is wearing may be ten times more detailed than the character herself. And it works, too. This love of simplicity is but one of the defining factors. Newbies seem to like to latch onto the big eyes and unlimited hair colour as the most defining traits, and it's not entirely unjustified, when speaking strictly of anime that is. Almost all manga is in black and white, so hair colour

is a rather ineffective sign as far as manga goes. There are a number of other traits to look out for. Firstly there's the Japanese flat shading technique for adding shadows, which stems from the simplicity concept. In general, Japanese comic artists don't crosshatch. Crosshatching, for those who don't know, is the use of parallel lines drawn at ever increasing or decreasing distances from each other to indicate depth of gradient. One could use the technique to give perspective to things that have depth, like a road going into the distance, or to indicate a hardening or softening of textures or shadows, as in a lot of western comics. But the Japanese tend to have two states, shadowed or non-shadowed and nothing in between. Deftly handled, this technique can impart as much of a feeling of depth as cross-hatching and provide a style that is very clean and pleasing to the eye. You do, however, get your exceptions to the rules, like Masamune Shirow and Hiroaki Samura, who use the cross-hatching techniques wantonly and with reckless abandon. Likewise, I'm sure you get some western comic artists who use the flat shading technique. The way the hair is drawn, and not just the fact that it can be any colour, is also a good indicator for manga. To the untrained eye, hair with those typical anime/manga style highlights is easier to identify, but time and experience will reveal more traits, such as the kind of hair styles and hair accessories that are the mainstay of manga. Then there's the ever popular Japanese schoolgirl uniforms that are a dead giveaway, as are the panty-shots that are likely to accompany them. Now both Japanese and American style comics make laboured and unethical use of scantily clad women or flesh exposure for a certain amount of appeal, but the Japanese comics in general come across with a slightly naughtier edge by focusing on things that aren't meant to be viewed, such as panties, when compared to, say, a small swimsuit.

These trends get carried across from manga into anime with few differences. Once you've seen enough anime and manga, you'll never be able to mistake it again, even the unusual stuff is anchored by certain traits and I'm sure you will all know them if you do not already.

Serpent's Monthly Character Bio

Name: Sena Robin **Title:** Witch Hunter
Favorite colour: Black **Favorite hobby:** Burning things
Famous Quote: ... Amon ...

From the following anime: Witch Hunter Robin
Robin, gifted from birth with the ability to use "the craft" has recently joined the STNJ. The STNJ is the Japanese branch of a secret global organization focused on monitoring and removing any potential threats as far as witchcraft is concerned. Powers of "the craft" are passed on genetically, and the STNJ has a database of everyone born with the potential to utilize this power; these people are monitored closely and if any of them discover their powers and begin to use them, the STNJ send out a hunting party to capture the said witch before too much damage is caused. Sena Robin was born in Japan but raised in an Italian convent, she has the power of controlling flame, able to create barriers of protection, as well as being able to burn things at will. However she cannot control her power fully, and although she is an invaluable asset to the STNJ, she may yet turn out to be a target of the very organization she works for.

Serpent



lazy gamer's guide:

Is it a phone? Is it a console? Is it any good?

All your questions will be answered as we take a serious look at the **Nokia N-Gage**



The technical specs

Inside the N-Gage you'll find:

CPU: 104 MHz ARM processor

Operating Frequency: Tri-Band GSM 900/1800/1900

Size: Weight 4.83 ounces (with standard battery)

Dimensions: 5.26 x 2.74 x .80 inches

Display: 176 x 208 (backlit)

Colours: 4096 colours, 12-bit

Tomb Raider

Tomb Raider for the N-Gage is reportedly based on Tomb Raider II but the version we played didn't feature the outside training section and the first level is 'Caves' as per the original game. Apparently the final game will feature new levels so that's something to look forward to.

The game feels exactly like Tomb Raider so well done there, the only hassle is getting used to the new controls and the fact that you need to tap the directional pad to stop Lara from running - this is an odd play dynamic choice from the developer. From a looks point of view the graphics are fully detailed and surprisingly crisp overall. The engine does a decent job of shunting the level around and the game also sounds exactly like you remember. Full review when we get the finished game.



Blue tooth?

The N-Gage is the first hand held to support full wireless gaming, if you don't count the small games on PDAs. This means you'll be able to play with anyone else in your vicinity who are playing the same game on their N-Gage, without having to connect any wires.

Media

The N-Gage supports FM radio, as well as playback from MP3, AAC, WAV and Midi. Everything can be transferred from your PC to the N-Gage via a 1.1 USB connector. The phone ships with its own management software, but it works fine as a removable drive in XP.

The screen

The N-Gage has a rather unconventional screen, sized at 176x208 pixels, making it a portrait view (opposite to the landscape view opted for by other handhelds). Whether this was a good gamble for Nokia remains to be seen, but the visual quality is good and the screen is capable of displaying 4096 colours.

The Battery life

How long will the N-Gage last you?

Talk Time: 2-4 hours

Standby: 150-200 hours

Music: Up to 8 hours

Radio: Up to 20 hours

Games: 3-6 hours



Some of the games

A gaming platform is nothing without its titles. Here are some of the games you can expect...

Tomb Raider

Sonic N

Super Monkey Ball

Pandemonium

Tony Hawk Pro Skater

Red Faction

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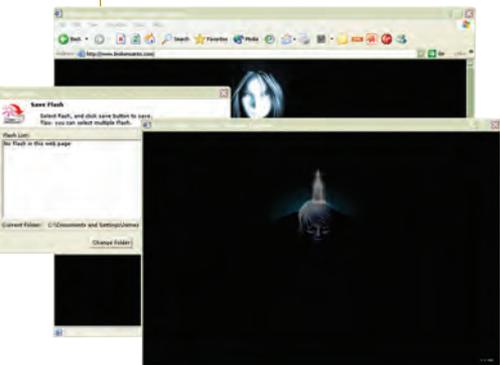
It seems to be that a few years ago, you could be relatively safe from viruses. Then worms appeared and managed to tunnel their way around the Internet, creating bandwidth-eating chaos. Now there are more aggressive viruses appearing again, causing real mayhem on PCs around the world. The irony is that most of these programs wouldn't be a problem if people didn't inadvertently spread them around. Most of the time users don't know they've just unleashed a worm on their system, only because they clicked on an attachment or copied and executed an infected file on their machine. You can protect yourself with an anti-virus program, and if you are a home-user, you don't even need to pay for it. Avast is one of the spans of companies who have a free, home version of their software. And it comes with all of the bells and whistles you'd need in an AV suite: browser protection, email protection, system scanning and so on. It also updates its definitions via the Internet, as is standard with these programs, so there's no excuse why you aren't up to date. The software does require you to register, for free, and you need a valid email address to do that - though in the months that I've been using them, they haven't spammed me once, so it's a safe move.



Flashcatcher

You just saw the most awesome Flash movie, and you want it for yourself! The problem is - how do you save it? Getting Flash from a website is quite tricky, since the software itself doesn't allow you to do so. Instead, it usually means trawling the web page for the file's link, or trying to find the movie in your Internet cache.

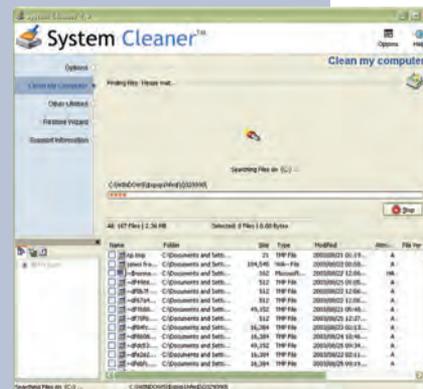
Flashcatcher eliminates this problem by allowing you to save the files directly to your hard drive. You can hover over the movie, and a toolbar to save the file will appear. Or you can click on the Flashcatcher icon in the Toolbar and it will list all of the flash movies in the current page, letting you choose which to save. Unfortunately Flashcapture only gives you a certain amount of saves before it disables itself, this is the only program on the market that does it so well. Flashcatcher doesn't work with tabbed browsers such as Opera or Slimbrowser.



System Cleaner

Your hard drive is a vastly complicated and busy metropolis of data, changing places every second. Every day, or week, new software arrives either through your own hands or through updates and a myriad of other means. Being connected to the Internet only makes things even more complicated. Every machine should have a clean-up regime where you scan your hard drive, defrag it, and back it up at regular intervals. You should also do regular Registry checks, and every now and then clean the machine from clutter. System Cleaner is ideal for the latter job.

It does a scan of your system for dead files, broken links, dead directories, cache files and so on. These are conveniently listed, and you can choose what you want done with them. There are also extra utilities,



such as keeping your Internet and system history clean, making the system more secure, removing useless Uninstall information from the Registry, and managing the Windows startup section. System Cleaner is Shareware, though, and will expire after 30 days. You do get programs for free that do some of the same jobs, but not as well, or all bundled together.

QTracker

Play games online? Then install QTracker - it's as simple as that. Granted, playing beyond our shores is a bit silly if you don't have decent bandwidth, but there are more local servers than you think, especially with the appearance of ADSL.

QTracker allows you to select the regions that you want to search, and backs it with a huge game database. Okay, you're not likely to find servers for all of those games, but this is the best way to find that elusive bit of online fragging you so desperately need in your favourite game.

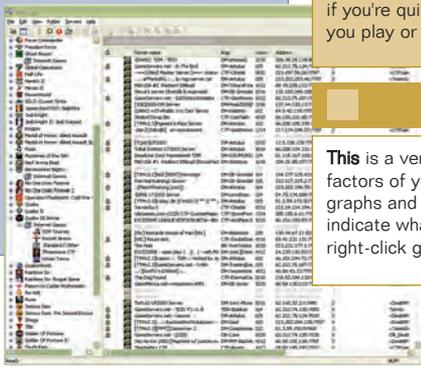
The software takes a while to update its lists, so give it a chance, and remember to refresh each individual list initially to get the server list from the QTracker server. QTracker allows you to ping a server or traceroute it. You can also monitor specific servers or players, if you're quite set on where you play or who with.



4T Tray Minimizer

The biggest problem with running a lot of applications at once, especially ones that are open most of the time, but you barely use them (like your mail program) is that they take up space on the taskbar. While some software comes with the option to minimize to the system tray, far too few programs have this nifty feature. So in comes 4T Tray Minimizer. It's free and it's very easy to use. All you do is configure the programs you want to have minimized.

This is made even easier with the small icon inside Tray Minimizer, which you can drag to an application window, thus grabbing all its info. Then it's a matter of setting shortcuts (i.e. Should it minimize to tray when you click on the Minimize button, etc), and a few other settings - and you're done!



Coolbeans System Info

This is a very simple, very small program that hovers on your desktop and has graphs for various performance factors of your machine, such as your CPU, RAM, network traffic, and so on. You can change the colours of the graphs and so on, but it takes a bit of educated guessing to find out what is what, because strangely the app doesn't indicate what it's monitoring. Still, it's useful to have around if you don't have something like this already. A simple right-click gives you access to all of the options for the program.

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PlayStation 2

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Recently London held its annual games week, sporting everything from ECTS and the PlayStation Experience to the Nintendo truck and the European Game Developers Conference. But it's all about the games, and NAG was there to weed out the good, bad and the ugly. Trust us, you're going to want to hang around the gaming scene for at least a few more months...

LONDON GAMES WEEK

The London Games Week recently took place in the British capital, representing a host of events, both for the public and industry folk only. NAG got shipped there for two days, frantically running around the two main events of the week - ECTS and the PlayStation 2 Experience, trying to get some of the scoops on what you might expect in the next few months.

PlayStation®2
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ECTS vs. E3 vs. TGS vs. GDC

There are several game shows being held all over the world, each with their own appeal. The most related, though, are E3 (Electronic Entertainment Expo) and ECTS (Electronic Consumer Trade Show). Both are trade events, which mean industry and press folk only. E3 is by far the largest, taking up most of the huge LA Convention Center every year, while ECTS is a much smaller affair, taking the main hall at Earl's Court, London. E3 is represented by the Entertainment Software Association (ESA), a body that represents most US publishers, while ECTS is part of the Entertainment & Leisure Software Publishers Association (ELSPA), who represent European publishers. The Tokyo Game Show (TGS) is the other major game expo every year, representing the vital Japanese market. Presented by the Computer Entertainment Suppliers Association (CESA) it's the best place to find out what the Far Eastern market (including the likes of Sony, Square/Enix and Nintendo) are planning for the next year. The Game Developers Conference (GDC) takes place several times a year all over the world, and is a International Game Developers Association (IGDA) initiative. The IGDA has a lot going on, with dozens of events throughout the years by their various chapters. The Tokyo chapter is also a supporter of TGS.



LGW Apocalyptica

Developer: Konami | Publisher: Konami | Q4 2003

Konami headline their return to making original PC games with Apocalyptica, a third-person action shooter where you choose between good and evil, and fight for that side. In the future an evil dictator stands on the brink of destroying mankind, and it's up to you what happens. A blend of gunplay and swordplay, mixed with a heavy religious and post-apocalyptic theme.

PC | ~~PS2~~ | ~~GCN~~ | ~~XBOX~~



LGW Beyond Good & Evil

Developer: Ubisoft | Publisher: Ubisoft | Q4 2003

A curious 3rd person action/adventure title where you uncover a conspiracy your government has been hiding for ages. The game has a strange mixture between stealth, investigation and combat, complimented with good graphics and fluid controls. One to watch...

PC | PS2 | GCN | XBOX



LGW Castlevania: Lament of Innocence

Developer: Konami | Publisher: Konami | Q4 2003

This legendary series finally arrives on the PlayStation 2, and comes in glorious 3D. Serving a prequel chapter to the saga, you get to investigate the origins of the conflict between Dracula and the notorious Belmont family.

~~PS2~~ | ~~GCN~~ | ~~XBOX~~

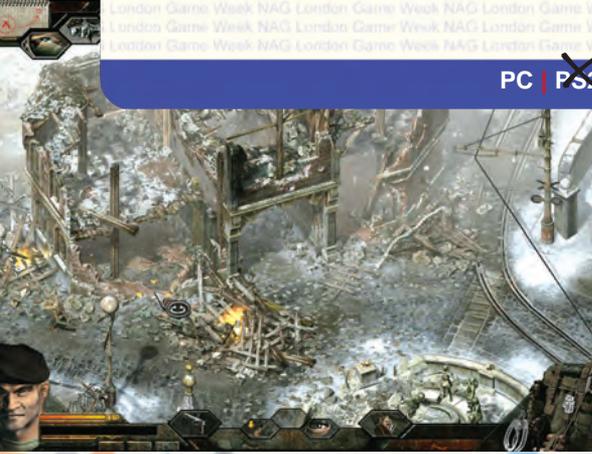


LGW Commandos 3: Destination Berlin

Developer: Pyro Studios | Publisher: Eidos | Q4 2003

Opting for smaller maps, less units with more skills and an enhanced engine sporting outside 3D elements and fully 3D interiors, the third game in the series is a significant step forward. New features include the ability to switch between the three campaigns, as well as a tutorial section for new players.

PC | ~~PS2~~ | ~~GCN~~ | ~~XBOX~~

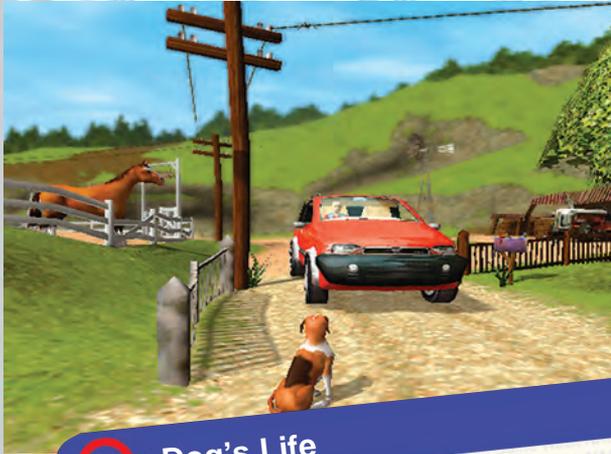


LGW Deus Ex: The Invisible War

Developer: Ion storm | Publisher: Eidos | Q1 2004

Though the game still has some development left to go, it's shaping up nicely. In the sequel you play a completely new character, either as a female or male, as you have to find out why a religious cult wants to destroy your organization, and why your superiors are spying on you... It's the sequel to one of the best action RPG titles in recent years, and introduces new elements such as mod chips and a more open-ended story approach.

PC | ~~PS2~~ | ~~GCN~~ | ~~XBOX~~



LGW Dog's Life

Developer: Frontier Development | Publisher: SCEE | TBA

Ever wanted to have a dog's life? This strange title from SCEE really feels like it is supposed to come from Nintendo, but it is Sony, and it's really interesting. After one of your friends gets kidnapped you go out to find him, smelling, digging, swimming, herding (and all other dog activities) your way along in the open-ended and intuitive world.

~~PS2~~ | ~~GCN~~ | ~~XBOX~~

LGW Destruction Derby: Arenas

Developer: Studio 33 | Publisher: SCEE | TBA

Destruction Derby arrives on the PS2 with a whole bag of new tricks. The game will feature 20 new cars, as well as unlockable cars and characters. There are also multiple story modes, race commentary, several game modes (including the hectic Arena), replays, rivalries and multiplayer support. Oh, who cares? It's Destruction Derby! Who needs to know more?

PC | ~~PS2~~ | ~~GCN~~ | ~~XBOX~~





LGW Echelon: Wind Warriors

Developer: MADia Entertainment | **Publisher:** Oxygen Interactive | **Q4 2003**

The sequel to the original futuristic flight combat game with a new engine, 30 new craft and over 100 new vehicles. The game will feature 40 single player missions spanning over several worlds with continent-sized areas in each mission.

PC | ~~PS2~~ | ~~GCN~~ | ~~XBOX~~

LGW EyeToy: Groove

Developer: SCEE | **Publisher:** SCEE | **TQ4 2003**

EyeToy games take on a new dimension with the ability to look even stupider in front of your TV. In EyeToy: Groove you have to hit and move colours in a sequence that will mimic you doing a rather complicated dance. The game has a single player mode, and also supports multiplayer and co-op play. Sure, you'll look stupid, but that's the point, isn't it?

~~PC~~ | ~~PS2~~ | ~~GCN~~ | ~~XBOX~~

LGW Freedom Fighters

Developer: IO Interactive | **Publisher:** Electronic Arts | **Q4 2003**

In a different past the Russian empire didn't lose the cold war. In fact, they just invaded New York City, and you join the resistance to fight the red threat. Using the Hitman 2 engine, the game features simple, but effective, squad combat as well as an open-ended mission structure in a true, guerilla-style war.

PC | PS2 | GCN | XBOX

LGW Gladiator: Sword of Vengeance

Developer: Acclaim Studios | **Publisher:** Acclaim | **Q3 2003**

Gladiator has a no-frill approach - you beat up the opponents that charge into the arena, and then you progress to the next arena, killing even more opponents. Each stage gets more and more challenging, and is complimented by a lot of gore and violence. You gain extra powers and eventually travel in mythical lands to combat monsters and humans alike.

PC | PS2 | ~~GCN~~ | XBOX



The PlayStation Experience

SCEE (Sony Computer Entertainment Europe) hosted their second PlayStation Experience at Earls Court this year, showing off some of the upcoming titles in their catalogue. There were 100 titles on show, and since the event was open to the public, it means thousands flocked to try them out. This event is made up as part of a series of Experiences happening all over Europe, and it illustrated Sony's confident dominance over the console market.

The London event debuted Gran Turismo 4 to the world, as well as titles such as Hardware, Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain, Castlevania, My Street and A Dog's Life. The show was divided into several areas, such as the Movie section (Alias, Harry Potter), Throttle (Colin McRae 4, SpyHunter 2), Horror (Siren, Ghosthunter), Cartoon (Whiplash, Worms 3D) and even an 18+ section featuring the likes of Backyard Wrestling and The Suffering. The show also had scheduled events, such as martial arts, breakdance workshops, Basketball Shooting workshop and appearances by the likes of Hideo Kojima (the creator of the Metal Gear series) and a range of UK music stars.

Big, loud and spectacular, it was a taste of what the throngs of press and industry folk go through every year at TGS and E3, but its also an excellent launch point of word-of-mouth hype amongst the game buying masses.

The EyeToy: Groove game also debuted. This new title for Sony's flagship hands-free gaming device goes after the lucrative dancing and rhythm market (which was present en masse at both the Experience and ECTS), allowing players to look even stupider by moving, jumping and juggling in front of their TVs, trying to hit coloured combos, and it's even more fun than the original Play titles. Sadly, none of the other developers or publishers had any EyeToy games on show, so the mystery of if anyone is working on something for the unit still stands firm.

LGW Ghosthunter

Developer: SCEE | Publisher: SCEE | Q4 2003

Sony was eager to show everyone this game, especially the journalists. An interesting mix of gunplay and ghostly powers, it's powered by the Primal engine, and is shaping up really well. When you accidentally release contained ghosts and your partner gets kidnapped, you have to recapture all the monsters and save the day. Ghosthunter has an interesting blend of intense gunplay and strange puzzle solving.

~~PC~~ | ~~PS2~~ | ~~GCN~~ | ~~XBOX~~



LGW Gran Turismo 4

Developer: Polyphony D. | Publisher: SCEE | Q4 2003

The greatest racer of all time returns yet again, and it's still only for PS2 owners. This time the developers didn't have to worry about building a new engine, but instead improve on it. The fourth game plans to have over 500 cars available, focusing on rarer racing models, as well as a more realistic driving physics engine and more realistic AI. And it looks really good.

~~PC~~ | ~~PS2~~ | ~~GCN~~ | ~~XBOX~~

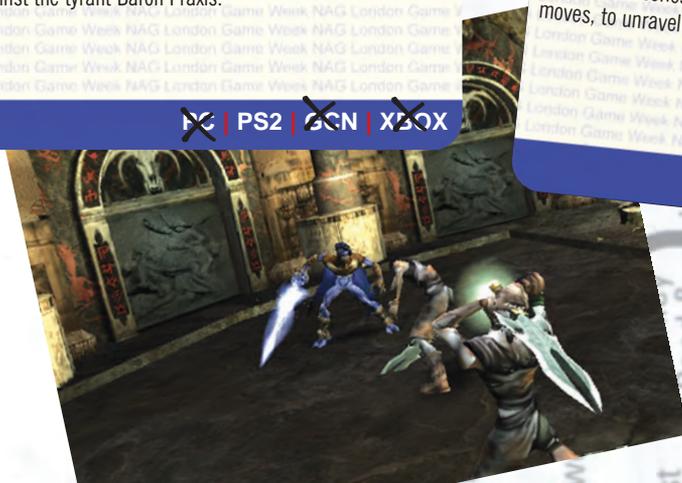


LGW Jak II: Renegade

Developer: Barking Dog | Publisher: SCEE | Q3 2003

The best 3D platformer on the PlayStation 2 returns, but with a new approach that plans to change the genre yet again. In a more open-ended approach and with more powers and fighting modes, Jak and his compatriot Daxter return to the future after stepping through a strange portal. Suddenly they find themselves as the unlikely liberators against the tyrant Baron Praxis.

~~PC~~ | ~~PS2~~ | ~~GCN~~ | ~~XBOX~~



The ECTS Awards

Every event has its own set of awards, and ECTS is no different. Unlike E3, though, the folks at ELSPA's show opted to instead award XIII Game of the Show. Our choice from E3, Far Cry, managed to grab the PC Game award.

Vote by a Press Panel:

- Best PC Game of the Show - *Far Cry*, Ubi Soft Entertainment
- Best Console Game of the Show - *XIII*, Ubi Soft Entertainment
- Best Handheld Game of the Show - *Advance Wars 2: Black Hole Rising* - Nintendo
- Best Online Game of the Show - *Everquest II*, Ubi Soft Entertainment
- Overall Best Game of the Show - *XIII*, Ubi Soft Entertainment
- The London Games Week Award - *Half Life 2*, Vivendi Universal Games

Voted by readers of ECTS.com:

- Best Console of the Year - *Microsoft Xbox*
- Best Publisher of the Year - *Nintendo*
- Best PC Hardware of the Year - *ATI 9800 Pro*

LGW Legacy of Kain: Defiance

Developer: Crystal Dynamics | Publisher: Eidos | Q4 2003

Raziel and Kain come together for the first time in the Blood Omen series as playable characters. With the trademark combat that we've come to love from the Soul Reaver series, you play as both characters, each with their own skills and moves, to unravel a strange, dark mystery that is slowly destroying their world.

PC | PS2 | GCN | XBOX



LGW Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater

Developer: Konami | Publisher: Konami | Q4 2003

The supposed world debut for MGS 3: Snake Eater was restricted to a movie presentation. Snake finds himself in the jungle, and in the bid to survive he'll have to hunt animals and make use of the terrain to keep ahead of his enemies. The game makes a move to the jungle terrain, complete with swamps, trees and long grass to use to your advantage.

~~PC~~ | ~~PS2~~ | ~~GCN~~ | ~~XBOX~~

LGW Need for Speed: Underground

Developer: Black Box Games | Publisher: Electronic Arts | Q4 2003

The Need for Speed franchise truly goes underground by focusing on illegal street racing. With over 20 licensed cars, hundreds of modifications from licensed manufacturers, over 100 events, several game modes and a new engine, it's sure to be a highlight for the franchise.



~~PC~~ | ~~PS2~~ | ~~GCN~~ | ~~XBOX~~

LGW Prince of Persia

Developer: Ubisoft | Publisher: Ubisoft | Q4 2003

With a fluid combat system, great character animation and amazing gameplay, Prince of Persia is not only set to be one of the games of the year but also gives a deserving and worthy next chapter to the classic game series. The new title, in stunning 3D, also includes the new Sand of Time control factor, and is the best use of time control in games we've seen since Max Payne...

~~PC~~ | ~~PS2~~ | ~~GCN~~ | ~~XBOX~~

LGW Ratchet and Clank 2

Developer: Insomniac Games | Publisher: SCEE | Q3 2003

20 all-new planets await you as our duo gets kidnapped to the Bogon Galaxy, where they are promptly employed by Megacorp CEO Abercrombie Fizzwiddget to recover an experimental and secret product stolen by a mysterious masked thief. More weapons and areas are combined with a new RPG-style system where players can earn points to improve Ratchet. But the enemy units also get more powerful, so managing your points becomes very strategic...

~~PC~~ | ~~PS2~~ | ~~GCN~~ | ~~XBOX~~



LGW Smackdown! - Here comes the Pain

Developer: YUKE'S | Publisher: THQ | Q4 2003

THQ takes the Smackdown series another step with new Superstars joining the current ones (making over 55 of them), as well as new moves and new gameplay modes and the ability to create your own superstar. A new commentary system, better counter and submission controls and Superstar voice-overs compliment the first WWE game to be scripted by official WWE writers.

~~PC~~ | ~~PS2~~ | ~~GCN~~ | ~~XBOX~~

LGW Siren

Developer: SCEE | Publisher: SCEE | TBA 2004

A terrible force has taken hold in the Japanese village of Hanyuda. The surrounding sea has turned the colour of blood and slowly but surely the village's inhabitants are changing, becoming vile creatures, fuelled by evil. This is the story of three days in a living nightmare. Seen through the eyes of ten characters, each embroiled in their own personal fight for survival; during these three days chronology is irrelevant - episodes do not take place in sequence and the only way to understand what has happened is to witness the horrors that unfold before all ten individuals.

~~PC~~ | PS2 | GCN | ~~XBOX~~



Sadly, there were no booth babes around



LGW Sphinx and the Shadow of Set

Developer: Eurocom Entertainment | Publisher: THQ | Q3 2003

Become the explorer Sphinx or his sidekick Mummy as he explores ancient tombs and strange worlds to foil the plans of Set. With over 150 characters and 50 enemy types spread over 5 worlds, as well as a stack of mini games and 12 abilities to master through the game, this is a 3D platformer to keep an eye on.

~~PC~~ | PS2 | GCN | XBOX



LGW The Suffering

Developer: Surreal Software | Publisher: Midway | TQ1 2004

A man on death row has little to lose, but when strange apparitions besedge a high-security prison and inadvertently free your character, you need to take charge and find out what's going on as well as uncover your own past. This interesting survival horror uses dynamic lighting to increase the tension as monsters attack you, hardened criminals might help you or try and kill you, not to mention the security guards...

