

GameOn

ISSUE 1
AUG 08
FREE

.CO.UK
Mag



SENTRY GOING UP!

DISCOVER THE EVOLUTION OF TEAM FORTRESS!

PLUS!

12 MULTIFORMAT REVIEWS
UNREAL 'BLAST FROM THE PAST'
2008 QUARTER 4 PREVIEWS

AND MUCH MORE!



**Exclusive interview
with the makers
of Trackmania!**

ISSUE 01 - AUG08 - FREE



DS™

PS2™

Wii™

PSP™

PC

PS3™

X360™

Welcome to the first ever issue of the Gameon.co.uk magazine.

We will be bringing you the latest and greatest in the world of games across these very pages. With details of all the finest games, breaking news stories and great articles, all produced by our dedicated staff from the forums at Gameon.co.uk

So enjoy all this FREE magazine has to offer, in the meantime, register on the forums to come and have your say about the magazine, suggest items for inclusion in later issues and most importantly, to join in with the rest of the gamers.

Yours,

THE ED



MEET THE TEAM

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NADEO

Nadeo, the creators of the world famous Trackmania series, gave us the opportunity to pose some questions to them, which in turn were created by our GameOn (GO) Team.

Alinoa graced us with her time to answer these questions, so that we can understand what it is like to be a famed games studio and a games player at the same time.

GO: What is your job role and title with Nadeo, and what does your job involve each day?

Alinoa: I don't have a precise title with Nadeo. I am both in touch with players and in charge of the game levels realisation for Trackmania and (the PC game) 32nd America's Cup. On a daily basis, I have to test the different game versions, make the game levels, organise focus tests, read what is happening on the forums and pass the information to the team, and play the intermediary between the support of our publishers. I also take care of the manianews/manialinks system and encourage users to post in game news to inform the players of their zone regarding new creations, tournaments, movies, e.t.c.

GO: Do you play any games yourself?

Alinoa: We sure like to play at Nadeo. We like all kinds of video games. We also really like playing on board games. Moreover one member of our team participates in a board games contest as a judge, and he's got more

Alinoa: What I really prefer in Trackmania is anything that enables players to create and share, and thus contributes to form links between players. That's why I am very glad we have made Trackmania Forever and I am very much looking forward to discovering the new creations made by players.



Trackmania Forever, bringing hundreds of racers to a single racetrack.

than a hundred board games at home. Since the release of Trackmania Forever some of us have played on Trackmania every midday even if other players have gone to trash us.

GO: What is your most favourite aspect of Trackmania?

GO: How do you usually design and plan the solo tracks?

Alinoa: I have to respect a lot of criteria. Firstly, I have to make tracks that will not lag, which means not using too many decor blocks. Secondly, it should be clear how to get from the start to the finish, so the player doesn't have to look for



the way. The easy tracks don't have to contain hard passages (to jump just after a curve is very difficult for a beginner!). The harder tracks have

Alinoa: Trackmania will be released at the end of 2008 on the Nintendo DS. It's the English studio Firebrand who is

that the manialinks system will be more accessible in the future. One of the nice features of Forever is the ability to upload files directly from ManiaLink. We hope it could help players to share more with manialinks.



"Anything that enables players to create and share, and thus contributes to form links between players. That's why I am very glad we have made Trackmania Forever"

GO: How does it feel to develop a very popular series?

Alinoa: We are very happy to be developing a very popular series. When a hundred players drive on the same map, the trackbuilder is very pleased. And when thousands of players are playing on Trackmania together, that also makes the team really glad!

to be both technical and interesting to challenge the experienced drivers. A last check is to make sure there are no cuts. The community helped us a lot to find the cuts during the Beta tests. Thank you Zooz!

GO: Do you think there is any chance of Trackmania ever being ported to other consoles?

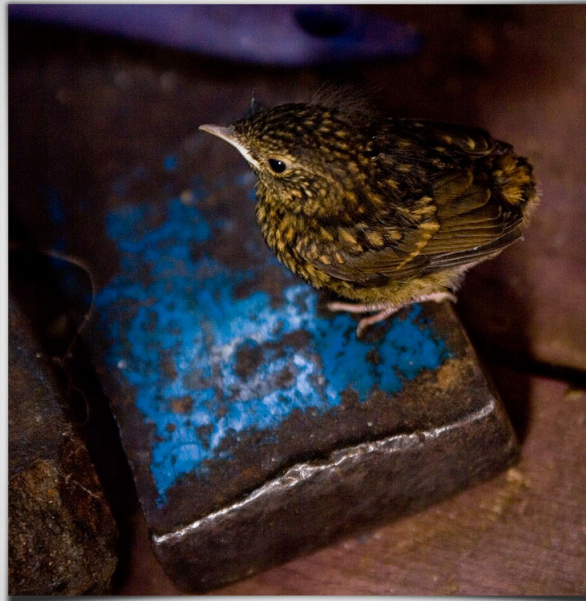
in charge of the development and they are doing a great job.

GO: Manialinks are clearly another unique idea seen in Trackmania, but do you have any plans to try and expand them in some shape or form?

Alinoa: Making a manialink is not that simple, and we wish

If that wasn't enough of a Trackmania treat for you, we have Trackmania articles further on in the mag!

link.gameon.co.uk/mag/1/p4



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Robert Whetton
Photographer

At GameOn, we found that a fair few of our normal games players were also photographers and opened up a forum section for them. We've had some cracking shots from the GO forum users, even some from people on their little digital cameras, so this area is for anyone with an eye for a good photo, not necessarily the wallet for good kit. We thought it would be fitting to dedicate some space inside this little magazine here to showcase some of their work from the ever popular 'Photo A Day' thread.

link.gameon.co.uk/mag/1/p5





**Headcrab says
OM NOM NOM NOM**



gameon's PHOTO OF THE MONTH

We also have a community based photo competition. For a bit of fun banter, everyone is allowed to enter the competition, regardless of what gear is being used. The competitions usually have a theme, and then all entrants are placed into a thread, at which time the users vote

on their favourite pictures and give any feedback they wish to leave. The winner gets to choose the next competition theme and it all starts over again. The last winner was "Pegster" with the photo you see below.

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COMING SOON...

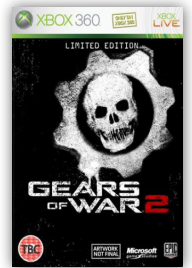
Resistance 2

After Resistance: Fall of Man sold so well, a sequel was inevitable and is due for release towards the end of the year. Set two years after the first game, the Chimera have overrun most of the world, with only America left protected. However when huge flying battleships appear, humanity is forced to make a desperate last stand. Promises of new weaponry, gigantic bosses and improved online multiplayer should make this better than Fall of Man. Yet the big draw looks like 8 player online co-op using a similar class system to Team Fortress 2.



Gears of War 2

After the huge success of Gears of War, more of the same would have been perfect for a sequel. Yet the developers look to be developing the story further by adding more depth. Despite delivering a crippling blow to the Locust Horde at the end of the original they have regained their strength and now threaten the remaining human's strongholds. With new weapons and moves the campaign looks to be stronger than ever. Expect to be curb stomping drones in November.



Fallout 3

Fallout 3 is shaping up to be one of the biggest games for some time. Developed by Bethesda, still riding high from Oblivion, this RPG has some real promise. Set in the devastated US after a nuclear apocalypse you fight for survival. The story follows your character's search for his missing father and has over 200 endings based on your actions in the game. Violent combat, lashings of gore and your very own canine companion should be ready by October.



Left 4 Dead

A game featuring hordes of 28 Days Later style zombies, co-operative online play and developed by Valve? Sign me up now. Playing as the survivors your goal is to survive waves of the undead to escape an area, using a variety of weapons. However, other human players can take the role of "special" zombies whose goal is to set out and kill the survivors. Knowing Valve's attention to detail this should be one of the best games of the year: if it meets its end of year release date.



Halo Wars

A real time strategy game for a console is a risky move, but when you have one of the most successful game franchises of all time, how can it fail? Taking place before the events of the original Halo, the campaign focuses on Earth's forces and the Covenant. The game features all of the vehicles and troops from the series and looks to add to the complex history of the series. A release at the end of the year seems very likely.



Far Cry 2

Since Crytek moved on to develop Crysis, the Far Cry series was left to Ubisoft. Using a new engine, the game is set in an open world environment somewhere in Africa. Deserts, jungles and small villages are all set to feature in an area around 50km² in size. The story revolves around the assassination of an arms dealer and will not follow on from the previous game. A number of different factions are featured in the game as well as a range of vehicles. With an alleged "50 hours of game play" this is one to watch for what could become a sizzling autumn.



FIFA 2008

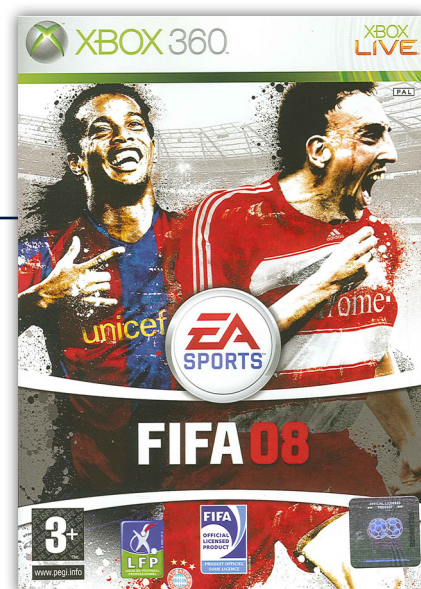
REVIEW BY: PAUL SHEARING

Everybody has heard of Fifa, the EA branded game out for over a decade. I can reflect back to the Sega mega drive days with Fifa International soccer with 'Crowd' effects which sounded so realistic! And yet again I find myself muttering the same words as I did back in 1993, 'this game can't get any more real... can it?'

have over the rather poorly put together rival Pro Evolution 2008.

Fifa has it all, single player cup, league competitions containing over 20 football federations, but what makes this game is its online arsenal.

Fifa online features the classic 1



unranked matches and the new



"The graphics are superb and players are extremely realistic"

For weeks I've found myself glued to my TV set playing Fifa 2008 on the Xbox 360 over and over again. This game is a true great football sim, and is a must

on 1 match ups allowing people all over the world to interact with 1,2,3 or even 4 players on each Xbox. Also included in the online features are ranked and

Pro mode, allowing you and up to 5 players total to control 1 team, with each person selecting a position to play on that team. Team captains allocate players requested and set tactics. Then via your Xbox live microphones communicate



with your team mates to try and overcome the opposition.

Pro mode is what has kept me coming back for more, the addictive element of online team play will keep the user playing on once bored of the solo stuff.

The actual game play of Fifa is brilliant, with the classic controls of Pass, Shoot, Lob, Sprint and Through Balls, also thrown in is individual skills, which you find yourself practicing as Ronaldinho on the loading screen. Using the right analogue with a combination of trigger buttons your player can do 'tricks' which can fool an opponent in game, allowing

you to get past the defender with the slick silky skills you learnt with good old Ronnie. The graphics are superb, and players are extremely realistic.

"Overall, this game is a must have if you're a football fan"

If I do have one gripe with the game it would be Martin Tyler and Andy Gray commentating. Most of the time it's acceptable, but you also find simple things annoying, such as softly hit balls which your keeper catches described as exceptional saves, and the babble they sometimes waffle about stadium's and teams can get very repetitive.

Overall this game is a must have if you're a football fan. Stay clear of this year's Pro Evolution and grab Fifa instead. This is coming from a PES fan!

+ Pros

- Realistic graphics
- Fantastic online play
- Great controls

- Cons

- Commentary can be annoying

WII SPORTS

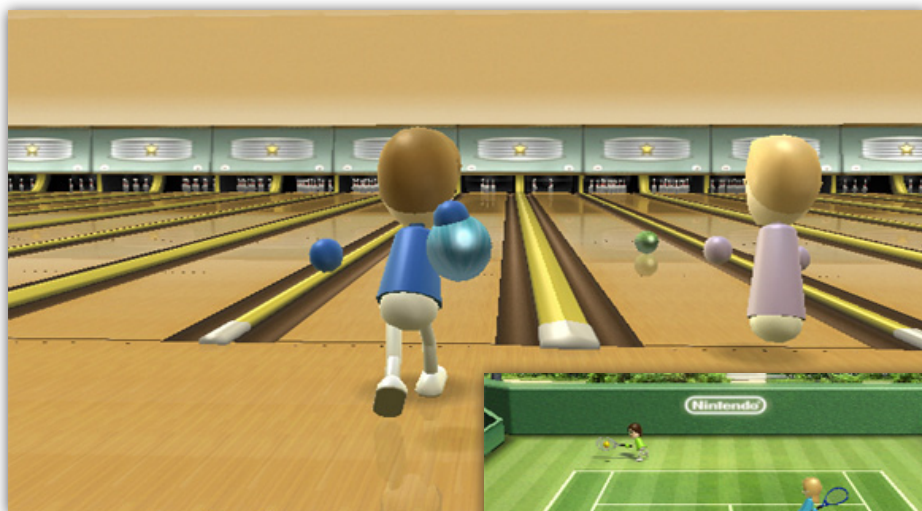
REVIEW BY: NEIL HETHERINGTON

Right, here we are with the Wii launch title of Wii Sports and my first impressions of the experience were ones along the lines of, how simple is this? Which then ranged to, just how long have I been playing this?

Quite simply this game, or technically pack of 5 games, is so intuitive and easy to pick up and play it can be extremely addictive.

gaming sessions as you may feel exhausted and sore after a prolonged bout of boxing or baseball, as unlike other control methods this may get you fit. Yes that's right, a game that's fun and has the potential to keep you fit.

