

Issue 04



THE WAY

It's Meant To Be Played

Ultimate PC gaming with GeForce

Silent and deadly

Choose your weapons
with **Hitman: Contracts** and
Thief: Deadly Shadows



Contents



What's new in hardware **04.** Thief: Deadly Shadows **08.** Hitman: Contracts **09.** Far Cry **13.**



Produced by
Future Plus 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW
Printed by
Precision Colour Print, Telford

The Future Network plc is a public company.
Printed in the UK © **Future Publishing 2004**
All images and materials are property of their respective owners.
All Rights Reserved.
GeForce FX GPU pictures © NVIDIA
Cover pictures © Thief: Deadly Shadows and Hitman:
Contracts, Copyright 2004 Eidos. All rights reserved.





The way it's meant to be played

Great technology, 100% compatibility. NVIDIA answers some questions about the TWIMTBP concept...

Q What is 'The way it's meant to be played'?

A 'NVIDIA®: The way it's meant to be played™ (TWIMTBP)', delivers the ultimate "install-and-play" experience for PC gamers. The goal of the campaign is to ensure that the greatest PC games play and perform stably on NVIDIA hardware with complete compatibility, so that gamers can enjoy the game exactly, "the way it's meant to be played".

Q Isn't this just another paid-for marketing campaign?

A Not at all – publishers don't pay NVIDIA to join the programme, and developers and publishers don't get paid to be in the programme. First and foremost, for a title to be in the programme, the developer and publisher have to believe that the customer will have the best overall experience if their game is played on NVIDIA Graphics. 'The way it's meant to be played' is a seal that the developer, NVIDIA and the publisher have worked together to provide a great gaming experience for the consumer. Secondly, NVIDIA promotes our software partners' products to our consumers so they know what games will best show off the latest GeForce graphics. It's about bringing a console-like experience to the PC.

Q What sort of support can programmers expect?

A Programmers receive world-class support from NVIDIA whether or not they're in the programme; that's what brings them into the programme

in the first place. The games are developed on PCs using NVIDIA-based GPUs, with NVIDIA's technical developer relations engineers on hand to offer support and performance testing, assistance in creating advanced special effects, and also to resolve technical issues if needed.

Q What difference does it make for the consumer?

A If you have an NVIDIA-based graphics card in your PC, such as a GeForce FX, then buying games with the TWIMTBP logo will help ensure compatibility, stability and reliability – NVIDIA's watchwords. Your game will install straight out of the box and, because it has been developed on and optimised for NVIDIA GPUs, you'll get the ultimate playing experience.

Q How many games are in the campaign so far?

A Worldwide, around 250 games carrying the TWIMTBP seal of approval have been published and are on sale. There are also around 60 more games currently in development, which have already signed up for the campaign. NVIDIA is talking constantly to publishers and developers across Europe, the US and in Asia, with new games being signed to TWIMTBP every week.

■ Published every three months, this magazine aims to showcase the very best TWIMTBP titles. In these pages, you'll read how the latest and most technologically advanced PC games are using the power of NVIDIA to give you the most exhilarating gaming experiences possible.



The way it's meant to be played



Introducing The GeForce 6800 GPUs

Immerse your mind with NVIDIA's new wave of graphics processing units...

Forget what you think you know about 3D graphics. With the introduction of the NVIDIA® GeForce™ 6800 graphics processing units (GPUs), everything changes. Offering much more than an exponential leap in performance, this new generation of GPUs brings a dazzling array of new technologies and visual effects to PC gaming for the very first time – setting new standards for image quality, realism and video functionality.

At the heart of the GeForce 6800 GPUs is an innovative 0.13 micron chip, composed of 222 million transistors yet measuring just 40x40mm. NVIDIA has harnessed the power of this hardware using the new NVIDIA® CineFX 3.0™ engine; its third-generation technology

This new generation of GPUs brings a dazzling array of new technologies and visual effects to PC gaming...

delivers eight times the floating point shader power and twice the vertex processing power of previous generation GPUs. Furthermore, CineFX 3.0 engine boasts 32-bit shading power throughout the pipeline, infinite length shader

■ The GeForce 6800 Ultra. Set to re-invent PC gaming graphics.

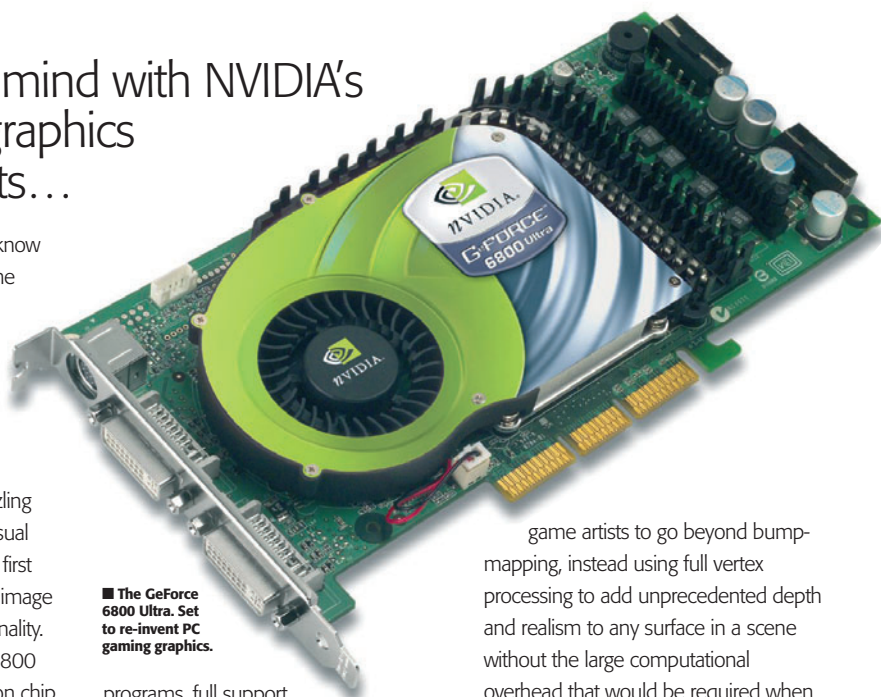
programs, full support for the new Microsoft® DirectX® 9.0 Shader Model 3.0, and the power to implement a slew of industry-leading features – all of which enable game developers to craft the most

complex and immersive digital worlds yet seen on the PC.

