

Issue 05



THE WAY

It's Meant To Be Played

Ultimate PC gaming with GeForce

A character with a long white beard and blue eyes, wearing a white hooded cloak, holds a sword. He is standing in front of a battle scene with many soldiers in armor.

One Game To Rule Them All

NVIDIA Brings
The Battle For Middle-earth
To Life

The way it's meant to be played



Welcome

Welcome to issue five of The Way It's Meant To Be Played magazine. This edition has a record number of games featured – over 30 in total – which is testament to the enduring success of the “NVIDIA®: The Way It's Meant To Be Played™” (TWIMTBP) programme. This campaign is designed to benefit both developers and publishers, as well as games players. By giving developers access to NVIDIA's hardware, and with NVIDIA's developer technology engineers on hand throughout the entire coding process, programmers can get the very best graphics and effects into their latest games.

Then, our intensive testing for compatibility, stability and reliability means that the consumer can buy a PC game with the TWIMTBP logo on the box, confident that the game will deliver the ultimate 'install-and-play' experience – so long as you have your NVIDIA GeForce graphics-based card installed, of course.

New games with TWIMTBP accreditation are coming out all the time – this magazine endeavours to keep track of the major new releases. In this issue, as well as a bumper crop of games, we've also included our first news page, with all the latest from NVIDIA, and a feature on NVIDIA's amazing SLI technology – upgrade your PC at a stroke by fitting a second graphics card...

I hope you enjoy the magazine, and if there's anything you think should be incorporated into our pages, please do let me know.

Darryl Still

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NVIDIA® SLI™ pictures © NVIDIA Corporation





DOUBLE THE POWER WITH NVIDIA SLI TECHNOLOGY

NVIDIA has long been a favourite for PC users looking to improve their graphical performance, but now there's something even better than an NVIDIA GPU... *two* NVIDIA GPUs! Through NVIDIA SLI™, it's now possible to run two GeForce 6 cards of the same spec alongside one another, to produce a double whammy of processing power. We take a closer look at this landmark new technology on page 22.

nFORCE 4 INCREASES PERFORMANCE AND SECURITY

Introducing NVIDIA® nForce™ 4, the latest range of dedicated media and communications processors for the PC. A low latency, single chip motherboard, the nForce4 MCP brings the latest PCI Express bus technology to AMD platforms, also adding NVIDIA's ActiveArmor™, for protection against spyware and hackers. nForce4 also offers support for the new NVIDIA SLI multi-GPU technology as well as storage solutions, including the new SATA 3Gb/s hard drives. For more, head to www.nvidia.co.uk/page/nforce4_family.html.

NVIDIA goes portable with Gizmondo

A new handheld gaming device delivering a true NVIDIA experience

Portable games systems have traditionally been somewhat primitive and unable to deliver graphical complexity beyond that of the home consoles of a decade ago. But that's set to change with the arrival of Gizmondo which has been designed to deliver an arcade-quality gaming experience – a feat made possible through the use of the NVIDIA® GeForce™ 3D 4500, the world's first wireless media processor (WMP).

Equipped with a 2.8 inch colour screen, a Samsung ARM9 400Mhz processor, Windows CE.net operating system, and a contract-free

GRS network link for music and video downloads, this is a true next-gen gaming system. What's more, the inclusion of the GoForce 3D 4500, with its 1280KB of dedicated 128-bit wide SRAM memory, enables the Gizmondo to deliver standard-setting visuals through the use of hardware accelerated 3D.

Yet the Gizmondo is much more than a games console. It's a full-blown mobile device. It also features an MP3 player, MPEG-4 support, digital still camera functionality, SD card

accessory compatibility, multimedia messaging, Bluetooth, and a GPS chip for location-based services and a completely new direction in gaming.

Already the winner of the Electronics Industry Design Awards, the mighty Gizmondo is due for launch before the end of 2004, priced at £229. You can find out much more about this multi-faceted device by pointing your browser at www.gizmondo.com.



■ Due for launch later this year, the Gizmondo mobile gaming device, harnesses the power of the NVIDIA GoForce 3D 4500. With a full 3D geometry processor, 64-bit 2D graphics engine, multi-texture support, fully programmable shaders, and battery life-preserving nPower technology, the WMP enables the Gizmondo to deliver a new, more immersive kind of portable gaming.

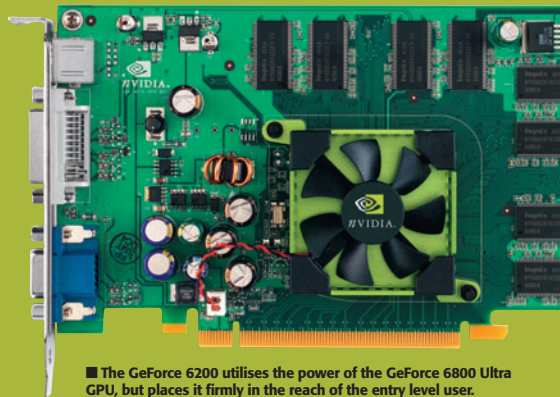
GeForce 6200 brings power to the masses

Dedicated to delivering graphical bang per buck, NVIDIA introduces the GeForce™ 6200. In a nutshell this takes the acclaimed feature set of the GeForce 6800 Ultra GPU and puts it within the grasp of the entry level user. The result is a GPU with the best performance in its class, and the ability to handle the advanced visual effects.

With a four rendering pipe design, fast GDDR1 memory and a 128-bit interface, the GeForce 6200 includes support

for Microsoft® Direct X® 9.0 Shader Model 3.0, along with NVIDIA's own UltraShadow™ II and antialiasing technologies.

It also features the first programmable video processing engine, for incredible playback of high definition video. And there's even support for PCI Express, with 4GBps of bus bandwidth. You can find more details about this high performance, entry level solution at www.nvidia.co.uk/page/geforce_6200.html.



■ The GeForce 6200 utilises the power of the GeForce 6800 Ultra GPU, but places it firmly in the reach of the entry level user.

The way it's meant to be played



Publisher:
Developer:
Release:

Electronic Arts
Electronic Arts
December

The Lord Of The Rings

The Battle For Middle-earth

Tolkien's epic tale is faithfully reproduced on a massive scale

Having already won massive critical acclaim for its action titles based on *The Two Towers*™ and *The Return Of The King*™, Electronic Arts now returns to Middle-earth™ in the most ambitious *Lord Of The Rings* title yet. Siding with either the powers of good or the dark forces of evil, players can, for the first time, take part in the large scale campaigns at the heart of the story.

Controlling legendary heroes, mythical creatures, and massive armies, gamers are able to wage all out war in a 3D living, breathing depiction of Middle-earth. The result is a game that takes real-time wargaming to a whole other level, and brings Tolkien's story to life in



■ The game utilises an upgraded version of the Sage 3D game engine originally used in *C&C: Generals*.

a completely new way. As executive producer Mark Skaggs says: "What if the Ents show up at Helm's Deep? What if Gandalf doesn't die and he takes on the Balrog in Minas Tirith? All these things are possible, making this a truly unpredictable and exciting experience."

Building substantially on the Sage 3D game engine first used in the *Command & Conquer: Generals*™, the game offers up an astonishing world, filled with interactive elements and populated by hundreds of foot soldiers, riders, creatures, and heroes. It's also



■ You can take part in and change the outcome of key battles in the stunningly ambitious Middle-Earth.

overflowing with amazing visual effects, with the game capable of depicting each individual unit in fine detail. The result is a glorious TWIMTBP key title.

"NVIDIA has made great strides with "The way it's meant to be played" in the last year," said Skaggs. "We've seen the benefits that NVIDIA's commitment to compatibility and reliability brings to PC games and we believe such initiatives are good for the industry as a whole."

Uniquely, the game also introduces units blessed with emotional responses. They will react to every situation,



■ You can zoom right into the heart of any battle, directing the action and watching the results from the best seat in the house.

You can at last take control of all the armies, all the heroes and all the magic...

covering in the face of a superior enemy, rallying before a battle, and celebrating after a victory. And by utilising the environment, the properties of key creatures can be radically altered. Trolls are able to tear up trees and use them as weapons. Ents can tear rocks from buildings, or even use water to put out fire on their bodies. And Fell Beasts have

the ability to pick up soldiers and drop them on other enemies! Leading either the forces of good or evil, players can take charge of one of *LOTR*'s unique groups, including the Riders Of Rohan and the Forces of Sauron. Each prompts a different playing style, with unique types of resource management and base building. And each has its own key characters and special magical aids.

Because the game makes it possible to control individual units and heroes as well as massive armies, the designers have introduced a new control system. With intuitive pop-up menus and minimal mouse movement required, gamers are able to fight the enemy, not the interface. Thus micro-management of resources and unit production is kept to a minimum, making it possible to



concentrate on orchestrating those amazing skirmishes and epic campaigns in fine detail. With *The Lord Of The Rings: The Battle For Middle-earth*, fans

can at last take control of all the armies, all the heroes and all the magic, ultimately taking control of the ultimate fate of the One Ring itself.