Now the 5 games contained under the banner of Wii Sports are tennis, baseball, 10 pin bowling, golf and boxing. 4



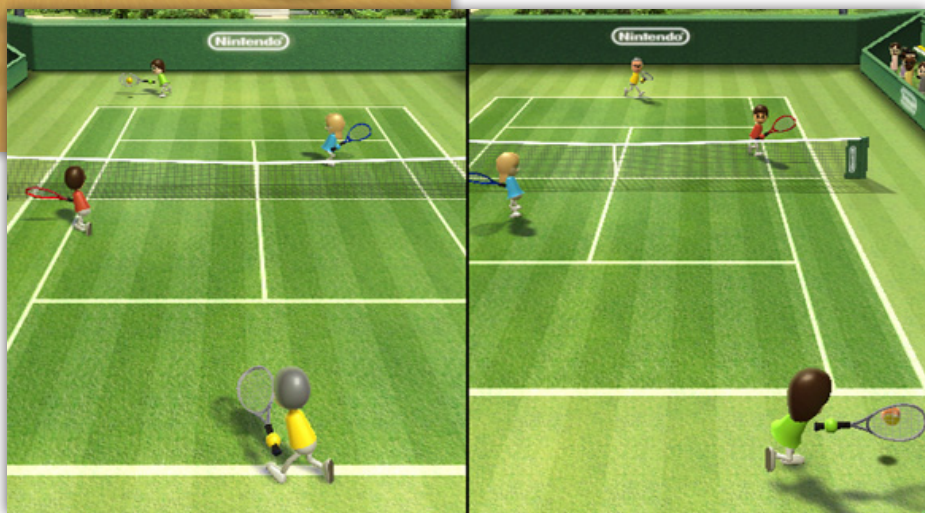
So the basis of the controls is using the Wiimote to emulate the movements of said games contained within Wii Sports, for example in tennis you would swing as you would a real tennis racket, or bowl as you would down your local 10 pin alley. Now this you may think is just a gimmick but this is actually may be the easiest control method that Nintendo have actually invented. Just be wary of extended

of the sports use only the Wiimote in its control as boxing is the only one that uses the nunchuck attachment, supplied in the Wii package also available separately from



good stockists, so you may control each fist independently.

The graphics are nothing to write home about compared to what the Xbox 360 or Playstation 3 can offer but they are functional, complement the style of the game very well and easy on the eye. I mean there's no point in having face melting visuals when the game play sucks.



But don't get me wrong, I'm not saying the graphics are terrible, far from it, they do look good for the unit and they appeal to a wide audience.



"Yes that's right, a game that's fun and has the potential to keep you fit."

So along side the bog standard single player nature of each sport you can also play multiplayer, the number of which depends on the sport you play. for example boxing is a 2 player split screen affair whilst golf is 4 players on 1 screen taking it in turns to spoil a good walk. Along side spoiling a good walk you may have all 4 players sharing the 1 Wiimote or each player with their own Wiimote as they can easily sync

between consoles with ease.

There is also a training section so you may hone your skills in each sport also a Wii fitness test.

This allows you to take 3 random challenges to perform, the outcome of which determines your Mii age (a Mii being a character you may create for yourself on the console) which is only available once each day, so again more potential to keep fit.

In conclusion, Wii sports is a highly addictive title for all age groups ranging from little Tommy 2 year old up to grandpa coffin dodger as the extremely easy control method is simple enough for anyone to pick up and play this game.

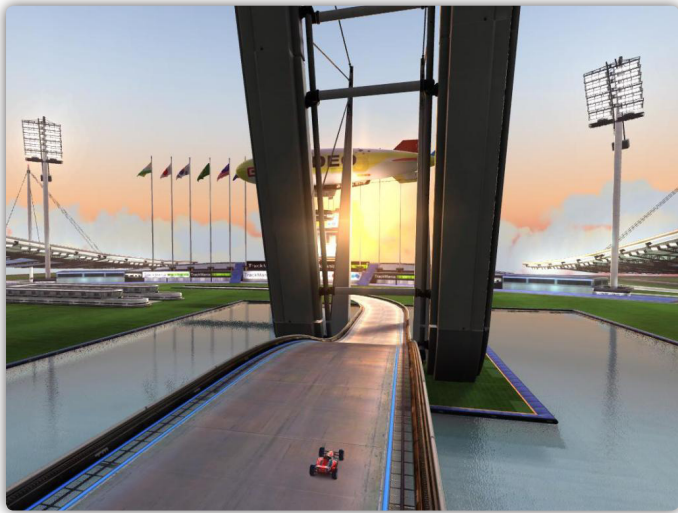
+ Pros

- Highly addictive
- Intuitive control system
- Great laugh with friends

- Cons

- Can make you feel sore
- Maybe too simplistic and childish for "hardcore" gamers.

The TM Community



One of the main advantages of the TrackMania franchise is its great supportive community. Both of the currently active games – TrackMania United and the free TrackMania Nations – offer extensive features enhancing the community spirit. With aspects such as ManiaZones and live forum updates in-game, the community is brought together in a way never before experienced.

If you're not familiar with the features, ManiaZones is a sort of built-in web page system. It's possible to create contest pages, places to download skins, tracks, sounds, e.t.c and many other things, all accessible within the game.

On the more simple and user-friendly level, the game offers live updates of what's currently going on in the TM world. With continuous updates of the hottest ManiaZones, as well as links to threads at the official supporting forum, the in-game main menu is constantly active and showcases points of interest. Add to this the easy to use PM (private message) system, which makes it easy to contact other members with only a few mouse clicks.

Another feature that further brings the players of TrackMania together is the Buddy List. You can view the status of your listed buddies, what server they're currently playing, e.t.c. This makes it very simple to join a match with your friends.

One of the more famous features in TrackMania is the copper system. You earn "coppers", a sort of currency, every time you log in, and by doing good in solo mode. The coppers may enhance your community experience as they are frequently used as prizes in contests and events by the community.

As the fans of any videogame, the TrackMania players have taken actions of their own. Fan sites have been created, and many supporting web sites offer the community valuable resources. Even, or perhaps especially, unofficial contests and events from all over the world unite players and challenge them to take their gaming one step further. Two of the more well known creations as a result of the players are the TrackMania Exchange (<http://www.tm-exchange.com>) and the so called Carpark (<http://www.trackmania-carpark.com/>). The first is the largest track sharing site out there, and perhaps one of the most important supporters of the TM community. The second is a similar site for sharing and downloading vehicle skins and models for the game.

It's easy to conclude that TrackMania has an extraordinary community consisting of everything from basic fan sites to high quality sites for sharing content and resources. After all, the success of any video game is dependent on its players. The game is only half the fun, and that's particularly true in the case of TrackMania.

By Jozii (<http://tmunited.wordpress.com/>)



FROM THE FORUMS...

The forums are always alive with the buzz of gamers whether they have opinions to give or questions to ask. Here are a selection of some of the best threads recently:

Deathwhisper: "Best game/type of all time?"

"Personally I think RPG's are the best cause you can interact with most things"

Ste (Homz): "Gah R.I.P. Xbox"

"The Elite has finally died on me (rrod), its been locking up a lot last few days so I figured it was due anytime soon, anyone else had to RMA there xbox's ? What was the turn around time like if so

Taaaa"

djmaggs: "RA 2 Anyone???"

"Just out of curiosity, anyone playing RA2 atm lol..or played it recently..ish?

I've been trying to play it, like learning to walk for me haha, getting smashed in offline games :/ but kinda getting back into things :P

I <3 Yuri and the cloning vats!"

Sty1es: "Help Please :("

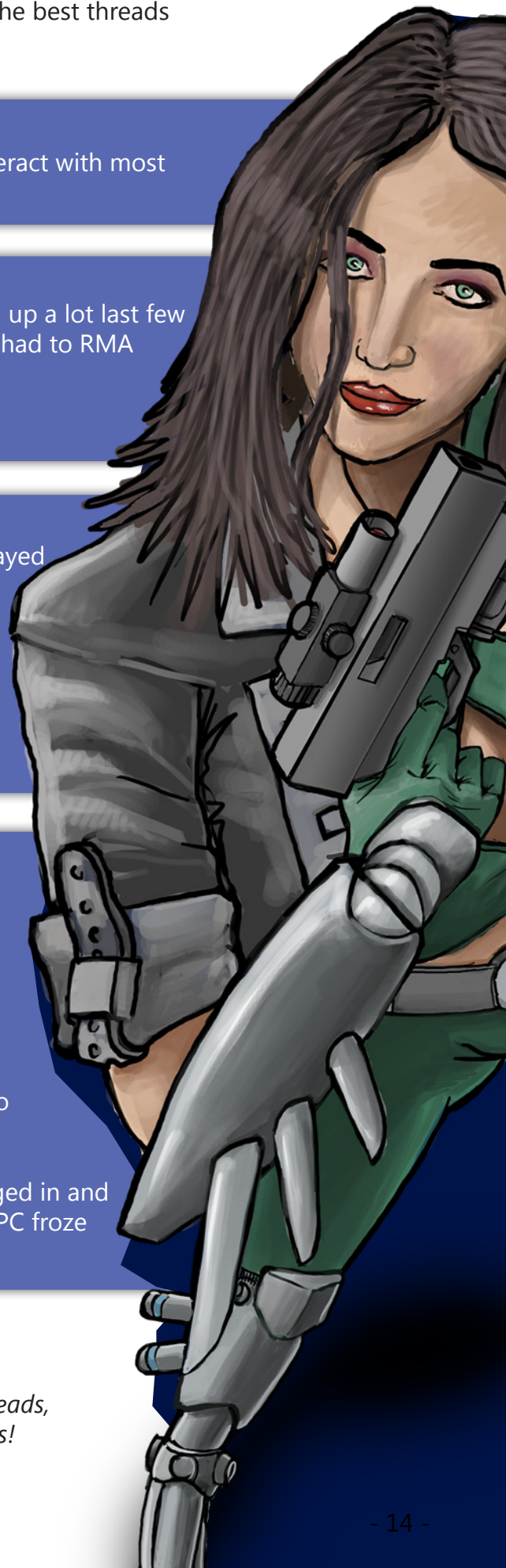
"Hi,

I have no idea if this is a hardware problem or a software problem

On Sunday I was playing CSS and I got the sound loop crash. I didn't think much of it. I restarted CSS and it crashed again 2 mins later. This time it didn't go back to desktop so I had to soft crash my PC.

It started rebooting and I got to the logging page, logged in and got to desktop. As soon as I tried opening ventrilo my PC froze then I got the BSOD...

If you want to offer help or have a comment on the above threads, register on our forums and have your say! Your opinion counts!



RACE DRIVER: GRID

REVIEW BY: NEIL HETHERINGTON

"If everything is under control you are just not driving fast enough"

-Sir Stirling Moss

Welcome to GRID, Codemasters' latest offering of motor sport erotica, this time dropping the TOCA branding in favour of dipping into the pools of racing from all over the world.

To begin with I must state that this title has not been designed to be a petrol head's dream where you can alter practically every part of your car to find that extra 0.001th of a second around the track, nor is it a veritable encyclopaedia of internal combustion. In fact the number of cars available is around 45 in total, with no form of tuning or modification possible in the game. As Codemasters put it "it's all about the race".

On the menu screen you will see

the usual selection of options, multiplayer along with race day and grid world. Race day allows you to set up single races on the track you want to race on, with the car you wish to drive, setting up the number of laps etc, then getting on with the job. For example if you wished to you can set up a true 24 hour jaunt around Le Mans but let's face it who on earth would actually want to sit for 24 hours driving around Sarthe?

Grid world is your single player career mode, where you start out in the seat of a Dodge Viper with 1 lap just to finish the race, doing so rewards you with your rookie license. Now don't expect this to be a cake walk, as I can pretty much guarantee that you will crash on your first few attempts as the handling of each car in this game differs vastly. Also the handling itself is geared towards a more arcade



like feel rather than a simulation. After completing the race and gaining your license you are greeted with your first garage, complete with an annoying American mechanic along with his annoying American business accountant who looks after your winnings allowing you to concentrate on winning races. You start off with a broken Ford Mustang Boss 302, to which you need to earn £40,000 until it becomes race worthy.

As you have no cars to race with you begin by driving for other teams, earning a couple of thousand for the drive with the chance of earning extra if you achieve their target for that race. This varies from finishing the race in X position to finishing the race ahead of rival team Y. This will be done for a couple of seasons as to be honest, driving for other teams isn't the best form of income due to poor pay cheques.

At the end of each season, normally after around 4 races,



you get the opportunity to race at the world renowned Circuit de la Sarthe for 24 hours of Le Mans. But don't worry you won't actually be driving for 24 hours, in actuality the race lasts 12 minutes so for you of a mathematical persuasion you would have deduced that 30 seconds real time equates to 1 hour of race time, but during this 24 hour race you do still get a day/night cycle and driving at night on a track you aren't too sure of, especially on your first couple of seasons is a nerve wracking task. You have the option to drive for another

There are 3 main regions to race in: American, European and Japanese locales. Each region hosting various championships ranging from the usual circuit affairs for touring cars, muscle cars, pro tuned street cars to formula 3 and LMP1 class open seat cars.

An interesting addition to the game is the introduction of the Touge event found in the Japanese leagues. This consists of 2 cars going head to head in a 2 leg race against each other. Contact is strictly forbidden; you will suffer a time penalty if

It's a nice change of pace from the usual circuit affair and with the strict no contact rule there is more emphasis on trying to pass your opponent cleanly which at times is not exactly an easy task, especially in the early stages of your career when your Mustang is up against a pro tuned Nissan Skyline GT-R.

Your team can have up to eight sponsors in total, 1 major and 7 minor. The major sponsor slot doubles their cash reward when completing the requirement, so think carefully which sponsor you wish to place in that slot.

"You can, if you wanted, destroy the entire car."

team, enter your own team or skip Le Mans, but I highly recommend racing it either for someone else or your own merit as the prize purse for 1st place is rather tasty indeed, and adds a nice chunk of funds to your bank balance.

Ok so we've fixed our broken car and now our team is ready to race, time to start earning the big bucks.

you are the chasing car making contact with the lead car, which could make you lose the race. The winner is determined by your overall time over the 2 legs. The first leg you start off with a slight lead going down a twisty Japanese mountain road while second leg starts you slightly behind your opponent going back up the road.

Right so now we're out on the track with AI drivers who aren't autonomous like Gran Turismo and just methodically stick to the racing line except to overtake. Your opponents here will drive aggressively, jostle for position, misjudge lines making mistakes or spinning off, and if needs be will nudge you out the way, normally resulting in a trip into gravel city. Or if you're unlucky you might receive a high speed shunt which inexorably will lead to a hefty crash either crippling or writing off your shiny car.

Race Driver: Grid





But do not fret for "Flashback" is your friend. This feature allows you to rewind a few seconds of your race, say moments before you get smacked into the barrier of failure. Press the magical button and you're placed back in your driving seat in a fully working car again, meaning you can take an emergency action to avoid the crash. So you can have a laugh at the odd spectacular crash, viewing it from a multitude of angles before finally rewinding to the safe point to try again.

increases, so finding the right balance is key to success. A steering wheel would be a wise choice of peripheral to get the best from the game, failing that then a game pad with analogue sticks should suffice.

Visually the game looks good, it looks really good. All the cars are accurately modelled and all the locales and scenery look great which adds to the overall impressiveness of the game. The car damage seems pretty much unrivalled as you can, if

making it more difficult to reach that top step of the podium, so again emphasis on trying to keep contact to a minimum weighs in your overall racing style.

The overall look of the game has a gritty grimy feel to it, instead of a clinical polished look other racers have. This I personally feel gives GRID more appeal than other racing titles. Granted there aren't as many cars to drive or tracks to race on but everything works so nicely together. Overall Codemasters has created another winner and it is a title I highly recommend in getting.

