

Loading...

Achievements in handheld gaming have quietly impressed since the advent of 3D engines on the GBA (Game Boy Advance). Not one to be left out, Eidos has released Tomb Raider for a range of Compaq's iPaq PDAs (personal digital assistants) – get a demo at www.tombraiderstogo.com.

AGB is currently developing its 3D technologies across a number of handheld platforms. It is also in the process of opening up its API (application programming interface) to allow other developers to license its technologies for their own products. AGB spokesman Matthew Hopwood says, "Our technologies are currently the best there is in terms of speed and visuals." Want to see for yourself? Go to www.agbgames.com.

Elsewhere, Vivendi Universal Interactive scared us silly with a press screening of John Carpenter's *The Thing*, to announce

→ What's his name: you know, Thingy

↓ Give her a big hand: Lara goes pocket-sized in her new Palm format



Finally, *PC Advisor* would like to apologise to Ubisoft, as our review of its *Morrowind: The Elder Scrolls III* in the September 02 issue contained some erroneous statements. This was because when

we first played the game we didn't have the manual. We have since replayed it with full instructions and have rewritten the review accordingly. For the full text of the updated review please visit www.pcadvisor.co.uk/about/printplus.cfm. ■

the upcoming release of its survival horror/action title based on the film. The game will add a trust/fear interface so your actions influence whether non-playing characters will co-operate. We'll keep you updated.

Xtreme Air Racing

Armed with the knowledge that this was a game demonstrated by Intel to show off its 2.2GHz processor, we waited with bated breath to review this 'extreme' flying production. Based around the antics of mad American pilots pitting their fastest and most manoeuvrable planes against each other in extreme air races, the game promised much. However, as we were soon to discover, it achieved very little of what was expected.

Installing Xtreme Air Racing was simple and uneventful if we ignore the DirectX issues and the rather worrying 46MB optional patch download to version 1.031.

There is pleasant, if tacky, commentary and advice throughout from RA Hoover (a famous extreme air racing pilot), and quite reasonable graphical detail for a game of its kind. It also uses a simplistic, easy-to-navigate menu system.

There, however, the appeal begins to wear thin. Typical of so many PC-based games, Xtreme tries to do too much (presumably in an effort to fulfil the requirements of mass appeal) and ends up never achieving satisfactory results for any of its intentions.

Xtreme Air Racing tries to combine simulation-type functionality, graphics and realism with exhilarating gameplay – not a recipe for success. There are enough plane options, venues, controls and views to keep simulation fans relatively content, however the game is not fast, not 'extreme' and not inspiring in the slightest. Once you've flown the circular



↑ Fly-by site: not quite the buzz we were looking for

race path, and got caught in the wind flow from other planes, there is no real appeal to doing it 50 more times.

The commentary and flying advice begin to grate and you find yourself not really caring if you're winning or not. Much more fun than flying round in circles is burning up your engine, drowning and crashing. You just feel the need to spice the game up. But, alas, to no avail. ■

Ian Douglas

Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos

Blizzard's 1995 *Warcraft II* literally defined the RTS (real-time strategy) genre and the sci-fi follow-up, *Starcraft*, was equally excellent and compelling. The developer's latest release, *Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos*, returns the series to its roots, with elves, orcs, swords and battle axes, and takes the genre to the next generation.

Warcraft II fans will be delighted with this follow-up. It delivers and surpasses, the stunning graphics gamers have come to expect and adds new gameplay features. These include a choice of two further alternative species – the undead scourge and the night elf sentinels – in addition to the traditional humans and orcs.

Earning the praise

Another new feature is the addition of hero characters who grow stronger and add valuable skills as they gain experience, and can act as leaders to your army. *Warcraft III* is also occupied by a range of additional characters; these can be further foes, or friends who can give you valuable items.

The heroes add a rich level of depth to the game. To ensure their effectiveness at the helm of your army you need to send your hero out to gain experience from fighting, as a powerful hero will greatly increase your chances of success. This is achieved by winning up to four unique special abilities per hero, including spells and special weapons. However, outside of campaign mode the heroes aren't as important as Blizzard would have you believe.

While in multiplayer or custom game mode you can choose to be any of the four factions, in the standard single-player game,



↑ Dragon drop: the monsters fly before the castle falls

rather frustratingly, you have to play all four in order so that you can follow the game's storyline. But the excitement comes from the variety provided by these four different species. Each has different types of units and appearances, and crucially the tactics you need to employ to succeed in your missions or in defeating your opponents varies greatly. This keeps you happy and itching for more as you go on to play against the computer or, best of all, against other people in multiplayer games.

If playing against human opponents on the internet is your thing, then support for developer Blizzard's free Battle.net service has been significantly enhanced. There are also world design tools that allow you to customise the game, changing the way the game and characters look and behave, and adapting special abilities and skills.

Sights and sounds

In terms of graphics the 3D engine is impressive, so characters and terrain look great. The sound is excellent, too, from the atmospheric music to the ambient sound effects which make you feel like you're right in the game.