Perfecting the war machine

Some of the innovative features to be found in *The Lord Of The Rings: The Battle For Middle-earth*

Emotionally charged characters

Every character is imbued with a range of emotions. Troops prepare for battle with war cries, cower and run in the face of superior firepower, and rejoice with each victory.

Interactive landscapes and battlefields

Ents can rip stones from buildings and hurl them at enemies. Trolls can rip trees from the ground and use them as weapons. Mumakai can ground buildings into dust.

Fully 3D world

The lie of the land plays a crucial role in the fate of armies; while airborne creatures such as the Fell Beasts navigate the skies, raining terror from above as they do so.

Contextual controls

A new user interface makes it easy for newcomers to get to grips with the game and enables experienced players to rapidly hand out commands to individuals and whole armies.

New building and resource gathering rules

Buildings gain in experience. A barracks, for example, is eventually able to spawn higher level troops. And with many kinds of resource gathering available, players can alter their



development path through the game's technologies.

Formation-based combat

It's possible to fine-tune battalion formations. Different unit types can even work together, with archers placed safely within the ranks of foot soldiers, for example.

The powers of good and evil

Each player can tap into the power of the One Ring, using familiar elements such as the roving Eye Of Sauron to either improve the morale of their troops or devastate the enemy.

The retelling of Tolkien's tale

Familiar battles can be played out, with new outcomes changing the fate of the entire world. Key characters from the story also feature. Players can even take control of a Balrog!

The way it's meant to be played



Publisher:
Developer:
Release:

Codemasters
Codemasters
Out now

Case study: Colin McRae 2005

This brand new addition to the *Colin McRae* series further consolidates its position as king of the rally genre. *Colin McRae Rally 2005* offers 23 individual rally events, plus a range of new modes, including the multi-discipline Career Challenge. Carving out a unique career path, drivers can work from lower-end championships with two-wheel drive cars and four-wheel classics right through to the competitions featuring high performance rally superbests. It's even possible to assume the role of McRae himself, in the ultimate six stage 4WD challenge. Featuring more than 30 accurately simulated vehicles (from the Mini Cooper through to the Mitsubishi Lancer Evo VIII) and with more than 300 stages stretching across nine countries, this 2005 edition is dazzlingly comprehensive. It doesn't skimp on the multiplayer fun, either, with four Super Special stages providing single stage, country rallies and custom rallies for up to eight drivers via LAN or Internet.

This is also the most realistic depiction of the sport yet, not least in the way it enables players to push their vehicles to the limits. Capturing the sheer velocity of the sport like never before, it makes it possible to use the very same edge-of-control driving techniques employed by real rally drivers.



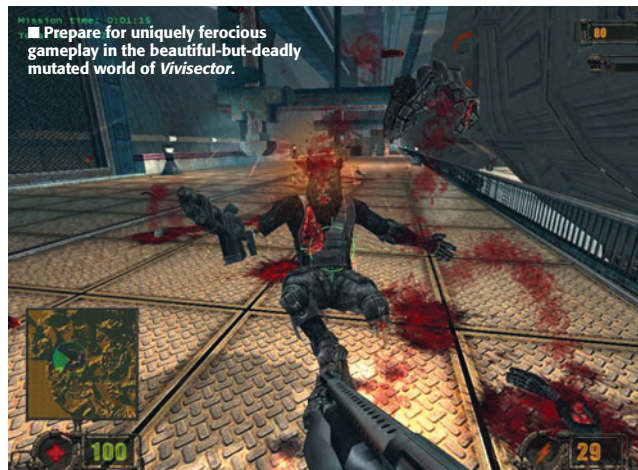
■ *McRae '05* is awash with new features and challenges, and blessed with an even greater clarity than its illustrious predecessors.

But make one tiny mistake and the detailed damage modelling will kick in, showing everything from paintwork scrapes to complete physics-enhanced bodywork mash-ups. This is PC rallying faster, muddier and more demanding than ever before.

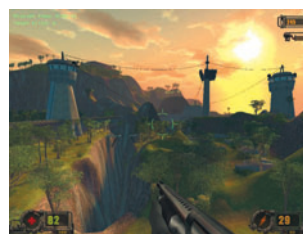
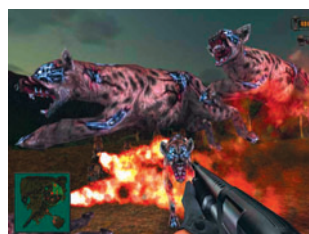


Publisher:
Developer:
Release:

Brigades
Action Forms
Out now



■ Prepare for uniquely ferocious gameplay in the beautiful-but-deadly mutated world of *Vivisector*.



Vivisector: Beast Inside

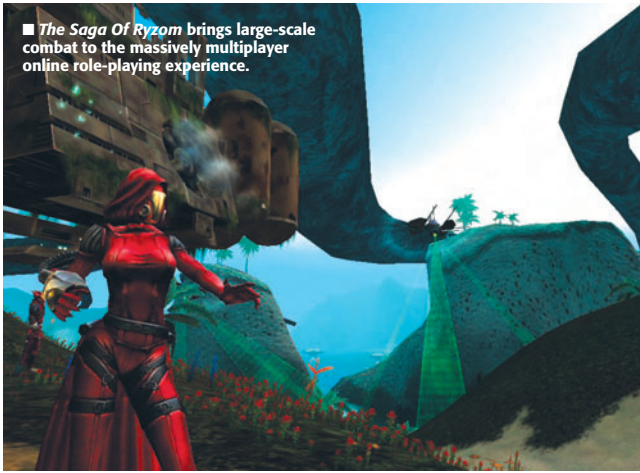
Taking the first-person shooter into strange new territory is state-of-the-art action horror *Vivisector*. Set on the island of Soreo, its highly mutated inhabitants (the result of strange experiments by deranged scientists) are out for human blood.

The game builds on its enticingly bizarre concept with a strong, fright-filled interactive storyline. Along the way there are many opportunities for character development, with the ability to upgrade skills and weapons through 'achievement points' gained when successfully dealing with creatures, completing tasks, and exploring the environment.

The game spans an incredible 24 levels, ranging from steaming hot jungles and vast mountainscapes, to scientific laboratories, while the hostile population comprises more than 20 different breeds of beast.

But it's the AtmosFear game engine that takes price of place in *Vivisector*. Taking full advantage of NVIDIA's GeForce hardware, its advanced rendering technologies can generate scenes with an incredible field of view, densely packed with photorealistic vegetation and complex architecture. "With experienced engineering staff at NVIDIA providing a wealth of technical information, we've been able to integrate highly advanced graphics effects into our technology," says developer Action Forms.

■ *The Saga Of Ryzom* brings large-scale combat to the massively multiplayer online role-playing experience.



The Saga Of Ryzom

With more than 165,000 gamers dipping into its ambitious online universe via an epic beta test, *The Saga Of Ryzom* has already been hailed as a masterpiece. Powered by the proprietary RAID engine, this is a game able to portray massive battles and dynamic territorial invasions in unprecedented detail, resulting in an incredibly action-packed take on the role-playing genre.

And because this is a TWIMTBP title, the game world is depicted in lavish detail, those large-scale battles in particular benefit from the muscle afforded by NVIDIA technology. "When you're working on a visually stunning product like *The Saga Of Ryzom*, the great hardware and solid technical support provided by NVIDIA's team make all the difference," says Daniel Miller, CTO of Nevrax.

After learning the ropes via a tutorial section, players generate their own hero or heroine, with an allegiance to one of four civilisations. Setting forth through deserts, forests, jungles, and over water on a series of quests, a whole series of adventures and missions await in the game's non-linear world. This open-ended design endows the game with a unique degree of flexibility. The result is an online world where the action never stops, where gamers can go it alone or form alliances, and where dynamic battles unfold in spectacular fashion.



Publisher:
Developer:
Release:

**Ubisoft
Nevrax
Out now**

Case study: Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines

Embrace the darkness once more in the second game based on White Wolf's acclaimed *World Of Darkness* role-playing universe. Development of this sequel has been handled by Troika Games, the Californian team founded by the creators of the award-winning *Fallout*. That the team have made good use of their RPG expertise should come as no surprise. But what makes *Bloodlines* a breed apart is the way it's been woven into glorious 3D action adventure.

Few titles can claim to possess a game engine on a par with that of *Half-Life 2*, but that's exactly what *Bloodlines* has – the very same Source engine used in *Half-Life 2*.

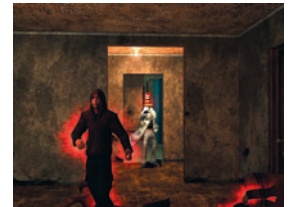
"With *Vampire*, Troika is proving Source can reach beyond the world of FPS games," says Gabe Newell, MD and co-founder of Valve. "The character system, rendering abilities, and contextual AI features of Source combined with the veteran RPG design talent at Troika is a great representation of the innovation we hope to enable with this technology."

