

THE WORLD'S NUMBER ONE PC GAMES MAGAZINE

PC GAMER[®]

MORROWIND RESURRECTED

REVIVING THE CLASSIC
RPG AS A SKYRIM MOD

REVIEWED

DARK SOULS III
QUANTUM BREAK
HYPER LIGHT
DRIFTER
AND MORE!



HARDWARE

MONITORS

THE LATEST
SCREENS RATED
INSIDE

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

WARHAMMER 40,000 DAWN OF WAR III

RELIC'S EXPLOSIVE RETURN TO
THE 40K UNIVERSE REVEALED

Issue 292
JUNE 2016

Future





Windows 10

CyberPowerPC recommends Windows.
One experience for everything in your life.

Infinity Xtreme Pro



Windows 10 Home

Intel® Core™ i7-5960X Processor

ASUS® X99-A Mainboard
16GB DDR4 3000mhz Corsair Vengeance LPX Memory
480GB Kingston V300 SSD
2TB SATA III 6.0Gb/s 64MB HDD
6GB MSI Nvidia® GTX 980 Ti Video Card
16X LG® Blu Ray BH16NS40 Writer Black
CoolerMaster Staker 935 Gaming Case
CoolerMaster B700 B2 Power Supply
Cyberpower Advance Water Cooling system
Extreme Overclocking
LCD monitor is not included but optional



16x Optical Drive



HD 7.1



CoolerMaster®



CoolerMaster®

FROM
£2549



Liquid Cooling
Included

Infinity Xtreme



Windows 10 Home

Intel® Core™ i7-5820K Processor

MSI® X99A RAIDER Mainboard
16GB DDR4 3000mhz Corsair Vengeance LPX Memory
240GB Kingston V300 SSD
2TB 7200rpm SATA III 6.0Gb/s 64MB HDD
4GB MSI Nvidia® GTX 970 Video Card
NZXT H440 Gaming Case
Corsair VS650 Power Supply
Corsair H55 Cooling System
LCD monitor is not included but optional



FROM
£1369



HD 7.1



CoolerMaster®



CoolerMaster®

Infinity X55



Windows 10 Home

Intel® Core™ i5-6600K Processor

Gigabyte Z170-HD3 Mainboard
8GB DDR4 2400mhz Corsair Vengeance LPX Memory
2TB 7200rpm SATA III 6.0Gb/s 64MB HDD
2GB MSI Nvidia® GTX 960 Video Card
NZXT Source 340 Mild Tower Black
Corsair VS 450W Power Supply
Corsair H55 Cooling System
LCD monitor is not included but optional



FROM
£849



HD 7.1



CoolerMaster®



CoolerMaster®

Order your **ultimate gaming system** today! www.cyberpowersystem.co.uk

All Desktop systems come with 3 year Limited Warranty + lifetime toll free techsupport

CyberPowerPC, CyberPowerPC Logo and, Unleash The Power are trademarks of CyberPower Inc. Copyright © 2013 CyberPower. All rights reserved. All prices are subject to change without notice or obligation. Celeron, Celeron Inside, Centrino Inside, Centrino Logo, Core Inside, Intel, Intel Logo, Intel Core, Intel Inside, Intel Inside Logo, Intel vPro, Itanium, Itanium Inside, Pentium, Pentium Inside, vPro Inside, Xeon, and Xeon Inside are trademarks of Intel Corporation in the U.S. and other countries. All prices are subject to change without notice or obligation. CyberPower is not responsible for any typographical or photographic errors. NVIDIA®, nForce®, GeForce®, SLI™ are trademarks or registered trademarks of NVIDIA Corporation or its subsidiaries in the United States and other countries. CyberPower PCs use genuine Microsoft® Windows®. www.microsoft.com/piracy/howtotell

Intel Inside®. Amazing Experience Outside.



LIQUID COOLING INCLUDED

CPUs with standard fansinks can reach core temperatures as high as 130°C, however, liquid cooling can lower that to 59°C giving you better performance and longer lifespan on your CPU.

£54.99
VALUE

Infinity X33



Windows 10 Home

Intel® Core™ i3-6100 Processor

MSI B150M PRO-VDH Mainboard
8GB DDR4 2133mhz Kingston Value Memory
1TB 7200rpm SATA III 6.0Gb/s 64MB HDD
2GB NVIDIA® GTX 950 Video Card
CoolerMaster Elite 310 Mid-Tower Case
400W Power Supply
Corsair H55 Cooling System
LCD monitor is not included but optional



FROM
£599



24X DVD ±RW



HD 7.1



CoolerMaster®



CoolerMaster®

Infinity X77



Windows 10 Home

Intel® Core™ i7-6700K Processor

ASUS® Z170-P Mainboard
8GB DDR4 2400mhz Corsair Vengeance LPX Memory
120GB Kingston V300 SSD
1TB 7200rpm SATA III 6.0Gb/s 64MB HDD
4GB MSI Nvidia® GTX 970 Video Card
Corsair 450D Gaming Case
Corsair VS650 Power Supply
Corsair H55 Cooling System
LCD monitor is not included but optional



FROM
£1179



24X DVD ±RW



HD 7.1



CoolerMaster®



CoolerMaster®

Fangbook 4 SX6-100



Windows 10 Home

Intel® Core™ i7-6700HQ Processor

15.6" Full HD 1920 x 1080 Display
Intel HM170 Express Chipset
Nvidia® GTX 960M 2GB Video Card
4GB DDR4 2133MHz HyperX Impact Black Memory
500GB 5400RPM SATA HDD
Intel® Dual Band Wireless-AC 3165 WiFi
Bluetooth 4.0 Combo



FROM
£819



8X DVD ±RW



180 Mins



Bluetooth 4.0



2x USB 3.0
1x 3.1 Type C

1x HDMI Port

Built-in 720P HD Webcam

2.4 kg

AC WIFI

Fangbook 4 Xtreme 100 G-Sync



Windows 10 Home

Intel® Core™ i5-6600K Processor

15.6" UHD 3840 x 2160 Display
Intel Z170 Express Chipset
Nvidia® GTX 970M 6GB Video Card
16GB DDR4 2133MHz SODIMM memory
1TB 5400RPM SATA HDD
Intel® Dual Band Wireless-AC 8260 WiFi
Bluetooth 4.0 Combo



FROM
£1159



250 Mins



Bluetooth 4.0



3x USB 3.0
1x 3.1 Type C

1x HDMI Port

Built-in 720P HD Webcam

2.4 kg

AC WIFI



CYBERPOWERPC
UNLEASH THE POWER

ORDER TODAY! **0844 371 2727**
www.cyberpowersystem.co.uk

Cartona available in select markets at launch, experience may vary by device.
*External monitor must support HDMI input (if continuum-compatible accessory is not included, add: "Accessories sold separately.") **App availability and experience varies by device and market. Office 365 subscription required for some features. Limited to select premium phones at launch. Feature and app availability and experience may vary by market and device. Windows Hello required specialized hardware including fingerprint reader, illuminated IR sensor or other biometric sensors.

Work easy. Play hard.





WIRED2FIRE

www.wired2fire.co.uk

Free Delivery
Code PCG291

100% Dedicated to Gaming PCs!

DIABLO ULTIMA



Corsair Carbide SPEC01 Case
FSP 500W Bronze Power Supply
Intel Core i3 **6100 Skylake** (3.7GHz)
nVidia GTX 960 2GB GDDR5 Graphics
Asus Z170-P Motherboard
8GB 2400MHz DDR4 Memory
120GB Crucial SSD
Windows 10 Gaming Optimised
3 Year Warranty

£619 inc VAT

DIABLO REACTOR



NZXT H440 Case
FSP 500W Bronze Power Supply
Intel Core i5 **6600K Skylake** (4.3GHz+)
nVidia GTX 970 4GB GDDR5 Graphics
Asus Z170-P Motherboard
16GB 2400MHz DDR4 Memory
240GB Crucial SSD
Windows 10 Gaming Optimised
3 Year Warranty

£929 inc VAT

DIABLO PREDATOR



Cooler Master CM690 III Case
FSP 750W Silver Power Supply
Intel Core i5 **6600K Skylake** (4.4GHz+)
nVidia GTX 980 4GB GDDR5 Graphics
Asus Z170 Pro Gaming Motherboard
16GB Corsair 2400MHz DDR4 Memory
250GB Samsung 850 EVO SSD
Windows 10 Gaming Optimised
3 Year Warranty

£1209 inc VAT

DIABLO ELITE



Corsair Graphite 780T Case
FSP 750W Silver Power Supply PSU
Intel Core i7 **6700K Skylake** (4.4GHz+)
DUAL SLI GTX 970 4GB GDDR5 Graphics
Asus Maximus VIII Hero Motherboard
16GB Corsair 2400MHz DDR4 Memory
250GB Samsung 850 EVO SSD
Windows 10 Gaming Optimised
3 Year Warranty

£1619 inc VAT



DIABLO EXTREME



Phanteks Enthoo Primo Case
FSP 1000W Aurum Pro Platinum PSU
Intel Core i7 **5930K** (4.4GHz)
DUAL SLI GTX 980 4GB GDDR5 Graphics
Asus X99-A Socket 2011 Motherboard
32GB Corsair 2666MHz DDR4 Memory
512GB Samsung 850 Pro SSD
Windows 10 Gaming Optimised
3 Year Warranty

£2489 inc VAT

THE BEST GAMING PCS ON THE PLANET



Call 01306 882211 or email sales@wired2fire.co.uk

PC GAMER®

#292 JUNE 2016

Future Publishing Ltd

Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA Tel 01225 442244
Fax 01225 732275 Email pcgamer@futurenet.com

Web www.pcgamer.com

EDITORIAL

Global Editor in Chief Tim Clark

Editor Samuel Roberts

Deputy Editor Phil Savage

Art Editor John Strike

Production Editor Tony Ellis

Web Editor Tom Senior

PCG Pro Editor Chris Thursten

Section Editor Andy Kelly

Staff Writer Angus Morrison

CONTRIBUTORS

Jake Tucker, Matthew Lochrie, Evan Lahti, Wes Fenlon, Jon Blyth, Chris Livingston, Tyler Wilde, James Davenport, Tom Marks, Dave James, Elizabeth Elliott, David Lyttleton, Tom Sykes, Ben Wilson, Andy McGregor, Zak Storey, Matt Elliott, Dan Giliopoulos, Jon Morcom, Leif Johnson, Holly Nielsen, Chris Higgins, Edward Bals, Matt Sakuraka-Gilman, Ben Griffin

Photography Future Photography Studio

ADVERTISING

Commercial Sales Director Clare Dove

Advertising Director Andrew Church

Advertising Manager Michael Pyatt

Account Manager Steven Pyatt

For advertising enquiries, please contact Andrew Church:

andrew.church@futurenet.com

MARKETING

Group Marketing Manager Laura Driffield

Marketing Manager Kristianne Stanton

PRODUCTION & DISTRIBUTION

Production Controller Fran Twentymann

Production Manager Mark Constance

Printed in the UK by: William Gibbons & Sons Ltd on behalf of Future

Distributed by: Seymour Distribution Ltd, 2 East Poultry Avenue,

London EC1A 9PT, Tel: 0207 429 4000

Overseas distribution by: Seymour International

CIRCULATION

Trade Marketing Manager Juliette Winyard - 07551 150 984

SUBSCRIPTIONS

UK reader order line & enquiries: 0844 848 2852

Overseas reader order line & enquiries: +44 (0)1604 251045

Online enquiries: www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk

Email: pcgamer@myfavouritemagazines.co.uk

LICENSING

Senior Licensing & Syndication Manager Matt Ellis

Matt Ellis@futurenet.com - +44 (0)1225 442244

MANAGEMENT

Managing Director, Magazines Joe McEvoy

Editorial Director Matt Pierce

Group Art Director Rodney Dive

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE... JUNE 2



Member of the Audit
Bureau of Circulations
18,786
January-December 2015



Future is an award-winning international media group and leading digital business. We reach more than 49 million international consumers a month and create world-class content and advertising solutions for passionate consumers online, on tablet & smartphone and in print.

Future plc is a public company
quoted on the London Stock
Exchange (symbol: FUTR).
www.futureplc.com

Chief executive Zillah Byng-Maddick
Non-executive chairman Peter Allen
Tel +44 (0)207 042 4000 (London)
Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244 (Bath)

All contents copyright © 2015 Future Publishing Limited or published under licence. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be reproduced, stored, transmitted or used in any way without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. Registered office: Registered office: Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA. All information contained in this publication is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. You are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price and other details of products or services referred to in this publication. Apps and websites mentioned in this publication are not under our control. We are not responsible for their contents or any changes or updates to them.

If you submit unsolicited material to us, you automatically grant Future a licence to publish your submission in whole or in part in all editions of the magazine, including licensed editions worldwide and in any physical or digital format throughout the world. Any material you submit is sent at your risk and, although every care is taken, neither Future nor its employees, agents or subcontractors shall be liable for loss or damage.



When you have finished with
this magazine please recycle it.



We are committed to only using
magazine paper which is derived from
well managed, certified forestry and
chlorine-free manufacture. Future
Publishing and its paper suppliers have
been independently certified in
accordance with the rules of the FSC
(Forest Stewardship Council).

We encourage you to recycle
this magazine, either through
your usual household
recyclable waste collection
service or at a recycling site.



War machine

This cover feature has been in the works for months – we're delighted to be the first in the world to reveal Relic's long-awaited *Dawn of War III*, with first images, interviews and impressions starting on p28. Pretty amazing, eh? What a gorgeous-looking, exciting sequel – fans of the first game will love returning elements such as base-building, as well as the increased scale over the second game.

And I happen to know our next few covers will be just as spectacular. Expect me to bang on about how this is once again the best year for PC games ever until 2017.

SAMUEL ROBERTS
EDITOR

samuel.roberts@futurenet.com
[@SamuelWRoberts](https://twitter.com/SamuelWRoberts)



The PC Gamer team



JOHN STRIKE

Specialist in

Skulls, weekend working

This month

Worked his gorgeous
arse off on a Sunday
night to bring this lovely
Dawn of War reveal issue
to you. Have a nap next
month, John.



TOM SENIOR

Specialist in

Adeptus, Astartes

Twitter

@PCGLudo

This month

Took a break from the
internet and flew to Relic
to get a first look at *Dawn
of War III*.



ANDY KELLY

Specialist in

Time travel, Twitter

Twitter

@ultrabrilliant

This month

Wandered through the
English countryside and
felt British things (Andy
is Scottish).

Contents

#292
JUNE 2016

SUBSCRIBE TO
PC GAMER
Check out our
digital bundle!
SEE p92



Monitor

08 THE TOP STORY

From the frontlines of *EVE Online*.

10 THE SPY

Our agent's latest rumour round-up.

12 ESPORTS

The latest in the world of *CS: GO*.

Previews

14 Tyranny

18 Fractured Space

20 Tokyo 42

22 Sherlock Holmes

24 Frozen Synapse 2

26 Zombie Night Terrors

Features

28 Dawn of War III

Our exclusive first look at Relic's long awaited strategy sequel starts here. Everything you need to know.

36 Mirror's Edge Catalyst

Samuel goes hands-on with another game we've been waiting years for.

40 Eternal Crusade

We interview the devs behind this issue's other Warhammer 40K game.

44 Skywind

The story of the rebirth of Bethesda's fabled but ageing RPG.

50 Master of Orion

Leif Johnson meets the team behind the 4X series revival.

28



28 DAWN OF WAR III

Tom Senior meets Relic to get the rundown on the latest in the brilliant strategy series.

36 MIRROR'S EDGE CATALYST

Hands-on with DICE's first-person platforming game, which now has better combat.

40 ETERNAL CRUSADE INTERVIEW

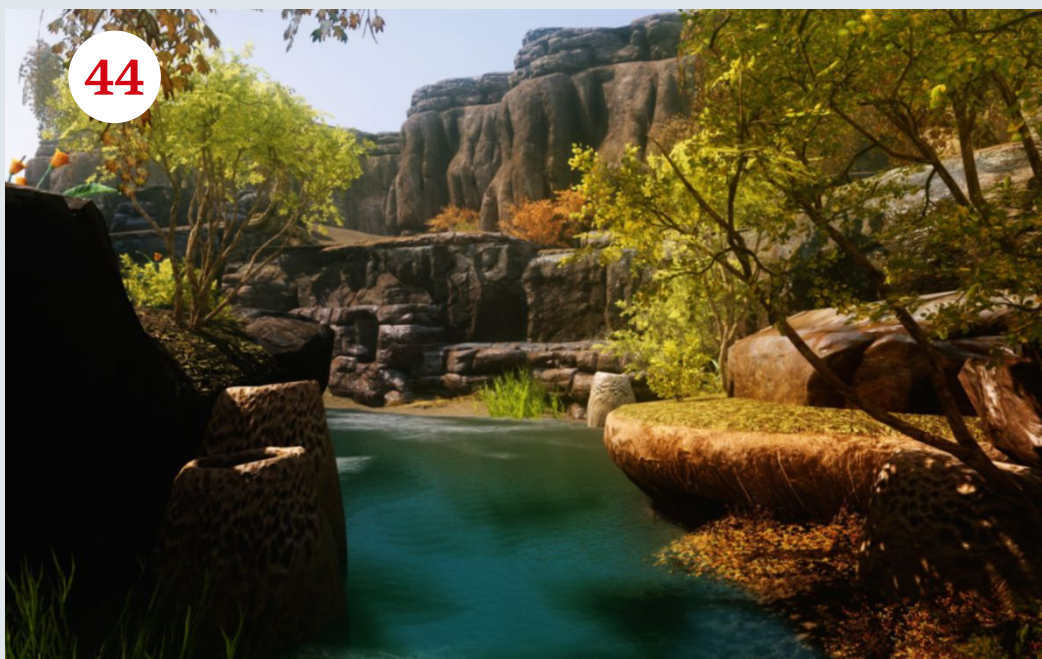
The origins of the 40K shooter.



36



40



44



58



95

44 MAKING SKYWIND

Inside the massive fan-driven project to bring *Morrowind* back as a *Skyrim* mod.

58 DARK SOULS III REVIEW

James Davenport gives the verdict on another game of the year contender.

95 MONITOR SUPERTEST

The 1440p-enabled Dave James reviews a whole bunch of monitors in our round-up.

Network

54 SEND

Your letters, our helpful answers.

Reviews

58 *Dark Souls III*

62 *Ashes of the Singularity*

64 *Adrift*

68 *Everybody's Gone to the Rapture*

70 *Enter the Gungeon*

72 *Quantum Break*

76 *Hyper Light Drifter*

78 *Out of the Park Baseball 17*

80 *Day of the Tentacle Remastered*

82 *Need for Speed*

84 *EVE: Valkyrie*

DLC REVIEW

86 *Fallout 4: Automatron*

88 *Baldur's Gate: Siege of Dragonspear*

THEY'RE BACK

90 *Alan Wake*

91 *Bio Menace*

91 *Contrast*

91 *Dark Souls*

91 *Eets Munchies*

Hardware

96 GROUP TEST

Get the right monitor for your budget.

102 REVIEWS

A 4K-ready monster of a rig reviewed.

104 BUYER'S GUIDE

Three price brackets of PC builds.

Extra Life

108 NOW PLAYING

Phil tries to hate *Stardew Valley* but finds himself drenched in horrible joy.

112 TOP 10 DOWNLOADS

The best mods and free games.

116 UPDATE

Jon Morcom revisits *Wasteland 2*.

118 REINSTALL

Andy revisits the flawed adventure *Beneath A Steel Sky*.

122 DIARY

Phil tries to finish *Day of the Tentacle* without a walkthrough. It gets messy.

128 MUST PLAY

What you should be playing right now.

MONITOR

THE PC GAMER VIEW OF THE WORLD

This is what war looks like in *EVE Online*. Such pretty colours.



THE TOP STORY

THE EASTER WAR

Months of conflict predicted as war grips **EVE ONLINE**

A war is raging in *EVE Online*. Yes, another one. The last big conflict, a battle between two huge Russian corporations over a moon, destroyed \$13,000 worth of ships. This one might be even more costly, and it all started with a failed Kickstarter.

At fan convention EVE Vegas, a campaign was launched to fund a book about the Fountain War, one of the largest battles in gaming history. The catch? It would be managed and published by The Mittani Media, a company run by the leader of CFC (now The Imperium), the side that won.

Inevitably, there were claims that the book was a cash grab by The Mittani, and that it would be biased towards the winning side. There were also claims that CFC (which stands for Clusterfuck Coalition) rebranded itself as The Imperium to be more marketable for The Mittani Media.

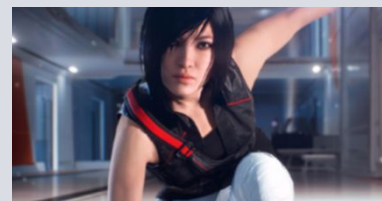
THE IMPERIUM ATTACKED TERRITORY HELD BY GROUPS DENOUNCING THE KICKSTARTER

People refused to support the Kickstarter on these grounds, and a furious Mittani declared war on the perceived enemies of the campaign in lowsec space. The Imperium attacked territory held by groups who publicly denounced the Kickstarter, igniting a series of conflicts that would eventually escalate into war.

A new anti-Imperium faction calling itself the Moneybadger Coalition was formed. Battles over valuable moons in the Hakonen system broke out, costing each side a combined 1.1 trillion ISK, or around \$20,000 in actual money. As more conflicts erupted, developer CCP Games allocated extra server power to support the war. Soon

HIGHS & LOWS

THE MONTH IN PC GAMING



HIGHS

Mirror's Edge Catalyst

The sequel no one expected is shaping up nicely, refining what made the original such a cult hit.

Steam Controller

The more we use it, the more we love it. The learning curve is steep, but it's amazingly customisable.

Dark Souls III

The only explanation for From Software's constant flow of great games is that no one there sleeps.

Mods

The XCOM 2 modding community is doing incredible things with Firaxis's strategy epic.

Evolution Studios

Codemasters has rescued the talented racing game developer from closure and absorbed it.

Virtual reality

It's here at last, but the pricetag means it's still out of most people's reach.

The Division

We've all stopped playing, and the lure of slightly better kneepads isn't enough to win us back.

Nostalrius

Blizzard swung its legal hammer and destroyed the vanilla WoW server.

Tracer's bum

Of all the things the internet has been angry about this year, this is one of the stupidest.

Quantum Break

A poorly optimised port shackled to the needlessly restrictive UWP.

LOWS



Events in the real world can lead to an EVE war.



the capital system of Imperium alliance Circle-of-Two, M-OEE8, was under attack, and over 5,800 players warped in for one of the largest battles since the infamous Bloodbath of B-R5RB. Fleets of battleships, cruisers, battlecruisers and frigates clashed, causing around \$9,000 worth of damage. The battle ended with a key Imperium facility being destroyed, which severely reduced the system's ability to defend itself.

DOGS OF WAR

As we go to press it seems likely that the Easter War, a name coined by CCP, could be the most destructive and expensive in the game's history. "The Battle of M-OEE8 is

just one of the first few battles of a new great war," the developer says. "There will be months of conflict ahead and likely bloodier fighting to come. History is still being written."

Stories of wars in *EVE Online* often make headlines, sometimes even in mainstream news, but this has the potential to dwarf any that have come before. "We have tens of thousands of pilots fighting tens of thousands of other pilots in a real-time war with strategic battles, advances, retreats, propaganda, betrayals, and diplomatic manoeuvring," says a clearly excited CCP. "What a time to be alive in New Eden!" ■

Andy Kelly

WHO WATCHES THE SPY?

THE SPY



The Spy knows the name of the Man With No Name.

As a child, The Spy dreamt of the dusty plains and agitated buffalo of the Wild West. It was a time of stoic heroes, gubernatorial villains, and the untoward rogues that preyed on both. Many a night, The Spy fantasised about great train robberies, daring bank raids and tense duels. Not of partaking in them, you understand – The Spy had long since perfected larceny, and had progressed to the field of light treason. Instead, it was the ease of getting away with it that appealed. Just imagine! No satellite surveillance or Interpol wanted list – just a horse, a big sack of money, and an unconscious local Sheriff tied up in a cupboard.

But when The Spy was a child, The Spy understood as a child. Now The Spy is a spy, and good friends with a Barrett M82A1 sniper rifle. In other words, The Spy has reconciled with the 21st century and its technology. Still, judging from the reaction to Rockstar's *Red Dead Redemption*, The Spy wasn't alone in yearning for a simpler, more lawless era. As of last year, sales for the Wild West shooter had reached 14 million across Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3. It's not exactly a *GTA V* level of success, but it's a big enough number that a sequel makes sense.

For years, rumours of such a sequel roamed the internet like tumbleweed through a ghost town. Due to their lack of substance, such claims were as convincing as those of that kid you knew at school who had an uncle who worked at Nintendo. Now, there's a new rumour in town. What makes this one so different? It has a map. The map first appeared on NeoGAF, but was quickly removed. Thanks to the magic of the Print Screen key, it was subsequently reuploaded just about everywhere. The map, if real, shows the new terrain of *Red Dead Redemption 2*.

Is it real? That's a difficult question to answer. It shows Blackwater – the main town from the first *Red Dead Redemption* – in the southwest corner, alongside some other familiar locations. Expanding out from there are new areas, from the 'Grizzlies' range of mountains, to the city of 'New Bordeaux'. The latter is the name of *Mafia 3*'s fictional city, which is

confirms its existence and claims it's a prequel to the original game. Could it be true? And will it, unlike its predecessor, ever come to PC?

TRIGGER WARNING

The Wild West favoured those who were quick on the draw. In that spirit, The Spy's fast fingers will fire a volley of rumours across the rest of the page. Bang! The next *Call of Duty* is back under the stewardship of *Modern Warfare*'s Infinity Ward. According to NeoGAF's resident rumourmonger Shinobi602, this year's outing will have a sci-fi flavour, with warring factions engaged in space combat. Based on Infinity Ward's track record, The Spy expects a harrowing recreation of the film *Gravity*, but with a space dog instead of Sandra Bullock.

Bang! An advert on US retailer GameStop may have let slip a PC release for *Final Fantasy XV*. The ad showed the JRP's main characters – an early 2000s boy band masquerading as a prince and his

friends – alongside logos for PlayStation 4, Xbox One and PC. Square Enix hasn't announced a PC version, and it is possible the advert was erroneous. Someone really should check Square's marketing department to see if one of their employees has been forced to sit in a

THE FILM GRAVITY, BUT WITH A SPACE DOG INSTEAD OF SANDRA BULLOCK

box marked 'NO'. based on New Orleans. Rockstar is owned by Take-Two Interactive, who also own *Mafia 3* publisher 2K, but a crossover seems unlikely.

If you think a map is too detailed a document to fake, you clearly haven't spent enough time on the internet. It's not like Rockstar is particularly imaginative with its place names, and the terrain just has to be an expanse of American

-looking geography to seem convincing. Still, TechRadar has reported an unnamed source "close to the development" of the sequel, who both

Box marked 'NO'. Bang! Orc genocide simulator *Middle-earth: Shadow of Mordor* is getting a sequel, if the CV of stunt actor Lauren Mary Kim is to be believed. Kim claimed to have done mo-cap work for *Shadow of Mordor 2* on her iStunt page – a sort of IMDB for people who acrobatically throw themselves off of buildings for a living. The listing has, unsurprisingly, been removed, but Kim's many previous industry credits lend legitimacy to this rumour. A sequel would certainly make sense given that the original – a surprise hit in 2014 – had the most successful launch of any Lord of the Rings-based game.

Click! Drats, The Spy only had enough rumour bullets to fill half a six-shooter. It's time to leave this one-horse town – preferably on its only horse. Can you have a no-horse town? Let's find out. Spy out. ■

The Spy

SPACE DOG HAS A BAD TIME



Where the hell is George Clooney when you need him?

SHOPPING LIST

- Cowboy hat
- Cowboy boots
- Spittoon



TOP SECRET

DESIGNED FOR GAMERS

Discover the winning formula at
elementgaming.com



ELEMENT GAMING

THORIUM100 - KEYBOARD
HELIUM150 - HEADSET
COBALT120 - MOUSE
ELEMENT - SURFACE

- Designed for intensive gaming
- Customisable WASD gaming keys
- 7.1 Channel simulated audio
- Mouse has adjustable DPI settings
- Gaming mat is non-slip
- Excellent quality
- Ergonomically designed

£29.99
BUNDLE PRICE

AVAILABLE FROM

ebuyer.com
amazon.co.uk



EVENT REPORT

LUMINOSITY RISING

An underdog claims the title in **CS:GO**'s first \$1m Major



COUNTER-STRIKE: GLOBAL OFFENSIVE

What is it?

A tense strategic shooter for teams of five, as one side attempts to destroy one of two map objectives while the other side stops them.

How do you win?

Single games are a best of 30 rounds, with a six-round overtime if the score is tied at the end. And another if tied after that. And so on.

What's the format?

Matches are best-of-one in group stages and best-of-three in second-place group seeding and the final playoffs after that.

The first *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive* Major of 2016 set a number of new records for the FPS esports. MLG Columbus marked the first time a Valve-sponsored Major event came to American soil, the first million-dollar prize pool in *CS:GO* and the first big win for Brazilian side Luminosity Gaming. The Nationwide Arena in Columbus, Ohio also played host to the longest single game of professional *CS:GO* as FlipSid3 Tactics and Mousesports played the equivalent of two full matches – through five consecutive overtime tiebreaker rounds – before the latter eventually won 31-28.

This wasn't the only bizarre extended scoreline of the week, as group stage bouts saw other underdogs forcing legendary opponents into the corner. French team EnVyUs suffered a continuing decline in performance finishing bottom of their group. Champions of the last Valve Major of 2015 – DreamHack Cluj-Napoca – EnVyUs obviously struggled with the loss of KioShima just weeks before, while freshly qualified North American sides Counter Logic Gaming and Gambit fought for the second seed place behind the Danes of Astralis.

Elsewhere in the groups, Swedish team Fnatic – hailed as the greatest *CS* squad of all time after two

years on top of the global podium – received a harsh return to mortality at the hands of Team Liquid. Though a double-overtime shocker, Liquid stamped their feet firmly on the world stage with considerable help from most recent recruit, 19-year-old Ukrainian Simple. The young AWP'er put to bed many concerns that his move to the States had been premature by propelling his team to the semi-finals.

Unfortunately for Liquid, that semi-final match-up – against eventual champions Luminosity – turned out to be one of the most thrilling games in *CS:GO* due to Liquid twice letting winning positions slip. In a best-of-three match, Liquid took commanding leads on both maps only to allow the Brazilians to pull off two incredibly unlikely comebacks. Down 15-9 in the first game, Luminosity's Coldzera sparked a complete reversal of momentum after killing four of Liquid as they rushed a site he was defending alone – two falling to the same bullet, fired from Coldzera's unscoped sniper rifle, while jumping. Luminosity proved lightning definitely can strike twice with another match-point comeback in the second game, this time from 15-6. In total across both games Liquid had, and failed to capitalise on, 15 match points.

On the opposite side of the bracket, CIS team Na'Vi had a far less dramatic route to the finals. Sweeping through their group stages, even Polish powerhouse VirtusPro could do nothing to prevent

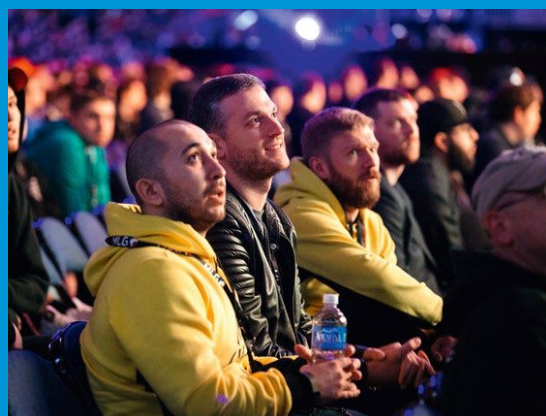


IMAGE CREDITS: ROBERT PAUL - MAJOR LEAGUE GAMING

Na'Vi emerging into the playoff stages undefeated, losing 16-4 against the boys in yellow. The playoffs were simply more of the same as first Sweden's second-string team Ninjas in Pyjamas and then Astralis fell in straight sets to give Na'Vi a clean sheet going into the final. If Luminosity's route to the final was a montage of five Rockies overcoming every adversity, Na'Vi's tale was that of Ivan Drago mercilessly dismantling every team who lay in their path.

Despite their Brazilian heritage, Luminosity are considered a North American team because their organisation is based north of the Mexican border. The team has been achingly close to the first place spot at many of the biggest *CS:GO* events in the past six months since taking second place in November at DreamHack Winter in Jönköping. Of course, this all played into the home crowd's internal Rocky IV narrative. After Liquid's defeat, the ever-present "U.S.A!" chant was transferred onto Luminosity's Brazilian shoulders.

The grand final between Na'Vi and Luminosity was a tense affair. The first map definitely followed

the script as Na'Vi went on to an 11-4 lead in the first half. However, right on cue Luminosity turned up at the start of the second half, even taking the lead at 12-14 before Na'Vi managed to eke out a draw. True to form, Luminosity then took control in overtime, winning the first three rounds and then snatching the sixth round before Na'Vi could equalise. Winning from behind had become Luminosity's speciality.

The second match, however, didn't follow the script at all, with Luminosity in control from start to finish. Perhaps Na'Vi were broken after an incredibly tense first game, one which by all counts they should have won had they kept their momentum. But Luminosity

earned their right to the championship title with a decisive 16-2 final map, not giving an inch for Na'Vi to play with. Fallen, captain of the Brazilian side, ended with a 21:6 kill-death ratio, and Coldzera wasn't far behind on 15:5. While the home crowd declared American victory, the glory was all Brazil's as Luminosity proved that *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive* is a truly international affair. ■

Chris Higgins

THIS ALL PLAYED INTO THE HOME CROWD'S INTERNAL ROCKY IV NARRATIVE

THE MONTH AHEAD



COUNTER-STRIKE: GLOBAL OFFENSIVE

DreamHack Zowie Open Austin
May 6-9

Counter Logic Gaming, Luminosity and Team Liquid will all be returning to American soil, along with more underdog talents from the USA.



DOTA 2

Epicenter 2016
May 9-16

The first chance to see the new teams created by this season's roster shuffle before they clash at the Manila Major in June. Catch the Team Secret vs Evil Geniuses grudge match after Arteezy's sudden departure.



HEROES OF THE STORM

Gold Series
Hero League
April 14-May 15

China's premier *HotS* league finishes, with two qualifier spots available for the DreamHack All-Stars summer champs.



DOTA 2

The Manila Major
June 7-13

The last chance for teams to make their name at Valve's final *Dota* Major of the year before this summer's The International. There's \$3m in prize money on the line.

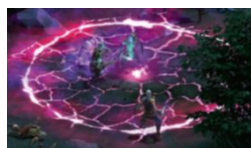


STARCRRAFT II

WCS Circuit Summer Championship
August 12-15

The culmination of this year's last seasonal *StarCraft* league in its new, foreigner-friendly structure.





NEED TO KNOW

RELEASE
2016DEVELOPER
ObsidianPUBLISHER
ParadoxLINK
www.tyrannygame.com

TYRANNY

The creators of *Pillars of Eternity* let you play the bad guy

In some ways, Obsidian's next RPG feels like a sequel to a game we haven't played or a story we've never read. *Tyranny*, which is built on a modified version of the tech used in *Pillars of Eternity*, doesn't depict the beginning of an epic struggle between good and evil. Instead, it takes place in the aftermath of such a conflict, in which evil has triumphed and a world that has been shattered by the great war is now slowly trying to recover.

"We started off talking about what are the traditional stories in RPGs," Obsidian lead producer Matthew Singh told me during our GDC meeting in San Francisco, where I got to watch a brief demo of *Tyranny* in action. "The epic clash between good versus evil, where the player comes from meagre means, works their way up, and eventually helps good triumph over all. We decided that's not the story we wanted to tell here."

Instead, the team had a more provocative idea. "What if we flipped that on its head? In this game, what if the clash between good versus evil has already happened, and evil has actually won. In this game, the armies of the Overlord, Kyros, have already come through the land, conquering all, and not only were you on the side of evil, you're actually one of their leaders."

Your character, called a Fatebinder, isn't some simple farmhand who has never swung a sword and has to learn by killing giant rats in a some dark sewer. Nor are they an outsider, recently arrived from overseas. You're already an established person in the world, someone people recognise and fear. You've survived the war, and now roam the land trying to restore order and rebuild what has been destroyed. Even when evil wins, it seems, someone has to clean up the mess.

"You can think of that as kind of like Judge Dredd," Singh told me. "Where you get to come in and bring your own brand of justice to the land. We're a Fatebinder, and with that are certain responsibilities. We need to be resolving disputes between the armies and people within this world, that's kind of a responsibility of ours."

HEAVY METAL

Not only is the world in transition due to the war, but also due to advances in technology. *Tyranny* takes place during a time when the world's Bronze Age is ending and its Iron Age is just beginning. And, while the war has already happened and you're exploring it during the aftermath, it turns out that players will still have something to say about the events that have already transpired.

"In our game," Singh explained, "within character creation, we actually let the player decide how that conquest happened, and based off the decisions that you make there, you actually shape the starting state of the world. Depending on those choices you're actually going to get a very different experience."

To an extent, you get to decide just how bad the war was for some people. I saw some evidence of this during my demo. The Fatebinder visited a town called Plainsgate, in a land that was devastated by powerful magic during the war. Plainsgate used to be a flourishing farming community that produced crops and could feed thousands, but post-war it's become barren and is constantly rocked by earthquakes.

In another game Singh and I revisited the same town, and due to different choices made during character creation, the events of the war had played out differently. In this game the conflict in Plainsgate had been much more severe, and the land was even more damaged by magic to the point where a portion of the town had actually crumbled into a chasm. Even the name was different: in this reality, it was called Halfgate. >>

FIRST
LOOK

EVEN WHEN EVIL WINS, IT SEEMS, SOMEONE HAS TO CLEAN UP THE MESS

Tyranny



>> More than just the landscape had changed due to the choices made at the start of the game. In one instance, we were allied with a faction called the Scarlet Chorus, one of Kyros's many armies that served him during the war. In the second playthrough, the Scarlet Chorus considered the Fatebinder to be an enemy. While both the Fatebinder, the Scarlet Chorus, and other factions serve the Overlord, it clearly doesn't mean everyone gets along.

A player's choices at the beginning of the game can also determine which quests they'll take on. On the trip to Plainsgate we were looking for a half-human prisoner called a Beastman who might have information on how to break the magic spells that had been cast over the land and restore it to its past farming glory. In the Halfgate version, we were there to kill the Beastman. These types of changes brought on during character creation are one way Obsidian is hoping to make the game a different experience on subsequent playthroughs.

TALK A GOOD FIGHT

Tyranny uses a classless RPG system. While you still level up with experience points, you grow your skills with magic and weapons by actually using them. If you're hoping to resolve conflicts through persuasion, intimidation, or other speech-based methods, good news: you'll gain experience and new abilities through dialogue, too. Combat works similarly to *Pillars of Eternity*: real-time with pause, so you can issue commands to your companions. And the relationships you form with your companions will play a role in combat as well.

"For combat, we've built on top of the foundation that *Pillars of Eternity* has set," Singh told me, "and we wanted to do that in meaningful ways. 'So, we recognised that people really enjoyed building relationships with companions, and we thought 'What if we took that into combat as well?' To do that, we've actually introduced some new abilities that are really powerful, called companion combos. Companion combos are devastating abilities that can either work as great openers or even change the tide

of battle, and you gain these from building your relationship with your companions."

I saw one such combo being used, called Death From Above. During a skirmish, the Fatebinder used a magic-infused punch to strike the ground at the feet of one of his companions. The companion, as if on a springboard, shot up into the air and proceeded to launch a barrage of arrows that rained down over a group of enemies.

The more you develop these relationships, the better a fighting team your party will become. This even includes companions you don't get along with. "You can actually get unique abilities depending on if they really love you or they hate you," Singh told me. "You have some different advantages for either of those."

I asked why not getting along with a companion would still result in gaining special combos with them. "Sometimes pissing somebody off gets you the reward you want as opposed to making them like you," was how Brian Hines, *Tyranny*'s game director, explained it.

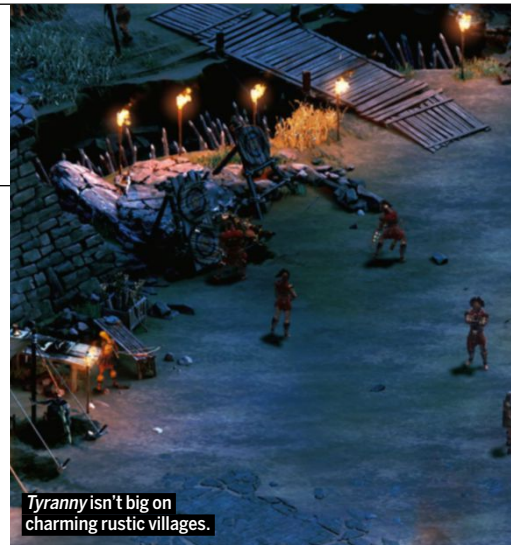
That's true of the player's reputation with non-party NPCs as well. "Not only does the reputation that you gain with factions control how people view you but it also gains you new abilities," Singh said. "You actually get different abilities if a faction sees you in a good light or not. So if somebody's angry with you, you can actually push them more towards [anger] and actually gain unique abilities for doing so. Same with being on their good side."

I still have a lot of questions about *Tyranny*, and there was a lot Obsidian wasn't willing to fully discuss at the time. How big a role Kyros plays in the game, for example: whether or not he's a character who exists in the world and can be visited, talked to, or indeed overthrown. I also asked whether there was going to be a stronghold system, as there is in *Pillars of Eternity*, and was told there would be one but wasn't given the finer details. Magic spells, meanwhile, can be crafted by players, though how that actually works wasn't discussed.

And I'm still curious about how being a 'bad guy' will really come into play. In an RPG, it's the player's choice if they want to be good or bad, and it sounds like *Tyranny* won't force you to be truly evil. If you want your Fatebinder to be good, however, how does that not clash with your character's own backstory?

We'll find out soon: *Tyranny* will be out later in 2016.

Chris Livingston



Tyranny isn't big on charming rustic villages.



The *Pillars* engine provides more gorgeous pre-rendered scenery.