Displacement mapping is undoubtedly one of the most exciting new technologies delivered by the GeForce 6800 GPUs. This enables

game artists to go beyond bump-mapping, instead using full vertex processing to add unprecedented depth and realism to any surface in a scene without the large computational overhead that would be required when creating a similar level of detail using polygons. It's a technique already regularly used in film effects. Now it's set to change the face of PC gaming.

Another industry first is the implementation of NVIDIA High-Precision Dynamic-Range (HPDR) technology. Based on techniques developed by none other than Industrial Light & Magic, this introduces a new era of high clarity through the rendering of extended lighting values, with frame buffer blending for explosion and motion blur effects. Then there's support for multiple render targets, an advanced technique that opens up a whole new range of custom effects, including complex lighting and shading goodies





The NVIDIA GeForce 6800 GPUs offer the most powerful graphics solution ever created for the home user...

such as glow effects. Equally jaw-dropping are the results offered by subsurface scattering. This technique mimics the effects of light on translucent surfaces such as skin.

Global illumination is another technique widely used in the world of pre-rendered visual effects now made available to game developers via CineFX 3.0. Furthermore, with support for soft shadows and the ability to cast onto environmentally generated surface detail such as grass or vegetation, a new, more photorealistic representation of light and shade is at last possible.

Beyond the many breakthroughs in real-time rendering, the GeForce 6800 GPUs also set new standards for image

quality and rock solid performance. Full 32-bit colour precision is offered without performance compromise; NVIDIA® Intellisample™ 3.0 technology delivers the industry's fastest antialiasing for jagged edge removal, and 128-bit studio-precision computation throughout the processing pipeline prevents defects and ensures maximum image quality.

The GeForce 6800 GPUs also offer unmatched video capabilities. With the industry's first on-chip video processor, it provides full MPEG support, an integrated TV encoder for display up to 1024x768 pixels, video scaling and filtering, plus advanced adaptive de-interlacing for smooth playback on progressive displays. Add DVI flat panel



output, NVIDIA® nView™ multi-display Technology, and NVIDIA® Digital Vibrance Control™ 3.0 technology and you've got the ultimate multimedia solution. And of course, it's all delivered via NVIDIA® ForceWare™ Unified Driver Architecture (UDA), NVIDIA's unique single software driver solution.

Delivering movie quality effects in real-time, uncompromised performance and unmatched multimedia functionality, the NVIDIA GeForce 6800 GPUs offer the most powerful graphics solution ever created for the gaming enthusiast.

THE GEFORCE 6800 AT A GLANCE

ADVANCED CHIP TECHNOLOGY

- 0.13 micron, 40mm x 40mm chip, composed of 222 million transistors
- 400MHz RAMDACs
- The world's fastest DDR3 memory
- 256-bit memory interface
- Support for both AGP BX and the latest PCI Express X16 bus for up to 4GB/sec transfer in both directions
- Advanced thermal management and monitoring
- Windows XP, ME, 2000 and 9X compatible
- NVIDIA ForceWare Unified Driver Architecture

CINEFX 3.0 FEATURES

- DirectX 9.0 and OpenGL® 1.5 Optimisations and support
- Infinite length vertex and pixel shader programs
- Multiple render targets
- Up to 16 textures per rendering pass
- Support of sRGB texturing for gamma textures
- Full 128-bit studio quality floating point precision through the entire pipeline for improved image motion, clarity and detail
- Floating point frame buffer rendering for explosions, motion blur.

SUPPORT FOR ADVANCED GRAPHICAL TECHNIQUES

- NVIDIA® UltraShadow™ II technology delivers four times the shadow processing power of previous GPUs
- Displacement mapping enables the unique creation and animation of 3D characters and objects
- NVIDIA High-Precision Dynamic-Range (HPDR) technology sets new standards for image clarity and quality through floating point capabilities in shading, filtering, texturing and blending
- NVIDIA Intellisample 3.0 technology utilises rotated grid sampling and offers the industry's fastest antialiasing for visuals with no jagged edges

MULTIMEDIA POWER

- The first on-chip video processor
- Full MPEG support
- Advanced adaptive de-interlacing for smooth video and DVD playback on progressive displays
- Video scaling and filtering for video playback at any window size, including full-screen HDTV.
- Integrated TV encoder with output up to 1024x768 resolution
- NVIDIA nView multi-display technology and NVIDIA Digital Vibrance Control 3.0

Meet Nalu

This is NVIDIA's new poster girl, the star of a technology demo that demonstrates the fluid animation made possible by the GeForce 6800 GPUs. Through the power of the CineFX 3.0 engine, Nalu offers a tantalising look at what the next generation of shading realism has to offer. Utilising full support for Microsoft DirectX 9.0 Shader Model 3.0, infinite length pixel shader programming, and floating point filtering and blending, she boasts complex hair, skinning and shadowing of a quality unlike anything you've ever seen before.

See Nalu and you understand how much of a breakthrough it is that pro-level movie visual effects techniques and technologies are at last available for use in real-time gaming – and at blistering speeds. This is a GPU built to easily handle the demands of the next generation of cutting-edge games.



■ NVIDIA has a new, aquatic poster girl to show off the fluid animation offered by GeForce 6800 GPUs.



© 2004 NVIDIA Corporation. All rights reserved.