Powered by Source, the game is able to bring to life a blood-soaked story of vampires running wild in modern day Los Angeles. Here players can journey through a living, non-linear world, forging their own path as they work for one of seven different vampire clans. Of course the game delivers



■ *Vampire* mythology and modern day Los Angeles clash with gruesome results in *Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines*.

horror in spades, but it's also rife with close combat against vampire hunters, enemy vampires, and other creatures of the night, with battles enhanced by the inclusion of knives, pistols, machine guns, stake guns, flamethrowers and other goodies. The *Hammer House Of Horror* this ain't.



Publisher:
Developer:
Release:

**Activision
Troika Games
November**



■ The Persian hero is back in *Prince Of Persia Warrior Within*, and this time he's got a whole new arsenal of weapons and range of amazing moves to try out.

In Profile

Ubisoft

Learn all about this one of a kind games publisher, including the latest on its brand new blockbuster games.



■ Depending on whose side you're on, you can rid the azure skies of enemy warplanes in *Pacific Fighters*.



■ The soundtrack to *Myst IV: Revelation* is a lavish affair featuring a contribution from Peter Gabriel.



■ *EverQuest II* enhances the massively multiplayer online experience with incredible 3D visuals.



■ Balancing community building and combat, the latest *Settlers* is set to become another classic.

This winter Ubisoft goes from strength to strength. Catering for all tastes – from the arcade fan to the simulation junkie, from the strategy nut to the role-playing enthusiast – its latest line-up is surely its strongest to date.

What's most remarkable about Ubisoft is that it has always dared to be different. Valuing originality, experimentation and artistry, it has produced some of the wildest, most inventive and best-loved videogames and digital characters around.

The company was formed back in 1986 by five brothers from the Guillemot family, with a mission to distribute games created by other publishers in its native France. By 1990 the brothers were itching to actively contribute to this bright new video games market, and so began building a team of talent artists, designers and programmers. The fruits of these labours began to make their first impact in 1994, not least with the arrival of *Rayman*, the legendary game character developed by the hugely talented Michel Ancel.

Moving into the new millennium, the company released one hit game after the other, even finding success in the new online market with games like *EverQuest*. By the end of 2003, with the launch of such acclaimed titles as *Prince Of Persia Sands Of Time*, Ubisoft had become firmly established one of the biggest and most respected game publishers and developers in the world.

This is now...

That's Ubisoft's past. Now let's take a look at the future, with a peak at its latest classics-in-waiting. First up is the hugely-anticipated sequel *EverQuest II* opens up a massive new massively multiplayer online game world. This must surely be one of the most visually accomplished games yet developed for the PC, and it's cinematic 3D even has the power to

further enhance the experience as technologies improve in the future. And the scale of *EverQuest II* is something else. Even the process of character creation is awash with possibilities, thanks to the inclusion of 16 unique races, 24 characters classes, and 50 experience levels to work through. Hero or villain, prince or pauper – there are no rules or limits in *EverQuest II*.

Adventuring of a different kind can also be found in *Myst IV: Revelation*. *Myst* was the adventure that introduced millions of people to computing gaming for the first time. Now the most famous adventure universe of them all is back, with Ubisoft's *Myst IV: Revelation*. Taking photorealism to a mindbending level, the game is truly something to behold,

Valuing originality, experimentation and artistry, Ubisoft has produced some of the wildest, most innovative and best-loved videogames around.

while the integration of live actors adds a new dimension to the adventure.

Pacifically speaking

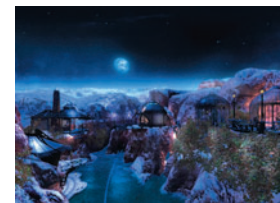
It's not often Ubisoft releases something as familiar as a combat flight simulation, so the arrival of *Pacific Fighters* heralds something special. This spectacular recreation of WWII combat re-enacts some of the most dramatic air battles of all time. Iwo Jima, Guadalcanal and even Pearl Harbor feature. Boasting both allied and enemy aircraft carriers, and more than 40 period aircraft, it's been

designed to provide an air-to-air and air-to-ground combat experience more immersive than any other flight sim.

And then there's the return of the Prince in the darker and edgier, *Prince Of Persia Warrior Within*. This time around our hero must defy date itself. It's an adventure that places greater emphasis on the Prince's combat prowess, with a brand new freeform combat system. The original *Prince Of Persia Sands Of Time* was probably the most critically acclaimed action game of 2003. The sequel offers even more.



■ The Prince of Persia is back; this time he's darker, edgier and ready for a fight.



■ Photorealistic 3D environments, cleverly integrating live footage, and a wealth of puzzles await in *Myst IV: Revelation*.



■ Relive key WWII battles, playing as an American, Australian or even Japanese pilot in the stunning *Pacific Fighters*.

The Settlers: Heritage Of Kings



■ Powered by Criterion's RenderWare 3D engine, *Settlers: Heritage Of Kings* contains a lushly animated environment that's teeming with activity and blessed with many cool visual effects and dynamic weather.



If you thought the property market was harsh, then try this classic franchise out for size.

Publisher: **Ubisoft**
Developer: **Ubisoft's Bluebyte Studio**
Release: **early 2005**

With more than five million copies already sold, the much-loved *Settlers* franchise is fully embracing the potential of 3D, putting a whole new spin on the well-loved construction

and conquest game style. On a mission to reclaim lands from an evil despotic ruler, gamers must rise to the challenge in 20 individual scenarios, conquering no less than seven kingdoms, and ultimately recovering the Orb Of Power.

Along the way there's the opportunity to indulge in some finely wrought real-time strategy and empire-building, with 70 different types of inhabitant, the ability to discover technology breakthroughs that advance the society, and of course the opportunity to indulge in skirmishes and all out warfare.

This effortlessly retains that classic *Settlers* 'ant hill factor', with the

landscape forever buzzing with activity, and a wide variety of animals and plant life adding further colour. In fact it's sometimes fun to simply sit back and watch the minions go about their assigned tasks, as the weather and seasons change (altering the behaviour of units in the process).

With the roaming viewpoint it's possible to zoom right out to see the whole community at work, or to get so close it's possible to observe the actions of a single person occupying a quarter of the screen. This is facilitated by an optimised graphics system that makes use of Criterion's acclaimed RenderWare engine.

"We're utilising the full bandwidth of conventional animation technology," states lead programmer Dietmar Meschede proudly. "We're using special vertex shaders for animating trees and other landscape elements, integrating particle effects, and also using a multi-layer terrain system, which has been designed to meet our high detail landscape requirements." Fans will have to wait until early next year to get their hands on the game.

The way it's meant to be played

DreamCatcher

DreamCatcher Interactive Inc. is a fast-growing worldwide publisher and distributor of interactive entertainment software for both core and casual gamers. From its Toronto headquarters it has since expanded throughout Europe, the Far East and even Australasia, its support for third-

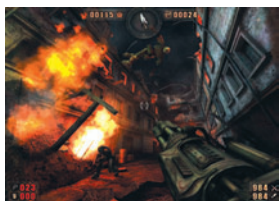
party developers and extensive customer support helping to achieve the ultimate goal of becoming a world leading publisher.

DreamCatcher now has two distinct brands for its highly diverse output. The main DreamCatcher Games imprint handles strategy and role-playing, as well

as all-out action titles such as *Painkiller*. Then there's The Adventure Company, home to titles such as the *Atlantis* series and a forthcoming range of games based on the novels of famed crime writer Agatha Christie. Below we take a closer look at two of DreamCatcher's key Christmas titles.



Take our word for it, the fighting fantasy genre enters the uncharted realms of arcade-quality 3D in *Dungeon Lords*.



Powered by the latest version of the physics-enhanced PAIN game engine, this *Painkiller* expansion pack features a host of new graphical tweaks, levels, and multiplayer options. Spectacular stuff...



Dungeon Lords

Publisher:
Developer:
Release:

DreamCatcher Games
Heuristic Park
November

Created in association with award-winning games guru D.W. Bradley, *Dungeon Lords* has been designed to fuse fighting fantasy role-playing with 3D arcade action. The result is a work of incredible visual detail, epic scale, and uncompromising depth.

Optimised for both solo adventuring and eight-way cooperative multiplayer action, *Dungeon Lords* features an abundance of missions and quests, along with ample opportunities to develop character skills, amass treasures and magical artefacts, and progress through cunning use of the unique race and character class traits. Because the game harnesses the power of NVIDIA GeForce technology, every hard-won step of the journey is depicted in fluid, glossy, full 3D detail.