+ Pros:

- Highly enjoyable
- Visually a treat
- Plenty of racing action to satisfy most tastes
- AI is challenging
- Impressive damage model

- Cons:

- Music can be annoying, especially when it kicks in the "dramatic music" 21 hours into Le Mans
- Annoying radio chatter
- AI can be a little too relentless at times
- Unable to save replays

"Codemasters have created another winner..."

Do not try to rely on this marvellous race saving device of flux capacitor like goodness as you are limited to the number of uses, which is dependant on difficulty level you choose. The higher the difficulty level the number of uses reduces, but to offset this the reputation and cash gained from winning

you wanted, destroy the entire car. Nudges and shunts will dent body work, pop windows e.t.c. but won't affect the performance or handling too much. Heavier crashes will start to affect your wheels, steering, gearing, engine, braking and radiator systems which can reduce your cars performance

BIOSHOCK

REVIEW BY: CHRIS WAKEFIELD

Bioshock was a game I was very intrigued with. Having bought a copy for the PC only to be plagued with technical problems, the minute I got a 360 it was the first game on my list.

The game plays like a successor to the System Shock series as a first person shooter with depth. The game begins when the plane you are in crash lands into the Atlantic, leaving you swimming to a mysterious lighthouse.

Finding a strange sphere you descend into the underwater city of Rapture. Built by a business giant, sick of society's meddling and morality, the city was designed to be a place for freedom and new discoveries not bound by normal rules and regulations.

However, things went very wrong. New scientific advances were made, specifically creating "plasmids" and "tonics" which would change the genetic structure of a person, giving them new powers and abilities. Yet these changed people into murderous psychopaths, known as "Splicers" which now roam the silent halls. It is here that the story progresses

where you try to discover what exactly happened as well as simply survive.

Firstly, the game looks incredible. The graphics are really impressive, especially in 1080p on a good television. The art design for the game is excellent and the mood of the period is captured well, down to subtle art deco touches and broken gramophones

still playing their tunes. The lighting and water effects are excellent and really help to make you become immersed in the game.

Sound is one of the game's strongest features. Realistic sound effects make the game more convincing and ambient sound really adds to a sinister and threatening atmosphere.



Thankfully the voice acting of the game's characters is some of the best in any game, which is always crucial to one which is story driven.



The key characters are voiced superbly, by some well known actors and at times the experience feels all too real. Even your enemies, the Splicers have distinct personalities and often scream out disturbing phrases when they attack you. More unsettling are the ones who just roam the halls mumbling quietly to themselves, cradling

"The voice acting is some of the best in any game"



a gun as though it were a child.

Whilst the game's presentation is unquestionably impressive, how does the game play fare?

I am pleased to say that Bioshock offers an excellent first person system with a good selection of

Alongside the weapons, your character also gains access to the same genetic enhancements as his enemies. These range from paralyzing them with electricity, setting them on fire and even freezing them solid. These plasmids are effective and become an

health from first aid kits, others improve your chances in the hacking mini-game to control turrets and security drones and one even gives you the ability to turn invisible when standing still. They fall into 4 categories, Plasmids, Engineering, Physical and Combat tonics.

"This moral choice is a good addition and really elevates the game..."

weapons and satisfying gunplay. Each weapon has a variety of ammunition types which are generally split into armor-piercing, anti-personal and general. The combat feels meaty and different from the clinical effectiveness of Call of Duty.

essential tool in facing off ever tougher opponents.

As well as offensive plasmids, you also can obtain tonics which are passive. These offer boosts to a wide range of different areas. Some give you more

As the game progresses you are forced to switch between these as you are limited to only 6 from each category which adds a tactical approach and allows you to take on situations in different ways. This adds a pleasant depth to the game play, though at times it is a little easy as there are plenty of places to swap your upgrades.

In order to purchase these upgrades you first have to acquire ADAM, a currency which is only available from Little Sisters. These small female

children roam the corridors collecting ADAM from corpses but are protected by large diving suit wearing bodyguards called a Big Daddy. You must kill the Big Daddy (quite a feat), to be able to access the Little Sister, where you must then choose to either kill her (and receive maximum ADAM), or save her (and receive a smaller amount but have a clear conscience). This moral choice is a good addition and really elevates the game from other titles, as it ties in with the narrative very well.

I could criticize Bioshock for a number of small issues. The hacking mini-game is rather

easy on a console, there is no inventory screen, and the map is confusing and so on. However, these criticisms are minor when you view the game as a whole.

I can't remember the last time a game gripped me so much with such a strong narrative, I literally sat and completed it in almost a single sitting. The game is mature, tackles interesting issues and isn't afraid to try to do things a little differently. Whilst it follows most of the conventions of the genre, it brings enough new elements to make it fresh and interesting. Seldom is a game crafted with so much attention

to detail and has an atmosphere as strong as Bioshock.

If you are a fan of FPS games and strong stories then Bioshock is unmissable. For everyone else: it is essential.

+ Pros

- Incredible story
- Unique atmosphere and setting
- Excellent game play
- Sound is brilliant

- Cons

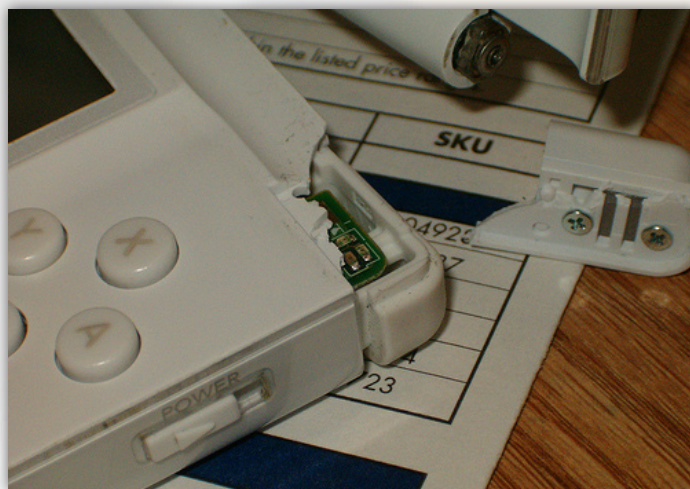
- Hacking mini-game
- Slightly limited replayability



DS UNHINGED?

Over the last two years there have been a large number of cases with the Nintendo DS Lite hinges cracking, then snapping or breaking off.

If you are one of the unlucky ones with one of these, there isn't a lot you can do unless it's still covered under warranty. The problem does happen with all colours, but is very prone to happen to the White DS Lite. It seems there was a "bad batch" of White Nintendo DS consoles that hit the market place just under two years ago.



What to look for:-

The crack normally starts on the right hand side (looking at screen); the hinge closest to the power LED. This almost always starts off as a hair line crack which seems to take less than two or three weeks to become a full split in the plastic. Once it has fully broken off, it can become hard to use the DS.

What can you do about it:-

1. Take it back to where you purchased it from.
2. Failing that, contact Nintendo directly and have them fix the fault.
[\(CLICK HERE FOR NINTENDO SUPPORT\)](#)
Or phone **0870 6060 247**
3. If you are out of your warranty and have tried these ideas without any luck you can try a site like eBay. Empty cases for the Nintendo DS Lites have come down in price a lot over the last 4 months.

If you've been affected by the same problem, or have any other information regarding this situation, drop us a comment at the following link:

<http://link.gameon.co.uk/mag/1/p21>



CALL OF DUTY 4

REVIEW BY: NEIL HETHERINGTON

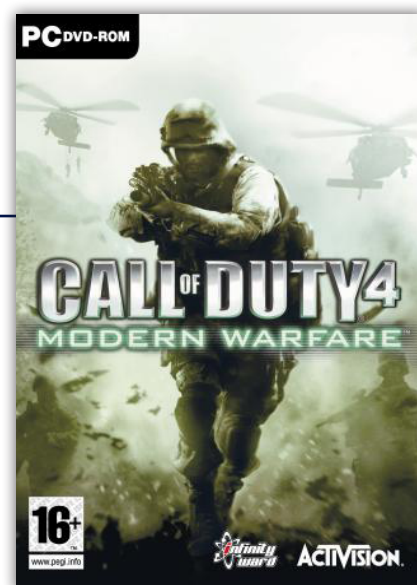
Ok so here we go with Activisions' 8th instalment of the Call of Duty franchise, this time with the best people for the job back at the helm in the form of Infinity Ward. I state 8th instalment as it literally is the 8th game to appear from the Call of Duty (or from now on in CoD) franchise womb.

Firstly we had CoD from IW then the expansion pack United Offensive (thanks to Grey Matter Interactive) and console spin off *Finest Hour*. IW hit a home run again with CoD 2 and again console spin off, this time developed by Treyarch, CoD2 Big Red One. Then came the obligatory black sheep, the outcast offspring, the hideous deformed abomination that was CoD3 developed again by Treyarch and was only available to the consoles. Then there is CoD: *Roads to Victory*, developed by Amaze

Entertainment and was released only for the PSP in march of 2007.

Now to the present with the gleaming beacon of joy from IW again in the form of CoD4: *Modern Warfare* and as you can guess from the game title that this is no longer a goose step slapping jaunt across the frozen wastes of Bastogne, no no, IW has brought the franchise into the era of today's Middle Eastern conflicts and the threat of terrorists with nuclear weapons.

To kick things off for us the first mission is regarded as a training mission, and as you would have noticed if you fired up the game before reading this review is that you are unable to select what difficulty you wish to play the game through on. This training mission actually judges your performance and selects a difficulty based on the time you complete the "exercise". But if



you wish you may select your own difficulty level after the short mission if you don't feel up to the suggestion.

Now you start off the game as "Soap" MacTavish, the latest member of 22nd SAS Regiment flying to a container ship somewhere in the Bering Sea, with Estonian registration number 52775, after the confirmation of a nuclear device. Not everything goes to plan though as your group barely escape to safety with just a cargo manifest as evidence of ties between Russian nationalists and terrorists in the Middle East.

This pretty much sets the tone of the game, with jaw dropping visuals and exciting game play, making you feel more immersed in the experience and falling into the deadly trap of the "just one more map" mind set which can leave you at your PC playing for hours on end and you only realize that you haven't had anything to eat as its 6am with your alarm clock blazing away and the sun beginning



to rise outside. Soap isn't the only character that you gain control of during the playtime of this outstanding title, USMC 1st Force Recon Sergeant Paul Jackson and also a section controlling Captain Price back in the days when he was just

you feel for the characters. To increase the single player game appeal there is also an arcade mode build into the game which is available at some point during the main campaign. This allows you to attempt each

of superman on steroids.

Another flaw is that of the regenerating health. Now my personal preference is that if I get hit, I lose health or I die, I also wish to see a health bar showing what I have remaining. What I don't like is this idea of "ow I got hit, I must hide behind this conveniently placed wall so I may regenerate back to my optimum level before I step out again". It's really annoying and removes some aspect of the realism of the game, now if in real life we had regenerating health then the outcome of world war 2 may have been somewhat altered and I may have obtained my copy of CoD4 by goose stepping down to the local Das Tesco, or by driving into town after I filled my car up at the local Schnell garage. Right maybe it's time to sort out the multiplayer section of

"Jaw dropping visuals and exciting game play..."

a "Leftenant" accompanied by Captain MacMillan are also key roles which you switch between during the course of the game.

Infinity Ward have managed to combine a story line that would have taken more than 1 bar napkin to write on and combine it with an adrenaline packed FPS without having to gimp one area or the other. It is truly remarkable, especially the gem of a level where you gain control of the weapons onboard an AC-130 Gunship, circling and covering the escape of Captain Price, blasting the enemy with massive cannons all viewed through the grainy TV sights that are installed in the aircraft. Now I assume you've all seen footage from the Gulf war or more recent the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, where we see missiles with TV sights flying into buildings e.t.c. Well its that sort of TV sight footage that makes this level so good, it's another step into immersing yourself into the game, making

mission or the whole game at once to achieve a high score.

But this game is not without it's faults, for example the friendly AI can be a pain in the backside by waiting for you to do something first before they act, or they simply get in the way acting out scripted sequences whilst you just want to get past and blow away the bad guys. Also the enemy AI



at higher difficulty levels can seem utterly relentless in their onslaught whilst also having the combined accuracy of 40 trained SAS snipers and the eyesight

this game, to begin with may I point out a word of warning. While playing multiplayer you will gain XP to gain higher ranks to be able to unlock weaponry

and perks, this information is stored locally so please make backups incase you may have to format your PC otherwise you will lose your XP and rankings.

Now to begin with we have the multiplayer modes, Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, Search & Destroy, Headquarters, Sabotage, and finally Domination. Now DM TDM and S&D should be familiar modes from the CoD series so I shall briefly cover the new modes.

Headquarters is a capture and hold objective based scenario with a random point, or headquarters, will spawn for either team to capture. After capture that team gain points over time so the longer they hold the area the more points they acquire while the opposition seek to destroy the H.Q. So they may stem that flow of points then try to capture the new point that spawns. If, however, the opposition fail to destroy the H.Q., it will destroy itself after so long so that they still have a chance to capture and gain points for their team.

Sabotage is a mix of S&D with some TDM, now there are 2 bomb points, 1 at each side of the map for the 2 corresponding

teams, so 1 bomb point for 1 team, the other point for the opposition team. Now the aim is to defend their own point whilst trying to obtain the only bomb in the map, usually spawned in the centre, and blow up their oppositions point.

Domination is a variation of a capture and hold scenario. There is 3 flag points within the map and the aim is for 1 team to hold the majority, if not all points, to gain an overall total therefore winning the map.

Along side these standard modes you may customize them further but if I waffled on any longer about the

classes with weapons you prefer.

The aforementioned perks are pretty much like marmite, some people love the system while some others do not. These perks customize your character with abilities to give yourself an advantage on the battlefield, now I won't go into too much detail but the perks range from simply letting you sprint farther to allowing you to carry a primary weapon instead of a secondary sidearm, for example equipping yourself with a M4 rifle while having a MP5 as backup instead of a USP or .45. So overall the experience of Call

"An essential title..."

game then there would be nothing for you to discover.

Then we have the issue about classes and rankings, now each kill in the game gives you XP, along with completing map objectives and such. This XP accumulates up to allow you access to higher ranks in the game therefore unlocking more weaponry and perks. There are 5 default classes to choose from each with different weapon setups and perks with some more slots for you to create custom

of Duty 4 is one of thorough excitement and delight and should be an essential title for PC gaming enthusiasts.....

+ Pros

- Great single player story line
- Fantastic multiplayer
- Impressive visuals
- Immersive sounds

- Cons

- The regenerating health
- AI can be annoying at times

LOST PLANET

REVIEW BY: CHRIS WAKEFIELD

I saw Lost Planet: Extreme Condition in the local game shop and seeing that it was available for a pretty reasonable price I decided to give it a shot.