The way it's meant to be played



Publisher: **Codemasters**
Developer: **Six By Nine**
Release: **Out now**

Case study: Colin McRae 04



When most PC gamers talk about rallying, they're talking about the *Colin McRae* games. And not without good reason. This series has come to define the desktop driving experience, and now – with this fourth generation simulation – everything steps up a gear with new modes, features, and challenges. Brace yourself for a range of 20 current and classic vehicles, each modelled with uncanny attention to detail; eight rally locations of six

stages each; and eight modes of play, taking in 4-wheel drive, 2-wheel drive and Group B events. Also featured are a host of new multiplayer options, including simultaneous co-operative and competitive races for up to eight players.

Of course the rally experience is as much about the look as it is feel, and so central to the *04* experience is a faster, more detailed terrain engine capable of rendering 34 different driving surfaces, with dynamic views aided and abetted by new bumper and damage cams. Here the *McRae* team clearly benefited from the TWIMTBP development experience:

"From start to finish, NVIDIA were there for us," says Six By Nine's director Sam Brown. "The level of service and access that was provided was way above what we had planned for. We found that if we had a problem or idea, we could just pick up the phone and ask questions of the guys who really knew the answers. This personal contact made working with NVIDIA a positive experience and as easy as you could ask for."

Colin McRae 04 is already a critical smash on Xbox and PlayStation2, attracting breathless plaudits for its incredible visual realism. Now the NVIDIA-enhanced version brings the series back home to the PC in style.



Publisher: **Lucasarts**
Developer: **Sony Online Entertainment**
Release: **Out now**



■ All the people, places and sci-fi hardware are vividly realised in this massively multiplayer epic.

Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided

Imagine if the 'A long time ago, in a galaxy far away' became here, now and in the form of a persistent online gameworld. That's exactly what *Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided* delivers. Playing alongside thousands of other *Star Wars* fans, gamers are given the opportunity to assume the role of smuggler, squad leader, bounty hunter, or one of the other 27 professions, nurturing their online character and taking part in a wide variety of encounters and missions, in the vast cities and massive outdoor terrains of nine fully realised worlds. It's an endlessly changing, utterly absorbing challenge, one that delivers a true *Star Wars* experience through a 3D engine capable of displaying familiar locations, vehicles, races and characters in vivid detail. If you spent your childhood fantasising about becoming a Jedi, space pirate or even a wookiee, this is the only place to be. And yes, even Darth Vader is in there somewhere, if you dare go looking...



Publisher: **Empire**
Developer: **Strangelite**
Release: **May**



■ The game looks uncannily similar to the original movie. Only this time the bugs are coming for you.

Starship Troopers

At long last the most intense monster movie of the last decade has spawned a brilliantly bug-infested videogame. In fact, to call this game bug-infested is almost an understatement. Mirroring the gorgeously horrific scenes of the film, *Starship Troopers* is packed with battles involving hundreds of killer creatures – a feat made possible through the use of an ambitious new 3D engine.

"Working with NVIDIA has given us the inside information we need to push the hardware to its extremes," reckons producer Simon Pryterch. "Developing a game which renders hordes of alien bugs with full real-time dynamic lighting and shadows requires a strong technical team. We're proud to have NVIDIA as part of that team."

Featuring classic bugs from the movie plus new even more deadly variants, a story that encompasses the original tale then goes in a wild new direction, plus classic squad-based shoot-'em-up-action, this shows how movie spin-offs should be made.



■ Breaking up is never hard to do, thanks to the amazing visuals and physics modelling in *FlatOut*.

FlatOut

Bugbear, most recently seen working with Wings on the hotly tipped *Soldner*, is a development team not so much passionate about racing as utterly obsessed. Having spent the last four years developing a state-of-the-art engine specifically for racing games, it's now ready to rumble with the explosive *FlatOut*. Here, arcade racing smashes headlong into an exacting physics system with chassis-crushing results. Strapped into rough and ready rust buckets rather than the latest swish sports cars, *FlatOut* drivers do whatever it takes to cross the finish line first. It's not just bumpers and bodywork that bend and break with unerring accuracy via the developer's truly state-of-the-art damage modelling system. Just about every element in the vast, near photo-real gameworld can also be knocked, dented and destroyed as cars spin, slide and sometimes even fly into the varied, all-too vulnerable scenery. Now who'd have thought road rage could look so attractive?



■ In *XPand Rally*, every last detail is fully replicated, right down to the livery on vehicle bodywork.

XPand Rally

Built to take advantage of the latest PC graphics technology, *XPand Rally* may well be the most visually authentic and immersive rallying game to date. Each car model is built using 10K polygons and textured using one hundred percent photo-based detailing, with DX9 pixel and vertex shaders enabling the addition of complex lighting and diffusion effects. Yet perhaps even more impressive is the depiction of the environments, packed with realistic water and vegetation, and augmented by effects such as glow and motion blur. Dynamic weather and daytime lighting changes add to the authenticity, and of course, there's a variety of road surfaces. This commitment to realism also filters through to the gameplay itself, with physics simulation applied to all objects, and even a set of inbuilt tools for creating new vehicles, tracks and game mods. On the strength of what we've seen so far, this newcomer to the rally scene could well be the first in a highly successful series.

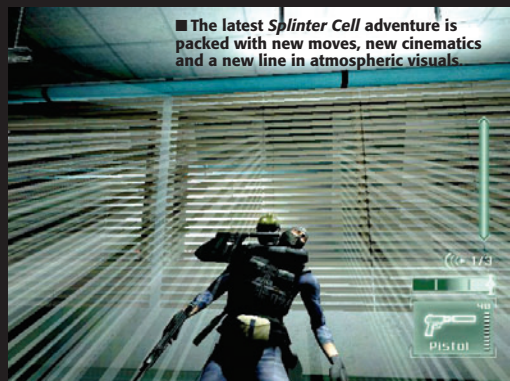


Publisher: **Empire**
Developer: **Bugbear Entertainment**
Release: **May**



Publisher: **Deep Silver**
Developer: **Techland**
Release: **May**

Case study: Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow



■ The latest *Splinter Cell* adventure is packed with new moves, new cinematics and a new line in atmospheric visuals.