"NVIDIA offers technical support, extremely advanced technologies and a massive consumer reach," comments DreamCatcher Europe Marketing Director Simon Vivien. "When you launch a leader title such as *Dungeon Lords* you always need to team up with the leader. NVIDIA is all of this, a leader and a great partner."



Painkiller: Battle Out Of Hell

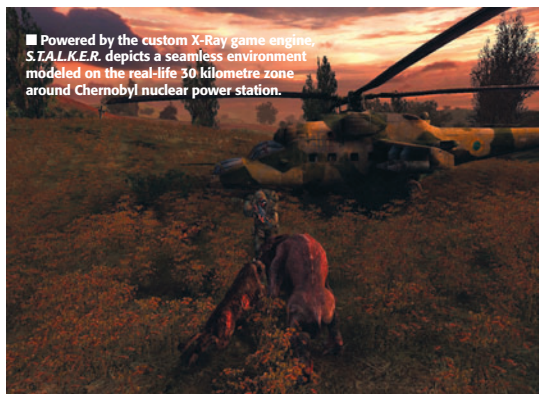
Publisher:
Developer:
Release:

DreamCatcher Games
People Can Fly
November

Feel the heat once again in this add-on pack for the critically acclaimed *Painkiller*. In the original, our hero Daniel Garner found himself fighting through the underworld, impaling enemies, blasting ghouls, and quite literally raising hell. Now he's on a mission to escape the torment, battling through ten new levels as beautifully crafted as they are filled with torture and evil.

The developers have excelled themselves in the art department, crafting levels that never re-use a single texture, while the improved proprietary PAIN game engine sports a range of improved visual effects such as heat haze, light blooms and per pixel mapping, thus ensuring the combat delivers an even greater graphical punch.

Battle Out Of Hell also caters for multiplayer fans, with a range of new multiplayer maps plus two brand new modes, including a 'hellish mutation of Capture The Flag'. It's definitely one for those with a strong stomach. And just to up the longevity, a full set of editing and modding tools are provided, enabling total customisation of both solo and multiplayer action. The pain need never end...



In Profile

S.T.A.L.K.E.R.

GSC Gameworld offers us an exclusive update on the development of this gritty, ambitious first-person epic.

Since news first broke in the press about *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.*, action fans have been clamouring to get their hands on the finished product. Set in the Zone, an area based on the real 30 kilometre radius area around the Chernobyl atomic power plant, the action in *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.* takes place some 16 years after the tragic accident at the infamous facility. It's a game world rife with valuable artefacts, but also a place where there are a million ways to die.

“What’s most valuable about our relationship with NVIDIA is the timely advice and replies to questions about architecture peculiarities...”

One thing that has earned the game unanimous praise is graphical quality afforded by the proprietary X-Ray engine. Designed specifically for advanced GPU hardware it renders both indoor and outdoor environments with ease, with a motion-capture based skeletal animation system on hand for the in-game characters. Other goodies

include dynamic light sources, day-to-night shifts, IK physics, character shadowing, interpolated animations, advanced water rendering, particles systems, and a whole range of other complex pixel and vertex shader effects.

“We have been building up on the main skeleton of the game, filling the global map with more and more content,” says Oleg Yavorsky at GSC Gameworld. “We started with the initial three levels and tried packing them with

all the gameplay components. The results were very impressive. Since then we’ve got all the levels up and running.”

The team has also been working to further enhance the look of the exterior environments. Says Yavorsky: “For the exterior levels, where all the lighting is processed dynamically, we’ve worked really hard to balance quality against

frame rate and we’re now very happy with how it’s going.”

“What’s most valuable about our relationship with NVIDIA is the timely advice and replies to questions with regards to architecture peculiarities,” he adds. “This knowledge is key for us to be able to optimise the performance of the game. And one of the key features NVIDIA-based hardware has enabled us to include is High Dynamic Range rendering pipeline in 64-bit colour.”

Beyond the core single-player experience, work also continues on the multiplayer portion of *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.* “We already enjoy playing it with the team. The focus of our multiplayer designers is adjusting the weapons, game speed and all the other little things that make it even more enjoyable.”

Tantalisingly, Yavorsky says a multiplayer beta test is planned for the near future. “We’re naturally really curious about what other players think about the game. Their feedback will be very valuable to us.”



Publisher:
Developer:
Release:

THQ
GSC Gameworld
Early 2005

The way it's meant to be played



Publisher: **EA**
Developer: **EA**
Release: **November**

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Case study: Medal Of Honor Pacific Assault

This is nothing short of a rebirth for the *Medal Of Honor*™ series. With new game dynamics, open-ended design, new AI and squad-based play and a number of new visual effects that take full advantage of version two programmable pixel and vertex shaders. Here each level is filled with realistic detail, including 3D grass, trees and other fauna, while ambitious lighting effects convey the unique conditions of the Pacific Islands. The complex character models are also truly something to behold, while a range of post-processing tricks simulate shellshock and other disorientating elements. And with the inclusion of the *Havoc* dynamics system, the game also boasts real-world physics.

This new chapter places gamers in the boots of Marine Private Tommy Conlin, as he witnesses the destruction at Pearl Harbor and battles his way through 25 levels, each with multiple pathways, and a mix of solo missions and squad-based situations – with the ability to hand out orders in the heat of the battle.

Squad members and enemies will even respond realistically to a player's actions. Act too reckless and your fellow combatants might hang back, fight too timidly and the enemy will seize the day. The designers have also paid



■ Take full control of the squad throughout the battle, in a completely new, graphically pumped up *MOH* adventure.

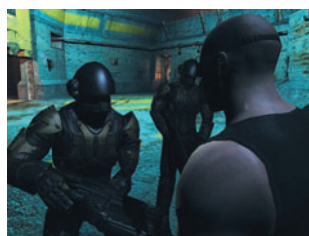
heed to the needs of multiplayer gamers, providing eight unique levels, a new game mode called *Invader* and – for the first time – a choice of soldier character classes. You may be a virtual battlefield veteran, but nothing will prepare you for the bloody intensity of *Medal Of Honor Pacific Assault*.



Publisher: **Vivendi Universal Games**
Developer: **Starbreeze**
Release: **December**



■ Vin Diesel lends his voice, likeness, and creative talents to this lavish next-generation title.



Chronicles Of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay – Director's Cut

Movie spin-offs are ten-a-penny, but *Escape From Butcher Bay* breaks the mould in a number of ways. This is no simple tie-in. Instead the developers have worked with Vin Diesel himself to create a new chapter in the story of the ultimate sci-fi anti-hero, fleshing out his history before the events of the movie *Pitch Black*. Additionally, developer Starbreeze has set out to craft an arcade adventure using only state-of-the-art technologies.

The CGI version of Riddick not only has Diesel's voice, he even looks just like the actor. Every other character benefits from equally lavish 3D modelling and animation, while the environs of Butcher Bay are also realised with a combination of highly detailed model and texture work. Also a range of GeForce-friendly lighting effects and pixel/shader programming tricks helps to produce a beautiful game world.

Gameplay has been given equal attention, the combination of stealthy third-person adventuring, first-person shooter and close combat action producing a seamless blend. One word of caution: *Chronicles Of Riddick* is no walk in the park, designed for more mature audiences, it carries a PEGI Age Rating of 16.



■ Smoke and flames take on a life of their own.

Fire Captain: Bay Area Inferno

Taking real-time strategy off the battlefield and into frontline of the fire and rescue scene, *Fire Captain: Bay Area Inferno* creates a scorching new kind of 3D gaming experience. No simple point and clicker, this challenges gamers to manage a squad of elite firefighters, taking on a deadly and unpredictable enemy: fire.

As players battle to extinguish flames and save helpless victims, they'll utilise specialised equipment, realistic strategies, and deal with real-life horror scenarios. What makes the action so effective is that *Fire Captain* makes use of a new technology platform capable of realistically modelling the behaviour of smoke and fire. They thrive and spread dynamically and realistically, while the rendering engine brings them to life with complex particle effects. The game even realistically depicts how the flow of water and fire can take their toll on objects within the fragile game world.



Publisher:
Developer:
Release:

Monte Cristo
Monte Cristo
November

Sacred Plus

It's not just the world of movies that benefits from extended and special editions. *Sacred Plus* applies the same concept to the acclaimed role-playing action game, *Sacred*. Giving gamers the opportunity to sample a new 'producer's cut', it features a number of updates to the core game, enhanced and extended RPG elements, plus a number of new world regions and quests. This edition also benefits from revised in-game difficulty balancing, an intuitive user interface and an improved multiplayer component. It also neatly ties up all Internet updates in this new package.

As for the gameplay, innovative features such as the ability to create attack combos, linking moves, spells and powers together, offer far more control than most arcade-based RPGs. And through a combination of pre-rendered backdrops and motion-captured 3D characters, it also possesses more visual smarts than RPG fans are used to.



■ *Sacred Plus* refines the gameplay of the original.