I had seen and heard one or two things when this game was released for the Xbox 360 over a year ago towards the end of 2006 and opinion on it seemed to be pretty mixed. But seeing as it was released by Capcom and had sold well I thought the PS3 release was worth reviewing.

Firstly, the game informed me that it had to install itself onto my PS3 hard drive which took a fair while. I am not exactly sure what it did as the loading times were still there, although not too lengthy.

The story of the game revolves around the "Lost Planet" of the title, a freezing ice world that was colonised by humans. Yet, unsurprisingly the planet was also home to a load of aliens, call the Akrid, who look suspiciously look like the ones from Starship Troopers. You play the character Wayne who wants revenge after his father is killed by one of the biggest, ugliest and greenest of the creatures.

The game takes the form of third person action which largely

involves shooting the aliens in their blindingly obvious glowing weak spots (honestly, haven't they heard of evolution?). The aliens drop Thermal Energy which you need to collect in order to avoid freezing to death and to replenish health using some kind of fancy device on your arm. This means that you are constantly on a timer as your energy reserve depletes which forces you to kill in order to replenish your supply.

Whilst this sounds like a good and novel idea for the game, it isn't particularly thrilling. Most of the time there is plenty of energy sources around and quite often it is simply a better method to run past all of the enemies and get to the next area. This sort of tactic rather defeats the point of an action game, especially when it is effective.

The other main area of game play comes from piloting mechanical suits which carry gigantic death weapons used to fight the larger Akrid and other mechs. Now, don't get me wrong, gigantic metal killing robots are generally cool, but not here.

The controls are generally annoying and some of the vehicle jumping sections are just plain irritating. Whilst they



aren't essential, if you don't bring a mech through with you and do it on foot, it makes future sections much more difficult. Also since when does bumping into a ruined car knock a quarter of a robot's health off?

The final stages of the game require you to pilot a different type of vital suit (looking very similar to Zone of the Enders). Yet the problem is you get about 2 minutes to try and get used to the different controls before you fight the final boss. They also reposition some of the weapon controls so you are forced to mould your hand into some kind of claw shape which makes it virtually impossible until your tenth attempt.

Boss battles are also very common, with at least 1, sometimes 2 on each level with the traditional "find-the-weak-spot" element, which really is starting to look a little dated. The boss characters are all usually bigger versions of enemies and they don't tend

to be particularly memorable. However, all in all, the game play itself is actually OK. The shooting is acceptable though never feels satisfying or as precise and skilful as Resident Evil 4 for example. The game would also feel better if there weren't some strange physics which totally ruins immersion. It is possible for Wayne to pick up and carry some of the huge vital suit weapons which restrict his movement. Yet, the strange thing is if you use the grappling hook, he can somehow mysteriously carry a 4 barrelled homing laser in one hand.

Another issue is that your thermal energy drops repeatedly due to the cold, but when you explore a volcano later in the game it still continues to drop. It is just frustrating when you are walking next to a gigantic pool of lava

that the game tells you that you are in danger of freezing.

The plot of the game doesn't do it many favours either. Firstly, the cut-scenes only last a few minutes each as a rule and each of them ends with a fade to black which left me wondering whether I kept passing out. The plot is very clichéd with the lead character suffering from amnesia (I lose track of how many games this happens in now).

Characters named Dennis, Joe and even a woman called Basil (!) don't make things easier and it is nice to see that Capcom keep up their unintentionally hilarious dialogue. I was left amused when someone says "I am tired of waiting, fiddling with machines" without a trace of irony.

All in all, for around £20, Lost

Planet isn't a terrible game, yet it certainly isn't a great one. With only 11 missions (and a very short prologue) this will be over in around 5 to 6 hours.

Multiplayer extends the life span though again it seems to be a bit mediocre, although it is refreshing to play against some human opponents rather than the game's AI. There are the usual array of game modes (deathmatch, team deathmatch, capture the point e.t.c) and a fairly healthy selection of levels.

If you can find this for a fairly cheap price or are desperate for an action game, then you could do a lot worse than Lost Planet. If you are considering playing, then a weekend rental will be more than enough for the single player campaign and plenty of time to give the multiplayer a test.



+ Pros

- Entertaining enough
- Some enjoyable weapons
- Hilarious dialogue

- Cons

- Dated game play
- Mech suits are disappointing
- Story

TM: NATIONS FOREVER

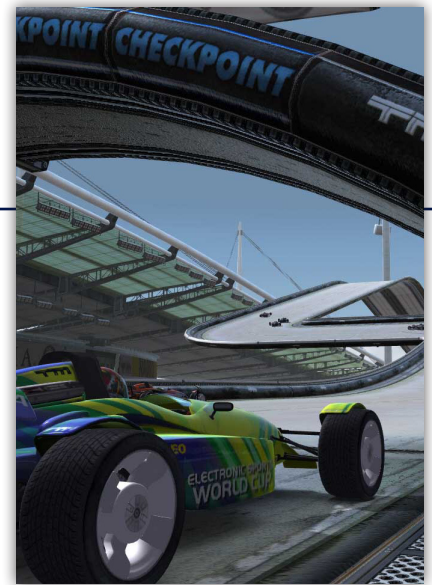
REVIEW BY: PETE O'BRIEN

Prior to mentioning anything else about the premise of this game, let me draw your attention to the fact this game is completely free. Trackmania Nations Forever, or TMNF for short, could be described as one huge "demo" for its commercial bigger brother, Trackmania United Forever, TMUF. But to call it a demo would be extremely unfair. Within the freely available 500mb download is what could easily be described as a full game, with an entertainment value millions of players have already experienced. Not only does this ingeniously advertise the Trackmania series, but it's also part of the popular Electronic Sports World Cup (ESWC).

Trackmania is, as one might assume, all about the tracks.

It's not just "another" racing game either. It's something which should be taken as an example of how a relatively small developer can successfully deliver a brand new and genuinely unique concept. The idea being that you can easily create and play your very own tracks, which look and feel professional, while being of little effort to your brain cells. The tracks can be designed to be of the extreme or just calm, with a huge host of "blocks" on hand. These range from loops to half pipes to speed booster blocks. The variation and diversity of this gives an end product which more than often is breathtaking.

While TMNF only contains one of the seven "environments" seen in United, the Stadium



scene included is arguably the most popular one, although that's probably down to it's free factor. The Stadium environment involves racing in a stadium no less, in what looks like a Formula 1 car. The handling couldn't be more different however, with the cars bouncing around, defying gravity with their air brakes. This makes a refreshing pleasure, as you can enjoyably throw these cars around corners, trying to pick off seconds off your best lap. While there is no contact with other cars, there is always a competitive edge in battling it out for the fastest time.

The greatest aspect for many will be the online multiplayer racing. Here you can race against players from all over the world on a thriving assortment of servers, each with a wide choice of different tracks and special features, like track records. To compliment the pure elation of racing is an official ladder, which sees you ranked in your nation and also globally. This gives you something to work





towards, and you have to try hard not to get addicted in trying to better your pride rank.

In addition to this there is a lengthy solo campaign, which is composed of a pleasantly varied 65 tracks for those who fancy a more laid-back drive. I say varied not only because of the selection of tracks available, but because there are a range of differently designed races, from multiple lap endurances

one, makes a nice addition.

If somehow you do managed to get bored of all the tracks online and off, you can easily create your own. The track editor is incredibly easy to use, and can result in high quality tracks with an exciting level of polish, achievable by anyone with enough creative talent. Before long you can find yourself hurtling round your newly created track, face gleaming

life to the Trackmania series. Florent Castelnérac, Director of Nadeo, sums up the idea nicely: "Instead of making it again bigger, we have decided to make it much stronger".

The biggest new feature in this upgrade you will probably notice is the ability to race online with players from TMUF, which creates the possible races where hundreds of other players race on the same server, and ultimately, the same track. While this brings lag and slowdown for those less equipped, the jubilation of beating over a hundred players is something everyone should try and experience at least once. There are plenty of bug fixes and improved features too, all of which is a nice gesture considering what they have done free of charge already.

"The track editor is incredibly easy to use"

to high speed races. The tracks get progressively harder, but since there are 4 difficulty levels or "medals" to aim for, they all remain attainable. Each medal is represented by the car which set the time you need to beat in order to win the medal, so you never need to feel entirely alone either. As an added incentive to win as many medals as you can there is an official medal ladder, which, although isn't in-depth as the multiplayer

at what you've just created. It's the fact that within seconds of pressing of the "enter" key you find yourself fluently transported to your car which is so superb.

Something of great significance is the "Forever" suffix which the veterans of the series would have noticed. Simply put it's a recently released free upgrade for what is already a free game, and brings with it a new set of content and changes, designed to bring new

I'm pleased to say Nadeo have excelled with the visuals of the game too, doing a grand job rendering the range and styles of tracks with great beauty. Sparkling real time reflections and roads shimmering in sun



ways than one. This is without doubt well worth the upgrade; just check out my TMUF review for more info. While I have had a few minor criticisms with TMNF, it isn't enough to tarnish this well deserved effort. Considering the nonexistent price tag, this is one grand achievement, and shows that some of the best

are all brought to life with new technology to make the whole experience look aesthetically pleasing. While this is no Crysis, the weaving curves and meandering track possibilities make it quite the excitement in seeing what could possibly come next. It takes good design and use of scenery to bring out such looks in a track, but rarely does it disappoint. The flaw with having such gorgeous surroundings in a racing game is that I often find myself staring at the scenery, which inevitably results in my car hurtling off the racetrack.

The audio aspect while not as special does little to harm the splendour of the game. The in-game music is a little too ordinary, and the atmosphere is somewhat underwhelming. But did I mention this game is free?

Considering the nonexistent

"Instead of making it again bigger, we have decided to make it stronger"

price tag, this is one grand achievement. If I haven't at least convinced you to at least try this free game, then I have more than likely failed as a reviewer. That is unless you are on a 56kb modem and a 500mb download is out of the question. Seldom do you find a developer generous enough to give away countless hours of hard work, and it would be unfair to not at least take a look into their unpaid labour.

If you thoroughly enjoy the experience, then I can happily tell you TMUF is much more of the same, but expanded in more

things in life are usually free.

+ Pros:

- Free game
- Easy to use track editor
- Great concept

- Cons:

- Lacking the variation and features of the full price game.

Read the review of Nations Forever's bigger brother, United Forever, at this link:

link.gameon.co.uk/mag/1/p29b

An in game render of an F1 car from Gran Turismo 5 on the PS3. We at GameOn would wager that you thought it was a photo at first...



EUROPA UNIVERSALIS

REVIEW BY: CHRIS WAKEFIELD

I wasn't quite sure what to expect from Europa Universalis: Rome. To tell the truth, the use of Latin in the title made me feel slightly intimidated alongside the fact it was a strategy game.

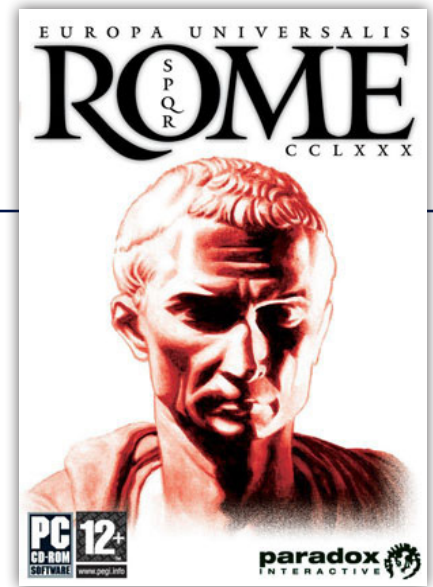
As a general gamer I like to play most genres, but strategy games have always left me a little confused. In my experience, strategy games tend to fall into two categories: those which are easy to pick up and play and those which require a little more effort. EU Rome is a little of both.

The game is an interesting one and defining it as a strategy title doesn't tell you much about its unique style. Instead of playing like a real time or turn based strategy game, EU Rome offers a blend of management and planning. You are given a map of Europe (in the style of classic board game Risk) which is divided into individual provinces each of which either constitutes part of a larger empire or forms dangerous Barbarian territory.

I would strongly advise sitting through the 6 game tutorials which teach you the basics, which I had to sit through a few times to fully appreciate what I was doing. After you select your starting province/ empire (from a very impressive

53 different ones, including some satisfyingly obscure ones) you set about running your country. You have to keep an eye on the large number of factors influencing your empire. These primarily consist of the economy, diplomacy, religion, military factors, technology and the dynasty.

Admittedly, at first I found managing all the different interfaces a difficult task, especially when you also have to monitor your stability, manpower, gold and research levels. The fact that the map view has 5 different modes (terrain, political, religious, trade and diplomatic) also meant that my first few hours were largely spent trying to work out exactly what was going on.



However, if you are a strategy game fan then I am sure that this will come a lot easier.

After I had settled down with the game for some time and had understood the basics, I started to enjoy it. The game doesn't have any set missions or goals; instead you choose your own objectives as well as the time frame your game lasts. This means that the game can be very challenging, attempting to conquer huge areas with a small tribe which can really



This freedom to do as you please is an interesting choice, which can give rise to both relaxing stress free gaming sessions and tense military conquests. The sheer range of options available in this game is also impressive, with delicate political wrangling working well alongside larger violent conquests. The AI is impressive and challenging, which at times leads to some frustrating enemy alliances that you can't seem to break through without some seriously devious tactics.

plan for situations then watch them come to fruition several years on in game time, which is satisfying. I did find myself playing the game at the normal pace, in order to carefully control all my campaigns at once which did slow the game down to a glacial pace at times.

feature, which added a sense of credibility to the realism.

However, I did have a few issues with the game which sometimes hindered my enjoyment. The military side of the game, which tends to form a large part, is a little strange. Your units are represented by large soldiers who fight opposing large soldiers in a little animation. If you click upon this then you can get a slightly more detailed analysis of the battle and then a message pops up saying who won. It is an oddly disconnected experience and just feels a little odd. You never feel as though you have any real influence over the battle and often in advance I would ensure I had far, far greater numbers in order to secure victories.

Unit selection is also rather limited with only a small choice to choose from. It also seems that all empires potentially have

access to all of them depending upon their trade routes. There doesn't seem to be the individuality to the units, and there is little difference playing Rome or Carthage, which is a shame considering the historical period the game is set in.

The technical elements of this game are fine, with the AI impressing and the sound and graphics doing the job well, though they are both relatively simple. Some of the music can get a little repetitive after a prolonged gaming session, though this is a very minor criticism.