Based on the bestselling espionage novels of Tom Clancy, the *Splinter Cell* series takes gamers into the shadowy world of stealth operative Sam Fisher, charged with infiltrating and eliminating the world's most dangerous terrorist cells. *Pandora Tomorrow* sees the shadowy hero delving into a deadlier, more involving adventure, where innovative features, higher production values, and atmospheric visuals amplify the tension like never before.

From the ground up, this is the *Splinter Cell* gamestyle refined and retooled. Fisher is now capable of pulling off a wide array of classic stealth and combat moves, from pipe shimmys and drop attacks, to rappels, split jumps and SWAT turns. It's even possible to make use of enemies, forcing them to utilise objects such as retina scanners, using them as human shields or simply carrying their bodies to a safer hiding place. A range of innovative new gadgets, based on real life prototypes, add to Fisher's arsenal. And complementing the single player narrative is a new multiplayer mode, offering the world's first competitive stealth-based online play. Here, Shadownet spies go up against heavily-armed Argus mercenaries in tense cat-and-mouse confrontations.

Locations as diverse as a US Embassy, the Paris to Nice train, and Los Angeles airport are all vividly realised through cinematic touches (complete with voice acting from *Total Recall*'s Michael Ironside and 24's Dennis Haysbert, plus music from the legendary Lalo Shifrin) and high-end real-time rendering, completed with dynamic simulation of indoor and natural lighting, and fluidly animated high poly models. As with other recent Ubisoft releases, this is a game that wears its TWIMTBTP badge with pride.

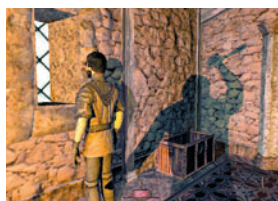


Publisher: **Ubisoft**
Developer: **Ubisoft**
Release: **Out Now**

The way it's meant to be played

Thief: Deadly Shadows

The original stealth adventure emerges from the darkness once again.



Publisher: **Eidos**
Developer: **Ion Storm**
Release: **Out now**

When *Thief: The Dark Project* arrived in 1998, it ushered in a new era of stealth-based gaming. Then came *Thief II: The Metal Age*, an even more audacious journey into a medieval world of darkness, deceit, thievery and heart-pounding tension. Now, at long last the third in the series is here.

Developed by the studio responsible for the award-winning *Deus Ex* games, Ion Storm, this pushes the genre to a whole new level with a story that sees anti-hero Garrett using his thievery skills to save the very city in which he has always kept to the shadows.

Garrett has unparalleled thieving skills making the most of the inky darkness and gloom around him...

"*Thief's* groundbreaking gameplay laid the foundation for the popular action-stealth genre," says Eidos' Matt Gorman. "*Thief: Deadly Shadows* revisits these roots and broadens its gameplay with the addition of the



■ The looming gothic architecture provides a suitably grim environment for the shadow stalking.

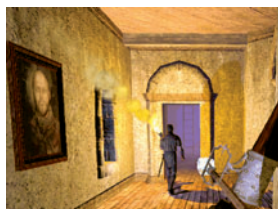
cinematic third-person perspective and Ion Storm's dynamic lighting and shadow technology."

According to Ion Storm, the level of communication offered through the TWIMTBP programme has helped ensure that the game engine delivers. "NVIDIA has been extremely responsive to all questions we have asked and been proactive in helping us identify and resolve both compatibility and performance issues," says Tim Little, director of technology.

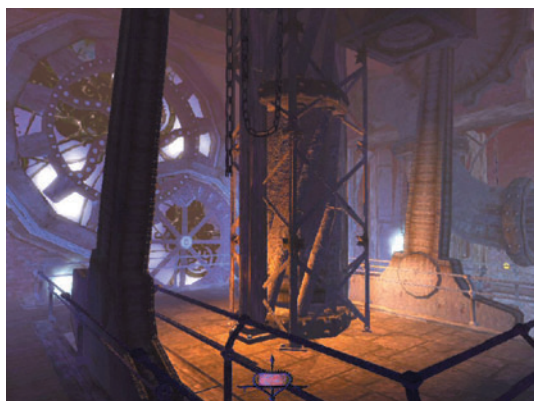
What's essential to appreciate is that the engine's ability to dynamically render complex lighting isn't just technology for technology's sake. In the world of the

thief, lighting and shadow are integral to the stealth experience. Garrett has only limited fighting abilities, but unparalleled thieving skills, making the most of the inky darkness and gloom around him. Dealing with enemies that actually look and hear, and using climbing gloves, flashbombs, and even arrows that carry flame, water, or make a distracting noise, players get to immerse themselves in the role of the thief like never before.

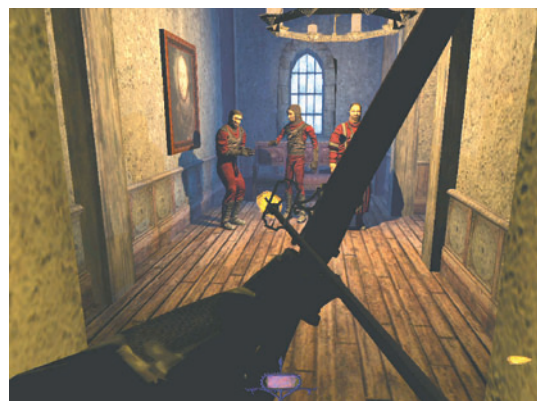
Thief: Deadly Shadows also blows the action adventure game format wide open, giving players complete freedom to tackle missions and situations in a multitude of ways. Will Garrett knock out the lights, leaving enemies temporarily blinded? Or maybe he'd be better off using stealth tactics to loiter in the shadows, move quietly and avoid detection? Or why not take more direct action, killing his foe then hiding the body so nobody will suspect a thing? In this strange world, rife with secret passages, hidden treasures, and untold dangers, Garrett's destiny is genuinely in the player's hands.