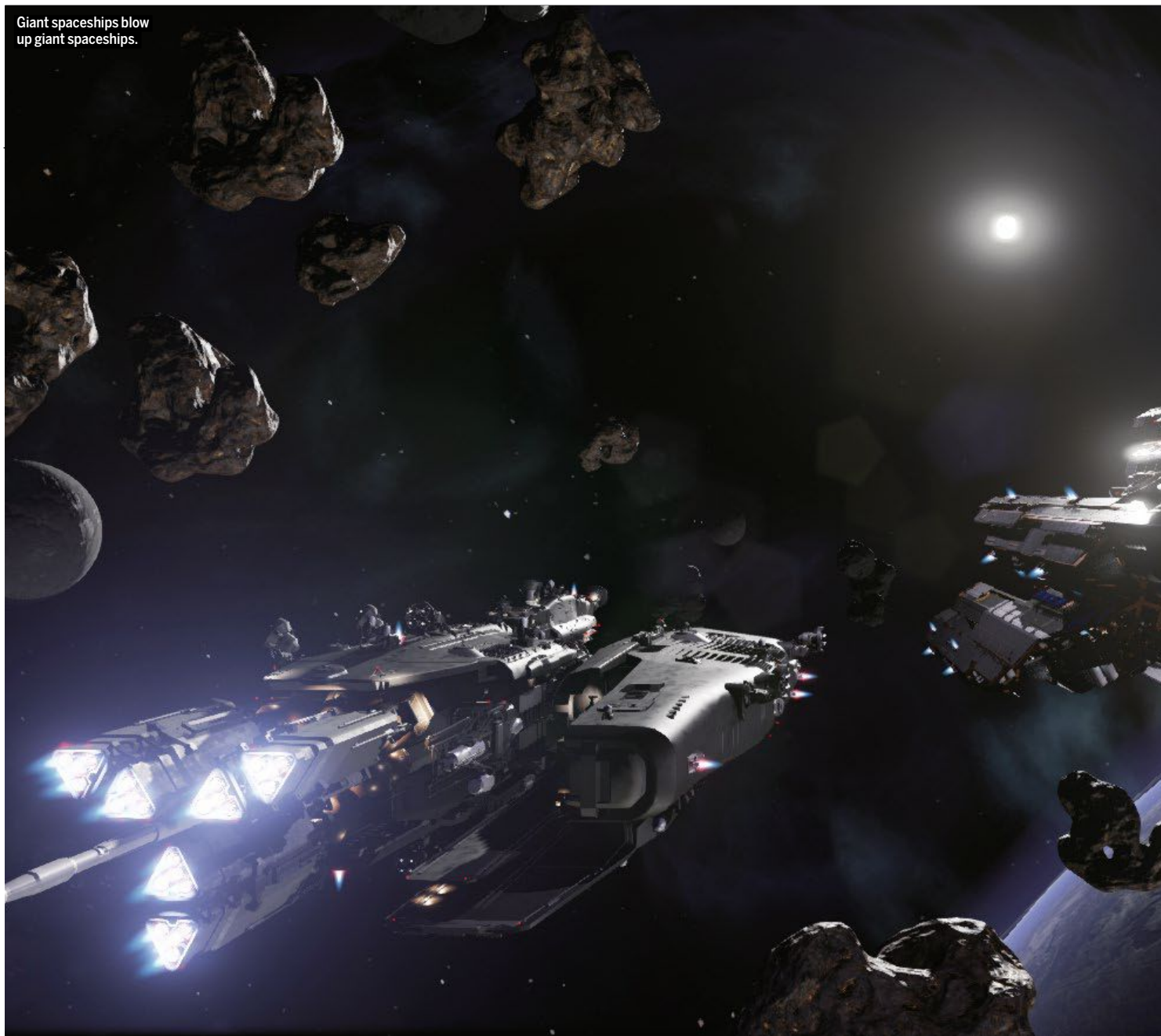
"SOMETIMES PISSING SOMEBODY OFF GETS YOU THE REWARD YOU WANT"

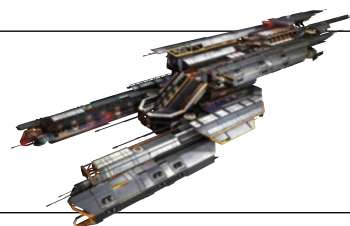


PREVIEW

Fractured Space

Giant spaceships blow up giant spaceships.





NEED TO KNOW

RELEASE
TBC

DEVELOPER
Edge Case Games

PUBLISHER
In-house

LINK
www.fracturedspace.com

FRACTURED SPACE

When massive spaceships and MOBAs collide

The best bits of space movies are always the same: whether it's the Rebel fleet attacking the Death Star over Endor, or Battlestars fighting off Cylon Basestars, or the Narada's destruction of the USS Kelvin in *Star Trek*, it's where mile-long capital ships kick the seven hells out of each other. Replicating those moments is the entire aim of *Fractured Space*.

Ostensibly a MOBA, *Fractured Space* is being developed by the team at Edge Case, who previously demonstrated their love of blowing up giant spaceships with *Strike Suit Zero*, as creative director Jim Mummery explains. "While we were making *Strike Suit*, we put so much effort into building the large capital ships you destroy, we were aware we wanted to do more with them. The idea of creating a multiplayer game where these vast ships fought it out grew organically from that."

The ships have a nice variety to them – some are slim with an Apollo series retro look to them, others are great hunks of guns and metal, designed for long-range area control, yet others feel like *Star Trek* or *Battlestar* or *Babylon 5*. They're roughly divided into three types. "Heavies are our largest ships – they're the hardest to destroy but also the slowest," says Mummery. "Lights are the smallest and fastest and are used as scouts, capture craft and support. And in the middle sit the Mids, which are generally the core attack craft." The Mids further specialise into three other types – long range attack

ships, close range attack ships and special attack (which includes stealth ships). As in *World of Warships*, there's a lot of customisation available too, including alternative weaponry, equipment and crew members to select from.

Once you're in a battle, it's probably nearest to *World of Warships* and *World of Tanks* in how it plays, save for it's in true 3D, with your position defined relative to floating asteroids and space stations. To make 3D tactical combat workable, Edge Case settled on a sector-based movement. Each sector is like its own small arena or lane, complete with capture points, within which you can move around – but you need to jump between sectors, meaning each team has to balance its defensive and offensive commitment. The ultimate aim is to jump to your opponents' home sector and capture their base.

Unlike *World of Tanks* and like *DOTA* or *LoL*, you get resources during battle, which are applied to upgrade their in-battle ship. There's a metagame sitting on top of this where you gain currency in battle to unlock new ship loadouts and new ships.

PREMIUM CONTENT

The game has been in Early Access for 18 months but when it comes out it'll be free to play, while premium ships and currency are already on sale in an in-game store. Mummery is philosophical about this. "It was important to us that premium ships were never better in-game than the 'parent' ships that players unlock through play," he says. "The games you put money into are the ones you feel earned it, the ones you put 50, 100 or 200 hours into. At that point, there's a sense all you need is a reason to put money back into it – it might be a cool skin or a way to progress faster – but the game has to earn that right by being fun."

Does *Fractured Space* earn that right? It definitely looks the part – detailed, cyclopean warships blasting each other apart is what the Unreal Engine does best. And the 3D battles and ability timings do seem to offer a more complex tactical format to the practically 2D world of X games. By contrast, balance, stability and the economy are still very much Early Access. Will *Fractured Space* will shatter the MOBA field? It remains to be seen.

Dan Griliopoulos



"HEAVIES ARE OUR LARGEST SHIPS – THEY'RE THE HARDEST TO DESTROY"

PREVIEW

Tokyo 42

CITY'S SKYLINE

This is the prologue area. The full game will be six to seven times larger, and just as intricately constructed. The environment is packed with detail, and full of references to cyberpunk films.

SOCIAL SPACE

Multiplayer takes its cues from *Assassin's Creed*, with players pretending to be NPCs in the hope of tricking their target. You're able to shift your appearance to help blend in with the crowd.

NEED TO KNOW

RELEASE
TBA

PUBLISHER
Mode 7 Games

DEVELOPER
SMAC Games

LINK
www.tokyo42.com

TOKYO 42

FIRST
LOOK

Grand theft action in the clouds

Usually I'd avoid defining a game based on its similarities to other games. For *Tokyo 42*, it feels appropriate. That's because SMAC Games's Maciek Strychalski isn't shy about such comparisons. As he shows me the prologue of *Tokyo 42*, he delights in pointing out references and naming sources of inspiration. "We're just stealing from all of the games that we've loved, because designing games is really hard," he says, laughing.

Tokyo 42 contains elements of *Grand Theft Auto*, *Far Cry*, *Hitman*, *Splinter Cell* and *Assassin's Creed*. It combines many of the best parts of many of the best action games into a single, beautiful package. It offers shooting, stealth and open-ended solutions, all contained in a colourful cyberpunk world. It may not be the most original set of systems, but they're all being meshed together into something that feels fresh and new.

Phil Savage

**OUT HOUSE**

Some buildings offer a challenge similar to *Far Cry*'s outposts. This is where the stealth comes in, letting you take out enemies unseen. Alternatively, go loud and use cover to stay safe.

NAKED GUN

Tokyo 42's campaign will be linear, and missions are undertaken for a variety of factions found throughout the city. Down here you'll find the liberated hangout of the city's nudist faction.



Even priests are fooled by Holmes' crucifix disguise.

NEED TO KNOW

RELEASE
TBC

DEVELOPER
Frogwares

PUBLISHER
Big Ben Interactive

LINK
www.bit.ly/SherlockGames

SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE DEVIL'S DAUGHTER

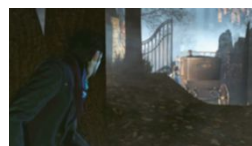
The consulting detective returns for more sleuthing and solving

Sherlock Holmes: Crimes & Punishments proved a much more successful game than previous releases in the series, generally respected for its grittier, more modern treatment of the world's greatest detective. Now it's follow-up time and a lot of new fans are looking nervously at the coming sequel. What does *The Devil's Daughter* have to offer?

PLAYED
IT

For the most part, a sense of consequence. "In this one we wanted to make it feel more meaningful," Alexandre Sainsily, software product manager at Big Ben Interactive, told me. "In this one all of the consequences of your choices are going to carry on, so if you make a wrong decision, you'll have to live with that."

Most of this involvement comes from a fifth 'meta case', which starts from the beginning of the game and runs alongside the other four cases – taking in elements as you solve them.



There's also a whole lot more to do in a slightly more open world. This becomes apparent as soon as you step outside Holmes' Baker Street lodgings and explore. You're able to take part in activities ranging from boxing to arm-wrestling and even shooting bottles.

These skills will come in useful, because Sherlock can't just use his brain anymore: there are several action scenes where the great detective is required to brawl, chase or just straight up shoot problems. Most of the time this works well, and it's a nice break after a couple of heavy puzzles.

I came away with mixed feelings. One thing I really enjoyed is that you actually feel like a detective. A beautiful mind map shows everything you know, and you draw

fibrous connections snaking from point to point to make your conclusions.

SHERLOCK HOLES

Less good was that sometimes the game didn't believe I was a detective and made me show my working out. After finding a leaflet hidden inside someone's coat that pointed to a nearby pub, I ran down there to get to the bottom of the mystery. The bar remained closed; Holmes refused to enter. Ten minutes later, I returned to the leaflet, and investigated a weird stain on the back. "Looks like glue," said Holmes, and now I could go to the pub. It was a weird moment, and made me feel less like Holmes, more like Inspector Clouseau.

Most of the time, you shouldn't have any problems. The standard easy mode allows you to skip any puzzles or investigations you think are too tough, but for the purists there's now a hard mode that takes away that crutch. The biggest surprise is that I often found myself wrong and the game was happy to let me fail. In an age of formulaic puzzle games, that was unexpected and enjoyable.

Jake Tucker

THE GREAT DETECTIVE CAN BRAWL, CHASE OR JUST STRAIGHT UP SHOOT PROBLEMS

FROM EVERYDAY TASKS TO EVERY GAMER'S DREAM

mesh
award winning PCs • 1987



visit www.meshcomputers.com
for the latest **Mesh offers and discounts**



You can follow us on:



*"packed to the brim
with some of the best
hardware you can lay
your hands on."*



Elite Diablo PCG

£1599 Inc. VAT &
Free Delivery

- Intel® Core™ i7 6700K Processor
- ASUS ROG Maximus VIII Formula V1.0 Z170 Gaming Motherboard
- 6GB ASUS GTX 980Ti Strix graphics
- Fast 16GB DDR4 2400MHz Memory
- In Win 805C Red/Black Aluminium Case
- Microsoft Windows® 10 Home
- Lifetime Gold Warranty*



Available
Chassis
colours



Go online for full details



*"One of the most
powerful mini PCs
we've ever seen."*



Voyager Mini CS

£1029 Inc. VAT &
Free Delivery

- Intel® Core™ i7 6700K Processor
- ASUS Pro Gaming Z170I - Mini ITX Skylake Motherboard
- 4GB ASUS NVIDIA GTX 970 graphics
- Fast 16GB DDR4 2400MHz Memory
- Fractal Design Node 304 Case
- Microsoft Windows® 10 Home
- Lifetime Gold Warranty*



Includes
Free Game
Tom Clancy's
The Division



Go online for full details



*"With great features
and build, and bags of
upgrade potential, this
Mesh PC comes highly
recommended."*



Elite Skylake PCA

£999 Inc. VAT &
Free Delivery

- Intel® Core™ i5 6600K Processor
- Gigabyte GAZ170X Gaming 3 Motherboard
- 4GB ASUS NVIDIA GTX 970 graphics
- Fast 16GB DDR4 2400MHz Memory
- Aero Cool DS200 Mid Tower Case
- Microsoft Windows® 10 Home
- Lifetime Gold Warranty*

Available
Chassis
colours



Includes
Free Game
Tom Clancy's
The Division



Go online for full details

17.3" ROG G752VY i7-Ultimate **£1999**

£200 OFF Inc. VAT &
WAS £2199 Free Delivery

- Intel® Core™ i7-6700HQ Processor
- 17.3" Anti-glare FHD (1920x1080)
- 4GB NVIDIA GTX 980M Graphics
- 64GB DDR4 2133MHz Memory
- 1TB 7200rpm HDD + 1TB SSD
- Blu-Ray RW Optical Drive
- Microsoft Windows® 10 Home
- 1 Year Manufacturers Warranty

Go online for full details



18.4" SLI GT80S i7-6920 Extreme **£4299**

£200 OFF Inc. VAT &
WAS £4499 Free Delivery

- Intel® Core™ i7-6920HQ Processor
- 18.4" LCD FHD IPS (1920x1080)
- 2x 8GB NVIDIA GTX 980 SLI Graphics
- 64GB DDR4 2133MHz Memory
- 1TB 7200rpm HDD + 1TB SSD
- Blu-Ray RW Optical Drive
- Microsoft Windows® 10 Home
- 2 Years Manufacturers Warranty

Go online for full details



✉ sales@meshcomputers.com ☎ 020 8955 0731 🌐 www.meshcomputers.com

0% FINANCE - BUY NOW, PAY MAY 2017 Terms and conditions apply

Now Accepting
PayPal

Please Read: Sales subject to terms & conditions (copy available on our website). Advert does not form part of a contract. Pictures shown for illustration purposes only - colours may vary. Full specifications available online. Microsoft and Windows are registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and other countries. All trademarks are acknowledged. At Mesh our PCs are custom built, fully burn-tested with professional CPU overclocking options - Free overclock configuration is available for an unlocked CPU and when a liquid CPU cooler is selected. 0% Finance - Pay 10% deposit, and pay the rest off within 12 months and pay no interest. *Lifetime Gold Warranty - Lifetime Labour, 2 Year Parts, 1 Year Free Collect & Return. Sales line open Monday - Friday 9am - 6pm. Online ordering 24x7. Prices and specification correct at time of going to press on 12/4/16. E&OE.

Frozen Synapse 2



Prediction: he's never going to make it.

NEED TO KNOW

RELEASE
2016

DEVELOPER
Mode 7 Games

PUBLISHER
In-house

LINK
www.frozensynapse2.com

FROZEN
SYNAPSE 2

Turn-based tactical combat moves to the big city

The first *Frozen Synapse* was an excellent turn-based tactical strategy about simultaneous action. The challenge was in predicting your opponent's movement and to respond accordingly. Clear combat rules and a turn preview function let you engineer the ideal outcome, but only if you'd correctly anticipated your enemy's plan. Deception and deduction were your weapons. Also assault rifles and shotguns.

Frozen Synapse 2 will offer more multiplayer modes and unit types. A new reactive orders system will expand the tactical possibilities by allowing you to use conditional commands – specifying an action to take if an opposing unit makes a specific move. As a multiplayer game, the action will be expanded and refined.

It's your typical sequel stuff: more, deeper, better. But there's another addition that, if done correctly, will provide a more strategic, replayable campaign. Rather than the standard, linear set of levels, *Frozen Synapse 2*'s singleplayer is set across a sandbox city. It's a city under siege – beset by a powerful external force making regular incursions across the map.

Mode 7's aim is to create a living, emergent space. As such, *Frozen Synapse 2* will have a variety of factions representing a diverse range of interests. There are banking factions, religious factions and terrorist factions. There's even a faction of bakers. Each faction has its own ideology and personality, and each wants to handle the external threat in their

own way. Some want to study it, others worship it and others plan to harness its power as a weapon of their own.

While factions can be at odds, *Frozen Synapse 2* isn't a game about painting the city your colour. You can acquire buildings, but you'll likely only ever own three or four at most. Instead, the factions are important for providing a sense of drama and purpose to a campaign. They're also a potential source of money. At first, only a few jobs will be available – delivering packages, for instance, or taking out terrorists. But as your reputation with a faction grows, more sensitive and potentially lucrative jobs will unlock. Interaction with faction leaders is handled through a conversation system inspired by *Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri*.

Factions will provide texture to the world. Each has a personality, and will pursue their goals regardless of the player's own interactions. If you're on a parcel delivery job, another faction may send a team to retrieve the item. If successful, a level will be generated based on the patch of road you were intercepted on. Factions will also have relationships with each other. Should you, for whatever reason, decide to fund the bakers, they will eventually raise an army of their own. Their target? The parcel delivery guys, who they inexplicably despise.

FIRST
LOOK

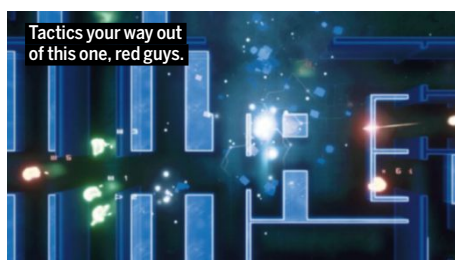
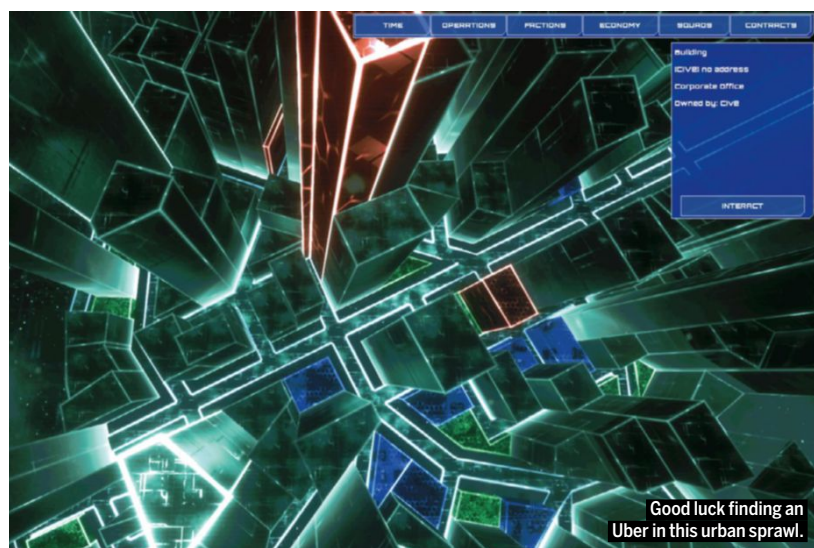
CITY GUIDE

With so much happening in the city, it could easily become overwhelming. An alert system has been implemented to help guide players through the action. Players are still free to go off on their own adventures – hunting terrorists, robbing banks, chatting to bakers – but, by responding to the pop-up alerts, you're able to easily respond to the most important events.

This strategic layer offers more context to the tactical combat encounters – providing a reason to fight that's defined in part by your own high-level plans. It also gives *Frozen Synapse 2* longevity beyond the multiplayer. Successive playthroughs will be a chance to court different factions – potentially making new, surprising discoveries as you explore the shifting, uneasy politics of a city under siege.

Phil Savage

THEIR TARGET? THE PARCEL
DELIVERY GUYS, WHO THEY
INEXPLICABLY DESPISE



Zombie Night Terror



Those arrow icons are used to guide your horde around.

NEED TO KNOW

RELEASE
July

DEVELOPER
NoClip

PUBLISHER
Gambitious

LINK
www.zombienightterror.com

ZOMBIE NIGHT TERROR

A zombie game with a twist

There are so many zombie games on PC, the idea of playing another is probably already making your brain glaze over. I felt the same when I loaded up *Zombie Night Terror*, but was surprised to find a genuinely fresh, imaginative take on the genre. It reverses the usual roles and has you control an army of the undead rather than fight one.

The best way to think of the game is like *Lemmings*, but directed by George A Romero. You don't control the zombies directly; you guide them by clicking icons that determine where they'll move and what doors they'll break down. They walk back and forth like, well, zombies, and it's only through your intervention that you can usher them around the map and towards the screaming humans.

Your goal is to clear the map of all survivors. When a zombie bites one, they join the horde, but things get tricky when you start facing people with guns. A handful of zombies won't stand a chance against a dude with a shotgun, but direct the entire horde towards him and he'll be overwhelmed. I love watching the level descend into chaos as my zombies bite people and spread the virus, and fountains of pixel-blood paint the monochrome levels with splashes of crimson.

When you start a level there won't be any zombies, but you're given the ability to infect people at will. Choosing where to do this is a tactical decision. You can only infect a few people, so you can't just turn

all the gun-toting survivors into zombies at a stroke. Positioning your horde is the key to efficiently clearing a level. The animation of a survivor being bitten or infected and mutating into a zombie is hilariously gruesome.

Early stages, such as city streets and apartment blocks, are relatively simple to clear, but things get tougher when you have to infect an underground military base full of armed soldiers.

PIXEL PERFECT

Luckily, you have the ability to mutate your zombies. Some mutations are practical, such as being able to change the direction one zombie is walking at any point in the level. Others are more entertaining, such as transforming a zombie into a hulking *Left 4 Dead*-style brute and watching them stampede through groups of humans. These cost DNA, which is earned either by eating people or sacrificing some of your horde. This gives the game a satisfying layer of strategic depth.

I had seven levels in my preview build, but the final game will have around forty. And as well as the basic objective of clearing the level of all humans, there are optional challenges that will take some skill to complete. For example, finishing a level using a certain number of zombies or doing so without using any mutators.

Don't be fooled by the simple pixel art in these screenshots. In motion, *Zombie Night Terror* looks incredible. The animation is smooth, detailed, and loaded with personality, giving those blocky zombies and survivors more life than static images can do justice to. I love the real-time lighting too, which casts lurching shadows of your zombies on the scenery as they shamle around.

The black-and-white art style gives the game a stylish B-movie feel, and the dialogue is amusingly tongue-in-cheek. Some light story elements include TV sets that show news reports charting the progress of the zombie outbreak and brief cutscenes setting up each level.

It's always nice to be surprised by a game, and now I feel bad about my automatic weary cynicism towards zombie-based indie games. *Zombie Night Terror* is a cool spin on a tired genre.

Andy Kelly

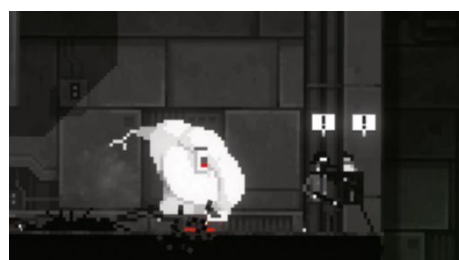
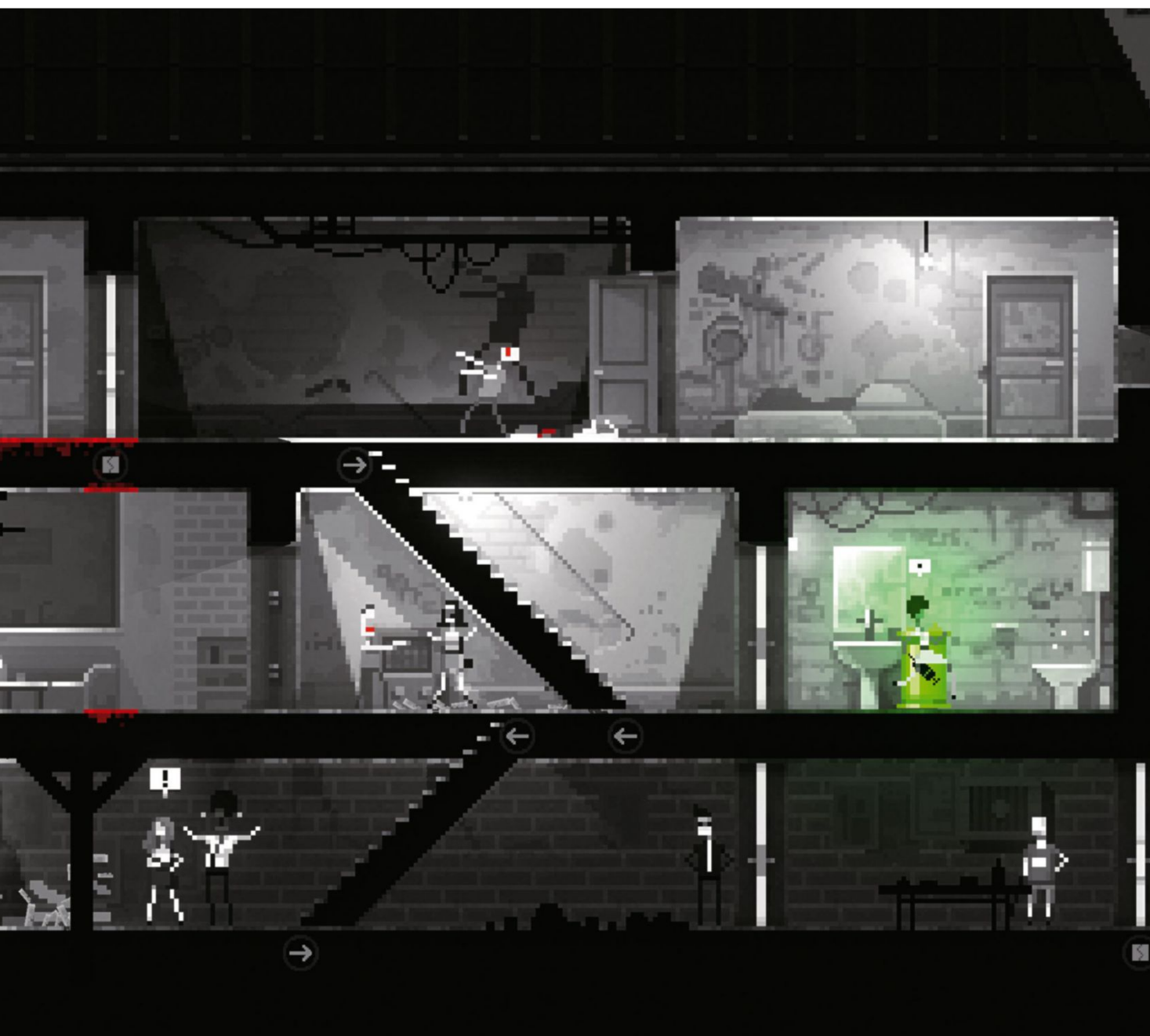


Guns are no match for groups of zombies.



PLAYED IT

YOU'RE CONTROLLING AN ARMY OF THE UNDEAD RATHER THAN FIGHTING ONE



COVER FEATURE

Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War III

**WORLD
EXCLUSIVE
ACCESS**



ONLY WAR

DAWN OF WAR III goes back to its roots to bring us the series' biggest battles yet.

By Tom Senior

T

he Space Marine and Eldar forces meet on

the ice. This is it, the moment that *Dawn of War* fans have waited a decade to see. *Dawn of War*'s sequels shunned huge armies, focusing on intricate tactical exchanges between a small collection of customisable heroes. They were great games that understood the appeal of the action RTS years before the

MOBA explosion, but the fiddly gear-meddling and complex small-scale engagements always sat uneasily with the fiction. If Warhammer 40,000 is about one thing, it's about huge armies clashing in the 41st millennium. As the Eldar and Space Marines open fire in a glittering exchange of lasers and bolter blasts, it's immediately obvious that *Dawn of War III* is a game about exactly that. »

WORLD
EXCLUSIVE
ACCESS



What happens inside these tiny buildings? The great mystery of the RTS.

» In the centre of the line about half a dozen Space Marine tactical squads open fire on the mass of Eldar warriors. On the left flank, Space Marine heavy weapons teams train their lascannon beams on the towering living bone constructs the Eldar use as shock troops. Eldar Banshees shriek as they charge the power-armoured Space Marine general Gabriel Angelos, but are quickly repelled by the spinning strike of his huge warhammer. It's a chaotic, colourful show of futuristic violence that will delight anyone who likes Warhammer, lasers, and English voice actors pretending to be genetically modified warrior spacemen.

As he directs the action, game director Philippe Bouille explains Relic's mission statement: "We spent a lot of time looking back at our previous games to see what were the best parts that we wanted to extract, what were the things that still resonated ten years on. The major things there were: we wanted to take the epic scale of *Dawn of War I*, the large over-the-top battles, and inject into that the awesome heroes from *Dawn of War II*."

Reflecting this merging of influences, Relic views *Dawn of War III* armies in terms of 'line' and 'elite' tiers. Line units are produced at bases, which make a return from *Dawn of War I*. For Space Marines, that means tactical

marines, heavy weapon squads, assault squads and the Dreadnought mechs. They exist to establish the front in an engagement and use a hail of fire to whittle down the enemy.

Elite units are a more complex proposition. You choose three elites before the battle starts, and they vary from hero figures like Gabriel Angelos to high-impact troops like the teleporting, hammer-wielding Assault Terminators. These units level up as you use them over the course of a campaign, and are designed to let you

craft a playstyle. Two Space Marine armies fielding different hero units will have very different strengths and weaknesses, and a different power curve over time. Relic has crafted early-game elites to support rush strategies, and monstrous late game elites for players who prefer to endure, build, and then crush in a huge decisive confrontation. "You'll be playing with them again and again and unlocking different things," says Bouille. "Our intent is less that you will spend your entire career micromanaging the

In 40K, always bet on the guy with the biggest hammer.



heroes, and more that you will collect a whole bunch of them that you want to play with.”

HEAVY HITTER

On the field they are hard to miss. Gabriel Angelos sends enemies flying with wide swings of his weapon, named ‘Godsplitter’. He has a collection of abilities that reward skilful micromanagement. His somersaulting overhead smash can propel him up cliffs, and the impact scatters units with a single blow. He also has a spinning strike and a shield ability that bounces

your opponent constantly has to factor-in the risk of a sudden unit drop.

In motion, *Dawn of War III* looks and sounds spectacular. The art style reflects the bright colours of the tabletop game rather than the darker tone of 40K lore. The bright red armour of the Space Marines, and the green and white of the Eldar, pop luminously against the ice-blue backdrop of the glacier. It’s not just aesthetics, this is part of a project-wide commitment to “accessibility”, a word that comes up over and over again in discussions with the designers. This

LOAD UNITS INTO THREE SEPARATE PODS, THEN SMASH THEM INTO A FIGHT FROM ORBIT

projectiles back at enemies. It’s interesting to see how these *Dawn of War II*-style elite heroes operate alongside an army. Boulle shapes the line units and lets them pour ammo into the enemy autonomously for a while as he steers Angelos toward new victims. The line units sustain the fight; the elite units finish it with brutal, decisive strikes.

If you lose an elite unit, you have to wait for their cooldown timer to reset before you can bring them back to the battlefield. Space Marines can do this with particular style using drop pods. Load units into three separate pods, then smash them into a fight from orbit. Once grounded, preferably on top of the bloody remains of an enemy unit, pods deploy your units directly to the fight then self destruct on a short timer. The Relic devs say this is particularly effective in multiplayer games, where

doctrine dictates that every aspect of the game be clear and readable. Relic wants the visual language of a fight to present a hierarchy of threats in an instantly understandable way. The Fire Prism hover tank shooting the big scary lasers at your Dreadnought will be doing more damage than the Eldar Warriors and their hail of weakly sparkling shuriken fire. Each weapon type fires easily identifiable projectiles that clearly show where damage is being directed between armies.

Here Relic has learned from watching players tackle their famously challenging World War II series, *Company of Heroes*. “At the pro level of play, in the previous games the pro players had to develop all these skills where they were reading all these minor cues and filtering out the most impressive thing on screen,” Boulle says. “With the grenade throw they

LEFT
Shoulder pads may have finally gone too far.

IMPERIAL MARCH *Every unit has a role*

1 THE IMPERIAL KNIGHT

Ranged elite that overheats occasionally.

2 GABRIEL ANGELOS

Close combat elite with a lightning hammer.

3 ASSAULT TERMINATORS

Close combat elites that can teleport.



4 DEVASTATORS

Line ranged unit with huge laser cannons.

5 TACTICAL MARINES

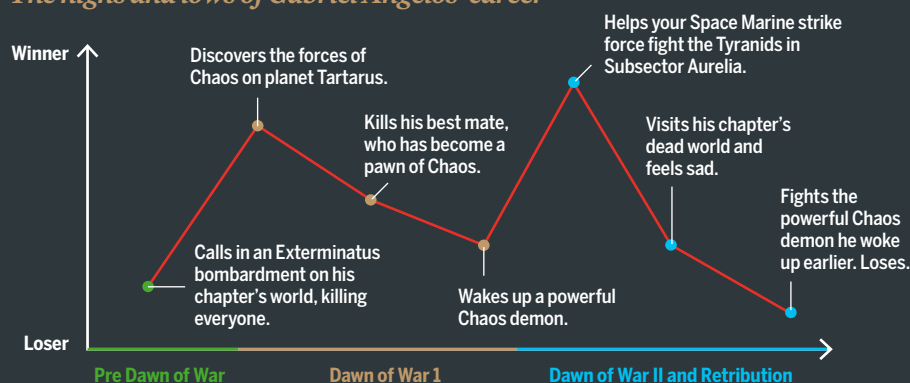
Line ranged unit with access to flammies and plasma guns.

6 ASSAULT MARINES

Line close combat unit that can jetpack into combat.

WELCOME BACK, COMMANDER

The highs and lows of Gabriel Angelos' career



» were reading a slight squad movement that could indicate you're throwing a grenade. When you're on the receiving end what's important is seeing the grenade coming so you can react. It's the tell that counts. We've spent a lot of time putting the love back in that tell. You'll see later on, the Eldar will throw grenades at us and they have a nice little swirl that really catches the eye."

RED ALERT

This approach even extends to ability cooldowns. Space Marine tactical squads can be upgraded with either flamers or plasma weapons. The latter deliver increased damage, but overheat after a while, glowing bright red when they're out of action.

Showcasing game mechanics in this way encourages players to focus on the battlefield rather than abstract UI icons. *Dawn of War III* sacrifices close-up detail to service this, ensuring that battles look spectacular from the

standard player perspective, suspended high over the battle.

Relic has made other changes to make battlefields easier to parse, and to create extra space for large forces. Cover has been radically changed as a result. Relic's smaller-scale RTS games are dense with buildings and low walls to hide behind. In the demo the fight took place on large crumbling ice sheets. "Trying to line everyone up on one side of a wall is just frustrating, so we wanted a system that was much more binary. You're either in cover, or you're not. You're either fully protected, or you're not protected."

Cover points are represented by circular barricades. Move a unit into a cover pen and they capture it and throw up a shield that deflects projectiles. This simplified system gives new purpose to *Dawn of War III*'s melee units, who now serve as a hard counter against entrenched positions. Boulle demonstrates by ordering a

squad of Assault Marines to attack Eldar warriors hiding behind their shield dome. The Space Marines use their jetpacks to dive into the middle of the squad, leaving streaks of yellow flame in their wake. Inside the barricades, they use their chainswords to dismember the Eldar in clouds of blood. The effect is one of having released Velociraptors into a sheep pen. The Marines quickly claim the cover.

This Killer Kan is the only look we've had at the Orks so far.



WORLD
EXCLUSIVE
ACCESS

May the team
with the fattest
lasers win.

The Space Marines have another huge surprise for the beleaguered Eldar. Relic call it a super-elite, for very obvious reasons. The Imperial Knight is a towering humanoid mech with Gatling guns for arms. The Gatling guns have flamethrowers on them, because this is Warhammer 40K. "They deserve special attention because they are the biggest, the best units, you've ever seen in *Dawn of War*, and I'm so proud to have them out there," says Boulle, happily. "Once you get them on the field they become one of your two hands. They're my right hand and the rest of my army is my left hand. I build up to one-two punches with that."

TOMORROW KNIGHT

The Imperial Knight is a stunning showpiece. The screen shakes with every step. Its Gatling guns glow red and then white with the heat of sustained fire. After a period of relentless slaughter the mech overheats. Rather than putting the Knight out of action, overheating causes it to deal even more damage. Two exhaust ports on the Knight's back start spitting fire. The shell casings spraying in arcs from the spinning guns start to glow white. It's clear to everyone on the battlefield: the giant robot is freaking out, it's time to back up and find some cover.

The Knight serves as an elite, just like Gabriel Angelos and the Terminators. That means you can level it up in the singleplayer campaign to unlock new abilities. A couple of these are shown in the demo: a raking Gatling gun attack that focuses fire on a forward cone area, and a missile attack that lets you specify six targets for a barrage. When the Knight is overheating, these missiles leave pools of flame on impact that continue to

going to see it from different perspectives," campaign lead Brent Disbrow tells me. "In some ways the actions of one race are going to further the agenda of the other race and vice versa so there are these narrative threads that we introduce and weave throughout, connecting mission to mission. Something you do in one mission might set something up for the next mission, which you'll be playing as a different race."

THE GATLING GUNS HAVE FLAMETHROWERS ON THEM, BECAUSE THIS IS WARHAMMER 40K

burn enemies for a while. "It can devastate heavy cover, it can take out bigger units, you can drop all six on the same spot and wreck it," Boulle says.

Dawn of War III's trio of races – Space Marines, Eldar and Orks – will each have a super unit, though the Ork and Eldar variants are yet to be shown. Every race will have heroes and elite units to collect and level up. All are playable in the campaign, which alternates between races with each mission. "There's one story, and we're

The setup for the story is comparatively straightforward. The three forces have converged on an icy planet rumoured to hide a mysterious superweapon. "When they do find that weapon they're going to be unpleasantly surprised by a terrible threat that I can't really talk about," says Disbrow. The Warhammer 40,000 universe is approximately 80% terrible threats, so fans can speculate freely about Necron, Tyranid and Chaos doomsday scenarios.

COVER FEATURE

Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War III

» The campaign structure allows for some interesting twists. Relic wants to use fluctuating perspective to give you a greater overall understanding of the plot than the Space Marine, Eldar and Ork generals under your command. As such, it's an RTS campaign that thrives on dramatic irony, and letting each character experience setbacks without the player ever being forced to fail. "If you need Gabriel to learn a lesson, you don't lose, but if you're playing as the Eldar you can beat Gabriel. You're still winning, you still feel it, but there's that moment. I think that's one of the strengths of this campaign."

CRASH COURSE

The campaign also acts as a "sub rosa tutorial", to use Relic parlance, quietly introducing new elites and mechanics between missions, and giving players a sense of each race's strengths and weaknesses. The team wants you to graduate from singleplayer to multiplayer with a good understanding of every race's units and capabilities. With a small cast of characters and a straightforward premise, it's also designed to be an introduction to the Warhammer 40,000 universe for players who have never seen a Space Marine before. In an era when younger players can't necessarily afford an army of miniatures, projects such as *Dawn of War III* must serve as a gateway.

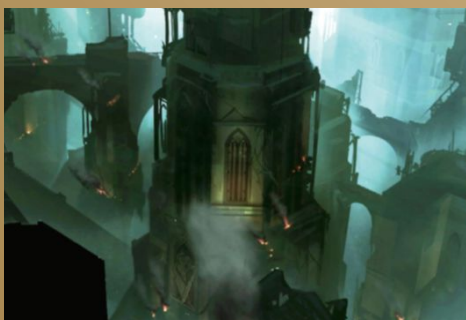
"With the 40K universe, when you come to it, we have this goal: we want



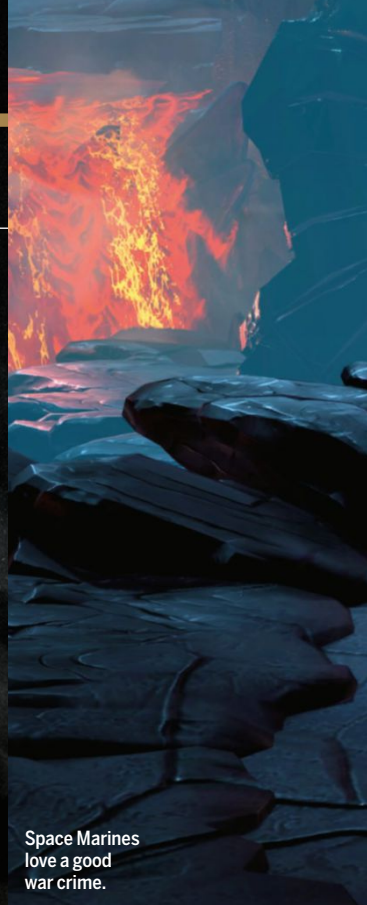
ABOVE
You won't just be fighting on ice sheets.

RIGHT
Gothic flair, but awful local amenities.

BELOW
Scare your enemies with a Loch Ness Monster logo.



Never invite Space Marines to drop in.



Space Marines love a good war crime.

WORLD
EXCLUSIVE
ACCESS



to bring more players into strategy games,” says Disbrow. “When you look at the Warhammer 40K universe it’s got such a great, interesting depth and lore to it that can be intimidating. It was intimidating to me when I started.

“One of the goals for the campaign was to make it equally friendly to people coming onboard. We’ve got these green monsters with chainsaws and the Eldar, the elves. We’ve got these really cool races that have got these really cool abilities and actions, and you can just take it at that, right? That’s your entry point.”

The colourful units, spectacular super weapons and large armies are designed to catch the eye of anyone who enjoys flashy sci-fi, in any medium. If the armies and the super-elites don’t do it, then the sight of a huge orbital space laser attack might.

This is the most audacious aspect of the Space Marines’ ‘death from above’ playstyle. Assault Marines jetpack into combat, drop pods outflank enemies and, if needed, a huge blast from a giant orbiting space laser finishes the job. At the end of the demo Bouille calls in a strike on the massed Eldar. A huge beam of energy crashes down into the

map with a noise that executive producer Stephen MacDonald later vocalises as “Tzzt-BWOOOM”. Bouille controls the beam, guiding it across the Eldar force as though it was a unit. As it passes, Eldar are sucked upwards. They catch fire and dissolve into ash.

“This is the super ability of the Space Marines,” says Bouille as he disintegrates a dozen more Eldar

landing area, triggering a game of ‘let’s not be under that giant laser’ as you find the attack and quickly manoeuvre units to safety.

Relic’s talent for spectacle gives *DoW III* instant appeal, even in this short demo. The explosions are punchy, the dismemberments gratuitous, in a cartoon way. The animations are already excellent. The Eldar Howling

IF NEEDED, A HUGE BLAST FROM A GIANT ORBITING SPACE LASER FINISHES THE JOB



warriors. “Every race has their own version of it.” The more enemies the beam kills, the fatter and slower it becomes. This makes no logical sense, of course, but in the context of a universe in which people attach flamethrowers to Gatling guns, it’s part of the fun, and adds an element of counter-play to the attack. The flash and noise will be obvious even if you’re not looking directly at the strike’s

Banshees charge in a low stance, blades extended behind them like ninjas in a Zhang Yimou flick. They break like water around the Space Marines, who move in mechanised marching patterns. Relic has spent 12 years capturing the essence of Warhammer 40K’s over-the-top units. It’s a pleasure to watch them take to the field once again, even if just to be immolated by a giant laser from space. ■

TRUE OR FALSE *How much do you know about the Emperor’s finest?*

1

Space Marines have two hearts.

2

Space Marines have three lungs.

3

Space Marines have an organ that heals cuts in moments.

4

Space Marines can sleep using half their brain at a time.

5

Space Marines have a synthetic stomach that can eat anything.

6

Space Marines can spit acid.

7

Space Marines can gain memories from animals they eat.

Answers: True, true, true, true, true, true, true.

EDGE OF TOMORROW

After a wait of almost eight years, **MIRROR'S EDGE CATALYST** reinvents the first-person platformer. *By Samuel Roberts*

For almost eight years we've lived in a world with infinite *Assassin's Creeds* but just one *Mirror's Edge*. What's fair about that? The series with free-running that's almost entirely automated with one button becomes a runaway success, while the far more intricate, complex alternative doesn't get a look in. Thankfully, digital sales and speedrunners have kept *Mirror's Edge* alive, and what we have in *Catalyst* is a sequel that feels more like what the first game should've been.

Reflecting on my three or so hours of playing *Catalyst*, it feels less like a follow-up in the traditional sense and more like starting again with the same ideas. What if that intricate first-person platforming was brought to an open-world playground, and introduced in a fashion that didn't scare newbies away with its complexity? *Catalyst* shows that DICE is confident it knows what the original *Mirror's Edge* was about, and instead tweaks what didn't entirely work about that game: the combat and the story.

The more substantial change is that this is now an open-world game, rather than a series of long tunnels. Missions take place seamlessly within the same gigantic environment and you'll find yourself running over the same places frequently but searching out new routes along the way. It's a better framework for the ideas behind *Mirror's Edge*.