Publisher:
Developer:
Release:

Koch Media
Ascaron Entertainment
October

Case study: Need For Speed Underground 2



■ With so many improvements, *Need For Speed Underground 2* is a more-than-worthy successor to its predecessor.

The follow-up to the best-selling racing game of 2003 is here and this one packs a whole number of new ingredients, not least Kelly Brook. Adding a touch of British class to proceedings, she has the starring role of rebellious street racer Nikki in a game of effortless cool, dazzling

hi-octane visuals and full-throttled driving action.

Star appeal aside, *Need For Speed Underground 2* cranks up the racing action to a whole new level, with an expansive, free-roaming city environment composed of five neighbourhoods providing the arena in which drivers meet up at racing hotspots and then battle it out for supremacy of the urban roads. It's not just a matter of turning up at the same old locations and joining the race, though, races can happen anywhere and at any time. It's only by encountering rivals out on the streets that players will get clued up about the hottest events, as well as the latest vehicle upgrades.

Need For Speed Underground 2 delivers dozens of licensed cars with a five-car garage for gamers to fill, each of which can be given near infinite visual customisations as well as extensive handling and performance modifications, ensuring each driver has their own customised car and unique driving experience. And this being a TWIMTBP title, each of the billion or so vehicle variations looks absolutely beautiful as it tears up the roads, blasting through the city environments and reacting to the real-time weather effects and variable road surfaces. Clearly it's not only Kelly Brook that provides the glamour in this pumped-up sequel...



Publisher:
Developer:
Release:

Electronic Arts
Electronic Arts Canada
November

The way it's meant to be played

In Profile

LucasArts

We take a closer look at the legendary games company responsible for some of the best-selling and most popular PC games of all time.

Founded in 1982 by the one and only George Lucas, LucasArts has been around longer than almost any other games company on the planet. The original team, then known as Lucasfilm Games, actually sprang from the same new computer division that eventually spawned the company's highly acclaimed movie visual effects division. Lucasfilm's debut titles *BallBlazer* and *Rescue On Fractalus* were spawned by a love of research and sheer gaming enthusiasm, rather than any desire to become a video gaming superpower – and while that's exactly what has happened over the last two decades, the desire to innovate and



Star Wars Battlefront



■ Familiar places, familiar vehicles, and even familiar faces make *Star Wars Battlefront* a real blast for any self-respecting *Star Wars* fan.

Fight on the frontline in the most famous science fiction saga of them all.

Publisher:
Developer:
Release:

LucasArts
Pandemic
Out now

Over the years, LucasArts has given gamers all kinds of illustrious opportunities to step into the *Star Wars* universe, but there's never been a way to take on the role of a soldier fighting as part of an elite unit in the battle between the Empire and the Rebel

Alliance. Until now. Finally, with the arrival of *Star Wars Battlefront*, the most famous science fiction universe of all time is given the full 3D combat simulation treatment, resulting in a multiplayer troop 'simulation' quite unlike any other.

With *Star Wars Battlefront*, gamers are able to fight on foot and in vehicles, in battles that recreate key moments in the incredible *Star Wars* saga. With scenarios covering every single *Star Wars* movie to date, including the eagerly awaited *Episode III: Revenge Of The Sith* (released next year), it's a one-of-a-kind thrill ride that you're never going to want to get off.

Battling across Hoth, Endor, Tatooine, Kamino and more, players will fight with and against Tie Fighters, X-Wings, AT-AT Walkers, speeder bikes, and even Republic Gunships. And because this is an online team game, many of the vehicles can be manned by two or more soldiers, radically transforming the combat experience.

Not that *Star Wars Battlefront* has to be played online. Using AI-driven bot allies and enemies, it's possible to play solo in a 'multiplayer' environment.

entertain has remained with the company throughout.

Following early days spent focusing on the Atari computer systems of the day – a period that saw it set out blueprints for 3D gaming that have been widely used ever since – the company really began to make an impact on the PC in 1987 with the arrival of *Maniac Mansion*. Building on a bold new type of point-and-click game design used in movie spin-off *Labyrinth*, it ushered in a new age of graphic adventuring. By 1990, *The Secret Of Monkey Island*, a game with a hilarious movie-quality script, had established Lucas's company as the world's finest

Now, with the 3D technology reaching dizzying new heights, LucasArts continues to push dynamic gameplay into exciting new territory...

purveyors of adventure gaming and the stage was set for an incredibly prosperous decade. Transforming from Lucasfilm Games to the LucasArts Entertainment Company in 1993, it continued to innovate while also introducing a new series of games based on the hugely popular *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* movies.

Now, with the 3D technology reaching dizzying new heights, LucasArts continues to push gameplay

into exciting new territory. And, in parallel to the arrival of a new series of movies in Lucas's famous science fiction saga, the company is finding new ways to immerse gamers in the *Star Wars* universe.

Check out the milestones in our history of LucasArts' games to see how many classic PC titles it has produced so far. And then read what's on offer in *Star Wars Battlefront*, for a tantalising taste of what's still to come.

MILESTONES

With more than 20 years in the business, LucasArts just keeps on delivering...

- 1982**
Lucasfilm Games is formed.
- 1984**
BallBlazer, *Rescue On Fractalus*, *Koronis Rift*, and *Labyrinth*.
- 1987**
Maniac Mansion.
- 1988**
Zak McKracken And The Alien Mindbenders, *Battlehawks 1942*.
- 1989**
Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade, *Their Finest Hour: The Battle Of Britain*, and *Pipe Dream*.
- 1990**
Loom, *The Secret Of Monkey Island*, and *Night Shift*.
- 1991**
Secret Weapons Of The Luftwaffe, *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge*.
- 1992**
Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis.
- 1993**
Sam & Max Hit The Road, *Rebel Assault* and *X-Wing*.
- 1994**
Tie Fighter.
- 1995**
Full Throttle, *The Dig*, *Rebel Assault II*, and *Dark Forces*.
- 1997**
Outlaws, X-Wing Vs Tie Fighter, *Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II*, and *The Curse Of Monkey Island*.
- 1998**
Grim Fandango, *Star Wars Rebellion*.
- 1999**
Star Wars Episode I The Phantom Menace, *Star Wars: Episode I Racer*, and *Indiana Jones And The Infernal Machine*.
- 2000**
Star Wars: Force Commander, *Escape From Monkey Island*.
- 2001**
Star Wars: Episode I Battle For Naboo.
- 2002**
Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast, *Star Wars Galactic Battlegrounds*.
- 2003**
Indiana Jones And The Emperor's Tomb.
- 2004**
Star Wars Battlefront.

There's even a split-screen mode for more social offline gaming.

Powered by a spanking brand new 3D engine developed in-house at Pandemic Studios, *Star Wars Battlefront* is as adept at depicting airborne combat as it is ground level skirmishes. Ragdoll physics is even incorporated, making for some suitably spectacular death sequences and explosions.

Recreating the greatest battles from the *Star Wars* universe is no easy feat. "With NVIDIA hardware, we have been able to recreate these visually stunning battles down to the smallest grass blade and up to the largest explosion. All this graphics power enables us to fully live up to our promise to allow players to play the greatest *Star Wars* battles any way they want to," says Greg Borrud, executive producer at Pandemic Studios.

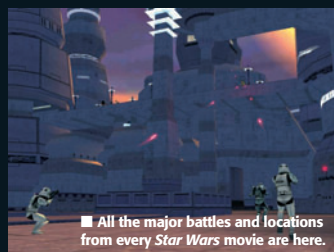
Ever wanted to ride your own Tauntaun? Or take to the skies as a jet-pack carrying Dark Trooper? Or simply crush the enemy underfoot in your very own AT-ST? Of course you have, and now all of these and many more are a distinct possibility. A new life in a galaxy far away awaits.



■ Powered by a new 3D engine, *Battlefront* brings a whole range of classic ground-based and airborne clashes to life.



■ *Battlefront* is easily the finest *Star Wars* title yet from LucasArts.



■ All the major battles and locations from every *Star Wars* movie are here.

The way it's meant to be played



Publisher: **10tacle Studios**
Developer: **SimBin Development**
Release: **December**

Case study: GTR: FIA GT Racing



■ You can race in fully licenced cars such as the BMW Z3 M, Porsche 996 and the Lamborghini Murcielago. Yeesss!

Based on the FIA's GT Championship racing series, *GTR* is a simulation with impeccable credentials. It features all of the cars and drivers from the 2003 season, adding up to 60 officially licensed GT and NGT vehicles, plus an additional 18 that feature in the game's extra '24 Hours Of

Spa' event. What's more, it packs in ten officially approved track recreations, each built using extensive GPS data.

Of course, none of this official approval would be much use if *GTR* didn't have the graphical muscle or the depth demanded by today's racing simulation fan. An association with NVIDIA and its TWIMTBP programme ensures the former. As Ian Bell, development director at SimBin confirms, "NVIDIA graphics technology proved invaluable in the development of *GTR*. The GeForce GPU represents the leading edge of 3D graphics hardware, and NVIDIA's cooperation ensures *GTR* takes advantage of the features and performance on offer to provide an incredibly realistic visual racing environment. The SimBin Development Team looks forward to extending this partnership for future titles."