■ This is the most ambitious and technically advanced journey into the shadowy medieval world of Garrett yet.



■ The advanced lighting techniques transform the whole stealth experience.



■ Guards have realistic hearing. If you make a noise, prepare to fight!



Hitman: Contracts

More action, murder and mayhem with gaming's most stylish assassin.

The third chapter in the highly controversial *Hitman* series is a truly radical creation. Even the opening is hard-hitting – showing our hero, Agent 47, lying bleeding on the floor of a Paris apartment, and then segueing to interactive flashbacks of all his formative missions. From there, it just gets even bigger, bolder, and more violent, the flashback concept presenting the world as the hitman sees it, a disturbing insight into the mind of a contract killer.

"*Contracts* reveals a new side to the hitman," says IO Interactive MD Janos Flösser. "The game is epic, disturbing, but most importantly an enjoyable experience. And the technology we're employing will make it one of the most advanced games on the market."

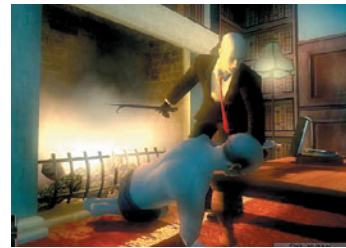
Through an amazing new graphical tool, the team was able to utilise the sort of visual tricks normally added to movies...



■ Improved visuals means even more graphic violence – this one is definitely not for the squeamish.

There are now even more killing moves, new weapons, plus a charming system whereby strangulations unlock further skills! There's also an improved control system, its speed and precision imbuing Agent 47's frequently lethal moves with worrying realism. It also enables the use of objects close to hand: from hot pokers to snooker cues, it's surprising what becomes a deadly weapon in the hands of a stone cold killing machine. Not that the many assassinations are any easier, a new AI system giving the enemies improved communication skills for better teamwork throughout the twelve levels.

Following the path of the hitman around the world, the missions take in Paris, Siberia, China and the UK, with

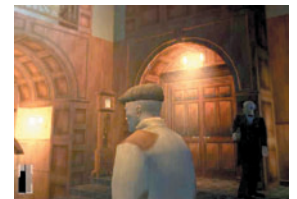


■ A great range of weapons and take-down moves makes Agent 47 more lethal than ever.

some locations familiar to fans of the first game, and several new concoctions, including a gruesome meat factory, replete with rivers of blood and suspiciously useful-looking meat hooks.

Responding to fan input, IO Interactive has created larger levels in which it's possible to get even closer to targets, while also providing greater flexibility over the way missions are tackled. Players can even wade in all guns blazing, though without an appreciation for stealth and the role of the game's dynamic lighting, the killing is likely to stop sooner rather than later.

IO Interactive has also pushed the Glacier 3D engine to new heights, yielding a fivefold performance increase that's put to good use rendering far more detailed environments. And through an amazing new graphical tool the development team was able to utilise the sort of visual tricks normally added to movies in post-production. The world of *Hitman* may be harsh, but it's one awash with special effects such as depth blurring, colour correction, film-style graining, and even ambient 'warm' and 'cold' lighting techniques. All the better to bounce light off the bald head of Agent 47, obviously.



Publisher:
Developer:
Release:

Eidos
IO Interactive
May



■ *Contracts* boosts its visual quality through clever post-production-style image manipulation and lighting effects.

The way it's meant to be played



Publisher: **Digital Jesters**
Developer: **Cyanide**
Release: **Out now**

Pro Rugby Manager 2004

While football simulations get more elaborate every year, rugby fans often get something of a raw deal. *Pro Rugby Manager 2004* aims to make amends. Here, every body blow and adrenaline pumping penalty is recreated in full 3D with motion-captured animation and graphical features extending beyond complex player detailing to encompass authentic stadium modelling and a range of weather effects.

"The great contacts we had with NVIDIA's developer relations team have helped to improve our already very good developer tools," says the game's project manager Patrick Pligersdorffer. "This provided a very welcome boost in productivity for both programmers and artists."

With the scrum level action accompanied by a full management simulation, data for over 100 clubs and 50 national teams, plus the recreation of all key competitions from 10 National championships, this is the sim rugby has been waiting for.



■ Motion-captured, bone-crunching action to pore over courtesy of the heavyweight *Pro Rugby Manager 2004*.



Publisher: **Zoo Digital**
Developer: **Cinemaware**
Release: **May**



■ Crowning glory: The legend of Robin Hood is brought to life in a blend of storytelling, 3D action and strategy gaming.

Robin Hood: Defender Of The Crown

Back in videogaming's own Middle Ages (circa 1988), *Defender Of The Crown* was the must-have cinematic experience, thrilling owners of the Amiga home computer and Nintendo Entertainment System with its deep and hugely varied historical gameplay. Now comes the 21st century incarnation – an epic tale of dering-do in the time of Robin Hood, Prince John and a medieval England split into territories ripe for conquest. From scenes focusing on one-on-one combat to battles featuring massed military units, *Defender Of The Crown* presents a richly detailed 3D world, while gameplay encompasses everything from archery and jousting, to interaction with such familiar figures as Friar Tuck and Little John. And through an entirely open-ended structure, plus a suite of multiple endings, it also manages to be that rare beast: a plot-rich cinematic title with genuine replay value. Could this be the most swashbuckling game yet to receive the TWIMTBP seal of approval?