It's familiar to play for series fans. You run up walls, climb pipes, hop over small obstacles and slide under barriers, keeping your momentum up. What's different is some of the abilities you start with from the first game – such as twisting 180 degrees instantly, or lifting Faith's legs mid-jump to get over an object faster, or the wonderfully satisfying last-second saving roll during a big fall – are all unlocked as upgrades. This ensures the player isn't forced to learn too much at once, letting them get to grips with the platforming's many elements individually before introducing more. If you're an amateur, you've got an easier way into the game, and if you're an expert, it only takes about an hour to progress Faith to where she was in the original.

I ask producer Amo Mostofi how much this idea is directed at new players. "As we re-evaluated the entire game, we knew there were things we needed to

improve from the first game. And certainly the player onboarding, and teaching new players the ropes, we had to look at quite seriously. So that is part of that thinking – to put it into a skill tree where people

could unlock them early on, they could essentially learn how to use those skills. They didn't have to learn it by themselves and discover it. It was more a case of showcasing that it's here, you can unlock it."

The opening area of *Catalyst* is a lot like the early levels of the first game: white surfaces and primary colours. DICE isn't saying how big the map is, but it's

IT FEELS LESS LIKE A FOLLOW-UP AND MORE LIKE STARTING AGAIN WITH THE SAME IDEAS

Mirror's Edge Catalyst

LEFT This is Faith's origin story, but that's the game's least exciting part.





teased locations with different colour palettes, and when I played around with the map I could set waypoints for places that are miles away. I'd estimate the opening area is about one-quarter or one-fifth of the total playing space, and there's more than enough in this one zone to support three to four hours of the story, along with potentially infinite amounts of time tinkering with the new user-generated time trials.

A KICK AND A PUNCH

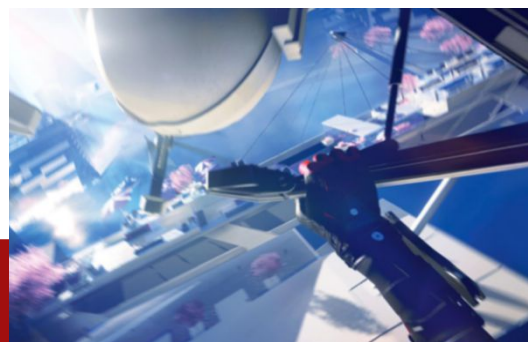
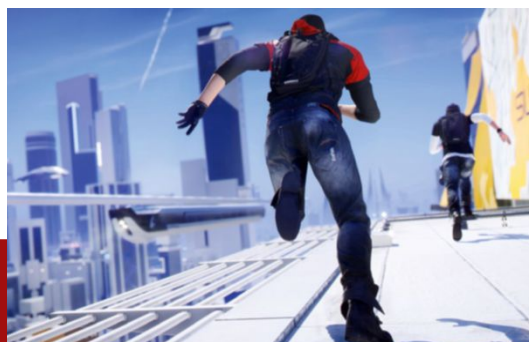
There are no guns this time. Well, no guns you can fire, anyway – enemies have them. But the melee combat has been revamped so there are two variants depending on whether you're sprinting or in close quarters. If you're bombing through a level at full pace, Faith can instantly knock guards out with one punch, though you're not always in a position to do this if you're in a more enclosed space with multiple guards. In that case, you use kicks to make enemies fall into other guards and can dodge their attacks in all directions by using a satisfying shift manoeuvre.

In using this dodge move, you're circling enemies before moving in for the knockout blow. Faith can

kick enemies left or right to get a positional advantage. It feels particularly heroic when an enemy raises their weapon at the start of a fight only to be booting off a building to their death. Melee combat becomes more about managing enemy locations than the more simple disarming/sliding kick fighting did in the first game. DICE has clearly thought hard about how to make these encounters interesting even if you're not on the run. What you end up with is something that feels a bit like playing a straightforward first-person fighting game.

"We looked at a number of solutions," Mostofi says, "and what made the most sense was using what's strong about *Mirror's Edge* and that's the movement and building Faith's ability to fight into her movement system. So now instead of disarming someone using their weapon, you're using Faith as a projectile." The team at DICE knew that wouldn't be quite enough to sustain a campaign in *Catalyst*, however. "Bursting through people? That's tremendous fun, but you don't want to do it for the whole game. So having that variety in the combat was important, so the shift move you can use to strafe

ABOVE
Faith's
moveset is
considerably
expanded.



LEFT
Well-dressed
men don't
improve
Mirror's Edge.

RIGHT
Some levels
have you
chasing
drones.

SAME, BUT DIFFERENT *The platforming feels familiar, but here's what DICE has changed*



NO GUNS

Some enemies still have them, but Faith never carries them, and the disarm move from the original seems to be gone.



OPEN WORLD

The City of Glass is now an immense web of obstacles to freeroaming, designed to be jogged across in any way you see fit.



FIGHTING

Positioning is everything if you're standing still. If you're running, Faith knocks enemies down one by one.



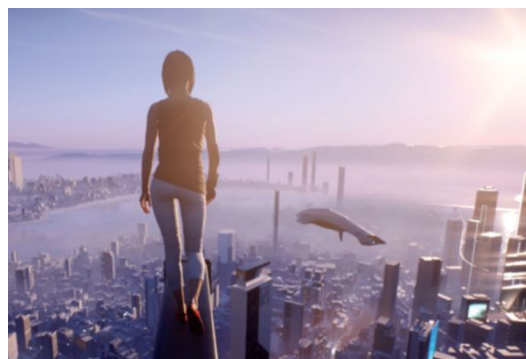
LEADERBOARDS & TIME TRIALS

Time trials lived in a separate mode to the story in the first game. Here, they're dotted throughout the city.



STORY

This is a *Tomb Raider* 2013-style hard reboot, but it still features annoying characters wearing trendy clothes.



LEFT
Mind out for the shiny dystopia soldiers.

RIGHT
It's not a GTA-sized world, but it seems big.

around people, or pull back, double tap on shift [gives you] a bit of situational awareness, space between you and the enemy. All of that is something you can build a bit of tactics in for the player."

Better combat and an open world make up *Catalyst's* winning hand for me. The open world works not just as a space to explore, but as the perfect bedrock for the online user-generated challenges DICE has plugged into *Mirror's Edge*. There are rooftop environments designed to be run across from all directions, a series of interlocking routes of platforms, climbing pipes, big jumps and potential wallruns. But the complexity of it really becomes clear when you start creating your own challenges, which can be shared both publicly and with a specific group of friends.

Players run the route they want, setting and dropping time trial markers along the way. After you set the last marker, you're taken back to the start line where you can run your route and set the first score on the

leaderboard. You'll be able to name your challenges in the finished game. I created one that had a couple of big walls to hop over and ended in a wallrun with a drop that could kill players if they didn't perform a roll at the right moment at the end. In the finished game, I plan on recreating this and calling it Deathbringer. When other players beat the time on my own course, it was like finding out my bastard of a son had surpassed me. When I took the top spot back, by figuring out specific changes to my run that sliced milliseconds off the time, it felt so satisfying to put junior back in his place.

This adds potentially unlimited playing time to *Catalyst*. The map is scattered with these online challenges, sorted in popularity by an algorithm. If you're not keen on seeing loads of icons on the map and fancy an isolated, distraction-free run through the story, you can play offline. In these community challenges, I can see a *Mirror's Edge* follow-up that's

truly built for the modern age. The leaderboard-obsessed should be able to play this forever.

SAME OLD STORY

I'm rather taken with *Catalyst*, but despite the gorgeously presented and well-acted cutscenes that replace the dry animated sequences of the original, once again the story hasn't grabbed me. I've always felt *Mirror's Edge* has such superior art direction that no scripted narrative could match the strangeness of that impossibly clean, eerily static city. I think there's a genuine power in that ambiguity that a generic dystopian narrative can only take away from.

In *Catalyst*, Faith's met by a series of trendy-looking men in hoodies with nice haircuts handing out objectives, along with occasional ominous talk

about a man Faith owes money to called Dogen (which is uncomfortably close to the old 'doge' meme for my liking) and a number of factions and corporations. It still feels like waffle to me, but it's possible

I'm influenced by my own preconceptions about *Mirror's Edge* always being a bad match for story. What's at least interesting about it from a series perspective is DICE is deliberately building a lore that can be used for future games – suggesting another *Mirror's Edge* is on the cards. "We've always wanted to have a great story and part of that is because we hope to have something, an IP where we can build on this story," Mostofi says. I hope DICE gets to tell it, because I don't want to wait another eight years for a game as specific and complex as *Mirror's Edge*.

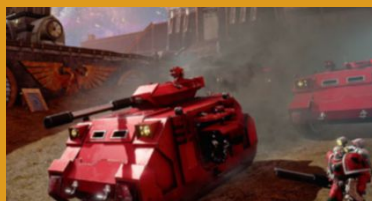
The first game was a true original and *Catalyst* is simply a refined version of that, built for the modern age. I'm unsure whether it can win over fans who bounced off the original, but the mechanisms for easing players into Faith's intricate skillset could prove very effective in getting them over that initial hump. As for those who loved *Mirror's Edge* the first time around, they'll feel right at home. ■

"INSTEAD OF DISARMING SOMEONE, YOU'RE USING FAITH AS A PROJECTILE"





**“WE WANT TO HAVE BATTLES
THAT FEEL APPROPRIATE FOR
THE 40K UNIVERSE”**



LEFT: It's rare to see the 40K universe represented on this scale outside of the realm of real-time strategy.



THE FOREVER WAR

The makers of **WARHAMMER 40,000: ETERNAL CRUSADE** tell us about the MMO-like shooter they're bringing to PC. *By Samuel Roberts*

There's no shortage of Warhammer 40,000 games right now. At one end, you've got the game that graces our cover this month, and at the other you've got 40K games as obscure as chess-alike *Regicide*. *Eternal Crusade* is an ambitious foray into massively online shooter territory that's currently in Early Access, and has been worked on by Behaviour Interactive, founded by former members of *Age of Conan* team Funcom. It looks like a pretty convincing facsimile of the 40K universe, like a slightly nicer version of Relic's *Space Marine*, even though as a shooter it feels like there's a long way to go to completion.

Eternal Crusade's senior producer Nathan Richardson and its lead game designer Brent Ellison, sat down with me at the PC Gamer Weekender in March to talk about their game's origins and how they're replicating certain elements of the tabletop game.

"We started on a concept doc back at Funcom in 2013," says Ellison. "Then at one point our executive moved over to Behaviour and took the project with him, and started it up from there. We started with an early prototype and got some stuff up and running very quickly, and that was when the project was announced and the deals were signed and everything like that."

A change in game engine helped the project's evolution. "We switched over to Unreal 4 at the beginning of 2015, which is the point where we revisited the scope of the game and focused it more," Richardson recalls.

Originally billed as an MMORPG, the game now seems to more resemble a large-scale online shooter with MMO elements attached. "We call ourselves a massive online shooter," Richardson says. "I think it's a term that's coming up that you can apply to *Division*, *Destiny* and stuff like that, which are not quite MMOs. They're big, massive online games, so we're in that category and have many similarities. But we thought we need to get that core shooter experience nailed down first, because anything we put on top is just useless, unless it's fun to run around and shoot."

With that in mind, the team's first move was to set up a form of playable prototype of the game for Warhammer 40K fans to try. "We started with a founders programme, where they started playing the game last summer in June, and that was about 25,000 people. The philosophy is we want players in as soon as possible to get feedback and evolve the direction of the game. We were looking for the

fun in the shooter, and us locked in a room in Montreal is not the best way to do that."

"Particularly with a game where it needs 30 people to play it properly," adds Ellison. "Being able to get good iteration internally on something like that? You can't do it. You need people playing the game."

Early Access has proved a good match for Behaviour – the team had already built seven iterations of the melee system at the time I spoke to them and clearly they're soldiering on until their audience is satisfied that the right systems are in place.

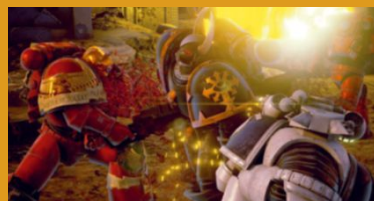
"Basically we knew we wanted to make a 40K game in an [online] space, and so that was the starting point," Ellison says. "And our guiding philosophy has always been that you're one of the guys on the tabletop." It certainly feels like there's a scale to *Eternal Crusade* that I've not seen in other shooters set in the 40K universe – from my brief hands-on, the maps seem huge, and are built to support vehicles, too.

VINDICATION

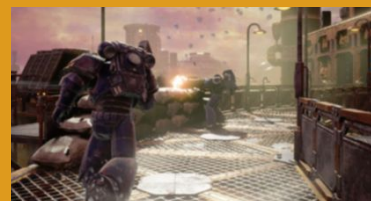
"Right now we have 60-person matches," Ellison tells me. "The 30-person maps, that's 15v15. Most of the time you'll be playing on those. The 30v30 maps are these epic siege events where you roll out the Vindicator, blast down the doors, and defenders up on the walls actually have a limited number of reinforcements and are trying to stay alive while the attackers are just throwing their bodies at them. Those we're going to be testing a lot to make sure we've achieved the right scale. But our goal is to make it feel like the game. If you play a game like *Battlefront*... *Battlefront* actually reduced the number of players from *Battlefield*. But they feel much bigger than the battles in *Battlefield 4*. That's what we'd like to achieve, we want to have battles that feel absolutely enormous and appropriate for the 40K universe."

I like the concept and certainly want to see a 40K shooter that can achieve the feel of something like *Battlefield*, but the quality of the melee combat and shooting is where it feels like *Eternal Crusade* needs the most work. Based on the few games I've played, both currently fall short of *The Division* and *Destiny* in providing instantly satisfying feedback to the player. Early Access gives Behaviour the chance to fix that. ■

There are no Imperial Guard, of course. Who brings a lasgun to a bolter fight?



RIGHT: Different classes carry different weapons, if you're more into your heavy bolters than your regular bolters.



Performance without compromise



Spectre Lite

- AMD FX-4300
- ASUS® M5A97 R2.0
- 8GB HyperX FURY RAM
- 2GB NVIDIA® GeForce® GTX 950
- 1TB Hard Drive
- Corsair 350W PSU
- **Windows 10**
- 3 Year Standard Warranty

THIS SPEC FROM **£499***



Gladius 900

- Intel® Core™ i5-6600K
- ASUS® Maximus VIII Hero
- 8GB HyperX FURY RAM
- 2GB NVIDIA® GeForce® GTX 960
- 1TB Hard Drive
- Corsair 450W PSU
- **Windows 10**
- 3 Year Standard Warranty

THIS SPEC FROM **£899***



Vitrum

- Intel® Core™ i5-6600K
- ASUS® Z170-E
- 16GB HyperX FURY RAM
- 4GB NVIDIA® GeForce® GTX 970
- 400GB Intel® 750 PCIe SSD
- 1TB Hard Drive
- **Windows 10**
- 3 Years Warranty

THIS SPEC FROM **£1,199***



Glacier

- OC Intel® Core™ i7-6700K
- ASUS® Maximus VIII Hero
- 16GB Corsair Vengeance RAM
- 6GB NVIDIA® GeForce™ GTX980Ti
- 400GB Intel® 750 PCIe SSD
- 2TB Hard Drive
- **Windows 10**
- 3 Years Warranty

THIS SPEC FROM **£1,799***



14" Enigma VI

- Intel® Core™ M CPUs
- Intel Integrate Graphics
- Ultra thin: Just 15.6mm!
- Full HD IPS Screen
- Up to 7.5 Hours Battery
- Wireless as standard
- **Windows 10**
- 3 Year Standard Warranty

THIS SPEC FROM **£409***



15.6" Octane II

- 6th Gen Intel® Core™ CPUs
- NVIDIA® GeForce™ Graphics
- NVIDIA® G-SYNC™ Option
- Full HD IPS Screen
- Thunderbolt™ 3
- Wireless as standard
- **Windows 10**
- 3 Year Standard Warranty

THIS SPEC FROM **£1,119***

Order your system now with PC Specialist





Award winning custom PC & Laptop manufacturer

UNLEASH THE GAMER WITHIN **YOU**...



Vulcan 440

- Overclocked Intel® Core™ i7-4790K
- ASUS® Maximus VII Ranger
- 16GB HyperX FURY RAM
- 4GB NVIDIA® GeForce® GTX 980
- 500GB Samsung EVO 850 SSD
- 2TB Hard Drive
- Windows 10
- 3 Year Standard Warranty

THIS SPEC
FROM

£1,499*

Quality builds at a low price
Always

GET A FURTHER £15 OFF WITH THIS EXCLUSIVE VOUCHER CODE:

PCG82

ORDER ONLINE NOW

0333 011 7000

www.pcspecialist.co.uk

A mushroom towers above you, reaching for the sky. The place feels familiar, but the light has changed. Plants have taken root in previously barren land, new rocks jut from the earth like gnarled fingers. It's the same, but different – a place inspired by what came before. “A complete remake and re-imagining of *Morrowind*,” in the words of Brandon Giles, one of the lead developers of the ambitious community project *Skywind*. The mod aims to draw players fresh and old to the world of Bethesda's 14-year-old RPG.

Skywind had its inception in 2012. The seeds can be found in *Morrobivion*, which ported *Morrowind*'s content into *Oblivion*'s engine. Once the project came to an end, some leftover team members decided to attempt a similar feat – this time using *Skyrim* as their base.

“It wasn't until late into the following year that the project evolved into what it is now,” Giles says of the Elder Scrolls Renewal Project, of which

Skywind is a part. “[We] aspired to do something greater than a mere port of *Morrowind*. No one really knows the exact point that this switch happened, but I think as we got more and more talented individuals on board, we really broadened our horizons and looked to make something much more special. Since then the vision has only grown.”

Skywind's global team was brought together by a love of the *Elder Scrolls* series. They're all volunteers, and their ultimate reward for the thousands of hours invested will be the finished project itself. The challenge they have set is to take a classic and renovate it, improving it graphically and bringing the world's density, life and interactions up to the standards set by today's open-world games.

The team, though scattered, has clear lines of management. Tasks are chopped into manageable chunks and assigned by the development leads. Countless spreadsheets are assembled in order to keep track of the various tasks and deadlines. The driving force is a small core team, working with and managing the vast array of people who have volunteered their time.

The MORRO MAKE

How
community-
made **SKYWIND** is
recreating a
modern classic.

By Edward Bals

WIND OVER



TAKE AIM

Just lining up another shot to a bandit's knee.

» These team members all share the same broad vision for *Skywind*. *Morrowind* is a game that now shows its age. The locales feel barren and sparse compared to modern achievements, the fog-cloaked horizon is a stark contrast to the immense draw distances we're now accustomed to. The team have to address this disparity, filling in areas of the world with new content. This act of creation in a game so revered comes with its own difficulties – the additions must merge seamlessly with the established world. *Skywind* will include the story and quests familiar to *Morrowind* players, but some carefully constructed new missions have been added. The ultimate aim is that new content should be indistinguishable from the old.

MORROW'S WORLD

Modifying a classic is no easy task, and the team must tread carefully when deciding on additions. Every idea goes through a vetting process. "When someone has a new suggestion, and they're serious enough about it, they write up a detailed plan and share it with the rest of the team," Giles says. "Everyone leaves comments and suggestions and we work from there, and if it's worth implementing, we'll put in the effort to make it a reality."

Additions are rigorously scrutinised to ensure that they meet the same high standards across the board. The gatekeepers of quality are several industry professionals, who are lending their expertise partly because of a deep love for the *Elder Scrolls* series, and partly to work on a project that's free from corporate oversight.

'Lore masters' also pick over any suggestions with a fine-tooth comb –



LEFT: Off-roading in a boat. Never a good idea.

BELOW: Essentially paradise, but without the piña coladas.



ABOVE: Weather forecast: cloudy again.

guaranteeing that everything fits within the universe set out by the *Elder Scrolls* games. These team members have been followers of the series since the start, and are able to draw from their own deep knowledge of the world, as well as consult the extensive wikis and other reference sources. They are essentially historians – historians with the advantage of being in direct communication with the creative mind behind a large part of the world and lore of *Morrowind*, former Bethesda designer Michael Kirkbride.

Enthusiasm can only take you so far, however, and the attrition rate among *Skywind*'s voluntary team is high. "The success of the project has been that, out of a number of people who have offered to help, you get one that really sticks with the project," Darren Habib, one of the team's veterans, says. "I'll put a rough figure to it: out of every 100 people that join up to do some tasks, only one person will actually carry on to progress the project."

The bulk of development is therefore handled by the core team, but they still want the project to remain as open as possible. They leave the door open in order to attract unique individuals able to contribute. Burnout is high – true of any voluntary project – but the team understand this, allowing people to take breaks when they need them. They have managed to keep morale high with their continuous communication and recruitment. Everyone is kept in the loop and made to feel a part of the community.

The legacy of the original game released back in 2002 – the third in the *Elder Scrolls* series – still casts a long shadow. Its weird world is filled with wonders, from magically crafted

mushroom architecture to the sprawling waterway-filled city of Vivec. *Morrowind* captured – and continues to capture – the hearts of its players.

MORROWEIRD

The action mostly takes place on the island of Vvardenfell, which today stands out as delightfully alien compared to other locations in the *Elder Scrolls* series. All of Bethesda's worlds have had their quirks, but none have had nearly as diverse a landscape as that found in *Morrowind*. Each region feels fresh and different, its architecture and landscapes drawn from different inspirations.

ABILITIES SUCH AS SHOUTS HAVE BEEN REMOVED COMPLETELY

The first *Elder Scrolls* games, *Arena* and *Daggerfall*, presented players with huge worlds, using random generation to map out and stock their myriad dungeons. *Morrowind* broke with tradition; Bethesda opted to create a smaller, more detailed, world than its predecessors. Throwing out the random generation, the game's designers hand-crafted every section of the world. This painstaking approach proved a massive undertaking, but the payoff was worth it. The developers' love and attention shines through in the design of every location. From the caves of skooma-smuggling bandits, to the tombs cobwebbed with history linked to actual families in-game.

Post-*Morrowind*, there have been two new main *Elder Scrolls* releases:

Oblivion and *Skyrim*. These build upon the foundations laid down by *Morrowind*, inevitably changing aspects of it as well. "The strength of *Elder Scrolls* games – especially *Morrowind* – has always been believable world building and focus on exploration," says Max Fellingner, *Skywind*'s game mechanics lead. "*Skyrim* shifted away from this to present a more streamlined reward-curve, based mostly on dungeon-crawls."

The team faces the challenge of deciding which new features from *Skyrim* should carry over to *Skywind* and which should be consigned to history. They have to determine how best to retain the feel of *Morrowind* while keeping any improvements made by the new game. Abilities such as shouts, tied specifically to the Dragonborn protagonist, have been removed completely. In general, *Skyrim* felt more focused on player skill, like modern action games, while *Morrowind* focused on character skill, like a classical RPG.

For instance, contrary to the implications of its first-person action combat, *Morrowind* used the classic RPG dice roll to decide what happened in a fight. Your sword might hit an enemy's flesh, but it was a behind-the-scenes number that decided whether or not you did serious damage. It's a system that lacks responsiveness. *Skyrim* has far better feedback, because it's driven more by the player's actions than their character's stats.

However, as a result, *Skyrim* is more uniform when it comes to the character builds of its players. There are certain core abilities and skills

THEN AND NOW *The changing textures of Morrowind*

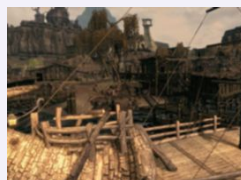
What a difference 14 years makes. Gone is the hazy mist that obscured the horizon; vistas are now deliciously filled with detail. Dappled light flickers through trees where before there was gloom. Water ripples as it flows and clouds lazily cross the skies.

Colour replaces what before was largely green and grey, and shadows have sharp focus. The differences between these images highlight just how far videogame graphics have come.

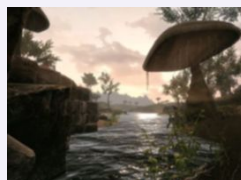
MORROWIND

SKYRIM

Ald Velothi



Ascadian Isles



Seyda Neen



Gnaar Mok



Skywind

that almost everyone upgrades, while others are largely ignored. *Morrowind* encouraged players to have more freedom in their choices. There's no single correct build. Some balancing issues remain, but in general players have a wider range to choose from.

The challenge, then: how best to fix *Skyrim*'s problems without recreating *Morrowind*'s unresponsiveness? The developers have a balancing act on their hands, merging two disparate systems into a cohesive whole. Their approach has been to strip down the *Elder Scrolls* and other RPGs to their core, and find out what makes them tick – how the gears of their various systems mesh together. Ultimately, the team want to craft an experience that brings back some of the systems of classic RPGs, giving players the freedom to build a character in whatever way they want.

TALKING UP

In *Morrowind*'s original release, dialogue was largely confined to text boxes, with only a small percentage of it voice acted. *Skywind* again aims high. Its ultimate goal is to have all lines of dialogue fully voiced. "Our biggest challenge is the sheer number of voice actors we're going for," voice acting lead Ben Iredale told me. "Unlike Bethesda's situation, where they focus on a smaller cast of actors covering the majority of lines, we're looking to have a pretty massive amount of unique voices to cover the roughly 40,000 lines of dialogue that are in *Skywind*. We think it is worth the extra effort especially since it is one of the benefits we have as a community project – there are so many dedicated fans ready to lend their voices."

Skyrim's world often comes close to a place that feels like home. At least until a guard tells you, yet again, about how their previous career as an adventurer was brought to a close by an arrow to the knee. Idle banter can make or break immersion in virtual worlds, especially those that support hundreds of hours of exploration.

For *Skywind*, Iredale says that a team of writers have crafted 9,000 in-game conversation lines between NPCs, giving each character their own essence of personality. The final release will include priests discussing the 36 lessons of Vivec, and merchants arguing over prices – little touches that breathe life into the world.

THE ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO HAVE ALL LINES OF DIALOGUE FULLY VOICED

On release *Morrowind* was praised for its vision and fully 3D world. Time has not been so kind. Its once vaunted graphics are now showing their age. Giving *Morrowind* back its beauty is a major objective for the *Skywind* team – they want to recreate the world with all the bells and whistles we've become accustomed to in modern games. This is no walk in the park: the team have to rebuild the world from the ground up.

Interpreting the low poly models and textures is one challenge, according to Aeryn James Davies, *Skywind*'s lead artist. "[It's] practically impossible without going back to the drawing board and looking at pre-3D concepting by the original team. We went back to the original concepts of Kirkbride and

others and reworked it from the earlier stages. The 3D representation of 2D concepts are always limited by the technology of the time. Fourteen years is a big difference in processing power."

The evolution of videogame graphics in the intervening time has given the team the chance to make something really special, building on the ambitions of what came before. The redesign ranges from equipment to landscapes, with a particular focus on ensuring each area of the island has its own distinctive feel.

"We felt that each region of the game deserved its own unique set of assets and textures to expand on the exotic nature of the original," says lead landscape designer Giles. "As a result, each area looks and feels much different than from before. Any *Morrowind* purist might be upset by the new changes, but we really wanted to do something different instead of just adding shinier texture work and remodelled objects. There have been countless fans who have commented on videos or screenshots of the game saying 'it looks and feels exactly as I remember!' so I think even with these major changes, the charm and spirit of *Morrowind* has definitely carried over to this new design."

Azura's coast is just one of the regions undergoing a dramatic change. It was originally sprinkled with menhirs, but the *Skywind* team have transformed it into a landscape filled with striking basalt formations, quietly betraying Vvardenfell's volcanic roots. An overhaul of this scale could have been a disaster, but it's handled with care by the team – changing the visual identity of the region while staying true to the heart and soul of *Morrowind*.

A VISITOR'S GUIDE TO VVARDENFELL

1 WEST GASH

Western highlands, bordered by mountains. The ebony deposits here are the source of the Caldera Mining Company's riches.

2 BITTER COAST

Humid, salty swamps dominate this largely uninhabited region. The isolated islands and caves are used by smugglers, who make use of the dense fog.



3 ASCADIAN ISLES

Fertile soil means lots of farms; floating netch are bred for their fine leather. The large city of Vivec is found in the south.

4 MOLAG AMUR

A fiery land, populated by lava flows and lakes. The ash storms of the Red Mountain coat the entire region in a fine layer.

5 THE RED MOUNTAIN

Also called Dagoth-Ur, this volcano lies at the centre of Vvardenfell, dominating the entire island. It is enclosed by a giant magical barrier.



The team's ambitions aren't restricted to improving the variety of the landscape, either. They're aiming to make *Skywind's* graphical quality in its entirety exceed that of *Skyrim* – itself now almost five years old. The team feels able to do this because their focus is solely on the PC. Where Bethesda had to take ageing console tech into account, *Skywind's* developers are free to concentrate on a single, more powerful platform.

DUE TO MORROW

The mod itself remains without a release date – the general feeling being that it'll be done when it's done. Still, there's confidence that it will, eventually, *be* done. In the years since the mod's initial reveal there has been the constant worry that it might end up as vapourware – all stylish screenshots and video, but never making it to a final release. It's a consequence of the team's open development. Professional studios only reveal projects after years of work. *Skywind* has been in the wild since day one. Viewed this way, their progress in the last four years has been remarkable from a group of volunteers.

The project inches ever onwards, getting closer to its release, but there is still plenty of work to be done and new volunteers are always welcome. The team have a lot riding on this – a lot of people to please – but each and every one is convinced they will deliver what they have promised. They probably won't have to resort to using magic to get there. ■

SUPER SIZE

The bigger they are, the harder they hit. Great.

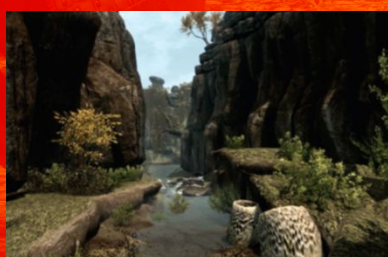


LEFT: The perfect place for a quick dip.

BELOW: The forests are a real tree-t. I'll stop now.

LEFT: Seyda Neen – gateway to Morrowind.

RIGHT: Some rivers are drop dead gorge-ous.





THE NEW MASTERS

Meet the team remaking the original 4X strategy game, **MASTER OF ORION**. By Leif Johnson

I met the Argentine lead designers behind Wargaming's *Master of Orion* reboot in Buenos Aires under the light of *Orion* itself, on a night when the sky's other half was dominated by the Southern Cross. I like to think they planned it this way, with the famous namesake of their game standing opposite a constellation only folks on the underside of the world can enjoy, as it pretty much symbolised their unique situation.

I'd come to Argentina to learn more about how these guys, the leading developers at NGD Studios, wound up updating a 23-year-old turn-based 4X game set in space for a publisher best known for multiplayer tank battles. Younger players know *Master of Orion* about as well as they know the name of the bassist in Nirvana, but its influence is extensive, to the point where some have said that *Mass Effect* took influence from its Sakkra, Elerians and Meklar races in creating the Krogan, Asari and Geth.

The enthusiasm at NGD Studios is infectious and there's a sense in their tales of long-lasting friendships and work on projects like a 17-year-old RTS about invading the Falklands that I'm practically looking at the face of Argentine game development as a whole. To hear NGD CEO Andrés Chilkowski tell it, theirs is a fascinating story of determination and making the best of adverse circumstances. Their latest project's very existence speaks to how far Argentinian game development has come in just a few years.

Chilkowski himself grew up in an environment where videogames were banned in Buenos Aires on account of a tenuous semblance to gambling, leaving him to only experience them in arcades when his dad took him to beachside resorts outside the city. By the '90s, though, 'piracy shops' had popped up in Buenos

Aires, where young folks like Chilkowski would walk away with dozens of games if they knew someone on the inside. That's how he first experienced *Master of Orion*, and it captured his imagination over *Civilization* owing to its sci-fi leanings.

"For us, as future game developers, this was an amazing opportunity for me," he said. "I was able to try everything, play every single game."

By his late teens, he and some friends took the leap into game development, which was a tough gamble so deep in South America. But they pulled it off amid changing attitudes toward games, and Chilkowski speaks fondly of the day when he swore off piracy in gratitude. By the mid-2000s they'd managed to scrape together what pesos the banks didn't nab during the country's 1998-2002 financial crisis to make an entire MMORPG for Latin America called *Regnum Online*, with just eight people.

FIGHT TO SURVIVE

"We in Argentina are resourceful, in the sense that we're like MacGyver," he says. "We're used to trying to make big things without many resources."

Regnum eventually kept the company alive on its own, but with the country's currency in freefall, NGD first resorted to drawing in money from elsewhere for its development, right down to making "crappy mobile games" with companies like Axe – yes, the deodorant – in which players steered women through a busy club. "Oh, God, it was so bad," Chilkowski says.

But their determination (along with some better games) caught the eye of Wargaming, who learned of NGD while the latter was trying to license an MMORPG with BigWorld. NGD apparently reminded Wargaming CEO Victor Kislyi a little of themselves, Chilkowski says, as "they're also from a country that's outside the traditional videogame industry" and they

BELOW
It's always fun to have a 'raid' on these guys.

Single Player/New Game

Choose your race

ALKARI	BULRATHI	HUMAN
KLACKON	MEKLAR	MRRSHAN
PSILON	SAKKRA	TERRAN
DARLOK Coming soon	SILICOID Coming soon	CUSTOM RACE

KLACKON

Leader: Initid

Tireless, Uncreative, Hive-minded

Traits:

- HOMEWORLD MINERALS: POOR
- UBER PLANET: CAVERNIOUS
- FOOD FROM POPULATION: +50%
- PRODUCTION FROM POPULATION: +25%
- STARTING TECH: BIOLOGY

Description:

Deep in the caves of Kholdan, the insect-like Klackon evolved to form the Hive, a unified consciousness stretching from Drone to Queen.

As such, the industrious Klackon have no individual needs, no desires, and no ambitions other than the benefit of the Hive itself. This effectively makes them tireless workers and fearless warriors, each and every one willing to give their lives for the Hive.

Having nearly exhausted their home planet, the Hive has begun its galactic expansion in search of more resources and room to grow.

428 0.5.18151W64S (03/31/2016 19:30)

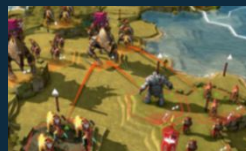
BACK

NEXT



ABOVE
The reboot may lack some of the origin's complexity, but it's a looker.

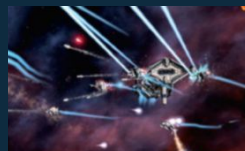
IMMORTAL 4X Games that show 4X strategy is in rude health



1 ENDLESS LEGEND
Diverse factions make this the most interesting 4X game you can buy – which is why we gave it one of our game of the year awards in 2014.



2 CIVILIZATION V
After its expansions arrived, *Civ V* felt like the complete modern *Civ* game, and is still an excellent introduction to the genre.



3 GALACTIC CIVILIZATIONS III
Stardock's latest space conquest game is a sandboxy epic, and continues to be built upon with new expansions.



4 DOMINIONS 4
This Tom Senior favourite 4X strategy series retains a loyal audience thanks to its interesting enemy types and for being highly moddable.

once were “fighting to make something as big as *World of Tanks* when nobody believed in them”.

What's more, NGD's involvement with *Master of Orion* actually sprang from a bit of a joke. In 2013, Chilkowski and his cohorts learned Wargaming had bought the rights to *Master of Orion* following Atari's bankruptcy, in part because of the heavy influence the game had on the young Kislyi. When Chilkowski visited Kislyi in Minsk, Belarus not long after to pitch an open-world survival MMO based on the development of *Civilization*, he quipped with his first slide that NGD was actually going to remake *Master of Orion*. The joke got some claps.

“At the end of that, Victor said, ‘Listen, this is very nice, but we *do* need a studio to work on *Master of Orion*,’” Chilkowski recalls. “And I was like, ‘Oh, my God. Yes, please. Forget all about the MMO.’”

And so they did, and here we are. Their game is in the wild now, facing a turbulent reception in Early Access. For weeks vocal players on Steam have expressed their disappointment that NGD's *Master of Orion* doesn't draw from all the lessons of 4X games from the past two decades, but Chilkowski seems to suggest these issues have grown out of the tango

between preservation and modernisation. And preservation, he points out, was the original goal.

“Victor said Atari was like a dark castle, and in the basement of Atari they had the Mona Lisa buried,” Chilkowski says. “He bought it to be able to put it in a museum so everybody can appreciate it, and to put it in a museum we had to clean it.”

In the process of cleaning it, though, *Master of Orion* became a ‘premium’ game in terms of

presentation with the help of Wargaming's deep coffers. The voice cast alone is an Orion-worthy constellation of stars, capturing the '80s and '90s sci-fi zeitgeist as it does with talent like Michael Dorn and

Mark Hamill. The original composer did the music. The animation is a constant joy, in part because it comes from some of the same designers who worked on the 2013 Argentine animated movie *Underdogs*. The game itself still has tons of kinks to work out and the AI disappoints, but it's fun to watch and, indeed, laugh with. Humour, after all, was a big part of the original series, and as senior designer and writer Matias Paolini says, “*Master of Orion* was more like a Mel Brooks movie.” It's an aspect that NGD embraces in playful defiance of all the dry sci-fi out there.

“I WAS LIKE, ‘OH, MY GOD. YES, PLEASE. FORGET ALL ABOUT THE MMO’”



RIGHT

In addition to modern graphics, there's an orchestral score by the game's original composer.



"We Argentinians value different things than other countries," Paolini continues. "For example, when we were talking about what makes *Master of Orion* good, all the Russians and the Americans were all about the management, the strategy. We were the ones that were more like, 'There's an interesting story here.'"

PLAYING WITH THE PAST

NGD and Wargaming wanted to make sure the largest number of people had fun, though, so they undertook a process to modify and update the game's original systems, in part to introduce the experience to a new generation unaccustomed to the designs of yesteryear or put off by the way some 4X games are "really just spreadsheets."

And thus some of NGD's tweaks actually added to *Master of Orion's* already strong personality, such as increasing the complexity of pollution effects on planets to mirror contemporary environmental concerns, or adding workers who strike or revolt on planets with low morale. But other choices have proved controversial, especially the decision to use real-time combat (with the ability to pause) over turn-based combat. Paolini, who seems hesitant to speak about the matter, acknowledges why some players might dislike it, but he asserts that turn-based

combat just wasn't as visually appealing or fluid as real-time design.

"You would make five or ten clicks, one ship after the other," he said. "You'd then have to sit back and wait for the AI to take ten or 20 turns and it wasn't as engaging as it could've been." Chilkowski himself argues many players who don't like the changes "are dealing with nostalgia – how they remember the experience – not how the experience actually was."

That's a common thread when speaking to the rest of the staff. I got the subtle impression that dealing with the force of *Master of Orion's* nostalgia has been more challenging than anyone at NGD expected. The smiles never drop, the enthusiasm never falters, but when they turn away I sense a

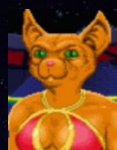
"YOU'D THEN HAVE TO SIT BACK AND WAIT FOR THE AI TO TAKE TEN OR 20 TURNS"

degree of stress and urgency I rarely feel at other studios at this same point in a game's production.

It's not hard to understand why. NGD knows there's a lot riding on *Master of Orion*. Indeed, the fruits of its efforts could decide the entire fate of Argentinian game development. Chilkowski hints as much when he says he hopes they "end this development cycle with some pedigree" and indisputably find themselves considered part of the international games industry. NGD is shooting for the stars. I hope it reaches them. ■

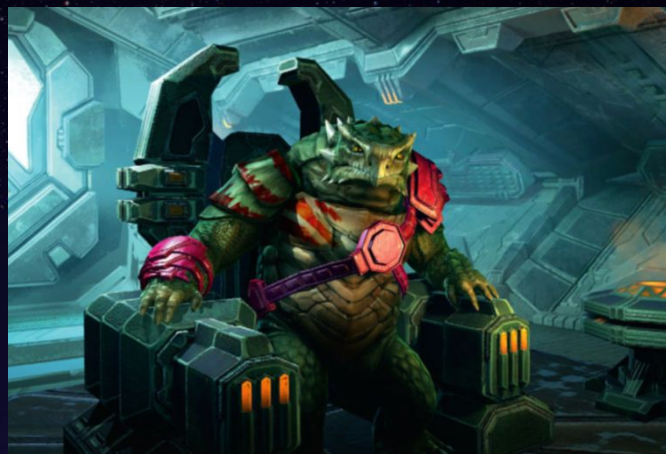
BELOW

A star cast provide the voices tailored to each race.



BELOW

The reptilian Sakkra race, before and after.



SEND

A free Steam key for the month's star letter!

USER REVIEWS

■ **TrackMania.** It's old, classic, but still fun and challenging, and refreshing. **Angelo Geels** Challenging unless you play one of those 'Press Forward' tracks where you just press forward.

■ **DiRT Rally,** the first game in years I truly enjoy. All about the player skills, not some fake skill tree or the most OP Car/Weapon. **Grande Lord Brian** Well now you've got us hoping for Codemasters to patch in some assault rifles.

■ I'm playing **Wolfenstein: The New Order.** I probably should have played this game earlier. **CLG RohnJobert** Definitely. One of the best FPS campaigns of recent years.

■ **Dark Souls III** of course! With Miyazaki as the lead director, it feels more like a direct continuation of **Dark Souls I.** Love it. **Kyle Tertzag** By direct continuation you mean just as bloody hard, right?

■ **LotR War In The North.** Can't stop wondering about why all Elves are so damn pretty. All of 'em. **Robbie Swift** They do have very strokable ears.

Habit of spawning

With Microsoft announcing at GDC that cross-platform play is potentially on the cards for Xbox Live, should we be worried about further sacrilege? I'm all for increased player counts but consoles tend to have a nasty habit of spawning raging adolescent idiots. Take *Rocket League* as an example. The infiltration of PS4 players has commonly led to our community being subject to their scandalous behaviour. ■

Steve Harwood

That's harsh, Steve. In our experience, platform has nothing to do with how unpleasant a Rocket

League player can be. Such 'raging adolescent idiots' are just as likely to be playing on PC as PS4. Some genres are less suited to cross-platform play, but such failures are more about control scheme than attitude. If in doubt, follow our tried and tested advice: be cool. **PCG**

Nice to know

I would like to see one more bit of information added to the reviews. Somewhere, maybe under the 'Need to Know' add the type of game. Is it singleplayer, multiplayer, RPG, FPS? The reviews are great, but it would be nice to know if it's the type of game I am looking for. Great mag,



Felt good vertigo

For me, the moment I 'got' *Elite Dangerous: Horizons* was when I plugged in my Oculus Rift and skimmed as low as I could across a planet's surface. Impact lights were flashing and the warning claxon was buzzing. Looking down to the side, watching the ground pass underneath was thrilling. You are there in the cockpit, the ground is below you; stations loom overhead and the Sidewinder is actually quite

big when you are looking up at it! The first time I hit the lateral thrusters, I watched the ground rapidly fall away from me and felt good vertigo. That was when I knew VR was a game changer. I love it. My wife didn't really like it. It made her feel sick.

Andy Muir

A tragic denouement to an exciting tale of VR adventures. The technology definitely opens up some exciting experiences. PCG

keep up the good work. Just food for thought from a 73-year-old gamer. ■ **Denny Olson**

The trouble is, modern games are blending genres to the point where you can have a sandbox FPSRPG with MOBA elements. But you're right that a reviewer should clearly identify what type of game they're writing about. Generally, you'll find this in the Need to Know section, under the title "What is it?" Unless, that is, the reviewer put a joke there instead. That does happen. PCG

I have deconstructed

I have been playing *The Division* since it came out and thoroughly agree with your review and its conclusions. You help an NPC in distress and they give you an item of warm clothing. Surely they'd need it themselves? They get mugged in the same places, and repeat the same sentences. As for the interface, it's horrible. I've lost count of the number of times that I have deconstructed the wrong gun by mistake. There are plenty of other issues and stupid touches. I will return to it when the first free update comes out, but as for paying for the next instalments? Not so sure. ■

Noel Draper

It's a shame, isn't it? We were looking forward to *The Division*, but it makes some critical mistakes that really detract from the experience. PCG

Just keep fishing

I have become a fisherman. I've found myself fishing all day. How can a game with such a simple premise have so much depth? It feels like *Myst*. Good music, sitting by the beach and casting a net just to fish. Relaxing and fishing. This is what gaming is all about.