Europa Universalis: Rome is a solid game and has the kind of

subtleties that regular strategy gamers will be looking for, yet the £25 price tag may put some off. If this game were released at a slightly lower price then I feel that more people would be encouraged to give it a go and play it. The multiplayer online option is a good addition with both competitive and co-operative play enabled, which will certainly extend the life span. The ability to play against several human players is what this kind of game is really designed for, though I imagine that games would take up several hours. There already seems to be word that mods are being developed for the game to improve the realism (which is already

pretty strong), which suggests that the game may well build up a community of players.

If you are a keen strategy player and are looking to try something new and different and can find this for a reasonable price, or when it becomes slightly cheaper, then EU Rome is an interesting game with some good ideas. However, if you are relatively new to the genre then this game can be a little intimidating with the array of interfaces and options to think about. This is a specialist game designed with a certain audience in mind and I am sure that strategy fans will enjoy the challenge.

+ Pros

- Detailed
- Expansive
- Plenty of depth
- Range of options

- Cons

- Military side
- A little complex for players new to the genre
- Unit selection



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AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH SMILES

Often, it can be hard to understand how children think and react to certain things in the world. Gaming, in particular is misunderstood. We have an exclusive interview with Smiles, an eight year old with an eye for writing reviews. GameOn (GO) meets Smiles:

GO: What is your favourite game?

Smiles: Team Fortress 2 !! Team Fortress 2 !! Team Fortress 2 !! Team Fortress 2 !!

GO: Do you enjoy writing reviews and why?

Smiles: Yes I like writing the reviews. It helps me with school book reviews and I like people reading them and I also like it that my dad and Wedgeh put my videos on YouTube.

GO: Which is your favourite review you have written?

Smiles: Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast one.

GO: Who picks what games you are going to review?

Smiles: I pick them from games that I am already playing.

GO: How do you go about writing your reviews?

Smiles: Well I play the game then I come out of the game and write notes (dad calls them

bullet points) in Microsoft word, then when I either finish the game or get stuck. I start to type my review up in word using my notes. Then I carry on playing the game to make sure I haven't missed anything.

GO: Why do you put so much detail in to your review about weapons?

Smiles: So people know how to use them and what attacks it does (it could save them from dying).

GO: What's your favourite lesson at school?

Smiles: Maths and Swimming

GO: What do you like to do when you are not playing games?

Smiles: Read books and comics and I like to play with my Star Wars toys.

GO: What is your favourite film?

Smiles: Star Wars

GO: Any one in particular?

Smiles: Revenge of the Sith

GO: What is your favourite character from the Star Wars films?

Smiles: Luke Skywalker

GO: What music are you in to?

Smiles: I like "Take That" {ohh god} (comment from his dad) and I like the "Apologise" song by Timbaland

you do any chores?

Smiles: They ask me to tidy up my Star Wars quite a lot because I leave it everywhere.

to his review of the game. Also, he's done some cracking video reviews of the same games.

link.gameon.co.uk/mag/1/p36

GO: Are you looking forward to any games?

Smiles: Yes, really looking forward to Half-Life2 EP3 and Star Wars The Force Unleashed

GO: What's your favourite TV programme?

Smiles: Doctor Who

GO: Which Doctor do you like best? (From Q above)

Smiles: I like the one who's playing him now, who is the 10th Doctor (David Tennant)

GO: What would you like to be when you're older?

Smiles: A Policeman

GO: Do you play any sports, and do you support any teams?

Smiles: I don't support any football teams and at the moment I am not allowed to play sports due to an operation on my arm.

GO: Do you fancy any girls in your class?

Smiles: No!!!! NO!!! NO!!!

Smiles has reviewed a number of games for GameOn, including the titles to the right. You can click on the images (if browsing this online) to be taken directly

Smiles can be seen below here, as proud as punch in front of his ever growing Star Wars collection of toys and figures. Enough to make some 'collectors' jealous!



BEIJING OLYMPICS

REVIEW BY: NEIL HETHERINGTON

"It is the inspiration of the Olympic Games that drives people not only to compete but to improve, and to bring lasting spiritual and moral benefits to the athlete and inspiration to those lucky enough to witness the athletic dedication."

-Herb Elliot

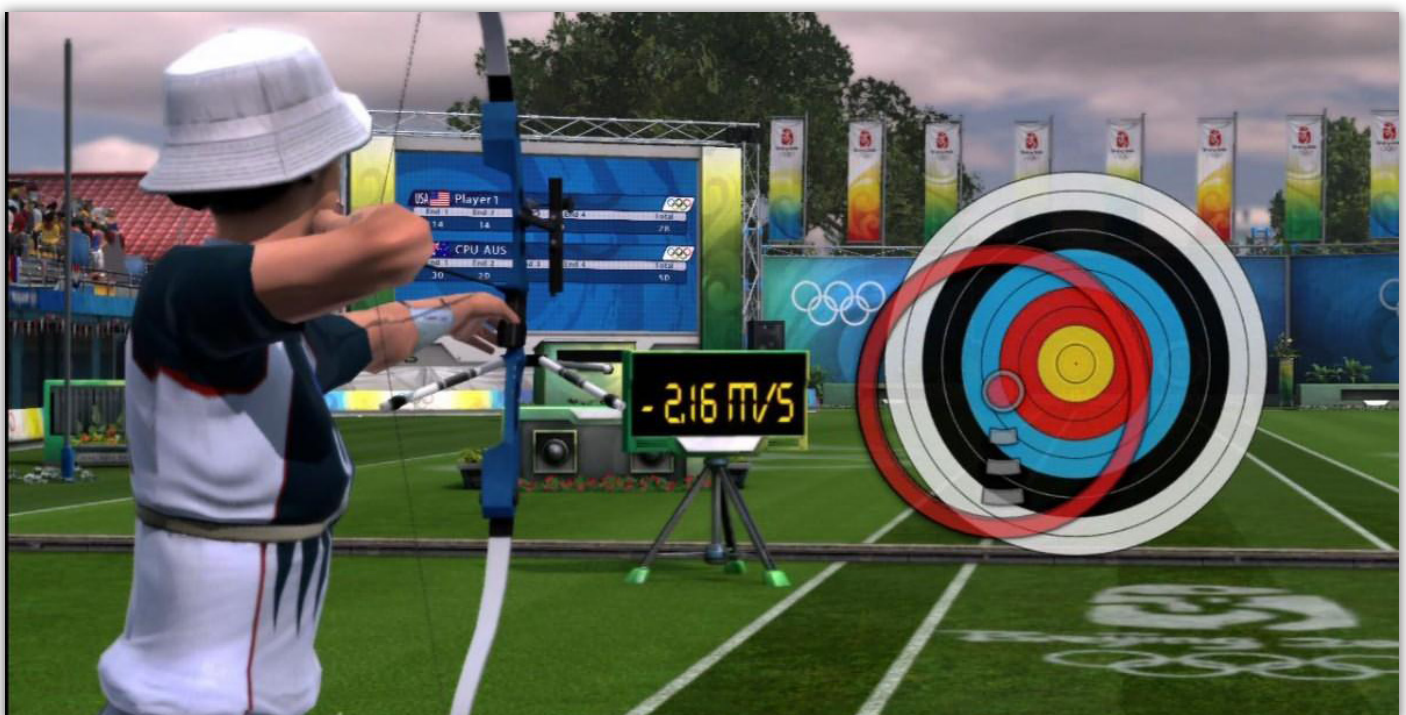
Well it's been a long while since a true Olympic Games title was bestowed upon the gaming world, where man or woman must delve deep into the core of their soul in order to strive for that coveted gold medal. But here are Eurocom and SEGA ready to carry that torch on forwards in the form of Beijing 2008. By the way, there's no way I am classing Mario & Sonic as a true Olympic title. After a brief install of the game

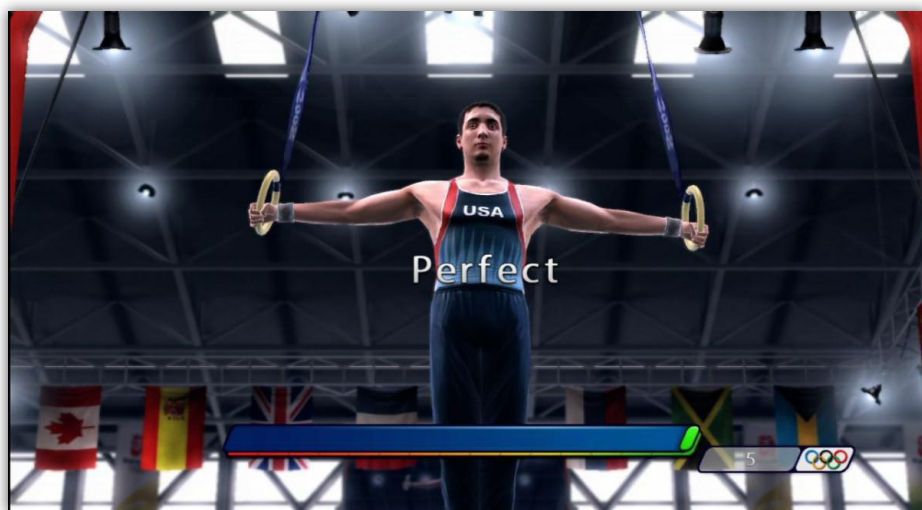
onto the PS3 hard drive which will take approximately 2gig of storage you'll be introduced with the usual welcoming menu screen, from here you can choose single events, a full Olympic campaign or multiplayer. Not just split screen multiplayer mind you, but 8 player online capabilities, which if my memory serves me right is the first time an Olympics title has been developed to include online modes. Campaign wise, you choose a country of your choice where you must qualify for events each day before moving on towards that Olympic gold medal, also you must achieve the daily target for that day, essentially qualifying for X number of events, otherwise is game over. Along with this you earn points



per event which vary in value depending on what placing you get in the said event; these points are then placed in several skills of your own choosing in order to improve your team, such as stamina, accuracy or reducing your overall team fatigue.

So what's in store event wise for the player? Well how about 40 individual events spanning from 100m sprints to archery and gymnastics so there is bound to be something to suit all tastes of gamer. Each event





will allow you to go over the controls so you are able to get to grips with them before you start, and to the game's credit not everything is a button mash like the good old days. The developers have actually given this some thought, to use the 100m sprint as an example you may if you wished mash the pad until your fingers bleed in order to gain that extra 100th of a second or waggle an analogue stick of your choice to prevent crippling your hands and developing arthritis in later life.

Swimming events have you rotate both sticks in alternate directions as if to give a feeling of simulating your arm swings through the pool, but not all events work as well as others. Judo is pretty much abysmal with its poor button matching system in order to pull off moves, seriously if anything else occurs

rather than dance with your opponent before falling to the floor then losing the match while you sit there looking bemused at what has just been portrayed on your screen then please let me know, and don't get me started on the kayaking either, I think I would rather endure several days of telly addicts than attempt that event again.

Though these are mediocre downsides to what is a rather enjoyable game, the visuals are pretty damn good yet I don't really have an Olympic title to compare it with unless I dig out Daley Thompsons Decathlon for the Commodore 64, which in that case the visuals are out of this world. Everything is nicely rendered and animated, the stadium, Olympic pool and gymnastics hall look marvellous while the animations on the athletes seem pretty much

spot on for each event.

I have to admit though, the audio of the game didn't do well to help make me feel more part of the game, I suppose functional would be the best way to describe it. Don't get me wrong, the sound isn't bad at all just I felt that the commentary on the events seemed a little strained at times but it is nothing too distracting as it's only at the start of events, which you can skip, also at the end of events which funnily enough you can magically skip too.

Now I'm sure that the live 2008 Olympics will put most of you in the mood for some digital events for yourself and I recommend picking this up for your PS3, 360 or PC and having a crack at that magical gold medal or world record.

+ Pros

- Online support
- Thoughtful control system
- Wide array of events

- Cons

- Medal ceremony underwhelming
- A small number of poor events

IL2: BIRD OF PREY

EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW BY: NEIL HETHERINGTON

IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey is based around large-scale aerial combat over the ground-based military operations of World War II. Players participate in the war's most famous confrontations piloting fighters, battle planes or heavy bombers across a range of thrilling missions. There are five seats of war to engage in – The Battle of Britain, Stalingrad, Berlin, Sicily and Korsun – representing the main airborne battles of World War II in Europe.

IL-2 Sturmovik I'm sure many of you remember IL-2 on the PC and I'm also sure you remember how it quickly became one of the main contenders within the combat flight simulation category almost 7 years ago.

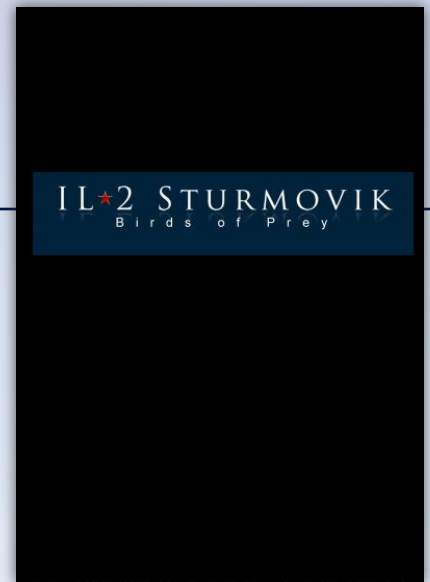
Testament to this is how, even to this day, there is a strong community for its 64 man multiplayer capabilities online. Now 1C have decided to breathe life into the IL-2 name once again by bringing it to the masses in the form of Birds of Prey.

Now unfortunately I'm going to have to deflate the elation of our dear PC readers by informing them that this title will only be available on Xbox 360 and Playstation 3, also I'm unable to offer any words of consolation to them as at the moment there are no plans to bring this fantastic game to our beloved beige boxes.

So moving swiftly onto the

game itself which is adorned upon an impressive TV IL-2 Sturmovik screen via the Xbox 360 sat neatly on the table in front of us and first impressions is that console owners are in for a treat. Make no mistake though, even with IL-2 gracing the console market, this is still a difficult simulation game with an outstanding flight model.

Yes you can tone down the difficulty of simulation to more



of an arcade style game with things like enemy and friendly names being displayed above the aircraft along with radar in your game interface HUD but this does not spoil the game which can only be a good thing. This change to the game should also broaden the appeal to a wider audience of gamers, those who wish to do things by the book and those who want to jump straight into the thick of battle all guns blazing.

The simulation side of things concentrates on proper aircraft operation, flaps, trim, rudders and all of the other fiddly bits in-between. Alongside this you also have to concentrate on not getting shot, shooting the enemy and making sure you don't find yourself losing control of your bird to the unforgiving nature of a flat spin. To make things even more interesting, the games damage model also takes its toll on the flight dynamics of your aircraft, bullets ripping holes in your wings and fuselage will affect airflow along with flight stability, damage to the engines

will reduce performance and thrust which could lead to premature stalling amongst other unexpected side effects. So emphasis on preserving your aircraft as much as possible is the key to success. Moving to the more arcade side of things, the damage model is still in full effect but has simplified the operation of the aircraft making it easier to control and less likely shoot yourself in the foot.