Publisher: **Codemasters**
Developer: **Codemasters**
Release: **Out now**

Case study: Toca Race Driver 2: The Ultimate Racing Simulator

Race Driver 2 is, ironically, a game of firsts. It's the first to fully simulate the awesome Aston Martin DB9, which features with 34 other vehicles, including the Jaguar XJ220, Nissan Skyline, and Land Rover Bowler Wildcat. It's also the first to cover so many different types of driving, simulating everything from Street Racing and Rally Cross, to Formula Ford, Open Wheel Grand Prix and Classic Car Racing. There's even truck racing for some real heavyweight driving. The game also packs in an amazing 52 different circuits, from Laguna Seca, to Kyalami, through to dear old Donington.

TOCA Race Driver 2 also features the new Terminal Damage engine. Created using real motorsport crashes for reference, it uses thousands of deformation points on each vehicle,



■ From Grand Prix to Rally Cross, *Race Driver 2* simulates just about every form of racing imaginable.

realistically modelling the effects of a crash on glass, metal and plastic, producing visually astonishing smash-ups. Cool particle effects even show the trajectory of individual glass shards,

dust specks and paint chips, while internal malfunctions can blight gear mechanism, brake systems and other essentials. Heady stuff, and just what we expect from Codemasters.



■ A brand new 3D engine will bring the highly addictive *EverQuest* experience to a higher imaginative level.

EverQuest II

EverQuest needs little introduction. The game's worryingly addictive qualities have been discussed everywhere from *Wired* magazine to the BBC news. But just imagine what would happen if that ferociously popular formula was brought bang up to date and consequently presented a richer, more rewarding kind of adventure. Chances are it would look suspiciously like *EverQuest II*. Like its predecessor, this is a fantasy role-playing game where thousands of players come together online, plying trades, fighting alongside one another, and building up experience, riches and power over weeks, months and even years. The difference is that this time it's brought to life with a spanking new 3D engine, one that harnesses the power of DX9 pixel and vertex shaders to depict a world of rolling hills, dense forests, and busy cities, and which even allows players to customise the animations and facial characteristics of their on-screen character. Looks like this new version is going to be even more addictive.

World Championship Rugby

With rugby fever spreading like never before, the timing couldn't be better for the developers responsible for the hit *Jonah Lomu* game to return with *World Championship Rugby*. The official game of the England Rugby team (and one also given the Welsh Rugby Players Association badge of approval), it's been designed to offer a slick, speedy, free-flowing take on the sport. Featuring 20 international teams, complete with highly detailed player models that replicate the scale and weight of real players, it features over 400 motion-captured moves to deliver a hard-hitting sim packed with a generous amount 'crunch'. Forget all that management malarkey, this is a game that revels in the physicality of the game, with 'pick up and play' controls to ease the player in, and dynamic tackling systems to ensure longevity. *WCR* even includes a clever visual depiction of the degradation and muddying of both pitch and players as the match progresses. It may all be good fun, but it certainly isn't clean.



■ Arcade-style, action-packed rugby comes to the PC screen courtesy of this, the official game of the England team.



■ The Dark Ages never looked so good, thanks to *Knights Of The Temple's* physics-based animation system.

Knights Of The Temple

Games featuring sword-wielding knights in armour have been thin on the ground since 1998's *Die By The Sword*. Now at last there's a new mediievally-minded action adventure, set to drag the Dark Ages into the 21st Century through detailed location work, beautifully animated characters, and a fantastic dedication to conveying exactly what happens when a heroic Knight Templar pounds the hell out of a bunch of infernal demonic enemies using axes, maces and very large swords. Primarily played out using an intelligent third-person camera system, the game also features a first-person view for stealthy bow and arrow attacks. But it's the close quarters combat that really powers the action in *Knights Of The Temple* – smart physics-based character animation brings the battles vividly to life, and a unique dynamic skill system bestows new abilities on players as they progress through the Holy Crusades of the 12th century in a war between good and evil. It was never like this in the school books!

Soldiers: Heroes Of World War II

War-themed games tend to fall into one of two categories: the dry and dusty strategy genre or the gung-ho first-person shooter. *Soldiers* offers a long awaited new perspective on period combat, utilising a unique middle distance viewpoint and presenting its 25 WWII campaigns using a 3D engine blessed with fully destructible environments, authentically modelled military hardware, and astonishingly realistic battles. Here, the special forces troops at the centre of the story (you can play as either British, American, German or Russian forces) represent just one part of the big picture. There are also more than a 100 vehicles and 25 weapons, with the effects of the latter on the former modelled using devastatingly realistic physics simulation. *Soldiers: Heroes Of World War II* offers such a seamless blend of point-and-click strategy and direct control action game we can only wonder why nobody has thought of this compelling combination before.



■ In *Soldiers: Heroes Of World War II*, the detail-packed environments take as much of a beating as the troops.



Distributor: **Ubisoft**
Developer: **Sony Online Ent.**
Release: **May**



Publisher: **Acclaim**
Developer: **Swordfish**
Release: **Out now**



Publisher: **TDK**
Developer: **Starbreeze**
Release: **April**



Publisher: **Codemasters**
Developer: **Best Way**
Release: **June**

The way it's meant to be played



Publisher: **Vivendi**
Developer: **Massive Entertainment**
Release: **July**

Case study: Ground Control 2: Operation Exodus

B lending open-ended gameplay with a strong narrative hook, this long-awaited real-time strategy sequel gives players the opportunity to command hardware-intense human factions or switch sides and direct the actions of the Vïrons, an alien race with advanced nano-organic technologies.

Alongside a 24 mission story, *Ground Control 2* also majors with its innovative multiplayer modes. Up to eight players can compete on existing or custom maps (and even drop in at any point during the game), while the Massgate online community system provides matchmaking, chatroom, score ladder and tournament services.