Maybe I'll go to the dungeons today? Nah. I'll just keep fishing. *Stardew Valley* is incredible. ■ **Preston Venzant**

We agree, Preston. In fact, turn to page 108 for some more *Stardew Valley* praise. PCG

CLICK



pcgamer.com

LIKE

facebook.com/
pcgammagazine

SHOOT

steamcommunity.com/
/groups/pcgamer

WATCH

youtube.com/user/
pcgamer

FOLLOW



@pcgamer

SEND



pcgamer@futurenet.com

PC Gamer, Future Publishing
The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA UK

OVERWATCH™

ORIGINS EDITION

AVAILABLE NOW



© 2016 Blizzard Entertainment, Inc. All rights reserved. Overwatch and Blizzard Entertainment are trademarks or registered trademarks of Blizzard Entertainment, Inc., in the U.S. and/or other countries. The "PS" Family logo is a registered trademark and "PS4" is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All other trademarks referenced herein are the properties of their respective owners.



PC | DVD



REVIEW

HOW WE REVIEW

Wherever possible, we finish a game before finalising the review. We review each game on its own merits, and try to match it to a reviewer who's a passionate expert in the field. The main aim of the reviews section is to help you make buying decisions.

ALPHAS & BETAS

This means we'll review any released alpha, beta or otherwise unfinished game that you can currently buy. For these games, we won't assign a score, but we will tell you whether they're worth your time in their current state.

DOWNLOADABLE CONTENT

DLC might be hours-long new missions for a game, or it might be a single new item. Either way, if we think you want to know about it, we'll review it.

THEY'RE BACK

Whenever there's a bargain or re-release of a significant game, our expert will revisit it and tell you whether it holds up today. With jokes.

OUR SCORING SYSTEM EXPLAINED

00%-10% A game of absolutely no value. Are you playing one of these games? Take 3d6 emotional damage.

Examples *Big Brother*

11%-39% Yikes. Technically broken, or so fundamentally flawed that it's ultimately not worth any time or money. Bad.

Examples *The War Z*, *Sonic: Lost World*

40%-49% This game is functional, but majorly flawed and disappointing.

Examples *Firefall*, *Star Trek*, *Armikrog*

50%-59% Mediocre. If it has any interesting ideas, they don't work well. Might suffer from bugs or technical issues.

Examples *Primordia*, *Painkiller: Hell & Damnation*

60%-69% An interesting idea poorly expressed, or a derivative idea executed averagely. Comes with caveats.

Examples *SimCity*, *Just Cause 3*, *The Division*

70%-79% Good, but not a classic. This score is a recommendation, just not a glowing one.

Examples *Broken Age*, *Batman: Arkham Knight*

80%-89% A great game with exceptional moments or features, and touches of brilliance.

Examples *Stardew Valley*, *Soma*, *Fallout 4*

90%-94% A compelling recommendation for most PC gamers. Ahead of its time and important to PC gaming.

Examples *XCOM 2*, *Rainbow Six Siege*, *Undertale*

95%-98% This is far and away one of the best games we've ever played, and we recommend it to the entire world.

Examples *Half-Life 2*, *Kerbal Space Program*, *Spelunky*

99%-100% Advances the human species. Life-changing. A masterpiece and more. Actively boosts the immune systems of nearby children and small animals.



The Editor's Choice award is granted in addition to the score, at the discretion of the PC Gamer staff. It represents exceptional quality or innovation.

Find out more
www.bit.ly/pcgreviews



Embrace the dark

For those of us who've never played a *Dark Souls* game, the reverence fans have for the series can be mystifying. And yet, here comes *Dark Souls III*, and it's yet another meticulously crafted work – filled not just with challenge, but also intricate, sprawling level design, excellent combat and subtle storytelling. Maybe it's on the rest of us to catch up.

Dark Souls is undoubtedly this issue's highlight. Elsewhere, there are lots of games that fall short of a glowing recommendation. Namely, *Quantum Break*. It's a good (not great) shooter, and another UWP game afflicted with performance problems. This month also features our first VR review, for the Oculus Rift's flagship game *EVE: Valkyrie*. Alas, it's not the killer app needed to mitigate the device's high price.

Phil Savage

PHIL SAVAGE
DEPUTY EDITOR
phil.savage@futurenet.com

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

Get in touch via our 'Network' section on page 54, or simply tweet us your thoughts @PCGamer



Contents

- 58** Dark Souls III
- 62** Ashes of the Singularity
- 64** Adr1ft
- 68** Everybody's Gone to the Rapture
- 70** Enter the Gungeon
- 72** Quantum Break
- 76** Hyper Light Drifter
- 78** Out of the Park Baseball 17
- 80** Day of the Tentacle Remastered
- 82** Need for Speed

84 EVE: Valkyrie

DOWNLOADABLE CONTENT

- 86** Fallout 4: Automatron
- 88** Baldur's Gate: Siege of Dragonspear

THEY'RE BACK

- 90** Alan Wake
- 91** Bio Menace
- 91** Contrast
- 91** Dark Souls
- 91** Eets Munchies

This month's ashen ones...



JAMES DAVENPORT
Specialist in
Action, dying
Currently playing
Dark Souls III
This month
Faced a most brutal
challenge: the PCG
editorial meeting.



LEIF JOHNSON
Specialist in
Strategy, conquest
Currently playing
Ashes of the
Singularity
This month
Built thousands of
friends. Forced them
to do his bidding.



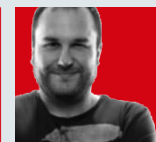
CHRISTOPHER LIVINGSTON
Specialist in
Space, grabbing
Currently playing
Adr1ft
This month
Discovered that an
astronaut's job is
mostly to grab stuff.



ANDY KELLY
Specialist in
Action, adventure
Currently playing
Quantum Break
This month
Wrote four of this
month's reviews. Still
had time to get some
serious retweets.



PHIL SAVAGE
Specialist in
RPG, robots
Currently playing
Fallout 4
This month
Returned to the city of
Baldur's Gate. Didn't
enjoy the trip quite as
much this time.



BEN WILSON
Specialist in
Sports, management
Currently playing
Out of the Park 17
This month
Divided his time
between analysing
batting averages and
performing karaoke.



JON BLYTH
Specialist in
Retro, the alphabet
Currently playing
Alan Wake
This month
Gives us the ABCs of
budget re-releases.
Like Sesame Street
with a beard.

GOOD GRIEF

More ambitious than ever, **DARK SOULS III** dodge-rolls series fatigue and backstabs expectations. *By James Davenport*

I'm friends with a giant now. He tosses spears taller than me a thousand yards to keep a white birch safe from cursed villagers, and I can respect that. The whole village is visible from atop his tower, all its ramshackle buildings and tortured denizens whose worship of a rotten greatwood has clearly gone awry. My job is to bring the ashes of the Lords of Cinder back to their thrones to prevent the apocalypse. Maybe it'd be better off that way. This world isn't my friend.

Still, the giant is, and if he cares about a little white tree, then I should too. That might be enough to keep going.

This is what makes *Dark Souls III* so profound. Sure, the thrilling combat and notoriously difficult boss battles are its skeleton, but the language and ambiguity of the world are the flesh and blood that imbue an excellent third-person action RPG with mythic authenticity. Marred only by a few performance hiccups, it's one of the most engrossing, cohesive games I've ever played.

You still kill monsters, collect souls, and use them to level up. Dying means you lose your souls and respawn at the bonfire last rested at. You can run back to pick them up and carry on, hopefully further this time, but die before reaching them and they're gone for good.

I spent most of the game shield up, tip-toeing. Because so many more enemies can appear on screen now, very cautious play is rewarded. Once

I ran into ten armed undead villagers, a corpse dog or two, and a beefy spellcaster. With a lot to deal with at once, I prioritised enemies, studied the arena, and dipped into my arsenal more often than in previous *Dark Souls*. In this instance, I could light up a gunpowder barrel with my pyro's fireball, skirt the edges of the

arena to take out the smaller enemies, then focus on the spellcaster.

Attacks animate faster, but every swing and dodge roll is still an unintermittable commitment. If I died, it was because I rushed into the fray too soon

or wasn't properly outfitted – though the camera did get me killed too. About four times, a pillar or wall got stuck between my vision and character. It's less of a problem than before, but still frustrating.

WHAT FRESH HELL

Enemy design is more diverse than ever; long-haired skeletal spider people sucked my face off, fire

Spider people sucked my face off, fire witches reduced me to ash

NEED TO KNOW

WHAT IS IT?

A difficult dark fantasy action RPG.

EXPECT TO PAY

£40

DEVELOPER

FromSoftware

PUBLISHER

FromSoftware, Bandai Namco

REVIEWED ON

Nvidia GTX 980 Ti, Intel Core i7-6700K, 16GB RAM

MULTIPLAYER

Co-op and PvP

LINK

www.darksouls3.com



witches reduced me to ash, and the icy quadrupedal Irithyll knights chopped me up into a big bowl of frosted flakes. Alone, they're a challenge, but I rarely found a baddie without a buddy. Well-paced bonfires and shortcuts mitigate frustration.

Dark Souls' difficulty has always been in service of building on themes of despair, not challenge for the sake of ego. This time, the game plays around with boss design to that end, throwing in a few more thematically, mechanically playful opponents. This isn't to say any are easy. Some are monstrosities with multiple stages that change pace in an instant. Others are pitiable opponents that made me wish I could show mercy. Some took a few tries, others closer to two hours. No matter the difficulty, every killing blow threw my heart at my ribs. They're challenging, animated with ferocity and elegance, and scored by a choral orchestra that expands on their themes and emotional backdrops.

Whether the deathblow is delivered by the fungal arm of a rotten greatwood or the jagged teeth of a rat, failure encourages experimentation: should I dip into the massive selection of weapons and armour, give a few miracles a whirl, or come back later? I almost didn't finish the game in time because I liked tinkering with my gear sets so much, even if it can be a clumsy

COVENANTS Online allegiances, and what they commit you to



WARRIORS OF SUNLIGHT

Rewarded with Sunlight Medals after successful co-op summon.



WAY OF BLUE

Summons friendly Blue Sentinels if you're invaded.



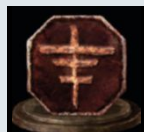
BLUE SENTINELS

Automatically summoned into Way of Blue player world for protection.



BLADES OF THE DARKMOON

Same function as Blue Sentinels, but player is dark blue.



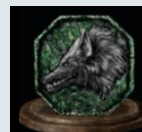
ROSARIA'S FINGERS

Pale Tongues rewarded for successful invasion. Traded for respect, etc.



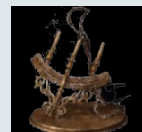
MOUND-MAKERS

Ambiguous co-op and PvP covenant. Can attack or help summoner.



WATCHDOGS OF FARRON

Summoned automatically to help other invaded covenant members.



ALDRICH FAITHFUL

Summoned automatically to help in specific late game area.

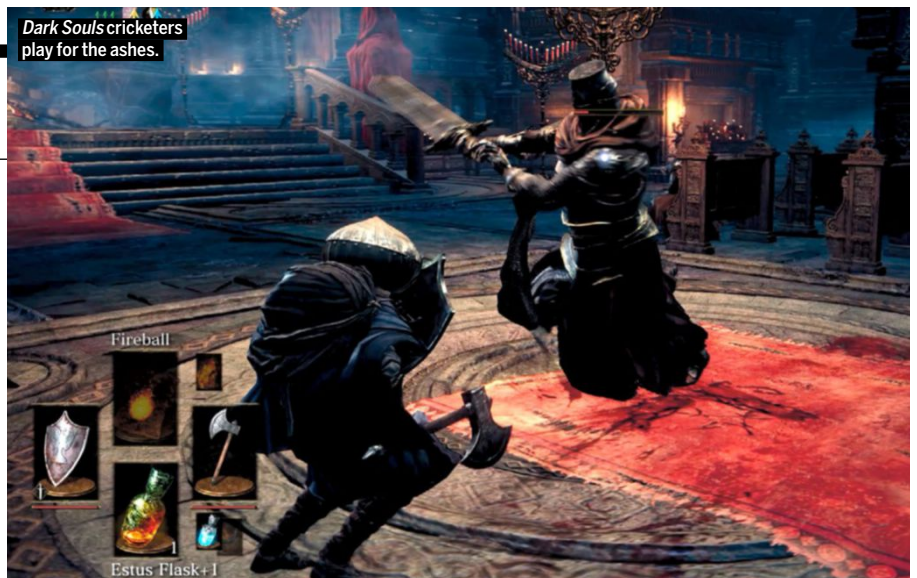
Lothric Castle sits high above.



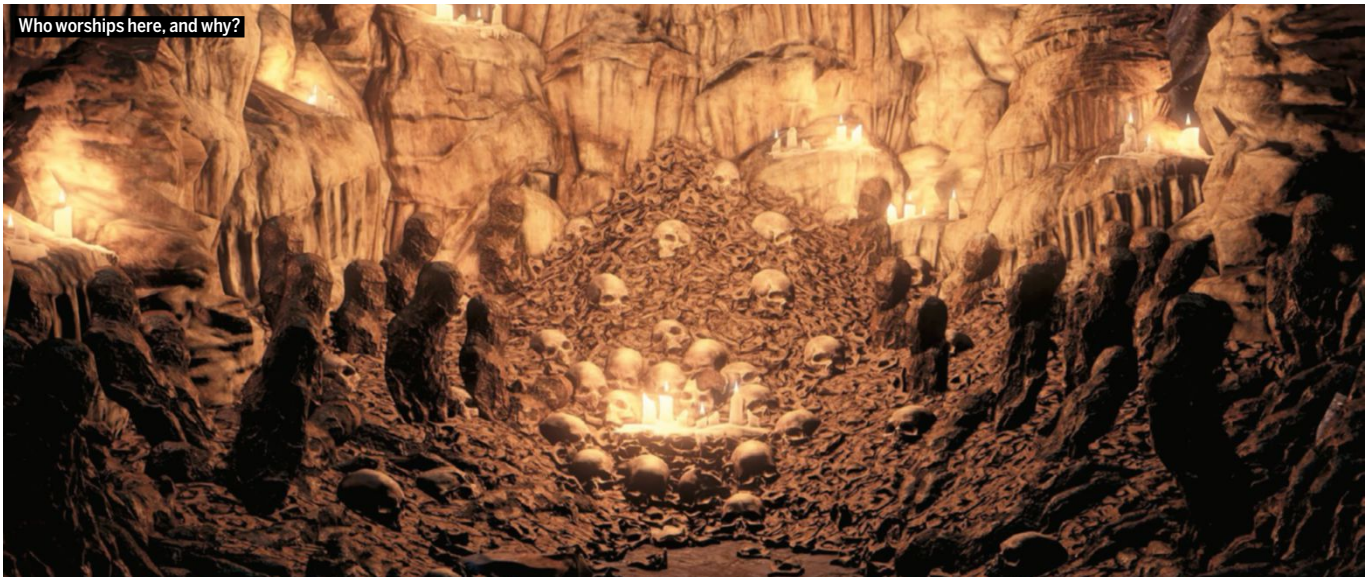
A new ally? Or my killer?



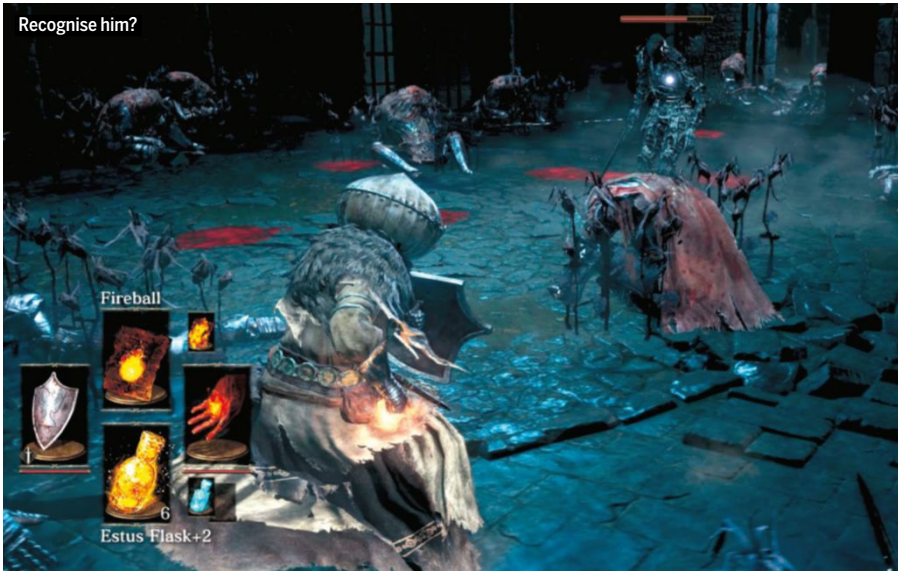
Dark Souls cricketers play for the ashes.



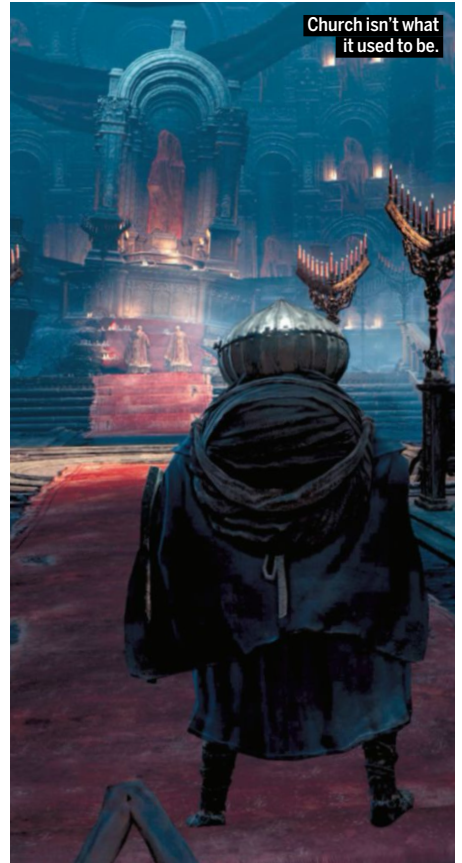
Who worships here, and why?



Recognise him?



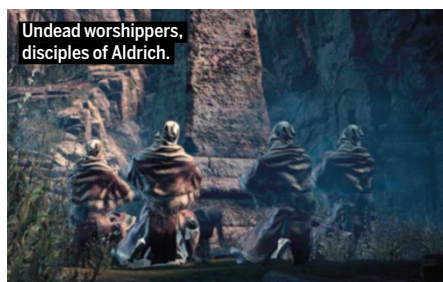
Church isn't what it used to be.



Take a drink, eh?

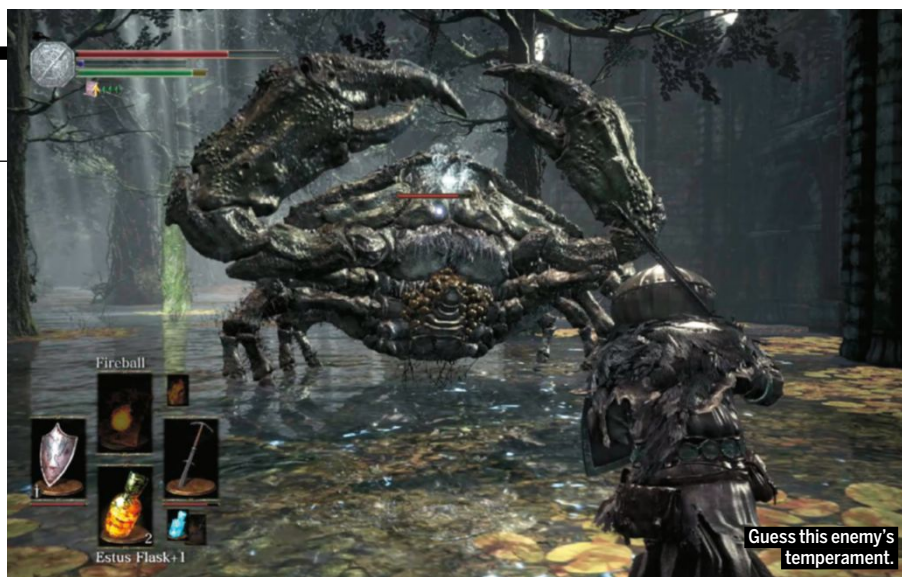


Undead worshippers, disciples of Aldrich.

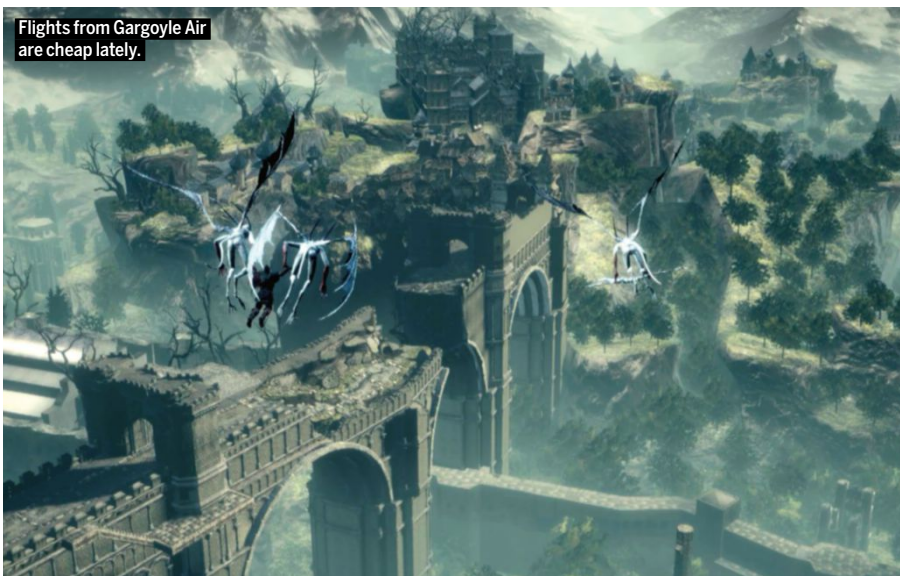




A rooftop battle with a sorcerer.



Guess this enemy's temperament.



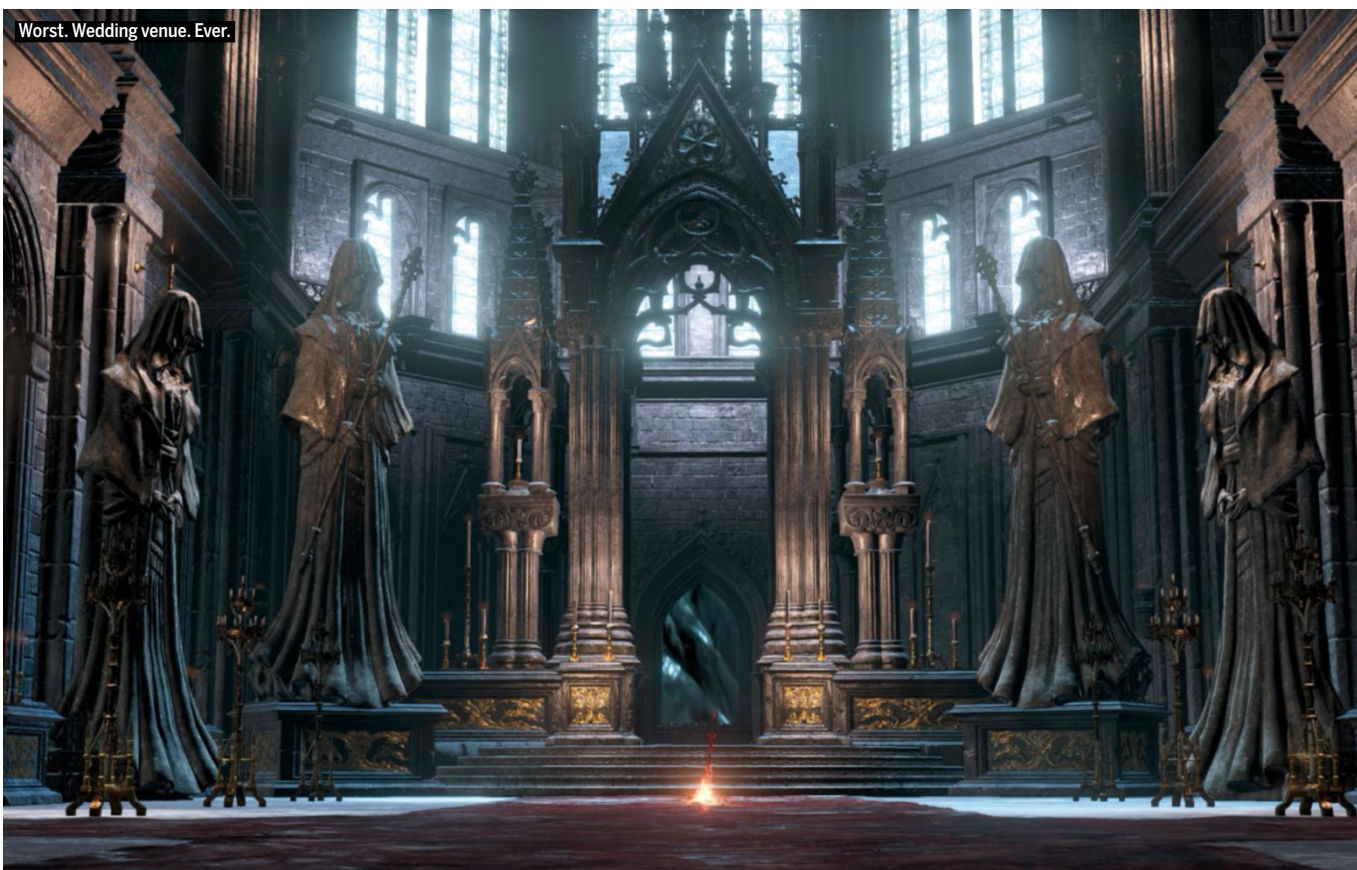
Flights from Gargoyle Air are cheap lately.



Heartwarming.



Ludleth is the only voluntary Lord of Cinder.



Worst. Wedding venue. Ever.

OH, THE PLACES YOU'LL DIE!

Soulful sites for death

1 UNDEAD SETTLEMENT

Full of thieves and sickly villagers. Look out for trees.

2 GIANT FRIEND

Be sure to talk to this guy. He'll come in handy more than once.

3 CATHEDRAL OF THE DEEP

Where Aldrich used to preach (and eat folks).

4 FARRON KEEP

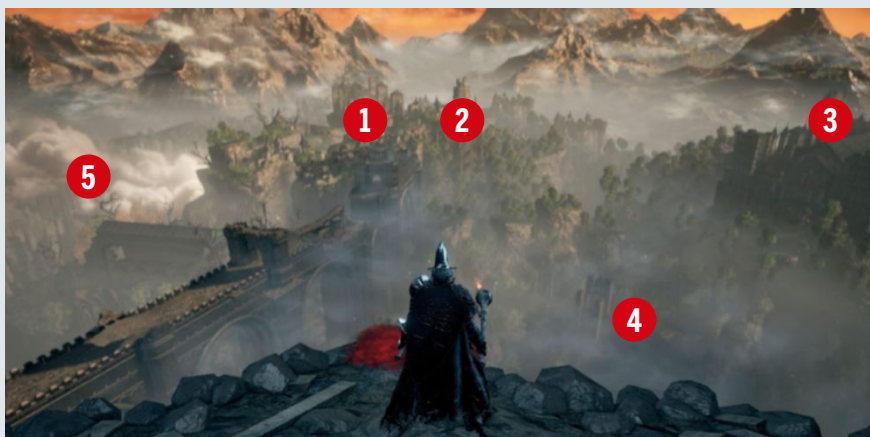
A warm, wet, toxic swamp. Bring bug spray and lots of fire.

5 IRITHYLL OF THE BOREAL VALLEY

An icy, quiet kingdom. Enjoy the chase scene.

6 NOT LISTED

Keep in mind, these are only the places you can see.



» battle with the UI. I found over 50 weapons, 20 armour sets, and about 40 rings in my first playthrough – ‘new game plus’ promises even more. I hardly touched sorcery or advanced pyromancy’s long list of spells. Bows are also much more viable this time around, easy to equip and quick to fire. I can hardly comprehend the variability in character builds, which is especially exciting for fans of PvP.

To start harassing or helping other players, you first need to consume an Ember.

These raise your health, but also open you up to random invasions. Covenants – hidden online guilds – come with their own lore and PvP goals. One is essentially on-call bodyguard duty. If a player in your covenant is invaded by another, you can join their game and hunt the hunters. My favourite covenant rewards successful invasions with player tongues, which I can hand over to my covenant leader to reallocate my stats or change my appearance. I was only invaded a handful of times, and several were scripted NPC invasions, but each was a frenzied dance, prolonged by Estus Flask heals that left my opponents vulnerable for a few seconds, but outpaced the speed at which I could damage them. Healing is no longer certain death, but a very desperate manoeuvre to reset the playing field.

PvP remains a spontaneous layer over an already a tense, unpredictable journey, but the community needs time to dig into PvP builds before they can establish the meta.

Throngs of walking corpses vomiting up maggots

Beyond the cursed undead village, I can see the fog blanketing the Irithyll Valley, its ruins resting below Archdragon Peak. A series of fetid swamps rounds out the panorama, lit by three towers of fire below the bridge to Lothric Castle. There’s no in-game map, but sweeping vistas

crop up often, and not just because they’re pretty. They’re how I know where to go.

Unlike the first game, the areas are fairly isolated, joined by a coil that snakes around the world with a few major forks.

Each is a massive maze, with more secrets than the space between your couch cushions. One particularly difficult stretch of combat killed me more times than I can recall, until I looked into the crevasse I was sidling around and saw I could skip the entire sequence by hopping down a few platforms. Damn.

It was one of many reminders to poke around innocuous corners; I couldn’t find a space that didn’t reveal an item, a hidden character, or a story-related prop. *Dark Souls III* builds a world and an entire history through a density of implicit information not possible in the previous games. There’s an early string of environments affected by Aldrich, a katamari of sentient goo leaving sickly signposts throughout Lothric. Before I met Aldrich, I saw where he’d been: a small stone tableau depicting his congregation, the unfaltering dedication of his sworn cathedral knights (to pursue and kill me), throngs of walking corpses vomiting up maggots, the

ambient hum of whales in a forest. It’s all there to build the myth of Aldrich, but I had to draw the connections myself.

THE ZERO’S JOURNEY

In my pursuit of this, I stumbled into a few hidden levels so easy to miss that it’s hard to believe time was spent filling them at all. They feature unique enemies, complex bosses (arguably one of the best in the entire series), and lore that many players will never see, exhibiting a faith in the playerbase to exhaustively discuss and catalogue every detail.

The mystery carries over into the characters strewn about the world. Each carries a personal storyline that can play out differently depending on their relationships with other NPCs and a few branching decision points. Moral dilemmas, tragedy, and corruption pull at every one.

The added fidelity in *Dark Souls III* could have just been a simple upgrade in texture detail, but FromSoftware treat the extra space like a wider canvas, pushing their themes and story through every possible avenue. I was challenged to read environments like a novel, to empathise with Lothric’s imperfect inhabitants, and to ask whether or not anything was worth saving. But there are no easy answers here, only 40-plus hours of tense action, awe-inspiring exploration, death, and big, bleak, beautiful questions. ■



PC GAMER VERDICT

Sprawling level design, thrilling combat, and masterful indirect storytelling make this the best *Dark Souls* yet.

94



SLOW BURN

ASHES OF THE SINGULARITY offers strategy on an epic scale, but little else. *By Leif Johnson*

Stardock's new RTS clearly sees itself as a phoenix of sorts for *SupCom* and the genre in general. For the most part it succeeds in spreading its wings, tossing out the speedy tactics of *StarCraft II* in favour of a more determined, thoughtful approach, while carpeting the playing field with thousands of fighter planes, hovering battleships, and tanks. It's an RTS for pensive folks interested in the big picture – hence the slightly dorky Kurzweil-referencing name.

Too bad it doesn't spin a yarn worthy of it. *Ashes* devotes a mere 11 missions to telling the tale of the 'Ascension War' between the technologically augmented Post-Humans and the strange AI faction, the Substrate. Victory rarely involves more than nabbing more resources than the other team. Each faction's 15 units look almost identical.

On the other hand, any more unit types would just get lost in *Ashes'* controlled chaos. It's all about piling hundreds or even thousands of ships on the screen at once, ranging from flying bombers and small skittering craft to lumbering dreadnoughts.

I played with DirectX 12 support enabled, and my GeForce GTX 980 had few problems running the camera over the busiest battles. It ran well when I zoomed in so close I

could see the nicks on my ship's hulls. It ran well when I pulled back to watch the symphony of destruction from afar, although it never quite reaches *SupCom* distances. The catch? I could only achieve an average 45fps.

I was having more fun with an RTS than I have in a couple of years

It rarely seemed to matter, since dealing with that many units on screen demands a shift from the speed-based strategies common to *Ashes'* few contemporaries.

Appropriately for its title, *Ashes* champions a slow burn. Reaching the point where I can cram my screen with hundreds of units usually takes a while, especially when the most powerful units creep over the battlefield like snails.

I started enjoying *Ashes* when I learned to think how it wants me to think; sending off dreadnoughts and small accompanying forces off to

NEED TO KNOW

WHAT IS IT?
A real-time strategy game that lets you build up thousands of units.

EXPECT TO PAY
£40

DEVELOPER
Oxide Games

PUBLISHER
Stardock

REVIEWED ON
Windows 10, 16GB RAM, GeForce GTX 980

MULTIPLAYER
Up to 6 players

LINK
www.ashesofthesingularity.com

points they wouldn't reach for five minutes, while I scouted out new deposits of resources with smaller, faster groups. Elsewhere, I shook off my initial disappointment with the samey look of units once I realised I fared much better using a hotkey to treat a collection of them as one entity, a 'meta unit'.

Ashes' true soul lies in skirmish mode. Centred on a mad rush for resources, it's dazzlingly customisable and playable by up to six AI teams or players. Rather than bothering with endless busybody micromanagement, I focused on the flanking, the surprise flashes for Turinium, the carefully timed arrival of a dreadnought. And in the process, I found I was having more fun with an RTS than I have in a couple of years.

The drab maps rob it of an extra layer of strategy, and I frowned at the forgettable campaign, but in other moments, *Ashes* rose beyond its lacklustre parts to deliver carefully paced victories I won't soon forget. ■

PC GAMER VERDICT

Ashes of the Singularity delivers thoughtful real-time strategy with many units, but drab maps and a poor story.

75

palicomp

Don't be the same..... Be Better!



Tel: 01270 898 104



sales@palicomp.co.uk

AMD Shockwave (KAV2)

AMD Athlon X4 860k (O.C 4Ghz)
ASUS A88XM-PLUS
CRUCIAL BALLISTIX 8GB 1600Mhz
SAMSUNG DVDWR 24x
SEAGATE 1TB SSHD
SHARKOON VG5-W Case
500W FSP PSU Bronze
AMD R7 370 4GB
WINDOWS 10 64Bit

£499.99



AMD Kaveri Evolution (KAV1)

AMD Kaveri 7700K (O.C 4.2Ghz)
ASUS A88XM-PLUS
CRUCIAL BALLISTIX 8GB 1600Mhz
SAMSUNG DVDWR 24x
SEAGATE 1TB SSHD
ZALMAN Z3 Case
AMD R7 Graphics Integrated
WINDOWS 10 64Bit
24" HDMI LED 1080p Monitor

£499.99



Eyefinity 1100 (EYE3)

INTEL i5 6600K Skylake
O.C to 4.4Ghz
ASUS Z170-P
CRUCIAL 16GB DDR4 2400Mhz
SAMSUNG DVDWR 24x
2TB SATA3 HDD
AMD R7 370 4GB
AVP Black VENOM Case
3 x 24" Samsung 1080p LED
Windows 10 64Bit

£1099.99



Battlefront Pro Gamer (BAT2)

INTEL i5 6600K Skylake
O.C to 4.4Ghz
ASUS Z170-P
CRUCIAL 16GB DDR4 2400Mhz
SAMSUNG DVDWR 24x
SAMSUNG 250GB Evo 850 SSD
2TB SATA3 HDD
NVIDIA GTX970 4GB
ZALMAN Z11 Neo
Windows 10 64Bit

£999.99



USE PROMO CODE 'PCGFQJ' - For Free Q-Jump* (Rrp £25.00)

Include on checkout notes as promo code to redeem - we will then dispatch next working day*

0% Finance Available - Buy Now Pay Later*

Terms & Condition apply - see www.palcomp.co.uk

Q-Jump Service Available - Next Working Day Dispatch

Free Games on all Gaming PC's

PC range starting from £119.99 with Windows included



AWARD WINNING PC SYSTEMS - QUALITY SUPPORT

*Sales subject to our terms of service available online - www.palcomp.co.uk - Configuration issues will be advised by phone - any alternatives will also be advised by phone before proceeding with the order. Systems Custom built then are tested 100% prior to dispatch - dispatched via courier for next working day delivery - other delivery options available online. 0% Finance upto 12 months only - terms online - early settlement fee just £29.00 - apply online or phone. Prices inclusive of VAT and free UK mainland shipping. Q-jump cut-off time 15.00pm.

ISN'T STELLAR

Beauty is overcome by repetitive grind
in space adventure **ADR1FT**. By Chris Livingston

I was tremendously satisfied the first time I reached out and snatched an oxygen canister. This first-person adventure takes place after a disaster on a massive space station orbiting Earth, and as I floated in zero-g amid the clouds of wreckage and debris, my space suit was leaking oxygen badly. While I struggled to control my movement with thrusters, small oxygen canisters spun and drifted maddeningly just out of reach.

I held down a button to grab one and my arm extended, my hand desperately reaching for the bottle as it tumbled past. A little more thrust in the right direction and my hand clasped the bottle, plugged it into a port on my suit, and then finally discarded it, letting it spin slowly away into the void.

Unfortunately, grabbing oxygen canisters is something you have to do dozens, maybe even a hundred times before the end of *Adr1ft*. Your suit continues to leak oxygen, and since your thrusters also use

oxygen, you need to replenish your supply almost constantly. As you make your way slowly through the enormous, shattered space station, activating computer terminals and restoring power to critical systems, you spend almost all of your time trying to spot spare oxygen canisters and wall-mounted oxygen stations so you don't asphyxiate. Later you'll upgrade your suit to hold more oxygen but it's still something you

need to closely monitor. Like the number '1' crammed into *Adr1ft*'s title, the oxygen hunt feels intrusive and distracting, taking away from what might have been an immersive and haunting experience.

Adr1ft is beautiful. Debris floats and spins through the station and in the surrounding space, and there are a number of interesting looking modules in the station: botany labs, communications arrays, and living quarters. The animation of your arms and hands as you open airlocks, use oxygen and repair stations, and

grasp floating objects is fantastic. But the beauty of the game gets lost in your near-constant hunt for oxygen, and by the tenth time I watched my arms open an airlock or haul my body into an EVA suit repair station – the same ten second animation every time – I was tired of it.

I understand the desire to create a sense of urgency for the player, but being the sole survivor in a ruined space station promotes that feeling

The beauty of the game gets lost in your near-constant hunt for oxygen

NEED TO KNOW

WHAT IS IT?

A first-person game about escaping a heavily damaged space station.

EXPECT TO PAY

£15

DEVELOPER

Three One Zero

PUBLISHER

505 Games

REVIEWED ON

Intel i7 x980 3.33GHz, 9GB RAM, Nvidia GeForce GTX 960

MULTIPLAYER

None

LINK

www.adr1ft.com

naturally without constantly forcing you to be on the verge of asphyxiation. Also making things occasionally frustrating is your minimap, which is presented in a flat 2D display, an arrow pointing to your next objective. While you spin and float in 3D space, it can be more than a little tricky to figure out exactly where and what it's pointing to.

RIFT

Adr1ft looks fantastic in VR. Since the Rift doesn't have VR hand controllers yet (I used an Xbox controller), it doesn't really feel like you're reaching for something any more than playing on a regular monitor does, but it's still a far eerier and more immersive experience in VR, and the zero-g debris and views of Earth are stunning to behold.

There are bits of story to find as you travel through the wreckage: audio logs you can pluck from in front of you and play (and plenty that play on their own) and personal emails to read (why I'm reading emails while I'm seconds away from death, I can't really say) to uncover the reasons behind the disaster. The voice acting and writing are well done, though I didn't find the story particularly compelling – as in *Gravity*, the visuals and setting are more important than anything else.

Exploration games like *Dear Esther* draw a fair amount of ire from players who don't consider them real games, but *Adr1ft* and its near-constant oxygen hunt feels like it's trying too hard to be a game, and the experience suffers for it. While VR certainly adds to the immersion and excitement, it doesn't do anything to overcome the repetitive tasks that stifle the enjoyment I might get from really examining *Adr1ft*'s space. ■

PC GAMER

VERDICT

As beautiful a space-based game as you could ask for, especially in VR, but exhaustingly repetitive.

63

HOUSTON, WE'RE F*CKED What went wrong in other space games

1993
DOOM

Man's hubris/demons.



1995
THE DIG

The title. Who names a space game "The Dig"?

2008
MASS EFFECT

Geth invasion; horribly slow elevators.

2008
DEAD SPACE

Whole buncha necromorphs.



2011
KERBAL SPACE PROGRAM

Hundreds of exploded rockets and dead or marooned Kerbals.

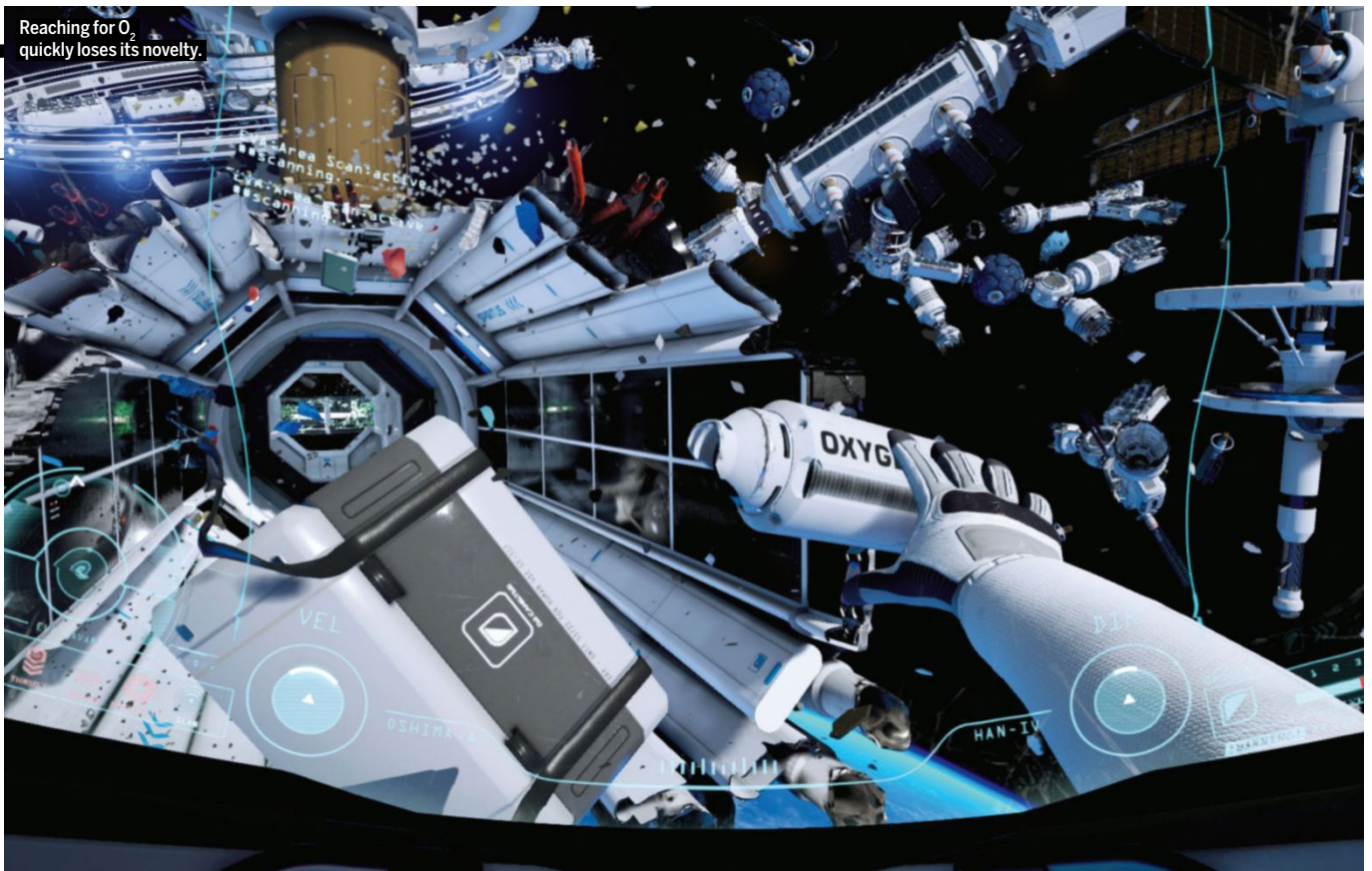
2014
ALIEN ISOLATION

A single xenomorph.