~~PC~~ | PS2 | GCN | XBOX



LGW Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

Developer: Konami | Publisher: Konami | Q3 2003

Leonardo, Michelangelo, Donatello and Raphael return with their pizza-munching, ninja ways to defeat Shredder and The Brain, all thanks to the new animated series. This celshaded beauty uses classic scrolling beat-em-up action that will instantly remind you of the original games, as well as a few new tricks only the new technology can provide...

PC | PS2 | GCN | XBOX



LGW True Crime: Streets of LA

Developer: Luxoflux | **Publisher:** Activision | **Q4 2003**

Duel Berettas, Kung-Fu moves and automotive combat are just some of the methods available to you as a tough-as-nails cop waging a one-man war against the LA Underground. Inspired by Hong Kong action movies, this game is one of the highlights on the PlayStation 2 catalogue and possibly Activision's answer to Grand Theft Auto.

PC | **PS2** | **GCN** | **XBOX**

LGW URU: Ages Beyond Myst

Developer: Cyan | **Publisher:** Ubisoft | **Q4 2003**

Myst, one of the biggest-selling PC games series of all time, returns in a fully-3D, real-time world where you have to explore various ages, at your leisure to discover your own place in this world. With an interesting data collecting system, you'll also be able to swap discoveries with other players online and open new worlds as it expands. As usual, the new Myst game seems to be like nothing before...

PC | ~~**PS2**~~ | ~~**GCN**~~ | ~~**XBOX**~~

LGW Warhammer 40k: Firewarrior

Developer: Kuju | **Publisher:** THQ | **Q4 2003**

The Warhammer 40,000 series has not had a lot of luck in recent years as far as digital games go, but this might change soon with the arrival of Fire Warrior, the first-person action shooter. Based in the 40k universe, you are a Tau warrior finding himself isolated and having to fight the Imperium's forces. 15 weapons are at your disposal over 17 levels. Good luck, soldier!

PC | ~~**PS2**~~ | ~~**GCN**~~ | ~~**XBOX**~~



LGW Worms 3D

Developer: Team 17 | **Publisher:** Sega | **TBA 2004**

The majestic Worms series gets its biggest facelift yet by going completely 3D. The game still retains its old flavour, though, as you command your squad of worms against opponents, using such bizarre weapons as the Holy Handgrenade and Banana Bomb. New weapons, fully deformable landscapes, various camera views and secret levels to unlock - these are all waiting for you in the next game of Worms.

PC | **PS2** | **GCN** | **XBOX**



LGW Whiplash

Developer: Crystal Dynamics | **Publisher:** Eidos | **TBA**

A 3D platformer where you use a bunny as a weapon? That's the case, but there is method to the madness as two creatures find themselves chained to each other. They escape the laboratory they are held captive in and set out to take revenge on the Vivisectors that held them there, which means a lot of action with a bizarre blend of dark humor.

~~**PS2**~~ | ~~**GCN**~~ | **XBOX**

The hottest games, goodies and technology coming to rAge

it's all the rAge EXPO+

Running from 10 -12 October at the Dome @ Northgate, Johannesburg, rAge is a computer console, gaming and technology expo that is seeing exhibitors saving the good stuff to showcase to those smart enough to attend. Visitors will have a lot to look forward to.

According to Michael James, Editor of NAG Magazine and rAge organiser, "Some time ago we identified a gap for an expo targeting hardcore gamers right through to casual gamers and people simply interested in technology."

In other words, an event that would display the latest gaming as well the newest and hottest hardware and technology, gadgets and goodies, as well as anime, entertainment for the whole family and competitions for serious gamers right through to old style video arcade competitions for the older guys who remember the good old arcade days. A fun, cutting edge event for the 21st century family.

"Judging from the response we've received from exhibitors we were spot on. We have over 70% of the floor space filled with players such as Nokia, Nintendo, Intel, Sony PlayStation, MegaRom, Musica, Microsoft, Budget Technologies, Mindsgate Solutions, Sapphire, Proton Technology, Outer Limits, Light Edge Technology, Axis, Phillips, Vivendi Universal, Rectron, ASUS, Mexcom, Naked IT and more on board - and all are planning something special for the event." says Michael. Exciting and special hardly sum up what's in store. To give visitors a taste of what's to come take a look at what some of the exhibitors are planning. Nokia is set to showcase the N-Gage which is only officially launching in SA three days prior to the event and the company is bringing this truly hot device to

rAge. According to Yoram Nitzan of Nokia, "While the N-Gage appears to be a gaming device first and foremost, there are plenty of other features for users to toy with as well. The most relevant in this walk-and-talk age is its cell phone functionality. Being that it's a tool of communication, the N-Gage also supports Bluetooth data or wireless gaming."

"Then there are the added pluses of being able to play/record MP3s (as well as AACs), access the Internet, text-message friends, download ring tones, display custom-made screensavers, use any Java-based application and much more. In fact it boasts a huge -- and I do mean huge -- spec list that proves it's the veritable Swiss Army knife of handhelds."

From the latest technology to toys, comics and cards, rAge has it all.

Outer Limits - a fantasy retailer specialising in Comics, Role-playing, Trading Cards, Science Fiction, Anime, Manga, Collectable Toys and Miniatures - will be bringing a selection of each to the show. In addition, the company will be stocking its stand with literally hot off the press comic releases from the States.

"We receive our comic shipments in SA one day after the American retailers receive theirs, so what you're seeing from us at rAge are the latest releases," says Grant Charlton of Outer Limits.

Local gaming distributor, MegaRom Interactive, will also

be focusing on hot goodies for the rAge visitor. The company is known for its extensive PC CD gaming brands boasting the sole local distribution rights to some of the biggest gaming brands in the world including publishers, Activision, Eidos Interactive, Take 2, Atari, Novalogic, Bethesda, Codemasters and Ubi-Soft.

"Our main focus at the event will be to showcase our up and coming AAA PC CD gaming titles and hopefully fulfill our markets curiosity," says Jason Borea of MegaRom.

rAge, or the Really Awesome Gaming Event, promises to be a computer & console gaming and technology expo with a difference. Not only will the event bring gamers the most popular games, hardware and latest products, rAge will also feature a kiddie area with supervised play, ball pools and more for 3- 8 year olds to be awesomely entertained while mom and dad tour the rest of the event.

rAge will also feature an anime theatre, role-playing games, awesome gaming entertainment, a game artwork auction, a 620 networked LAN area where gamers bring their own PC and play games against each other, and the chance for the casual gamer and technology consumer to get their hands on some of the hottest gadgets and goodies ever assembled under one dome.

Not to scale - Not final





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Brought to you by New Age Gaming Magazine



Here are some of the things you can expect to see at rAge ...

Please note (and this is important) that due to our magazine print deadline schedule, not all our exhibitors made the cut off date for this article. However the good news is that they're all going to be at rAge so the event can only be better than what you've read here.

Before we start remember one thing - this is a list of confirmed details and specifications - things will change between the writing of this article and the actual event so be prepared for a bigger and better show than what we've outlined here.

Gamers Gate

This just in! WarCraft III Worldwide Invitational in conjunction with Vivendi Universal. The SA winner will be flown to Korea in January to compete in the finals. Keep an eye on the usual websites for more information on this.

We're still considering a Counter-Strike competition with some serious cash prizes but we've recently become very disillusioned by the poor attitude of the Counter-Strike community... we're still weighing up odds. There will also be another large Gamers Gate competition but the guys who want to sponsor it didn't

Magic section

Games Emporium will be running a serious Magic the Gathering competition. Players of this popular card game can bring their own decks and take part in the standard and booster-draft side events that will take place all weekend, with the chance to win lots of rare foil cards. On Saturday Games Emporium will also host a sealed deck and team sealed deck tournament for the new Mirrodin series and Sunday sees the last Pro Tour Qualifier take place where the winner gets to represent SA at the international event early next year, as well as winning R 2500 towards his ticket.

Charity

For NAG the point of charity is just anonymous donations to a charity we like [usually children or animals because they can't fight for themselves]. Just so you know we're giving money away to a charity and we're not saying who it is or how much. We're tired of organisations announcing charity donations just to make themselves look good or get in with big sponsors - our initiative here will hopefully pave the way.

Anime

There will be an Anime theatre run by Black Blade Anime - this will run almost all the time, featuring such classics as Full Metal Panic, as well as new shows such as Wolf' Reign and Last Exile. Anyone who has attended Black Blade's frequent Anime days know that they are in for a treat. In-between you're going to have to put up with a few new game trailers and exclusive footage of upcoming games - there will be a timetable so everyone knows what is showing when. And just for comfort's sake, MTN are sponsoring 200 bean bags for the theatre.

sign the paperwork before this article hit deadline so they missed out here. Mayhem will be running the network. Check www.gamersgate.co.za for more info.

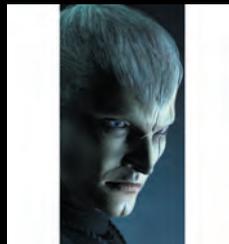
Arcades

If the companies that rented these things out would get off their butts and actually return a mail or answer a phone we'd be able to give you a definite specification here but seeing that this is a loose end that isn't tied up we'll just throw you a bone. NAG is planning on sponsoring a free-play arcade at rAge i.e. all arcade machines [those old classics] will be scattered around the Dome @ Northgate with unlimited credits. The only rule: if there's a queue behind you and you die you leave the machine and go to the back of the queue - hopefully it'll get quiet during certain times of the day so us really old gamers can abuse this option.

One thing that is a definite however is the inclusion of an Arcade Raffle. NAG is giving away a whole arcade machine to a lucky winner - this is so exciting that the Editor has gone and ordered himself one for his office... sod.

Gallery

You'll also find at rAge a gallery of artwork - these will be high quality framed pieces of game artwork compiled by us using all the artwork CD's we get sent every month to use in our reviews.



NAG LAN

Not forgetting the NAG LAN - this will be divided up into a number of sections and instead of hosting a huge leeching fest we're ensuring that more gamers will be playing games and having fun than ever before. So please note rAge is not a copy party - you come to play games not chew up the bandwidth with illegal software. Mayhem will be running this entire section (remember to thank Vapour and his team when you see them - they'll be dressed in orange tights with black rAge beanies).

Also confirmed at the time of writing this article will be a DOD competition as well as a Das Wolf section. Registration for all NAG LAN events is open on www.langames.co.za. Entry into the NAG LAN is R150 per person for the whole weekend and includes entry into the expo.

ZA Developers

We're happy to announce that I-Imagine will be at rAge and two [at time of writing] other local game developers - Black Gryphon Entertainment and Born Interactive. These guys will be at the show and are looking for talented people to impress them. So if you're going to apply bring something impressive or don't bother...

Games

All 3 major console players will be present - Nintendo, PlayStation and Nokia all peddling their wares on their massive 36 square metre stands - there should be more than enough units on the show floor to keep everyone happy. Besides this all the local distributors will be represented with their own stands including MegaRom, Vivendi and Microsoft [Microsoft are showing off by driving a huge truck into the venue for the 3 days].

Retail

You will be able to buy stuff at rAge and we've asked all the retailers at the show to not go on expensive overseas holidays this year and instead come up with a few show stopping specials. So bring plenty of money and spend it all - this way the retailers will be impressed and make tons of money off rAge ensuring a bigger and better event next year [and if you thought this years was big just wait and see]. Musica, Budget Technology and Naked IT are all going to be there plus a few more...

Hardware

Oddly enough the hardware guys this year have gone a little overboard with this event proving that they must be keen on attracting you to their bright and shiny stands. As it stands now we have a few more hardware stands at rAge than software - not a problem in our book. Hardware. We love it long time.



Food

There will be plenty of Dome styled food at the event and if you don't like the food there's always the whole of Northgate to abuse. Also... Slush Puppy are going to be there with everyone's favourite [among others] flavour Banana! We'll also have a popcorn vendor around the Anime theatre.

As it stands now, there will be much more information on the event website as this magazine was put to bed 2 weeks before you're reading it.

Go there now for an update: www.rageexpo.co.za.

This one should be huge - it is in our head but it's only the tip of the iceberg, each day we think up new ideas that are not workable for this event so they've been filed in a folder called rAge 2004... our eventual goal is to make rAge exactly as exciting and compelling as E3 - this is the goal and we need all of you to make it happen.



Write the dates on a piece of paper and magnet it to your fridge and then go mail bomb all your friends and family and tell them to be there!

Cut me out...

Coming soon



R489⁹⁵

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www.musica.co.za

Selected stores.

Player of the Month

Name: Anthony Fellowes
Clan: Nightfall

Nick: Juvenile
Games: WarCraft III | Quake 3 | StarCraft

Age: 22
Quote: "If you want to improve, be content to be thought foolish and stupid."

Occupation: Honours Student at UCT (Bachelor of Business Science)

Achievements:

- 1st place at Cape Town Worfaire Prelims 2002, WarCraft III
- 2nd place at Worfaire Finals 2002, WarCraft III
- 3rd place at Gamers Gate Eastgate 2002, WarCraft III
- 2nd place at ESWC South African qualifier 2003, WarCraft III
- 1st place at Organised Chaos WarCraft III 2v2 Tournament (with nf-Stealth)
- 1st place at WCG Cape Town 2003, WarCraft III



<The_Basilisk> You have a reputation as a "second place man" thus far, is your fortune about to change?

<nf-Juvenile> Hahaha, that is so unfair. Well, I can only hope :P WCG Finals should be the closest competition so far. Seeing how Frozen Throne came out ages ago, everyone has been playing it. There have been very few people playing normal WarCraft, and a lot of the previous winners have been neglecting it.

<The_Basilisk> Talk us through the ESWC qualifier.

<nf-Juvenile> I had an easy run

right through to the superfinals. To be honest, all the games were short, and no one really made me nervous. I had knocked sWoop into the losers' bracket earlier in the rounds, so I was pretty confident I could do so again. It was a bit disconcerting being marked as "the favourite", it's always nice to be the underdog. Anyways, my biggest mistake in both games was not taking out his expansion. In the first game I simply didn't scout, and in the second I only picked it up once daybreak had come. To be fair, I should've taken it out later, but I guess I was just too nervous to notice the building was on low hit points.

<The_Basilisk> What is the best gaming event you've attended, and why?

<nf-Juvenile> I enjoyed Worfaire 2002 the most. The level of competition wasn't all that great and there were very few entries for WarCraft III, but what stood out for me was playing on stage. I think all

competitions should organise for the finals to be played on stage, it makes them special.

<The_Basilisk> I hear you endured some comments from the audience.

<nf-Juvenile> Plenty. Unfortunately in JHB, sWoop has his home crowd to back him, so he's always more popular with the audience.

<The_Basilisk> Do you think it's possible for a South African player to compete reasonably in Korea this year?

<nf-Juvenile> Haha, not a chance. If one watches a bunch of replays, vanilla (Reign of Chaos) WarCraft III really doesn't look too complicated. However, it's the small things which make all the difference, especially in tournaments. You only learn those from making the mistakes previously. It's impossible to get that kind of experience with our bandwidth situation. Here there aren't enough high level players willing to play 1v1's.

WCG Prelims (Through the Eyes of The_Basilisk)

This past month has been a fantastic one for competitive gaming. Two major competitions in one month is not a common occurrence, especially outside of Gauteng. To cover the action and help out with the running of the tournament, everyone's favourite intrepid reporter was on the scene at the event in Canal Walk Shopping Centre, Cape Town.

Having arrived on the Thursday evening after a wonderfully turbulent flight (I enjoy watching other passengers panic), I found the event still in its setup stages. The Mayhem crew was in a frenzy as usual, since all fifty competition machines needed to be set up, with operating systems and installations of the games. The venue itself was special, by far the most impressive gaming location I have ever been to. Not only was it conveniently near all essential stores in the mall (restaurants and internet cafés, etc), but it was positioned so that practically all the shoppers would walk past at some stage. With the added presence of a massive screen you'd expect to see in a stadium, countless spectators gathered to watch throughout the weekend. On Friday afternoon, the gamers started to arrive. There isn't much to mention about the technical aspects of the network setup, other than that it was flawless. Power to a small section went down once due to a faulty multiplug, but aside from that there were no electricity incidents.

The level of skill among Cape Town players has increased much over the course of this year, and I was excited to see that rivalry was most intense among them. The Counter-Strike matches were virtually dead-even between the top three, and Albatron Team Africa managed to surprise quite a few people by emerging victorious over the favourites Hell'z Own, having to win twice in the final. WarCraft III saw NAG's Player of the Month, Juvenile, narrowly beating outside favourite m0Op (who won the first game and forced a second). And as for UT2003, ZeRo-1 (fourth at the ESWC qualifier) also came from the loser's bracket and needed to win twice against his Naja Clan teammate, Gengis. The final game finished with a score of 6-5 in favour of ZeRo-1, with Gengis only needing a few extra seconds and he would have taken the game into overtime.

While I was not able to personally attend the Durban event, I have been speaking to the high finishers there to get a general opinion of how the event ran. Some were not happy about Double Elimination being used throughout the tournament, believing there was more than enough time to run Round-Robin stages first. There have been complaints that the competition machines (which have GeForce 4 MX graphics cards) got low framerates in the more intense games, and comments that the referees did not know the games well enough are also doing the rounds. However, the network and power were again without incident, and everyone seems to be happy with the prizes. Unlike Cape Town, Durban also featured a Bring Your Own Computer section which, by every account I have received so far, was a success.





As for the competitions, Counter-Strike was entirely dominated by Ethereal, giving the other clans no chance and once again proving their unrivalled superiority in the region. They are the only Durban team that has ever competed reasonably in Gauteng-based tournaments. WarCraft III was won comfortably by Vetoll and in UT2003, no-one could really stand up to Loons, who also won without any hassle.

The 28 representatives from Cape Town and Durban now join the Gauteng finalists at Sandton City to decide the team for this year's World Cyber Games.



Game	Cape Town Results	Durban Results
Counter-Strike	1. Albatron Team Africa 2. Hell'z Own Enemy Owned 3. Anarchy Inc.	1. Ethereal 2. Insurrection
WarCraft III	1. nf-Juvenile 2. m00p 3. TDC CrittersInc	1. Assassin (aka Vetoll) 2. Black
Unreal Tournament 2003	1. [N]ZeRo-1 2. [N]Gengis 3. Sabretooth	1. Loons 2. Karnaugh

Das Wolf

A duo of regular LANners, Marc "Aequitas" Luck and Paul "Toadflakz" Baumgartner are the masterminds behind Das Wolf, a refreshing new approach to multiplayer gaming gatherings. After becoming disillusioned with other LANs where there would be hordes of people attending and still no big games to play in (other than Counter-Strike), they decided to start running things their own way. At a Das Wolf LAN, everyone plays the same game, everyone plays all the time, and games are played according to a pre-planned schedule.

"It's all about organised non-competitive gaming," says Paul. "We found that we were incredibly frustrated at LANs because people would only play certain things. To give you an example, Worfaire Prelims at Kyalami last year had a 500 person BYOC open LAN area and the only big game we had was a 9 on 9 game of C&C Renegade. We decided that organising things and getting people to comply with rules and a schedule might be a good way to get things working."

Marc adds, "We try to get people to play games (specifically teamplay) that they normally wouldn't get a chance to at a big lan. There are three conditions in place to prevent problems. 1 - We allow all players to bow out one game without penalty. 2 - If your PC can't handle a game, you don't have to play it. 3 - If 75% of the players want the schedule changed or a game added/removed from the schedule, we take it under consideration. But we have the final say, so as to stop chaos from erupting. When someone contravenes the rules he gets a *very* friendly warning and if he persists, he is asked to please leave (without getting his money back)."

"The two deadliest sins of a Das Wolf LAN are playing Counter-Strike and WarCraft III: Tower Defense, simply because you can play those games at any LAN in the country. We are about new games," says Paul. "We have only ever had a near-miss with one person. When we explained why we were so desperate to not play Counter-Strike, he apologised and quit immediately. Generally, we play the nazi for about the first two hours, then everyone gets into it and has a huge amount of fun."

Das Wolf was preparing to host an area of the Bring Your Own Computer area at the Johannesburg WCG event, but unfortunately, due to a miscommunication, that has fallen through. "Everyone was very busy sorting out the events before the WCG Finals," says Paul, when asked about it. "Vapour was our liaison with Len at Gamers Gate. He organised for us to hold the area at Sandton, then communicated the terms to us. Only problem is that both Len and Vapour were so busy they only recently realised that a mistake had been made. And now the BYOC section of the Finals is full and our allotment never happened." However, for all those who wanted to attend, Das Wolf has since been invited to run an area at the NAG rAge Event in October.

You will be able to find many games being played. The list so far is: Unreal Tournament 2004 Team (Assault, Onslaught, Bombing Run, Capture The Flag), Natural Selection 2.0 (requires Half-Life), Battlefield 1942 and Mods (DesertCombat v0.38, Road To Rome), Rainbow 6: RavenShield, Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory (Free game), Tribes 2, Soldat Capture The Flag, Command & Conquer Renegade (Command & Conquer Mode) and America's Army: Army Ops (Also a free game).

For event dates and Das Wolf news, check out their website at www.mayhem.co.za/daswolf. (Updates may take time as admin access to the site is still being worked out). You can also check www.langames.co.za for event listings.



Sponsorship and prizes



Does this seem familiar to you ...

You've read it in a magazine, your fellow gamer friends are raving about it, you've visited the website, registered, been receiving newsletters and updates. A big up and coming LAN with huge prizes. You've been amongst the top 5 for a while at your local LAN events and thought why not try your luck. After a lot of saving, washing cars and arranging a lift you are on your way. All you have been doing was practising day and night, even dreaming of your strategy. All red eyed, you packed the sleeping bags, the important food supplies including the Redbulls and mom's cookies. You're ready to frag your heart out. Map in hand you take to the road. Following all the directions carefully. Disaster! The road map and the actual road don't exist. After several phone calls you finally get the correct directions. After intense competition for 2 days you've done it. Disappointingly your prize has undergone a metamorphous to a cap! Most disappointed you undertake your long journey home that will most probably be more expensive than the cap.

This situation is happening all too often at our local LAN's. Prizes are promised but not delivered. There is always some excuse. Some better than others, but never good enough to satisfy the disgruntled gamers. When most people plan to host a LAN they always envisage some prizes to try and make the LAN more attractive. Although this might seem like a good idea, it seriously complicates the LAN. Although sponsorship is normally associated with prizes, it may well only involve the supply of equipment or services. I will try and supply pointers on how to approach sponsors, and the pitfalls involved. In our game of LAN'ing sponsorship is a rare resource that needs protection.

Hosting LAN's require a lot of expensive equipment. Switches cost anything from R2000 to R50 000. You will require network cables. If you have planned the venue and layout as discussed in a previous instalment, you should be able to determine the lengths of cable you require. Always have spare cables around. You should also have a few crossovers available. Power leads and multi-plugs will also be required. You could try and get sponsors for this equipment, but sponsors require something back. They lend or give you equipment in return for exposure for their service or product in the hope that their investment will be returned with increased sales.

If you plan to approach a company, do so in an organised and professional manner. Have a business plan ready. The plan should include the layout of the venue, the number of people that you expect to attract. It should indicate what the sponsor is to gain from this venture. You should also be quite clear on what you require, and the amount that you need. Do not approach a company without an appointment. Business people usually have tight time schedules, and do not appreciate being approached as sponsors without appointment.

If you approach different companies, and more than one accept, keep the following in mind. You should not entertain two companies that are in competition with one another. Have you ever seen an event that is sponsored by MTN and Vodacom?

The tax man might be your friend in this regard. Depending on the time of the year, some companies may be willing to spend the outstanding balance of their planned budget on a local venture like yours. But if you expect your sponsor to deliver, it implies that you too should deliver on your promises. Never be greedy or pushy when approaching a company. Sponsorship should be finalised, preferably in writing before the event. Try to get one person to contact in case of any queries. This will ensure that there is a lesser change of miss communicating.

If you plan to have prizes, think about what type of prizes. The prizes should be relevant to gaming, desirable and/or practical. Casual, fun LAN's are easy with minimum hassles, so I suggest no prizes or small prizes. Although prizes attract people, I have seen LAN's fail to attract people with some great prizes on offer. If you decide on a competition LAN you will need decent

prizes.

Keep the sponsor happy by informing and updating him regularly on all your happenings. Give something back to your sponsor. Hang banners at your event for all to see. Also mention when you do a newspaper or magazine article. Put their logos on your website and link to them. After the LAN you should send them a newsletter informing them of your successful LAN. Also send a thank you letter neatly typed on proper paper.

Where, how and when to advertise? This is an easy as well as difficult question. You can advertise on the website www.langames.co.za. This is a local website where most langame events in South Africa are listed. The advantage of adding your event to this list is that the cost involved is nothing, and regular Lanners already browse over these events whenever his need drives him to it. Gamers can register and see if they've been accepted, get information and download directions on the site. While on directions, again I should mention that you should ensure that the directions/maps are correct. This site will also give an indication of when to host your LAN by checking the other organisers' dates. This will ensure that you do not clash with any other big LAN's or LAN's close by you.

You can set up a website with all your details. This is quite costly and time consuming, which may become redundant if you won't continue hosting LAN's. Contact a local newspaper and run an ad or ask them to do a small article on your LAN in their community section. This should be free since the papers are always running articles on local events. Spread the word to your friends, make posters and put them up at your Internet cafes, IT shops, etc.

When advertising include the following: Your LAN name, the venue location, set-up time and actual start time. (Start time of the competition and the LAN is important when hosting a competition LAN). Contact persons with cell phone numbers and the entry fee also needs to be indicated.

You should start advertising roughly 4 to 6 weeks before the event. If you start too soon, many people may accept, but not attend or cancel due to other higher priority issues presenting themselves. You should ensure a cut-off date for registering to ensure that you have enough time to cater for the amount of people that applied and were accepted.

I will conclude this instalment by advising that you rather concentrate on the sponsorship of equipment rather than prizes. A well set-up LAN is much better received than a LAN plagued by issues and controversies with nice prizes. Once prizes have been given, they will be expected at your following event as well. Rather concentrate on the successful start and grow and expand with time.

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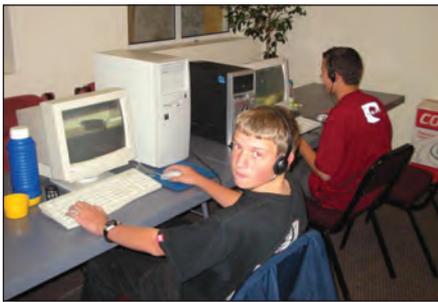
WCG 2004

The World Cyber Games has announced that San Francisco will be the WCG Grand Final host city for the year 2004. This will mark the first time the WCG event has been held outside of Korea, its birthplace, and will solidify WCG's standing as the largest and most truly international e-sports competition in the world. The WCG Committee selected San Francisco after the city's bid gained the highest score during the rigorous evaluation process, beating out excellent bids from several other candidate cities that also expressed a strong desire to hold the event. Starting with San Francisco in 2004, the WCG Grand Final will continue to be held in different cities across the globe.



Letter to the parents:-

In my general quest for mass response to emails I have received, I find it is long overdue that I respond to Johnny Noobgamer's (aged 7-15) dad about LANs. Firstly, if you are wondering about LANs for your children, or your little home computer guru is bugging you to go to a LAN and he is only 7, then maybe this is where to start. I am writing this to myself in many ways, 6-10 years from now I will be faced with the same questions about LANs and wonder if my son Owen should be going there?



To the Parents: We (gamers/lanners) stay in the real world but we live inside a computer. We speak, dream and think games and computers; what is important to us, might not be important to you, or was to a large extent not available to you as a child. Go and ride a bike to get out of the house isn't what we are interested in. Comparing your Sinclair, Commodore or ZX spectrum you bought in high school and lost interest in when you left school cannot be compared to what is available today but surely has its roots sprouting out from that era. Online, LAN and singleplayer are options that didn't exist back then, your option was single player, single player and single player and inviting friends over to play single player. Sure you had machines that could have 2 people playing at one point in time, but it's a new gaming world out there.