To bring the combat to life, Massive has finessed a 3D engine capable of depicting the gameworld at extreme levels of detail. From a full strategic overview, players can zoom right in to a troop-level view, where the fine



■ *Ground Control 2* can depict an entire battlefield as well as showing the carnage in extreme detail.

textures and high poly counts combine with astonishing detail. Muzzle flashes light up the screen while soldiers leave footprints in the snow.

"Getting access to all of NVIDIA's latest hardware helps us ensure that

we can make the most of *GC2* on up and coming hardware," says Martin Rystrand, tech architect at Massive Entertainment. "NVIDIA also helped us achieve better performance and generally make *GC2* a kickass game!"



Publisher: **Codemasters**
Developer: **KD-Lab**
Release: **May**

Perimeter

T he star of the recent Russian Developers' Conference, *Perimeter* quite literally rebuilds the real-time strategy game from the ground up. Terraforming is at the heart of this planet colonisation experience, affecting every aspect of play, and creating a gameworld like no other. It also makes *Perimeter* a sight to behold, the highly versatile 3D engine portraying the seismic changes in spectacular fashion using over a million polys per second. Here volcanoes erupt, earthquakes change the landscape beyond recognition, and both creatures and technologies can trigger spectacular land shifts. And all the while players are also able to modify the world around them as they attempt to collect energy to power the building of an empire, the construction of an impenetrable defensive perimeter field, and the creation of an ever-morphable war machine in a battle against other energy-hungry factions. After *Perimeter*, all other real-time strategy games seem just a little, well, flat.



■ Thanks to a powerful 3D engine, the planet surface is as unstable as the balance of power between warring factions.



Publisher: **Namco**
Developer: **Argonaut**
Release: **May**

I-Ninja

T hey say size matters, but nobody told the diminutive, comically hot-headed star of *I-Ninja*. Blasting through a world in the grip of the evil Master O-Dor and his army of robotic Ranx, young Ninja attacks like a whirling dervish, slicing and dicing with lethal accuracy, and building up a head of steam using the mystical power of the Rage Stones. This is console-style arcade gameplay given PC spit and polish, resulting in a game boasting intuitive controls and mad action, but with Manga-esque visuals of freakish quality. The in-game cinematics are something extra special, too, having been produced by legendary filmmakers Gary Goldman and Don Bluth, responsible for such animated classics as *An American Tail*, *All Dogs Go To Heaven* and *The Land Before Time*. 'Even the smallest ninja can kick the biggest ass' runs the tagline. Given that the little guy wields shuriken, swords, blow guns, explosives, rocket launchers, guided missiles and more, who would be silly enough to argue?



■ Japanese animation gets the 3D treatment in the comically over-the-top martial arts actionfest *I-Ninja*.



Far Cry

Amazing scenery. Smart AI. Infinite replayability. Far out.

In the space of a few months, the buzz surrounding *Far Cry* has grown from a whisper to a scream. Much of this is due to the unflinchingly detailed environments. For the first time, here is a landscape without boundaries. Detail is visible right to the horizon, and everywhere is completely explorable, from lovely, light-dappled Caribbean waters to the loftiest windswept peaks. Plus, it's all rendered in amazing detail,

reflect off of all of the details properly on a per-pixel basis. We then use that map as a lighting calculation texture for a low-poly model. This means, as we move this model beneath a real dynamic light, we see the light change as though all the original details were in place."

Then comes dot3 light-mapping. "This is a new way of using traditional light-mapping technology with per-pixel lighting to create a vivid model that still

Everywhere is completely explorable from the lovely, light-dappled Caribbean waters to the loftiest windswept peaks...

with an incredible amount of flora, complex lighting, and – best of all – an entire army of deadly soldiers.

To make such richly detailed scenes possible, Crytek has integrated two key technologies into the game engine: PolyBumping and dot3 light-mapping. "The key idea to PolyBumping is deceptively simple," says lead producer Christopher Natsume. "First we make a very high poly model, most of our characters are about 400,000 polys, and then take that mesh and transform it into a map showing how light should

■ Characters look plain nasty and play nasty, using advanced AI against you.



lights the world with an infinite number of lights," says Natsume. "Light-maps and bump-mapping were once mutually exclusive, but our patent-pending dot3 light-mapping makes this possible."

Physics lessons

These techniques alone would make *Far Cry* something to talk about. But Crytek has gone much further. For the lush gameworld also benefits from advanced physics simulation, which drives everything from bodies crumpling when shot, to buildings collapsing when hit by a rocket. Those enemy soldiers, meanwhile, use an advanced AI system unlike anything yet seen in a first-person shooter.

"They see and hear just like the player does, and understand which entities are objects and which are people," explains Natsume. "More importantly, they understand where in the environment they are and how objects relate to themselves, so they can work together against the player."

Enemies even have the ability to work alone or in groups, each acting and reacting to the player in an individual way. They use the environment with intelligence, commandeering gun posts and using vehicles. Teams will also try genuine SWAT tactics, while a 'chain of command' system makes it possible to cause chaos by killing the leader. As a result, Natsume says the game, "puts the real control of what is happening in the player's hands, not the designer's."

Make no mistake, *Far Cry* is on the bleeding edge in both gameplay and technology terms. Alongside *Doom 3* and *Half-Life 2*, many believe it could change the face of PC gaming forever.



Publisher:
Developer:
Release:

**Ubisoft
Crytek
Out now**



■ Enemy mercenaries can be spotted from a mile off, or viewed close enough to see the stubble on their chins. Of course, getting that close is dangerous.



■ One man faces an entire army in the lush, highly cinematic *Far Cry*.

Do You Wanna Be In My

The rise and rise of online gaming has spawned a new community built around clans. We take a closer look at what it means to be a team player.

It all started with the arrival of multiplayer gaming. Initially it was the straight deathmatch options offered by the likes of *Doom* and *Quake* that made LAN and Internet gaming such a success, but it wasn't long before team-based play began to come to the fore, and with that came the clans.