2014
SPACEBASE DF-9

Ran out of money in Early Access.

Reaching for O₂ quickly loses its novelty.



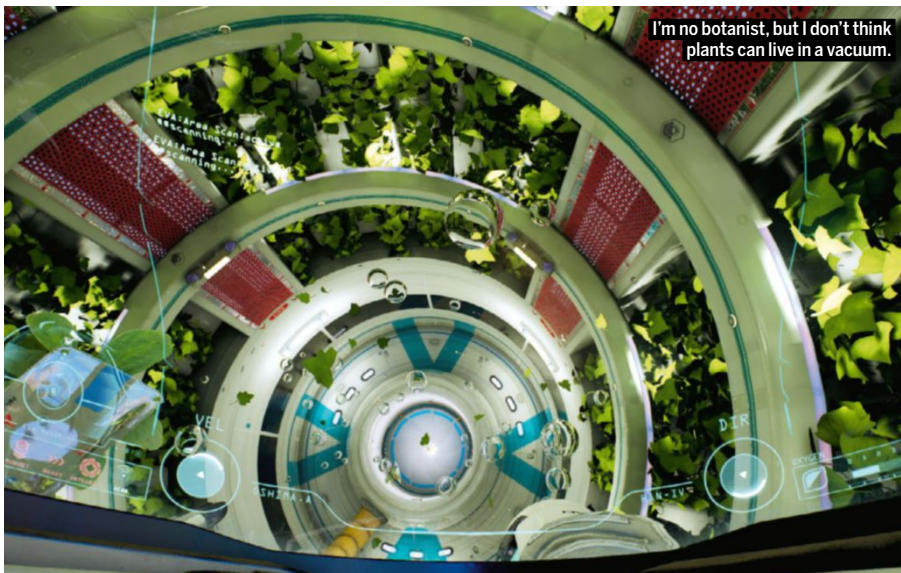
Suffocating is horrifying, until it happens for the tenth time.



Bits of story can be plucked and examined.



I'm no botanist, but I don't think plants can live in a vacuum.



Reaching, in every sense.



PC GAMER
PRESENTS

PC HARDWARE

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE 2016

BEGINNER-FRIENDLY

ESSENTIAL GUIDES

BUILD, BOOST AND
CUSTOMISE YOUR
PERFECT RIG

54

PAGES OF
HARDWARE
REVIEWS
INSIDE!

oculus

VIRTUAL

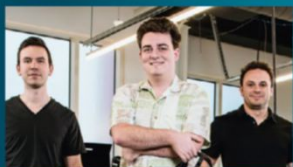
YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE FUTURE OF PC TECH

REALITY

FEATURING 38 PAGES OF VR

FLIP

FOR MORE



INTRO TO
OCULUS
RIFT
WORKED
ON



VR EXPERIENCES
THE BEST IMMERSIVE
GAMES AND DEMOS



RIFT REVIEW
OUR VERDICT ON THE
CONSUMER VERSION



HTC VIVE
NEW SOFTWARE TESTED

ON SALE
NOW

KEYBOARDS | PROCESSORS | GRAPHICS CARDS | SOLID STATE
DISKS | KEYBOARDS | MICE | MONITORS | GAMEPADS | HEADSETS

Future

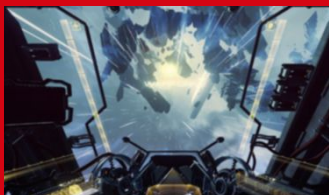
ISBN 978178389308-9

SPECIAL 10
PRINTED IN THE UK
£9.99



9 781783 893089

— FEATURING —



**THE BEST VR
EXPERIENCES**



**OCULUS RIFT
REVIEW**



**ESSENTIAL
GUIDES**



**HARDWARE
REVIEWS**



YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE FUTURE OF PC TECH

ORDER NOW
myfavouritemagazines.co.uk



zinio™



COUNTRY MILE

EVERYBODY'S GONE TO THE RAPTURE is a slow, haunting journey through a very English apocalypse. *By Andy Kelly*

Hidden among the rolling hills of the Shropshire countryside, Yaughton Valley is a sleepy, secluded community that embodies the idyllic image of rural England. It's an unusual setting for a story about the end of the world, but that's what makes *Everybody's Gone to the Rapture* so special. As you ramble through this rich, pastoral landscape, you realise there are no other people around, prompting the question: where did everybody go?

The first place you visit is the village of Yaughton itself. Walking along the quiet, leafy streets you see hastily abandoned cars, discarded suitcases, and – perhaps most unsettling of all – an empty, lifeless pub. Ominous government posters mention a quarantine and you get the impression that whatever happened here happened recently. But the village isn't completely lifeless. Ghostly human shapes made of shimmering light reenact moments from the past, and through these you're given an intimate glimpse into the lives of the people who lived there, as well as clues about their disappearance.

Each area of the valley you visit focuses on a different character. In Yaughton we follow a priest as he interacts with his parishioners. Later we shadow a farmer working on the outskirts of town, a retired busybody, and the troubled owner of a lakeside holiday camp. They're evocative stories of ordinary people dealing with extraordinary things, and the natural dialogue and understated

voice performances make the conversations relayed by those ethereal figures of light feel real. And each character's story has a dramatic denouement, some of which are genuinely moving.

Apocalyptic fiction rarely focuses on how normal, everyday people would cope when faced with the end of the world, which makes *Rapture's* story all the more powerful. It's in these intimate vignettes that the game really shines, but the larger arc isn't quite as effective. It's a fairly standard sci-fi story and although I found it compelling for the most part, it was ultimately less interesting than the lives of the villagers.

The valley itself is a remarkable feat of world-building. Not only is it amazingly beautiful, but it captures the ambience of rural England perfectly. It's a huge space too, incorporating a variety of detailed terrain, from golden wheatfields to shadowy forests. The overcast sky, tennis courts and rows of caravans here provide the setting for one of

Yaughton Valley is one of the most exquisite places to take a walk

NEED TO KNOW

WHAT IS IT?
A first-person adventure about the end of the world.

EXPECT TO PAY
£15

DEVELOPER
The Chinese Room

PUBLISHER
Sony Computer Entertainment

REVIEWED ON
GeForce GTX 970,
Intel Core i7-5820K,
16GB RAM

MULTIPLAYER
None

LINK
www.thechinese-room.co.uk

the best, and most emotional, stories in the game.

Jessica Curry's orchestral score is enchanting too, with stirring choral pieces that echo the game's religious themes and help define the emotional landscape of the story. A piece titled 'Carry Me Back to Her Arms', which plays as you gaze across a beautiful sea of farmland, made my arms bristle with goosebumps. The audio design is also wonderful, from the peaceful chirp of birds and the lazy buzz of insects, to the eerie broadcasts crackling on radios.

SLOWLY DOES IT

Yaughton Valley is one of the most exquisite places to take a walk on PC, but that's all you do. Compared to other first-person games with a story focus like *Gone Home* and *Firewatch* it's a very passive experience. Your only real interaction, besides opening doors and poking around in buildings, is 'tuning' orbs of light to reveal story and switching on the odd radio or TV set. Personally, I didn't mind. The atmosphere, story, and world are so captivating that I was happy to go along for the ride. But be warned: it's an *incredibly* slow game, with a glacial walking speed that's barely improved by the 'run' button. I love slow games, but I found it slightly too ponderous at times.

Everybody's Gone to the Rapture doesn't tell its story in an especially interesting way. Events unfold in front of you and you watch them. It's as simple as that. But what it lacks in narrative innovation it makes up for with a heartfelt tale and a gorgeous world to explore. Sharing the lives of the residents of Yaughton Valley was a pleasure. But you'll have to be willing to yield to its passive nature and sedate pace to fully enjoy it. ■

PC GAMER VERDICT

A leisurely stroll through a beautiful apocalypse, it's stirring and heartfelt, but may be too slow and hands-off for some.

79

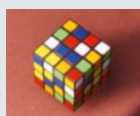
FLASHBACK *Clues we're in the '80s*



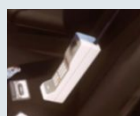
COMPUTERS
The Commodore 64 was the height of technology in the early '80s.



CARS
Before car designers discovered curves, they looked like this.



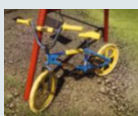
RUBIK'S CUBE
Except they only had nine squares per face, not sixteen. Weird.



MOBILE PHONES
Basically a big, plastic brick, as used by Gordon Gekko.



CHEAP BEER
An entire pint of real ale for 50p? These truly were halcyon days.



BIKES
A brightly coloured BMX was a staple of many '80s childhoods.

These echoes are the only life in the valley.



Religion plays a big role in the story.



I wish I was having a pint here right now.



The village is the heart of Yaughton Valley.



Frank, a local farmer, is one of the main characters.



The world is big, but there are boundaries.



The everyday setting heightens the eeriness.



BULLET TIME

Lock and load with **ENTER THE GUNGEON**, the shootiest top-down shooter ever to fire a shot. *By Jake Tucker*

Enter *The Gungeon* has a gun fetish. The story revolves around a giant bullet and a gun that can kill the past. Enemies are mostly bullets, the end-of-level lift is a shell casing, the in-game art is modelled around gun paraphernalia. It's the latest in a long line of top-down roguelike shooters, taking its inspiration from standouts *Nuclear Throne* and *The Binding of Isaac*. It adds many cool touches of its own, too, even if it doesn't quite match the highs of its peers.

From *Binding of Isaac*, it borrows the chaotic room-based structure, and the ridiculous boss battle blocking your path to the floors below. From *Nuclear Throne*, the mass of guns and power-ups, the ridiculous weapons and weird and wonderful enemies.

It's one of the hardest top-down shooters I've played in a long time.

Enemies in the first room are capable of spewing endless rounds your way, and even on the first floor death comes quickly if you're overwhelmed. There are also the bosses which, to a man, are the hardest things I've ever encountered.

Gungeon's additions all feel meaningful. Every character has a dodge roll, making you invulnerable while you're in the air and enabling you to dance between incoming rounds. You can also kick barrels at enemies and flip tables to shield yourself from incoming fire.

The floors of the dungeon – sorry, gungeon – are all hand-crafted

rooms, meaning you start to recognise similarities. It also means you can have strategies for certain rooms, and none of the encounters feel truly unfair, even if you may feel some of your deaths are a bit cheesy.

One of the best things about the game is that combat is filled with decisions. Reloading, flipping tables, rolling across the floor, all are essential to the flow of combat, and how you use them determines your overall success. Many weapons have secondary effects that you have to factor into your strategies. One gets less powerful

as the clip drains, another alternates between spewing fuel and fire.

My main complaint is that actually pulling the trigger on most of the guns feels flat. It's disappointing. For a top-down shooter, that's a big problem, and it's testament to how good the game feels everywhere else that I've enjoyed it regardless.

You choose one of four starting characters, each with their own

strengths. They're not all that different in playing style, merely starting out with different weapons and passive items, but one of them has a dog, and so became my go-to.

There's a lot to learn, and most of your information will come from the *Ammonomicon*, a book that gives you information on everything you're currently packing, in addition to anything you've discovered before. This is good because when you're picking up such weapons as a beehive, a camera or a bit of tree, it's invaluable to know how you're going to kill people with it.

UNTO THE BREACH

Over time, as you return to the Breach, the game's hub level, you'll notice it's slowly evolving. Certain characters you found in the depths return to the Breach and offer a variety of services. This gives *Gungeon* a light metagame to encourage repeated playthroughs, but finding all the bizarre weaponry is very much its own reward.

The loot is so bizarre that it's a shame how tight-fisted the game is at handing it out. You find new items and power-ups rarely; a couple of chests per floor, a shop and the boss are the only real way to get the weapons and ammo. Frequently you'll find yourself stuck with your starter weapons and several times I've had to plink at bosses with the starter pistol. Given that a good weapon is the only way to succeed, it can be infuriating.

I like *Enter the Gungeon* a lot, despite its numerous little niggles. There's a lot of depth here for fans of the genre, and importantly, it's a lot of fun. You'll die a lot, you'll probably rage at a fair few deaths, but you'll keep coming back for more. ■

NEED TO KNOW

WHAT IS IT?

A top-down shooter with rogue-like elements and a shedload of guns.

EXPECT TO PAY
£10

DEVELOPER
Dodgeroll Games

PUBLISHER
Devolver Digital

REVIEWED ON
Intel i5, 16GB RAM,
Nvidia GeForce GTX 970

MULTIPLAYER
Local co-op

LINK
www.dodgeroll.com/gungeon

You can also kick barrels at enemies and flip tables to shield yourself

THINGS THAT MAKE YOU GO BOOM

A selection of weird guns from *Gungeon's* armoury



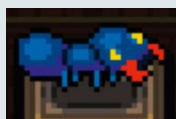
BARREL

This barrel lets you bombard your enemies with fish, which then flop about the place, uselessly.



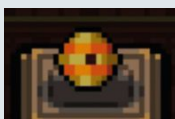
VERTEBRAEK-47X

A mix between an AK47 and someone's spine, this gun fires rounds that home in on enemies.



GUNGEON ANT

Unlike regular ants, this fires balls of fiery death and fuel. Who says a creature can't just be a gun?



BEEHIVE

Bees! Bzzz. *Far Cry Primal* isn't the only game that gets to use bees as weaponry. Bees are big in 2016.



PEASHOOTER

This gun hits like a handful of peas but reloads with an adorable popping sound.

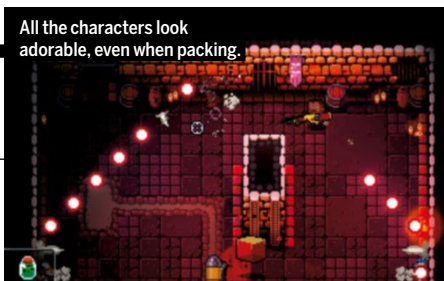
PC GAMER

VERDICT

A solid shooter that slightly underdelivers on its promise. It's still fun, but there are better examples out there.

78

All the characters look adorable, even when packing.



ACCURSED GUNWITCH THE GORGUN

This isn't even the most painful pun.



Finding this prisoner unlocks a shop in the Breach.

If you want to buy something, talk to Ox. I don't deal with customers.



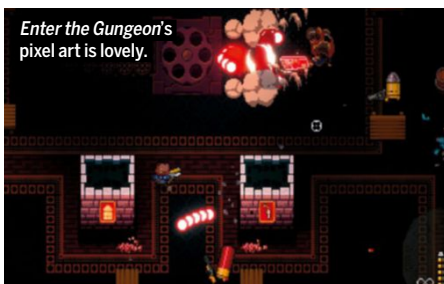
Even the early levels can get a bit hectic.



The Ammonomicon: the best way to learn about new guns.



Enter the Gungeon's pixel art is lovely.

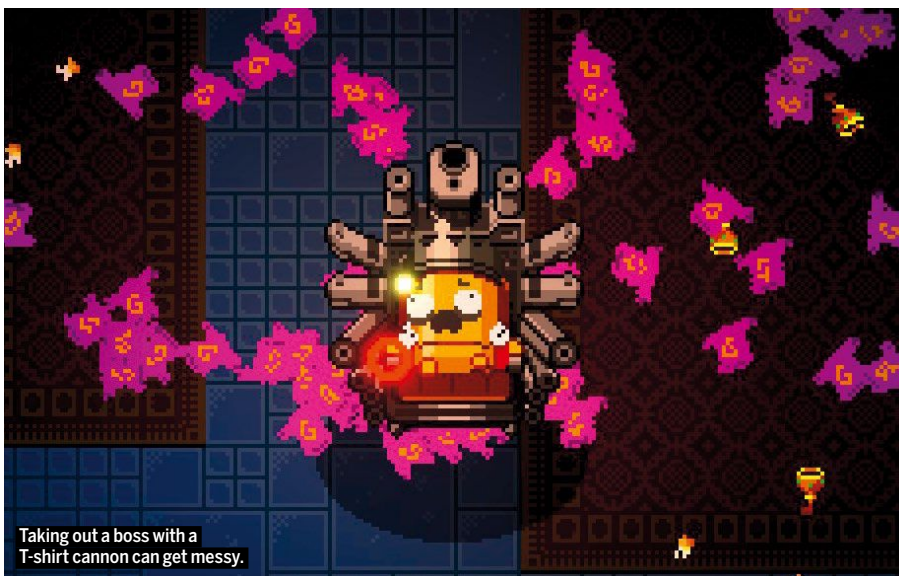


If you get hit, lay on the ground and die.



The shopkeeper is a fount of useful knowledge.

Taking out a boss with a T-shirt cannon can get messy.



Out of ammo, no health. Here comes the game over.



Just... so many muscles.



TV ON THE RADEON

Remedy's **QUANTUM BREAK** is another stylish, story-heavy shooter, and an uncharacteristically shoddy PC port. *By Andy Kelly*

A physics experiment goes horribly wrong, granting everyman Jack Joyce time-bending powers. He can deflect bullets, teleport, freeze or reverse time, and unleash deadly bursts of energy – abilities that come in handy when he learns he's on a mission to save the world. But the evil Monarch Corporation has other ideas, and Joyce finds himself being hunted across the fictional East Coast city of Riverport by a ruthless private army.

Quantum Break is a story-heavy action game by *Max Payne* creator Remedy. As well as a ten-hour campaign featuring the kind of cinematic combat the Finnish studio is known for, episodes of a live-action TV show play between acts, and the scenes change – sometimes dramatically, sometimes subtly – according to in-game decisions you make and things you interact with. It's an interesting idea in theory, but you quickly realise your impact on the outcome of the show is negligible, and that the game attached to it is a disappointingly average shooter.

Remedy has always been comfortable embracing pulpy genre

fiction, whether it's the paperback horror of *Alan Wake* or *Max Payne's* hard-boiled noir. Now the team are embracing sci-fi, and the result is an enjoyably melodramatic story that ended up being the highlight of the

game for me. A solid cast of B-listers help bring the script to life, including Aidan Gillen (*The Wire*, *Game of Thrones*), who chews the scenery brilliantly as villain Serene, and Shawn Ashmore (*X-Men*) as likeable

hero Joyce. It's Remedy's most self-serious game to date, missing some of the knowing humour of their earlier work, but it spins an engaging, energetic yarn that kept me interested all the way through.

**Aidan Gillen
chews the
scenery
brilliantly as
the villain**

NEED TO KNOW

WHAT IS IT?

A time-bending shooter from the creator of *Max Payne*.

EXPECT TO PAY

£45

DEVELOPER

Remedy Entertainment

PUBLISHER

Microsoft Studios

REVIEWED ON

GeForce GTX 970, Intel i7-5820K, 16GB RAM

MULTIPLAYER

None

LINK

www.quantumbreak.com

The conflict between Joyce and Monarch erupts, inevitably, in gunfire. *Quantum Break* is primarily a third-person shooter, and you spend a good portion of the game firing guns at people who are also firing guns at you. But it's not really a cover shooter, at least in the conventional sense. Joyce crouches automatically behind objects of a certain height, but firing a gun makes him stand up, and you can't pin yourself against surfaces or blind-fire around them. This is, I think, to encourage you to keep moving and take advantage of his time powers, rather than playing it like *Gears of War*.

POWER TRIP

Joyce's dash ability lets him basically teleport across the level for a short distance – and if you aim your gun at the end, time will briefly slow down to give you a chance to line up a headshot. Or you can toss a bubble of energy to slow an enemy down, then fire into it to create a throbbing, fiery mass of bullets that are simultaneously unleashed when it bursts. A charged attack lets you toss



TIME OUT *Joyce's time powers and what they let him do*

TIME VISION

Reveal the location of nearby enemies and see through walls.



TIME DODGE

An instant short-range dash move that slows time at the end.



TIME STOP

Freeze an enemy in place and stack bullets up for extra damage.



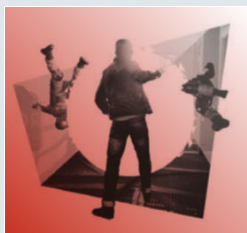
TIME SHIELD

A bubble that protects from incoming fire for a few seconds.



TIME BLAST

A surge of energy that instantly kills anyone inside its blast radius.

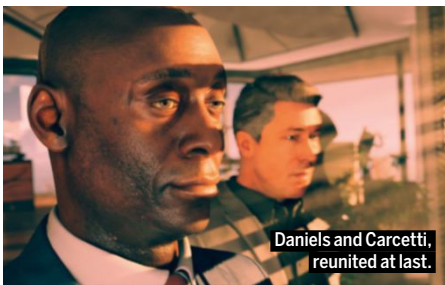


TIME RUSH

Time freezes, but you can still sprint at full speed.



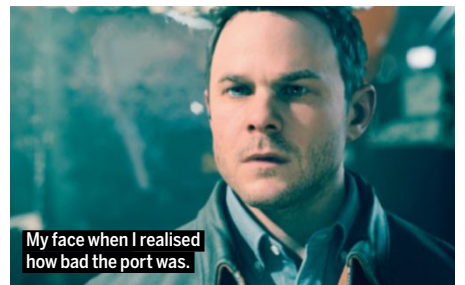
These big guys explode satisfyingly when defeated.



Daniels and Carcetti, reunited at last.



Some enemies have their own time powers.



My face when I realised how bad the port was.



I hope you like explosions.

That skyscraper is Monarch's HQ.



Your powers let you leave cover and attack head-on.



The facial animation is pretty incredible.



There are some funny moments.



That guy on the right looks familiar.



The platforming bits look cool, but are no fun.



I hate it when that happens.



Serene and Joyce face off in the live-action show.



» a large ball of energy that can kill a group of enemies instantly, and you can freeze time for a few seconds to help you flank. And if you're low on health, you can pop a shield that will deflect bullets.

The powers look amazing, especially the way the level fragments and ripples around you when you use them, and I like how you can experiment by combining different ones. But once the initial buzz wears off they feel slightly gimmicky, and fail to make up for the fact that *Quantum Break* is, really, a fairly basic shooter. The enemies in particular are amazingly unimaginative: the shotgun guy who charges you, the brute with a weak spot on his back, the sniper with the big, obvious laser sight. But I did enjoy fighting the guys who can teleport around the level, and later there's an enemy who makes your powers stop working if you get near them. Both complement the game's combat, while the others feel like they've been drafted in from the mercenary army that supplies soldiers for every third-person shooter.

There are moments of calm, thankfully, where you can explore and learn more about the story. The realistic locations aren't that fascinating – train yards, warehouses, offices – but Remedy's world-building and attention to detail is remarkable. Almost every environment feels authentic, lived-in, and hand-crafted. There are frequent interaction points that reveal interesting backstory and, sometimes, affect the TV show. If, like me, you're the type of person who likes to poke around in every corner of a level before moving on, your curiosity will be rewarded. Or you can just ignore all this stuff entirely and focus on the story at hand. In general the firefights are nicely spaced out, preventing the combat fatigue that often plagues games like this.

QUANTUM LEAPS

Another attempt to break up the combat isn't quite as successful. There are, lamentably, platforming sections in *Quantum Break*. One takes place on a bridge that's just been torn apart, and you have to navigate Joyce through the twisted metal and exploding cars. Things are made more difficult by the fact that time is

PAYING THE BILLS *The cast and what you might have seen them in*



AIDAN GILLEN
(Paul Serene)

The Wire,
Game of Thrones,
The Dark Knight
Rises



LANCE REDDICK
(Martin Hatch)

The Wire, Lost,
John Wick,
American Horror
Story



SHAWN ASHMORE
(Jack Joyce)

X-Men, Fringe,
The Outer Limits,
Smallville,
The Following



DOMINIC MONAGHAN
(William Joyce)

The Lord of the
Rings, Lost, X-Men
Origins: Wolverine



COURTNEY HOPE
(Beth Wilder)

Grey's Anatomy,
CSI: Miami, Bones,
NCIS: Los Angeles

'stuttering', meaning this debris is constantly moving and distorting. It certainly looks cool, and the stutter effects are a visual treat, but see past it and you'll realise that you're just leaping between platforms and dodging moving obstacles. This might have been a tolerable distraction if it wasn't for the lumbering, sluggish character movement, which clearly wasn't designed for platforming. You feel like you're wading through syrup, and if you make a mistake you have to endure a loading screen as the game whisks you back to the last checkpoint.

The production values are incredible throughout, but fail to hide the fact that, underneath all the gloss, *Quantum Break* is a completely prosaic action game. It's helped a bit by the live action show, which is decent for something made by game developers. If it were on TV you probably wouldn't watch it, but it's professionally made, mostly well-acted, and does a good job of fleshing the characters out – particularly the villains. It focuses on Monarch rather than Joyce, and Lance Reddick (The Wire) is subtly menacing as sinister CEO Martin Hatch. Ultimately though, it feels unnecessary. Some scenes change based on binary decisions you make at so-called junctions, but the overall narrative remains largely unaffected. Even so, I enjoyed the show, and always looked forward to the next episode to learn more about the characters. It just isn't connected to the game in any meaningful way, making its existence feel arbitrary.

Remedy has a track record of developing quality PC versions of its games, but *Quantum Break* – one of

the first big releases for Microsoft's Universal Windows Platform – runs poorly, even on high-end systems. It's incredibly demanding (or badly optimised, depending on how you look at it), and on low settings at 1080p with a GTX 970, it struggles to maintain a steady framerate. On a 60Hz monitor the game is inexplicably locked at 50Hz. This, combined with blurry edges, pop-in, and fuzzy shadows does a disservice to the otherwise impressive visuals. And the inconsistent framerate makes moving and shooting feel frustratingly cumbersome when the screen gets busy or you venture outdoors. It's a hugely disappointing PC port, and if Microsoft wants to improve its reputation with PC gamers it's off to a terrible start.

Quantum Break has some genuinely brilliant set-pieces and a better story than most action games. But overall it's an unremarkable shooter that tries to distract you from its lack of ideas with dazzling production values and polish. It's a lavish, passionately made thing, but more concerned with the plot than the game holding it all together. And while the live-action TV show concept seems new and exciting, it's really just a series of high-definition FMV cutscenes presented as something more.

Remedy fundamentally knows how to make an exciting action game, and *Quantum Break* has its moments. But they're overshadowed by dumb platforming, uninspiring enemy design, and a lacklustre PC port. ■



PC GAMER VERDICT

An average shooter tied to a confident story, but the TV show is ultimately an expensive, if entertaining, gimmick.

70

HARD LIGHT

Try, try, and try again in the beautiful but challenging
HYPER LIGHT DRIFTER. By Andy Kelly

The drifter, a mute warrior draped in a red cloak and wielding a sword of light, is an enigma. He roams a broken landscape searching for something, but it's not clear what. Occasionally he hunches over and coughs up blood, which causes the screen to glitch and flicker. There's a beguiling mystery about this figure, like the nameless gunslinger in a Western or a wandering samurai, and the same can be said of *Hyper Light Drifter* as a whole.

It's a world of strange machines, ethereal forests, ancient temples and lifeless, overgrown robots. An evocative intro shows us glimpses of a cataclysmic event – a gleaming futuristic city disappearing in a flash of explosive light – and this seems to be the aftermath. A ruined place littered with the remains of forgotten technology. It's not a dead world – there are people and creatures everywhere, some of which are friendly – but it feels like you're living in the wake of a disaster of some kind.

It's a beautiful post-apocalypse, brought to life by a vivid palette and intricate pixel art. A haunting ambient score by Rich 'Disasterpeace' Vreeland adds to the atmosphere, subtly changing to reflect your surroundings. Artistically, it's a triumph, but the considered, delicate aesthetic is somewhat misleading. Mostly *Hyper Light Drifter* is a punishing, fast-paced action game.

It never tells you anything – about the drifter, the setting, or even what you're supposed to be doing. This minimalist approach gives the game an air of mystery, but can also make it feel aimless. You spend the early stages of the game lost and bewildered, trying to make sense of it all. Other characters speak in gibberish or obscure comic book panels. Arcane symbols decorate the crumbling temples, but you have no way of deciphering them.

But then objectives slowly begin to form in your mind, like the diamond-shaped objects you collect – usually by fighting through dungeons – that fill in parts of a glyph

in the village at the heart of the map. The locations are interconnected and there's no attempt to lead you in the right direction. You'll stumble into areas that seem impossibly difficult, making a mental note to return later when your skills are sharper. This freeform structure is occasionally confusing, but gives you a satisfying amount of agency.

The varied bestiary of enemies is relentlessly aggressive

Really, though, *Hyper Light Drifter* is all about the combat. Its varied bestiary of enemies is relentlessly aggressive, but they have attack patterns that can be learned and exploited. It's when

you're facing several different types at once, usually in confined, trap-filled spaces, that things get difficult. You can dash, fire a gun, and attack with your sword, but can't endure much damage. Timing and carefully observing your opponent are key to surviving a battle. It's almost like a puzzle game, knowing which enemies to attack first, where to move, and when to use your limited health consumables.

NEED TO KNOW

WHAT IS IT?
A beautiful, challenging action RPG.

EXPECT TO PAY
£15

DEVELOPER
Heart Machine

PUBLISHER
In-house

REVIEWED ON
GeForce GTX 970, Intel i7-5820K, 16GB RAM

MULTIPLAYER
None

LINK
www.heart-machine.com

Dungeons hide the most satisfying combat in the game. Their layouts change dynamically around you, forcing you to constantly change your tactics. Kill one enemy and a wall that was providing cover from a sniper on the other side of the room will suddenly disappear. These sections present an enjoyable challenge, and there's satisfaction in dancing around a room and killing everything without taking a hit. But you also find yourself repeating areas, which is when frustration inevitably sets in. If you're deep in a dungeon and run out of health items, bad luck. You have to leave and scour the overworld for more, or somehow scrape through the next room – which is teeming with powerful enemies – with your dribble of HP.

TRIAL AND ERROR

This is a game where enduring persistent failure is the only way to get good, and a lot of people won't have the patience to get through some of its more gruelling battles – particularly the fiendishly difficult boss fights. Ultimately, how you respond to these difficulty spikes will depend on your temperament. If you're the type of gamer who has the fortitude to try things over and over until you master them, *Hyper Light Drifter* is for you. If not, you'll almost certainly give up after a few hours.

The exhilaration of clearing a dungeon with only a sliver of health is worth chasing. But the unwavering difficulty – especially the bosses – makes it an experience for a very specific type of gamer. If you have the will to overcome its many trials you'll find a rewarding, uncompromising action game. If not, you might feel like you're banging your head against an incredibly stylish brick wall. ■

ATTACK FORMATION

The drifter's weapons of choice



SWORD
Your trusty light-sword. Upgrade to deflect projectiles.



GUN
A basic pistol. Upgrade to activate rapid fire, or find a bigger gun.



BOMB
Rolls along the ground, explodes on contact. Wide blast radius.

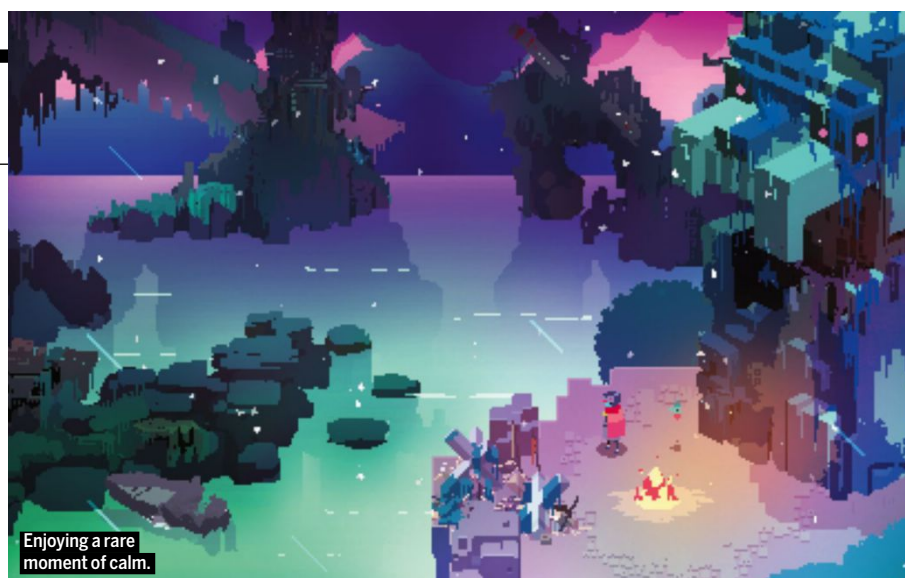


DASH
Super fast. Upgrade to slash with the sword at the end of it.

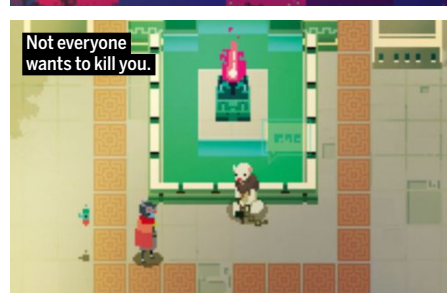
PC GAMER VERDICT

Artistic, beautiful, and uncompromising, *Hyper Light Drifter* is as rewarding as it is frustrating.

78



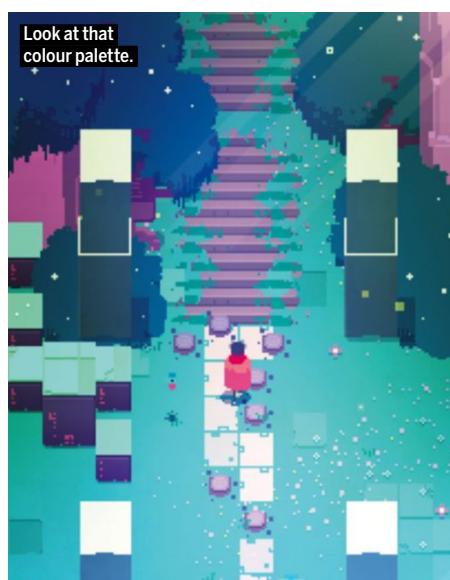
Enjoying a rare moment of calm.



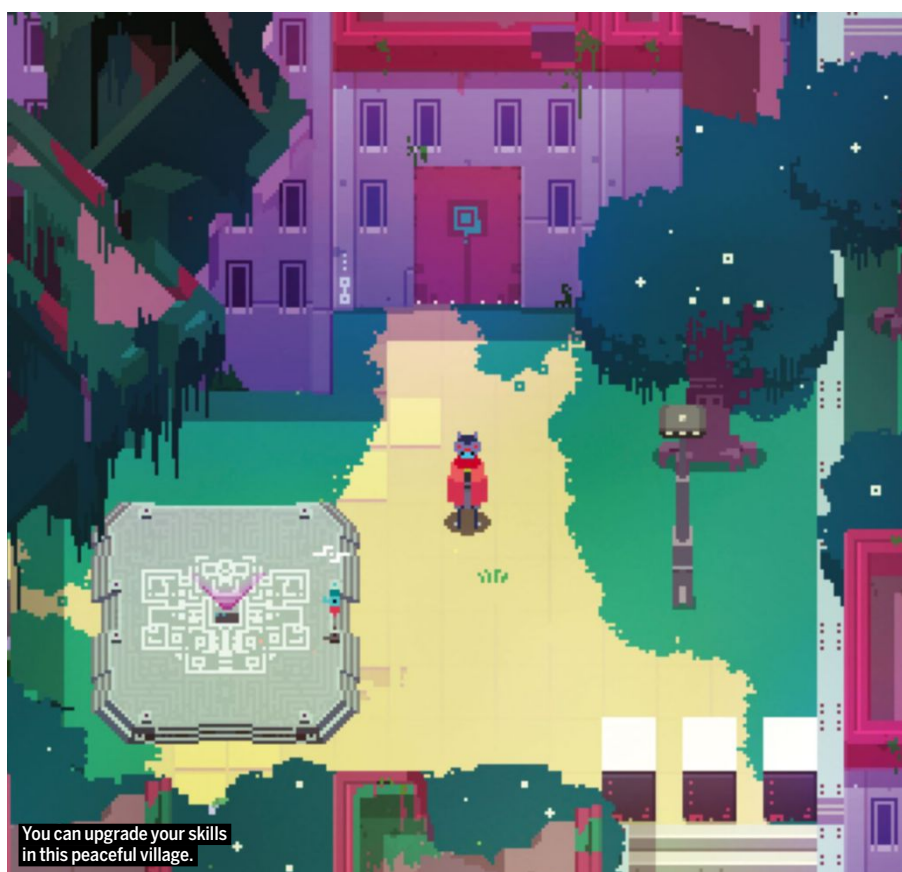
Not everyone wants to kill you.



The prettiest post-apocalypse.



Look at that colour palette.



You can upgrade your skills in this peaceful village.

FLY BALL

Familiarity breeds contentment in reliable slugger
OUT OF THE PARK BASEBALL 17. By Ben Wilson

For developers, creating an annual update to an already-revered sports management sim is a bit like advanced Jenga. They're expected to deftly pile on an abundance of heavyweight new features, without troubling the foundations of success. It's especially difficult for a game such as *OOTP*, considered the most accomplished offering in its particular discipline for nearly a decade. So to say it plays just like last year's outing is an obvious compliment, but also a subtle criticism.

No sports game ever – including the ever-vaunted *Football Manager* – has afforded so much control to the user. Matches can be played 3D, top-down, text commentary, radio commentary, any variation of the above – and offer the same sense of engagement no matter your level of experience.

Never played before? Set all options to auto, advance between pitches by tapping the spacebar, and let the AI make decisions for you. Want to oversee every last choice? The field is yours. Literally.

Every statistical eventuality is thrown up at least once in a 162-game campaign. You consider packing it in after a couple of defeats to unfancied teams, only to swear yourself to *OOTP* and *OOTP* alone when a 9th-inning, two-out home run seals an unlikely comeback against the best team in baseball. It really, really is just like the real thing.

No sports game ever has afforded so much control to the user

How can any of this be considered a negative? Because every last word was true of *OOTP 16*. I could have cut and pasted the entire review of that game (PCG 279) here and been happy that it provided an accurate verdict. I've no hesitation in recommending this to anyone new to

the sport, or genre. For those who took my advice this time last year, the discussion is more complex.

There are improvements. It all runs a touch more swiftly, which makes a difference when

tackling a full season. The default skin utilises a neater interface – vital manager options streamlined into a home screen drop-down menu, and more peripheral needs relocated from the top of the screen to its right-hand side. A neat touch, but taken in isolation not one which should cause you to re-invest.

NEED TO KNOW

WHAT IS IT?

The best baseball management game, with real teams dating back from the present day to 1871.

EXPECT TO PAY

£28

DEVELOPER

OOTP Developments

PUBLISHER

In-house

REVIEWED ON

Windows 8, Core i7-4770K, 16GB RAM

MULTIPLAYER

Up to 30

LINK

www.ootpdevelopments.com

Of more note is the instant text-based recap accompanying your scorecard at the end of every contest. This sounds like the most trivial thing, but it makes a huge difference in terms of believing you're in a real game world. Some of the player quotes could be snappier, but then pro sportsmen aren't exactly famed for their erudite post-game analysis.

STRIKE OLD

As for modes, the big new addition is the ability to replay any past World Series dating back to 1903. It's an impressive developmental feat, and a commendable addition to the option to start the game in any year as any team, but once you've set right the failings of your real side, the appeal is limited. If you had the time it might be fun to play them all in succession and compare against reality, but that would take months – if not years.

What will appeal most to returning fans are updated rosters, team logos and the like. Here, *OOTP* presses hard for perfection. Licences for both MLBPA and MLB.com mean real badges are used for even the most anonymous of minor teams, while 'facegen' technology enables them to visibly age season after season. The dev also promises to update every roster to exactly match real life come opening day (April 5).

While *OOTP 17* might not pile on the new features, the salient point is that those delicate Jenga blocks remain snugly in place. A wealth of up-to-date licences and attribute ratings make it an essential purchase for the devoted player. For those not fussed about such things, the message is stick with last year's. But whichever bracket you fit into, know this: even the most minor of sports fans needs to be playing *OOTP*. ■

PC GAMER VERDICT

A sports sim deep enough to sustain interest for years, but it's not vital if you've got last year's release.

89

FIRST BASE New to OOTP? Here are five teams perfect for beginners



KANSAS CITY ROYALS

Begin the game with ten four-star (or better) prospects and over \$30 million to spend on free agents. Perfect for a sustained challenge 2017 to 2020.



NEW YORK YANKEES

Perhaps the most despised team in all of American sports – but with an in-game payroll of \$222 million, you won't be complaining.



BOSTON RED SOX

The Yankees' great rivals won it all in 2004, 2007 and 2013, and start with \$36 million for free agents and contract extensions in the hope of another title.



CHICAGO CUBS

The romantic's choice, having failed to win baseball's biggest prize in 109 years. A pitching staff stacked with quality provides a strong chance of breaking that.



ST LOUIS CARDINALS

The most appealing team if cash is your priority. \$80 million for free agents with a further \$52 million to spend on contracts for talent like Randal Grichuk.

Mike Trout #27
LF | Los Angeles Angels | Bats: Right | Age 25 | 6'2" - 230 lbs | Salary: \$15,250,000
Displayed player salaries and contract values for MLB players are not official

Profile Contract & Status Scouting Reports Development BNN Page Baseball Cards Available Actions

Personal Details
Age: 25 years, 26 days
Date of Birth: August 7th, 1991
City of Birth: Milville, NJ
Nationality: American
Bats / Throws: Right / Right
Team: Los Angeles Angels (MLB)
Salary: \$15,250,000
Signed through: 2020 (Free agent)
Major Service: 5 Year(s), 50 Days
Nat. Popularity: Extremely Popular
Moral: Great
Expectation: Middle of the lineup
Position: Left Field

Personality
Trout has a good head on his shoulders and has an exceptional work ethic. He gets along with everyone.

Defensive Ratings
Outfield Range: 70
Outfield Error: 70
Outfield Arm: 70
Left Field: 70
Center Field: 70

Basic Batting Ratings
Contact: 70
Gap Power: 70
Home Run Power: 70
Eye / Discipline: 70
Avoid K's: 70

Other Ratings
Speed: 70
Stealing: 70
Baserunning: 70
Sacrifice Bunt: 70
Bunt for Hit: 70
Hitler Type: Normal
Batted Ball Profile: Flyball Hitter

Status
Health Status: OK
Injury History: Durable
Rest Status: 100% - Rested

Game Log

Season	Team	League	G	GS	PA	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	CS	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS	WAA
2016	LAA	MLB	116	116	526	417	110	155	23	5	39	92	95	92	14	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
2015	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
2014	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
2013	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
2012	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
2011	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
2010	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
2009	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
2008	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
2007	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
2006	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
2005	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
2004	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
2003	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
2002	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
2001	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
2000	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1999	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1998	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1997	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1996	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1995	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1994	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1993	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1992	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1991	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1990	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1989	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1988	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1987	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1986	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1985	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1984	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1983	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1982	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1981	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1980	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1979	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1978	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1977	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1976	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1975	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1974	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1973	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1972	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1971	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1970	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1969	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1968	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1967	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1966	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1965	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1964	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1963	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1962	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1961	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1960	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1959	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1958	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1957	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372	.491	.731	1.223	231
1956	LAA	MLB	157	157	705	602	118	172	29	9	36	111	63	184	16	0.372</				

TIMELESS

DAY OF THE TENTACLE REMASTERED gives a LucasArts classic a new lease of life. *By Andy Kelly*

Released in 1993, *Day of the Tentacle* is widely regarded as the best, and funniest, of LucasArts' many beloved point-and-click adventures. Created by a dream team of adventure game designers including Tim Schafer, Dave Grossman, Peter Chan and Ron Gilbert, it's the story of an evil, super-intelligent tentacle who wants to take over the world, and three eccentric time-travelling teenagers on a mission to stop him.