The visual side to IL-2 can be summed up in general using two words, one of which would normally be blocked by profanity filters so I shall use the other word of IL-2 Sturmovik stunning. Everything is beautifully modelled and detailed, cloud formations look realistic and natural whilst the ground detail is breath taking. An example would be the demonstration of one of the opening campaign levels set in Dover where I was reliably informed that everything is accurately modelled along with it being densely populated, though not having actually

been to Dover I could only take the demonstrators word on this.

The audio side of things seem to be realistic enough, but it's not the most of exciting things to listen to now is it? The drone of your engines with bursts of machine gun fire is pretty much the order of the day, however the musical side of things are being handled by Jeremy Soule whose previous work includes Guild Wars, Company of Heroes and Oblivion, and judging by the brief preview along with his previous game accompaniments, players are in for an orchestral treat.

So game wise the single player side comprises of a campaign mode taking you through some of the most notable combat zones of World War II ranging from bombing raids over Berlin to the Battle of Britain, letting you control various different aircraft along with sitting you in the gun turret of a bomber in some scenarios. Multiplayer wise the game will offer players four game modes, Dogfight, Team Dogfight, Control Airfields and an Attack and Defend mode.

Basically everything is coming together really nicely and is set to be a very strong title for the console market, definitely a game that I whole heartedly recommend in obtaining when it is released sometime in 2009.

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IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey



COMING SOON...

Spore

Dubbed as the "everything sim", Spore is shaping up to be a game like no other. You start with a mere organism, evolving every step of the way right through to intergalactic exploration. Designed by the creator of The Sims, this ground breaking idea is sure of success. And luckily for us the calibre of the game seems to be nothing short of top class. The recently released creature creator (costing a respectable £5) has already been well received, with over a million creatures already created in the first week. Let's just hope the set in stone September 5th release date doesn't mar the evolution of gaming as we know it.



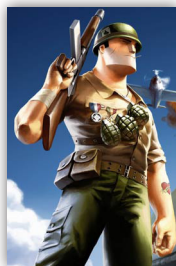
Animal Crossing Wii

With the Nintendo Wii still pouring out of shops like, well you know what, it's surprising to learn that there's little to get excited about on the platforms game agenda. One game which stands out though is Animal Crossing, which promises more of the "life simulating" social franchise which has made the game so popular. With the Wii controls and potential, this is a game which could make the heart skip a beat for the end of November release date.



Battlefield Heroes

Another idea set to revolutionise the PC platform, Battlefield Heroes is a multiplayer shooter with a staggering price tag of zero. A fresh take on the Battlefield series, this latest incarnation features cute Team Fortress 2 style graphics, RPG mechanics and two maps. With the game being released as an open beta around September time, any player with broadband and a mouse has no excuse not to try what should become an interesting experiment.



Empire Total War

It's time for another change of scenery and timescale for the successful series, this time taking to the Napoleonic era. Spectacular looking ship battles are sure to be just one of the games talking points, as we can expect a host of new exciting features. Once again the player will take to the diverse campaign map, before indulging in epic battles which will require new tactics and thought from previous outings. Gunpowder is all the rage, where taking cover and the odd rampaging Dragoon dominate the battlefield. A game sure to put a wide grin on your face all over again, Empire Total War is expected in the autumn.



World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King

Likely to be snapped up by millions of players around the world, this latest World of Warcraft expansion features yet more content and reasons for players to stay addicted. A level cap of 80, a new continent and a new class are only a few of the new goodies awaiting loyal fans. Expect to see the wrath of Warcraft strike again before the close of the year.



Stalker: Clear Sky

For a game supposed to be grim and twisted, Stalker: Clear Sky looks surprisingly pretty. This is thanks to an updated DirectX 10 engine, with exciting effects like volumetric smoke and rain droplets sure to make the experience more authentic. This stand-alone prequel features a new story line peppered with further insights into the original antics. Further game play additions and tweaks mean this is yet another exciting prospect for the PC, with a release date down for August 29th.



TEAM FORTRESS 2

REVIEW BY: CHRIS WAKEFIELD

Team Fortress 2 is art.

A quick look at the definition of art (on Wikipedia, naturally) gives the following: "The conscious production or arrangement of sounds, colours, forms, movements, or other elements in a manner that affects the sense of beauty," In short, Team Fortress 2 is simply astonishing in all of these areas.

A game with a long development history, stretching back a decade, always raises a few eyebrows (aka Duke Nukem Forever Syndrome) but if anything, this has benefitted the game. Originally intended as a mod, Valve wanted a grander game and hired the developers behind the original Team Fortress to turn the class based combat into something exciting, unusual and original. Well, let's just say

that they certainly did just that.

Firstly, the look of the game is jaw dropping. The highly stylised cartoon visuals are truly a joy to behold, requiring very little to actually be able to play them at maximum specification. When the carnage begins, it initially seems strange to see limbs flying everywhere when the graphics resemble those of a children's film. However, it just adds to the game's atmosphere and the comedy value really helps to set it apart from the typical grainy realism of a lot of serious online shooters.

The game itself is a team orientated class based shooter with 2 key game modes. The main mode is a zone capture one, with multiple points required to win the game, usually with each team taking it in turn to attack



and defend. The other mode is a more conventional capture the flag (sorry, that should be "intelligence", presumably important documents with details of Half Life: Episode 3).

Whilst the game modes themselves have been seen numerous times in other games, they have seldom been handled with such skill and attention to detail. They are kept fresh with a good selection of maps which are refreshingly different to play, if not being too visually different from one another.

However, the real crux of the game play comes from the class system. Each team has access to a range of characters all with unique skills and abilities. The 9 classes are divided into Offense, Defense and Support and there are significant strengths and weaknesses to each of them. The classes are: Scout, Pyro, Soldier, Heavy, Demoman, Sniper, Engineer, Medic and Spy.

It is worth mentioning now that



each individual class has been designed with the typical level of attention to detail that Valve have become renowned for. Whether you play as the English balaclava wearing Spy or the gigantic mini-gun wielding Heavy you are guaranteed an experience to remember.

Voice acting is also superb with a wide range of phrases prerecorded for each character which can either be useful ("Go left!") or largely for irritating the enemy ("Oktoberfest!"). The inclusion of taunt animations is also a masterstroke, allowing to really rub it in when you have just humiliated someone with a melee attack, although be prepared for retribution as a taunt takes control away for valuable seconds.

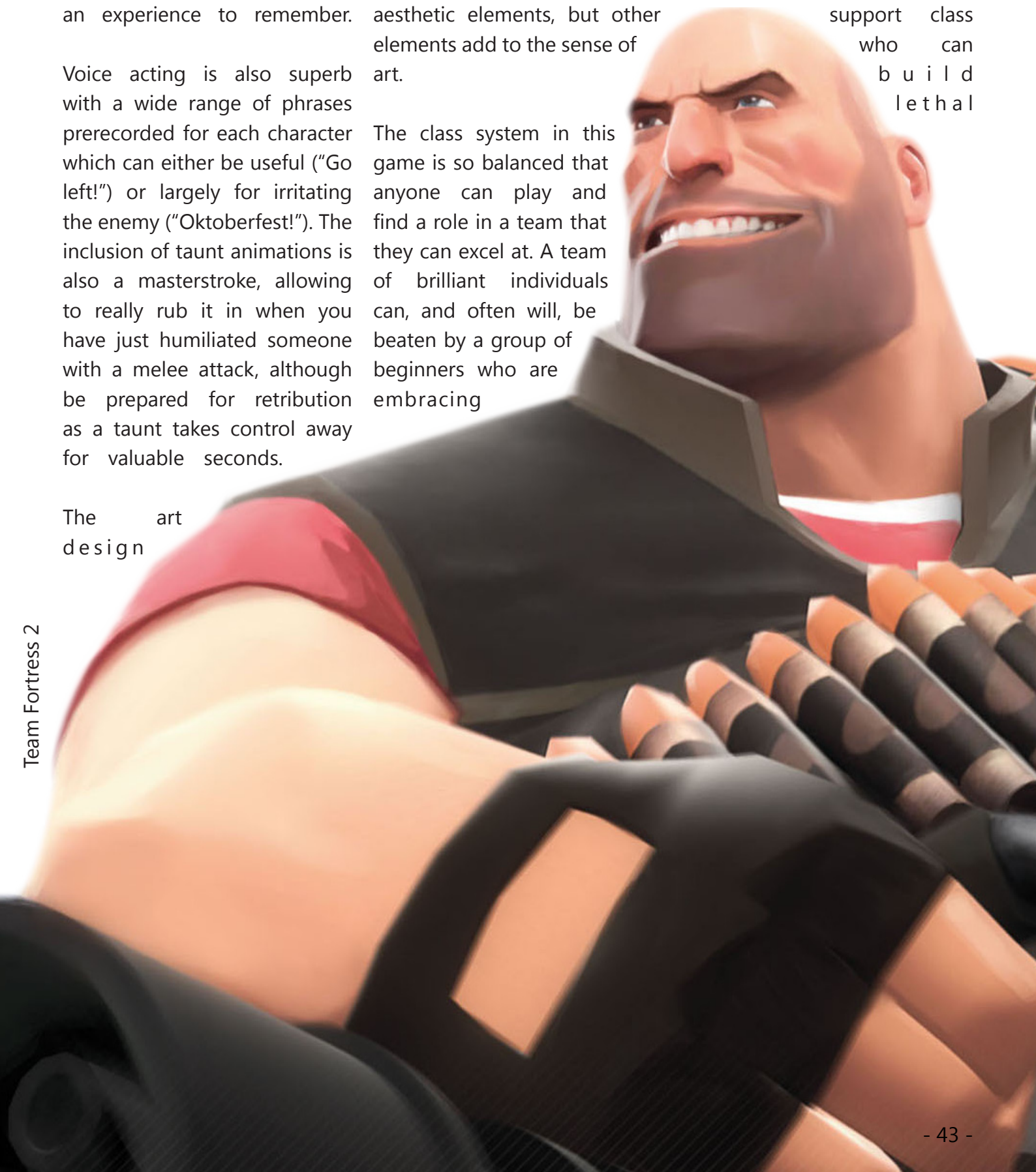
The art design

means each class is instantly recognizable and you soon recognize to steer well clear from a Heavy and Medic combo, that is unless you're a Spy. Here lies the real beauty of the game, as the definition shows (I would get there eventually) not just aesthetic elements, but other elements add to the sense of art.

The class system in this game is so balanced that anyone can play and find a role in a team that they can excel at. A team of brilliant individuals can, and often will, be beaten by a group of beginners who are embracing

the name of the game and are working as a team.

The complexity of the system makes it difficult to describe in detail, but I will outline an example. If a team is faced by a group of Engineers (a support class who can build lethal





sentry guns which can mow down virtually anyone head on), then they have a number of options. Do they send in the Spy disguised as an enemy to sap it whilst launching a simultaneous team attack? Or instead have a Medic launch an Uber Charge (temporary invulnerability) on a Demoman whose Sticky Bombs can easily destroy a cluster of turrets and anyone foolish enough to be nearby? Or do they try a barrage of long range attacks out of reach of the sentries' fire?

This level of complexity means that rarely are two games the same and this means that the game stays fresh and enjoyable

for far longer than many other online games, where repetition is often their downfall. Valve has also promised new game modes and achievements to follow on a regular basis, whether these will enhance the game or destabilise the fragile balance remains to be seen. If anyone can do this though, it is Valve and already the update is overdue in order to tweak it to perfection, I for one, wouldn't have it any other way.

I can't recommend Team Fortress 2 highly enough, not for a long time has a game had me entertained so thoroughly for so long. When you consider that it comes as part of The

Orange Box packaged with several other similarly excellent games, then this is a deal not to be missed.

If you enjoy first person shooters and online games with a little more depth, stylish appearance and satisfying game play then Team Fortress 2 is for you.

+ Pros

- Fun to play
- Rewarding
- Unusual

- Cons

- Addictive

A BLAST FROM THE PAST: UNREAL

10 years ago a first person shooter game was released which pushed the genre, and gaming in general forward. Unreal displayed significant technological advances which had a major impact on the industry as well as the player.

Released on May 22nd 1998, Unreal was a sci-fi first person shooter which placed the player as a prisoner on a crashed spaceship on a hostile planet. With a lengthy and developed story told through the discovery of notes and diaries it made a refreshing change from most "obliterate everything" games. The numerous subtle sub-plots were also interesting and helped to build a realistic environment with a history which became evident as the game progressed.

The game world itself was incredible for the time, built on a state of the art engine which took over three years to complete. The game was originally planned to be a Quake style shooter, with a similarly designed HUD. But changes

during the development led to a different game. A rivalry with ID software's Quake series was beneficial and many people considered Unreal to be the technically superior title.

The game's graphics were

particularly revolutionary, with an exciting lighting system. Coloured lighting really added to the atmosphere and the game even had an early form of texture filter. However, what really made Unreal special were the detailed textures. At the time I remember being amazed at the close up detail, especially in the game's atmospheric opening and later on in the water temples. Stone, wood and metal had never seemed so convincing in a game.

As well as offering a wide range of indoor

environments, Unreal had staggering outdoor worlds.





The game featured a range of plants and wildlife which really helped to create a believable game environment. Waterfalls, rivers and lakes looked spectacular especially when you were swimming past a shoal of fish.

The sound technology was cutting edge featuring accurate sound effects which could really enhance the atmosphere. The chilling screams of dying prisoners from the opening level and the first encounter with a Skaarj alien remain significant gaming memories, and even today they still measure up. The game's music sound track was developed with a memorable theme, and music that could add to the drama of the story.

The enemy AI proved genuinely challenging, with enemies

diving out of the way of fire and attacking using a variety of athletic tactics. The range of enemies was significant with different races and types including the terrifying golem monsters.

The game's level editor was also very popular at the time, and with the encouragement of the developers a thriving mod community developed. Maps were easy to develop at home and the editor meant that they could be finished more quickly than the equivalent Quake map maker.

Unreal's influence has been long reaching. The game engine has been developed significantly and formed the basis for many of the top games of the last 10 years. The game spawned the successful

Unreal Tournament franchise and a slightly lackluster sequel.

Even today, Unreal offers fun nostalgic gameplay. The graphics can't measure up to today's standards but in a high enough resolution, it retains an old school charm. Playing through the game again recently, I was pleased to remember classic levels and the weaponry is still as great as ever. Multiplayer is still fun and the bots can be really tough to play against in the standard deathmatch.