We like what we do: LANs are happening all over and if you didn't know, it is where a bunch of us "kids" go to play "computer games", rarely sleep for a weekend, eat junk food, drink lots of fizzy cool drink, get a cold from a cold cement floor and get shouted at by some insane LAN organizer for doing something wrong. Your son would have copied things from friends you would not have wanted him to ever see (if you have seen what we've seen, you would not allow him on the internet - now who is naïve?), be exposed to "bad kids" and mature gamers who are possibly having a beer. Sounds horrible, right? Not if you are gamer....



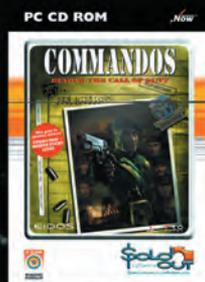
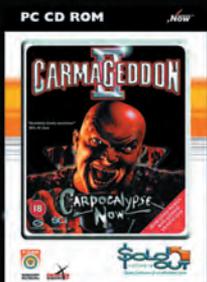
Life is not perfect: What other activities does he have? Riding around on his bike where your neighbourhoods have hooligans racing down the road. Going out to a club on a Friday night, and coming home tipsy at 3 in the morning smelling like smoke and vomit. Making friends with Henry, the small town guy who is 32 and dating your 15 year old daughter's best friend and driving a Nissan bakkie (sorry, I am thinking back to school days, a location situation). I cannot promise it is the perfect environment, and I cannot take responsibility for what a LAN organizer permits. It is important that parents have a look at the people and make a bit of a character judgment call based on the organizer he meets at the LAN, taking into consideration that looks can be deceiving. Some over eighteens might have a beer; some might go outside to smoke (usually not allowed inside the venue, ESPECIALLY not close to me). Some guys will be sharing their pictures and movies and some will be sharing games, movies and even bring a virus home (all of which can be done via internet too). After reading everything said above you are probably doubting if your child should go to a LAN, but saying it never happens will be naïve on my part, however I painted the worst case scenarios, but that is not what a LAN is about for many of us and for most organizers. None of the regular LANs I know let underage children bring indemnity forms, then again, nor do most nightclubs worry about an ID document in a place where they sell alcohol and peddle drugs...

What we do: At LANs we set up networks, install games, play for hours non stop (sometimes days), shout at each other for most part because of the games, laugh our asses off because of the things that happen, watch movies, chat about hardware, spend time trying to set up machines, find out about new games that were released, order out and drink a lot of Coke, have good clean fun, surrounded by mature people who would not give a child alcohol and who are not there to get sloshed out of their mind. (I am generalizing, seen a few sloshed people, but they didn't give beer to anyone, they were on a mission to consume it themselves). It all comes down to you Johnny Noobgamer's dad. It's your choice, and your responsibility to have a look at the event and meet the organizer. Johnny will have a lot of fun ... or not, just like everything else in life. Gaming kids are too busy playing the game to be bothered with your worst nightmares, which makes it a generally safer place than walking in the park (which is generally not so safe anymore).

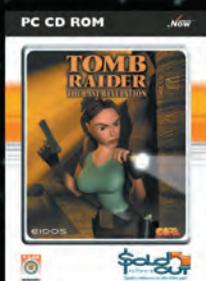
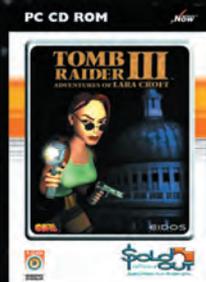
Please note that my views and opinions are based on experiences (mostly good ones) and they might not be the view of the magazine or any organizer out there. If you want me to suggest a LAN to you, let me know, and I will see what I can do, but I am not responsible for any public LANs that are hosted anywhere.

TadMadLad
LanGames

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EVENT NEWS:

September saw the WCG finals in JHB. From our point of view the WCG events were all a load of fun, but WCG JHB had one or two problems that made life really fun for all involved. For a full break down of what happened at all of the WCG events, as well as what went wrong go check out www.mayhem.co.za.

LEAGUE NEWS:

Yes we are mad enough to go through it all again. Mayhem off-line league 2004, registrations will open in November. Info on how to register will go up on www.mayhem.co.za soon.

We will be accepting registrations for 48 teams this time round. Which is double the amount of teams we catered for in 2003. We hope to see a good mix of the top teams in the country as well as a lot of the newer teams out there.

The format will be as follows:

Preliminary events:

- January - Round Robin format
- February - Round Robin format
- March - Round Robin format then a double elimination

Finals:

- April - Double Elimination format

Teams who wish to register for the league will have to mail the following information through to staff@mayhem.co.za.

- Team name:
- Clan TAG:
- Clan Website Address:
- Team Leaders Name:
- Team Leaders Surname:
- Team Leaders NICK:
- Team Leaders e-mail:
- Team Leaders Tel:
- Teams Leaders Sisters details:

Cost: R1250.00 per team for the entire League. Only teams who have paid the full amount will be accepted into the league.

Please note that a deposit of R9000.00 will be needed before the league starts. This will be refunded at the end of the league. There will also be a fine of R15000 for teams who pull out of the league with out prior notice.

(No we are not serious about the deposit or fine!)

For more info on the Mayhem off-line league please feel free to contact staff@mayhem.co.za or go to www.mayhem.co.za.

Registrations will open in November.

Other exciting news is that Mayhem are planning a MASSIVE event. We are talking huge, we are talking at least + 1. Unfortunately we have decided not to tell you any more than that at this stage.

For full details on this refer to the November NAG and www.mayhem.co.za

DATES TO LOOK OUT FOR:

- 4 October**
- Monthly link day PTA
- 10, 11, 12 October**
- rAge (brought to you by NAG)
- 18 October**
- Mayhem Open LAN
- 25 October**
- Funky Cow LAN PTA
- November**
- Registrations for Mayhem off-line league 2004 OPEN.

For more info and event dates check out www.mayhem.co.za.

Vapour[CHKNHHD]
staff@mayhem.co.za

North meets South

It is getting harder and harder to write these columns. There are only so many ways that you can say a LAN was fantastic, without any hassles, with cool prizes and a bunch of great people. Thus I must resort to talking about another LAN, or at least part of another LAN, for a while. And that would be the WCG qualifiers that took place in Canal Walk over the same weekend that OC was held.



It was great to finally meet some of the names that you talk to every month but don't yet have a face for. So hello to Lauren, the_basilisk and vapour and the rest of the crew organising the WCG qualifiers. Right so back in the cars down the road and to the left (literally) to Theo Marais Park and Organised Chaos.

As I have mentioned above everything went swimmingly. The only down side was that the number of participants was a bit down on previous events because of the aforementioned qualifiers and we all know people love a competition.

All the favourites were played - Battlefield 1942, Desert Combat, MOHAA, JKII and the rest. A couple of new additions were also made to the LANing fraternity with Chaser making the rounds as an alternative to the regular first person shooters out there. Midnight Club 2 also proved popular.

As usual prize giving was really popular with many prizes being handed out. Thanks again to Diesel for the sponsorship of the watch that was won by ChoJin. VanMan won the Logitech Z640 speakers, Killerbeam and OC regular AlphaElite both walked off with the Logitech MX500 mice.

September will see OC in a new venue in the MTN Science Center in Canal Walk. This appears at first glance to be a fantastic venue. Being inside the Center the gamers will have access to all the amenities that it has to offer, including various fast food chains, movies (for those that don't want to game the whole time) and a skate park. So next month I will hopefully have something new to tell you all about the exciting new venue.

Sean "KilRoY" Beamish
www.oc.co.za



competition

Have you built for the kill?



betty 04/02



sigh! 06/03



summer 02



my christmas dream



sexy see through number



my babe 03

E-mail us a picture of your best mod and a description of how you did it and you stand to win a p4 2.8 800 MHz FSB with HT (Hyper Threading).

Submit your entry to profiledesign@mweb.co.za

Only one entry per person & only one case mod per entry.

Please enclose your contact details in the email.

Competition closes End October 2003. get your pics in by then

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Gaming rig specialists

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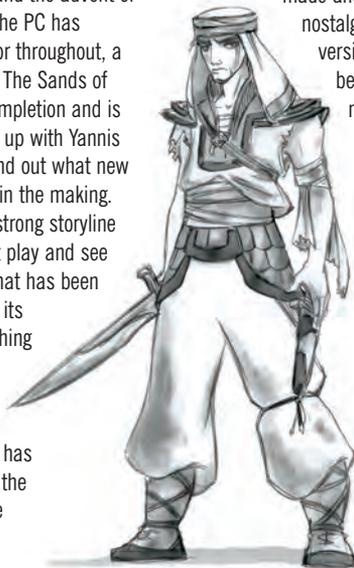


preview:

Prince of Persia: Sands of Time

▶ The Prince of Persia game goes back a long way, right back to the good old 8-bit days when its many distinguishing features made it a flagship title. Its qualities - including polished graphics, unrivalled animations, superb action, thrilling storyline and ambient settings - put it way ahead of its competitors and made it almost a cult series. With each new games platform came a new version of Prince of Persia, each of which always managed to continue to be one step ahead of its time.

With the passing of time and the advent of new platforms, although the PC has remained a constant factor throughout, a new Prince of Persia title, The Sands of Time (POP), is nearing completion and is due late 2003. We caught up with Yannis Mallat, the Producer, to find out what new and inventive ideas were in the making. With a game based on a strong storyline and action (that you must play and see to fully appreciate), one that has been chronicled endlessly from its conception, getting something new on the title is an almost impossible task. Throughout the many years POP has evolved, it has got better technically, but the essence of the game - the story and the characters and above all the



compelling action - has always remained primarily the same. So how does the team go about making things even better? Newer and more powerful machines, more detailed settings, swishier movement and even more complex moves are a prerequisite. The initial task was building a playable area around the main character's behaviour, a principal priority for the team. Comparisons with older versions will be made and time does tend to bring the nostalgic view that some of the versions from bygone days were better, even though they were not. With the POP concept being so strong the development team used other sources for inspiration such as The Arabian Nights book, even the movie Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon, as well as the original games, which the team plays constantly. Yannis mulled over and reminisced, then quickly brought us up to the present day with some interesting comments. "The Prince of Persia games were among the coolest multiple format games ever. We



wanted the huge numbers of people who are playing on next-generation consoles (including lots of the original Prince of Persia fans) to be able to experience this game. The game offers a fresh and new start to this license. Although it will be very much inspired from the original creation, basically everything needed to be rebuilt and redesigned to bring it on the Next Generation consoles and PC."

"We knew very early on that the whole concept would depend on the immediate appeal and intuitive controls of the Prince. Of course, this implied a specific organisation of the team, as we wanted the core to focus on this crucial goal. But we also wanted to experience this title played on the real engine, on the real platform, with all the constraints that implies. So we sent the core engineer team to another Ubi Soft studio to learn the engine we chose for the game. Once we were satisfied with the 'playable feel, movements, and basic game dynamic, we focused on character design for the Prince, and then on environments and art. In a nutshell, we focused first on the play dynamic basics, the things that make the game fun to play, and then we focused on the dressing of the game, the things that make it beautiful to look at. And we also achieved a technical breakthrough very early on, but you'll have to wait to hear more about that!"

The newly created Prince has a very different look from the previous games. He is strong and has many qualities and attributes, which includes courage and determination. The new character design will highlight other qualities and with almost feline movement, agility that offers spectacular lightning moves that will please connoisseurs of the series. Skills in combat, from swordplay to martial arts, make the Prince an impressive specimen, one who on his journey will face many life-or-death situations. In POP, the Prince's ideals and illusions will be challenged by the hard choices he must make. In the course of the story he matures and learns what is really important.

Jordan Mechner has written the storyline. As a games designer, filmmaker and screenwriter, his specialty is telling a story in cinematic form, and comes with a truly impressive CV, which includes working on previous POP titles. One objective for him was to create action in the game that was interwoven with the storyline and not just merely adding cut scenes to flesh the game out. "The game will take place in an exotic and mysterious world representing Persian time - from architecture and style to the animals and the attire. The plot and storyline of the game are very much linked to the innovative play dynamic found in this title. Locations vary greatly and mostly take place around the Persian Palace, from the deepest, darkest dungeons to the beautiful sun

drenched gardens - there are so many locations, and a few surprises!"

POP offers almost everything action and adventure games could wish for.

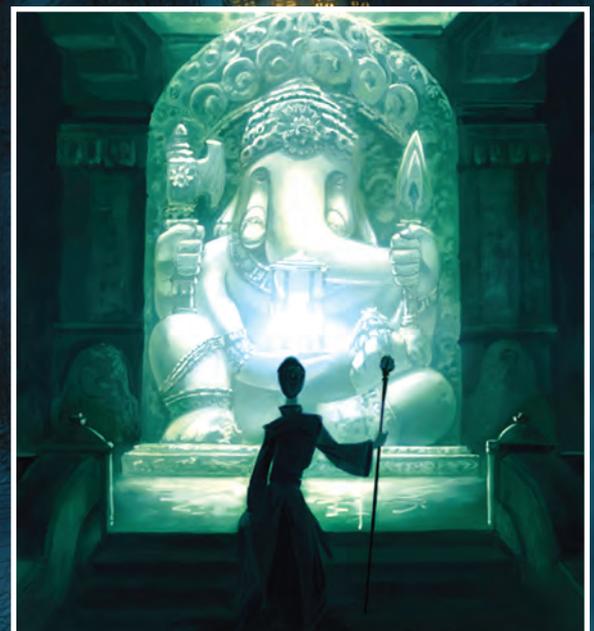
There is an endless list of enemies with both outside and inside action. If it is puzzles you want, or precise movement and manipulation, where timing really matters then look no further. Older gamers will fondly remember playing some of the original games and getting excited and frustrated at having to jump from one ledge to another, failing just short and having to redo the task again.

If you like your combat then this should please even the hardliners. The real essence of POP has always been the fine mixture of gaming elements that fuse themselves seamlessly with the story to offer up an experience

where you always want to play for just one more level, but end up playing for hours on end just to see what is on offer on the next level.

POP is filled with little touches and the special effects cannot be appreciated unless you are playing live. The glow of the naked flames, the fluid character animation, the endless particle effects that give POP its ambient look and feel - even the music and sound effects within this game actually heighten enjoyment as opposed to being there for the sake of it.

Although POP may still be relatively low profile at this stage, but that will change soon with a massive marketing drive - it's a title that looks to be perfect in almost every area.





preview:

Here is a topic that has hardly been touched before (but is becoming a popular theme in upcoming developments), one that focuses on the life of a Gladiator. Developed in-house by Acclaim, it tells the story of a Warrior Slave, chosen by the Gods, to restore the glory of an Empire. Our quest for knowledge saw Derek de la Fuente speak with Nick Dixon - Designer and Screenplay Writer - to find out more.

It doesn't take a genius to guess where the inspiration for this game came from, as Nick suggested. "It is safe to say that the film 'Gladiator' initially inspired the project but then I think it is also safe to say that we were inspired by a whole range of Hollywood Roman classics. In addition we are also influenced by epic myths, both real and Harryhausen related. You will see a lot of this influence throughout the game, which also includes an authentic cinematic approach to lighting and production design, evocative of movie epics such as 'Spartacus', 'Ben Hur', and 'Gladiator'. A lot of us just want to tell a good story from a very real and brutal period of history. Of course as it is a combat adventure most of the game will be centred on fighting mechanics,



Gladiator: Sword of Vengeance

however you can expect a healthy dose of exploration to add to the epic storyline."

Vast stage and landscape arenas form bloody battlegrounds loaded with deadly traps, imposing fortifications and lethal stage machinery which make this a real dynamic and creative project. It appears the look, game idea and settings are all equally important and some really inventive methods in the development of this game have been implemented.

"We use a scripted camera sequence in-game. As the camera runs along a spine this allows us to create some truly beautiful camera moments. In addition, the cut-scenes were created with a 'Hollywood' approach in mind. Finally we have used well-respected voice actors (including Sean Pertwee for Thrax) to deliver top-notch voices for the main leads." The main story objectives for Thrax, the gladiator you assume, will be to hunt down Phobos and Deimos, the Gods of fear and terror (oddly enough, these two are Greek gods), in order to release Rome from the grip of the madman that they sponsor. In-game objectives to achieve this task both revolve around the fighting, using an interesting fighting technique, as well as progressing forward and solving tasks that involve manipulating the environment in some degree to create a path ahead.

The gladiator's opponents, and there are many, are very much grounded in the real world and differ mainly in attack speed and strength. However the mythical enemies often possess different powers and abilities that require you to learn the best method of power or attack type to deal with them efficiently. What Nick said was that the good players would be separated from the bad ones by how quickly they deal with enemies, which is dependent on how they have mastered and understood the combat mechanics. If you don't learn how to use the combat system to your advantage, you'll be dying quite often.

Your fighting skills improve and your moves increase as you progress through the game. A

multitude of moves and combinations, without overly complicated controls, will please gamers. Exciting combination attacks produce spectacular sequences and gorier deaths - the more fantastic the kill, the higher the Blood Meter rises.

The rich mixture of combat on offer, how precise and accurate the players have to be and how injury is handled and where a huge variety of conventional and mythic weapons is on offer brought some interesting thoughts from Nick. "A multiple opponent lock-on





system has been created. This enables the player to lock onto multiple enemies and spread a single combination attack string across more than one opponent. So whilst accuracy of hitting is not entirely the issue, accuracy of timing and quick thinking is. We

have incorporated a fight gauge into the system that measures how well a player is playing the game whilst in combat. The more enemies you kill with a single combination, coupled with how well you evade, will cause the fight gauge to rise. This has the effect of making Thrax more and more powerful. "As for an injury system being more of a Devil May Cry or Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers type game this kind of system is not necessary for us. However, just to throw in a point, on certain enemy champions (mythic and real) you can perform an execution. These are extremely gory and rewarding animation sequences that are great fun to watch. There are over 60 of these to find throughout the game and I can assure you that Mortal Kombat never did gore this good!"

Gladiator is full to the brim with gaming ideas. There is a range of Olympian Battle Magic for the player to collect as he progresses through the game. These are not just one-shot activation routines and they require careful consideration when best to use each one and how much power to place into them. They can be used as an extended attack boost or a one-shot smart bomb attack. In addition, the second battle magic can be used to regain health from enemies, so in effect the player can choose, during combat, when and how they get their own health restored. Progression will see you collect a number of Olympian powers; several weapon variants (adding new animations in the process) and a range of add-ons to the fight gauge. As such, by the time you complete the game you really will seem to be a champion of the

gods with all the powers and weaponry that befits such a stature.

With a plethora of ideas and actions (pagan barbarity), the AI that drives the enemy challenge must be well balanced and believable. "The enemies react according to information given to them by Thrax - the player's character. They will often apply group tactics that vary dependent on how much damage they are taking as a group or how the group numbers are comprised in the first place. Some enemies, who lose group members, can suddenly increase a level of difficulty to appear as if they are becoming more aggressive and use more aggressive tactics. Another feature added is that enemies will block players who are simply 'button-mashing'. Switching attack type or evading and re-attacking forces the player to re-think their attack strategy, something that will counteract this often-used 'technique'. The enemies are not programmed to impede casual players but people who take time to learn and implement the control system well will be very well rewarded in how the fights progress mechanically and visually."

You can equip your gladiator with personalized armour, compete in spectacular and complex battle events, so getting the right information onscreen and being able to see and manipulate things is essential and with a crowd baying for blood, the amount of time you take and the effort unloaded are prime.

"We will have a fully integrated HUD system that incorporates icon use for ease of information giving. This small and compact HUD should give the player all they need to know with just a quick glance. Ultimately much of the action is very intuitive anyway."

Fighting in the Coliseum to the sound of 60 000 spectators, battling through the streets of ancient Rome, exploring some fantastic mythic locations, such as the Island of the Titans and Edge of the World, gives even more appeal.

Described as an old school fighter with next generation fight mechanics by Nick covered only a fraction of what is on offer.



▲ Hang on... lie still, there's a bee on your back



▲ "Look up my loincloth - it's the last thing you'll see"



preview:

Battlefield 1942: Secret Weapons of WWII

▶ Arguably, the Battlefield 1942 brand grows with each release. Secret Weapons of WWII, the second expansion pack to the highly acclaimed series plans to significantly enhance the gaming experience by bringing the most bizarre and deadly weapons from the German and Allied laboratories to the Battlefield. We spoke with Armando 'AJ Marini, Creative Lead, working at Digital Illusions to find out more.

From top secret, cutting edge weapons to secret forces and secret places, a new level of drama and excitement will be added to the Battlefield experience. Many of the new vehicles and weapons featured in Secret Weapons - futuristic for the WWII timeframe - were considered extremely powerful and very experimental. While these armaments and vehicles are rooted in the Second World War's history, many never saw actual combat - however, they are put to extensive use in the game. Secret Weapons lets

gamers control and use new weapons and new vehicles in eight fresh WWII combat battlefields including Telemark, Peenemünde (V2 research facility), Essen and The Eagle's Nest (Hitler's hideaway). All the new battlefields offer unique settings from nightfall during the summer in Prague to a winter battle in Norway.

The first and central question put was - why go with the expansion pack route when a standalone game will make more impact? "Just consider, when we looked at the 1 new game mode, 2 new forces, 7 new hand weapons, 8 new maps, and 16 new vehicles we thought, 'hmm, feels like an awesome expansion pack'. Now, imagine what you can expect when we release an actual new standalone game. What we've done with Secret Weapons is push the BF1942 play dynamic and technology to



▲ "Men... fire in random directions so that we look cool!"



the limit. Given that, and with the short development cycle, there wasn't time to make more dramatic changes to code - which is what you could expect with a standalone product. And, you get the equivalent of a new game at a lower price-point."

Secret Weapons offers eight maps and, rather than depend on a particular campaign, the team focused on the more covert operations of the war. This brings the player to a wider variety of locations from Italy in the South to the Netherlands in the North, the White Cliffs of Dover in the West to Prague in the East.

As mentioned, the expansion brings such environmental things as snow and night-time to some levels; these changes to the environment have an effect on the way players play the game. The specific effects on offer differ based on the context. For instance, airplanes are much harder to spot against a night sky. Commandos wear winter camouflage that is difficult to detect against the snow. What players do with these circumstances is

up to them.

Secret Weapons brings the total number of playable vehicles in the game to 46. In addition to the 30 vehicles in the original game, players can operate 16 new vehicles, including a Horton HO 229 fighter plane that is equipped with a 30 mm machine gun. Other vehicles include a US Sherman tank with a T-34 Calliope (rocket launcher), U.S. Super Heavy Tank, the Sturmtiger, Goblin jetfighters, C-47 cargo planes, the Armstrong Whitworth AW-52, the German Wasserfall guided anti-air missile and the German Natter rocket plane.

Armando highlighted his favourite new vehicle: "I think players will be most intrigued by the C47. Its overt offensive capabilities are almost non-existent, but the way this vehicle can affect the battle is unparalleled. It allows a team to drop players on key positions making it one of the most threatening vehicles in the game."

In addition to offering innovative weapons and vehicles, the game also improves on the play dynamic by adding an 'objective based' mode. In this new setting, players will be tasked with a specific objective to win the battle (e.g. destroy a secret facility). Many will enjoy the objective-based mode within the game. The basic principle behind it is to focus players on one location of the battle - rather than having the team spread out across the map, the sides need to work as a unit to infiltrate and eliminate the objective. As defenders, the same team principles hold true. In order to win, you'll need to defend as a group in order to hold

off the onslaught.

Rather than adding a new country's infantry to the battle, the team has kept with the idea of covert forces, namely the British Commandos and the German Elite troops being introduced. All the new weapons have been assigned to these two forces. Most notably, the engineers have more offensively capable weapons now and this means that forces are comprised of more varied classes, which adds to more team dynamic. The interview rounded off with a look to the future and how the PC and consoles sat with the team, "I'm a big proponent of consoles because, as a developer, you always know what your customer will be using and you can design specifically for that. You also know your limits. With PCs the sky's the limit. Working with a minimum specified machine brings people down to earth in terms of what they are doing. They have to be more efficient with what they are creating. In the end, having a low minimum specification is good because it means more people can play your game."

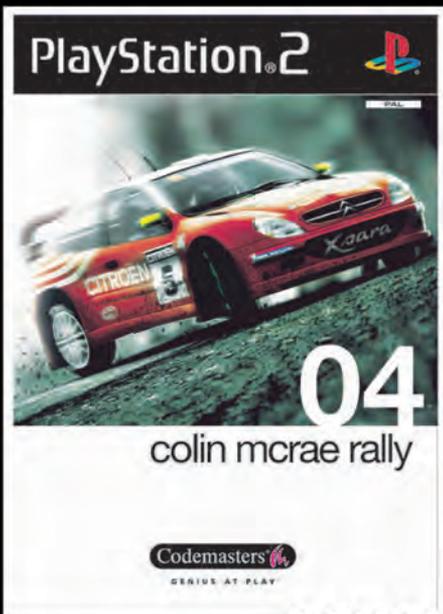
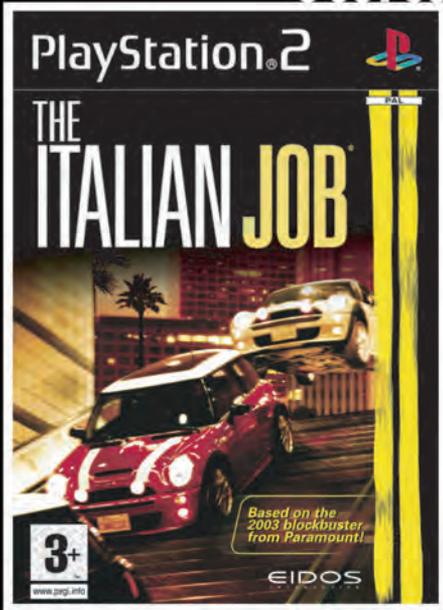


▼ "Hey, I can see Hitler's house from here..."



PlayStation®2

*8 OCT 03



*8 OCT 03

PlayStation 2



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NAG Editors Choice
The big thumb-suck for the month.



NAG Award of Excellence
Games which score over 90% are given this award.



NAG Award of Merit
Games which score over 85% and below 90% are given this award.



Dead to Rights [GCN]

"...it is the clichés and dark story that makes this game one of the most enjoyable and engrossing I have played for some time."

Iwan Pienaar

90%



Hoyle Majestic Chess [PC]

"... I am probably nowhere closer to becoming a Grandmaster than what I was so many years ago after falling in love with this ancient sport."

Iwan Pienaar

90%



The new [old] scoring system: **behind the scenes**

As you page through the next few reviews, you will notice that scores have generally decreased across the board - hence fewer awards. This is thanks to a new review scoring system [it's actually a version of our old system but this time around will be transparent to the reader] - we've also been discussing how scoring creeps up over the months and things we can do to prevent it. Ergo new [old] scoring system and a few other minor changes in how we approach the game review. Below is a list of all the individual factors considered when scoring a title - each is rated as a percentage, with 50% being average:

- Graphics:** How does the game look? How does it animate? Do the various graphic elements add significantly to the gaming experience? Are the graphics detailed and suitable?
- Sound:** Is the sound of good quality? Is it suitable to the game? Is it easy to listen to? Does it enhance the gaming experience?
- Story:** Is the story original? Is it a good story? Does it advance well, or does it stagnate?
- Originality:** Is the game a new genre? If not, how does it approach the old genre? Does it have any new concepts? Is anything unique?
- Control:** How simple are the controls to master? Are they accurate and responsive? Are they well designed and suitable for the game type.
- Playability:** Was the game entertaining and fun to play?
- Continuity:** Will you play the game again? How long will you play the game for?
- Multiplayer:** Does the game have a multilayer element (if appropriate?) Is the multiplayer element enjoyable and working correctly? Is anything new introduced?
- A.I.:** Is the computer opponent appropriately challenging? Is it too smart or too stupid?
- Judgement:** What is the reviewer's personal opinion of the game?

These factors are then divided by ten, for a final score. Simple.