They do so by altering each other's timelines and trading items through a malfunctioning time machine disguised as a portable toilet. The puzzles are brilliantly designed, and the running joke of the characters carelessly meddling with the fabric of time to achieve relatively minor things – on one occasion by changing the United States Constitution – is a source of constant amusement.

This being a LucasArts adventure game from the '90s, some of the puzzle solutions are comically absurd. But unlike most adventures from that era, they rarely feel unfair or deliberately obtuse. Paying attention to the environment and listening to dialogue always yields clues that push you in the right direction. There are a few puzzles that will have you reaching for a guide, but you soon settle into the game's cartoon logic.

Day of the Tentacle has a Looney Tunes approach to physics, and this extends to its time travel, which is more Bill & Ted than Primer. Hoagie

needs vinegar, so he puts a bottle of wine in a time capsule. Two hundred years later, the wine has turned to vinegar, and Laverne sends it back to him. It's Saturday morning cartoon time travel, and bearing that in mind will make some of the puzzles easier. One of the achievements, a new addition to this version,

acknowledges this when you solve a puzzle that's particularly Wile E Coyotesque: 'Oh Right, I'm Playing a Cartoon!'

Day of the Tentacle is a wonderfully expressive, colourful game, and genuinely

funny too. Like the classic cartoons that inspired it, its humour is timeless, although a few of the best gags in Hoagie's timeline might go over your head if you aren't familiar with some basic American history.

There's only one setting – a mansion owned by the Edison family – but each version is wildly different. In the present day it's a seedy motel; in colonial times it's an inn being used by America's Founding Fathers to spitball the Constitution; and in

the future it's the headquarters of villain Purple Tentacle. Peter Chan's background art, inspired by classic Warner Bros cartoons, is incredibly stylish, giving all three versions of the mansion a distinct personality. It's remarkable that, even with so few locations, the game never feels visually repetitive.

DRAWN OUT

As for the remaster, Tim Schafer's studio Double Fine has done a splendid job. Everything has been redrawn, and it all looks great at high resolutions, but the original art style hasn't been altered. It's the *Day of the Tentacle* you remember, just with a new coat of paint. If you don't like the new graphics, you can hit F1 and revert to the old style.

Double Fine also managed to locate the original master tapes for the dialogue, and it sounds fantastic. It's weird hearing all those lines I know so well without the hiss and crackle of compression – the actors could have recorded them last week, never mind 23 years ago. A simpler interface has also been included, similar to the kind seen in later LucasArts adventures like *The Curse of Monkey Island* and *Grim Fandango*, but you can still use the old wall of verbs if you'd prefer.

There are a few neat extras too, including an archive of concept art and an entertaining and insightful commentary track recorded by most of the original development team.

Reasonably priced and passionately restored, this is a perfect opportunity to revisit one of the best adventure games ever made. The final act feels a little rushed, and its roots in '90s adventure game design are undeniable, but otherwise *Day of the Tentacle* is hard to fault. ■

NEED TO KNOW

WHAT IS IT?

The classic LucasArts adventure, remastered.

EXPECT TO PAY

£11

DEVELOPER

Double Fine Productions

PUBLISHER

In-house

REVIEWED ON

GeForce GTX 970, Intel i7-5820K, 16GB RAM

MULTIPLAYER

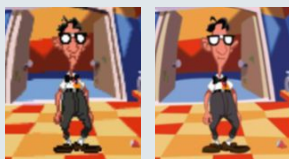
None

LINK

www.dott.doublefine.com

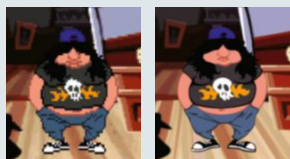
Carelessly meddling with the fabric of time to achieve minor things

THEN AND NOW *The old character sprites versus the new*



BERNARD

A charming poindexter. Loves science and technology, hates clowns.



HOAGIE

A roadie for a metal band. Says 'dude' a lot, is named after a sandwich.



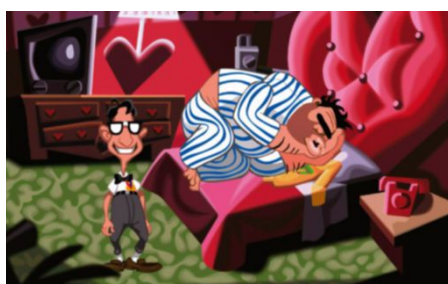
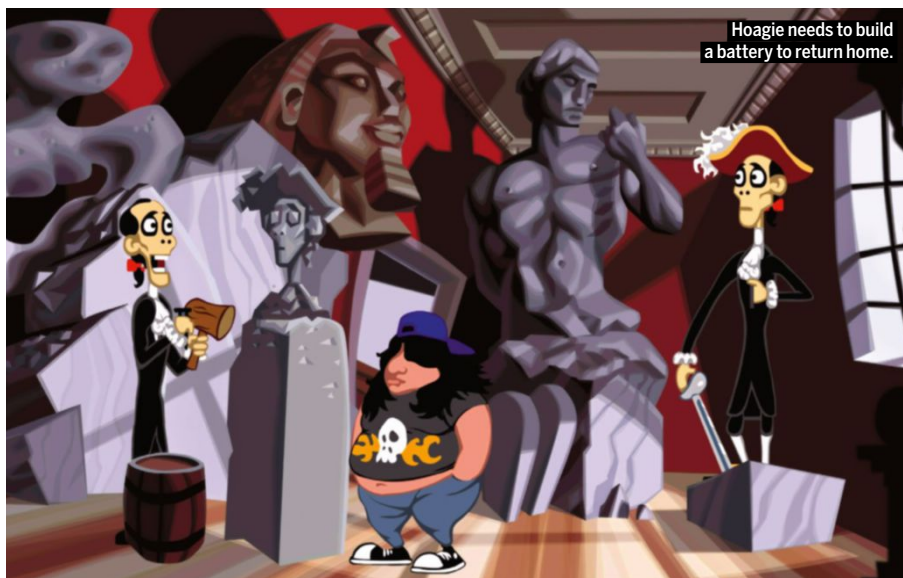
LAVERNE

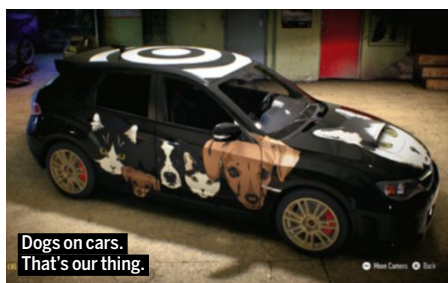
An unhinged medical student. Likes to experiment on small animals.

PC GAMER VERDICT

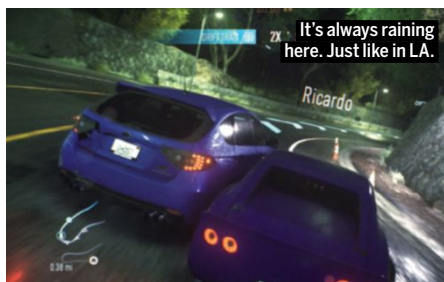
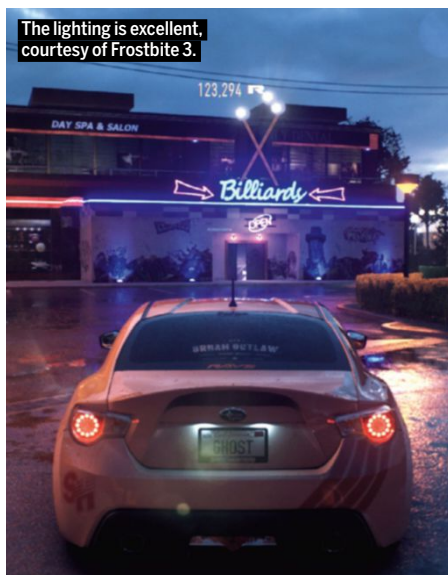
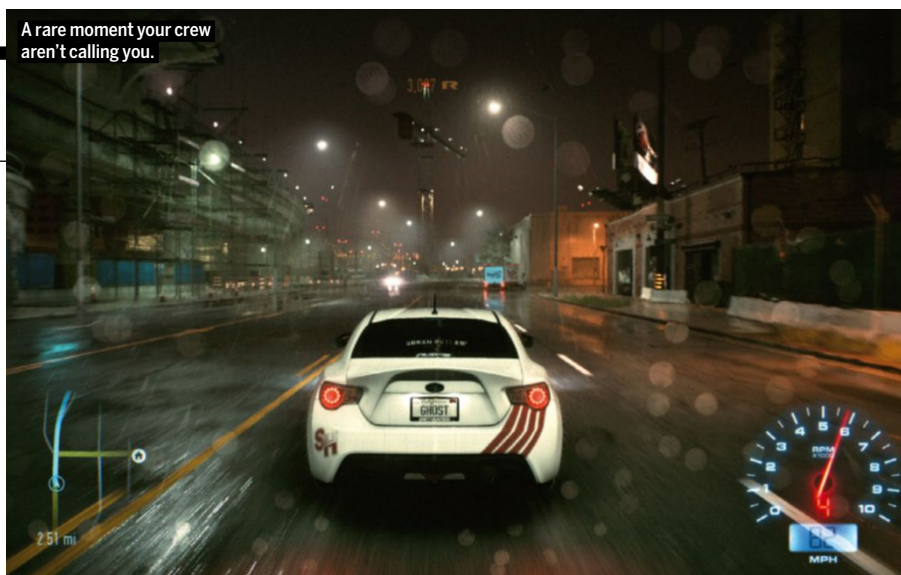
A lovingly remastered version of a classic adventure, and every bit as funny and entertaining as it was back in 1993.

87





A rare moment your crew aren't calling you.



ALL TORQUE

The new **NEED FOR SPEED** feels like only one part of a good racing game. *By Ben Griffin*

It's like a nightmare. You're trapped in LA and the sun never shines and you're living out of your car and everyone keeps talking to you about driving techniques. When they're not taking in person, they're calling you all the time. It's hell. It's the setting for new-gen *Need for Speed*. After a relatively unimpressed response on console, Ghost Games has used the interim to tune the PC port. It now has manual transmission, additional steering wheel support, an unlocked framerate, 4K res, and new cars and customisables.

You play what is essentially a voiceless camera who hovers around a bunch of nocturnal street racing enthusiasts while they ignore the fact you never speak, driving from diners to bars drinking – as everyone is keen to point out – coffee. You're somehow able to operate an automobile, and because your crew acknowledges you'll never know human emotions like love and joy, they instead race you for 'street rep'. The more you win, the higher your rep, the more cars you can buy.

Handling is satisfying. Tyres grip the road and motors have a heft that makes it seem bodies are really sinking into their suspension, and tune-ups, whether geared towards racing or drifting, feel markedly different. The problem is Ventura

Bay. Heavily referencing LA's grid-based layout, it sometimes lets you complete an entire race without touching the brakes, only occasionally dealing with a sudden right turn.

Ventura Bay is uncannily empty, a lush but lifeless location

Although Ghost claims to have lessened rubberbanding AI, it sometimes feels like you're only driving at the speed they designate: grazing scenery drops you multiple places, but you can sometimes

spontaneously leap from first to last as opponents all seemingly drive over banana peels. Winding canyons and tight docks introduce a new problem: drifting. Going sideways requires reconfiguring your entire car, and without a middle ground between driving fast and drifting well, you can't do both at the same time. Powersliding in a standardly-

NEED TO KNOW

WHAT IS IT?
An open-world driving game delving into street racing and tuner culture.

EXPECT TO PAY
£50

DEVELOPER
Ghost Games

PUBLISHER
EA

REVIEWED ON
Intel i7 x980 3.33GHz, 9GB RAM, Nvidia GeForce GTX 980 Ti

MULTIPLAYER
Online

LINK
www.needforspeed.com

balanced ride demands high speed, but reaching that speed takes ages, and it's reduced instantly when you do drift. It's needlessly tricky to maintain momentum.

Activating the various event types involves engaging your awful posse, who phone you multiple times *mid-race*. Robyn calls to offer drift challenges, speedy Spike's all about point-to-point sprints, Amy doles out time trials, and silly-haired leader Manu incorporates all the disciplines into his lot. It's astonishingly seen-it-all-before, as it was in 2012 with *Most Wanted*.

Ventura Bay is great for taking pictures in, but the nature of the racing means it's also uncannily empty, a lush but lifeless location. This game feels like the tutorial for a deeper racer, or the barebones bit you can play while the rest of the game downloads in the background. It's not only boring, but represents a series running dangerously low on creative fuel. The hazard lights are blinking. ■

PC GAMER **VERDICT**

The series leaves its garage looking even worse than when it went in. Decent handling doesn't save it.

50

RAZER
WILDCAT



DESIGNED FOR ESPORTS

Experience true console gaming supremacy the way the pros do, with the **Razer Wildcat for Xbox One™ Gaming Controller**.

Made for tournament play and developed with feedback from the world's best eSports athletes, this ultimate gaming controller packs four additional Multi-Function Buttons over the ordinary controller layout for unparalleled customizability. Whether you want to create dedicated button layout profiles for each of your games or tweak your audio settings on the fly, the Razer Wildcat gives you absolute control without any distractions.

AVAILABLE FROM:

GAME lime
Pro gamers favourite fruit

eu.razerzone.com

Copyright © 2015 Razer Inc. All rights reserved. Actual product may differ from pictures. Information correct at time of printing. Microsoft, Kinect, Xbox, Xbox 360, and Xbox One are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies. All other trademarks, if any, are property of their respective owners.

Designed for



STAR KILLER

It was hailed as the Rift's killer app, but **EVE: VALKYRIE** can't quite pull off a perfect barrel roll. *By Matt Sakuraoka-Gilman*

The idea is so simple that an eight-year-old could conjure it up. In fact, it's probably one that most eight-year-olds have indeed fantasised about at one point or another since 1977. Now, with VR technology, it's suddenly possible: pop an Oculus Rift on your head, boot up *EVE: Valkyrie* and suddenly you're inside the cockpit of a careening, laser-loaded, missile firing, dip-dodge and diving space-bound dogfighter.

It's proper gasp-out-loud stuff, seeing enemy ships zoom past you and being able to follow them with real life head-turns as they go. The most immediately arresting, and perhaps surprising thing about all this, is just how intuitive it is. Using the sticks of your gamepad to control the pitch and yaw of your vessel is a breeze, while your weapon systems are tied to the two triggers.

Lasers fire straight forward, requiring active tailing of foes and proper positional awareness in order to fire just ahead of them in time-honoured fashion. But it's with missiles that the VR comes into its own. You press left trigger, then eyeball targets and follow their trajectory up, down, and all around long enough for your missiles to lock on. The longer you're able to keep an enemy in view, the more of your missiles you can unload on them at once. It's intensely satisfying stuff – the sort of videogame joy that's immediate and clear.

Valkyrie, by its nature, is an arcade experience. Those of us weaned on *Elite: Dangerous* or *Freespace* will find their cockpit stripped back and built for shorter, more bombastic experiences. Having sunk hundreds of hours into both those games, I found myself looking around my VR cockpit and wishing I could actually interact with the myriad levers, buttons and doo-dads. I couldn't.

But for all the useless tat on display there's a respectable efficiency to certain individual elements of cockpit design. Shield and hull armour meters hang in front

of you to either side, and as you go about the task of not blowing up you find yourself actively looking around whenever a red emergency light's glow extends into your missile-firing vision. Which, again, feels cool, giving your gaze yet more agency. Outside in space, enemy ships leave a clear red tail behind them, to make it that little bit easier to crane your view in their direction, and floating armour packs – I did say it was an arcade experience – glow an eye-catching green.

Yet for all these smart design tweaks, *Valkyrie* remains a fairly shallow experience. You get levelling and ship upgrades, but it's a lamentably slow process. It can take hours to get your first upgrade, and even longer to earn yourself a new ship. By that point you'll have repeated the same stages, and the same actions, tens of times over and it's easy to feel like you've seen all the game has to offer.

Partly this is down to its heavy reliance on multiplayer. After an initial mission, *Valkyrie* splits into two game modes. Chronicles can be played in singleplayer, and Combat is where you go for up to 8v8 PvP.

Chronicles shoots you out into one of the maps, to either explore it in peace, collecting salvage and listening to audio logs, or to tackle waves of AI bots in survival mode. The story is, you're in control of a clone of a dead pilot (not a spoiler, you start the game dead), and these levels have been reconstructed from the databanks and memories of other pilots who

died there. All that you're seeing happened long in the past. As a framing device it burdens the whole affair with a sense of futility.

Over in multiplayer, you play through those same maps endlessly, as part of an eight strong team. With no narrative to hold things back, and with combat boiling down to spectacle over legitimate tactical warfare, things get old fast.

VOMIT COMET

Every lump of praise and nugget of criticism I've fired at *EVE: Valkyrie* might be irrelevant for a certain group of players, however. The Oculus Rift store rates *Valkyrie*'s comfort level as 'Intense' for a very good reason. Despite CCP working some design magic to limit unease as you barrel roll through space – ensuring no maps have a natural horizon line, for example – there's no escaping the game's ability to cause nausea for some. Myself included.

While playing, I had to rip the Rift off every 20 or so minutes to let my stomach calm down. There's an element of physical endurance to the whole affair, from the nausea to the slowly heating up hardware that's wrapped around your face. It's just not built for sustained play.

So while *EVE: Valkyrie* promises to herald in a new era of VR gaming, deep down it feels very much like a behemoth of yesteryear. It would fit in perfectly in an arcade on your local pier, between the *Time Crisis 2* machine that refuses to die and a Star Wars battlepod. It's an incredible experience, and one that in 20 minutes will convince you of VR's gaming future. But beyond that initial foray you'll have too many excuses to disembark. And that's if you *don't* throw up in your mouth. ■

NEED TO KNOW

WHAT IS IT?
An Oculus Rift dogfighting game set in the EVE universe.

EXPECT TO PAY
Free with Oculus Rift

DEVELOPER
CCP Games

PUBLISHER
In-house

REVIEWED ON
i7-5820K, 16GB RAM, GeForce GTX 970

MULTIPLAYER
1-8 players

LINK
www.evevalkyrie.com

**In 20 minutes
it will convince
you of VR's
gaming future**



PC GAMER VERDICT

Strong first impressions make this ideal for showing off your Rift, but there's little to keep you flying after that.

60

A cooldown meter for stomach volatility would be useful.



Long trails help you track in VR.

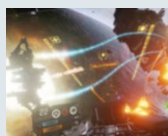


Skyboxes occasionally feature huge ships.



BUCKET LIST

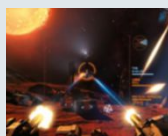
Games likely to make you chunder, ranked



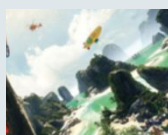
EVE: VALKYRIE
Join the corps, they said. Do a barrel roll, they said. Keep a laundrette on speed dial, they didn't say.



ADRIFT
The heroine's space suit has a 'don't hurl' button, limiting your view of its anti-gravity depravities.

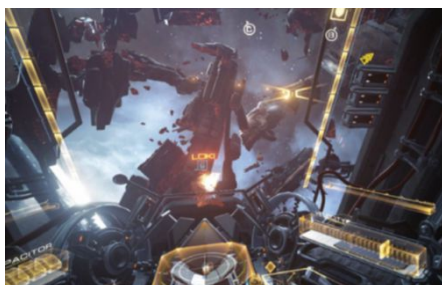


ELITE: DANGEROUS
Much more sedate combat makes it much more bearable than *Valkyrie*.

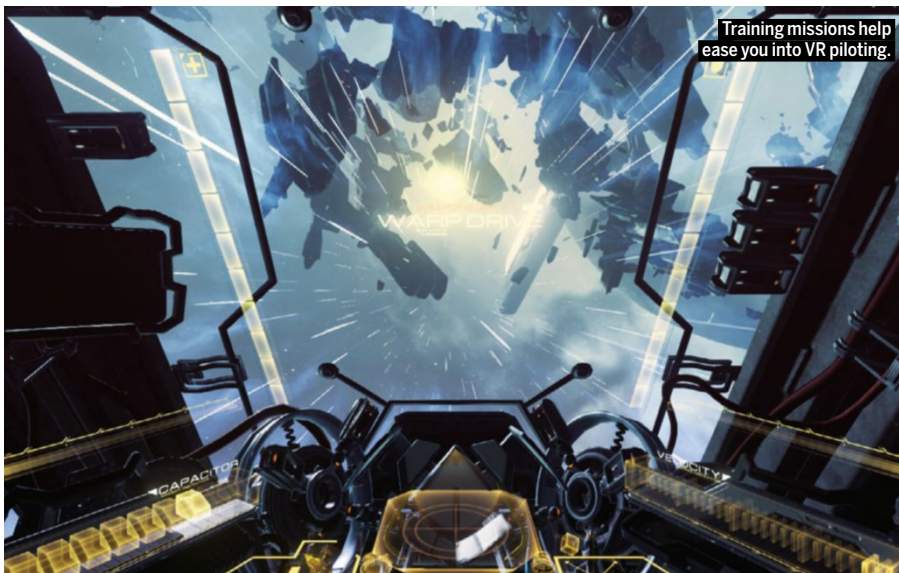


THE CLIMB
Only vertigo sufferers need apply for this one. And they really, really shouldn't.

Which way is up?



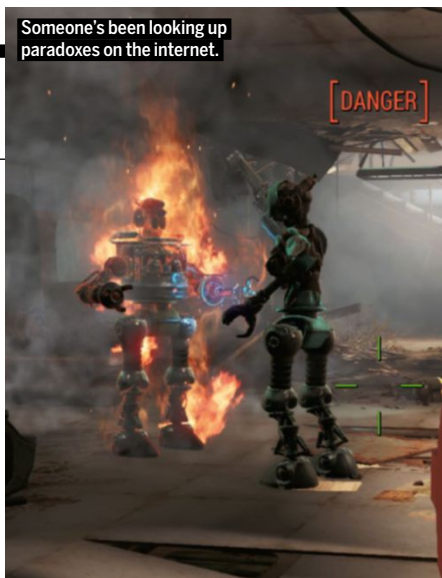
Training missions help ease you into VR piloting.



T1-MMY makes a new friend.



Someone's been looking up paradoxes on the internet.



The only thing integrated here is my lasers into your body.



CIRCUIT HORDE

Make a new friend in **FALLOUT 4: AUTOMATRON**. By Phil Savage

T1-MMY is a hovering orange rustbucket – the ramshackle result of whatever mods and components I had lying around my home base. He has a cryogenic blaster on one hand, an oversized vice on the other. He's also got a cartoonishly cheerful face and communicates through optimistic bleeps and bloops. His name doesn't really mean anything other than that, if he was a person, he'd look like he was called Timmy. Maybe I can turn it into a backronym: Tier1-Mechanical Military, er, Yunit? No, that doesn't work.

Like Dogmeat, Timmy doesn't judge me for picking locks or stealing telephones. Unlike Dogmeat, his hand can be replaced with a flamethrower. He's the result of *Fallout 4: Automatron*'s robot workbench, where you can construct metal pals from spare scrap. It's an excellent addition that lets you mix-'n'-match parts – an Assaulttron head here, a Protectron arm there. You can even modify the voice.

It's hardly essential. *Fallout 4* already has plenty of companions. But there's something about constructing your own Frankenbot that taps directly into *Fallout*'s weird science. It fits the established tone, and nicely complements the Sole Survivor's skillset. If robot crafting was all there was to *Automatron*, I'd

feel more positive about the whole package. It's not, though.

There's also a short quest chain. A distress signal leads you to Ada – a new robotic companion whose friends have been killed by the robotic army of the Mechanist. Robots, if you haven't yet picked up on the clues, are the theme of this DLC. The story takes you through a couple of new ruined buildings – one full of raiders and

robots, the other full of robots and other, slightly different robots. Along the way you'll pick up some new weapons, including a Tesla rifle that fires lightning that chains between foes. There's also some new armour.

It sounds like I'm being reductive, but it's hard to get enthusiastic about more dungeon-crawling through the decrepit ruins of a post-apocalyptic

I'm glad I have Automatron, because now I've got T1-MMY

NEED TO KNOW

WHAT IS IT?
Fallout 4's first DLC, featuring robots.

EXPECT TO PAY
£8

DEVELOPER
Bethesda

PUBLISHER
In-house

REVIEWED ON
Windows 10, 8GB RAM,
i5-3570K,
GeForce GTX 970

MULTIPLAYER
None

LINK
www.fallout4.com

Boston. *Fallout 4* is already full of that. If *Automatron* was a sidequest within the base game, it'd be one of the better ones thanks to its campy, occasionally dark story. As an add-on, it doesn't have the conceptual strength of *Fallout 3*'s DLCs. They weren't always great, but *Operation: Anchorage* and *Mothership Zeta* did at least make sense as additional chapters separate to the main game.

The new enemies are good, at least. Like my own creations, they're cobbled together, sporting different frames and weapons. It adds variety when even a room full of basic junkbots can utilise numerous combat styles. Variety, however, can't save the resolution, which includes a tiresome wave-based arena fight.

I'm glad I have *Automatron*, because now I've got T1-MMY – a robot friend to accompany me on future escapades. Robot crafting is a good idea, and well executed. But it's all tied to an adventure that isn't very adventurous. ■

PC GAMER VERDICT

Functional, yet prosaic. Constructing robots is a highlight, but *Automatron*'s quest is short and unremarkable.

65

Quality begins where improvement never ends.



As a premium brand manufacturer of power supplies, cases and cooling solutions for PCs, be quiet! never ceases to develop itself as a brand and enhance its products. This attitude has made us consistently the market leader for PSUs in Germany from 2007* to date and one of the most successful European brands in this segment.

All conception, design and testing is done with a German passion for quality and precision at our headquarters in Germany. Innovative engineering concepts, premium materials and world-class quality make be quiet! products among the most silent, reliable and powerful available.

Visit bequiet.com

*GfK data 2015

Available at:

scan.co.uk · overclockers.co.uk · ebuyer.com · novatech.co.uk · aria.co.uk · amazon.co.uk

GERMANY'S NO. **1**^{*}
PSU MANUFACTURER

be quiet![®]

DRAGON AGED

Fifteen years later, *Baldur's Gate* expands with **SIEGE OF DRAGONSPEAR**. By Phil Savage

As a historical artefact, *Baldur's Gate* is important. As an RPG, it's huge and expressive. But as a moment-to-moment experience, it can be something of a chore. *Siege of Dragonspear* is an expansion for *Baldur's Gate: Enhanced Edition*. As an add-on – albeit one that takes the form of a full length campaign – it's forced me to reevaluate if *Baldur's Gate* is actually worth expanding.

The *D&D* ruleset feels awkward and restrictive. Melee combat involves watching sprites wave weapons at each other until invisible dice register a hit. Detecting traps requires walking a few paces in a dungeon, stopping and waiting to see if your Thief signals danger. If she doesn't, take a few more steps and repeat. If she does, disarm it.

Then take a few more steps and repeat. There are a lot of traps.

It seemed fine in 1998. It even worked in the *Enhanced Edition*, where, despite the frustrations, it felt important to hold true to the original experience. But as a campaign released in 2016, the rougher edges feel more pronounced. As much as I loved the Infinity Engine, that style is being replicated more smoothly in *Pillars of Eternity* and *Divinity: Original Sin*.

Modern sensibilities aside, how does *Siege of Dragonspear* work as a new *Baldur's Gate* chapter? Pretty well, for the most part. The story fills in the gap between the first and second game, opening with a dungeon filled with Sarevok's remaining followers. That taken care of, a new threat rises: Caelar Argent, the Shining Lady, who's leading a crusade in the north. With the Flaming Fist in tow, you – the Hero of Baldur's Gate – set out to stop Argent on behalf of the city.

Hence the linearity. You're travelling with the Flaming Fist's camp and, once they've packed up and moved on, there's no turning back. But the pace works within the scenario and gives the campaign a feeling of building momentum.

While your path is somewhat restricted, *Siege of Dragonspear* works well as an RPG. I found numerous opportunities to talk my way out of fights, or engineer interesting solutions to quests. That said, the dialogue options feel more restrictive than in *Baldur's Gate* proper. Many responses fit into three categories:

good, neutral and evil, where evil really means being a bit of a dick.

Overall, though, the writing's good. There are some duff moments, like the time new companion Corwin mistook my few curt responses to

her questions as romantic interest. There is, however, some great stuff. In particular, Caelar Argent. There's a great depth to her emotional range. She's not a pantomime villain, despite the damage she's wrought.

There's no hiding the fact this is a 15-year-old engine

NEED TO KNOW

WHAT IS IT?

A meaty, campaign-length expansion for *Baldur's Gate: Enhanced Edition*.

EXPECT TO PAY

£15

DEVELOPER

Beamdog

PUBLISHER

In-house

REVIEWED ON

Windows 10, 8GB RAM, i5-3570K, GeForce GTX 970

MULTIPLAYER

Six-player co-op

LINK

www.siegeofdragonspear.com

There's a greater sense of spectacle, too. This is the most populated *Baldur's Gate* has ever felt, with huge crowds gathering on the streets. That also manifests in combat. Individual encounters feature a greater number of enemies, and focus is more on crowd control than systematically clicking on enemies in order. It can feel like a battle of attrition but I appreciate the chance to try new tactics.

If you'd rather not bother with combat, Beamdog's Story Mode – first seen in *Icwind Dale: Enhanced Edition* – is now available, offering a strength boost and invulnerability. It's probably not the difficulty most people would pick, but it's a nice option if you want to experience the RPG elements without the repetition of the expansion's many encounters.

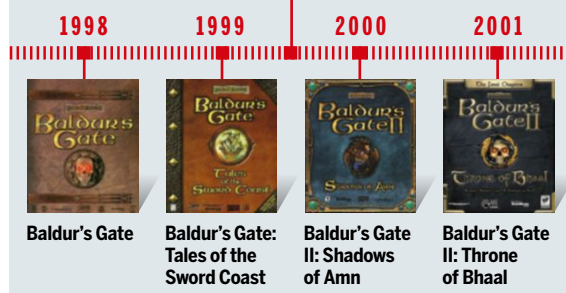
PERFORMANCE ISSUES

I haven't experienced many bugs but reports suggest others haven't been so lucky. The engine also fails in other ways. The *Enhanced Edition*'s reworked interface is barely fit for purpose. Simply navigating through the different menus is a pain and the new journal seems less intuitive than the old one. And, while an effort has been made to pretty up the graphics – mostly by zooming the camera out to an absurd level – there's no hiding the fact this is a 15-year-old engine.

As a *Baldur's Gate* adventure, *Siege of Dragonspear* works well. While the tone isn't entirely consistent with the original series, it does a good job of inserting itself into the middle of the story without feeling like sacrilege. As a result, though, it requires that you still be invested in that story. The fact is, a decade and a half later, there are much smoother, more enjoyable RPG experiences available. ■

GATED COMMUNITY

Where this add-on fits in the Bhaalspawn Saga



PC GAMER VERDICT

Beamdog has proven it can continue the *Baldur's Gate* story. But it's replicated the antiquated nature of the games.

71



THEY'RE BACK

RE-RELEASES REVIEWED by Jon Blyth



Evil crows hate the bright light of excellent horror writing.



Here I am, standing by a sign. Poor screenshot.



Now I'm driving off a cliff. This is not representative.



Barry - uncomfortably close to explicit comedy relief.

IAN SOMNIA

Remedy isn't the only one who can think of awful titles like **ALAN WAKE**

There's a bit in *Quantum Break* where you walk through a university lecture theatre. Read the blackboard, and you'll see the last class was studying *Alan Wake*. The board is full of solemn notes and interpretations. Classic Remedy – infused with such a musky sense of its own importance that it has to be a joke, right? Remedy isn't just giving itself a reacharound, it's motorboating its own beautiful buttocks. It is brilliant.

You can imagine an interview in which an earnest journalist, full of love for the creators of *Max Payne*, asks what their inspirations for *Alan Wake* were. "Oh, you know. Stephen King, *The Twilight Zone*," our man from Remedy will dutifully say. "We've really tried to recreate that sense of naive terror, of confusion and shifting possibilities that those otherworldly books evoked in us when we were growing up." The interviewer would nod so furiously his glasses would drop off, and our Remedy man would use this moment to dramatically wink at the camera. I long for that wink, but I'm glad that it never comes. It's like I'm experiencing tantric humour.

There's no arguing that the core system that fuels the combat complements the pulpy horror tone

perfectly. To hurt the nightmares that attack Alan, you must first use your torch to sizzle through the darkness enshrouding them. With multiple enemies, managing the battery levels of Alan's rapidly drained and

magically recharging torch is a great source of that "oh my god" feeling movies get from having the hero unable to get a key in the lock for a few seconds.

The balance of light and metal reaches several silly climaxes –

in one, a firework display on a makeshift rock stage is a highlight that could only have been improved with the flame-throwing guitar truck from *Fury Road*. But luckily, Alan's very prone to losing consciousness and all of his weapons, so you're never too far from another moment of powerlessness. From one point of view, these repetitive power-resets

Luckily, Alan's prone to losing consciousness and all of his weapons

NEED TO KNOW

WHAT IS IT?
A masterpiece, in its own opinion.

EXPECT TO PAY
£23

DEVELOPER
Remedy Entertainment

PUBLISHER
In-house

MULTIPLAYER
None

FIRST REVIEWED
PCG 238, 86%

LINK
www.alanwake.com

might be considered annoying. But by the fourth time it happens, you're like "well, it was about time I lost everything again, I get it."

Before the internet went full business, there was a spoof TV listings site I used to write the odd entry for, called TV Go Home. One series, *The Metaphor Zone*, spoofed the heavy-handed imagery of some of sci-fi's more moral lessons. In one episode, a rich man was chased down a hill by a giant coin. Are Remedy's own homages to *The Twilight Zone*, found on in-game TVs, intended as similar spoofs? I don't know.

And that's why I bloody love Remedy. The team's ego and the possible self-mockery make them as appealing and impenetrable as a WWE wrestler. To jump cultural touchstones for a moment, at the end of *Sex and the City*, Carrie Bradshaw decides to stay with the man who makes her the person she likes to be. God damn it, I like me when I play *Alan Wake*. ■

PC GAMER VERDICT

Did I mention that it looks really good? They've really mastered shining a torch around a creepy forest.

86

POISON GRACE

BIO MENACE had neither

Human memory is a capricious wee chap. Take 1993. My memory is fine with the fact that I was singing along to *Animal Nitrade* while I booted up Windows 3.1 for Workgroups on my brand-new multimedia Apricot Pentium 60 MHz home entertainment system, with a really clacky keyboard.

I'm also happy to remember that my second year at university was defined not by a thorough understanding of Land Law and Equity & Trusts, but by a profound oneness with the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* pinball machine in the Noble's arcade in Manchester's Piccadilly Gardens. (I got into the Q Continuum high score table. Proud times.)

But it will not accept that I was exiting to DOS and reconciling my IRQ conflicts to fire up... this. This was the year of *Doom*, for God's sake.

NEED TO KNOW

WHAT IS IT?
The platformer that didn't launch Snake Logan to fame.

EXPECT TO PAY
Free on GOG.com

DEVELOPER
Apogee

PUBLISHER
3D Realms

MULTIPLAYER
None

FIRST REVIEWED
N/A

LINK
www.3drealms.com/catalog

What is this two-dimensional scrolling shooter doing at the dawn of 3D gaming, and six years after the release of *Contra*?

To give *Bio Menace* its dues, it's not trying to be *Contra* – that game's simple pleasure of killing, boss battles and 'go right to progress' has been adjusted so that the shooting is infinitely less satisfying, but the progress through the level is more exploratory, with colour-coded crystal keycards that would go on to define games for... well, forever.

But in much the same way that I will not go back to manually setting DMA channels on my hardware devices, I am not going to play *Bio Menace* without being grumpy about how bad PCs were at platforming for so long. *Commander Keen*, *Jazz Jackrabbit*, *Bio Menace* – mark my words, these fly-by-night developers will amount to nothing. ■

58



Shooting gingers. Unacceptable.



The Tomsk 7 nuclear accident was in '93. Facts are fun!



Like my TV, she's got contrast and balance.

CONTRAST

Ever wondered what process goes into selecting the games for review on these pages? Wonder no more! I could say "this 3D puzzle platformer shares *Alan Wake*'s themes of light and dark", but in all honesty it just popped up in Steam's auto-suggest while I was looking for *Contra*. *Contrast* is an emotionally pregnant game in which a young girl and her imaginary friend negotiate a Paris full of unpleasant 2D adults. Dawn, your friend, can slip into darkness and use shadows as platforms, leading to occasionally interesting real-world manipulation to create paths for her. Original and atmospheric, even if the platforming can feel greasy. Worth investigating. ■

76



Like a kitchen, it's got plate (armour) and (dragon) scales.

DARK SOULS

Is *Dark Souls* here because of the new sequel? No. I just noticed the last three games began with ABC. I'm in the difficult position of loving *Dark Souls*, but not liking it. I love the lore, but I never discovered it. I knew the thrill of victory as impossible enemies became trivial, and I even enjoyed it when those trivial enemies briefly became impossible again as I lost my composure. But after I got killed a dozen times by the Moonlight Butterfly – yes, I know that's very early – I simply became distracted by another game, one with a warm open-world map, full of achievable objectives and inevitable progress. If anything, *Dark Souls* is a game that should review me. I would be found wanting. ■

92



Unlike anything else, it's pink and it gets hard.

EETS MUNCHIES

Eets are reckless mouths who jump higher when angry, become timid after an onion, and can be blown into the air by a whale to reach a higher platform. It's as slick and tightly-designed as you'd expect from the people who made *Mark of the Ninja*, but the constant introduction of new stuff belies the inflexibility of each object. It follows the *Angry Birds* template: level select grid, up to three stars, menu/replay/next level buttons. But this isn't *Angry Birds*. It's precise, predictable and thoughtful. ■

74

SUBSCRIBE TO

PC GAMER®

CHOOSE YOUR PACKAGE

PRINT

Including exclusive subscriber-only covers!

+ PICK YOUR FREE GIFT



THE WORLD'S NUMBER ONE PC GAMES MAGAZINE
PC GAMER
MORROWIND RESURRECTED
REVIEWING THE CLASSIC RPG AS A 21ST CENTURY VIDEO GAME
REVIEWED
FROM THE BLOOD OF THE GODS
WARHAMMER 40,000
DAWN OF WAR III
REINC'S EXPLOSIVE RETURN TO THE 40K UNIVERSE REVEALED
MONITORS
THE ULTIMATE HARDWARE GUIDE

ONLY £59 PER YEAR

DIGITAL

Including image galleries on iPad



THE WORLD'S NUMBER ONE PC GAMES MAGAZINE
PC GAMER
MORROWIND RESURRECTED
REVIEWING THE CLASSIC RPG AS A 21ST CENTURY VIDEO GAME
REVIEWED
FROM THE BLOOD OF THE GODS
WARHAMMER 40,000
DAWN OF WAR III
REINC'S EXPLOSIVE RETURN TO THE 40K UNIVERSE REVEALED
MONITORS
THE ULTIMATE HARDWARE GUIDE

ONLY £28 PER YEAR

PRINT + DIGITAL

Every issue delivered in print and to your iOS and Android devices

+ PICK YOUR FREE GIFT



THE WORLD'S NUMBER ONE PC GAMES MAGAZINE
PC GAMER
MORROWIND RESURRECTED
REVIEWING THE CLASSIC RPG AS A 21ST CENTURY VIDEO GAME
REVIEWED
FROM THE BLOOD OF THE GODS
WARHAMMER 40,000
DAWN OF WAR III
REINC'S EXPLOSIVE RETURN TO THE 40K UNIVERSE REVEALED
MONITORS
THE ULTIMATE HARDWARE GUIDE

ONLY £70 PER YEAR

LIMITED
TIME ONLY!

CHOOSE YOUR FREE GIFT

Get a free keyboard or mouse with a print or print + digital subscription!



WORTH
£39.99

SPEEDLINK PARTHICA CORE LED ILLUMINATION KEYBOARD

CUSTOMISABLE functions and look,
93 programmable keys

FREELY CONFIGURABLE key/button
functions

PROFESSIONAL gaming keyboard
with LED illumination



SPEEDLINK®

OR



WORTH
£34.99

ROCCAT LUA TRI-BUTTON MOUSE + KANGA MOUSEPAD

2000 DPI SENSOR gaming mouse
with no-sweat sidegrips

265 x 210 x 2mm **CLOTH
MOUSEPAD** with non-slip grip
rubber backing

PRECISE CONTROL & COMFORT
for long gaming sessions



ROCCAT®

SUBSCRIBE TO **PC GAMER** TODAY

myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/PCGsubs

PLEASE USE THE FULL ADDRESS TO CLAIM YOUR FREE GIFT

TERMS & CONDITIONS Gift is available to new UK print subscribers and print + digital subscribers paying by yearly Direct Debit only. Please allow up to 30 days for delivery of your gift. Gift is subject to availability. In the event of stocks becoming exhausted, we reserve the right to replace with items of a similar value. Prices and savings quoted are compared to buying full priced UK print and digital issues. You will receive 13 issues in a year. If you are dissatisfied in any way you can write to us at Future Publishing Ltd, 3 Queensbridge, The Lakes, Northampton, NN4 7BF, United Kingdom to cancel your subscription at any time and we will refund you for all un-mailed issues. Prices correct at point of print and subject to change. For full terms and conditions please visit: www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/terms. Offer ends 02/06/2016. For queries please call 0844 848 28 52.



Ready to play

Discover the new look Official Xbox Magazine



FREE
68-page
supplement



AVAILABLE NOW OR ORDER DIRECT FROM MYFAVOURITEMAGAZINES.CO.UK/GAMING

HARDWARE

GET THE PC YOUR GAMES DESERVE



96

GROUP TEST

Dave James rounds up the best 1440p and 1080p monitors around. Which one's right for you?

Could a curved screen be right for you? Are you ready for a bendier desktop in 2016?



102

REVIEWS

Our hardware round-up, including a 980TI SLI rig and three headsets.



104

BUYER'S GUIDE

Our expert guide to the parts you need for the PC you want (or can afford).

[UPGRADE]

GROUP TEST

By Dave James



GAMING MONITORS

Ultrawide, ultra-slick or ultra cheap, which is the perfect panel for you?

Q&A

Is panel technology itself evolving?

Slowly. I've been recommending IPS panels for years, but the recent 4K TN screens have been far more impressive than their perennially washed out brethren, it's true.

Is anything new coming?

Quantum dot filters enable a screen to cover a wider colour gamut; Philips is launching its first right now.

And OLED offers a much quicker pixel response, because it doesn't require backlighting. It also means colours are simply stunning and contrast ratios go through the roof.

Should I step up to 4K?

I've deliberately not featured 4K screens in this test because they're not practical for the majority of gamers. You need an incredibly powerful rig to power a modern game engine at the 3840x2160 native resolution of a 4K panel. Even the 3440x1440 ultrawides don't demand as much.

Can you really tell the difference between a 60Hz panel and 120Hz, or 165Hz?

Absolutely. You can tell the difference between 60Hz and 75Hz, as the Acer ultrawide shows. Making the step up to rates of double or more yields a far more natural experience. It becomes very jarring to go back and use a 60Hz panel again.

Dictionary

G-Sync – Creates a smoother moving image by synchronising graphics card and panel.

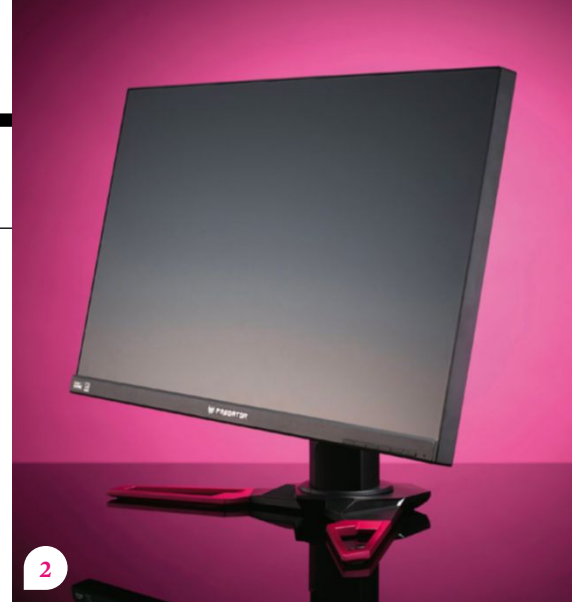
IPS – In-plane switching technology, introduced to solve TN's problems with colour and viewing angles.