Up to 56 cars can be seen in a single race, each rendered with more detail than simulation fans have ever seen before. And 'live track technology' means courses can be dynamically altered during a race. Here, crashes can leave debris on the track that may pose a serious hazard on future laps. And even weather conditions change over the course of time. The aim is to provide the most realistic driving sim the world has ever seen. It may well have succeeded.



Publisher: **Aspyr**
Developer: **Aspyr**
Release: **Out now**



■ Harry's most visually arresting jungle romp yet.

Pitfall: The Lost Expedition

Step aside Indiana Jones, Pitfall Harry got there first. The hapless adventurer has been trekking through jungles for almost 25 years now and he's still going strong. In this latest outing he's tasked with adventuring through the darkest corners of Peru in search of treasures and glory. Along the way Harry faces a range of perils from piranhas to human mercenaries, explores jungle terrain, delves deep into subterranean mines and uncovers the secrets of ancient ruins. There are more than 40 levels in all, each filled with all the staples of a rollicking good adventure.

Now fighting the good fight in full 3D, Harry's escapades look more sumptuous than ever. Our hero, his enemies and the environment itself are all rendered so that the game has a beautifully cartoonish feel. And NVIDIA owners can bask in a range of exclusive extra visual details, thanks to support for Shader Model 3.0 technology.



Publisher: **THQ**
Developer: **Pandemic Studios**
Release: **Out now**

Full Spectrum Warrior

The game that began life as a training aid for the US Army is finally here. Needless to say, *Full Spectrum Warrior's* heritage makes for an ultra-realistic portrayal of infantry-level warfare, with the emphasis on the kind of urban combat that today's soldiers now find themselves embroiled in. This is 21st century war at its most adrenaline-charged – and its most claustrophobic.

Giving the player command of two squads, the emphasis is on teamwork. The pressure is constant, the risks too great to contemplate and the need to make good decisions vital. Controlling a team of eight soldiers via a simple command system, players get to use real rules of engagement and even call in air strikes and chopper support. With highly detailed environments and troop animations modelled on the moves of real US Army Rangers, could a combat simulation boast a finer pedigree?



■ FSW unleashes urban warfare in unflinching detail.



■ CDV's latest all-action real-time wargame. Soaring.

Codename: Panzers

In the space of a few years CDV has earned itself a reputation as a purveyor of high quality action wargames. *Codename: Panzers* continues the onslaught, with an up-close-and-personal recreation of WW2 combat. Its fully animated, physics-enhanced 3D depiction of the war's bullet-strewn towns, bleak mountainscapes and deadly swamps brings new levels of drama and interaction to troop-level combat.

Providing gamers with the ability to build a combat force composed of more than 100 units, from flame-thrower carrying troops to rocket launchers and battle tanks, *Panzers* piles on the carnage with every battle. Yet there's also genuine subtlety and depth to the gameplay, not least in the way buildings can be occupied by player or enemy units – making it vital to hold some key locations to avoid being overrun. And just wait until you see what happens when bombing support is requested...



Publisher: **CDV**
Developer: **Stormregion**
Release: **Out now**

Evil Genius

Calling all Dr Evil wannabes, Blofelds-in-training, and all-round ruthless despots. *Evil Genius* is the finest way to let off some steam, playing out those world domination fantasies without any of the tears before bedtime. Forget saving the world. In *Evil Genius* it's your job to be mean, mad and very, very bad.

Delivering the whole dastardly package in a deliciously tongue-in-cheek '60s spy thriller style, *Evil Genius* challenges gamers to build the ultimate secret island fortress, carry out crazed missions such as the theft of the Eiffel Tower and even work towards the construction of a deadly doomsday device. Naturally, do-gooders try to thwart these plans, so that's where the army of henchmen and the creation of high-tech weapons come in. Dispensing cold justice in a 3D world of cartoon lunacy, gamers will discover *Evil Genius* is that rarest of things: a game that's actually funny.



■ Are you evil enough to cause this much mayhem?



Publisher: **Vivendi Universal Games**
Developer: **Elixir Studios**
Release: **Out now**

Case study: Nexus: The Jupiter Incident



■ Sci-fi simulation *Nexus* has been designed to give gamers a deep experience boasting motion-picture quality visuals.

The long-awaited follow-up to science fiction strategy opus *Imperium Galactica II*, *Nexus* is every bit as innovative as its predecessor. The aim of design team Mithis has been to create a game boasting movie quality visuals, real-time battles and real-time tactical mission-based action.

Space hardware junkies will love the result. With the ability to control up to a dozen battleships, players get to explore unknown solar systems, deal with strange astrophysical phenomena, and call upon their command skills during encounters with alien races.

The action takes place at the dawn of the 22nd century, a time when the conquest of space and colonisation of the solar system is being monopolised by a select few megacorporations. Though these companies exist in harmony a discovery is made at the very edge of the solar system, one offering massive technological advantages to whoever harnesses it. Thus the balance of power is set to shift, creating a conflict into which fabled space captain Marcus Comwell is unwillingly thrust.

Within its massive 3D game universe and gripping storyline, *Nexus* offers a truly epic campaign comprising 26 missions. As they progress, gamers will encounter six unique alien races, 10 solar systems and interact with 50 unique characters. And thanks to the new Black Sun 3D engine, absolutely everything is rendered with maximum detail and governed by realistic laws of physics. With *Nexus* the Tactical Fleet Simulation has come of age.



Publisher: **HD Interactive**
Developer: **Mithis Entertainment**
Release: **Out now**

The way it's meant to be played



Publisher: **Empire**
Developer: **Bugbear**
Release: **November**

Case study: FlatOut

When it comes to high-speed racing, it's always the crashes that send the crowd into a frenzy. Imagine, then, how much fun a game as obsessively dedicated to highlighting and simulating the spills, as much as the thrills, of the car versus car experience could be. Welcome to *FlatOut*. "We have strived to make *FlatOut* one of the most technologically advanced racing games around," reckons Jussi Laakkonen from Bugbear. "To this end it was logical for us to partner with NVIDIA to push the performance and quality of the game visuals as high as possible."

Featuring 36 tracks set in five different environments, the racing action takes in gravel pits, winter routes, town-based tracks, forest drives, and Tarmac-based circuits – the unique driving conditions of each posing a different racing challenge.

These are massively detailed and destructible racing environments, packed with route options and governed by realistic laws of physics. Buildings collapse, tyre walls scatter, walls explode all over the place, and mangled car parts are scattered everywhere. Any carnage created in one race – including obstacles left on the track – is carried over to the next.

It's the way the physics modelling is applied to the vehicles that really makes *FlatOut* a game of bone-crunching



■ In *FlatOut* you get first-hand experience of the world's craziest and best car chases, races, pile-ups and crashes.

poetry in motion. The 16 different types of car have 40 deformable pieces. And most spectacularly, drivers also feel the impact, with ragdoll physics even catapulting them out of the vehicles. Now that's not something you're likely to find in more middle-of-the-road racing offerings...



Publisher: **Activision**
Developer: **Grey Matter Studios**
Release: **November**

■ *United Offensive* is an even more immersive and intense experience than the original.



Call Of Duty: United Offensive

Call Of Duty heralded a new era for first-person troop combat by employing fantastic storytelling, superb graphical effects and rock solid gameplay. Now comes the next chapter, a recreation of some of the most climactic battles of the war, including the invasion of Sicily, the Battle Of Kursk, and the Battle Of The Bulge. There are 13 new single-player missions in all, with the three campaigns again casting players in the role of American, Russian and German soldiers.

Vehicles still play a major role in the game, this time with the inclusion of tanks, jeeps, and motorcycles. Gamers can even take to the skies in a bomber or call in artillery strikes. *United Offensive* also has improved visuals and new special effects to add even greater realism to the battles. Now units find themselves fighting through snow and rain, while spectacular new explosions further enhance the battlefield environments.

The original *Call Of Duty* is, of course, also a massive online hit, and so *United Offensive* takes great care to give multiplayer fans exactly what they want, with the addition of ten new multiplayer maps and three new multiplayer modes: Domination, Capture The Flag, and Base Assault. And just wait until you experience multiplayer tank combat...



■ *Joint Ops: Escalation* expands on the original groundbreaking wargame with 25 new maps.

Joint Ops: Escalation

Where some large scale combat games suffer from sprawling, unfocused multiplayer battles, the beauty of the original *Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising* was its ability to keep the action tightly focused on its massive maps – and the game has rightly been hailed as a classic. Now comes the very first expansion pack, building on those excellent foundations with a whole new South East Asian scenario.