NAG Review Rigs supplied by:

Your Components Solution Provider

SPECIFICATION

Intel P4 3.1 GHz 512KB
Gigabyte GA-8SG800 Motherboard
NVIDIA GeForce4 Ti 4200 with AGP8X
AOpen A90E 19" Monitor
TwinMOS 1GB RAM DDR 266
Seagate Barracuda 80GB
AOpen CD ROM
AOpen Tower Chassis
Logitech Cordless Desktop



ACTIVISION®

CALL OF DUTY

Call of Duty

Call of Duty is an intense first-person action game that allows players to experience the movie-like intensity and gripping combat of World War II as never before – through the eyes of ordinary soldiers, fighting as part of a squad through the chaos of battle.

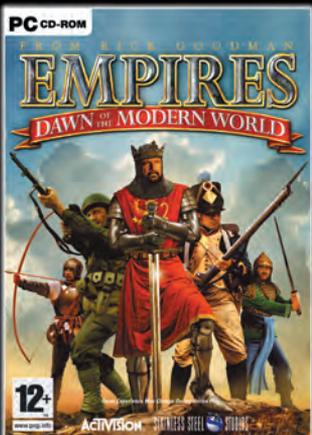
Available November



Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy

Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy is a dynamic single and multiplayer action experience featuring an all-new epic story. Players are immersed in the role of apprentice at Luke Skywalker's Jedi Academy where they learn the power – and danger – of the Force. Amidst a multitude of complex and richly detailed Star Wars environments, including twice as many unique locales as those in Star Wars Jedi Outcast, players face a variety of powerful and insidious enemies.

Available September



Empires: Dawn of the Modern World

Empires: Dawn of the Modern World represents the only truly global RTS where players control unique civilizations across a timeline that spans from the Middle Ages to the modern era. Gamers lead their nation's economic growth and military campaigns in their effort to dominate the world. Each civilization has its own historically accurate units and abilities to be used as players command battles over land, sea and air. From a cavalry charge to a surprise air strike, gamers will know what it truly means to rule one of the world's greatest empires.

Available October



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PC
CD



pc review:



I am quite apprehensive about tackling this title, because of what it was meant to be, and what it actually is. It seems a great many people are holding out a lot of hope for this game, based largely on the enormous amount of hype created around it. These gamers are going to be victims of exploitative marketing... they will show how a few elements can disguise a title such as this. And, because these elements so often work well, there will be many people who realise that their expensive silk purse is, in fact, a swine's ear.

Three massive forces joined together to create an impression of Bethesda's new title, Pirates of the



▲ Cannons are not too accurate... thankfully!



Caribbean. The first is, obviously, the name, which implies that the game is at least loosely based on the film of the same name to be released later this year. It has, in fact, nothing to do with the movie at all. The name was obviously tacked onto the game (which was originally called Sea Dogs 2) as a ploy to move more units off the shelves. A shameless move indeed. The second is the developer's reputation. Bethesda has been known to create wonderful games in the past. But even the best developers can hash things up. But they will never admit to that. The third - a blitzkrieg style marketing campaign bombarding the consumer with the brand. A typical stunt used by marketing people when they know that their product will not sell on its own merits.

Pirates of the Caribbean has very little going for it. While there are no massive flaws in the game, there are a huge number of smaller faults, bugs and general annoyances - enough to thoroughly ruin the experience of playing what could have been a really great game (despite the shameless name debacle.) Ostensibly a third person action adventure with sea battle elements (which are also in a similar third person view) the overall play dynamic feels overly eclectic and rather haphazard.

The one thing that the title has going for it is an outstanding level of graphics; this certainly is a pretty game, but the substance needed to back the eye-candy up is missing.

The number of bugs infesting this title is incredible, with all aspects of the game suffering from at least minor glitches. Bigger bugs enter into the fray with regards to clipping and AI, as well as the overall sound of the game. Other problems within the game seem to be the kind that would be made by inexperienced developers - not Bethesda. A ragged and unwieldy bunch of controls govern the game - they seem to have been randomly selected and chucked together at the

Pirates of the Caribbean

last minute.

This results in combat being so difficult it's easier to run away from confrontation. The story is rather weak, and the interface features writing so big that even the most myopic gamer could put his glasses aside while playing this one. Customisation of the game is very limited as well...

Sadly, this anticipated title will go to show, once again, how a clever marketing strategy can sell units. No matter how many reviewers slam this one, it will fly off of the shelves.

And, as a result, there will be a huge number of very disappointed gamers out there.

As a footnote, I must add that I personally did enjoy the naval battles - purely for the fact that they were something rather original.

Not enough to redeem the game, though.



AOpen

all games reviewed on AOpen machines

Minimum Specification

Pentium III 800 MHz | 128 MB RAM | 8 x CD ROM | 64 MB D3D Video Accelerator
 2.5 GB HDD

⊕ Pretty

⊗ Tons of bugs

⊗ Nasty controls

⊗ Horrid interface

Summary

Pirates of the Caribbean is a classic example of exploitative marketing... out right lies, in plainer terms. The game has nothing to do with the film of the same name and, other than nice graphics, is nothing like the triple A title it is tipped to be. It has more bugs than a roach motel, and will leave even the most forgiving player gagging and running for the toilet. [So... you didn't like it? Ed]

47

eidos

COMMANDOS 3 DESTINATION BERLIN



Commandos 3
Commandos 3 takes the stunningly detailed graphics and compelling play dynamic of the series to a whole new level. The game features a new interior engine that enables you to rotate the detailed environments and zoom in and out. Prepare your Commandos as enemy bombing raids lay waste to environments, requiring you to change your tactics and approach.

**Available
October**



R299.99

R199.99

R199.99

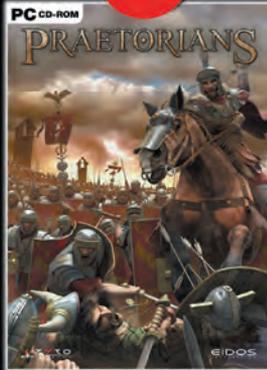
R199.99

R299.99



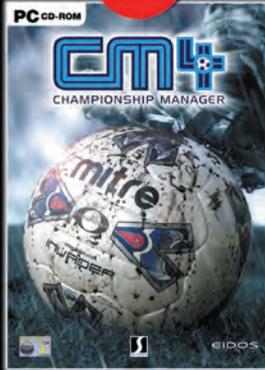
Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness
A series of grisly murders brings Lara into conflict with a sinister Alchemist from the past, and a secret alliance of powerful individuals shrouded in mystery. Accused of the murder of her one time mentor, Lara Croft becomes a fugitive on the run.

Available Now



Praetorians
Praetorians is an epic 3D strategy game set at the time of Julius Caesar's campaigns to expand the frontier's of the Roman Empire. Taking on the role of a Roman General you are transported back to the deserts of Egypt, the frozen lands of the Gauls and to the heart of the Empire itself, Italy.

Available Now



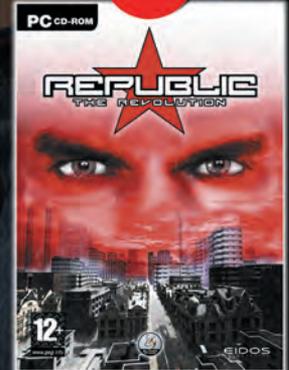
Championship Manager 4
Championship Manager 4 is the next generation of football management games offering more players, leagues and competitions than any other title. For the first time ever in the series, Championship Manager 4 features a 2D match engine enabling you to make tactical decisions as the action unfolds.

Available Now



Hitman 2
Step into the world of a cold-blooded killer for hire, hunting and stalking your prey in a deadly game of cat and mouse. Obtain a disguise, find a way in, and silently finish the job unnoticed, or kick down the front door with gun's blazing, and take everybody out. It's completely up to you how to fulfil the contract.

Available Now



Republic: The Revolution
Following the fall of the mighty Soviet Union, the Republic of Novistrana verges on collapse, and numerous factions struggle for power. Starting with nothing more than a small base of local support, challenge the state and build a nationwide faction powerful enough to oust the President and enforce a new Republic...by any means nec-

Available Now

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**PC
CD**



pc review:



Not only does this year mark a 100 years since the Wright brothers pioneered powered flight, but Microsoft also celebrates 20 years of Microsoft Flight Simulator. It was thus apt for the ninth incarnation of this great simulator to celebrate the first century of aviation, and to pay tribute to the legends and events that made aviation history.

There are very few titles in the gaming world that can claim a 20-year history, and fewer yet that have become even more popular with each incarnation. Microsoft Flight Simulator 2004: A Century of Flight is exactly that. After the very successful FS2002, one often wondered how this simulation could be improved. Instead of giving it a total makeover, it was decided to improve and refine existing features, and to add a new dynamic weather system.

To celebrate a history of flight, aircraft such as the Wright Flyer, Curtiss "Jenny", Vickers Vimy, Ryan NYP "Spirit of St. Louis", Ford Tri-Motor, Vega, De Havilland Comet, Douglas DC-3 and Piper Cub were modelled in breathtaking detail. Many of the history-making events these planes took part in can be revisited, with loads of information and in some cases, movies of the original aircraft. Although flying some of these old crates can be very gratifying, the DC-3 should probably prove to endure above the rest, as it has done in real life.

Looking at the mainstay of the usual Flight Simulator aircraft, fans can look forward to the revamped Learjet 45 and Mooney Bravo. Both of these planes now sport excellent 3D models, virtual cockpits, and enhanced flight modelling. On the topic of flight modelling, almost all the aircraft received some attention, and overall these planes are an improvement over FS2002. A newcomer is the Robinson R22 Beta II helicopter that is remarkably

accurate, although autorotation modelling is slightly off. The game interface has been slightly improved to allow for better navigation through the sections, and makes information more easily



Microsoft Flight Simulator 2004: A Century of Flight

available. The training lessons are as good as ever thanks to Rod Machado, and John and Martha King of King Schools still educates virtual pilots on some of the basic principles of flight.

Referring to enhanced features, the groundbreaking virtual cockpit from FS2002 took a step up, and is now totally interactive. This means one can now use the mouse in the virtual cockpit to operate almost all the switches and levers in the cockpit. Some major United States airports have received stunning visual upgrades, and the dynamic scenery has been tweaked to provide much more life-like land-class use, and thus more convincing scenery. Air Traffic Control has also been improved, allowing one to land on different runways other than the active, and even to file a flight plan whilst in flight. Flight level changes are also supported now.

The most remarkable addition must be the new dynamic, automatically updated real-world weather system. The simulation of atmospheric conditions will now affect the formation or dissipation of clouds, the onset of precipitation, and the movement of frontal systems. Weather templates are available, new ones can be created, or through the Internet real weather conditions can be displayed. One moment one could be flying around large clouds on a sunny day, and quite rapidly the situation can result in a thunderstorm. Flight Simulator 2004: Century of Flight symbolizes synergy, as the total product is far greater than the



▲ Ed on subscriber-sponsored R&R... the Bermuda Triangle is lovely this time of year...

sum of its parts. All the small changes, enhancements and new features result in the best version of Flight Simulator to date. Although the "As Real as it gets" logo is not entirely true, Flight Simulator still provides the best all-round value for virtual pilots, and even real pilots that want to brush up their skills.



all games reviewed on AOpen machines

Minimum Specification

Pentium 450 MHz | 128MB RAM | 24 x CD ROM | 8 MB D3D Video Accelerator
 1.8 GB HDD

- ⊕ Interactive virtual cockpits
- ⊕ Dynamic real-world weather
- ⊕ Totally interactive air-traffic control
- ⊖ Not as real as it gets
- ⊖ Lacking flying adventures
- ⊖ Helicopter modelling still mediocre

Summary

Flight Simulator still represents the bastion of simulations for the PC, and it is commendable that over many incarnations it is still improving. Given some ground breaking features such as dynamic weather and a much improved feel, this title is a must get for every fan of the series, and a great learning tool for beginners that have an interest in flying.

79

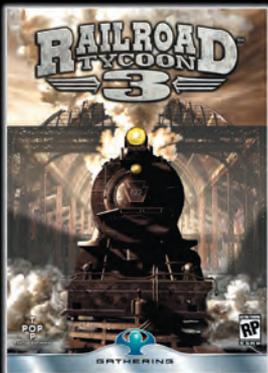


**It's not about you dying for your country...
It's about making your enemies die for theirs.**

Hidden & Dangerous 2

Hidden & Dangerous 2 is a first and third person tactical shooter that builds upon the tremendous success of Hidden & Dangerous. You lead a small squad of Allied soldiers deep behind enemy lines, to carry out secret missions during World War II. The gripping story line takes you to Europe, Africa, Burma, and other locations scattered across the globe. Each critical decision impacts you, your men, and your country. This unique blend of action, strategy, and tactics forces you to use your brain just as much as your trigger finger.

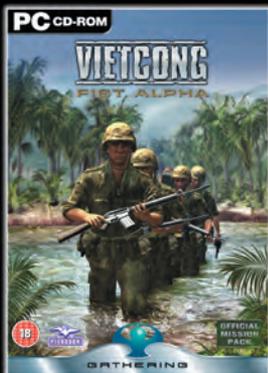
Available November



Railroad Tycoon 3

Players of Railroad Tycoon 3 begin the game with a modest sum of capital at the beginning of the Golden Era of Railroad-ing and expand their empire into major cities, while purchasing the latest locomotives, forcing competitors into bankruptcy, and exploiting the stock market to become the ultimate Railroad Tycoon.

Available November



Vietcong First Alpha

Placing you in the highlands of Vietnam, Vietcong First Alpha brings 7 brand new single player missions as well as 8 new multi-player maps to expand that jungle experience of Vietnam in 1967.

Available November

MAX PAYNE 2 THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne
In 2001, Max Payne arrived to set the benchmark for action gaming, earning countless awards and revolutionizing the genre with cinematic combat sequences fuelled by the groundbreaking use of slow motion and a compulsive narrative-driven play dynamic. Now, working together with Rockstar Games' New York-based production team, Remedy has combined Max Payne's hallmark play style with all new innovations and unmatched production values.

Available November



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**PC
CD**



pc review:



Midnight Club II, the sequel to the PS2 launch title, has finally made it to the PC, with all the fast, frenetic action intact. And, aside from a few minor issues, it retains all the qualities that have made console owners fall in love with it.

Ever since "The Fast & the Furious" showed us all how cool illegal drag racing can be, no small amount of us have undoubtedly daydreamed about burning rubber against the best of the best on the night-time drag racing circuit in machines capable of obscene speeds, particularly when they're kitted out with nitrous bursts. Midnight Club II turns that dream into reality (well...



▲ Nitro-bursts are paramount to succeeding in Midnight Club II

almost), and although it doesn't sport any licensed vehicles, the similarities to true-life cars isn't exactly subtle. The crux of the game is the Career mode, where you cruise around Los Angeles, Paris and Tokyo, searching for other members of the "Midnight Club" on the streets. When you pull up behind one of these racers and flash your bright headlights, the opponent in question begins a game of "follow the leader" with you. Succeed in staying on his tail, and you'll find yourself mixing it up with him and a handful of other racers, with the loser's car up for grabs. Along the way, in addition to unlocking faster vehicles, you'll also find yourself having to drive the odd motorbike, adding to the variety of the game. As well as unlocking new tracks for use in the Arcade mode, you'll also unlock new techniques, such as slipstream turbo boosts (a turbo meter that accumulates as you travel directly behind an opponent, eventually awarding you an additional nitrous boost), and weight transfers (allowing you to drive your car on two wheels when needed - tough to control, but good for squeezing through tight spaces). The controls are fairly responsive, however anyone who doesn't have an analogue controller (i.e. a game-pad or steering wheel), will suffer tremendously using the keyboard/mouse control system, particularly when the races become more difficult, and quick reactions become a necessity. The cars do, however, seem to handle in an unrealistic fashion, at times it even seems as though they are almost weightless, launching for improbable distances off ramps, and coasting for miles when power sliding. Aside from that, the play dynamic is solid, and as a result of the "rubber-band" AI (opposition cars speed up when you're in the lead, but slow down when you're

Midnight Club II



behind them), your opponents will never be too far behind (or ahead) of you, always making for tight results, and often much frustration, particularly if you drive a sterling race, but are involved in a collision near the end. When it comes to the visuals, the different cities are

all well designed (not to mention huge!), as well as nicely detailed, as are the different vehicles. Fortunately, the frame rate falters only infrequently, provided you have a PC that meets the specifications. Unfortunately, however, the pedestrians are often very difficult to hit, and the poor animations when you do succeed makes it hardly worth the effort. [Is this something you always check for? Ed] Midnight Club II's soundtrack is adequate, though hardly memorable - it doesn't get in the way of the action, but neither does it add anything to the experience. The voice acting is of a rather good standard, if a little stereotypical of the characters' nationalities, not to mention a little annoying when you're fed the same line for the hundredth time. On the whole, Midnight Club II does well to bolster a genre in which the PC is sorely lacking, namely that of the arcade racer and aside from a few minor niggles (including a terribly confusing interface), it definitely does provide the entertainment and the adrenaline rush that one would expect from this sort of game.

AOpen

all games reviewed on AOpen machines

Minimum Specification

Pentium III 800 MHz | 128 MB RAM | 4 x CD ROM | 32 MB D3D Video Accelerator
1.6 GB HDD

- ⊕ Lots of fun
- ⊕ Good graphics
- ⊕ Depth
- ⊖ Poor interface
- ⊖ Game-pad or Steering wheel practically necessary

Summary

Midnight Club II brings all the excitement associated with illegal drag racing to the PC. Good graphics, reasonable sound and a highly entertaining play dynamic, make this an excellent arcade-style racing game. Midnight Club II does very well to fill a genre that's been neglected on the PC for too long.

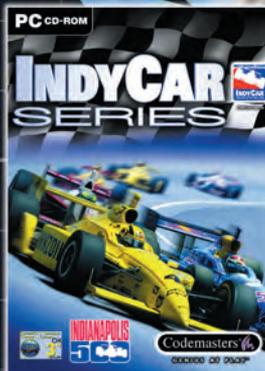
77

Codemasters®

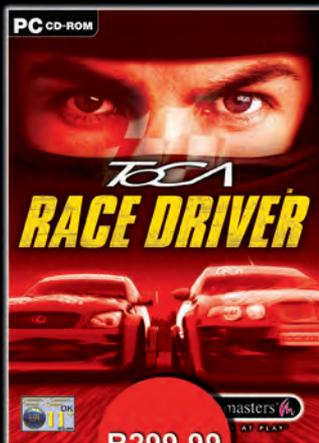
GENIUS AT PLAY™



Indy Racing League
Set to be the most accessible, exciting and entertaining open-wheel racing game designed, Indy Racing League features adrenaline-fuelled, ultra-close pack racing, with up to 33 cars racing on track, and requires total focus to handle the incredible overtaking manoeuvres at speeds well over 200mph.



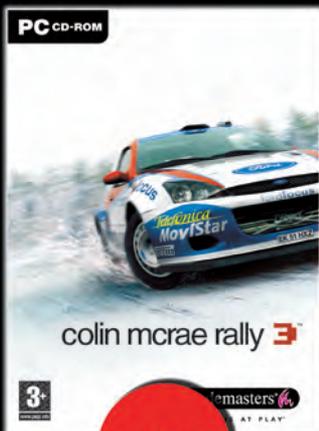
Available September



R299.99

TOCA Race Driver
Retaining the series' core values of close-contact racing with real cars, real teams, real track, real drivers and an astounding damage engine, TOCA Race Driver introduces a character-based narrative and episodic storyline. The game blends real world global championships with a fictional cast; the player takes the central role of aspiring driver Ryan McKane. The heart of the game sees the player advancing Ryan's career from a test driver to a potential world champion.

Available Now



R299.99

Colin McRae Rally 3
Colin McRae Rally 3, coming to PC this summer, captures the emotions and consequences of being a professional rally champion. It's an unbelievably personal gaming experience, as you become the globe's greatest rally driver - Colin McRae himself.

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PC
CD



pc review:



Oceans are as fascinating to people as the vast emptiness of space. Perhaps the isolation and lack of being in control are what draw people to these realms. However, before man looked to explore the stars it was the dark waters of the sea that called out to his soul and lured him in.

This leads me to what publishers JoWood Productions is classifying as an add-on title to the fairly recent underwater action title Aquanox. Reviewers practically slated the first Aquanox as a wet squib (sorry, could not help myself). A graphically beautiful wet squib, but a wet squib nonetheless. However, the release of the add-on, Revelation, has been a more low-key affair that is evoking a mixed response from the critics. Revelation is not an add-on in the classic sense of the word. You do not need the original title to play Revelation nor does it matter if you have



never played the original since it explains in some detail the milieu in which the game takes place. To summarise, the year is 2666 and mankind has been living under the waters of the oceans for more than five hundred years. This migration was necessitated by wars and natural disasters that rendered the earth's surface uninhabitable (original eh?).

You play as William Drake, a young freighter pilot that is struggling to keep his father's business after he left him and his grandmother many years ago when Drake's mother died. The grandmother has subsequently passed away, leaving Drake alone to fight off the liquidators

wanting the business. Revelation starts with Drake on a run to Atacama City when he encounters a distress call. The distress calls turns out to be a hoax and Drake soon finds his freighter overrun by pirates. He is faced with a simple choice. Either he helps them on their missions or they kill him. Not too hard to guess which option he chose.

In addition to this campaign mode of Revelation, there is a selection of single missions to complete that are independent of the main story. As players complete these missions, more difficult ones will be unlocked. These missions are your standard space simulator-turned underwater simulator affair.

Aquanox 2: Revelation

There are your obligatory "destroy everything that moves" scenarios and "escort the hapless freighter" ones as well.

These missions prove nothing more than a diversion though as the campaign mode is the game's strongest point. Most gamers will remember the Wing Commander series. This is considered to be one of the finest space opera franchises around. Its story gripped gamers from the start and the action was fast-paced throughout. Revelation is very similar to this bar the obvious fact that it takes place underwater.

Unfortunately, the game feels dated. This is probably due to the awful interaction between characters that harks back to games from the early nineties - having said that, the story is strong enough to let the forgiving player see beyond this. Graphically, the game is not bad but there is a distinct lack of variation in the underwater scenes. One of the best things of the game is the music that ties in perfectly with the narrative and the feel of the title.

While Revelation is not a brilliant game, it is more than enjoyable if you are able to overcome the terrible voice acting. However, if story-driven affairs do not tickle your fancy, then I would recommend getting something else as the action in itself can become very repetitive. The lack of multiplayer support will also see this title losing many supporters.

Revelation will probably be remembered as a game that promised much, but delivered little.



all games reviewed on AOpen machines

Minimum Specification

Pentium III 750 MHz | 128 MB RAM | 4 x CD ROM | 32 MB D3D Video Accelerator
 1 GB HDD

- Storyline
- Control system
- Atmospheric music
- Graphics
- Linear
- No multiplayer

Summary

Aquanox 2: Revelation is a game that wants to be different but does not pull it off. Gamers will get a strong feeling of déjà vu when playing this "underwater Wing Commander". At least it has an interesting story, atmospheric music and fun game play. However, the lack of multiplayer will annoy many gamers looking for a title that offers some longevity.

65



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LOCK ON™

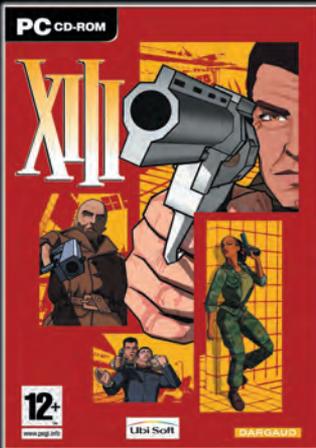
AIR COMBAT SIMULATION



Lock On: Modern Air Combat

Feel the power of commanding a modern jet fighter. Fly a variety of combat aircraft in the most graphically rich, audio intense game environment ever created for a combat flight simulator. Lock On: Modern Air Combat combines a broad scope of game play that includes a dynamic campaign system, an immersive combat environment, and in-your-face action.

Available October



XIII

XIII features a conspiracy of epic proportions, and players will unravel clues behind the story's compelling and mysterious events. XIII includes themes of amnesia, in which players must uncover sinister plots against themselves, the U.S. government, and even the president himself. The only clues players have are the roman numerals XIII tattooed on their shoulder and a key to a safe deposit box in a New York bank.

Available November

Tom Clancy's RAINBOW SIX 3 ATHENA SWORD™

Rainbow Six 3: Athena Sword

The elite multinational squad of counter-terrorist operatives returns in Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3: Athena Sword, the first mission pack of the wildly successful Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield. They defeated the diabolical plot of a terrorist mastermind in the smash-hit PC game Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield. But a few desperate remnants of the organization remain - and Team RAINBOW won't rest until terror has been vanquished and the world is safe.

Available October



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**PC
CD**

ps2 review:



There are two things you should never try and teach your loved one - how to drive a car and how to play chess. While there is a plethora of driving schools to choose from, learning chess is not as easy as some might think.

It has often been said that chess is easy to learn but difficult to master. Of that I can attest since I am probably nowhere closer to becoming a Grandmaster than what I was so many years ago after falling in love with this ancient sport.

Game publishers are increasingly taking chess seriously with several solid titles having been released in recent times, the most notable being the ChessMaster franchise. However, Hoyle Majestic Chess has arrived to challenge the supremacy of the aforementioned title.

What makes this title so different is the way in which it teaches the principles of chess to the novice and intermediate player. This takes the form of an adventure in

which the player will need to complete certain tasks in order to get chess pieces. These pieces are then used in "combat" to beat the Boss at the end of every chapter. Admittedly, these missions might be a bit basic for the advanced player, but it does provide an interesting platform for the newcomer.

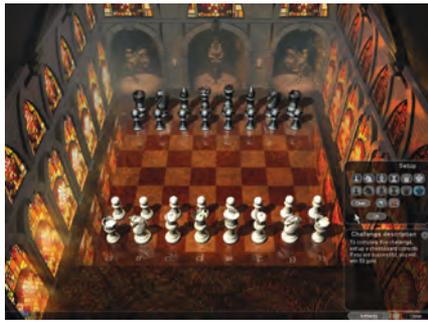
Apart from this adventure mode, Majestic Chess features all the bells and whistles that have become part and parcel of modern-day chess titles. You can play online or simply choose to play against the computer on a difficult level you feel comfortable with.

There are also several classic games you can watch with detailed textual commentary on the moves and the thinking behind them. Trust me, this is a boon for the serious chess player.

Graphically, the game is beautiful with the player being able to select from a variety of boards, backgrounds and pieces to use. The sound adds to

the atmosphere, but its repetitive nature will see many players turning it off.

This is a must-have title if you are on the lookout for a PC chess game.



- Fun learning adventure
- Historical games
- Graphics
- Music can become repetitive
- 3D board controls take getting used to
- Lack of Grandmaster guidance

90

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* Weapons featured not in game.

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10/10 Official PlayStation 2 Magazine
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ps2 review:



While Futurama may not have been as popular as The Simpsons, Matt Groening's "other" series did garner a rather loyal cult following. Now it has finally made its way to the PS2, and it will certainly delight fans.

Although it is little more than a 3D platform title, Futurama is some of the most fun I have had on the PS2 in quite some time. This is probably partly due to



the fact that I loved the TV series, and the developers managed to capture the spirit of the show perfectly. Add to this the fact that all the voices are performed by the original voice cast and that the script might as well have been taken from the series (it's that good) and you have a definite winner - if it's your taste. The humour is rather off beat and quite disturbed at times, after all... Within the game the player gets to use three of the characters: Fry, Bender and Leela. Each character brings a slightly different play style to the game, with Leela being more combat oriented and Fry being more movement oriented... with Bender somewhere in between. The control system is basic and comprehensive. Despite this, the game can get very difficult at times, and "inconsistently" so; a very tough level may be followed by a very easy one, and vice versa. Some of the levels seem almost impossible. Futurama is quite a long game, and will provide the player with hours of enjoyment. Although not the greatest PS2 title ever, it will certainly appeal to fans of the television shop more than just your average gamer.

Futurama

It pays perfect homage to the series in every way possible... right down to the fact that, unless you die within five minutes of starting the game, you can't continue playing... try it, you'll see what I mean!