The world of PC gaming is a fast evolving one. Processors, graphics cards and SSDs are all advancing at speed. A new top-end component can start to look very last-gen within twelve months or so.

Historically, that hasn't been the case with gaming monitors. For a time it was all about screen real estate with a few relatively

minor bumps up in resolution every few years. Recently, though, monitors have begun iterating as swiftly as more headline-grabbing components. From the huge step up to 4K displays or 21:9 ultrawides, to super high-refresh-rate or curved panels, to serious gaming technologies such as G-Sync and Freesync – every year there's a new temptation to upgrade your screen. Here's our round-up of what's out there.



ASUS ROG SWIFT PG279Q

www.asus.com **£680**

→ When it comes to the finest gaming monitors, Asus has serious pedigree – the original Swift was the first 1440p G-Sync panel with a 1ms response and 144Hz refresh rate. So is this sequel worthy of the name?

1

Short answer: yes. And it deserves the title 'best gaming monitor' too, because from top to bottom it's a winner. The first Swift was only let down by the washed out colours of its TN panel, which enabled the 144Hz Acer XB270HU to take the crown by virtue of its IPS screen. Now Acer and Asus are going head-to-head again, but the new PG279Q just wins this latest clash.

Both new screens are incredible, sporting a 1440p native resolution, that all-important IPS tech, Nvidia G-Sync support and a refresh rate of up to 165Hz. So how does the Asus beat the Acer? Aesthetically, I prefer its design. The chassis is classic, using a physical rather than recessed bezel, and the controls are the easiest to use in the business. But there's also something more natural to its images, mostly in the white reproduction – something which I couldn't replicate with the almost-identical Acer's image settings. It's an all-round excellent display and just that bit better than all the rest.

92%

ACER PREDATOR XB271HU

www.acer.com **£576**

→ It feels supremely harsh relegating the superb new Acer Predator to second place. It's almost all the gaming monitor I've ever wanted, but Asus's latest Swift landed first and made the top spot its own.

2

There's practically nothing between the top two monitors this month – after all, both are using the same panel. And what a panel it is. The image quality from the super-responsive IPS screen is excellent – everything looks fantastic on it. The only difference comes in the display setup and the surrounds of the monitors as a whole – but that's where the Asus has the slight advantage.

The Acer, however, is around £100 cheaper than the Swift, so if the high cost of these screens is a barrier then you're hardly missing out if you opt for this less expensive option. Money no object, I'd have the Asus, but you would never feel like the poor relation sitting in front of your stunning Acer IPS gaming monitor.

Both the Acer and Asus deliver glorious, vibrant images and that 165Hz refresh really does make a difference – although you do have to access the overclocking sections of the respective monitor controls to turn it on. It's tough going back to 60Hz afterwards.

91%



ACER XR341CK

www.acer.com **£717**

→ While the new Swift has won the best monitor war in this round-up, there are still other battles to be fought, and when it comes to the ultimate *ultrawide* monitor, Acer has got it sewn up with the XR341CK.

3

The closest rival is the adjacent Philips screen, but the Acer's design, extra response and quality of image make it the one to recommend.

The XR341CK's IPS panel is able to deliver glorious colours and defined contrast. Yes, maybe the black levels could be better, but you could aim that comment at most IPS displays. I'm also not convinced by the curve, although it's more aesthetic than anything else as it's so shallow as to not have much visual impact at all.

The big winner for me is the extra refresh rate that the XR341CK offers. Having a 75Hz refresh over the standard 60Hz might not sound like a lot, but it genuinely creates a smoother experience. It's not in the same ballpark as the shift up to 120Hz or 165Hz, but it is noticeable.

The Acer is also able to offer FreeSync support for AMD GPUs, something the big Philips cannot, thereby providing another level of gaming smoothness and cementing its place as the best ultrawide around.

91%

PHILIPS BDM3490UC

www.philips.com **£666**

→ I'm a big fan of Philips' monitors, from the manufacturer's previous ultrawide to its 40-inch 4K behemoth, but when you put this curvy 21:9 wide-load up against the Acer there can be only one winner.

4

On the face of it there's little between them. They're both fitted with IPS panels and built with a curve shallow enough not to leave distorted reflections cluttering your screen. But the extra refresh of the Acer gives it the edge and it has an air of smarter design about it too. The Philips' little joystick-like control would be great if it was more intuitive, but pressing it does nothing, while a flick to the right is the confirmation gesture.

I also noticed a faint touch of input lag. It's unlikely to affect your experience greatly, but testing side-by-side you can see a slight delay. Like the Acer, the Philips' IPS panel isn't too hot on the black levels, but the colours and contrast are similarly excellent. I did notice a little IPS bleed at the sides, it's true, generating variations in shade at the extremities of the panel.

If the Philips was significantly cheaper than the competing Acer, I'd still recommend it as a worthy ultrawide, but at this end of the market it's pricing itself out.

83%



AOC C3583FQ

www.aoc.com **£551**

→ This new AOC monitor's spec had me excited about its gaming potential, boasting as it does a high refresh rate, Freesync support, less-demanding 21:9 resolution and a more defined curve. But there's a ghost in this machine.

5

The C3583FQ has just gone on sale in Europe, and has a US release of late June. It's the first 160Hz 21:9 screen I've had the fortune to play with. That ought to be a big tick in its pro column, but there's a ghosting issue with the AOC's VA panel which takes away a lot of the goodwill its spec sheet built up. On the desktop there's a telltale smudge of colour as you move windows around and in-game the indistinct motion blur creates a similar impression to the vaseline effect when you stream a game.

I could have forgiven the relatively lowly 2560x 1080 resolution, given that it won't demand as much from your GPU and will still look great in-game – even if the desktop experience is compromised by the compressed vertical height. The same for the larger pixel pitch, born of stretching that res across a full 35-inch panel. But considering how much the AOC costs, and how badly the ghosting affected my gaming experience with the screen, it can't get the PC Gamer seal of approval.

67%

ASUS VX239H-W

www.asus.com **£112**

→ The beauty of the recent advancements in screen technology is that better and better tech is filtering down into far more affordable levels. Now you can get relatively big-screen IPS monitors for great prices.

6

This Asus panel, for example, is no fresh-faced entry to the ranks; it's a couple of years old, but that means you can now purchase it and its 23-inch, 1080p IPS panel without breaking the bank. And with the colour reproduction and contrast levels of the VX239H it knocks any other budget TN equivalent clean out of the race.

Naturally there are compromises down at this budget end of the market – it's not the brightest screen in the gaming world, it's only got tilt adjustment and the clunky touch controls aren't particularly well designed – but there are a pair of MHL, powered HDMI connections on the back, it's got a slimline bezel and chassis and that IPS panel certainly supplies good game graphics.

If you're on a limited budget you could go for a 27-inch TN monitor, offering you a bigger 1080p experience, but with the washed out colour of that ageing screen tech. The improved image quality of a more advanced screen is worth sacrificing a little scale for.

77%



BENQ GW2270

www.benq.com **£86**

→ This bargain BenQ may not be the biggest screen in the world, but its decent spec, fantastic price and impressive visuals more than make up for what it lacks in terms of raw desktop real estate.

7

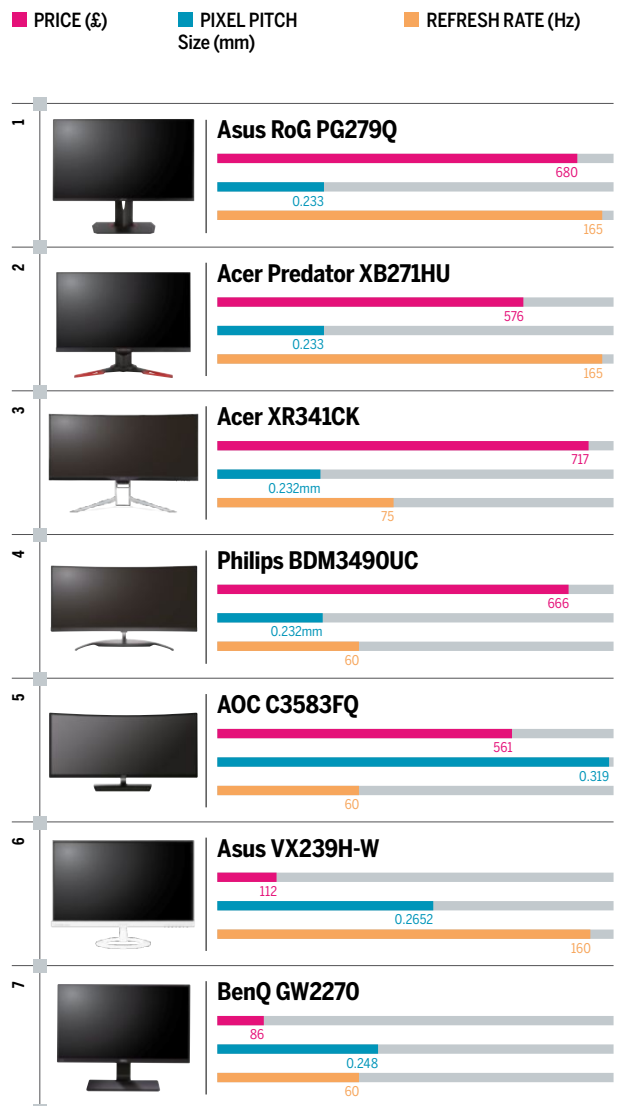
At 21.5 inches the GW2270 is the smallest screen in the test, which also helps make it the cheapest. While you're not getting the vaunted IPS tech, you are getting the next best thing, a VA panel. These don't have the same levels of colour reproduction as IPS, but still have impressive depth compared with TN and far better viewing angles too.

And this BenQ does actually deliver a great image, once you adjust some of the settings. Out of the box the low level contrast is crushed, leading to a lack of detail in dark scenes, but alter the HDMI RGB range and the contrast and black levels are much improved, giving a more natural image.

Because it's a 21.5 inch screen, with a 1080p native resolution, it also has a pixel pitch that's not far off the top monitors on test this month. Along with its motion control that results in a really crisp picture in-game. So while it might not be the biggest, or most beautiful, it certainly has a great price and genuinely good visuals to boot.

83%

STACKED UP



ESSENTIALS

	Screen size	Panel technology	Native resolution	Response time	Maximum brightness
1	27 inch	IPS	2560 x 1440	4ms	350Nit
2	27 inch	IPS	2560 x 1440	4ms	350Nit
3	34 inch	IPS	3440 x 1440	4ms	300Nit
4	34 inch	IPS	3440 x 1440	5ms	300Nit
5	35 inch	VA	2560 x 1080	4ms	300Nit
6	23 inch	IPS	1920 x 1080	5ms	250Nit
7	21.5 inch	VA	1920 x 1080	5ms	250Nit

UPGRADE

REVIEWS

The very best in gaming hardware, reviewed

By Zak Storey



1 WATERCOOLING INSTALLED

There's nothing quite like having your own watercooled system. The parts in this behemoth would easily set you back an extra £600 if bought separately.

2 GARGANTUAN CHASSIS

This case is a true tower of power. The Phanteks Enthoo Primo comes in at a staggering 250x650x600mm. It also weighs an absolute ton with all that hardware inside.

3 SLI CARDS

Not all games have been built to take advantage of multiple GPUs, but with DirectX 12 right around the corner, this will soon be a thing of past. This is excellent future-proofing.

4 KING OF THE OVERCLOCKS

4.7GHz is monstrous for an i7-6700K, and with all that watercooling behind it, it's unlikely to hit 55°C even under load. Sweet, silent, gaming.

OVERCLOCKERS INFIN8 TOXICITY

www.overclockers.co.uk £3,424

GAMING
PC

→ Liquid cooling. It's the technology at the very top of a PC enthusiast's arsenal when it comes to customisation. It looks awesome, improves overall heat disposal, and reduces noise. However, there are good reasons for getting someone else to build the machine it sits in.

Although you will gain some advantage from applying that chilly upgrade to an average specced system (we're talking GTX 960 and an Intel i5), the way to make the most out of your investment is to push the limits of higher quality hardware. In other words, build a brand new PC. And even for experienced DIY builders, stepping into a world of tubes and pumps can be intimidating.

Overclockers has provided a solution in the form of its impressive range of Infin8 watercooled builds. Inspired by its own Ian '8Pack' Parry's monster machines at the

top of the heap, these rigs are designed to push the limits of computer gaming. Featuring an Intel Core i7-6700K and two GTX 980 Ti cards, all water cooled, this machine is big, silent and pretty. Obviously this isn't a cheap machine, far from it, but if you're after a 4K 60fps games beast, the Infin8 Toxicity is your machine.

CPU: INTEL CORE I7-6700K @ 4.7 GHZ / **MOTHERBOARD:** GIGABYTE G1.SNIPER Z170 / **MEMORY:** 16GB KINGSTON FURY BLACK DDR4 @ 2666 MHZ / **GRAPHICS:** 2X GEFORCE GTX 980 TI SLI / **STORAGE:** 512GB M.2 PCIE SSD, 500GB SSD, 3TB HDD **WARRANTY:** 3 YRS (24 MNTH C&R, 12 MNTH LABOUR)

84%

STEELSERIES RIVAL 700

www.steelseries.com **£85**



GAMING MOUSE

→ Haptic feedback in a mouse? What is this nonsense? The mouse is a precision instrument, a tool designed with fine-tuned accuracy, so why on earth would you make it vibrate?

Although it currently only supports *Dota*, *Minecraft* and *CS:GO*, the haptic feedback is just a gentle reminder that something has happened, a little nudge to say "hey, you're nearly dead". It's calm, smooth.

The OLED screen, however, I'm finding hard to justify. You'll be too focused on your monitor to pay attention to it.

90%

Otherwise the Rival 700 is great. The swappable sensor is intuitive, you can use braided or smooth swappable cables depending on your preference. It's now being released later in the year, and will be tweaked even more before then.

SENSOR: PIXART PMW3360 OPTICAL SENSOR / MAX DPI: 16,000 / LIGHTING: 16.8 MILLION COLOURS / PROGRAMMABLE BUTTONS: 7 / WEIGHT: 135g

RAZER BLACKWIDOW ULTIMATE 2016

www.razerzone.com **£100**



GAMING KEYBOARD

→ If you haven't already, you really should make the move to a proper mechanical keyboard. Compared to their chiclet and membrane counterparts there is no competition. But which type of switch do you choose?

Cherry switches are best known by gamers, but Razer has its own. Good for 60 million clicks, it's the perfect balance between the clicky signature sound of the Cherry MX Blue, and the responsive, no nonsense fast travel of an MX red keyboard.

Put that in a £100 full-sized keyboard with some fancy green LEDs and you're good to

81%

go. It might take a little while to get used to the font if you're coming from a more sedate brand, but once you try those switches I can guarantee you'll be sold. Downsides? Integrated media keys and no RGB lighting.

SWITCH TYPE: RAZER GREEN / KEY DURABILITY: 60 MILLION KEYOPS / PROGRAMMABLE KEYS: YES / DEDICATED MACRO KEYS: NO / RGB LIGHTING: NO / N-KEY ROLLOVER: 10 KEYS / PASSTHROUGH: USB & AUDIO

ROUND-UP



CLOUD REVOLVER

HyperX **£100**

→ This is a new design, built from the ground up for gamers. Comfortable, light and with an impressive soundscape and frequency response. Better than the original Clouds? Too close to call. There's a little more emphasis on the treble, but the tradeoff is that more gamery aesthetic style. **94%**



VOID WIRELESS

Corsair **£100**

→ There's something liberating about a pair of wireless headphones. The wireless edition of the Void comes with the same great features the USB variants have, but with a lot more flexibility. They're comfortable and crisp, despite limited frequency response. **85%**



SIBERIA 350

SteelSeries **£90**

→ More manufacturers are turning away from the "humans can only hear between 20Hz – 20KHz" nonsense. With a great frequency response, intuitive Dolby software and USB connectivity these sound immense. The design is incredibly light, too. **83%**

YOUR NEXT PC

BUYER'S GUIDE

Build the best PC for your budget



KEY

Budget build

PC gaming is for everyone. Pick the parts you want to build a new, well-rounded PC for a good price.

Mid-range build

You want to run every new game at 1080p 60fps. This recommended build will see you through.

Advanced build

You're looking for the best PC on the market and superior components. But you still want to spend smart.

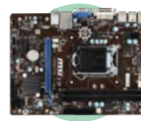


BUDGET BUILD

Enjoy 1080p gaming without breaking the bank

TOTAL
£773

MOTHERBOARD

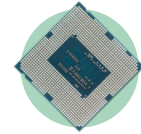


H81M-P33

MSI **£34**

A bargain-priced microATX board that pairs nicely with the Pentium G3258, letting you overclock into 4GHz+ territory.

PROCESSOR



Pentium Anniversary G3258

Intel **£48**

Ludicrously cheap and overclockable, the dual-core G3258 rivals far more expensive processors in gaming performance.

GRAPHICS CARD



AMD R9 380 2GB

Sapphire **£159**

AMD's R9 380 is a refreshed R9 285, but it still packs enough power to handle 1080p gaming at a decent price.

COOLER



Hyper 212 EVO

Cooler Master **£25**

A legendary cooler, still the best for its very reasonable price. Overclock to your heart's content with this.

MEMORY



Elite Black DDR3 – 8GB (2x4GB) 1600MHz

Team Group **£30**

Cheap, low-profile, and reliable. Does its job. The best 8GB you'll find.

POWER SUPPLY



EVGA 500W 80PLUS Certified ATX12V/EPS12V

EVGA **£33**

A reliable PSU with enough juice to run your CPU and a reasonably power-hungry GPU.

SSD



BX100 250GB

Crucial **£67**

Thinking about skimping and going HDD-only? Don't. The BX100 is much faster and a fantastic performer for the price.

CASE



Carbide 200R

Corsair **£50**

The 200R gets the job done with toolless trays and plenty of space. ATX-sized, so you can upgrade that microATX board later.

DISPLAY



VX2263SMHL

Viewsonic **£118**

An affordable 1080p monitor with vibrant IPS image quality and low response times. A real bargain.

KEYBOARD



CM Storm QuickFire Rapid

Coolermaster **£83**

A no-frills mechanical keyboard with a standard layout and Cherry switches. We recommend Browns or Reds for gaming.

MOUSE



G303 Daedalus Apex

Logitech **£50**

The best gaming mouse sensor in existence paired with buttons with extremely low click distance. Especially ideal for MOBA players.

HEADSET



HyperX Cloud

Kingston **£55**

Our favourite gaming headset, and it happens to be as cheap as plenty of inferior cans. A good buy for any gaming rig.

CONTROLLER



Xbox 360 Wired Controller

Microsoft **£21**

Now available at a sane price, the standard 360 controller feels great and functions perfectly on PC.



MID-RANGE BUILD

Our recommended build for playing the latest games

TOTAL
£1,384

MOTHERBOARD



Z170 Pro Gaming

Asus **£120**

The latest revision of our favourite gaming motherboard, with an M.2 PCIe x4 slot, Intel network port, USB 3.1 and SLI support.

PROCESSOR



i5-6600K

Intel **£156**

Intel's new Skylake processor is nearly as fast as an i7 for gaming. Comes with some important memory/storage speed boosts.

GRAPHICS CARD



GTX 970 4G

MSI **£270**

Offers the best price/performance ratio right now, and MSI's model is cheap and overclockable, with a quiet cooler.

COOLER



Kraken X31

NZXT **£60**

To get the most out of a good CPU you need a cooler to match. The Kraken X31 is powerful, quiet and great for overlocks.

MEMORY



Vengeance LPX (8GB)

Corsair **£50**

8GB of reasonably fast DDR4, and one of the cheapest deals you'll find. Corsair is reliable, and the RAM's overclockable to boot.

POWER SUPPLY



CX600M

Corsair **£61**

80Plus Bronze efficient, with enough power for a good gaming PC. Modular design is a great perk that cuts down on cable tangles.

SSD



850 EVO 250GB

Samsung **£75**

Samsung retains its top spot on the SSD pile with the fantastically priced, very speedy 850 EVO. Still the best price/performance.

CASE



S340

NZXT **£57**

The stylish S340 has some nice touches, such as removable dust filters and space for huge liquid cooling radiators.

DISPLAY



G257HU

Acer **£282**

A step up from 1080p to 1440p territory, with a vibrant IPS display and good response times at a strong price.

KEYBOARD



K70 Vengeance

Corsair **£101**

A great, full-size mechanical keyboard with an ergonomic wrist rest. We recommend Cherry Brown or Red switches for gaming.

MOUSE



Deathadder 2013

Razer **£59**

There's not a huge range of price differences on great gaming mice, so go with the best for your mid-range build.

HEADSET



HyperX Cloud

Kingston **£55**

Even for our medium build, we still recommend this decently-priced headset. There's nothing better for the money.

CONTROLLER



DualShock 4

Sony **£38**

Requires unofficial software tools to get working, but it's so comfortable to hold and comes with lovely face buttons.



ADVANCED BUILD

Go above and beyond with a PC powerful enough to end worlds

TOTAL
£2,443

MOTHERBOARD



ROG Maximus VIII Hero

Asus **£172**

Fantastic overclocking and stability, with a great UEFI BIOS from Asus. M.2, USB 3.1 and on-board power, reset, CMOS, etc, buttons.

PROCESSOR



Core i7-6700K

Intel **£263**

Intel's new top-of-the-line Skylake processor. Its new chipset includes important memory/storage speed boosts.

GRAPHICS CARD



GTX 980 Gaming 4G

MSI **£415**

Right now the GTX 980 is the best value single-GPU card for ultra 1080p and 1440p gaming, bar none.

COOLER



Hydro H110i GT 280mm

Corsair **£92**

Quiet, cool and capable of providing even the most aggressive overclocker with more than enough headroom to hit that 5GHz mark.

MEMORY



Savage Black 16GB @2400 MHz Cas12

Kingston **£100**

Thanks to insanely low timings, these two 8GB sticks of DDR4 are more than enough.

POWER SUPPLY



Supernova 850W G2 80 Plus Gold

EVGA **£112**

A reliable, quiet, gold-rated EVGA power supply, modular, with enough juice to sustain two overclocked graphics cards and a CPU.

SSD



850 EVO 500GB

Samsung **£133**

The 850 EVO is so good, there's not much need to step up to the more expensive 850 Pro for a gaming rig. Just get a bigger drive.

CASE



Noctis 450

NZXT **£110**

Thanks to its innovative interior layout and daring design, this case is a pleasure to work in and a beauty to behold.

DISPLAY



Predator XB270HUbpz 144Hz G-Sync

Acer **£600**

Simply the best: a 27" 1440p 144Hz IPS display, with Nvidia's variable refresh tech.

KEYBOARD



Ducky One

Ducky **£100**

An elegant set of keys from mechanical keyboard fan favourite Ducky. Renowned for their impeccable feel and build quality.

MOUSE



Deathadder 2013

Razer **£59**

Even if you've got money to burn, the Deathadder really is the best mouse you can buy right now.

HEADSET



H Wireless

SteelSeries **£249**

Our favourite wireless gaming headset, with great sound quality and a convenient battery swapping system for long gaming sessions.

CONTROLLER



DualShock 4

Sony **£38**

For the high-end rig, we recommend the PS4 controller as well – £38 is about as much as you need to spend.

EXTRA+LIFE

CONTINUED ADVENTURES IN GAMING



“I’ve embraced the life of an embittered loner”

Living a year of solitude in neighbourly **STARDEW VALLEY**

I came to *Stardew Valley* as a cynic. I'd seen screenshots, I'd seen praise, I'd seen it topping the Steam chart. It's a sickeningly cheerful RPG about farming, I thought. Can it really be that good?

Yes, it really can. I've now played for over 25 hours, and I'm creeping towards the end of my first year in Pelican Town. After the initially overwhelming introduction to *Stardew Valley*'s many activities, I gained an economic foothold via the fishing minigame. It's a pleasant time waster, and easy enough that I could haul in a decent catch in a day.

That's when the numbers started growing, and everything became compulsive. Fishing gave me money that I invested in seeds. Weeks later, the seeds became vegetables, and money started to pour in at a steadier rate. By summer, I'd made enough to buy chickens. By autumn, cows.

PHIL SAVAGE



THIS MONTH
Moved to the country, became rich and cantankerous.

ALSO PLAYED
Hitman, Fallout 4

At this point I was a full-time farmer, hand-watering rows of crops, brewing pale ales, and creating artisanal cheese and mayonnaise. I became the hipster's hipster, supplying the town with all the raw materials of gentrification without any of the downsides. Even homeless hermit Linus has his tent.

It's winter now, and I'm tidying up the wilder edges of my farmland. I'm investing in upgrades, new buildings, and finding more valuable resources in the mines. It's all with a goal of increasing production in year two. Come spring, it all begins again – this

time, with the benefit of tens of hours of experience. I'm using an external tool to map the ideal layout. *Stardew Valley* has its tendrils in me, and it's not letting go.

COUNTRY MATTERS

A few remnants of my cynicism remain. *Stardew Valley* asks you for a few basic details on character creation. As a result, I'm the proud owner of Atrocity Farm. When I find an energy-boosting stardrop fruit, I'm told that my "mind is filled with thoughts of petrol bombs." It's like having a friend who teases your latest hobby, but instead it's my past self mocking me through time. And for good reason. As much as I'm obsessed



I DID LIVE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. IT WAS BORING AND FULL OF JERKS AND COW SHIT



with the game, I can't quite deal with how gosh darned nice it is.

Pelican Town feels sickly sweet. Its inhabitants are mostly unfailingly polite, even when they don't much care for you. Living in *Stardew Valley* is like being indoctrinated into a cult, only without the underlying tragedy. It's the version of the countryside people who've never lived in the countryside dream of moving to. I *did* live in the countryside. It was boring and full of jerks and cow shit. Not necessarily a higher percentage of jerks than you'd find anywhere else, but when there's less people around they tend to stand out. Rural life is full of gossip, and polite, silent judgement. Here, I can't even tell people about the mayor's fling with the ranch owner.

I've come to admire and embrace the few dark edges that exist in the game. I've almost entirely ignored the NPCs, because I can't bring myself to join their saccharine community. My favourite character is Haley, because her borderline disgust at my appearance and work feels honest.

I've embraced the life of an embittered loner in protest at the townspeople's anodyne pleasantries. I've taken to rummaging through bins as characters walk by. It grosses them out, which I find funny. Plus, I once found a pufferfish that someone had thrown away. I sold it for 200 gold. ■



“Everyone George meets is asked if they want a dog biscuit”

Offering strangers dog treats in **BROKEN SWORD 2**

▶ ANDY KELLY



THIS MONTH
Ate some gourmet dog nibbles.

ALSO PLAYED
Hyper Light Drifter

Some of the best humour in *Broken Sword* comes from the weird, seemingly useless junk filling George's bottomless pockets and the reactions when he shows it to people. In the first game, *The Shadow of the Templars*, he carries a soggy greasypaint-soaked tissue halfway around the world, and waving it in people's faces is met with disgust. And I loved the running gag of people always having an excuse not to shake his electric-buzzer-trapped hand.

In the second game, *The Smoking Mirror*, it's a box of gourmet dog biscuits he's got hold of that creates some of the best laughs. Everyone George meets, be they military general or art dealer, is asked if they want one. Sometimes he'll be crunching on one himself, commenting on how delicious they are. This goofy charm is what makes George such a likeable character. He might be wrapped up in a deadly conspiracy, but that won't stop him cheerily offering strangers dog treats.

LucasArts adventures like *Day of the Tentacle* are (rightly) regarded as the

funniest, but I don't think *Broken Sword* gets enough credit for its sense of humour. And it's even more remarkable that it manages to marry this with serious, often fairly dark storylines. The balance of gags and drama, at least in the first two games, is pretty much perfect. And George's obsession with picking up the most random, bizarre objects in the hope they'll come in useful later – such as the shrivelled worm from a tequila bottle – is a joke that keeps on giving.

I spent most of a lazy Sunday replaying *Broken Sword 2*, and there's something about its warm humour, mystery-laden plot, and slow, easy pace that makes it perfect for days like that. It's slightly too short, and there's more talking than satisfying puzzle-solving, but it's still one of the best adventures on PC. The most recent game, *The Serpent's Curse*, continued the tradition of George's pockets of junk, but wasn't quite as funny. The first two games are, for my money, still the best entries in the series, and always worth revisiting. ■





“I’ve watched a steady stream of town guards tumble from the city walls”

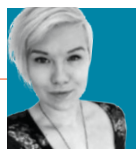
Mods still bring the magic to **OBLIVION** a decade later

I’m standing in the cold grey Nordic town of Bruma. Expressionless NPCs acknowledge my presence with either an overly jovial “HELLO” or strangely omniscient statements about my various levelled skills. I’ve now spent a good minute watching a steady stream of town guards tumble from the city walls. They follow their patrol diligently, even when the route means flinging yourself off the battlements like a steel-clad Lady Macbeth.

I’ve played this game for hundreds of hours in the ten years it’s been out, first on the Xbox 360 and now on my laptop (usually in bed with a cup of tea – luxury 12-year-old me could hardly dream of). My latest playthrough has been given a new lease of life by mods. Beautiful, face revamping, texture defining, location re-jigging mods.

I lack all the necessary skills to be able to mod *Oblivion* myself, so I rely on the hard work of others to make my gaming experience slightly slicker. Even with the vital tool of Nexus Mod Manager at my fingertips I still find modding a fiddly business. I spent hours hunched over the screen as screen tear rendered the world of Cyrodiil in twain and unexplained grey blocks bombarded innocent textures. “It must

HOLLY NIELSEN



THIS MONTH
Inadvertently turned *Oblivion* into *Lemmings*.

ALSO PLAYED
Stardew Valley

be something in the code,” I whispered to myself, pretending I knew what I was talking about. I gave up for the night. The next day I realised there was something in the wrong place in the load order. Cyrodiil is fixed. Nexus is forgiven. I feel like a technological mastermind.

An hour later I’m standing in Bruma, observing the lemmings dressed as town guards. What’s happened is that the guards’ set path hasn’t been changed to fit the fancy new city modifications I’ve added. After a little while the guards start to become aware of the difficulties of patrolling a now imaginary wall and change their route to fit my desire for slightly higher architecture. The mods I’ve added don’t

hugely alter the game: I’ve passed by the ostentatious player-built mansions and laser weapons in favour of prettier flowers. However, I did go for something that made the cities a little more interesting, and apart from the odd out-of-place statue it’s brilliant.

SCROLL ON

The quests and world in this game are what bring me back, whether it’s finding something sinister in a quaint looking chapel, or putting on the boots of Spring Heel Jak and leaping about like a grasshopper on steroids. The silliness, ambition and the feeling that PVA glue and sheer will are keeping the game together charms me every time. Now, thanks to an army of dedicated modders, I can look at my wood elf, and instead of a stumpy cuboid with a potato face staring back, it’s now a closer representation to how she looked in my imagination ten years ago.

I scurry towards the wall to loot the bodies of the guards. Burdened with armour and apples, my thrifty wood elf hastens to the closest shop to sell the still warm chainmail. I go to fast travel and the game immediately crashes. My eyes wander over to the Nexus Mod Manager icon on my desktop, and I prepare yet again to do battle with my own incompetence. ■

MY THRIFTY WOOD ELF HASTENS TO THE CLOSEST SHOP TO SELL THE STILL WARM CHAINMAIL

“Life’s too short to block”

I am **STREET FIGHTER V**'s most irritating noob

I've chosen Rashid as my main character because facing him is annoying and I feed off misery. This so-called 'master of the turbulent wind' scraps like a Henry Hoover on a revolving dance floor. Like a greased hula hoop falling down some stairs. What else? Er, a bumble bee in moon boots? A smoke ring from the mouth of a bastard. He's tricky is what I'm saying, and that's why I've won against the best players in our office, my technique being if I don't know what I'm doing then they don't either.

When the match starts I'll explode with a screen-crossing eagle strike before backing up and doing it a second time. From here I'll use this horizontal flying kick again before slinking away. Then when my opponent is thinking 'Wow, really, dude?' I'll try it again. I'll probably do it a fourth time. At some point I'll switch to the second of the three moves I can reliably pull off, whirlwind shot, which involves punting a humiliatingly small twister into someone's gut. My best/most awkward technique is the spinning mixer where Rashid becomes a human tribute to wind turbines and rapidly backhands

BEN GRIFFIN



THIS MONTH
Harnesses the elements to beat someone up.

ALSO PLAYED
The Division

opponents for slightly longer than seems fair.

I mix and match this tiresome trifecta to great success, which I measure entirely by the frustrated huffs of the player next to me. In game lore Rashid is mellow: during the story he accepts a loss to Ryu with a handshake, and his biography lists one of his interests as 'making friends'. In my hands he's a troll wrapped in a shemagh. Combating Rashid is akin to fending off a kickboxer on a bungee cord, all his moves linked by silky swishes and pirouettes that disguise

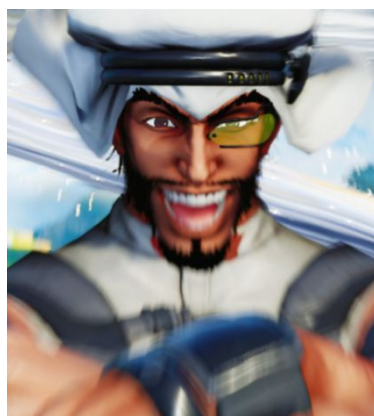
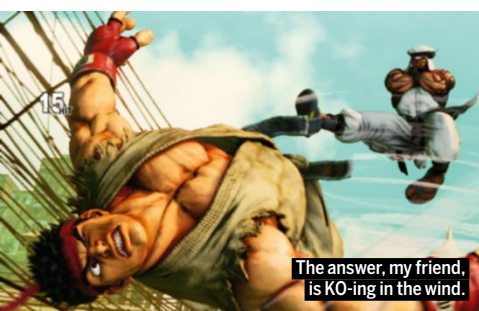
their beginning and end like an expertly looped gif of a swinging boot tied to a playground roundabout.

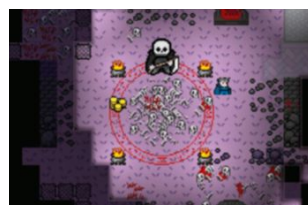
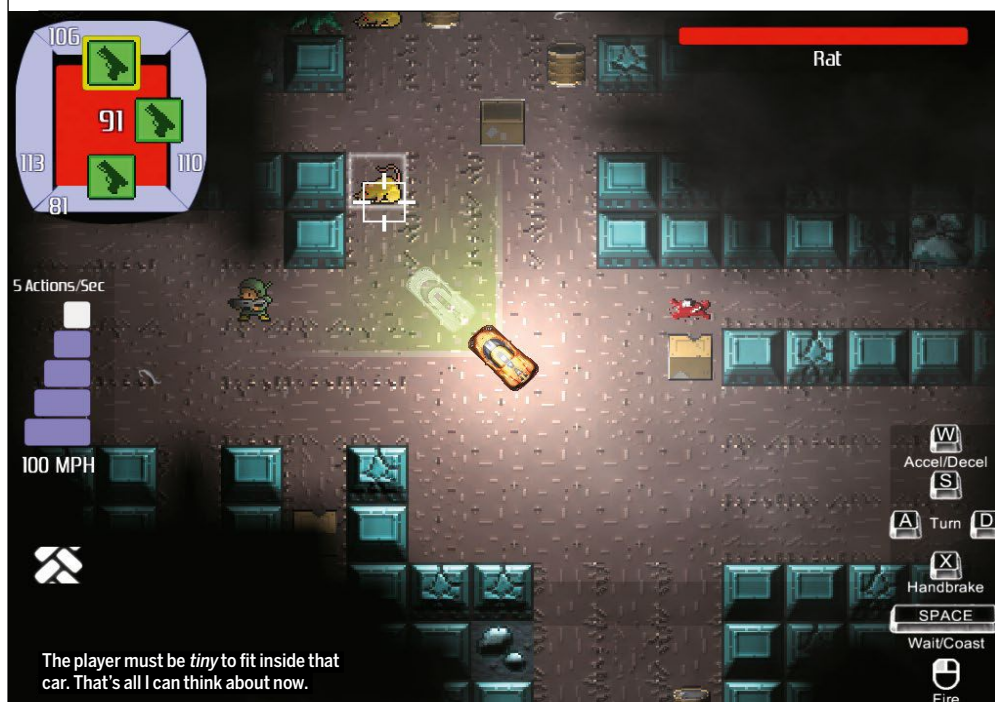
LOW BLOWS

What's amazing about my victories is I don't even practise. While my opponents study YouTube tutorials on how to extend combos, I'm watching videos of guilty dogs and Friends goofs. They use fight sticks – I'm on a controller. They block and I don't. Life's too short to block. I'm the poker novice who goes all in and forces his competitor to fold because they can't work him out. Anarchy is hard to read, and that's what my Rashid is. An indecipherable book in a wind tunnel filled with fists.

I meet my match, however, when I come up against my own worst enemy online: another Rashid. I leap in and so does he. I try a spinning mixer and he does it sooner. With grappler R Mika or rangy Ryu you can at least learn a pattern, but Rashid is unstable and slippery, like Jean Claude Van Damme crossed with a dolphin. I'm reassessing my entire fighting style now, forced to confront my own prior conduct. That assessment? I am very annoying. ■

AT SOME POINT I'LL SWITCH TO THE SECOND OF THE THREE MOVES I CAN RELIABLY PULL OFF





1 AUTOFIRE

FREEWARE This year's seven-day roguelike challenge

There are so many game jams these days that websites exist just to keep track of them, but if you only pay attention to one, make it the venerable, the always surprising, 7DRL. It took place this year in early March, the competing developers once again having been given the task of making a game a bit like *Rogue* in just a week. *AutoFire* stood out to me as the highlight, a game that replaces the traditional adventuring hero with a automobile, of all things.

To answer your first question: yes, it's still a fairly small, claustrophobic dungeon environment that you're exploring, hardly built to accommodate the horseless carriage. And to answer the next one: yes, your character moves, well, like a car, meaning you'll need to manage its acceleration, turning circle and grip.

It's a bizarre experience, steering a car in a turn-based manner, although it comes into its own as you rev your engines to trample giant rats, and employ the handbrake to manoeuvre around tight corners. Loot, meanwhile, takes the form of a bunch of guns you can graft onto the sides of your vehicle, in time-honoured fashion.

There's just space left to note that the other highlights of this year's 7DRL included the atmospheric *Darkyr*, the pretty gothic adventure *Cult*, and the excellent *Switch Hook*, a game that fundamentally improves the concept of roguelikes by adding a big grappling hook. Your main, and only, weapon here is a hookshot that swaps your position with your target's, ripping a chunk of their health in the process. It might sound like a gimmick, but it soon becomes essential to the smart, compact, puzzle-like stages that await.

DOWNLOAD AT www.bit.ly/AutoRogue

2

STARDEW VALLEY

MODS Valley of the dogs

While there's still no official mod support for this wildly successful life sim, that's hardly stopped the eager modders who have spent the last few weeks stuffing the forums with all manner of agricultural goodies. There's no shortage of sprite replacements, that's for sure. As always with the world of unofficial mods, you'll want to back up both your saves and the game files you're replacing before diving in.



UNDERTALE DOG

You can replace the default pets with alternative sprites, including new breeds of dog, cat, and horse. You can also grab the Annoying Dog from *Undertale*, who is an annoying dog.

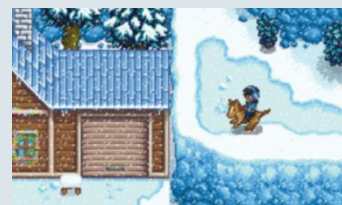
www.bit.ly/Undertale1



ANIME-STYLE PORTRAITS

If you find yourself displeased with *Stardew Valley*'s lovely character portraits, this image pack might be more what you're looking for. It replaces each character's chat pictures with anime-style images, on the off chance that's what you're into.

www.bit.ly/Undertale2



TIMESPEED MOD

Setting this mod up is fairly complicated, as it requires the Stardew Modding API, but it's worth it. It lets you speed up or slow down time to suit your needs.

www.bit.ly/Undertale3

3 CRYISIS CO-OP

MOD Enjoy super-powered jungle antics with friends

After a mere seven years of development, the *Crysis* co-op mod is finally here. Sort of. There are only a couple of levels included at the moment, but it's been such an arduous undertaking that I figured it was worth bringing to your attention anyway. The lengthy gestation time was down to the way Crytek handled singleplayer AI, and it's taken years of experimenting to get it to play nice with other humans, albeit in the game's standalone multiplayer component, *Crysis Wars*.

It's a bit of a faff to set up, but if you've ever wanted to creep up on, fling barrels at, or throw *Crysis*'s Korean soldiers halfway across the jungle with chums, then you finally can. It's still early days for this project, but there's a chunk of the lush tropical sandbox to play around with in super-suits, and let's face it, that's the best part of the game anyway. Now that the modders are finally over the hump, hopefully further updates won't take quite as long.

DOWNLOAD AT www.bit.ly/CrysisCoop

You're currently limited to fighting humans. Yay!



4 COLD EMAIL

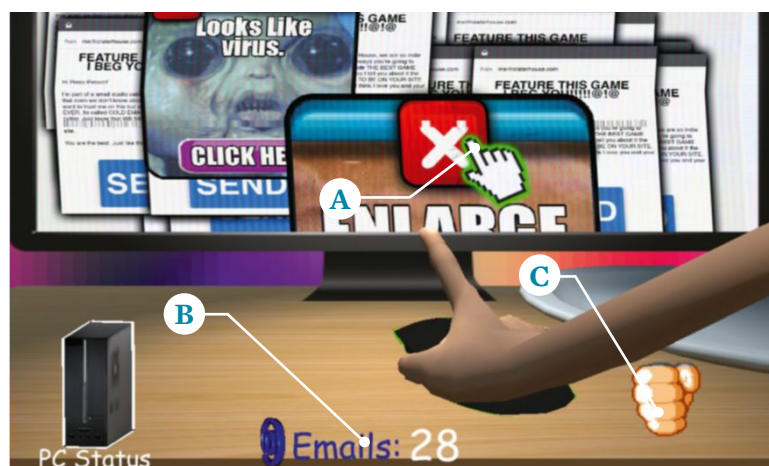
FREEWARE Bombard game journos with nonsense

One of the hardest things about indie development is getting the press interested in your game. I'm perhaps breaking trade secrets by revealing that the most effective method is blanket emailing every journalist you can find with the same impersonal email – oh and be sure to spell their name wrong.

In Daniel Ponce's silly, funny jam game, you're trying to fire off the same desperate email to as many journos as

possible, while battling environmental hazards including cats and falling furniture, which you have to physically swipe away from the screen with the mouse. You also have to contend with the bane of every computer user: pop-ups, which will overheat your PC if left unchecked. If you get too frustrated, you can bang on your desk, scattering these and any nearby detritus.

DOWNLOAD AT www.bit.ly/ColdEmailGame



A CLOSE CALL
As in real life, removing pop-ups is a tricky business, given how they dance about or hide behind other windows.

B YOU'VE GOT...
You have to fire off a large number of emails each day, which for some reason are all in separate windows.

C DEV SMASH
If pop-ups get too overwhelming, hit the spacebar to bash your fist on the desk, removing many.



5 NORTH

FREEWARE It ain't half grim up North

Outlands' *North* puts you in the role of an asylum seeker in a strange, mildly terrifying city that feels alien on just about every level. The oppressive, cavernous architecture melds sci-fi with noir in much the same manner as *Dark City*, while the surreal story recalls the madness of *Pathologic*: that is, you'll have to decipher it on your own.

You visit a freaky church, perform hard labour, and if you survive the working day you'll relax at home with your creepy housemates, who will mumble constantly to themselves, or stare fixedly out of the window at something you can't see.

Every day you send a letter home to your sister, and it's in these missives you'll find the meat of the story, along with hints at how to progress in this strange world.