There are 25 new maps in all, each with a radically different feel and each prompting unique strategies and playing styles. Battle tanks make their debut, along with Mobile SAM launchers and even dirt bikes. It's now also possible to parachute into hot spots, while a new third-person view makes vehicle control even more intuitive. Once again, there's support for massive battles, with up to 150 gamers on the battlefield at once.

"The support from NVIDIA during development of the *Joint Ops* graphics engine has been invaluable to us," says Mark Davis, Chief Scientist at Novalogic. "Every aspect of our rendering pipeline has been optimised, and *Joint Ops* uses many of the features available on NVIDIA hardware, and with their robust support of the programmable pipeline, and the various shader models, we've been able to roll out an engine with advanced texturing and normal mapping techniques, and a variety of full-screen post processing effects."



Publisher:
Developer:
Release:

Novalogic
Novalogic
November



Case study: Rome: Total War

Having practically invented the real-time 3D wargame with *Shogun: Total War*, and then polished it until it shone with *Medieval: Total War*, The Creative Assembly is back to show how the battles of the Roman army should be done. With scenes comparable to those in blockbuster movies, *Rome: Total War* brings the days of key historical figures to life with conflicts on the battlefields of the Empire.

Though this is the story of the Roman Empire, it's not just the story of the Roman army. There are a dozen playable nations in all, each with its own unique units, strengths and weaknesses, and its own style of combat. From Barbarian hordes to Egyptian warriors in chariots, each enables the player to experience and rewrite history in a different way. The game also majors on empire building, with the ability to construct entire cities and of course train up armies in preparation for war. You can also micro-manage as much or as little as desired, through the use of auto-management tools and special advisors on hand to dispense wisdom.

Best of all, the game engine is now capable of portraying battles featuring more than 10,000 units. And because each unit is a complex 3D model benefiting from fluid motion captured animation, the intelligent camera system is as



■ Up to 10,000 soldiers fight it out in the incredible fully-3D battles of *Rome: Total War* – not all of them survive.

adept at getting right into the heart of the battle as it is pulling right back for a perfect strategic view. From all out war on the plains of Europe, to assaults against cities with catapults and war elements, to attacks on fortresses using siege towers and battering rams, this is really is Total War.



Publisher:
Developer:
Release:

Activision
The Creative Assembly
Out now



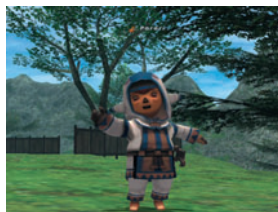
■ In *Final Fantasy XI* gamers can set forth on multiplayer missions that help to build character reputations, earn useful items and untold riches, and even unlock the secrets of Vana'diel.



■ *FFXI* has been developed in conjunction with NVIDIA. The result is a living, breathing gameworld.

Final Fantasy XI

An epic online game world that's in a league of its own.



Publisher:
Developer:
Release:

Square Enix
Square Enix
Out Now

Since its inception in 1987, *Final Fantasy*® has become a legend in the world of video game role-playing. Over the years, the format has pushed ever forwards, widening its appeal through the use of lavish cinematics and real-time 3D elements while never losing its adventuring roots. With *Final Fantasy XI*, the series ventures into new territory once again, this time making the transition to the Internet.

A subscription-based MMORPG, *Final Fantasy* enables gamers to play alongside one another in the online world of Vana'diel. Employing the same epic brand of storytelling that's made the *Final Fantasy* series so well loved, players start off by pledging allegiance to one of three nations as they set forth to raise the standing of their homeland and their online alter ego.

There are more than 100 different areas in the diverse game world, with

forests, mountain ranges, icy wastes, desert plains, rivers and oceans all faithfully recreated, along with castles, dungeons and other areas ripe for exploring and questing.

And because this is a persistent online world it even has its own day and night cycles, while climate changes can

***FFXI* possesses the exact same visual stylings and epic brand of storytelling that has made the *Final Fantasy* series so loved by so many...**

bring fog, snow and thunderstorms.

"We developed a solid partnership with NVIDIA during the development of *Final Fantasy XI*," commented Square Enix. "The GeForce series has enabled us to create the world of Vana'diel successfully on the PC, which allows us to offer the ultimate *Final Fantasy XI* experience to all our many players."

Some *Final Fantasy* fans may worry that the gameplay has been diluted for online play, but they can rest easy. This is a true *FF* experience, from the inclusion of Chocobos, to the use of stately modes of transport like boats and airships.

And, while the game majors on combat, there's also a wide range of

non-battle related skills to pursue, including alchemy, fishing, and even leatherworking. And of course there's now the ability to form or join parties, fighting alongside other players, on quests, mini-adventures and battles against the more powerful foes. Believe us, it's like the ultimate *Final Fantasy* adventure, and then some.



■ *Lineage II* adds next generation graphical appeal to the number one selling online role-playing franchise.

Lineage II

In the world of MMORPG, *Lineage* is legendary. Having sold more than 2.5 million copies, the original game is officially the most popular MMORPG ever created. Now the follow-up is set to do the same.

This is actually a prequel to the first title with a story set in the same kingdom of Aden some 150 years earlier. It's a far more ambitious online gaming experience than its predecessor, boasting a dynamic 3D world inhabited by thousands of monsters, beasts and players in all manner of guises, from human and elf to orcs and dwarves. *Lineage II* uses a modified version of the *Unreal* engine – a system that thanks to collaboration between NVIDIA and its creators at Epic, can handle highly detailed environments and character models plus a wide range of special effects without ever compromising game performance.

It's a game that's deceptively easy to get into, yet blessed with an amazing depth of content. Complex economic and political systems lie beneath the surface, while an enhanced character class system brings with it a wide range of playing styles, skills and special items. There are also numerous communication tools to enable gamers to converse as they fight alongside or even against each other. *Lineage II* even features siege warfare elements, adding yet another new dimension to the role-playing genre.



Publisher:
Developer:
Release:

NCSOFT
NCSOFT
December



World Of Warcraft

Ask any RTS fan to list their all-time favourite games and you can be sure that *Warcraft* will be mentioned. Now at last the series is headed online.

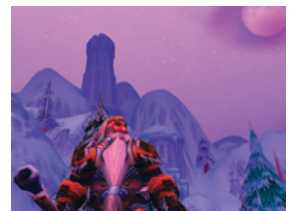
World Of Warcraft takes place in the land of Azeroth, some four years after the story told in *Warcraft III*. As the various races and factions begin to rebuild their shattered and ravaged kingdoms, they soon discover that the world is once again under threat, with an ancient evil threatening to engulf everything in chaos and pain. Azeroth's fate lies in the actions of heroes of all races, who must forge fellowships and fight side by side in order to overcome this new and deadly threat.

The online game world is home to thousands of players, with fully customisable character classes, a unique range of *Warcraft* races and creatures. Thousands of quests and real-time battles also await in the expansive and highly varied terrain, with new content added on a regular basis on the online servers.

The development team at Blizzard have worked closely with NVIDIA to deliver a game with maximum graphical impact. "NVIDIA GPUs enrich the gaming experience with faster frame rates and enhanced visuals," says Blizzard's Paul Sams. "With a track record of performance, compatibility and reliability, it's easy to recommend NVIDIA GPUs for those about to begin their journey into the *World Of Warcraft*."

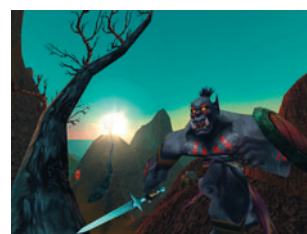


■ Play out your fighting fantasies in *World Of Warcraft*, an online experience supporting thousands of players at once.



Publisher:
Developer:
Release:

Vivendi Universal Games
Blizzard
Out now



The way it's meant to be played

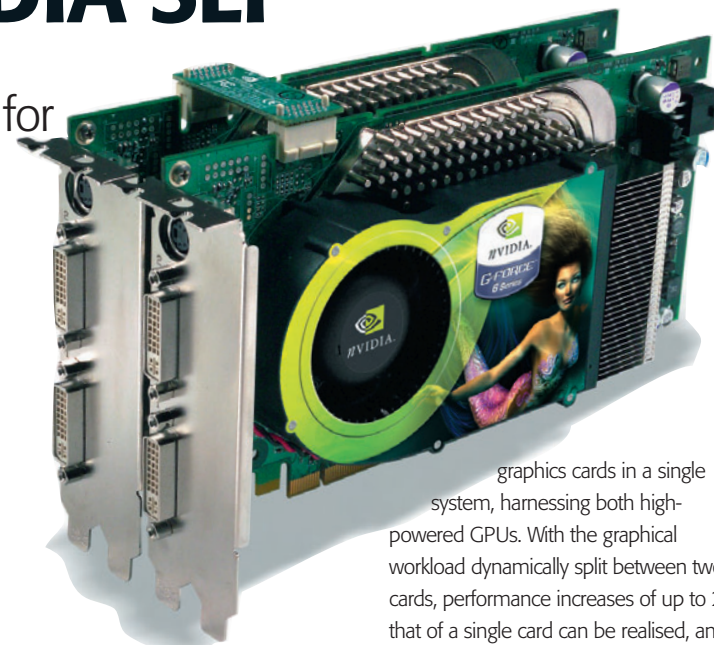
Turbocharge Your Graphics With NVIDIA SLI

Meet the Ultimate Performance Boost for NVIDIA owners...