It seems amazing to think that Unreal came out a decade ago, and yet it still remains an excellent example of a solid first person shooter which has left its mark on PC gaming.

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COMING SOON...

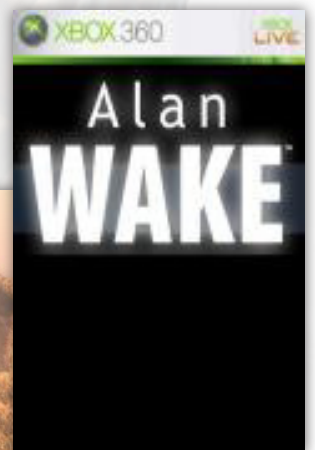
Fable 2

To go into detail on the sequel to one of the most hyped console games of all time would be like trying to write an obituary of Julius Caesar. Just some of the key new features to note are an offline co-op similar to that of the recent Lego games, and also a "fully dynamic world". What the latter will actually mean won't be known for sure until release, but it certainly sounds exciting. The original Fable might not have lived up to it's greatly hyped promises, but the sequels relatively quiet proceedings mean that few will be disappointed in what will surely become a truly unique RPG this autumn.



Alan Wake

While little is known about this highly anticipated gem, it's still worth a mention to remind PC and Xbox 360 fans of what joys lie ahead. Apart from what looks like an impressive engine, all that can really be said is watch this space. While there is no official released date, a late 2008 release is still on the cards.



Mafia II (2009)

To finish let's be cheeky and take a peak at a promising act for 2009. A real contender as a GTAIV rival, Mafia II is not likely to be just another "clone". Focusing more on realism, plot and style, this sequel could be more deemed more alike to Oblivion. Don't get too excited though; no dwarfs or axes in sight. Instead we are promised a living breathing world, to make the "Empire City" a most exciting prospect to visit. If a free roaming city isn't enough, then hopefully 2K Czech (aka Illusion Software) can continue the wonderfully refreshing movie style story of the original. This second outing certainly has promise and shouldn't be lightly dismissed. 2009 suddenly looks a long way away.



SENTRY GOING UP!

A LOOK BACK AT THE HISTORY OF TEAM FORTRESS AND WHERE IT CAME FROM

When Team Fortress 2 was released in October 2007 it finally completed its 9 year development cycle and was warmly received by critics and gamers alike. Yet, if we trace back the game to its humble origins, as a mod for Quake in August 1996, we can see how far the series has come.

Team Fortress was arguably the first popular online class-based multiplayer game, which goes a long way to explaining why at least 14 different versions exist. When you look back and compare the very earliest incarnation, it is really so different from the smooth and polished version released only last year?

The original Team Fortress was developed by Robin Walker, John Cook and Ian Caughley as a mod for Quake. They sought to develop a game which offered something different than the standard "deathmatch" experience. By introducing different classes, this offered a more tactical and strategic approach to the game and helped separate Team Fortress from other titles. Interestingly, the original release contained only 5 classes: Scout, Sniper, Soldier, Demo Man and the Medic.

Soon, a 1.1 update was released, which began to introduce the changes that created the Team Fortress most people know and love. The Heavy was introduced

alongside the now classic 2Fort. It wasn't until version 2.5 that the Engineer, Spy and Pyro were added to create the classic 9 class line up. By the end of 1996 Team Fortress had a large internet following, largely from interested Quake players.

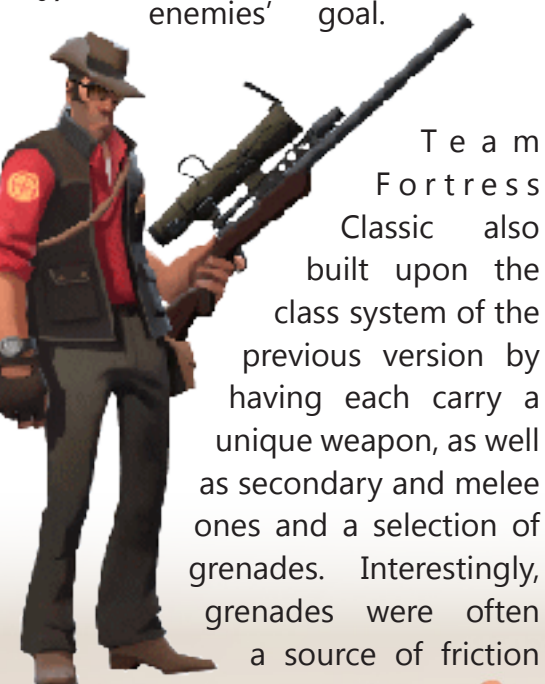
Team Fortress remained highly popular amongst online gamers and soon work began on a sequel for Quake II by the original trio of developers. However, regardless of the work which had gone into the project, it never saw the light of day. Yet, despite the set back Cook and Walker joined Valve and began working on a remake of the original game for the Half Life game engine, which



became Team Fortress Classic.

This remake was released in 1999 as a free addition to Half Life and made some changes to create a slightly different game. In the original modification for Quake, the game was primarily about hiding and could be suitably tense, yet Classic altered this. Now, it became about a battle between the teams and became slightly faster paced in comparison. The emphasis on cooperation was still key to success and utilizing classes effectively was essential.

Classic contains a range of game modes, including the now obligatory "capture the flag" and "capture control points" as well as the interesting VIP mode. In this game, one team is tasked with protecting the vulnerable VIP (a tenth class with only a melee weapon) whilst the other team must assassinate them. After an update, a fourth game mode "football" was created, in which a ball must be captured and taken to the enemies' goal.



Team Fortress Classic also built upon the class system of the previous version by having each carry a unique weapon, as well as secondary and melee ones and a selection of grenades. Interestingly, grenades were often a source of friction

when skilled players could often use them with almost unfair precision. The Demoman's "demo pack" grenade is now infamous, with its cluster bomb explosion often annihilating entire teams and even servers, as it wasn't 56k

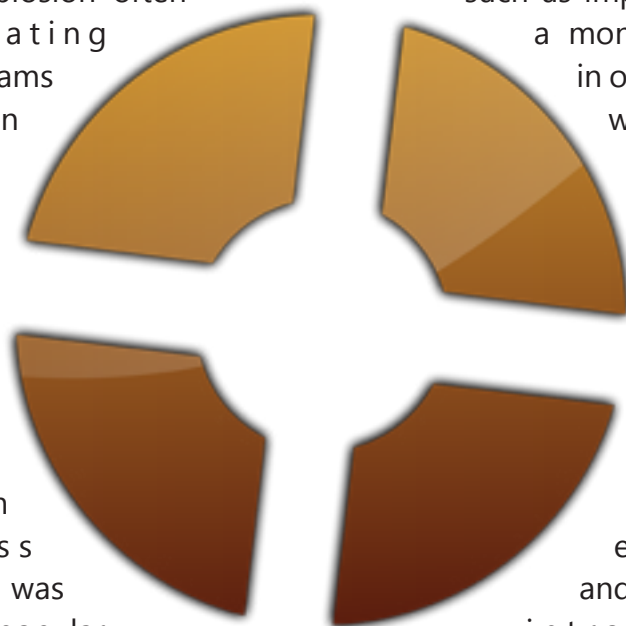
friendly.

Team Fortress Classic was now very popular, ranking alongside Counter Strike as the most played online game, with huge numbers of servers running it. From here, the modifications and different versions began to really multiply in earnest.

There were several notable modifications, but few managed the popularity of the original or Classic. Quake III Fortress never really managed to build up a large following yet remained popular among a small number of internet gamers. Similarly, Unreal Fortress, developed for the Unreal engine allowed for more equipment and 5 game modes. When Epic announced Unreal Tournament 2003 and 2004, new Team Fortress mods were announced but some never managed to make it past the Beta testing stages.

There were also a multitude of

modifications for Team Fortress Classic: NeoTF, CustomTF and MegaTF being the key ones. Most of these included relatively minor changes to the game play, such as implementing a money system in order to buy weapons and



equipment and the introduction of new gear. These small modifications proved popular with existing players who sought to tailor the game to their own preferences.

Whilst these mods were being developed and Classic was enjoying its popularity, Valve began work on a direct sequel, Team Fortress 2: Brotherhood of Arms. The game was set to have a much more realistic tone than the predecessor and promotional screenshots released for the game confirm this. There was even talk of one player, commanding the battlefield from above in the manner of an RTS whilst others fought the battle below.

However, whilst initial talk and information seemed reliable, the game soon vanished from view. Soon there were rumours of vaporware and people began





to lose hope of seeing it, as Valve busied themselves with the implementation of Steam and expanding their hugely successful Half Life series.

Whilst the official sequel remained hidden in the depths of Valve, a modding team began work on their version of Team Fortress built atop Valve's own Source engine. Designed to update Classic and keep the core game play the same, the team created Fortress Forever.

Fortress Forever, stays loyal to much of Team Fortress Classic, with only minor changes and improved visuals. Interestingly some changes would appear similar to those eventually utilized in Valve's official sequel, most notably the Spy's ability to cloak. This was primarily implemented as it was now impossible to feign death due to ragdoll physics technology being used in the Source engine.

The team behind Fortress Forever had been planning the game before Valve released their SDK software tool and sadly their game was to fall victim

to an unfortunate coincidence. After years had passed, in July 2006 Valve finally announced Team Fortress 2 and the development started in earnest after the completion of Half Life 2: Episode 1. When Fortress Forever was finally released in September 2007, only a month later Valve's official sequel was released, which meant Forever went largely unappreciated.

When Team Fortress 2 was released, the 9 year release was worth it. Yet, But early trailers hinted at a different game. Grenades were featured, including the Demoman's cluster bomb and the Scout appeared to carry a nail gun. Yet, Valve decided to make Team Fortress as accessible and balanced as possible, and changes were made to create the game we have today.

The other key change is the unique art style, which gives Team Fortress 2 an impressive appearance. The cartoon visuals blend well with the excellent character design which really brings each of the classes to life. Here lies the

other key change; most classes only carry 3 weapons, with a few exceptions, which have helped make the classes more distinct. The game is now so finely balanced that multiplayer games become as much a battle of strategy as individual skill.

Valve have decided to carry on developing Team Fortress 2 and are regularly releasing patches and updates, including new game modes and a new unlockable weapon system. Here players are rewarded with achievements which build towards new equipment, which can replace their existing load out. Time will tell how much this effects the game, but initial reports are generally positive, with the exception of a small number of players.

The Team Fortress series has come a long way since the initial Quake mod was created 12 years ago, but it appears that the release and development of Team Fortress 2 is still going strong.

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GRAND THEFT AUTO 4

REVIEW BY: NEIL HETHERINGTON

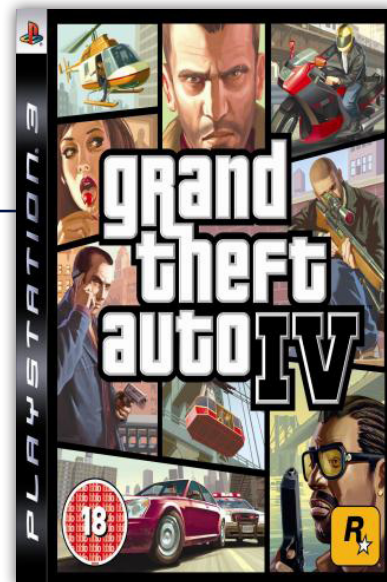
"Life is complicated. I've killed people, smuggled people, sold people. Perhaps here, things will be different."

These are the words of Niko Bellic, a troubled soul hailing from the eastern bloc, and the game's main protagonist who you control through the living breathing world of Liberty City. From the outset you can tell that this latest incarnation of Rockstar's epic Grand Theft Auto series is nothing short of spectacular.

Forget what you may have learned or appreciated in the previous iterations of Grand Theft Auto as this has been completely reworked, built up from scratch and polished to a fine sheen. Yes this is Liberty City, but a completely reworked and expanded version to what we saw in GTA 3. Everything has been worked upon to give this game a heartbeat, you no longer feel like a stranger in the town,

now you feel more connected to the city, pedestrians now have their own agenda's and personalities instead of being bonnet fodder. Pick a fight and they'll generally fight back or if you're unlucky, they'll fight back along with several other pedestrians joining in to lay the smack down upon you for disturbing their peace. Make no mistake, Liberty City is now alive.

Rockstar's obsessive attention to detail is quickly obvious, everything feels like it's in the correct place, nothing sticks out like it should not be there, all the advertisements, TV shows, radio stations immerses the player into this beast of a game. The visual outlay has a gritty realism about it, after all Liberty City is based upon New York. Deliberately moving away from the bright cartoon-like style of the previous instalments, Rockstar created an unmistakable visual style that is consistent throughout



the art design, the storytelling, the physics, mission design and the interactivity found within the metropolis of Liberty City.

The increased individuality that is visually apparent as you wander about had an influence on all aspects of the game. Rockstar's design team has created brands for countless companies; clothing, foods, banks, drinks, movies, credit cards, everything you would expect to see in a city. All of which carry over to radio, internet and TV for an amazingly complete, coherent experience. OK, OK, I've rambled on long enough, time to get into the game itself. For PS3 owners you will have to wait a few minutes longer to jump into the shoes of Niko as the game will install





information onto the hard drive, also perform a system update if needs be, while 360 owners I believe are able to load up the game and play without any fuss.

Right the game begins with Niko entering Liberty City on a ship with cousin Roman Bellic arriving soon after you set foot back on stable land to take you back to the safe house which is located on the island of Dukes (Queens) and Broker (Brooklyn), Bohan (Bronx) becomes quickly available, while the other sections of the game, Algonquin (Manhattan) and Alderney (New Jersey) are currently under lockdown due to a terrorist threat.

I do not recommend trying to wander into these blocked locations as you will initiate a 6 star police chase which will ultimately lead to either your arrest or death, also do not try and hijack a plane from the nearby Francis Airport as unlike San Andreas, aircraft aren't freely available and the police will attempt to arrest/

kill you, I learned out this information the hard way.

Also gone are the little sheriff badges of joy to remove your wanted level, in this version you will have a flashing red and blue area which the police know you are in. What you have to do is drive out of this search area without being spotted by any other police and keep a low profile until they stop searching for you. This, however, only works up to a 2 star wanted level, anything above that then you're either going to die in a blaze of glory or drive like Steve McQueen around liberty city and dive into a spray shop to remove the wanted level, as long as the police did not see you drive into the garage.