- Original voices
- True to the series
- Funny!
- Can get a bit tough

65

ps2 review:



2103 AD... Alien invaders have invaded Earth's colony on Mars. There is only one hope for the planet: Wheeler, a one-man-army, biomechanically enhanced and ready to fight for the future of the human race. Of course, a sense of humour helps in this kind of situation...

There is a blend of action and comedy that seems to work well for virtually every entertainment form - a secret formula that makes for memorable movies, books, television series and, of course, games. It seems to me that RTX Red Rock from LucasArts is



trying to live up to this kind of popular entertainment and it almost achieves the perfect blend. But although the humour within the game is great, it certainly aims more towards the action adventure side of things, and then even more towards adventure than action. We haven't seen anything phenomenal from LucasArts in some time, but RTX goes a long way to reverse the trend of lacklustre titles that they have produced. It is a highly enjoyable, challenging game with a great backstory and wonderfully colourful characters - including IRIS, a robotic assistant who acts more like a jealous wife than a mechanical servant. The most interesting thing about this game comes in trying to pigeon hole it into one of the accepted genres that gamers generally expect. It is full of action (more so than other adventure games like Tomb Raider) but also has a strong adventure element. This technically qualifies the game as an action adventure - but there is something about the game that just makes one want to say "platform..." Overall, this is a very fine game, with great graphics, challenging levels, comprehensive controls and an overall feel of "quality." The game dynamic involves a lot of running back and forth and often depends on spotting things that may be a little

less than obvious; this may lead to a lot of frustration and self-kicking. This is probably a good point, rather than a negative factor for the title, but that's debatable. Great fun for those who like their action funny and thought provoking, with a science fiction flavour.



- Great story
- Good graphics
- Long levels
- Frustrating at times
- Often "platform-like"

70

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ps2 review:



Given the current popularity of extreme sports titles, the eventual emergence of a supercross title was inevitable. It's a good concept for a game, but is Acclaim's latest offering good enough to make an impression in an already-saturated genre?

SX Superstar sees you in the role of an amateur supercross competitor, with barely 2 cents to scrape together, as you try to make your mark on the professional scene. As you earn money from races and promotions to bigger leagues, you'll watch your apartment grow from a run down hole-in-the-wall to a luxury penthouse, and you'll also be



able to purchase bigger, faster bikes to facilitate further progress. SX Superstar even attempts to include a storyline by having your character's parents, friends, agent and girlfriend leave voice messages and faxes. However, the level of interactivity in this aspect of the game is minimal, and one can't help but feel that it's merely a shoddily-assembled afterthought, when it could have made the game more original and involving.

The essence of the game is found in the racing, and although the riders are capable of pulling off tricks, which in turn contribute to filling a boost meter, allowing your rider a burst of additional speed, none of the stages boast stiff enough competition to necessitate the use of a boost, and the tricks are almost always very

difficult to perform, and you'll more often than not find your rider eating dirt rather than successfully landing one. Although this doesn't detract too much from the game, it's just another area where one feels the developers could have done more to make this a better game. Visually, the stages all look fairly realistic, if repetitive, but the different riders and bikes appear virtually identical. The graphics are by no means bad, but they are certainly quite far from being cutting edge. The sound is standard fare for this genre, with hard, noisy backing tracks, and the mandatory squeals of the bikes' engines sounding real enough. Ultimately, SX Superstar can be mildly entertaining, even engrossing at times, but the novelty soon wears off, and one is forced to lament how much better this game might have been had the developers spent a little more time correcting its faults.

⊕ Engrossing at times

⊖ Poor control

⊖ Graphics are only decent

65

ps2 review:



Games based on the concept of driving dangerously appear to be the "in thing" at the moment, particularly with the folks at Acclaim. Speed Kings is all about driving a motorcycle on busy streets in as crazy (or more accurately, "retarded") a manner as possible, and it's sure to be compared with the brilliant Burnout 2. Is Speed Kings good enough to stand up to it though?



preventing it from being a must-have. At the outset of the game, the majority of bikes and tracks are locked, and can only be unlocked by successfully winning races, beating times for the fastest laps and

completing 3 ridiculous "respect challenges" per track. In terms of the play dynamic, Speed Kings is very easy to get into, and after a few minutes getting used to the controls, you'll soon be able to hold your own against the AI competitors. Add unpredictable traffic to the mix, and you've already got an exciting and entertaining game on your hands. Where it falters, however, is with the trick system. In an effort to make things more intriguing, your

rider has the ability to perform a few tricks such as handstands and wheelies while racing, and these are required to fill your boost meter, as well as to complete several of the respect challenges. Unfortunately, the control system is often unresponsive when trying to pull off tricks, making the game incredibly frustrating, especially since you'll need the nitro boosts gained from performing tricks to win many of the races. Graphically, the locales are well designed, though they look somewhat blocky at low speeds, and the game does suffer from instances of slow-down, but in general, the graphics are quite good. An average soundtrack and decent effects also complement the action. Ultimately, Speed Kings is a solid title, and is more than capable of providing hours of entertainment, but is let down, to an extent, by its flaws. If you can forgive them, however, this may be just what you're looking for.

⊕ Good graphics

⊕ Fun factor

⊖ Poor trick system

⊖ Dodgy control at times

75

The concept is certainly a sound one - Burnout 2 is undoubtedly one of the most entertaining arcade-style racing games available, and extending the "daredevil" concept of that game to motorbikes is sure to appeal to many racing enthusiasts. Speed Kings is quite entertaining, but it is, sadly, lacking in a few key areas,

gcn review:



Slate's the name, Jack Slate. I'm a cop, or at least was one until that little SNAFU in the hotel last night. You see, the feds don't seem to appreciate a pile of bodies too much but they appreciate corruption even less so at least I'm in with a chance. But wait, I'm giving away too much already. My



story begins on a cold night in Grant City as I investigate a shots-fired call-out with my K-9 partner, Shadow...

Welcome to Dead to Rights, the latest offering from Electronic Arts. Developed by Namco, this Action Noir thriller is as over-the-top as they come. Thankfully, this

is not to the detriment of the title. In fact, it is the clichés and dark story that makes this game one of the most enjoyable and engrossing I have played for some time. Dead to Rights is driven by a narrative that offers so many twists and turns, that one cannot help but keep on playing to see where it takes you. This is to the detriment of the title since once you finish it there is no real reason to play it again.

Having said that, this title is much more than a standard third-person action offering. Scattered throughout the game

are mini-games that offer a break from the routine of shooting everything that moves. These mini-games range from doing a strip-dance to arm-wrestling. For my taste, the game could have done with more of these mini-games but that is just nit picking. The only annoyance is the game's camera angle. While this can be forgiven on large levels, there are too many narrow corridors where Slate finds himself fighting someone he cannot see. The fighting engine is remarkably simple to learn. There is an assortment of weapons to get, but even if the player runs out of ammunition, Slate is more than capable of using an opponent as a shield or disarming some hapless enemy.

Dead to Rights breathes fresh air into what has become a stale genre. If you are one of those gamers that enjoy a good story, then this is the one to get.

- ⊕ Gripping story
- ⊕ Mini-games
- ⊕ Fighting system
- ⊕ Camera angle
- ⊕ Graphics
- ⊖ Low replay value

90

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Def Jam VENDETTA

Def Jam VENDETTA features four match types including Single Match so you can play 1-on-1 against the computer or a friend; Tag Team play in which you and a partner can go against another two-person team; Free For All where you can jump in the ring with up to four players with no holds barred, no allies and no mercy; and Handicap where you can prove your skill by taking on two or three opponents at once.



Resident Evil: Dead Aim

Resident Evil: Dead Aim sees search and pursuit team agent, Bruce MacGavin spear heading a shady anti-Umbrella organization's attempt to infiltrate and investigate a gigantic sea-cruiser as it makes its way across the Atlantic. Bruce MacGavin is a brand new character to the Resident Evil series and along with his mysterious female partner must battle against the hoards of relentless zombies that confront them for the first time.

gcn review:

Anyone who's ever happened to stumble into an arcade unawares or even aware, would have perhaps noticed one or two of those grimy arcade boxes containing cult classics such as Street Fighter 2 or King of Fighters, the occasional gamer popping in a few tokens only to bash at the buttons in a vain attempt at pulling off some incredible moves. There's good news for those who'd do anything to save that machine from such heathens, and for those of us who've never had the chance to see what all the fuss was about.

For those not in "the know", Capcom have been the undisputed leaders of the 2D Fighter genre since the dawn of arcades. Or at least, that's what Capcom fans would have you believe. On the flip side, SNK fans would claim that SNK produce far more refined fighting games than Capcom could ever hope to achieve. In the long run, most people would just ignore such bitter rivalry. Others however, can pick up this title, choose from your favourite of 44 Capcom and SNK characters (roughly half-half to each side) and battle it out in front of some of the most interesting backdrops ever seen in a fighting game. There is virtually no difference between

the older PSX version of the game and the newer Gamecube version, with the exception of the new 'GC-ism' control method (dubbed 'newbie mode') which allows you to pull off the special moves with little to no effort.

For fans of this genre, Capcom vs SNK 2 EO is a literal nirvana. There are six modes of play, including the favourite '3 on 3 Ratio Match' mode. The 44 characters include favourites from titles such as Samurai Showdown, Final Fight, Darkstalkers and Street Fighter. The man in the street may be raising an eyebrow or two, but fans can rejoice in the same street. To sweeten the deal even more, the 'Groove' system delivers unabridged fighting candy. Players can chose their favourite 'Groove' which influences how the fighters charge their special move bar (either through being attacked, or taunted, etc) as well as giving them different / new special moves.



If you have the space on your memory card, you can even save replays for later gloating. The game itself has almost constant hyperactive audio commentary, which can (after the novelty has worn off) be switched off. My only complaint is that Capcom should have retouched the graphics for the fighters, since they appear unchanged from their original titles, in Capcom vs SNK 2 Eo. Puritans might argue that keeping them in their original state adds to the appeal, but this might put off newcomers to the genre. None the less, there is enough in this title to keep the fans happy. If you don't have anyone to fight against, fear not. The AI for opponents is ruthless.

- Over 40 fighters
- Beautiful 3D backgrounds
- True-to-the-original
- Fighter graphics dated
- Niche title
- Commentator can get annoying

66

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gcn review:

With the recent movie release, it would be hard to not know what Resident Evil is about. It's about zombies. It's always been, about zombies. But why? That is the question that's never truly been answered. Where the heck did all this zombie-eating-brains stuff start? Why does the Umbrella Corporation always have something to do with the zombie hordes? Resident Evil Zero aims to explain all that, the obvious 'Zero' in the title being an indicator that it is, in fact, a prequel to the Resident Evil series. Nobody, however, expected it to look so dang good!

Right off the bat, I'll say it loud and clear. Resident Evil Zero is to date, the most graphically detailed and beautiful game on the Gamecube. What Zelda : Windwaker achieved in style, RE:0



achieves in pure eye candy. Of note, is the fact that it comes on not one, but two Gamecube disks. Considering how much data one disk can hold, that's quite impressive. The necessity for such a lot of storage space stems from the high quality characters as well as the backdrops which, unlike the previous RE games, are not static at all but rather rendered movies. This leads to an unparalleled movie-like quality, something that has to be seen to be believed. But not everything is about graphics, is it?

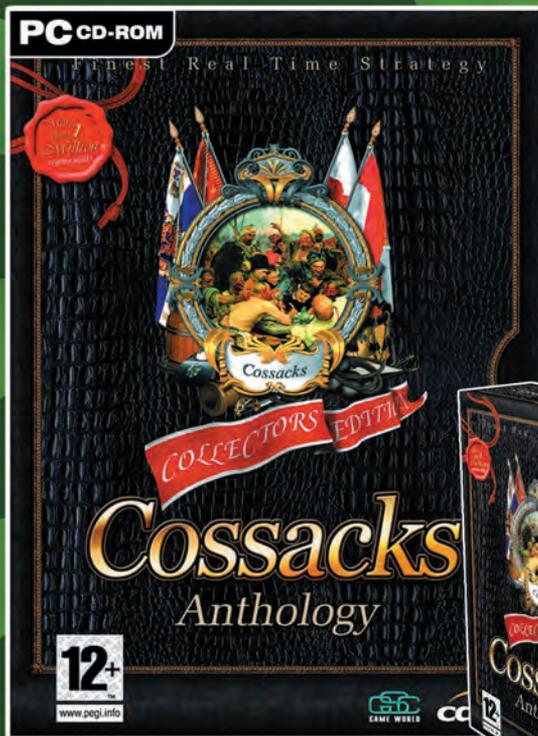
Another deviation from the usual style, RE:0 lets you play not just one character, but two, at the same time. Using their 'character zapping' system as they call it, you control both Rebecca (a rookie Raccoon City Police Officer from the original Resident Evil) and Billy (a framed

convict). If you control one character, the other becomes an AI operated partner that will help you take down zombies. Passing items between characters inventories if they stand close together is a breeze, thankfully, as you need to do this quite often. The team play aspect also plays an integral part in the puzzle solving side of the game. Often you may have to have one character hold down a lever, then switch to the other and move to stand on a platform, switching back to the original to pull the lever. It's a classic system, but it works remarkably well.

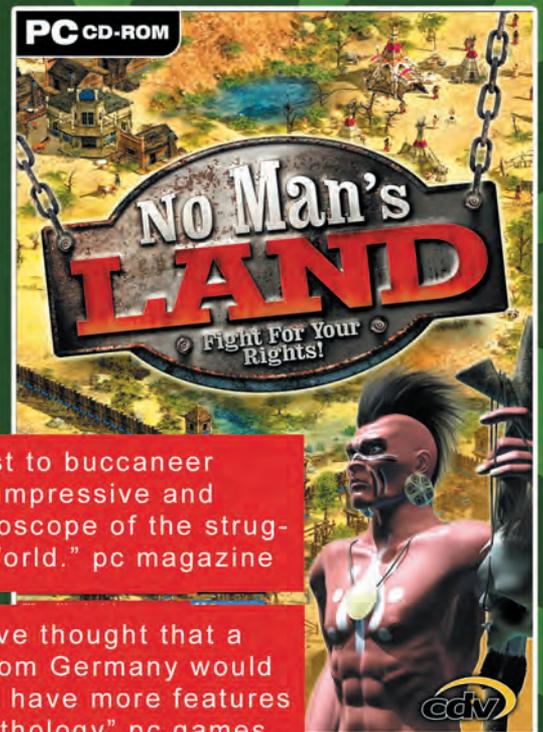
Aside from those new additions, it's vintage Resident Evil. The plot, while sometimes flimsy, serves well to support the existing storyline. The sounds and music are a notch above the norm thanks to extensive use of the Gamecube sound system and there's more than enough zombies and large spooky creatures for everyone.

- ⊕ Graphically amazing
- ⊕ Dual character interaction
- ⊕ It's Resident Evil
- ⊕ Not as scary as newer titles
- ⊕ Sluggish control
- ⊕ Confusing puzzles

64



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H@RD@COR3

cpu

Writer: Tom "FROTC@3" Taylor

All H@rdcor3 hardware is tested on an Emerald computer supplied by Light Edge Technology:

2GHz Intel Pentium 4 processor
MSI 845PE Max 2 motherboard
Transcend Radeon 9700
Philips 107E 17" monitor
Transcend 1GHz RAM DDR333
Western Digital 80GB HDD 7200rpm
LG DVD/CD-RW combo drive



▶ My virgin experience with computers was back in 1992 when my parents bought me a brand new Intel 486DX computer; it ran at an amazing clock speed of 66MHz. Today, however, the CPU has reached clock speeds of about 48 times that.

With last month's motherboard roundup, I thought it would be appropriate to do a roundup on CPU's. I tried to get hold of as many CPU's as possible and I saw this as the perfect opportunity to see, for myself at least, which processor is currently the best performer and which is the best value for money. I also realised that this roundup will spark another debate over which platform is better - AMD or Intel (a perk to having your own feature in a top magazine is that your opinion will be read by thousands of people). Sadly I was not able to compare the top contenders as neither AMD nor any local distributor I spoke to was able to supply me with an Athlon XP 3200+ CPU, the one company who I was supposed to get one from dropped me at the last minute. It was suggested to me, more than once, to take the benchmark scores of the review did on it in last month's edition of NAG and simply factor them into this review. This worried me a lot as I would not be able to accurately compare the top two processors

Benchmarking

The one part of my job which takes a lot of time is setting up and running the benchmarks for each product. It took me three days of straight testing and as a result of me forgetting to set up the RAM in dual DDR mode I had to rerun the first three CPU benchmarks (acceptance of dumb-ass award here [you can't win that eight times in a row - give someone else a chance - Ed]).

The Intel Processors were tested on the new Gigabyte GA-8IPE1000 Pro2 (Intel 865PE Chipset) and the AMD CPU's were tested on the superb Chaintech Zenith 7NJS Ultra (NVIDIA nForce2 Ultra chipset). For both platforms I used two sticks of Transcend 256MB DDR400 RAM and they were set up in Dual DDR mode for all tests. The graphics card was a Gigabyte Radeon 9800Pro and I installed the Catalyst 3.6 drivers for it. The operating system on the test machine was Windows XP Professional SP1.

The benchmarks were Aquamark, 3DMark03 build, 3DMark 2001SE Build 330, PCMark 2002 Pro (just the CPU test), PassMark PerformanceTest V4.0, Sisoft Sandra Standard MAX3! and Quake III. To try and ensure that each processor performs optimally, I formatted the test machine for each CPU and all the benchmarks were installed and run in exactly the same order, perfection is my middle name.

I then rated each of the processors according to its performance, value for money, and its desirability factor. The desirability factor is a combination of its performance versus its value for money rating.

A question I get asked on a regular basis is; which CPU should one buy? I will try to answer this question in each of the processors and mention why I would or would not recommend it.

Please note that the ERP (Estimated Retail Prices) quoted in this roundup are just a guideline and will most likely be slightly different at your local computer shop. These prices are heavily dependant on the rand/dollar exchange rate and neither Intel nor the suppliers can guarantee the quoted prices here. They are purely estimated.

currently available not to mention that as a technical journalist it is my duty to report the findings I come across while reviewing products as accurately and truthfully as possible, and I will not include a product in any of my roundups if I do not physically have it to compare against its competitors at the time of a given roundup. This even goes for products I have benchmarked independently. Anyway, enough rambling, on to the round-up...

I am always amused when I am in a conversation where somebody tries to tell me that his preferred processor platform is better because of whatever reason. My reasoning is simple and has always been that I have no particular processor platform of choice; I will only buy whichever processor is the top performer, or which processor offers the best performance for the best price, at the time I make the purchase. Granted the fact that one's budget does not always allow it, and many people stick to a particular platform because they do not wish to spend more money to buy a new motherboard if the new CPU is based on another platform. The idea behind this months hardware roundup is to be able to give you a better understanding of the CPU's currently available and to show that it is not always necessary to buy the

latest and greatest CPU when another, cheaper, one could do the job just as well, or at an acceptable level close to it.

Before you run out and buy a new processor, make sure your hardware is compatible. The first thing you need to check is whether your motherboard is compatible with the CPU you wish to buy, if you are unsure check out the manufacturer's website. If you are upgrading to improve your gaming performance, make sure a new CPU will do the trick. Normally upgrading your graphics card will offer far better, improved, gaming performance than a new CPU.

To get the best out of a new CPU, make sure you have the best RAM for the job. An example of this would be to get DDR400 RAM for an Intel processor with 800MHz FSB. If you use DDR333 with such a processor it will not perform as it should, in fact running DDR333 alongside an 800MHz FSB CPU will cause your RAM to only operate at 320Mhz. When you have finally decided that a new CPU will do the trick, be sure you either get a professional technician to help you install it, or make sure you do it properly. It is not very difficult to damage a new CPU, and if installed incorrectly you will enjoy the sweet smell of a brand new, blown, CPU.

Heatsink Paste

The one "component" of installing a CPU that is always overlooked is the thermal paste. The job of the thermal paste is a very important one and one which is underestimated. In a nutshell, thermal paste is used to ensure a 100% surface contact between the heatsink and the CPU. Even though both surfaces look flat and smooth to the naked eye, when placed on each other the heatsink and CPU do not make full contact, thus the CPU cannot get rid of its heat fast enough and tends to run very hot and if it is a high end CPU it can blow. The thermal paste also helps the CPU to get rid of the heat it generates much faster as it is generally an excellent heat conductor.



Locally we do not have much to choose from as not all the big brands are freely available here. Many home users make do with the paste that comes with the Heatsink, but a popular trend lately is that the manufacturers include a thermal-paste patch on the bottom of the Heatsink, where it makes contact with the CPU.

This allows for hassle free installation of the CPU, but the problem arises when the Heatsink is removed once, because the patch has now been used, the heatsink can't simply be put back onto the CPU. This results in you having to clean off all the old paste and use new paste to ensure the CPU will not get damaged. In next month's round up I will feature one or two brands of Heatsink paste so stay tuned for that...

Intel Celeron

The Celeron processor has been around for a while, even though it has seen many changes to its architecture, this budget-line CPU offers great performance at a very reasonable price.

Currently the Celeron lends its existence from the Pentium 4; whenever Intel produces a new processor they downgrade its L2 cache, lower its FSB (Front Side Bus) rating as well as its clock speed, and slap a Celeron logo on the box.

So what is the significance of the lower L2 cache you might ask, well the L2 cache is basically RAM which is built into the CPU. The cache on a CPU helps it to process tasks much quicker as it does not require sending a request to the system RAM (the sticks of DDR RAM). The L2 cache also determines the speed in Gigahertz of the CPU, the speed of the L2 cache is the Gigahertz rating we see the CPU rated as. For example, a 2 GHz Intel Celeron CPU features 128KB L2 cache and the cache runs at a frequency of 2 GHz. Currently the Intel Celeron CPU's are based on one of two Pentium 4 architectures, the Willamette and Northwood cores. All Celeron CPU's slower than 2 GHz have a die size of 0.18-micron; these CPU's are based on the older Pentium 4 (Willamette).

The newer Celeron CPU's, of 2 GHz and higher, have a die size of 0.13-micron and are based on the new Pentium 4 (Northwood) CPU. The Willamette which was the first Pentium 4 CPU featured only 256KB of L2 cache, Intel then moved the architecture to a smaller manufacturing process and increased the L2 cache to 512KB, which is what the new Pentium 4 CPU's (Northwood) have today. A benefit of the new 0.13-micron core is that it requires less voltage to run which equates to a much cooler running CPU, this also gives it an edge when it comes to overclocking as it has a lot more headroom to run hotter.

As an entry level CPU the Celeron also features a slower FSB, as mentioned before. Because the Intel architecture quad-pumps the Celeron's FSB rating, which is 100MHz, it has an effective FSB of 400MHz.

Who should buy a Celeron processor? Well the answer is fairly simple, if you are on a very tight budget but would like a decent performing CPU, the Celeron would be a great option. It offers pretty decent performance and it is very affordable. If you currently own a Socket 478 motherboard you cannot go wrong with the Celeron range of processors.

Celeron 1.7GHz

The Celeron 1.7GHz is the baby in the range. It still makes use of the 0.18-micron die, making it part of the Willamette family. It is the cheapest CPU in this roundup and it battled to put up a fight against its nearest price competitor, the Athlon XP 2000+. Looking at the benchmark results, this CPU lacked just behind the Athlon XP 2000+ and in some cases the AMD offering far surpassed this one. For gaming I would not recommend the Celeron 1.7GHz, if you wish to build, or buy a PC which will be used mainly for office or internet use this CPU will do the job at a cost-effective price.

Performance	75	Overall 70
Value for Money	75	
Desirability	60	

Pros: It's cheap
Cons: The budget AMD outperforms it
Supplied by: Light Edge Tech. [021] 510-8270
ERP: R 599
Internet: www.intel.com



Celeron 2GHz

The move to the 0.13-micron process was great for the Pentium 4 range of CPU's and even though this was implemented into the Celeron range, its performance did not improve all that much. Looking at its benchmark results it is clear to see that this CPU is not intended for serious gaming. The one major benefit, as mentioned before, is that this CPU runs a lot cooler than its 0.18-micron counterpart. There is no doubt that this one out performs its predecessor, but at the extra R100 or so you would have to ask yourself if the AMD Athlon XP 2200+ would not be a better option. Obviously if you are going to need to by a new motherboard the answer would probably be no.

Performance	78	Overall 71
Value for Money	72	
Desirability	63	

Pros: Great for office use
Cons: Not really for gaming
Supplied by: AXIZ [011] 237-7000
ERP: R 699
Internet: www.intel.com



Celeron 2.4GHz

The Intel Celeron 2.4GHz is the highest clocked Celeron I was able to get for review; it is also based on the 0.13-micron manufacturing process. In running the benchmarks for this month's roundup I was very disappointed with the performance of the Celeron range. As both my machines and my notebook currently use Intel processors I was quietly hoping that Intel would dominate this roundup. Sadly this will not be true for the budget range of CPU's and even though this one is rated a 2.4GHz, much faster than its AMD counterpart, its performance was mediocre in comparison. Sadly, the performance difference between this one and the 2GHz version is not all that much, and again comparing it to the AMD equivalent, it does not take a genius to figure out which are better performers.

Performance	75	Overall 70
Value for Money	75	
Desirability	60	

Pros: It's cheap
Cons: The budget AMD outperforms it
Supplied by: Light Edge Tech. [021] 510-8270
ERP: R 599
Internet: www.intel.com



Intel Pentium 4

The Intel Pentium 4 is roughly 3 years old and has enjoyed an enormous amount of limelight since its release. Intel has done a superb job of keeping it up to date and spectacularly fast, making the competition attempt other tactics to prove they can keep up *cough*AMD model-numbering system*cough*. The first Pentium 4 codenamed Willamette was based on the 0.18-micron manufacturing process and introduced us to a faster FSB rating of 400MHz (quad pumped 100MHz FSB) as well as introducing a new architecture called NetBurst. The NetBurst architecture was the name given to the new features of the Pentium 4 processors. One of the core features of NetBurst is the Hyper Pipelined technology which features a 20 stage pipeline, as opposed to the 10 stage pipeline of the Pentium III. If you have no idea what I am talking about, don't worry about it, it is a techie thing, just know that it is a major improvement. Another feature which falls under the NetBurst umbrella is the Pentium 4's enhanced floating point and multimedia support, alongside the advanced transfer cache (again this is a techie thing).

Not too long after the launch of the Pentium 4, Intel increased the FSB rating of the Pentium and upped its clock speeds. Then they shrunk the die size to 0.13-micron and the now-popular Northwood was born. The benefits of moving to a smaller die size are plenty; a smaller die size requires less voltage to operate thus it produces less heat. Less heat in turn allows for faster clock speeds, and faster clock speeds makes very happy gamers. Another huge benefit of the Northwood processor is that the L2 cache had doubled from its predecessor, the 512KB L2 cache it features makes for a huge performance boost and takes a lot of strain off the processor trying to get information from the system RAM as it can store a lot of it in its, now larger, L2 cache.

Soon after the launch of the Northwood, Intel introduced the 533MHz FSB processors (quad-pumped 133MHz) and with this the 400MHz FSB Pentium 4 processors have been discontinued. Still based on the 0.13-micron manufacturing process though, Intel was now able to push the clock speed of the Pentium 4 up to 2.8GHz, with the clock speed of 3GHz imminent it was really just a matter of time before Intel would break it.

(continued next page)

Just over 7 months after the 533MHz FSB was introduced, Intel launched the 3.06GHz Pentium 4. Even though this was one of the most expensive CPU's ever, it was welcomed with open arms, and I am sure the people over at AMD were not very happy with this milestone. The 3.06GHz Pentium 4 also introduced us to a new technology called Hyper Threading which I covered in the August issue of NAG (page 84).

Exactly 5 months after the release of the 3.06GHz Pentium 4, Intel amazed us all yet again by upping the FSB of its processors to a mind blowing 800MHz (200MHz quad-pumped). Still based on the Northwood core, Intel has really been able to get some mileage out of it. Soon Intel will drop the 533MHz FSB processors and all new Pentium 4 CPU's will feature Hyper Threading and a FSB of 800MHz.