Q What could possibly be better than a PC equipped with an NVIDIA-based graphics card?

A A PC equipped with two NVIDIA-based graphics cards.

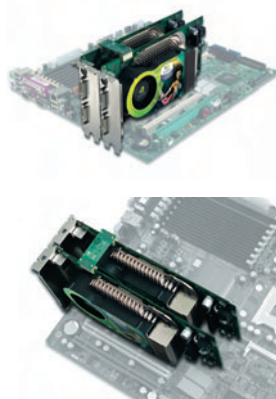
NVIDIA has long been at the forefront of technology advancements in the world of PC graphics processing; its current range of NVIDIA® GeForce™ 6 Series graphics processing units (GPUs) offers the most significant performance breakthroughs yet. But, of course, it's human nature to crave more power and that goes double for gamers and PC enthusiasts for whom the highest possible resolutions, frame rates, refresh times and detail levels are of paramount concern. For these power-hungry users, the



revolutionary new NVIDIA® SLI™ (Scaleable Link Interface) multi-GPU technology offers the most powerful graphics solution yet.

With NVIDIA SLI technology it is now possible to combine two GeForce-based

graphics cards in a single system, harnessing both high-powered GPUs. With the graphical workload dynamically split between two cards, performance increases of up to 2x that of a single card can be realised, and all by expanding upon rather than replacing the existing installed hardware. The result is the fastest 3D and 2D performance available to home PC users – more than enough power to handle any gaming or 3D-reliant application



■ NVIDIA SLI makes use of NVIDIA SLI-certified motherboards that are capable of having two NVIDIA SLI-certified PCI Express graphics cards plugged into them. Joined by the NVIDIA SLI connector, the two graphics cards are able to power one monitor. It's an intelligent hardware and software solution capable of delivering earth-shattering PC performance.

NVIDIA SLI EXPLAINED

Ever wish it was possible to squeeze two graphics cards into one PC, turning it into a graphics powerhouse? Now you can.

WHAT IS NVIDIA SLI?

- NVIDIA is a high-performance technology that makes it possible to use two NVIDIA GPUs in a single PC system
- NVIDIA SLI intelligently distributes the workload between the two GPUs, to

scale both geometry and fill rate performance

WHAT YOU NEED

- Two NVIDIA SLI-certified GeForce 6 Series-based PCI Express graphics cards (Cards must be the same model from the same vendor). NVIDIA SLI technology is supported in the following GeForce 6 Series GPUs: GeForce 6800 Ultra, GeForce 6800 GT, and GeForce 6600 GT.

- An NVIDIA SLI-certified motherboard with two physical connectors that are capable of having two NVIDIA SLI-certified PCI Express graphics cards plugged into them.
- The NVIDIA SLI connector.
- The latest NVIDIA® ForceWare™ unified graphics driver with NVIDIA SLI support.

WHAT IT DELIVERS

- Raw graphic performance is boosted by up to 2x the

performance of a single card.

- Games and applications can be run at higher resolutions than ever before
- Advanced compositing, rendering and scanout technologies ensure uncompromised image quality.
- Patent-pending load balancing and rendering algorithms intelligently and dynamically split the workload to maximise dual GPU power.



■ While early multi-GPU solutions (such as the one once offered by 3dfx) were only able to use two graphics cards to scale texture fill rate, NVIDIA SLI technology fully scales geometry performance. What's more it uses a fully digital frame-combining method to ensure maximum image quality.

currently on the market, or likely to be released for some time to come.

The idea of using graphics processing units in 'parallel' is nothing new. Back in 1993, such solutions helped make Silicon Graphics' range of computers a must for high end visual work. At the time, such technology could cost anywhere between a quarter of a million dollars to a cool million. Then in 1998 came the advent of parallel graphics for home computer users, with the Voodoo SLI™ solution from 3dfx. Enabling users to increase their power by strapping an extra graphics card alongside their existing one, it provided a tantalising glimpse of things to come.

POWER POINT

Fast-forward to 2004 and the idea has finally come of age. Brushing aside the architectural and performance limitations

that have previously hindered the advancement of dual-card solutions, NVIDIA SLI multi-GPU technology ushers in a new age of graphics processing power. While previous multi-GPU solutions were constrained by reduced image quality, NVIDIA SLI completely eliminates this problem, whether the display is output via an analogue or digital connection. Best of all, with NVIDIA's SLI making maximum use of PCI Express, innovative inter-GPU communication protocol, and dynamic load balancing algorithms, the net result is a massive speed gain.

NVIDIA SLI facilitates higher frame rates, more polygons on screen, more complex lighting effects and all-round best ever visual quality

Support for NVIDIA SLI technology can be found in the GeForce 6800 Ultra, the GeForce 6800 GT. Armed with any one of these cards and a motherboard offering two PCI Express buses, it's then possible to add in a second, identically specified card from the same manufacturer, to obtain an instant performance boost. And because support for NVIDIA SLI is built right into the latest update of highly acclaimed NVIDIA's ForceWare Unified Driver Architecture (UDA), there isn't even any need for special drivers.

The additional bandwidth of PCI Express is integral to the NVIDIA SLI experience. In the past, the connection between the GPU and the PC's input/output created a bottleneck. With PCI Express offering some 60 times the bandwidth of the old PCI system, that bottleneck is finally removed, enabling not one, but two NVIDIA GPUs to work at peak performance. Additionally, an internal bridge provides 'invisible' communication between the two cards, enabling them to communicate quickly and easily with one another, and without any of the overheads usually associated

with a bus-only implementation.

The final piece of the puzzle is a set of software so advanced that patents are already pending. This software dynamically splits the multi-rendering load between the GPUs, adjusting the split based on what is being displayed at any moment, and so taking advantage of the two-card SLI configuration.

Facilitating higher frame rates, more polygons on screen, more complex shaders and lighting effects, and best ever visual quality, NVIDIA SLI is a whole new way to view the big picture.



HOW TO DOUBLE YOUR GRAPHICS MUSCLE

NVIDIA SLI will initially be available from PC manufacturers through certified systems. For those looking to upgrade, retail versions of NVIDIA SLI-bundled graphics boards will follow later this year. Below is a list of just some of the NVIDIA partners set to offer SLI-certified products.

Alienware
www.alienware.com

ASUS Computer International
www.asus.com

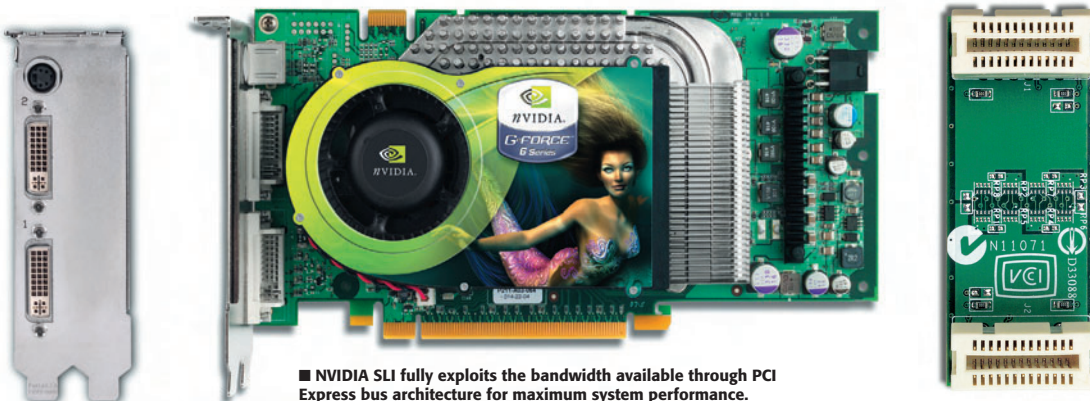
Boxx Technologies
www.boxxtech.com

Gainward
www.gainward.com

Leadtek Research, Inc
www.leadtek.com

Point Of View
www.pointofview-online.com

Scan Computers Intl Ltd
www.scan.co.uk



■ NVIDIA SLI fully exploits the bandwidth available through PCI Express bus architecture for maximum system performance.



Look for 'NVIDIA®: The way it's meant to be played™ (TWIMTBP)' seal on games and hardware that deliver an awesome gaming experience. Equip yourself with an NVIDIA GPU so you can play your game the way it's meant to be played. The power, compatibility and reliability of NVIDIA GPUs make them the overwhelming choice of game developers, which is why today's hottest games are developed on NVIDIA, to be played on NVIDIA.