DOWNLOAD AT www.bit.ly/NorthOutlands



6 RESIDENT EVIL: MORTAL NIGHT

MOD A new *Resi 2* scenario, starring Hunk

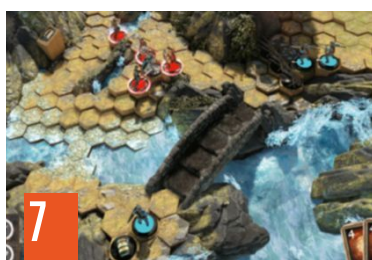
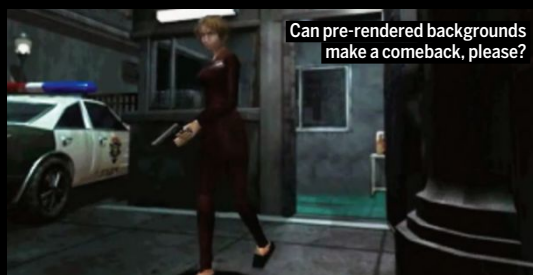
Capcom's inevitable spit-and-polish of *Resident Evil 2* is likely some way off yet, but this comprehensive *Resi 2* mod will do nicely in the meantime. While it uses many of the game's base assets – in particular the corpse-infested setting of Raccoon City – *Mortal Night* is a new, standalone scenario that re-introduces obscure characters, adds extra cutscenes, music and more. It's obviously not as polished as an official Capcom entry, but it's not wildly off.

It not only cranks the action up to twelve, it breaks the crank into several equally sized puzzle pieces,

scattered around town. Where once there would be three zombies, there are now twelve; where once there was one lick, you are already viewing the Game Over screen. It's hard, is what I'm saying.

Luckily, you have the firepower to tackle the increased zombie presence. You play as fan-favourite Umbrella heavy Hunk, a masked operator bussed in to search for Sherry Birkin, and with enough guns and ammo to last an NRA meeting until elevenses. This is essentially a huge new *Resi 2* scenario, some 18 years later.

DOWNLOAD AT www.bit.ly/MortalNight



7 WARTILE

DEMO Clobber digital miniatures in real-time

Wartile is a strategy game evoking tabletop wargames, replete with digital miniatures, a pack of playing cards, and a gameboard that looks a hell of a lot like a tactile, physical object. You move your units by grabbing them with the mouse, and manhandle them around a hex-based grid. The odd part is that all this happens in real-time.

Or real-time-ish, anyway. There's a small cooldown after actions, to save things being too overwhelming, but the end result is game with a much faster pace than most tabletop-inspired strategies. This robust early demo offers a few Viking-themed maps, while the full game will offer medieval England-inspired battles, among others.

DOWNLOAD AT www.bit.ly/Wartile



8 BE THE DOG

MOD Play as Dogmeat, or any other pup, in *Fallout 4*

It's dog-eat-dog in the grim, post-apocalyptic world of *Fallout 4* – literally, if you download this brilliant mod. It lets you play as Dogmeat, or any of the other canines, including those feral animals beloved of raider gangs. You obviously want to be Dogmeat, though, and now you can finally live the dream.

Be The Dog does more than just swap the player model with that of a pup: it lowers the camera angle, changes the way movement works to

accommodate those extra legs, and rewrites your methods of attack. Dogs, I'm told, can't wield guns or melee weapons, so you're limited to a quartet of slobbering bites. You perform two alternately just by mashing the shoot key, but you can also jump or run at an enemy for unique attacks.

The odd crash, and the lack of a Pip-Boy display, are small prices to pay for the privilege of paws.

DOWNLOAD AT www.bit.ly/BeTheDog



9 AMERICAN TRUCK SIMULATOR

MODS Keep on trucking, now in a more authentic lorry

Support for the Steam Workshop was safely delivered to *American Truck Simulator*, and now a whole convoy of tweaks has arrived to make the game more realistic, more interesting, or more stylish with custom liveries. It's a sublime mix of the fanciful – you can now drive a Simpsons truck, for example – and the nerdy. But mainly it's stuff to make this simulation more authentic, pretty, or immersive.

In addition to the three fine examples arranged in the column to the right of these words, you can also add to your collection mods that will make headlights give off a more natural light, and gas prices that accurately reflect the real world. If you'd rather make things easier on yourself, you could always increase the period of the twitchy yellow traffic lights, or make police fines cheaper so you can ram pedestrians to your heart's content. Basically, there's something for everyone here.

BIG HAUL

Three fine mods for improving *Truck Simulator*



1 REAL COMPANY LOGOS

Swap the fictional, lawsuit-avoiding logos with their real-life counterparts, for that extra touch of authenticity. This affects everything from signs to billboards to cars.

www.bit.ly/AmericanTruck1



2 REAL ENGINES AND SOUNDS

Modder Wilson212 has added a range of new engines painstakingly modelled after the real things, featuring accurate torque, horsepower ratings and sounds.

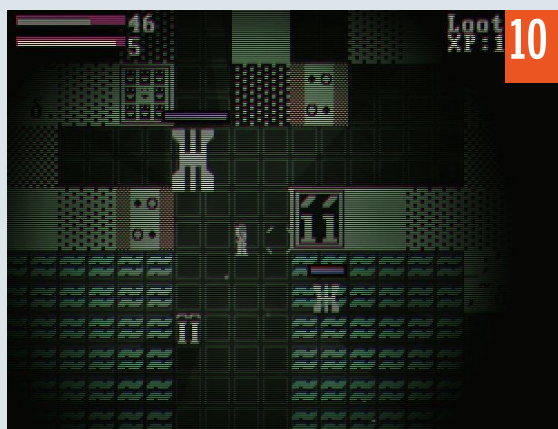
www.bit.ly/AmericanTruck2



3 REALISTIC MIRROR FOV

"Objects in mirror may be closer than they appear". Not in *American Truck Sim*, which fudges its mirror FoV to make it easier to park. This mod undoes that.

www.bit.ly/AmericanTruck3



437 UNDERWORLD [EP]

FREWARE No knowledge of the first 436 games necessary

This is a twin-stick action RPG that uses the iconography of roguelikes to brilliant effect. You're a lone wanderer in an ever-changing dungeon filled with deadly monsters and horrible traps: crisp ASCII characters brought to life with swish animation and fancy screen effects. Creator Unusual Cadence reckons that *437 Underworld* isn't a roguelike,

but it certainly has the feel of one, albeit one that's real-time and pretty streamlined, with no inventory management to speak of. However, you'll still explore rooms, acquire gold, collect keys and improve your character, all while shooting at giant Ts (trolls) who want to mash your ASCII chops into a pile of goo.

DOWNLOAD AT www.bit.ly/437Underworld



WASTELAND 2: DIRECTOR'S CUT

It's lights, camera, action points as inXile overhauls its epic RPG. *By Jon Morcom*

Like checking the soles of your shoes and finding you *haven't* stepped in something you thought you had, inXile's *Director's Cut* of its 2014 RPG *Wasteland 2* is high on life's sliding scale of pleasant surprises.

Released 13 months after the original (and free to those who bought the original PC version), the *Director's Cut* presents an even meatier roleplaying experience with newly added voiceover work, tweaks to the combat, and a generous package of skill modifiers and modding support, all overlaid with a patina of additional graphical polish from the upgrade from Unity 4.5 to 5.

The first significant change appears during character creation, with the introduction of Quirks, a list of 19 optional personality traits just one of which can be conferred on each team member. All have yin and yang elements; for example, Mysophobic provides +25% effectiveness with healing items but medics can't use any healing items on themselves. Choose Unlucky and there's a chance that lightning will

strike and shock a random target in combat, including members of your own team. While notionally fun, all 19 Quirks represent a gamble of sorts. Whether or not you deploy them will depend on whether you're happy having your mood swing wildly between "Woo-hoo!" and "Oh, shit!"

PERKS OF THE JOB

Every four levels now, each team member earns a Perk, selected from a list of over 90, although only a certain number will be available depending on that team member's points investment in their Combat, Knowledge and General skill sets. The more points invested in a particular skill, the greater the chance to unlock a wider range of complementary perks to augment it. It's a versatile, generous system that serves all play styles and I was gratified to see ostensibly dull Perks like Hit The Deck! (reduces damage from explosions) and Weathered (reduces damage from critical hits) come into play so regularly during encounters. This system encourages experimentation with loadouts and adds new dimensions to what is already a highly replayable game.

According to inXile, over 8,000 lines of dialogue have now been voiced for the *Director's Cut*, which will only excite you if you're not the impatient type who clicks through conversational text in order to get on with the other stuff. Any of the

dialogue I recognised as being new was consistently good, typically characterful and entirely in keeping with the game's already high standard of voice acting.

Encounters have been rebalanced, although it was difficult to notice any significant difference on one playthrough and without directly comparing the same encounter from the original game. Precision Strike is a new combat action that expands on the previous Headshot option within the HUD. Working like a distillation of *Fallout's* VATS, it lets you target an enemy's specific body parts to either headshot them, hobble a leg or literally disarm them. The concept of conductivity for higher level armour and some robotic enemies has also been introduced,



YOU HAVE TO WONDER WHY THEY DIDN'T JUST MAKE DIRECTOR'S CUT IN THE FIRST PLACE

giving energy weapons added purpose, but this can obviously work both for and against you.

The UI remains busy, more so now that Quirks and Perks have to be accounted for, but it's well laid out and easily accessed. When using Perception on an object, for example, a transparent contextual menu appears, listing which team specialist's skills can be utilised and their respective percentage chances of success. Click on the skill with the best odds and that squad member will then step up and succeed or explode in a shower of gore trying.

The inXile team could have just released DLC or an expansion of some sort; instead we got this obvious labour of love – although if *Wasteland 2* was '26 years in the making', you have to wonder why they didn't just make *Director's Cut* in the first place. Whatever the reason, it deserves to do good box office. ■

NEED TO KNOW

RELEASE
2015

DEVELOPER
inXile Entertainment

PUBLISHER
In-house

LINK
www.bit.ly/WasteDC

HOW QUIRKS WORK *Five of the quirkiest*



ASSHOLE

Hard Ass dialogue choices always succeed but squad can't use Kiss Ass or Smart Ass.



HEAVY HANDED

Increases base damage from melee attacks but greatly reduces base crit chance.



MANIC DEPRESSIVE

Attributes change randomly by plus or minus 2 every 10-15 minutes.



PSYCHOPATH

Successful attack gains bonus hit and crit chances but bonuses are lost, with interest, if you miss.



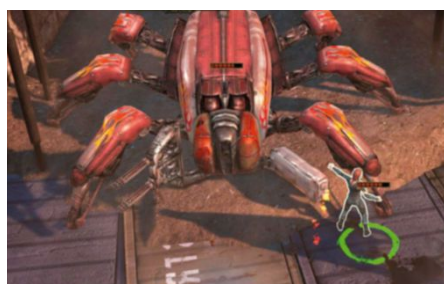
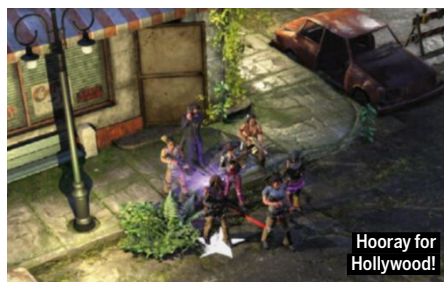
FAINTING GOAT

35% chance of fainting if hit by a crit. Next attack will miss but you get pushed back in the combat order.

Workerbots – now with added lead.



Where's Wally?



Learned Perks on the left, available Perks on the right.



“The peculiar whimsy of a sitcom
from the 1970s”

The backgrounds are all digitised paintings.



BENEATH A STEEL SKY

Before there was a broken sword, there was a steel sky. *By Andy Kelly*

After the success of its first adventure game, *Lure of the Temptress*, UK-based Revolution Software was ready for its next project. An early idea was to develop an adaptation of Alan Moore's acclaimed comic *Watchmen*, which led to a meeting between Revolution co-founder Charles Cecil and artist Dave Gibbons. The *Watchmen* game never came about, but Gibbons and Cecil became friends and decided to work on something original together.

NEED TO KNOW

RELEASED
March 1994

DEVELOPER
Revolution Software

PUBLISHER
Virgin Interactive

LINK
www.revolution.co.uk

NAME DROP

Alternate titles that didn't make the cut

"SEARCH FOR MY
SILICON DAD"

"RAGE IN A DARK
MEMORY"

"ORPHEUS
ASCENDING"

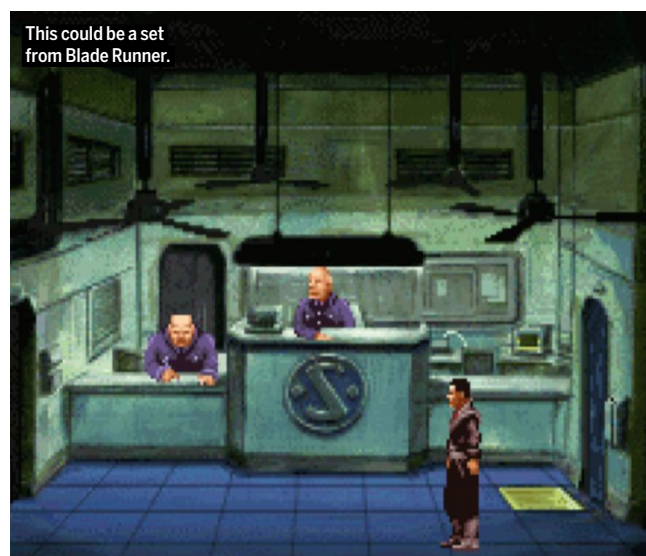
"HEART
OF STEEL"

"THE MEMORY
THAT REFUSED
TO DIE"

"CITY
WITHOUT
HUMANITY"

Gibbons wrote a story outline, titled *Underworld*, which laid the groundwork for what would eventually become *Beneath a Steel Sky*. Set in Australia in the wake of some unspecified apocalyptic event, it's the story of a man named Foster trying to escape from a dystopian metropolis called Union City. A helicopter crash left him stranded in the Outback as a boy and he was raised by a group of aboriginals. At the beginning of the game, a jack-booted security force arrives in his village, kills his adopted family, and takes him to the city as a prisoner – and he has no idea why.

With such a dark premise and that evocative title, you'd be forgiven for thinking *Beneath a Steel Sky* was some kind of earnest, weighty science fiction story. In some respects it is, but mostly it has the peculiar whimsy of a sitcom from the 1970s. Inspired by the success of LucasArts adventure games such as *Day of the Tentacle* and *Monkey Island*, Revolution injected the game with a distinctly British sense of humour. And, honestly, it doesn't really work. The jaunty music, slapstick, and silly jokes jar with the bleak setting, and for a game supposedly set in



» Australia, most of the people you meet have stereotypical regional English accents. I can't think of a game with more northerners in it.

Union City reverses the dystopian fiction trope of an urban setting where the poor live in the slums and the wealthy tower above them in luxury. Here the underclasses live and work in the upper levels among factories, while the well-off live in the clean, safe lower levels. Foster tries to reach the bottom level, but finds himself hindered by the city's rigid social structure. To use the elevators, citizens must achieve a certain status – a way for the totalitarian government in charge to keep the poor and the wealthy segregated. It's no coincidence that, when the game was being made, Britain was experiencing similar division.

BIG ISSUES

"We were designing a dystopian future," says Gibbons. "So we looked at how society was in the present day and imagined how it could move forward. *Beneath a Steel Sky* was made at the height of Thatcherism. A consumer society with divisions that

were deeper than ever. And these ideas were floating around in our heads when we created the game." Cecil adds: "You had the rise of the yuppies, the mega-rich, and the ultra-poor. There was a lot of conflict, and that influenced our setting."

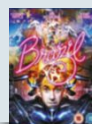
It's a politically charged game, informed by the era in which it was made. But they don't do enough with this aspect of the story, focusing mainly on Foster's immediate predicament. It feels like a missed opportunity, because dystopian fiction is often a great way to say something meaningful about our own society. True, there are some thoughtful moments in the game that touch on these issues. But in the next moment, you'll be solving an elaborate puzzle to flip a dog into a swimming pool. The humour almost feels like an afterthought; as if they wrote a serious, straight-faced sci-fi tale, then played *Day of the Tentacle* and thought "Damn, we better lighten this up with some jokes."

There was apparently some tension between writers Charles Cecil and Dave Cummins about the tone of the game, which may explain

its inconsistency. Cummins wanted the dialogue to be fun and flippant; Cecil wanted it to be more serious. They attempted to compromise and find a middle ground between the humour of LucasArts games and the "ridiculously earnest" Sierra adventures. Actors from the Royal Shakespeare Company were hired to

CALL SHEET

Films that inspired *Beneath a Steel Sky*



BRAZIL
Terry Gilliam's cult dystopian sci-fi thriller is set in a similarly bleak brutalist city, run by a totalitarian government obsessed with bureaucracy.



MAD MAX
They share a post-apocalyptic Australian setting, and artist Dave Gibbons partly based Foster on Mel Gibson's haunted road warrior.



METROPOLIS
Class division, social unrest, and the perils of technology loom large in this pioneering 1927 sci-fi epic by German director Fritz Lang.



BLADE RUNNER
Union City's urban sprawl is reminiscent of the grim, rain-soaked futuristic Los Angeles seen in Ridley Scott's neo-noir masterpiece.



Foster donates his lungs to science.

THE TEAM WOULD TOSS FLOPPY DISKS ACROSS THE OFFICE AT EACH OTHER

record the dialogue, but the writers were unhappy with the results and re-recorded the entire thing with traditional voice actors. The acting is decent, but the comical tone is, once again, at odds with the setting.

HIGH CONCEPT

When it came to designing the look of the game, Gibbons started with concept art in his familiar comic book style. He imagined Foster in his original *Underworld* pitch as “tall, tanned, and craggy, a mixture of *Crocodile Dundee* and *Mad Max*.” He sketched out the Nazi-esque uniforms of the security officers and the city’s jumbled, industrial skyline. Then, with only 500 colours and a 320x200 pixel resolution to work with, he began work on the game itself. He used *Deluxe Paint II* – bitmap graphics software designed by Electronic Arts – to draw the



characters pixel by pixel, while the backgrounds were digitised paintings with foreground elements added to give them depth. Finally, a team of animators at Revolution took Gibbons’ sprites and brought them to life. It was a huge undertaking, especially for a small team of only about a dozen people.

Beneath a Steel Sky was developed, according to Cecil, in “a grotty little office above an arcade in the town centre of Hull.” Instead of a network the team would toss floppy disks across the office at each other. The game was built using Revolution’s own Virtual Theatre engine, which would give NPCs rudimentary AI routines. This comes into play when Foster has to talk to a character, obnoxious factory owner Lamb, in a certain part of the city. He walks back and forth between the factory and his apartment, and could be anywhere inbetween. Simple stuff, but impressive at the time.

After the release of *Ultima Underworld: The Stygian Abyss* in 1992, Gibbons’ original title for the game, *Underworld*, had to be changed. A list of ideas was shared

among the developers, but *Beneath a Steel Sky* was eventually settled on, which Gibbons wasn’t a fan of at first. The game was released in March 1994 for PC and Amiga and, thanks to marketing support from Virgin Interactive and Gibbons’ involvement, was a commercial success. The critics liked it too, with our own reviewer, Steve Poole, giving it 91% and calling it “well-written” and “challenging but fair.”

Two decades later, *Beneath a Steel Sky* hasn’t aged as well as some of its adventure gaming peers. It has its charms and some imaginative ideas, but it’s not on the same level as genuine classics like *Monkey Island* and *Day of the Tentacle*. It wasn’t until *Broken Sword: The Shadow of the Templars* (1996) that Revolution made its first truly great game, but *Beneath a Steel Sky* was an interesting step along the way. A slightly remastered version was released for iOS recently, but you can get the original for free on GOG.com. Time has been slightly cruel to it, but it’s worth experiencing if you’re a fan of Dave Gibbons’ art, or just as a piece of adventure gaming history. ■



SURVIVING WITHOUT A WALKTHROUGH IN DAY OF THE TENTACLE REMASTERED

Have we lost what it takes to
play the unforgiving, illogical
adventure games of old?

by Phil Savage



THE RULES

1 Don't look at any walkthroughs or FAQs for answers.

2 Use the old 'verb wall' interface, and no object highlighting.

3 Andy Kelly is your LucasArts hint line representative.



I never played *Day of the Tentacle*, despite its reputation as one of the best adventure games ever made. With the remastered edition now available, Andy has challenged me to finish it without a walkthrough. It's my chance to experience the game as it was meant to be played – without the safety net of the internet. In the spirit of the era, I can use Andy as my very own LucasArts helpline. Be warned, there are puzzle and plot spoilers throughout this article.

I'm not too bad at modern adventure games – I completed the *Blackwell* series without a walkthrough – but I'm less adept at the older ones. *Monkey Island 2* had me utterly stumped. Judging by *Day of the Tentacle*'s opening cutscene, I'm worried this will be more of the same. It appears to take place in a slapstick cartoon, where logic has upped sticks and bought a quaint country cottage in a heartland of zany adventure. I'm in trouble.

We open to the lobby of Doctor Fred's combined hotel, laboratory and psych ward. I recognise my first puzzle: a coin on the floor that's stuck to some gum. I go to pick it up, but it won't budge. No doubt this is part of some long, elaborate puzzle chain. If I was a standup comedian, here is where I'd go on a long routine imagining common tasks through the lens of adventure game logic. Perhaps a skit about acquiring milk by using leather cushions to trick a cow into letting me near her udders.

No time for that, though, as I trigger a cutscene by climbing into a

grandfather clock. Soon, a time travel mishap occurs.

The three playable characters now exist in three different time zones. Equable roadie Hoagie is in the past, and skittish student Laverne finds herself in a future ruled by tentacle monsters. Both must get power to their Chron-o-Johns. Back (or forward) in the present, bookish Bernard must buy an expensive diamond to bring his pals home.

I quickly make what seems like progress by picking up every item I can find. Pretty soon Hoagie and Bernard's pockets are bulging. Not Laverne's though, because she's stuck up a tree. Also, I've talked to the founding fathers of the United States. They seem nice.

Climbing into a grandfather clock in the past as Hoagie, I find Fred's ancestor, Red Edison. He's going to help me build a super-battery, but only if I provide him with three things: oil, vinegar and gold. I suspect these aren't the ingredients for a battery, but then Fight Club lied about the recipe for homemade napalm, and the most cartoonish thing about that was Jared Leto's hair. Thanks to my earlier hoarding, I already have the oil.

Next: vinegar. I don't find any, but I do have a bottle of wine. As any sommelier will tell you, wine plus time equals rhyme. And also vinegar. I'm about to drop the wine bottle into the Chron-o-John – which lets me transport inanimate objects between





time periods – when I realise a conceptual flaw in my plan. If I send the wine forward in time, it will still be wine. I need to hide the wine in the past, and have one of the other characters retrieve it and send it back. I am a clever boy.

Admittedly not that clever, as it takes me a while to realise I need to put the wine in Thomas Jefferson's time capsule. In the meantime, I cajole George Washington into cutting down a kumquat tree by painting its fruit the colour of cherries. This frees Laverne. I'd gloat, but it was accidental. I recognised the basic template of an adventure puzzle, and attempted to solve it regardless of

reason. I also add an amendment to the Constitution requiring vacuum cleaners in every basement. I assume this will, at some point, be of use.

I CAN'T TELL IF THE HORSE'S DENTURES ARE GOLD OR GRUBBY YELLOW

STITCHED IN TIME

Freed from the tree, Laverne is locked up by tentacles. Releasing her proves surprisingly easy. Feigning sickness, I steal a chart of tentacle anatomy and send it back to Hoagie. He hands it to a seamstress who assumes it's the template for a new American flag. In the future, Laverne is able to retrieve the flag and wear it as a disguise. Did I say it was easy? I meant stupid. Free to wander the future mansion, I find the time capsule. Laverne can't open it with her bare hands, though. Didn't I see a crowbar back in Bernard's time?

I did! The crowbar lets me pick up the coin from the lobby, and also steal

a stack of quarters from a candy machine. What I can't do is send it into the future to help Laverne. Instead, I do more things that don't make sense. I use the dime to shake a fat man off a sweater. (Why?) I put the sweater in a tumble dryer and use my stack of quarters to send it spinning into Laverne's time. (Er?) Later, I tell Bernard to steal a hamster. (What?) I put the hamster in an ice box. (Oh, come on!) In the future, Laverne retrieves the frozen rodent and puts it in the microwave. (Seriously?) I place the thoroughly damp hamster in the dryer-shrunk sweater to warm him up. (WTF, adventure games.)

Doing things for no reason works for a while, but pretty soon I'm stuck. It's time to turn to my only hope: Andy Kelly, who is standing in for the LucasArts

tips line. For a while, I'd harboured dreams of completing the game without ever calling him – especially as he'll be billing me for every hint I receive. Alas, I'm at a loss. I email Andy and ask how to send the crowbar to the future.

"Thanks for calling the LucasArts hint line. Calls to this 1-900 number are charged at \$3 for the first minute, and \$1 for every additional minute. Your hint is as follows: there are other ways to open a time capsule. The charge for this call is \$4."

What a rip off! That is no help at all. I've already been through the rest of my inventory, and there's no other item that could realistically open a... oh, it's the can opener, isn't it? That





would be the most nonsensical solution, and so it's clearly the correct one. I send Laverne the can opener that Hoagie is inexplicably carrying and, yes, it works. Vinegar acquired. Just the gold to go.

Elsewhere, I'm starting to understand what I must do in the other time periods. For Laverne, I need to lure away the tentacle guarding the grandfather clock that leads to the basement. To do that, I'll need to free the prisoners by offering their warden the free dinner that can be won from the tentacle's Crufts-like human beauty contest. Problem: I don't know where to get a human.

In Bernard's time, I engineer a situation that results in Fred sleepwalking to his safe. But every time I go to grab the contract secured inside, he sleepslams the door shut. What a sleepjerk.

GIFT HORSE

Back in Hoagie's time, I can't find the gold. It's probably the pen by the draft Constitution, but I can't tell if the horse's dentures are gold or grubby yellow. Oh, right, yes: there's a talking horse. I can't wait to discover what logical, grounded and not at all contrived puzzle he's involved in.

I attempt to get some value for money by tricking Andy into



revealing more than he should. "How do I get the gold?" I ask. "And, if it has anything to do with starting a rainstorm, how do I get the soap?" The latter has to do with a puzzle thread I don't really understand, but I'm convinced will make me angry once it's played out. I'm not even sure it's relevant to my current situation. Mostly, I'm just frustrated that there's an inventory item I can't pick up. Every time I try, the cleaner scolds me and walks off with it.

My hope is that by my questioning a link between the two puzzles, Andy will be a bit broader in his hints. It doesn't work. "You need to keep the maid busy long enough to grab the soap. As for the gold, the pen is mightier than the sword. \$6."

What a swindle! \$6 for information I (mostly) knew! I'd already figured I'd need to keep the maid busy, I just don't know how. The only interactive element in Washington's room is the bed, and I can't seem to use any item on it. In desperation, I try using the bed by itself. It works. Hoagie nudges against it, messing up the blankets. I call the maid and grab the soap.

As for the other hint, I suppose it at least confirms that it's the pen I'm after. Also, now I have the soap I can clean the cart to trigger a rainstorm. Let's not stop to consider how idiotic that last sentence is, and instead stop to wonder why I need to trigger a rainstorm. I have no clue. I do it anyway, and, as a result, Benjamin Franklin returns to the hotel. I guess that's progress.

Using a letter from the past, Bernard gains access to a flag gun which I swap with a cigar lighter so as to pilfer an exploding cigar without blowing my face off. Perhaps,

ILLOGICAL INVOICE

A list of Andy's earnings

- \$3 Catching the teeth
- \$3 Making the mummy laugh
- \$3 Acquiring the lab coat
- \$3 Accessing the VCR
- \$3 Engineering a prisoner escape
- \$4 Opening the time capsule
- \$6 Acquiring the soap
- \$9 Making the mummy smile

\$34 TOTAL

at times over the last two decades, you've wondered why adventure games died out. I'd argue that the answer lies within this paragraph. If you're au fait with the genre, you should be able to puzzle out the answer. No? Here's another clue: I then gave the exploding cigar to George Washington to blow out his false teeth.

Here I realise that I can use the chattering joke teeth from Bernard's time. If I can give them to Washington, people will assume he's cold and light the fire. I'm not sure how this will help, but I figure any puzzle to do with the founding fathers will get me the gold pen.

The trouble is I can't get the chattering teeth. They bounce away whenever Bernard gets near them. Once again, I try everything in my inventory to no avail. Fine, Andy, you win again.

"Catching the chattering teeth? That would be grate. \$3."

As a games journalist, Andy's idea of a cryptic clue involves puns. Still, I had previously tried to pry open the



grate. Unless, that is, I can just open it. I tell Bernard to open it, and, of course, it opens. Stupid verb wall.

I give Washington the chattering teeth and, lo and behold, a fire is lit. This gives me an idea. I go to the roof and place John Hancock's blanket over the chimney, filling the downstairs room with smoke. The founding fathers evacuate, and I pinch their pen. Sorry America, no Constitution for you.

I hand the pen to Red, who makes me a battery. It's uncharged, which finally explains the point of Benjamin Franklin. Besides the founding of a nation stuff, I suppose.

MUMMY'S BOY

It's time for some more sentences I'd never imagined writing. I have found an entrant for the tentacles' human show. It's Ted, the mummified corpse that exists in all three time zones. Progress is smooth, at first. I plop some wet noodles on his head, and use a fork to style them into a meatball laden hairdo. I also get my strongest competitor disqualified with some fake barf that, earlier, I'd rescued from a ceiling.

Hair is only one of the categories by which a human (or mummy) is

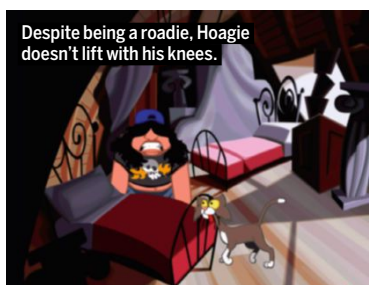
judged. The other two are smile and laugh. Once again, I am stuck.

"You can't use the chattering teeth, but there's another set somewhere around in Hoagie's timeline. I had to look that up myself, so that'll be \$6."

The horse! I knew it! The problem is, I've already tried to get the horse's dentures, and failed over and over again. And so, like some desperate puzzle addict jonesing for just one more hint, I go crawling back to Andy.

"There's a glass next to the horse. When do people put their dentures in a glass? \$3."

This makes me so frustrated that I involuntarily stand up in exasperation. That's when I remember that I work in an open-plan office. I grab the mug from my desk and walk off to make some coffee, thus creating a cover story for my sudden vertical outburst. The reason I'm annoyed is that, in previously attempting to learn the purpose of Bernard's book, I'd used it on just about every character. Each one had said that it made them feel sleepy. I'd come so close, but, for whatever reason, I hadn't considered using it on the horse. Back at my



Despite being a roadie, Hoagie doesn't lift with his knees.



A memory from back when I thought this would be easy.

desk, coffee in hand, I easily acquire the dentures. Great, my mummy has the best smile.

CLUE D'OH!

I still can't work out how to do almost anything else. My progress has halted in each time zone. In the past, I need to persuade Red to give me his lab coat so I can hand it to Benny Franklin. In the present, I need to persuade Nurse Edna to let me access the security room's VCR. In the future, I need to persuade a panel of tentacle judges that my mummy has the best laugh. Instead of the usual back-and-forth, I send Andy a bumper list of requests.

"An employee? Seems Red Edison wants help. Edna's a real pushover. Clowns often make people laugh. \$9"

That was expensive, but worth it. In the present, I use the scalpel on the fake clown, take out his chuckling voice box and send it to Laverne. All items in place, she wins the competition. Also in the present, I notice the "Help Wanted" sign. I pick it up and send it to Hoagie. Red assumes he made the sign and gives Hoagie the lab coat. I deliver it to Franklin, who makes it into a kite. I attach the battery to said kite and hurl it into a lightning strike. Grabbing the now charged battery, I



plug it into the Chron-o-John. I have completed the past!

As for Bernard, I wonder if it could really be so simple? I tell him to push Edna. He gives her chair a kick, sending her flying out of the room. Once again, I'm a bit annoyed. Bernard is so mild that he refused to use a scalpel to cut gum off a floor. Now he's kicking lecherous old women? It's completely out of character. Yes, that's right, I'm choosing to blame the game's inconsistent logic rather than my inability to use a verb wall.

I record Fred entering his safe code, and then watch as the IRS arrests him. I grab a contract out of the safe, and – through a complicated series of events involving an ink-stained stamp collection, a painted mummy and some light



dialogue puzzling – post it in the past. As a result, Bernard has access to enough money to buy the diamond he's needed all this time. I stuff it into the time machine and complete the present day.

Just the future to untangle now, and doing so involves a puzzle so infuriatingly nonsensical that this remastered edition has an achievement that makes fun of it. Having given the prison warden my dinner coupon, I must now cajole the prisoners into staging an escape.

Naturally, I have to consult Andy. He points me in the direction of the cat – specifically to the fence it's scratching itself on – and charges me another \$3. Eventually, I realise I must use the correction

fluid on the fence, which, as the cat returns for another scratch, leaves a white stripe along its back. Tempting the cat with a mouse, I grab him and take him to the cell. The prisoners naturally think he's a skunk, and make a run for it.

POINT AND QUIT

Look, I'm just going to say it: I'm glad adventure games died off. Fans used to lament the fact that mindless action had replaced their more cerebral pleasures. But *Quake* never asked me to paint a cat by proxy. That's not cerebral, just annoying puzzle design. *The Longest Journey*, an adventure game, has you use breadcrumbs to tempt a seagull into

attacking a rubber duck so that you can retrieve a clothesline. *Gabriel Knight 3*, an adventure game, has you style a moustache out of syrup and cat hair in order to disguise yourself as a man who doesn't have a moustache. Adventure games deserved to die.

With the tentacle guarding the grandfather clock lured away, Laverne can now access the basement. I go to put the hamster on the treadmill of Fred's old generator in order to power the Chron-o-John. As I do, a boxing glove attached to an

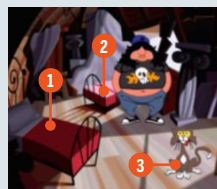
extending arm shoots out of the wall and punches Laverne in the face. This, I feel, is the perfect visual metaphor for my time playing this game.

The hamster scurries into a mouse hole, but I'd already amended the Constitution to mandate vacuum cleaners in every basement. I did this for no conceivable reason. Retrieving the hamster, I put him on his wheel and plug in the Chron-o-John.

All time periods are complete, and the three characters reunite for an epilogue. It is mercifully simple, requiring only that I hurl a bowling ball at some tentacles and talk another into firing his shrink ray at Fred's head mirror.

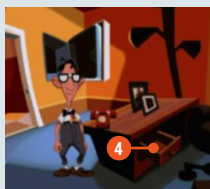
It's done. I have completed *Day of the Tentacle* without a walkthrough. I owe Andy \$34. More than that, though, I now hate adventure games. It's something of a pyrrhic victory. ■

TIME TEAM *How to trigger a prison escape*



PAST

- 1 Swap mattresses so the squeaky one's at the far end.
- 2 Push the squeaky mattress to attract the cat.
- 3 As the cat walks over, run back and get the toy mouse.



PRESENT

- 4 Grab the corrective fluid. No puzzles here, just pick it up with your hands.



FUTURE

- 5 Paint the fence with corrective fluid.
- 6 The cat jumps up here. Lure him down with the mouse.
- 7 Take the cat to the prison cell. Re-evaluate your life choices.

SAMUEL ROBERTS



There's no pattern to the games I like, because I am a man of many faces. A liar, if you will. Or a fraud.

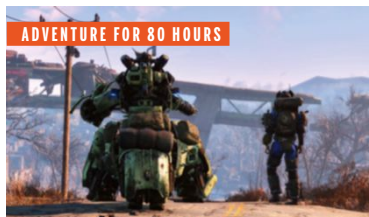


ENJOY QUIET MOMENTS

FIREWATCH

www.firewatchgame.com

→ I enjoyed orienteering my way through the Wyoming wilderness of *Firewatch*, despite initially struggling to use the game's map and compass. I would recommend this to anyone who wants to feel like they're in a real place that's far from home. Unless you live in Wyoming, in which case play *Grand Theft Auto V*.

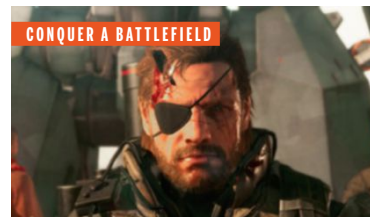


ADVENTURE FOR 80 HOURS

FALLOUT 4

www.fallout4.com

→ There's an undercurrent of negativity towards *Fallout 4* in some corners of the so-called 'internet', but aside from a main story that feels a little too familiar, this features the best world, writing and sidequests of any Bethesda game as far as I'm concerned. The comic-book-infused Silver Shroud quest was a highlight.

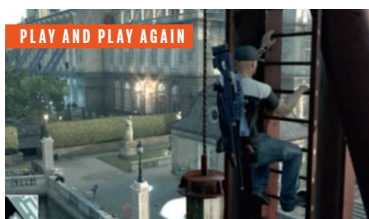


CONQUER A BATTLEFIELD

METAL GEAR SOLID V: THE PHANTOM PAIN

www.metalgearsolid.com

→ I've played *MGSV* more than any other game on Steam. Sometimes you need to go for a ride with your one-eyed dog while listening to The Cure and driveby shooting soldiers in Afghanistan. Tony Ellis is angry at me because I recommended it and it's stopped him playing anything else.



PLAY AND PLAY AGAIN

HITMAN

www.hitman.com

→ By the time you read this, *Hitman* will have the all-new Sapienza level to explore on top of its existing Paris mansion locale. While it's rough around the edges at this early stage, what a brilliant sandbox of a stealth game, full of ways to experiment with AI. Even the tutorial missions can swallow hours of your time.



MUST



PLAY

A PERSONAL LIST
OF THE BEST
GAMES YOU CAN
PLAY RIGHT NOW

by Samuel Roberts

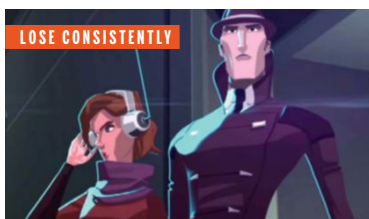


PERFORM HEADSHOTS

RESIDENT EVIL 4

www.re4hd.com

→ The best-paced action game ever, with an extraordinary degree of variety. This 2014 HD edition remains the best available version. This is a game that takes you to settings as diverse as a Spanish zombie mountain village, a spooky castle and an entire island that's rigged to explode somehow.

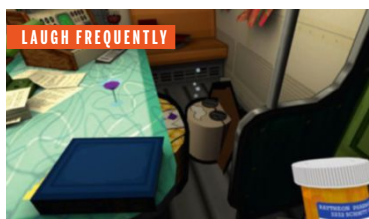


LOSE CONSISTENTLY

INVISIBLE INC.

www.kleientertainment.com/games/invisible-inc

→ I'm not particularly good at accepting loss in games, so turn-based strategy games with frequent opportunities to die shouldn't be a good fit. *Invisible Inc.* joins the growing list of Klei classics in being so elegantly designed that I can't miss it, with world-class art direction, too.

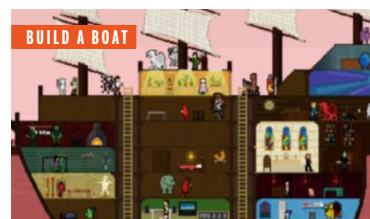


LAUGH FREQUENTLY

JAZZPUNK

www.jazzpunk.net

→ This first-person comedy game set in a world of Cold War espionage delivers its humour interactively. Activating its many bizarre objects puts you in command of the comic timing, which is pretty cool, but it's the oddly unsettling sound design and weird choices of environments that make it.



BUILD A BOAT

YOU MUST BUILD A BOAT

www.eightyeightgames.com/you-must-build-a-boat

→ In this sophisticated match-three dungeon crawler, you have to assemble a boat by running through levels and fighting enemies until you find the appropriate parts. It's hard to get to grips with, but so rewarding once you crack it. When I think about what I did with my life in March 2016, this is all I will be able to recall.

TAKE YOUR COMICS KNOWLEDGE TO THE NEXT LEVEL!

COMICHEROES

COMICS FOR EVERYONE



**ON
SALE
NOW**

IT'S **MUTANT MAYHEM** WITH OUR PREVIEW OF X-MEN CROSSOVER APOCALYPSE WARS AND OUR PICK OF THE 20 BEST X-STORIES EVER.

PLUS! CIVIL WAR 2, ATTACK ON TITAN, RAT QUEENS, PAUL DINI, NOEL CLARKE AND MORE!

FIND IT ON THE NEWSSTAND OR ORDER YOUR COPY FROM MYFAVOURITEMAGAZINES.CO.UK

IT'S ALL OVER...

OLIVER: "Mr Gainsborough! Mr Gainsborough! I've got some bad news."

GAINSBOROUGH: "Calm down, Olly. Is it about Feast Week? Is it those bloody Waltzers again? I told you we should have gone with the swing boats instead."

OLIVER: "No, Mr Gainsborough. It's... it's about your spaniel, Sir Galahad... there.. there was a bunting incident. We were setting up the decorations for the It's A Knockout tournament... I think he saw a partridge and ran after it. When I found him he was all tangled up in decorative pennants."

GAINSBOROUGH: "My God! Is he... is he OK? Talk to me, man!"

OLIVER: "I... I think he choked on a tiny Union flag, Mr Gainsborough. I'm so sorry."

GAINSBOROUGH: "My God. My God..."

GAINSBOROUGH WEEPS

[Fade out]

[Distant cheering, the sound of something being hit, children laughing]

OLIVER: "..it's the least we could do, Mr Gainsborough."

GAINSBOROUGH: "And what did you say this was called again? A pina colada?"

OLIVER: "A piñata."

whack

GAINSBOROUGH: "And it really does look like Sir Galahad. The little papier mâché ear. His good eye. All three of his legs. I'm deeply touched, Olly. I think... I think this is what Sir Galahad would have wanted."

...UNTIL
JUNE
02

A black and white advertisement. The background features a woman in a black dress holding a sword. In the foreground, a laptop is open, displaying a samurai-themed game. The text "Thinner, lighter, it's the cutting edge." is overlaid on the image.

Thinner, lighter, it's
the cutting edge.



Samurai 15.6"
Gaming Laptop

From £1499

For full specs please visit:
www.chillblast.com/PCgamer

"You'd be hard-pressed to find anything thinner that's this capable"

Richard Easton, Computer Shopper

Chillblast

www.chillblast.com/PCgamer

01202057533

Prices are correct at time of going to press (11-03-16) E&OE



Intel Inside®. Extraordinary Performance Outside.



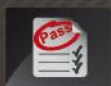
"The best quiet gaming PC we've seen" – Custom PC



Finance Available on
PCs above £300



Fully 3XS
configurable



Fully soak tested



Built by award
winning 3XS team



Scan 3XS
overclocked



3 Year Warranty
Parts + Labour

3XS gives you exceptional Specifications, exceptional Service and exceptional Satisfaction



3XS Z170 Vengeance Q

- Intel® Core™ i7 6700 Quad Core with Hyper-threading
- 4GB EVGA GTX 980 Superclocked ACX 2.0
- 16GB Corsair Vengeance 3000MHz DDR4
- 900GB SSD

THIS SPEC,
FROM
£1499
inc VAT

The Vengeance Q has been specially designed to make the least amount of noise possible with a case that includes sound absorbing foam and a special CPU cooler. This all makes the Vengeance Q the quietest system in our range. The default specification includes a quad-core Intel Core i7 6700 CPU plus a 4GB NVIDIA GeForce GTX 980 graphics card. Also included is 16GB of 3000MHz Corsair Vengeance DDR4, an Asus Z170 Pro Gaming motherboard and silent ultra-fast 900GB SSD.



Don't buy hardware without Scansure protection. 28 day installation damage insurance www.scan.co.uk/scansure



Scan Finance. Buy now, pay 10% deposit* and spread the cost over 36 or 48 months when you spend £300 (inc vat) or more.