2.4GHz Pentium 4 (533MHz FSB)

Currently one of the entry-level Pentium 4 processors, this 2.4GHz does not feature Hyper Threading technology. It is however able to put up a fight against its AMD counterparts and is roughly comparable to the Athlon XP 2400+ in terms of its benchmark scores. With the newer Intel processors hitting the market this one will not have a long shelf life as its 800MHz-FSB brother features Hyper Threading technology and retails for about R250 more. No guessing as to which one I'd buy. Looking at it on its own this is a great processor, it features a not-to-bad price tag and it will deliver very acceptable performance for gaming. This is a very popular processor for OEM computers because of its price, and I guess it is for this reason that it is still around.

Performance	83
Value for Money	79
Desirability	79

Overall
80

Pros: Price
Cons: No HT or 800MHz FSB
Supplied by: Rectron [011] 203-1000
ERP: R 1750
Internet: www.intel.com



3.06GHz Pentium 4 (533MHz FSB)

This is the original 3GHz barrier breaker and the first CPU to host Hyper Threading technology. Even though it has dropped a couple of thousand rand in price since its first release, the same fate awaits it as with the 2.4GHz Pentium 4 in this class. Looking at the price and comparing it to that of the 3GHz Pentium 4 with 800MHz FSB you would be a fool to consider this one, sadly this is the case with new technology. On the bright side though, if you only have a motherboard able to support up to 533MHz FSB, this would be the processor you would need to buy as the 800MHz FSB offering would be incompatible. Hopefully its price will soon drop, but until then I would suggest you rather upgrade and get yourself an 800MHz FSB processor for about the same price.

Performance	89
Value for Money	79
Desirability	77

Overall
81

Pros: 3.06GHz clock speed
Cons: No HT or 800MHz FSB
Supplied by: Rectron [011] 203-1000
ERP: R 4200
Internet: www.intel.com



2.4GHz Pentium 4 (800MHz FSB)

This 2.4GHz Pentium 4 with 800MHz FSB is currently the entry-level Pentium 4 of choice. It features both Hyper Threading and the new FSB rating and for gamers on a not-too-tight budget this is a great option. Its closest AMD competitor, the Athlon XP 2800+ which scored roughly the same in most of the benchmarks is a tough competitor to beat. Even though the prices I work with are estimated and will most likely be different, the 2.4GHz Pentium 4 with 800MHz FSB is a great entry level Pentium 4 processor to buy. But you also need to ask yourself, would the odd R500 extra be worth it to rather buy the 2.6GHz Pentium 4? Read on to find out.

Performance	85
Value for Money	85
Desirability	80

Overall
83

Pros: Price, HT, and 800MHz FSB
Cons: R500 more buys you the 2.6GHz
Supplied by: AXIZ [011] 237-7000
ERP: R1900
Internet: www.intel.com



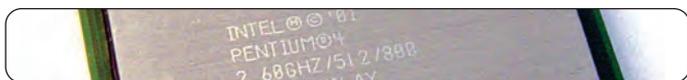
2.6GHz Pentium 4 (800MHz FSB)

Even though the 2.6GHz Pentium 4 with 800MHz FSB is only about R500 more expensive than the 2.4GHz Pentium 4 with same FSB rating, it's slightly higher benchmark scores might prove to be worth the money for some. With a little knowledge on overclocking and a decent motherboard this processor is sure to give you some great performance. Even as it stands at the moment it is able to outperform some of the higher clocked AMD CPU's such as the Barton-core based Athlon XP 2800+. I would, however, find it difficult to decide between this and the 2.4GHz (800MHz FSB) processor. The performance benefits are clear, but being the poor freelancer that I am (hint to Ed) I would not easily pay the difference for the slight performance increase.

Performance	87
Value for Money	84
Desirability	79

Overall
83

Pros: Slight performance increase over 2.4GHz
Cons: Price difference not really worth it
Supplied by: AXIZ [011] 237-7000
ERP: R2399
Internet: www.intel.com



2.8GHz Pentium 4 (800MHz FSB)

Looking at the estimated retail price of this processor, it is immediately thrown into the mid-range to high-end class. Supporting both Hyper Threading and an 800MHz FSB this processor's performance is great, especially when comparing it to the 3GHz Pentium 4 which has an estimated retail of R4300. The opposite is also true however, and I am faced with the same dilemma as with the previous two processors. This time it's different - I'm impressed by what Intel has on offer here. Not only does this 2.8GHz Pentium 4 out perform most of the AMD processors in most of the benchmarks, it does this at a mere R100 more than the Athlon XP 3000+. Looking at value for money and desirability, this is my processor of choice.



Performance	90
Value for Money	93
Desirability	95

Overall
92

Pros: Performance | Value for money
Cons: Profile Design Technology wanted it back
Supplied by: Profile Design Tech[011] 469-4757
ERP: R2999
Internet: www.intel.com



3GHz Pentium 4 (800MHz FSB)

Since the 3GHz barrier has been broken, owning such a processor has been every boy's dream. Sadly this dream comes at a hefty price and spending about R1300 more than the 2.8GHz Pentium 4 is sheer madness. The expensive price tag of Intel's high-end CPU's is just a phase though and we will hopefully soon see a 3GHz CPU for under R2500. Don't get me wrong, this processor is a great performer and it sports the latest technologies which is what we all want, but I always put myself in the reader's shoes and I can imagine that not everybody would be willing to spend this amount of money on a processor if all they want to do is improve their PC's gaming performance. If I had this amount of cash lying around I would much rather invest in a Radeon 9800 Pro, it is definitely going to improve your gaming experience a lot more.

Performance	92
Value for Money	85
Desirability	90

Overall
89

Pros: Great performance...
Cons: ...comes at a price
Supplied by: Light Edge Tech [021] 510-8270
ERP: R4300
Internet: www.intel.com



3.2GHz Pentium 4 (800MHz FSB)

The 3.2GHz Pentium 4 is Intel's flagship processor. It is without a doubt the latest and greatest available. Sadly no-one was able to supply me with its only competitor, the AMD Athlon XP 3200+. This makes proving my statement this month a bit difficult. The performance offered by this CPU is second to none, I refer specifically to the Quake III time demo benchmarks, using this processor Quake III delivered an average of 300 fps for Time Demo 1, a score not seen every day. All this power does however come at a price and that price is R6300. If this roundup was after the best performing processor this one would have snagged the honours, but looking at value the 2.8GHz Pentium 4 still has the edge.

Performance	98	Overall 91	Pros: Superb performance
Value for Money	84		Cons: Price is still very steep
Desirability	92		Supplied by: Rectron [011] 203-1000 ERP: R6300 Internet: www.intel.com



AMD Athlon XP

In preparing for this month's roundup, I was disappointed not to have been able to get my hands on some AMD Duron processors. Although some distributors might still have a couple in stock, the one's I spoke to, including AMD themselves, were unable to supply me. This was not really such a big issue though as the current range of Athlon XP processors feature some models which are priced well enough to compete with the Intel Celeron processors as well as give the Celeron processors a run for its money. When I spoke to AMD about the Duron processors, they mentioned that the Duron will be continued in the form of the new core, oddly named, Applebred. It is rumoured that these CPU's will feature a FSB of 266MHz, 128KB L1 cache and 64KB L2 cache. These CPU's will also apparently be shipped only to some of the countries where the Duron is still in demand. I can't see how this CPU would break the market here, it obviously will not be a high performing CPU and with the Athlon XP2000+ being one of the best priced processors around, the Applebred would have to retail for about R400 to make a mark. When I searched the Internet for more information on this new core I came across a rather interesting website, www.virtualcities.com/ons/me/s/mes95013.htm which explained it in detail. For now I think we should be happy with the current offering from AMD, as I said, the Athlon XP 2000+ is one of the best priced processors around.

The Athlon range of processors started its life back in 1999 with the Thunderbird core. The Thunderbird started its life with a 100MHz (double-pumped to 200MHz) FSB and introduced AMD's first CPU with L2 cache. AMD was fast losing to its competitor though and it had to do something to show that it can still put up a fight. In November 2001, AMD launched the 0.18-micron Athlon XP (code named Palomino) range of CPU's which featured their new model numbering system. At first this numbering system baffled users, as AMD gave its processors high model numbers which depicted that the CPU's were running faster than their actual clock speed was. AMD said that its new naming convention was derived from comparing the Athlon XP to the Athlon (Thunderbird). In other words, the AMD Athlon (Thunderbird) had to run at 1.5GHz to perform as well as the AMD Athlon XP 1500+ which had an actual clock speed of 1.33GHz. Even though this is what AMD claimed, I have on numerous occasions, seen that AMD compares its AMD Athlon XP3200+, for example, to Intel's Pentium 4 3.2GHz, which begs the question, is their rating system a ploy to try and keep up with Intel? In all fairness the Athlon XP range of processors perform very well.

A year after the Palomino was released, AMD introduced us to the, now popular, Thoroughbred core. One of the most significant improvements of this new core was the move to the 0.13-micron manufacturing process which required less voltage and allowed for a cooler running CPU, it also allowed for a faster FSB and it was maxed at 166MHz (333MHz quad-pumped). The Thoroughbred core kept the same size L2 cache as the Palomino at 256KB but the smaller die-size and faster FSB allowed for a faster running processor.

Again, a year after the release of the Thoroughbred processor, AMD launched the Barton core. This new core saw another, welcomed, increase in the FSB to 200MHz and a doubled L2 cache of 512KB. This paved the way for AMD's flagship CPU, the Athlon XP3200.

Athlon XP 2000+

The Athlon XP 2000+ is currently the best, price versus performance, CPU available. This makes it a great option for gamers on a budget as it is able to perform the same, and better in some tests, as the Intel Celeron 2.4GHz. It is based on the Thoroughbred 0.13-micron core and I can think of about 20 people I know, who currently use this processor, as a testament to its popularity. The one thing AMD has been able to successfully prove is that they can offer great performance at a very affordable price, and this is why so many of the gamers swear by AMD. Even though the performance offered by this processor is great and it has a very affordable price to boot, the Athlon XP2200+ is a much better buy, read on to find out why...

Performance	81	Overall 80	Pros: Price
Value for Money	90		Cons: The Athlon XP 2200+ is a better buy
Desirability	70		Supplied by: Sahara Computers [011] 542-1000 ERP: R670 Internet: www.amd.com

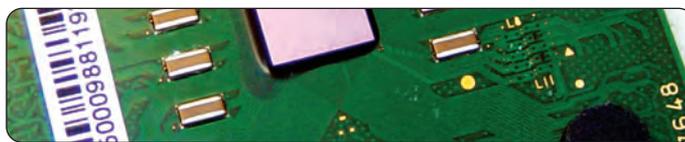


Athlon XP 2200+

The Athlon XP 2200+ is also still based on the Thoroughbred core and even though it retails for only about R100 more than the Athlon XP 2000+ its performance is much better. Looking at each of the benchmark scores it is not difficult to see why this one was awarded the Award of Excellence. As an entry level CPU you cannot get better than this, and even though I rate it in this class, seasoned gamers will not be disappointed either. With a decent motherboard and some overclockable RAM this baby will perform impressively and hopefully with the release of the new 64-bit processors from AMD the Athlon XP 2200+ will drop even further in price.



Performance	80	Overall 87	Pros: Price Performance
Value for Money	93		Cons: Nothing comes to mind
Desirability	90		Supplied by: Sahara Computers [011] 542-1000 ERP: R760 Internet: www.amd.co.za



Athlon XP 2400+

This was AMD's first CPU which broke the 2GHz barrier, although there was not much hype around this, AMD was very satisfied with the results. The Athlon XP 2400+ upped the performance levels of the Athlon XP again, and compared to the 2.4GHz Intel Pentium 4 it ran roughly on par. Even though this one underperforms in some of the benchmarks, there are also some areas in which it outperforms the Intel offering. The jump in price, to just under R1000, does not really justify the performance benefits it currently offers, and I still feel that the Athlon XP 2200+ is a better AMD CPU in terms of value.

Performance	84	Overall 87	Pros: Much cheaper than the 2.4GHz Intel P 4...
Value for Money	89		Cons: ... does not outperform it
Desirability	88		Supplied by: Sahara Computers [011] 542-1000 ERP: R950 Internet: www.amd.co.za



Athlon XP 2600+

The second last Thoroughbred CPU in the Athlon XP range takes shape in the form of the Athlon XP 2600+. Even though this processor only runs 83MHz faster than the Athlon XP 2400+, its benchmark scores are a lot higher in most cases. Another great feature of this CPU is that unlike its Palomino counterparts, this one sports a double-pumped FSB of 166MHz, making for an effective overall rating of 333MHz FSB. What counts in this processors favour is its price; it is very affordable although not as cost-effective as the Athlon XP 2200+, this CPU will be a great option for the gamer with a couple of rand extra in his pocket. Comparing its benchmark results to those of the Intel processors, this one fits in somewhere between the Intel 2.4GHz and 2.6GHz

Performance	86	Overall	84	Pros: 333MHz FSB
Value for Money	85			Cons: Barton core version available
Desirability	82			Supplied by: Sahara Computers [011] 542-1000
				ERP: R1199
				Internet: www.amd.co.za

CPU's. Looking at its value for money this is a great processor, but sadly some of the others have more to offer.



Athlon XP 2800+

This Athlon XP 2800+ runs at the same clock frequency as the Athlon XP 2600+, the difference between the two is that this one is based on the new Baron core. The two major benefits of this new core are that it increases the L2 cache on the CPU to 256KB, it also allows for a faster FSB of 200MHz (400MHz double-pumped). Looking at the performance offered by this CPU you will see that the new core does a couple of good points, in terms of increased performance. The larger L2 cache and FSB is the one thing which helped this processor a lot. Its estimated retail price seems fair for what it delivers, it just depends on the amount of spare cash you have lying around.

Performance	87	Overall	82	Pros: Larger L2 cache and FSB
Value for Money	80			Cons: Does not outperform the 2.8GHz Intel P 4
Desirability	79			Supplied by: Sahara Computers [011] 542-1000
				ERP: R2099
				Internet: www.amd.co.za



Athlon XP 3000+

It was very sad when I had to abandon all hope of getting an Athlon XP 3200+ CPU for review, sadly I had to make do with this one. Based on the Barton core, this CPU has an actual clock frequency of 2.16MHz. Seeing that this was the only high-end processor at my disposal I was a tad disappointed at its benchmark results. Most of the high-end Pentium 4 processors out performed this one. Directly comparing the Athlon XP 3000+ to the 3GHz Pentium 4 proves that AMD's model numbering system does not work in all scenarios. The estimated retail price of this processor is close to that of the 2.8GHz Pentium 4 which outperformed this one, and made it quite easy for me to choose the Editor's Choice winner this month.

Performance	86	Overall	80	Pros: At 2.16GHz it can put up a fight
Value for Money	80			Cons: Cannot out perform its Intel counterpart
Desirability	75			Supplied by: Sahara Computers [011] 542-1000
				ERP: R2899
				Internet: www.amd.co.za



MODEL	AQUAMARK (AVG FPS)	3D MARK 03	3D MARK 03 CPU SCORE	3D MARK 2001 SE	PC MARK 2002 PRO CPU	PERFORMANCE TEST V.4.0	PERFORMANCE TEST V.4.0 MEGAFLOP RATING (HYPER THREADING DISABLED)	SISOFT SANDRA STANDARD MAX3! CPU ARITHMETIC (DHRYSTONE - WHETSTONE)	SISOFT SANDRA STANDARD MAX3! CPU MULTIMEDIA (INTEGER/FLOAT)	QUAKE III TIME DEMO 1	QUAKE III TIME DEMO 2	RATING	PRICE
INTEL CELERON (400MHZ FSB)													
1.7GHZ	45.9	5108	287	9355	4107	350.2	363.9	4633 - 965/2134	6795/8642	147.3	142.9	70%	R 599
2GHZ	50.1	5136	321	9555	4747	377.8	457.3	5475 - 1165/2645	79.96/10182	146.3	143.4	71%	R 699
2.4GHZ	49.1	5218	351	10027	5609	397.5	547.6	6327-1399/3174	9594/12219	156.3	153.5	69%	R 899
INTEL PENTIUM 4 (533MHZ FSB)													
2.4GHZ	81	5524	522	14652	5949	454.1	545.7	6229 - 1395	9574/12218	237.9	233.7	80%	R 1,750
3.06GHZ (HT)	91.7	5677	617	16267	7465	493	241.1(699.9)	9352/ - 2664/5984	14240/22348	262.7	265	81%	R 4,200
INTEL PENTIUM 4 (800MHZ FSB)													
2.4GHZ (HT)	83.8	5576	561	15200	5934	445.6	191.5(544.5)	6691 - 2086/4661	11134/17575	248.4	244	83%	R 1,900
2.6GHZ (HT)	88.2	5629	599	15968	6432	454.2	204.4(603.5)	7785 - 2259/5027	12061/18356	261.8	258.6	83%	R 2,399
2.8GHZ (HT)	91.7	5678	631	16521	6892	474.5	219.5(635.9)	8622 - 2434/5433	12991/20518	275.9	272.6	92%	R 2,999
3GHZ (HT)	95.7	5725	662	17056	7401	489.9	226.5(676.0)	9422 - 2607/5828	13914/21178	288.7	284.8	89%	R 4,300
3.2GHZ (HT)	99.1	5760	693	17668	7825	507.7	241.0(728.9)	8624 - 2780/6202	14845/22473	301.6	298.5	91%	R 6,300
AMD													
ATHLON XP 2000+ (1670MHZ THOROUGHRED)	66.5	5125	305	11467	5095	406.4	552	6267 - 2512	8984/9794	172.5	167.8	80%	R 670
ATHLON XP 2200+ (1800MHZ THOROUGHRED)	81.7	5349	454	13411	5460	430.4	611.8	6772 - 2687	9703/10635	240.3	239.4	87%	R 760
ATHLON XP 2400+ (2000MHZ THOROUGHRED)	87.3	5379	484	14032	6020	462.6	674.7	7508 - 3014	10782/11705	252.6	251.8	87%	R 950
ATHLON XP 2600+ (2083MHZ THOROUGHRED)	90.4	5464	521	14793	6322	451.3	716.8	7776 - 3110	11236/12279	268.4	266.9	84%	R 1,199
ATHLON XP 2800+ (2083MHZ BARTON)	92.5	5514	560	15572	6405	467	689	7809 - 3110	11237/12315	278.3	278	82%	R 2,099
ATHLON XP 3000+ (2167MHZ BARTON)	94.8	5543	574	15807	6646	476.8	729.5	8111 - 3235	11685/12806	284.3	284.1	80%	R 2,899



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Perspex Cases: Light Edge vs. World Computer Systems

▶ "I can see clearly now the rain is gone", sang Johnny Nash. While see-thru cases aren't likely to remind you about the silver lining in the clouds, it is a cool concept none the less. And let's face it: you'll be different to the rest of the crowd who really have this thing for those cases with handles...

Between you and me, whether case modders are all compos mentis is probably a debatable point. Spending an absurd amount of money just to make your case look prettier and get to see your CPU temperature displayed on an LCD screen in the front doesn't seem like a sound financial approach to me. But on the other hand, standard PC boxes are just so bland.

These days, of course, you don't need to be a modding enthusiast to have a good-looking case. You can pick up nearly any sort of case out there with transparent sides, sound-sensitive lights, LCD screens, fan switches and strobes that will no doubt make anyone in your immediate area feel epileptic.

My secret passion, though, has always been to get a Perspex case - a real see-thru case that exposes your PC's innards to the world. Don't ask me why, but it's always been a novel idea, right up there with building your PC into a suitcase. Luckily some thoughtful case manufacturers have decided to save us the work of learning how to put the tricky, and expensive, plastic

compound together.

Locally there are two choices worth looking at - Light Edge provide a cheaper box while you can get a slightly fancier model from W.C.S. As it goes with all boxes, it's generally an aesthetic choice, but there are some critical differences between the two models. Light Edge probably offers the most value for money, but only because they allow you the choice to remove components, such as the internal lights and power supply, making it easier on your wallet. W.C.S.'s model, on the other hand comes as-is, but you do have the internal tube lights as an optional extra. The Light Edge box also ships with 3 fans as opposed to W.C.S.'s two. Another point goes to Light Edge's product for having a 300W power supply, compared to the 230W supply on the W.C.S. case (though apparently our model should have had a 300W supply. 400W and 500W upgrade options are available).

On paper Light Edge has the definite edge (no pun intended), but the W.C.S case is a much better buy. For one, it's much sturdier. While I had no concern with the case taking general knocks and blows, the Light Edge case is far flimsier, with the side panels not being secured at the top or bottom (thus, they can bend inwards). The W.C.S. case is also finished on some of its edges with copper supports, and it uses copper screws to hold things in place - something that actually looks

very good. The Light Edge case opted for silver bolts, but bolts only - no support strips or anything.

The Light Edge case has a once-size-fits-all mounting for your various drives, so you need to use their extension bolts to place smaller drives such as hard drives and stiffy drives. Both cases have ample space for drives, though. The W.C.S. case also has front USB and sound ports.

Of course, the real beauty is when you turn these machines on in a dark room - the cases glow, thanks to the lights inside. The W.C.S. case has a lot of blue LED lights inside to give it the maximum effect, whereas you'll need the additional tube lights to get a glow effect in the Light Edge case. The W.C.S case is also tinted blue for that touch of magic.

Both have coloured fans, but I'm not sure if the W.C.S. case's 3-colour fans will appeal to everyone.

The real watershed, though, is the price.

The W.C.S. case with the 300W supply is a pricey R1900.00, whereas the Light Edge option is R1630, including the three cathode lights (blue, green and cherry red). Also, at the time of writing, there are only 100 of the W.C.S. models in the country. To me, if money was no object, I'd go for the W.C.S case. If money was, I'd consider the Light Edge model, but not before giving it a thorough, personal look, especially if you intend carting it to LANs.

REVIEWED BY	
James "Priest" Francis	
PLUS	MINUS
Modular	Flimsy
More extras	Looks rather dull
Cheaper	

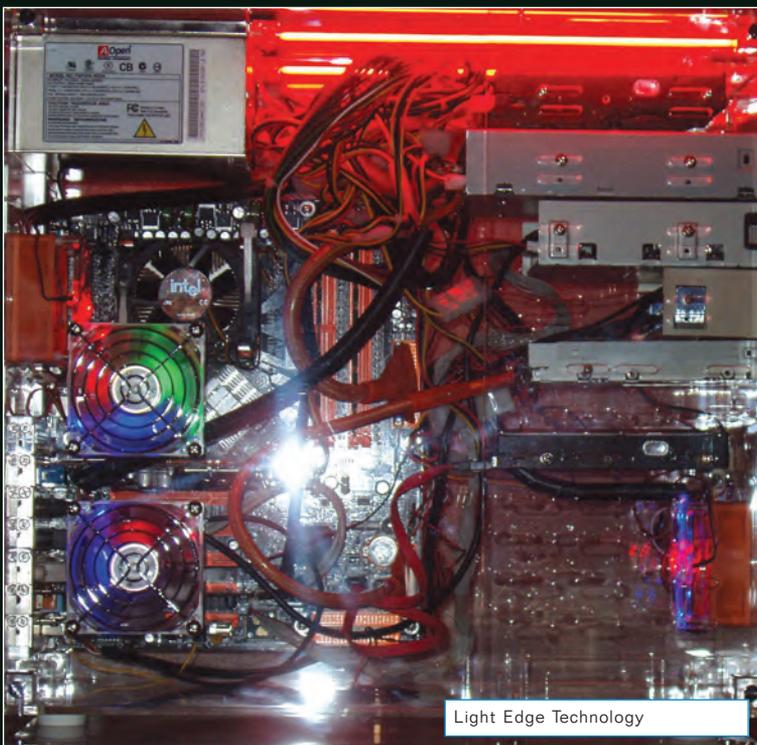
SUPPLIER: Light Edge Technology [021] 510 8270
PRICE: R1500.00
WEBSITE: www.www.lightedge.co.za

REVIEWED BY	
James "Priest" Francis	
PLUS	MINUS
Pretty	Expensive
Sturdy	Non standard screws
Various upgrade options	Heavy

SUPPLIER: World Computer Systems [011] 823 2002
PRICE: R1900.00
WEBSITE: www.wcs.co.za

name of the game

You'll notice I keep referring to the distributors when identifying the cases. That's because these models are called CAS-10010-J and CAS025 respectively (and those are probably inventory numbers). A tip to the powers that be: if you plan to market a R1500+ product, give it a cool name. Please.



Light Edge Technology



World Computer Systems

Jazz 9940B 5.1 Home Theatre System

► Jazz Speakers is not a name that readily springs to mind when thinking of high quality, value-for-money speaker manufacturers. However, do not be fooled by the low-key market presence of this company as its latest offering, the Jazz 9940B 5.1 Home Theatre System, is a truly inspiring system.

If speaker quality is measured by weight and size alone, then this system is amazing in itself. The Editor and I (well, mostly the Editor as I stood back to watch and laugh) battled for nearly ten minutes just to get the two unwieldy boxes to fit in my car. This would not so much be a problem if I had a small car like an Uno or Corsa, but I drive a mid-sized Polo Classic with supposedly loads of space. Installing these speakers is a dead simple. Unfortunately, the system only ships with a CD demonstrating how to connect the plethora of

cables. Personally, I would have liked to see a manual as well. It also takes it for granted that you know which cables to connect to your input device of choice, whether it is a DVD player, satellite receiver or just a good old-fashioned television set. Another major annoyance is the fact that all the speaker cables seem to be just that little bit too short. This is even more annoying when you have to leave the satellite speakers standing in the middle of a small room.

However, the sound quality more than makes up for these negatives. The speakers deliver crisp sound on all but the loudest and highest of ranges with the massive subwoofer complimenting things nicely with sufficiently deep bass.

Overall, this system offers incredible value for money and delivers on the sound quality stakes. In fact, the suppliers will probably never see this review system again.



REVIEWED BY	
Iwan "Da3dalus" Pienaar	
PLUS	MINUS
Value for money	Cables too short
Aesthetically pleasing	Does not ship with satellite speaker stands
Good sound quality	

SUPPLIED BY: Corex IT [011] 707 5000
 PRICE: R2399
 INTERNET: www.jazzspeakers.com



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Liteon DVD +R/+ RW DVD/CD ReWritable Drive & Liteon DVD-Rom Combo Drive

DVD writing technology is finally becoming mainstream; prices on DVD writers have tumbled in the last 6 months while our Rand has strengthened making this type of technology affordable for the average home user. With 4.7GB of space and 4X DVD access times the Liteon DVD drive offers users a decent data storage medium.

Liteon is a massive company that manufactures everything from mainboards to Bluetooth devices; they also have developed the 1st DivX standalone DVD player with uses I won't go into at this stage. DVD technology has been a real talking point as no-one wants to agree on the format to be used, we have plus and minus media as well as 4.7GB and 17GB platters. These issues have led to a delay in DVD taking over from CD-Rom but the advantages of the medium can no longer be ignored.

Liteon DVD R/RW drive supports 4.7GB plus media and writes/re-writes at 4X DVD speed (roughly 36X CD) it can also burn cdr's at 40X and cdrw's at 24 speed making this one multi-purpose drive. I used Nero 6 Ultra edition to test the drive, it would take roughly 14 minutes to burn an entire 4.7GB disc and with its SMART-BURN technology I was assured I would not lose any discs. It's amazing how much you can fit onto a single disc, I am really eager to purchase a DVD drive just so that I can archive information and free up space on my hard drives. An added bonus is that the DVD RW (re-writable) discs burn just as quickly as the DVD-R (writable) discs, making DVD backups a reality for smaller companies not willing to fork out thousands for a backup solution.

For those users looking for a DVD drive that can write CDR/CD-RW, the Liteon 16XDVD 48X24X48 CDR/CD-RW drive is a great budget buy, you can watch the latest DVD's while having the functionality of a CD-Writer. People are getting tired of having multiple drives to support different formats so these Combo drives have become really popular. If I didn't have the money for a DVD writer I would surely look at a Combo drive as the next best solution.