Teams of players united by the love of a game rather than geographical proximity, clans have added a whole

NVIDIA's sponsorship enables the clan to focus purely on gaming. It enables them to win at the events that count.

new social aspect to deathmatches. What's more, the emergence of clans has enabled multiplayer gaming to become an electronic sport, one where teams battle it out in tournaments, compare performance through online scoreboards such as the Computer Sports Network (www.csports.net), and

chase grand prizes in high-profile competitive events like the World Cyber Games (www.worldcybergames.com), Electronic Sports World Cup (www.eswc.com), and the Cyberathlete Professional League (www.thecpl.com).

Professional killers

In 2004, the clan community is bigger than ever. There are clan leagues dedicated to all-girl teams, there are clans with teams covering a wide variety of multiplayer games, there are even clans set up for old timers. But perhaps most interesting is the emergence of the professional clans. Those grand prizes, along with official sponsorship and support from gamer-friendly companies such as NVIDIA, have enabled the very best clans to turn their passion for gaming into a full-time occupation.

"The nature of NVIDIA's sponsorship encompasses equipment, travel expenses, and clothing," explains Thorsten Zippan, manager of

Mousesports. Craig Levine of the Team 3D clan says that NVIDIA's sponsorship enables the clan to focus purely on the gaming. It enables them to win at the events that count. Team 3D has bagged some \$100,000 in earnings in the last year alone.

So just what does it take to be a professional clan member? "Players in each team specialise heavily in their chosen game, with constant practice required," says Zippan. "Before a big tournament, they will all go off to 'boot camp', essentially a period of constant practicing within the team."

No pain, no gain

He estimates that it's necessary for the team to play together for at least six months of the year in order to develop coherent strengths and strategies. "It's not enough for members just to be good at the game in question. They need to be a strong team player as well. All members are highly motivated

Team Schroet Kommando www.schroet.com

Sweden's Team Schroet Kommando offers a shining example of how truly dedicated gamers can, with a little help from sponsorship, turn a hobby into a living through the professional gaming circuit. Now ranked the world's number one for online mega-hit *Counterstrike* (in which they provide online lessons to new gamers via their website) the NVIDIA-sponsored team also

continues to blaze a trail in *FIFA*, *Unreal Tournament* and *Warcraft*, and has expanded to include teams in Germany and Korea.

Andreas Thorstensson, leader and co-owner of Team SK explains that he's always been a competitive person: "When I was young, I was active in sports like American football, skiing and basketball. That has merely transferred to e-Sport."

In addition, to help push Team SK to greater heights, the clan's website has been transformed into a content-packed operation, complete with scene news, features, interviews and even movies of recent tournaments, showing all the best frags. With 300,000 registered website members, the clan scene has clearly become a serious business for this team of dedicated gamers.





Clan?



■ *Unreal Tournament* is one of the most popular clan games. It sorts the men from the bullet fodder...

thanks to the prize money at stake." Gaining membership to an existing pro-level clan isn't easy. Zippan says that Mousesports receives many more applications from aspiring gamers than it could ever possibly deal with. But the beauty of clan gaming is that there's nothing to stop newcomers from simply forming their own clan and aiming for the top. Play well, promote the clan within the online community, and get to

a level where the team has what it takes to compete in the big tournaments, and a career as a professional games player may just await.

Of course, getting to that level isn't just about skill. It's also about making sure your PC setup won't compromise your performance through slowdowns or lack of graphical detail. That's where the power of NVIDIA comes in, whatever clan you play for...

Mousesports www.mousesports.de

Formed just two years ago, Germany's Mousesports clan has rapidly established itself as a major fixture on the international gaming scene. Alongside its *Unreal Tournament*, *Battlefield 1942* and *Warcraft III* teams, it also boasts a highly successful *Counterstrike* team. With NVIDIA as the primary sponsor, this group currently has a number two world ranking (go to www.csports.net and select CPL World Rankings for a full listing).

There are plans to produce an English version of the Clan website, however, to reflect the growing popularity of the team outside of Germany. "Mousesports is popular all over the world, especially China," says Zippan. "Last year we were invited to China by the Ministry Of Culture to play *Counterstrike* in a series of demonstrations."

For Mousesports, the Clan aspect is clearly just part of the bigger picture. Even that unusual



"We have only German-speaking players in the teams, which limits us to Germans and Austrians," explains Thorsten Zippan, manager of Mousesports. "It's a policy that means German gamers can fully identify with the team and have a real sense of belonging."

moniker was chosen as 'a generic style name that could be used later on for other lifestyle products'. It can surely only be a matter of time before fans are seen wearing Mousesports brand clothing while cheering their team on to further online successes.



■ Team 3D has recently expanded, and a *Call Of Duty* side has been added.

Team 3D www.team3d.net

Like many clans, the members of the US-based Team 3D are spread across a number of cities. What's different is that these guys are living the dream. Not only have they been able to give up their day jobs to spend all their time playing videogames, they're actually making a living from it. In addition to winning thousands on the gaming tournament circuit,

they've turned Team 3D into a corporation. Each clan member even gets paid a salary.

"With CPL championships, WCG USA titles, and a page full of accomplishments both in game and out, Team 3D has come a long way," says Team 3D's Craig Levine. "As far as we have come and as much as we have accomplished, there is still so much more to go. Moving forward

the members of Team 3D are going to continue to push ourselves, pave the way for others to follow, and set the bar for other teams to live up to."

Having recently expanded beyond *Counterstrike* with the addition of a *Call Of Duty* team, Team 3D is now considering adding *Unreal Tournament 2004*, *Warcraft III*, *Halo* and *Battlefield 1942* to its repertoire.



The Saga of Ryzom



Wartime Command



Div3r



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.



CS12



Rome: Total War



STALKER: Shadow of Chernobyl