Now cars are not the only form of transport in Liberty City, there is also the efficient subway system that runs 24 hours a day, motorcycles, choppers (a type of motorcycle for the uninformed), boats, planes and

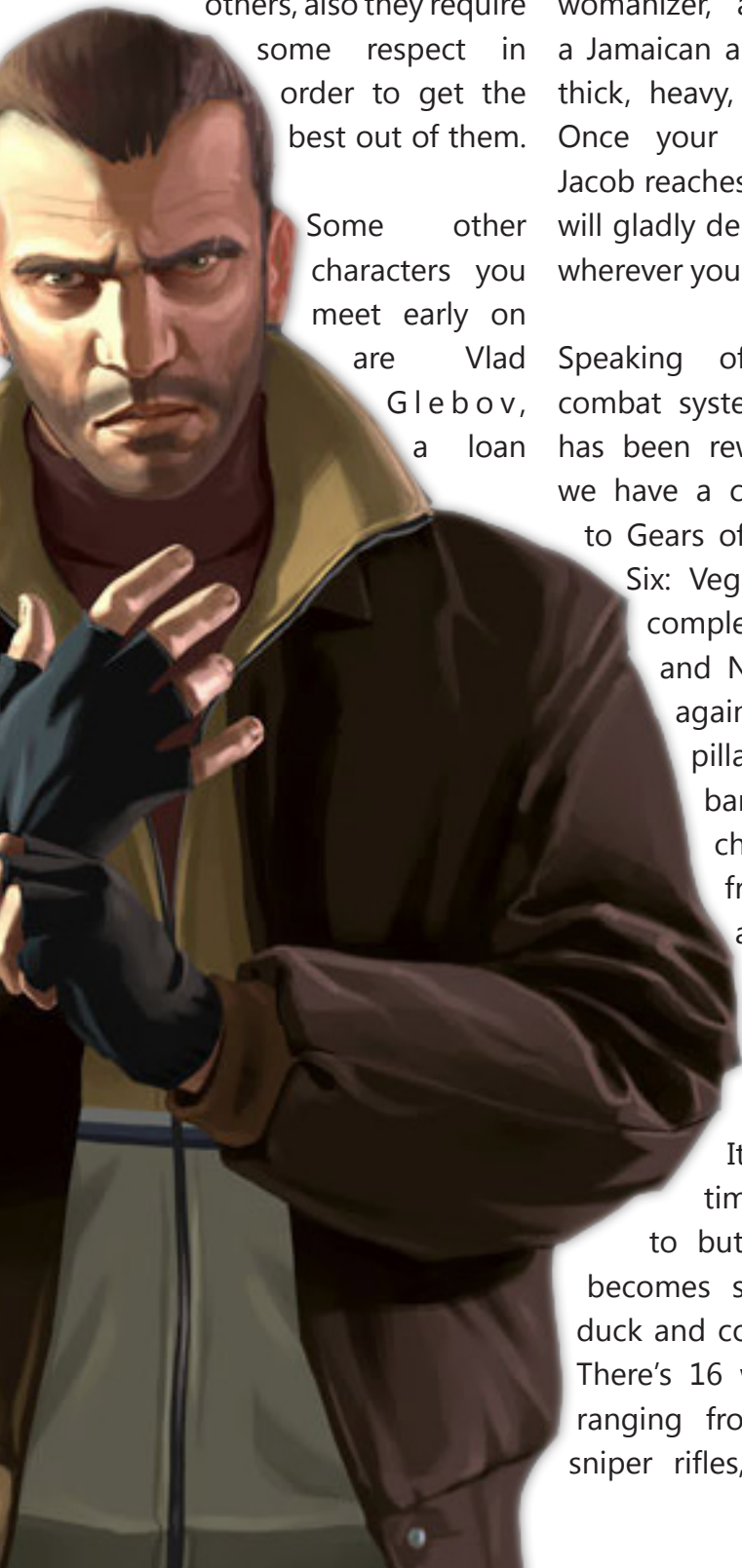
helicopters also feature as forms of transport for our protagonist.

Now like the previous games, your first few missions are very basic allowing you to learn the controls

and get to know the area, for example; drive car from A to B while picking up XYZ on the way. Nothing very taxing but enjoyable nonetheless as you are able to take in the sights of such a beautiful city. The cars also handle differently to previous incarnations of GTA. Each car has its own mass, handling characteristics, power outputs and other various

factors making each





make of car stand out from the others, also they require some respect in order to get the best out of them.

Some other characters you meet early on are Vlad Glebov, a loan

shark and ill tempered womanizer, and Little Jacob, a Jamaican arms dealer with a thick, heavy, Jamaican accent. Once your relationship with Jacob reaches a certain level he will gladly deliver you weapons wherever you are in Liberty City.

Speaking of weapons, the combat system for this game has been reworked too. Now we have a cover system akin to Gears of War or Rainbow Six: Vegas 2, just not as complex. Basically hit R1 and Niko will press up against the wall, car, pillar or whatever

barrier you have chosen as cover, from here you are able to blindfire, peek out to pop off a few caps or take careful aim at your assailant.

It may take some time to get used to but after a while it

becomes second nature to duck and cover in gun fights. There's 16 weapons in total, ranging from side arms to sniper rifles, oh and a RPG

thrown in for good measure.

The voice acting, script writing and story line for this title is rock solid, every character you come across has his or her own personality which is expressed very well indeed through the voiceovers and physical gestures, it's apparent that this story line took more than 5 minutes and a couple of napkins to create. The interactivity between Niko and other main NPC characters is generally initiated through Niko's mobile phone which he receives from cousin Roman at the beginning of the game.

From here you can ring your contacts to arrange excursions out with them to gain respect, such as frequenting the local boozier or partaking in some sort of other activity like darts or visiting a strip club, also you may call certain contacts for jobs when you are in need some quick cash.

Your mobile phone is also the main point of contact for the myriad of women Niko is able to date, simply ring them up arranging a meet and generally



they will either say no or ask you to pick them up in an hour. The interactivity does not stop there though, if you feel like wasting some time you can actually call a vast cavalcade of numbers that appear around Liberty City, albeit advertising banners TV commercials or internet adverts, also you may call the emergency services if you feel like it. Again just another little detail that goes to bolster the big picture of immersion for the player.

So you may have noticed that I have not mentioned the multiplayer side to this

game and to be honest I shall not be covering that area of Grand Theft Auto 4 as I feel it warrants a review in it's own right. Also because I have not had the opportunity to try out this side of GTA yet as I have been too engrossed in the single player story line. Well that wraps it really, we've been waiting with baited breath for a long time for this title and I personally believe that it does live up to the hype, and is certainly one which I recommend to be a must buy title, whereas others may disagree. but do not base an opinion of the game from what others say, experience

what this title has to offer for yourself and enter with an open mind free from judgement and you shall be rewarded with hour upon hour of excitement and entertainment. Even if you do just switch on the TV to watch a section of the Ricky Gervais stand up show.

+ Pros

- Amazing attention to detail
- Rock solid story line
- Excellent mission structure
- Goregeous visuals

- Cons

- Waited too long for its release

LEGO: INDIANA JONES

REVIEW BY: STUART GUNN

Even if your not a fan you've defiantly heard of Indiana Jones, cracking his whip and defeating the bad guys just to get the treasure. For those that are fans of the films then this will be a real treat as "LEGO: Indiana Jones – The Original Adventures" puts you in the driving seat.

Do I still have your attention? Good, then I'll continue...

The basic premise of the game is simple, the first three movies are played through but everything is made of LEGO. You get to play all the main

characters (with a few bonus ones thrown in for fun) while trying to solve the puzzles and complete the game.

OK, so it's not the most original idea in the world as LucasArts released the popular LEGO: Star Wars games back in 2005. But with the recent release of the 4th Indiana Jones film I guess they thought they could capitalize on the hype, but don't be fooled into thinking this is a cheap quick knockoff game that was rushed for the opening. LucasArts and Traveller's Tales have taken what they learned from the previous LEGO games and improved it to make a fun, action packed game that makes it hard to put down.

You start off just the same as the demo available, trying to get the golden idol and escape the giant boulder. But along the way you have to collect 10 treasure chests and a set amount of coins per level (to obtain "Ultimate Adventure") and still come out with the prize. Like other games of this style only some areas are accessible to certain characters, Indiana has a whip and so can swing across cliffs where as Short Round can crawl into small areas (yes, you get to play that annoying kid. I spent a good 5 minutes just slapping him!)



The game is designed to make you revisit each level more than once, the first is to simply play through in story mode and the second is to collect all the prizes. Some are really hard to reach and others take a little bit of thinking, but it's nothing beyond an average gamers capabilities. With this in mind the developers did sway from the path of the films a little bit, but only to make it a more challenging game for all.

As you would expect with LucasArts, the graphics are nothing short of what is needed with a few trimmings. The scenery is authentic to the last detail, though not overly exaggerated and over the top. The interactive parts of the game however, are made up of authentic looking LEGO bricks so you know what to interact with. The character's animation is funny and amusing, the video clips even reenact the sword swinging bad guy with Indiana shooting him at the





end, but with this being LEGO, they guy simply falls to pieces.

For me the game play was smooth and with a steady growth of skill towards the end. And with the skill you achieve at the end, replaying the first levels to get all the hidden secrets becomes easy. The game has a steady pace with no time limits so you can take your time and explore around, however the AI of both your co-player and the enemy can get a tad annoying at times. I often found myself in a battle of 3-4 enemies with the co-player in front of me, thus having to beat them up just to beat the enemy up. Not the most sophisticated in the world but it does the job.

Another fun game for the PSP and if you're a fan of the films or the LEGO franchise then you'll like it even more. However there are a few bad points about the

game I feel I need to mention. The video scenes between the levels are long and although informative they can not be interrupted, however when in the free play mode they are not present. The loading times are extremely long and I'm talking about a good couple of minutes plus in some places. Which for a PSP game is bad but well worth it when you start the level as there is hardly any load time between the different sections which makes up for it. Some scenes are annoying in that you can't backtrack and try to find all the secrets and theirs no restarting the level as you have to go back to Barnett College and restart the entire level again, and wait another couple of minutes.

Additional good quirks of the game are amusing, like the fact that Indiana is afraid of snakes and so won't be able to pass

beyond a certain point where they are (Henry is also afraid of rats and Marion is afraid of spiders). The game as a whole is well rounded and I personally thoroughly enjoyed playing it, but once you complete all 100% there is no real need to continue and as such gets a medium replay-ability score.

+ Pros

- Play as Indiana Jones and the rest of the cast
- Quirky AI interaction with surroundings
- Funny video clips
- Bonus unlocks
- Land of LEGO

- Cons

- Long loading times
- AI is a tad stupid
- Annoying lack of restart to levels (when 1 chest remains)

TRACKMANIA NATIONS

GET THE FOREVER UPGRADE FROM THE GAMEON WEBSITE

TrackMania Forever is the latest addition to the popular TrackMania series. Forever upgrades both the Nations and United version of the game series and takes the game to a whole new level.

With improved graphics and a much more appealing menu layout the Forever update aims at providing the series with a longer life span. The real deal, however, is within the game play and new features added to the game. For players of the free Nations version of the game, the Stadium environment has received a well deserved update. With all the blocks previously only available to the players of United, plus some new blocks featured in both the Nations and United Forever games, the replay value of the game has increased a lot. New tracks have been added, and the new blocks provide unlimited fun in the track editor.

Regarding the other six environments in TrackMania United, it's especially the three oldest ones that have received a graphic- and block upgrade.

The Forever upgrade also makes TrackMania Nations and United compatible with each other. It is now possible for players of both games to play together online, as long as the tracks played are in the Stadium Environment.

The earlier release of TrackMania United on Steam may further have enhanced the value of the game. With the access to a broader audience and potential buyers, TrackMania has most certainly experienced an increase of activity. This in combination with the Forever upgrade makes TrackMania one of the most active and up to date arcade games out there.



Click on the link below to be taken direct to the download of the upgrade pack!

link.gameon.co.uk/mag/1/p57

Downloading from the GameOn servers is FREE, there are no pesky file waiting queues and it's fast!



By Jozii (<http://tmunited.wordpress.com/>)

COFFEE TIME!

LATE NIGHT GAMING SESSION GOT YOU? TAKE A BREAK...

See if you can complete our word search below.

Note, there are two hidden answers in the grid below, find them! Post in the forums if you think you've found them! First person to get the answers wins a Curly Wurly! All the answers are Half Life related!

link.gameon.co.uk/mag/1/p58



- Gordon Freeman • Dr Mossman
- Alyx • Barney
- Eli • Lamar
- Dr Breen • Combine
- DOG • Antlion
- Ravenholm • HEV Suit
- Nova Prospekt • Gravity Gun
- Citadel • Citizen
- Buggy • Crowbar
- City Seventeen • The Horse
- G-Man • Rocket Launcher



TOP 10 VIDEOS

FOR JUNE

The Incredible Hulk Game Trailer : By Sega

The Making Of The Incredible Hulk
The Beast Within Trailer

Stan Lee - The Making of The Incredible Hulk
Game Trailer

WALL-E Game Trailer

Lego Indiana Jones : The Videogame

Team Fortress 2 Trailer - Meet The Sniper

Star Wars The Force Unleashed Game Trailer

4x4 Hummer Game Trailer

Metal Gear Solid 4 Flashback Trailer

Race Driver GRID Damage Flashback Trailer

These are the top most viewed
trailers for June

Click on them to watch them!

See all of our latest trailers at:
link.gameon.co.uk/mag/1/p59

WHO WE ARE...

All of the team are active on the forums. These are our names if you wish to be in touch.

STEVE GREENFIELD

- Rasher

STEVEN DAWSON

- djdawsonuk

SIMON BONDS

- Si^

ROBERT WHETTON

- Bobster

CHRIS WAKEFIELD

- evilgiraffeman

PETE O'BRIEN

- POBmaestro

NEIL HETHERINGTON

- Wedgeh

PAUL SHEARING

- ExeCute

STUART GUNN

- Gunn (LA)

If you've enjoyed this magazine, you can subscribe to further issues via this link:

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URL INDEX

Throughout the mag we've had various links to the forums, our site and other bits and bobs online. Here is a complete list of everything featured in this mag:

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| link.gameon.co.uk/mag/1/p5 | • Photo A Day |
| link.gameon.co.uk/mag/1/p7 | • Photo Of The Month |
| link.gameon.co.uk/mag/1/p10 | • Fifa 08 Review |
| link.gameon.co.uk/mag/1/p12 | • Wii Sports Review |
| link.gameon.co.uk/mag/1/p17 | • Race Driver: Grid Review |
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| link.gameon.co.uk/mag/1/p26 | • Lost Planet Review |
| link.gameon.co.uk/mag/1/p29 | • TM Nations Forever Review |
| link.gameon.co.uk/mag/1/p33 | • Europa Universalis Review |
| link.gameon.co.uk/mag/1/p36 | • Interview With Smiles |
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LARA'S BACK

IN THE NEXT ISSUE



**TOMB
RAIDER**
UNDERWORLD

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