Although DVD writers

become really popular. If I didn't have the money for a DVD writer I would surely look at a Combo drive as the next best solution.

cost almost three times as much as CD-Writers now this gap will surely close as DVD becomes the format of choice, media is also quite expensive coming in at around R35-R45 per disc as apposed to R3-R5 for CD-R's. Liteon's drives performance was exemplary and I did not lose a single disc while backing up roughly 20 GB of data. CD and DVD technology has come a long way since 2X CD writers and I must say I'm impressed. Liteon ships their writers with Nero Xpress and DVD Studio which are adequate; I found that I liked Clone-DVD best for DVD's and Nero 6 Ultra for general copying. Liteon have produced two excellent products that will definitely replace the ordinary cd-rom drive as the optical drive of choice. Now if only everyone could agree on a DVD format we could get on with making CD's obsolete.

REVIEWED BY	
Brett "KnightMarE" Hamilton	
PLUS	MINUS
Pirce Performance Storage capacity	2 MB buffer

SUPPLIER: Corex IT [011] 707 5000
PRICE: ReWritable Drive: R1699 | DVD-Rom Combo: R625
WEBSITE www.liteon.com

	Liteon DVD +R/+ RW	Liteon 16X DVD-Rom Combo Drive
Interface	Atapi/E-IDE	Atapi/E-IDE
Data Transfer		
CD-R	6000 KB/secs	7200 KB/secs
CD-RW	3600KB/secs	3600KB/secs
CD-ROM	6000 KB/secs	7200 KB/secs
DVD-ROM	8100 KB/secs	21,350 KB/secs
DVD-R +	5400 KB/secs	N/A
DVD-RW +	5400 KB/secs	N/A
Buffer	2mb	2mb
Random Access Time	120ms	120ms



Acrox Mini Mobile Optical Mouse

The world we live in is really focussed on mobility. Mobile phones, laptop computers and the like all allow us to communicate on the run, to do our work no matter where we go.

The biggest problem with owning a laptop: the sleek bag always looks lumpy when you squash a huge mouse into it. Okay, maybe not the biggest problem, but using a mouse with a laptop has always been something of an issue, varying from mild annoyance to down right aggravating. The size of the standard PC mouse is the main problem - it is not conducive to anything much more than desktop use. These devices were never really designed for portability.

Acrox have brought out a mouse specifically designed for portability. It is a device that should make the lives of laptop users the world over a lot simpler. At least, it was designed with that in mind, but it seems that, at times, designers seem to forget all about practicality.

Made of a durable silver and black plastic, the Acrox mouse is a USB optical unit. While the plug means that it can only be used with newer laptops, the optical unit allows the mouse to be used virtually anywhere - except for, of course, on glass. The optical unit sends 1500 messages to the mouse's internal processor a second, so it is a rather accurate device. Also, it is, due to being a USB device, totally plug and play, not to mention hot pluggable. The lack of moving parts means increased reliability while transported. With two buttons and a scroll wheel, it has all the functionality it needs to have.

To go along with the portability factor, the mouse comes with a handy vinyl pouch, to ensure that it does not get damaged while being carted around. All of these features seem to make the Acrox Mini Mobile Optical Mouse the perfect device for those who are working on the move and, while it does go far to make the mobile office an easier place to work, there is one thing that makes this mouse difficult to use. Its size. Yes, it is supposed to be small, due to the whole nature of mobility and such like, but the device is so small that using it gets uncomfortable after any length of time. It is a very cramped item indeed, and needs to be used pretty much with finger tips only...

It's a great idea, and with a bit of time, you might get used to it. However, unless you have very, very small hands, this mouse will never be an ideal alternative.

It's a great idea, and with a bit of time, you might get used to it. However, unless you have very, very small hands, this mouse will never be an ideal alternative.

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REVIEWED BY	
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius	
PLUS	MINUS
Tiny Accurate Nifty case	Tiny Not really for gaming

SUPPLIED BY: Wen Tech [021] 551 8866
PRICE: R220
INTERNET: www.acrox.com.tw

GO-W0404A [Extreme Solution for DVD-Dual]

Adopting a dual DVD±R/RW design, the GO-W0404A supports 4X DVD±Write, DVD+ReWrite / 2X DVD-ReWrite / 6X DVD-ROM-Read / 40X CD-Write / 24X CD-ReWrite / 40X CD-ROM-Read. Furthermore, Gigabyte's I.B.S. feature prevents buffer under-run problems eliminating the creation of CD and DVD coasters.



The DVD-Dual drive, GO-W0404A, will be able to push writable DVD into the mainstream market due to its cost-effective design and its full support of the most popular DVD write formats. The GO-W0404A is capable of reading data from and writing data on both DVD+R/RW and DVD-R/RW formats. With this dual compatibility feature, the drive creates DVD discs which can be played or read by most DVD-ROM drives and DVD players. It is unequalled for providing flexibility and efficiency in multimedia data storage. The GO-W0404A's advanced technology and high compatibility, coupled with Gigabyte experience makes it the perfect solution for novices and power-users.

The GO-W0404A is a powerful solution for fast data accessing and keeps data stable and reliable under high speed [16000KB/s]. It's able to satisfy any multimedia enthusiasts' desire - whether it's reproducing memory-intensive video sequences on DVD with optimal digital image quality or playing full-length films, the functionally versatile GO-W0404A delivers smooth and efficient performance. Based on recording memorable moments in your life and sharing with your family and friends anywhere anytime, Gigabyte DVD-Dual drive is the key to high-speed, effective DVD burning.

Ultra 8 in 1

End-users are able to burn any type of discs without worry about different kinds of discs. In general, DVD-R | DVD-RW | DVD-ROM | DVD+R | DVD+RW | CD-R | CD-RW | CD-ROM are the common discs which GO-W0404A can support at different writing or reading speeds.

Intelligent Burning SuperLink

This technology prevents errors from occurring when data flow to the drive is interrupted during the recording process due to slow source-drive performance, PC configuration problems, or when running other applications. The ability of a DVD-Dual drive to read different types of compact discs varies based on the quality of the discs and the type of data written to them. I.B.S. technology is utilized to take full advantage of the latest, high performance DVD±R/RW media to optimize record speed and reliability.

Smart Monitor System & Power Saving

The drive is capable of auto-detecting the disc format and auto-adjusting the optimal speed for reading the disc. Using this technology, the GO-W0404A can save power, increase a product's life cycle, and maximize work efficiency.

Prevent Vibration & Almost Noiseless

The most advanced design and engineering reduces vibration and noise and also provides better stability when the drive is operating at high speed.

Bundled Software

In order to satisfy both novices and experienced users, the GO-W0404A drive includes the well-known Nero software, which supports just about every feature users would want in a CD-burning suite. Additional software includes the well known and easy to use Power DVD.

Over-clocking with Gigabyte's C.I.A. and M.I.B.

Over-clocking is becoming more and more popular and well accepted by many computer users nowadays, and has almost turned into an art form as users are able to gain the highest performance out of their system with their current hardware configurations. However, even with a certain level of knowledge about over-clocking, there are still many difficulties to overcome before users can fully exploit their systems capabilities.

So, is there any easier and more intelligent method for over-clocking? The answer is "Yes!" Two newly developed features by Gigabyte namely C.I.A. (CPU Intelligent Accelerator) and M.I.B. (Memory Intelligent Booster) are the easier and more intelligent way for over-clocking. Through Gigabyte C.I.A. technology, the system will intelligently accelerate CPU computing power according to system loading, to provide a more stable state comparing to manual over-clocking. Similarly, the GIGABYTE M.I.B. technology provides an ultimate memory performance increase of up to 10%.



Gigabyte C.I.A. (CPU Intelligent Accelerator)

Gigabyte C.I.A. (CPU Intelligent Accelerator) is designed to detect CPU loading during a program's execution, and automatically adjust CPU computing power to maximize system performance. During CPU resource intensive tasks such as video and audio encoding programs or 3D games, the CPU requires much more CPU computing power - when C.I.A. is enabled, it will detect the current CPU loading and automatically accelerate the CPU computing performance, thus allow programs to execute faster and smoother. On the other hand, when the programs are terminated, the CPU will return back to its initial status. With Gigabyte C.I.A. technology, users are able to enjoy the benefits of over-clocking without too much trouble of manual adjustment. CPU Intelligent Accelerator provides reasonable and acceptable over-clocking options for user to select. All that users need to do is to select the desired over-clocking level and the rest of the

environment settings are automatically set-up by the BIOS. Therefore, Novice users are able to enjoy the experience of over-clocking and Advance users are able to gain more computing power easily - as for Power users, with the combination of C.I.A. and EasyTune™ 4, they are able to enjoy the art of over-clocking.



Gigabyte M.I.B. (Memory Intelligent Booster)

Gigabyte M.I.B. (Memory Intelligent Booster) technology is specially designed to maximize memory performance and boost memory bandwidth up to 10% by optimizing data transmission among CPU, North Bridge chipset and memory. The innovative Gigabyte M.I.B. technology shortens memory latency time and enhances system performance without sacrificing stability. The North Bridge chipset has a very important role in the data communication process between CPU and memory - it provides a data transaction center for CPU and memory, and the rate of data transfer depends on clock cycles needed for memory data to be delivered to CPU, the fewer the clock cycles needed the faster the data is being transferred. Therefore, by shortening the interval of each clock cycle, the system is able to transfer the same amount of data within a lesser time - thus greatly increasing system performance.

Gigabyte C.I.A. and M.I.B. technology will be available on Gigabyte P4 Titan™ GT edition motherboards.

Sapphire 9800 Pro / 9600 / 9200 Atlantis Review

Keeping it in the family

► Sapphire is a name that keeps cropping up when the conversation turns to ATI video cards; I finally convinced my Editor [*hey, they didn't send us any free gimmicky toys! Ed*] that we needed to look at this new kid on the block (in South Africa anyway). So here I have three shiny new video cards for review, and we get to look at everything from the entry level 9200 SE 128mb to the 9800 Pro 256mb. Impressed I am, drool I must.

The battle between ATI and Nvidia seems to rage on, there has been so many complaints about driver cheating in 3dmark 2001/2003 that many hardware reviewers are wondering what to believe, my personal opinion is that both ATI and Nvidia offer solid solutions and that card features and software bundles should be the deciding factor and not synthetic benchmarks. I feel that ATI shades Nvidia on certain features, especially on image quality and TV-out performance but Nvidia have deeper pockets than ATI leading to better pricing. Sapphire have been a ATI OEM partner since 2001, the great thing about Sapphire is that they don't stick to ATI's reference designs too closely and this sets them apart from many of the other OEM manufacturers. Sapphire have created a

features. The difference in performance is quite startling but then the price differences are just as big, the 9200 SE doesn't lag too much behind in older benchmarks but the newer DirectX 9 games will simply bring it to

although all the cards have a TV-Out function and the 9800/9600 both have DVI ports for additional monitor support. Sapphire have created a card for all levels of the market, if you are looking for an entry level card the 9200 SE is reasonable gaming card with the additional TV-out and decent home theatre

support, it may not be a performance monster but it will find it's way into budget machines that need 8*AGP and DirectX9 support. In the middle we find the 9600 offering great gaming performance with the added benefit of 256mb of DDR ram, the 9600 is a good budget gamers offering. Last but not least we have the range topping

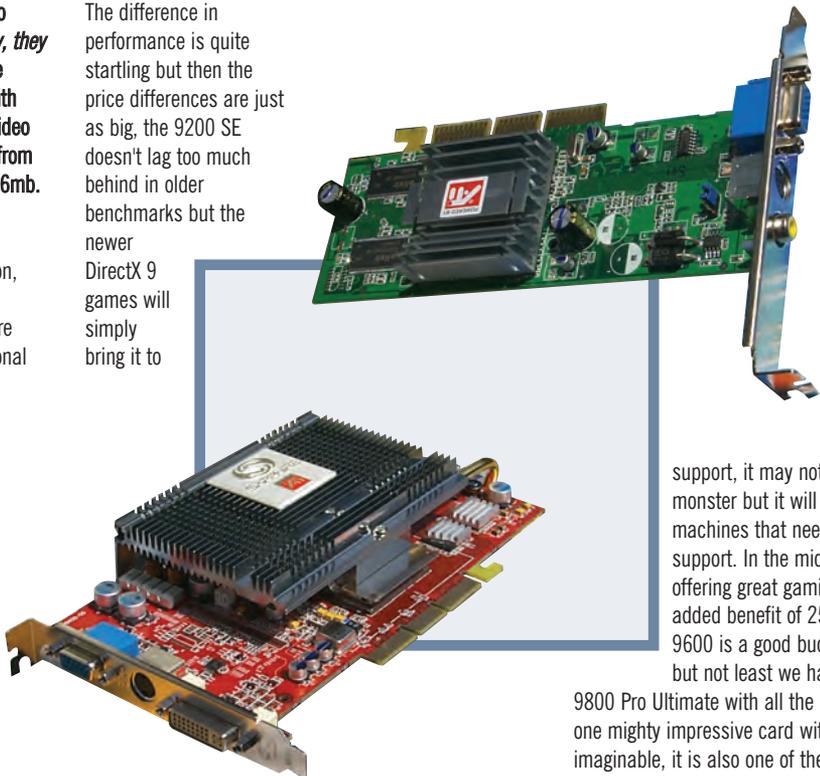
9800 Pro Ultimate with all the bells and whistles, this is one mighty impressive card with every feature imaginable, it is also one of the quietest units on test ever (guess having no fan helps).

Sapphire and ATI have delivered graphics cards that will find their way into peoples machines, whether it's a hardcore gamer looking for awesome graphical performance or a corporate buyer looking for decent 2D/3D features. Now I just need to come up with a motivation to hang onto the 9800 Pro Ultimate for a year or two.

its knees, on the other hand the 9800 is a performance monster crushing almost any benchmark with ease. Sapphire's 9600 sits nicely in the middle of the other two, offering strong performance whilst still being kind to our wallets. ATI's range performs well against its Nvidia counterparts and it's nice to see ATI's range filling out to encompass all areas of the video card spectrum.

From laptops to desktops users now have something I find very comforting and that is choice. Competition also means faster and better products sooner at better prices than if we only had one big graphics card player. Each card has it's on unique bundle with the 9800's being the most comprehensive, it comes with a reasonable software bundle which includes a full copy of the new Tomb Raider game, PowerDVD and Power Director, also included are the latest ATI catalyst drivers and redline overclocking utility. On the hardware side the card includes an S-Video cable, RCA cable, DVI to VGA adapter, S-Video to RCA adapter, and the cable to hook the card's 4-pin Molex to your power supply. Sapphires 9600 comes with PowerDVD and an S-Video cable while the 9200 SE only comes with the drivers and PowerDVD, I guess you get what you pay for,

unique cooling system for their cards, using a fanless heatpipe technology similar to what we saw in some mini-pc's reviewed earlier this year and this makes for a very quiet video card when compared to other solutions. I was slightly worried by the amount of heat the unit generates but this is normal for this type of cooling solution although I wouldn't recommend it for smaller case form factors (you can order a low profile fan that aids in cooling). This cooling is found on the 9800 Ultimate edition while the 9600 and 9200 rely on a normal aluminum heatsinks for cooling making the Sapphire range of cards very quite indeed. Obviously performance and price vary greatly from card to card, the 9800 Pro Ultimate is one of the highest performing graphics cards ever seen while the 9200 SE is really on the budget end of performance whilst still offering great



Sapphire 9800 Pro Ultimate	Sapphire 9600 Atlantis	Sapphire 9200 SE
3d mark 2001		
17728 marks	11956 marks	7098 marks
3d Mark 2003		
5801 marks	3376 marks	1054 marks
Quake 3 Arena		
362 fps	291 fps	234 fps
Unreal Tournament 2003		
226 fps	146 fps	47.5fps
Unreal Tournament 2003 4x AA 8xAF		
93 fps	46 fps	21.7fps

REVIEWED BY	
Brett "KnightMarE" Hamilton	
PLUS	MINUS
Performance (9800/9600)	Lara Croft is the devil
Features (9800/9600)	I want a 9800 *sob*
Unique Design (9800)	Is a pricewar looming?

SUPPLIER: Mindgate Solutions [011] 314 6201
PRICE: 9800: R6579 | 9600: R2189 | 9200: R669
WEBSITE: www.sapphiretech.com



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Mexcom USB e-modem

Here's something that is quite challenging to review... what exactly can one say about a modem? Oh well, have to try...

Actually, this is going to be a little easier than I first thought. That is entirely due to the unit's performance... but more about that later. Let's look at the unit first.

Apparently one of this modem's selling points lies in the fact that it is not square; a fact which is probably the most remarkable thing about it. Being a USB modem, it connects to the PC via USB port, and has no need for any external power sources. This results in a rather uncluttered area, which is a bonus (especially on my desk...)

The modem is sturdily constructed, and has a fairly long cord to connect to a USB port - again, a handy feature. At first glance, I wondered about the size of the modem.

It's at least twice as long as my previous USB modem, and at least half again as thick. Rather large, when you consider how small these devices are getting, and that trends are definitely towards smaller these days. But that's not the be all and end all of modems. The thing that matters is when you plug it in and dial up...

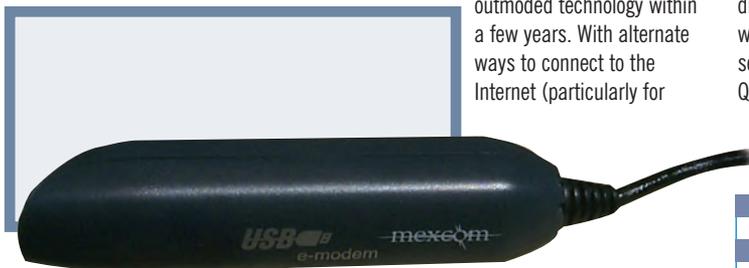
On a slight side note - modems are facing a rather difficult time, because they could possibly become outmoded technology within a few years. With alternate ways to connect to the Internet (particularly for

those that can afford them) the old 56k dial up modem may become a relic of a slower age. Therefore, theoretically, modems need to perform well to survive. What's the big thing, though? A 56k modem is a 56k

modem, isn't it? Nope, that really is not the case. Because your connection speed may vary, you need a modem capable of maintaining good speeds. Also, the stability of the device is important.

When compared to my old US Robotics Speedster, which came with Noah on the Ark, the Mexcom USB e-modem loses hands down. It dials up more slowly, its connection speeds vary wildly, and it is prone to dropping the connection. Additionally - and this is really weird - I could not, in any way, access some of the secure sites I visit on a regular basis.

Quite simply put, I would never exchange my current modem for this one. It might look nice, but it doesn't deliver.



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REVIEWED BY	
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius	
PLUS	MINUS
USB	Unstable
Price	Large
	Long dial up time

SUPPLIED BY: MexCom
RRP: R275.00
INTERNET: www.mexcom.co.za

Nokia 3300

A cellphone! And it plays music! Plus it has a colour screen! Okay, these aren't huge features when you look at them quickly, but

the Nokia 3300 is actually a very neat package for anyone who likes their music on the go.

I definitely fall into that category considering my passion for digital music and portable players. In fact, when I upgraded my contract earlier this year, I was disappointed that the 3300 wasn't available yet. The cellphone comes with a 64MB flashcard

(upgradeable), and is capable of storing MP3 and AAC songs. It can also use these as ring tones. This is all complimented by a large colour LCD screen with changeable backgrounds and colourful screensavers. Everything works through the USB cable, and if you plug the phone into a PC with XP on it, the device will show up as a removable drive. Alternatively you can use

Nokia's software to transfer files between the phone and your PC. The 3300 ships with a walk-and-talk kit, plus supports radio tuning and even has a few fun games



thrown in. It's also a joy to type SMS's on, and supports MMS and multimedia messaging. There's little to nitpick over, but I would have liked to see Ogg Vorbis support as well, since finding proper AAC rippers and converters is quite a challenge. There is also no means to delete the songs on the phone unless you access it via the data cable. The walk-and-talk has no

volume control, and you can't adjust the volume if the keypad is locked - somewhat stupid considering the volume control is a separate button.

You can set MP3s to play as Ringtones, but these are much softer than the Midi tones. Obviously you can transfer your own Midi files as well. The phone also has the ability to record from the radio or from an external sound device.

The battery life is fine as well, and you should get around 8-10 hours of solid music playback on that, while not playing music that often extends the battery life considerably.

Generally the 3300 makes for a nice package. The only problem is that it's rumored to be priced around the same as the N-Gage (R2999).

Bringing out the N-Gage at such a cheap price makes it a bit moot to get the 3300, since Nokia's handheld will have the same multimedia features.

That said, if you aren't interested in the bulkier N-Gage, or you simply want a phone with proper music and radio support, the 3300 is a great package. The interface alone when it comes to messages and other features is a joy to work with.

REVIEWED BY	
James "Priest" Francis	
PLUS	MINUS
Good sound	No Ogg Vorbis support
Simple USB support	Average battery life
Decent radio tuner	

SUPPLIED BY: Nokia [011] 799 7400
RRP: R 2999.00
INTERNET: www.nokia.com



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- ▶ Overclocking - FSB, Multiplier

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- ▶ Integrated Cooling Engine(ICE)technology



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- ▶ Supports ATA 66/100/133, 6 USB2.0
- ▶ On-board LAN Port
- ▶ Overclocking - FSB, Multiplier

AOpen Multimedia Case

I am in a store. I need a case. I need a case now!
But there are so many to choose from. And so many options, too! See-thru side panels, lights, multi-coloured fans, handles. What to do? And to make things even worse, I really, really need to get a keyboard, mouse and a set of speakers to the order as well. Ever happened to you? Nope, not to me either.

This is the part that confounds me about the AOpen offer. The case, a midi tower, also comes with its own keyboard, mouse (both PS/2) and speakers. It also has a 230W power supply and space for 2 fans at the back. The mouse is probably the nicest part of the deal, being a somewhat decent optical mouse, at least as far as general mice go (i.e., it's no Microsoft or Logitech). The keyboard is nothing special, but it's a solid multimedia offering, and comes with its own driver disk to get the

extra buttons going. The speakers, though, are a big disappointment. They have no base, and they take up a USB port to power themselves. This might have been acceptable if the speakers had any redeeming quality, but their sound quality is tinny and lacks base. Even after trying several software options to try and make the sound feel more beefy, I finally gave up. They are sufficient for listening to midi files or some soundtrack on an educational program, but that's about it. This brings me to the problem: who would buy this? I narrowed the field down to parents putting together a machine for their young kid, or companies whose tech departments are building new desktops for them. For the average person who actually knows how to buy all the separate components for a machine and then put it together this is a bit of a waste, since that person is more than likely going to get a better mouse, probably a better keyboard, and definitely a much better set of speakers. In fact, I'd bet he or she probably already owns half these things. That said, it's not an ugly case, and it has all the usual trimmings. It will set you back around R 720 at retail, which means the keyboard/mouse/speakers combo add around R 300 to the pricetag. Whether that's worth it really depends on what you need and what you are willing to pay, I suppose.



REVIEWED BY	
James "Priest" Francis	
PLUS	MINUS
It looks nice	Looks aren't everything Cramped interior Rotten speakers

SUPPLIED BY: Rectron [011] 203 1000
 PRICE: R720.00
 WEBSITE: www.rectron.net

WinFast A350 MyVivo GeforceFX 5900

Nvidia has struck several blunders in its existence, the most recent being the FX 5800 Ultra. It was inferior to its competitor over at ATI, the memory was expensive and rare, pushing up the card's price (not to mention the Bus was only 128-bit, which created a memory bottleneck), and the cooling system was notoriously noisy. The graphics chip manufacturer has since made up for this with the newer 5900 FX, touted to be the graphics card to own. Winfast naturally followed with their version, and at a cool R 7000, it's nothing to be frowned upon.

The main reason why you'd want to own this card is because it is truly high-end, and the best demonstration

of what the FX range is capable of. The closest comparable card to this is the A310, Winfast's smaller offering. As far as MyVivo features go, the cards are identical, but the technology onboard from Nvidia's perspective is greatly improved (see the box out). The card performs somewhat better than its younger cousin under normal circumstances (60% score difference), but the real difference comes

A310 Ultra & A350 Comparison		
Video Card	A310 Ultra	A350
Core Clock	350 MHz	400 MHz
Memory Clock	700 MHz	850 MHz
Memory Bus Width	128-bit	256-bit
Maximum Pixels/clock	4	8
Fill Rate (texels/sec.)	1.4 billion	3.6 billion
Vertices/sec.	88 million	338 million
Memory Bandwidth	11.2 GB/sec	27.2 GB/sec

outwards. While this looks cool, it makes the unit very heavy, not to mention it takes up a lot more space on your machine. Also, I've found that on some boards, bad design on both

manufacturers' part causes the card to block off IDE ports and even hard drive bays on smaller cases. You can overclock the card for a nice boost in performance, though the temperatures spike quite often, meaning the twin-cooling unit isn't enough if you plan to go this route. Overall, it's a nice card, with a significant boost in performance over its predecessor, and well worth it if you are willing to pay the high retail price.

when you start pushing the GPU. Under 3DMark03 the card more than doubles in performance, when compared to the A310, when enabling Anti-Aliasing and Anisotropic Filtering (up to 80%). This is mostly thanks to the larger memory bus. The A350 isn't without its vice, though, and ironically this isn't as much an onboard issue as a design one. Leadtek opted to make their card look different to everyone else's by using a twin-cooling system, which encases the card in an aluminum box, complete with two fans blowing

REVIEWED BY	
James "Priest" Francis	
PLUS	MINUS
Best FX card on the market No memory bottle-neck Feature rich	Expensive Big and heavy

SUPPLIED BY: Rectron
 RRP: R6199.00
 WEBSITE: www.asus.com



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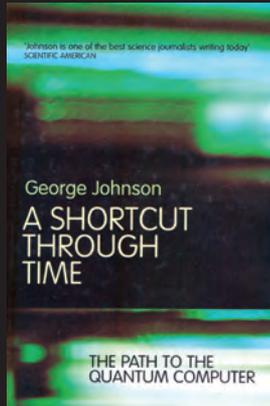
book review:

Of Creepy Atoms and Ghoulish Castles

In keeping with the spirit of Halloween, this month's books are bound to send a shiver down every spine. A *Shortcut Through Time* discusses quantum computing and its implications. A frightening topic if every there was one. The *Gormenghast Trilogy* is a tale of the macabre that has become a classic in its own right.

▶ Mention the term quantum physics and most people's eyes glaze over. Couple quantum physics with computing and you get a topic that will scare many people. George Johnson has written this book to explain what quantum computing is and how such a machine would work in a way that is both readable and enlightening at the same time.

Johnson, by his own account, uses this book to provide readers with a glimpse into the realm of quantum computing. He simply lays the foundation for people who want to delve deeper into this topic. Even if you hate physics or have no inclination to pursue this topic further, *A Shortcut Through Time* is a must-read. While it runs the risk of coming across as patronising, Johnson succeeds in showing that he is also approaching this topic through "new" eyes. He takes the reader on a journey that becomes mesmerising. You almost forget that you are reading a science treatise as you are constantly trying to figure out where Johnson is taking you.



A Shortcut Through Time does become daunting at times with some of the examples being truly dizzying, not to mention frightening. However, the book succeeds in opening the reader's eyes to show them what the future of computing holds in store. It is closer than you think.



a shortcut through time

Author: George Johnson
Publisher: Jonathan Cape London - 2003
ISBN: 0 224 06233 6
Pages: 204
Format: Hardcover
Kalahari.net price (excl. delivery): R266.95

about the author

George Johnson was born in Arkansas but moved to New Mexico with his family when he was six-years-old. After graduating from high school in 1970, Johnson spent two quarters as a freshman at the University of Minnesota before transferring to the University of New Mexico. He graduated from college in 1975 after which he spent a year freelancing as a copy editor and then as a police reporter. Subsequently, Johnson enrolled at the American University in Washington where he earned a master's degree in Journalism and Public Affairs in 1979. He is currently a science writer for The New York Times. Johnson is a recipient of the Science Journalism Award from the American Association for the Advancement of Science and was a finalist for the Rhone-Poulenc Prize.

▶ Mervyn Peake is a name not many of the younger generation of horror readers are familiar with. Admittedly, I have never given much thought to any of his works, especially his most celebrated piece, *The Gormenghast Trilogy*.



selected bibliography

Novels:

Captain Slaughterboard Drops Anchor (1939)
 The Craft of the Lead Pencil (1946)
 The Glassblowers (1950)
 Mr Pye (1953)

Short stories:

Boy in Darkness (1956)
 Danse Macabre (1963)
 Same Time, Same Place (1963)
 The Party at Lady Cusp-Canine's (1969)

The trilogy has attained cult status amongst those that have read and enjoyed it. In fact, many fans believe that *Gormenghast* is to horror writing what *Lord of the Rings* is to fantasy writing.

While I am not entirely convinced that such a comparison is fair to either of these works, *The Gormenghast Trilogy* is certainly unique in the way Peake constructs the story. It tells the tale of Titus Groan, the seventy-seventh Earl who is lord and heir of the crumbling Gormenghast castle. The story is focused on the interaction between the different characters. These characters are as bleak, dark and foreboding as the castle itself and it is fascinating to try and determine the motives behind their actions.

This is definitely not a light read. In fact, it is one of the more difficult books I have read. However, if you are willing to take on a challenge, then read this enthralling trilogy. You will not be left disappointed.

the gormenghast trilogy

Author: Mervyn Peake
Publisher: Vintage -1999 (first published in 1946)
ISBN: 0 099 28889 3
Pages: 953
Format: Paperback
Kalahari.net price (excl. delivery): R216.95

about the author

Mervyn Peake was born in 1911 in Central Southern China where his father was a medical missionary. His education, which began at Tientsin Grammar School, was continued in England at Eltham College in South East London. An aptitude for drawing led him to study at Croydon School of Art and the Royal Academy Schools. He subsequently exhibited paintings at galleries and taught at the Westminster School of Art. During World War II, whilst serving with the army, Peake established a reputation as a gifted book illustrator. In addition to his paintings and illustrations, Peake wrote many novels, short stories, a number of plays and also published several volumes of poetry. He had planned to write more about Titus of Gormenghast, but he suffered from a protracted and destructive illness that made this impossible to achieve. He died in 1968.

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music reviews:

Woodstock 3 Days of Peace and Music Director's Cut DVD

In 1969, Sullivan County in New York State was invaded - but not by an army. It was here that the world's largest open air music festival was held, an event that set the precedent for every similar occasion since.

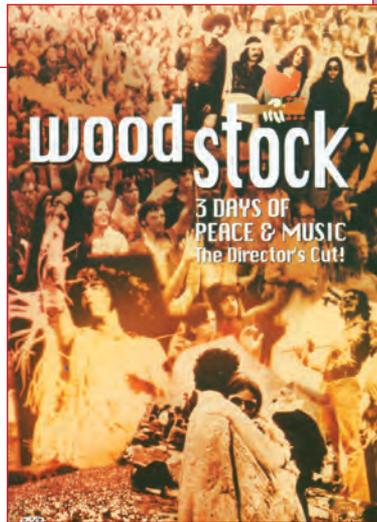
It is one of the things I regret most - that I was not alive to see Woodstock. However, the chance is granted to all of us in this re-release of Michael Wadleigh's ground breaking film. Remastered and re-edited, this new version of the film features 40 minutes of previously unseen footage.

With a total of 216 minutes of viewing time, this is a true celebration of the event that resulted in the area being declared a disaster area as over two million young people descended on the county to celebrate the birth of a new age. The film features live music and sound track music (recorded at Woodstock) by artists including Joan Baez, Joe Cocker,

Crosby, Stills and Nash (their second gig ever), Arlo Guthrie, the incomparable Jimi Hendrix, Jefferson Airplane, Janis Joplin, Sanatana, Ten Years After and The Who (with a decent instrument trashing session to boot.)

Experience the real thing up close and personal - everything from the living conditions right down to the public service announcements - including the infamous "don't take the brown acid" statement.

Watching this DVD (which has no special features, I must add) is an amazing experience - it is as close as our generation will get to the greatest rock concert of all time.



The Very Best of Fleetwood Mac

Fleetwood Mac

It certainly looks like this is a month for classics. Fleetwood Mac are the kind of band that created (and still creates) music that will endure all the ravages of time and fashion. This double CD celebrates a band that has been recording tracks since 1975 and will probably die on stage. A total of 36 tracks chronicle the musical history of a very fine group of artists, including tracks like Go Your Own Way, Rhiannon, Tusk, Don't Stop, Seven Wonders and Little Lies.

They might be a bunch of old folks, but Fleetwood Mac will be in the hearts and minds of fans forever - and they keep gaining more with each generation that experiences their wide variety of sounds and songs.

the mass market.

Some of the all time classics that this CD annihilates include Moonlight Shadow, Baker Street, I Just Died, Stand By Me and I Wanna Dance With Somebody. The only redeeming feature of this sacrilegious rubbish is the fact that they actually admit to the stuff they do being covers. However, I still can't stand this merciless massacre of good music.

You could argue that covers keep the songs alive, but who wants to hear them if their spirit has been stripped away by repetitive drum beats?

The Very Best of George Benson

George Benson

Another classic! 20 tracks on this CD look at the musical career of George Benson who (if you don't know) was one of the finest guitarists to ever grace the stage. This was a nostalgic journey for me indeed, seeing as I haven't heard Benson for a really long time. His style is unique - there is no mistaking the smooth, subtle style this man creates with anyone else. With music that generally tends to be laid back, this album makes for great easy listening (although your parents may steal it from you.) Featured tracks include Give Me the Night, Turn Your Love Around and Love X Love.

Waiting for my Rocket to Come

Jason Mraz

One of the toughest things to do these days is break into the music scene... it's a tough market out there, and the public is very fickle indeed. But people like Jason Mraz shouldn't have too much trouble. With a voice and style that makes one think of a male Tracey Chapman, Mraz produces a brilliant level of Adult Oriented Rock.

But it's not quite that simple. While his music is easy listening, it is also complex, with sentiments of jazz, country and even hip hop showing up every now and then. Jason Mraz is one of the people that, provided the timing of this album was right, will go far - all by the strength of his excellent voice.

Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life

Various Artists

Legend has it that the second film is better than the first, and the same goes for the sound track. Featuring artists like Filter, P.O.D., the Dandy Warhols, Lunatic Calm, Crystal Method and Moby, the mix is varied and vibrant. This album ranges from fairly laid back right through to frantic - a lot like

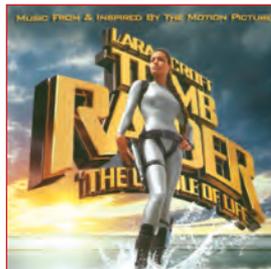
the film, in fact.

Once again, this album demonstrates the very reason why I love buying sound tracks and compilation albums... some of the best songs available, all squashed onto one convenient CD. If the film is as good as the sound track, it's going to be great!

Cover 2 Cover Volume 1

Various Artists

Call me a grumpy old bugger, but I hate this kind of stuff. This album consists entirely of songs taken from their original format and beaten into dance tracks for



www.musica.co.za

CHARTS

1	Luther Vandross	Dance with my Father
2	In Grid	Rendezvous
3	Evanescence	Fallen
4	Various	R&B Hits 5
5	Simply Red	Very Best of
6	Whitnet Houston	Just Whitney
7	Various	Power Ballads
8	Various	Hip Hop The Collection
9	Matchbox 20	More Than You Think You Are
10	UB40	Platinum Collection Labour of Love III





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Game
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Gangs of New York

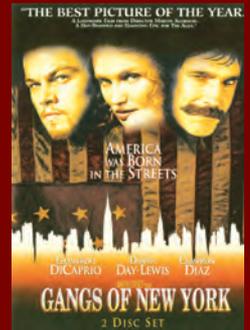
Runtime: 160 minutes

16 LV

Martin Scorsese's epic movie about New York is set in the 19th century, where corrupt politicians worked with a corrupt police force and the gangs rule the streets. In the midst of this a young man (Leonard DiCaprio) sets out to take revenge on his father who was killed in a gang fight by the notorious Bill the Butcher (Daniel Day Lewis).

James: If Scorsese were to die today, *Gangs of New York* would be a fitting crown to his career. It's a stunning piece of work, with excellent acting from everyone in the cast. Violent, thought-provoking and apparently quite accurate, it's the part of American history you've never heard about. Daniel-Day Lewis is the star, though, doing the best work of his career. It's not a quick slice of entertainment, but instead an epic of a movie. The bonus disc has some great documentaries to compliment the work.

Walt: While most might expect a massively action packed film (which is not surprising, given the name and trailer) *Gangs of New York* is a thought provoking, almost surreal film set in a period of American history that most want to forget. With stunning performances from all involved, *Gangs of New York* adds yet another brilliant film to Martin Scorsese's already incredible collection of films. Many seem to dislike this film, but that's probably because they expect the wrong kind of thing from it.



Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers

Runtime: 172 minutes

10 V

The second movie in Peter Jackson's epic adaptation of the books takes Frodo and Sam deeper into Mordor with the help of Gollum, while the rest of Middle-Earth has to start mobilising against Saruman's huge army.

James: Though ultimately I reserve judgement on this series of films until I've seen the third one, the second LOTR movie should shut up the ignorant masses who complained about the ending of the first movie - obviously confused by the concept of a trilogy. It's quite long, and gets over-bearing, plus the effects falter at times, and the script tends to drag, but it's still a fun piece of film. Be sure to catch Sean Astin's short film on the bonus disc.

Walt: This film will be similar to *The Empire Strikes Back*, in that it is the second film of the trilogy, and thereby the darkest and most foreboding. By that account, it will probably be the least popular film. I was fairly disappointed with certain sections of the film, with poor special effects and dragging, unnecessary plot devices. Other sections, though, were very impressive. It's not a better film than the first one, but it isn't like you can skip it...



utterly predictable on another. Although the plot of the film was a typical Hollywood gangster double cross kind of thing, the film was made awesomely enjoyable by the performances of the actors - especially Vin Diesel and Seth Green. Great fun, but not much by way of surprises.

Jackass: Not The Movie

Runtime: 82 minutes

16 VN

Jackass alumni Steve O gets his own DVD showing the stuff that they wouldn't show on TV and in the movie. The

Jackass: CKY

Runtime: 112 minutes

18

CKY is the original Jackass, doing stuff not even the TV show would dare touch. Weird Skits, faeces jokes, furniture surfing - it's all here.

James: If this is where it started, it should have stopped here. Anyone who opposes the notion of Evolution should use this DVD to prove their point that the gene pool doesn't improve over age. I'd much rather admit to owning Dutch porn before admitting to owning this.

Walt: And I thought the other one was bad...

Ultimate X

Runtime: 37 minutes

PG

ESPN's documentary on the X Games and the athletes who star in them.

Starring some of the top names in Motocross Freestyle, Skateboarding, Rollerblading and BMX, it covers some of the events of the 2001 event.

James: Too short, too lacking in features and too unexciting. It might interest the standard guy who accidentally stumbled upon the X Games while channel flipping, and though it was really cool "how those guys did those crazy things on those bikes", the interviews lack, the runs are incomplete and the sports are not given their due time.

A great opportunity wasted.

Walt: A great look at the world of extreme sports, with brilliant cinematography and awesome footage of some of the greats. Although ostensibly a documentary, the film feels like a high budget undertaking. It is very entertaining and will appeal even to those not really interested in extreme sports. A bit short, though.

Knockaround Guys

Runtimes: 88 minutes

16LV

In a bid to prove his worth to his mobster father (Dennis Hopper), Matty (Barry Pepper) and his crew (Vin Diesel, Seth Green and Andrew Davoli) have to transport a bag of cash for him. But when they lose it to a crew of corrupt cops in a small town, they have to get it back to save face with his father and his uncle (John Malkovich).

James: *Knockaround Guys'* main flaw is that the plot becomes very clear very fast, and you can spot the supposed villains a mile away, stripping any real surprise. It also takes itself too seriously at times with its "kids of the mob" theme. But its fun to watch, even if only to see Vin Diesel redeem himself to a level last seen in *Pitch Black*.

Walt: Here's a film that surprised on one level, and was

camera follows Steve O and his crew with their road show, where they trash bedrooms, snort chilli sauce and shoots fireworks out of their asses.

James: I don't get Jackass, and I never will. Though I love reading Bizarre and sitting around watching a Crusty Demons of the Dirt video, Jackass just represents the kind of stuff that makes me wonder if society is, indeed, at the brink of collapse. The shock value soon deteriorates and the pranks are just juvenile and stupid.

Walt: When being an idiot becomes entertainment, I really must bemoan our modern society. This is moronic, dangerous and self destructive stuff from a man that admits to doing this because it's better than going to school. A great attitude. The only thing that Steve O has going for him is that he will probably rid us of his presence before long - and will probably earn a Darwin award doing it.

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strategy guide:

WarCraft III: The Frozen Throne (part 1)

As has previously been the case with StarCraft, Blizzard Entertainment have rounded out their latest real-time strategy offering with an expansion pack that lets the game come of age. With over a million copies of The Frozen Throne already sold, this title is a favourite for competitive strategy play.

This two-part feature will build on the guide we published for the original, updating it to accommodate the new features in the add-on. I will not be discussing specific build orders, as costs have been very fluid of late, with each new patch adjusting prices for most elements, and this may continue until such time as Blizzard deem the game fully balanced. Instead, I'll be discussing issues in a more abstract sense, providing ideas to be developed.

Recap of fundamentals

In the WarCraft III strategy guide, a number of concepts were covered that bear repeating, even if only briefly.

Here's something to try when playing with at least one team-mate. Be warned - this tactic is somewhere between gambling and suicide when playing one-on-one - it simply cannot cope with a competent opponent wielding a balanced force! This specific example uses Night Elves, though the idea can be adapted to most races in some way. The basic concept is to skip building Ancients of War and instead to quickly upgrade to a Tree of Ages. Before taking this step, make sure that your resource gathering is up to speed; in particular, you will want at least five wisps harvesting lumber, as it's easy to get bottlenecked with this resource, which has been greatly emphasised in Frozen Throne.

While the Tree is upgrading, your hero should join up with a team-mate's creeping force, in order to gain experience and contribute in some way. Once the Tree of Ages is up, you should immediately order your second hero and start building two Ancients of Lore. You will find that your resource stockpile should be looking very healthy, particularly gold (both, if you allocated enough lumber gatherers). One of the Ancients of Lore can then handle upgrades and produce dryads, while the other trains druids of the claw. These tier-2 units will hit the battlefield, generally, substantially earlier than your opponents may be expecting them, giving a substantial advantage. The druids are tough and can roar, as well as healing any friendly unit (healing is always a very useful ability), while the dryads help against air and have the slow poison ability that will grant your team the ability to hunt down anything that tries to run away. It's also a very good idea to churn out one or two mountain giants to take along - the taunt ability will add a further order of battlefield control to your team.

(Thanks to FlameBird for this team strategy.)

1. Know the resources.

By "resources" I mean every unit, structure and other element (such as items that can be purchased) in the game. Furthermore, it is not enough to know only what is available to you - you need to be aware of exactly

what your opponent has at his or her disposal. To this end, you should familiarise yourself thoroughly with the manuals' contents, and experiment with various units and items, particularly when not in a high-pressure competitive situation.

2. Be active.

WarCraft III has been designed in

such a way as to reward the player who is constantly exerting him- or herself.

Creeping aggressively is essential - every minute spent idly is a minute that your opponent may be using to gain experience for his or her heroes. Even when not creeping, you should be exploring as much as possible.

3. Exploration.

The new map features in Frozen Throne give players an idea as to the location and relative strength of creeps, which may seem to suggest that mapping is less important. Quite the contrary! These new features make it possible to make every exploring effort more significant - dangerous creeps can be initially circumvented; creep appropriate to a hero's current power and accompanying army can be easily located, and all this makes it possible to search for one's opponent earlier. Know thy enemy!

4. Practise.

As is the case with any competitive game, you should practise as much as you can if you wish to play competitively. Even practice against AI opponents is not totally worthless - it provides the opportunity to play against an opponent that normally has a dangerously balanced force. It also allows you to experiment with individual units and tactics in a low-pressure environment. Lastly, Insane AI opponents offer a considerable challenge, particularly if you are bored and have nothing better to do.

Capitalising on interface enhancements

As mentioned earlier, the mini-map now offers more information than was previously the case. Although to an extent this has the side-effect of de-emphasising scouting, it reduces the advantage of knowing the map better than your opponent. It also means that you can plan your initial creeping much better, allowing earlier, more aggressive creeping.

Something that, some may argue, should have been featured in WarCraft III right from the beginning (other games have had this for ages, after all) is the ability to queue upgrades in research buildings.

Used with care, this feature ensures less down-time in such structures, and a smoother flow of technological development (assuming that available resources permit, of course). Do, however, be careful - if you over-commit to upgrades, you may find yourself unable to afford units, so it's best not to have more than one additional upgrade queued at any structure at any given time, leaving more resources for diverse activities.

A recent addition to the interface is the functionality of the Alt key.

When held down, Alt displays the health status of all units on the screen. This is a very useful feature that allows you to pick out the most injured unit for healing, even if it is in a different group to your healer/s, or even more importantly, to pick out the most injured enemy unit to attack.

Half Time!

Next month I'll be taking a look at the new units and upgrades, and discussing ways to combine them effectively. This is, after all, probably what most of you are most looking for. Until then, happy hunting!



▲ Placing Moonwells near Ancients of Lore and Altars ensures that emerging units are ready for battle.



▲ The Alt key easily pinpoints which units need healing...or a different kind of "special attention"!

A useful guideline: In general, it is best to attack the weakest enemy units (particularly ranged units) first, particularly with ranged attackers. Weaker units fall quicker, and then no longer contribute an attack. Chopping up a player's archers first, for instance, quickly results in that player losing his ranged capabilities and also reduces the number of hits he or she is getting in against your units. It also means that soon enough your forces outnumber your opponent's, allowing you to overwhelm. Of course, this is a generalisation, and exceptions exist - if your opponent's hero is weak and vulnerable, by all means kill it! But generally leave things like abominations and tauren for last (naturally, if you have battle control capabilities such as sleep, polymorph or cyclone at your disposal, keep these big beasts out of the way early in the battle - all the better to concentrate on the soft targets!). The Night Elves' taunt ability is an exact reversal of this principle - it forces the opponent to attack the biggest, toughest unit while its friends are free to target whatever they like.

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Lemming geeks

Rotten Movies

www.rottentomatoes.com

Movies are part of the NAG office's staple diet. We love the stuff. Granted, we rarely ever agree on what's worth seeing, but we argue about it a lot, and that's what counts. That also means we waste a lot of precious bandwidth on trawling movie sites and downloading trailers. After all, what kind of a life would it be if you didn't know a lot about the next popcorn-yarn on its way?

Rotten Tomatoes still rank as one of the top sites on our lists, since it focuses on how bad movies are.

The site takes the latest release list and has a reviewing system where users can vote on the movies. Each movie is also accompanied by a stack of quotes from movie critics, giving you a general idea on why the movie is good/bad and if you should see it.

The site also looks at game rental charts, has quite a vibrant forum, and a relatively okay news section. But the real reason to go here is to see if that movie you want to see is worth it.



The Geek inside

www.innergeek.us/geek.html

Do you have a lot of time? I mean, A LOT of time? Then take this test and see just how much of a geek you are. And once you have your results, mail me [james@nag.co.za] and explain how you summoned up the will to actually go through this list. Include your score too - we need a chuckle. [You bored? Ed].

Lemmings Online

crew.tweakers.net/crisp/lemmings/

Either you know Lemmings, or you have a serious gap in your gaming education. The cute game in which you instruct little men in what to do before the entire group kills themselves has been a classic for years, and has spawned a lot of sequels. Some web coder took the initiative to rewrite Lemmings into a web game, showing just what is possible with standard scripting technology these days. It takes a while to load, but it's as vintage lemmings as you could have ever wanted, complete with the classic midi theme song looping in the background.



AMD info

www.amdmb.com

If you own AMD hardware and you are passionate about it, perhaps you should bookmark this site. AMDMB is completely focused on the AMD boards and news surrounding their development. Recently the site did coverage of Quakecon, which used AMD-powered machines to showcase such games as Doom III.

As with a lot of hardware sites, it is quite technical in nature, and will probably be daunting to anyone who only has a passing interest in what's powering their machine. But if you really need to know what the best cooling system is or the latest project over at AMD's labs, jump in here.



Online reading



www.alpha-shade.com

One for you manga puppies. Occasionally an online comic appears that just has to impress you, no matter how jaded you are. Alpha Shade not only

falls into this niche comfortably, it manages to move our expectations just that little further. Sadly, there seems to be no set update schedule, so the pages appear hap-hazard over time, though they arrive at least twice a month. The site is also very reliant on Flash, which will be a problem for the bandwidth impaired (anyone who's not on ISDN or faster). Even more annoying, there is no HTML version. Still, these things aside, this is an excellent piece of work. The rants section is also great if you are able to stream the audio. The creators give commentary on the latest pages, and other topics close to their hearts. Its usually mundane banter, but the in-between moments of clarity are quite funny and informative.

Not just beer...

www.guinnessworldrecords.com

The highest walk between two hot-air balloons was at 5,486 meters. The most expensive house cat ever sold was for £25,000. Shenmue is the most expensive game ever developed - at a budget of \$20 million. The fastest selling console of all time is the PlayStation 2 at 98,000 units in four hours.

While it may seem that the staff at NAG are regular thinktanks who can bring up tidbits like these at the drop of a hat, we really also need such human things as the Guinness World Records site. Sadly, it doesn't have all the records on it, but at least it's a good place to find some useless trivia.

Hardware for all

Hardware sites aren't, unlike gaming sites, a dime a dozen.

That's mainly because they can be so technical it will drive the average punter to tears if he tries to read up on specs.

Not unlike reading an interview with John Carmack... you have been warned.

www.tomshardware.com

If you need to know about hardware, stop here first.



Tom's Hardware Guide has, over the years, established itself as the premier hardware site, especially when it comes to gaming.

www.anandtech.com

Anandtech is pretty, technical, huge and a great place to send a geek to if you need him out of the way for a few days.

www.rage3d.com

Everything you'd ever need to run your ATI card, with a legacy stretching back to the infamous Rage cards.

www.techspot.com

If something on your PC broke, these guys probably know how to fix it. Even if everything's working fine, their reviews and news are worth reading.

www.guru3d.com

It's all about 3D hardware and the stuff that goes around it - but you'd expect it with a site called the Guru of 3D. Really ugly logo, though.

www.hardwarecentral.com

Hardware Central is geared towards the more mainstream hardware buying crowd, with general news and reviews on hardware products.

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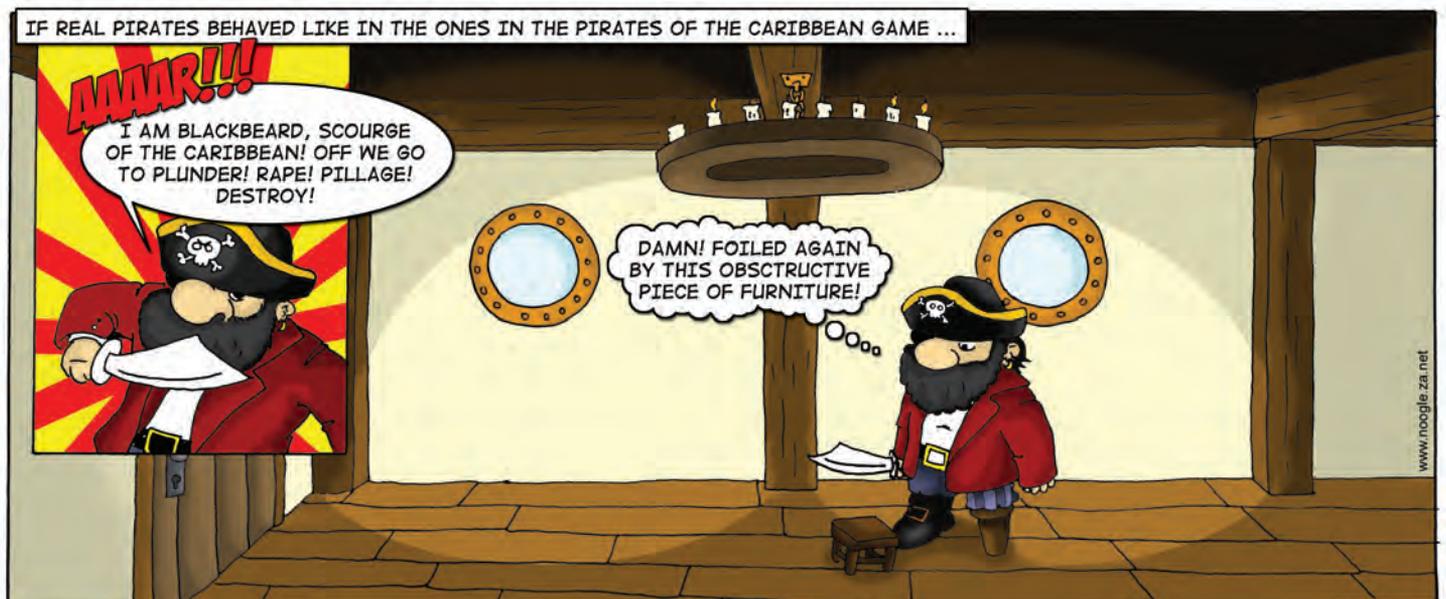
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S

HRYKE IS BUSY PLAYING BETHESDA'S LATEST VIDEO GAME WITH A DISMAYED LOOK ON HIS FACE...

- Shryke:** Oh boy...
- Priest:** Tell me about it. We're out of avocados and I still have a bucket of nachos here...
- Shryke:** No, man. I am talking about this game... Um, hang on, are you Priest or Naffel?
- Priest:** Naffel?
- Shryke:** Ok. Never mind. Just take a look at this game, man...
- Priest:** Did you have another alcoholic black-out again?
- Shryke:** Shut up... look at this game! Look! Look!
- Priest:** I can see - it's Johnny Depp as a pirate. Now, about these nachos...
- Shryke:** WHAT? Are you completely dense? That is not Johnny Depp...
- Priest:** It is. Look, it's Pirates of the Caribbean, in which Depp is a pirate. And that's the main pirate in the game, ergo Jack Sparrow. Which is Johnny Depp. Where's your cheese?
- Shryke:** You ate it all. Now listen, it's not Johnny Depp. It's not Jack Sparrow... It's Nathaniel Hawk. Johnny Depp is in the movie, not in the game...
- Priest:** No, Johnny Depp is Jack Sparrow. Orlando Bloom is Nathaniel Hawk. Okay, so Nathaniel became a pirate captain in the game, then. When are you buying more cheese?
- Shryke:** No, putz. Nathaniel Hawk is the hero from the game. Jack Sparrow is the hero from the movie. The guy in the game is not the same guy as in the movie. This is what I am trying to say - they have nothing to do with each other...
- Priest:** Well, they both own ships and have facial hair. Besides, if we can't celebrate our differences, how can we expect to get along?
- Shryke:** What the hell are you talking about? Why must I buy the cheese?
- Priest:** Because else I can't justify this bucket of Nachos. So you're not Jack Sparrow?
- Shryke:** No. I am Shryke. In the movie, Johnny Depp plays Jack Sparrow. In the game, I play Nathaniel Hawk. But look... not only does it have nothing to do with the film, but it's a pretty bad game, too. Just take a look...
- Priest:** Pirates! Cool... It can't be a bad game. Everyone knows pirates are cool. Even cooler than dinosaurs and Darth Vader.
- Shryke:** I lament for your lost intelligence, do you know that? How can a game be cool because it's about something? Oh, damn, hang on...
- Priest:** You know, last I recall, all games tend to be about something. It's kind of a prerequisite to plot, gameplay motivation and such other silly things.
- Shryke:** Don't pretend to be lucid! Don't pretend to make any sense. IT CONFUSES ME WHEN YOU DO THAT! Now what was I doing?
- Priest:** Going out to buy cheese.
- Shryke:** Yes, that's right... cheese... you should try this game, by the way... Johnny Depp is very cool in it...
- Shryke wanders off in a daze to soak his head...**



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THE 2nd RUNNER



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- 256MB DDR Memory
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- AOpen 52x Rewriter
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