Warcraft III is probably not the best RTS game ever in terms of gameplay at least, and this may leave some hardcore gamers disappointed. But it's got everything you could want from a game of this type – graphics, simple interface, multiplayer support – all wrapped up with Blizzard's renowned polish and professionalism. ■

Alex Katz



← Something vexes thee, master? The orcs try to soothe their undead scourge master's erratic temper

↓ Don't worry, they're only playing: the night elf sentinel's pet hell cats are more scared of you than you are of them



Xtreme Air Racing

System requirements: 450MHz Pentium III; Windows 95/98/Me/2000/XP; 128MB RAM; 650MB hard disk space.

Victory Simulations: 01480 462 748

Website: www.xtremeairracing.com

Price: £19.99

Overall rating **5**

Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos

System requirements: 400MHz Pentium II; Windows 98/Me/2000/XP; 128MB RAM; 700MB hard disk space.

Jungle.com: 0870 728 7777

Website: www.blizzard.com/war3/

Price: approx £27.99

Overall rating **8**

Agassi Tennis Generation

In choosing Andre Agassi as both the brand name and only real-life player to feature in this game, Mindscape succumbed to the same fate as 7Up which chose World Cup non-starter Roy Keane as the central plank of its summer ad campaign. Agassi crashed out of Wimbledon on day three to Thailand's Paradorn Srichiphon, so expect to see this game discounted.

There are 32 players to choose from in Agassi Tennis Generation and all except Agassi are fictional – no Henman, no Sampras, no Rusedski. At least the menus

Agassi Tennis Generation

System requirements: 500MHz Pentium II; Windows 95/98/2000; 64MB RAM.

Mindscape: 01664 481 563

Website: www.mindscape.co.uk

Price: £24.99

0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10
Overall rating **4**

are easy enough to use, so it's only a matter of seconds before you are on court smashing winning forehands.

As soon as you step out on to court you can appreciate the hard work put in to make all the players – even the fictional ones – look as real as possible. Animations of different types of shots are very good and the players all sport convincing volleys and backhands, so it's great eye candy.

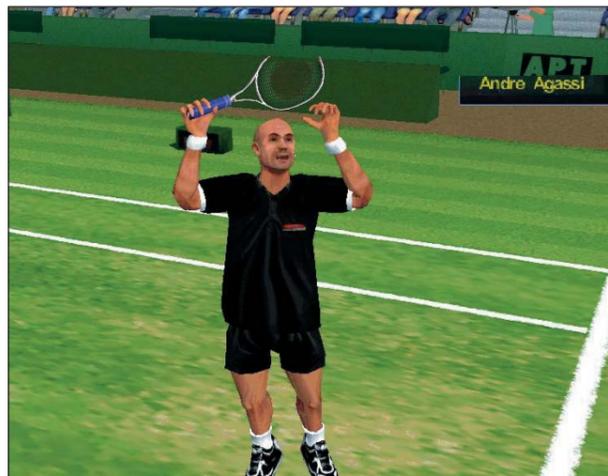
Unfortunately, that's as far as it goes. The sound is basic: the players grunt in the same way every time they hit the ball and the commentary is limited to a few repetitive phrases.

There is little variety in the gameplay, as it stretches no further than the standard tennis match. The AI (artificial

→ Unforced horror: Andre does an impromptu scary monster impression

intelligence) is also a bit unadventurous, with your opponents sometimes just leaving the ball to bounce twice. All in all, this is no challenger to Virtual Tennis, which still remains the number one seed of tennis games. ■

Michael Werbowy



F1 2002

Formula One is surely the biggest travelling circus in the world, with millions of fans tuning in every other week from March to October to watch 22 highly trained performers laugh in the face of death and serious injury. The glamour, the spectacle, the superstar names and the vast amounts of money involved in F1 make the sport so intriguing that nobody seems to mind that the races themselves are predictable enough to seem almost

processional. So, for those of you who want to experience this for more than two hours on a Sunday afternoon, EA Sports has come up with F1 2002.

Playing games like F1 2002 is about as close as your average Joe is ever going to come to driving an F1 car and, considering the fact that my heart was in my mouth playing this simulation, I don't think I could handle racing in the real thing – I'd just be too scared. Even practice laps of the Albert Park circuit gave me the overwhelming urge to burst into tears and start crying for my mummy.

One hot sweet cup of tea and change of underwear later, I decided to try again. The more I played F1 2002 the more I began to notice the level of detail in all aspects of the design of this game. The sound is

← Mirror, signal, manoeuvre: and check your blind spot at 210mph

particularly good, from the curious hum of the engines to the cheering of the crowds. The cars look brilliant and move with a convincing, and attractive, smoothness.

You'll need an awful lot of practice before you master the skill of not crashing into several cars at the first corner of the race, let alone get to grips with overtaking one of the Schumacher brothers. If you're prepared to persevere and can accept that you're not going to be World Champion as soon as you load this game, you will have great fun with it, although you may need to have a lie down afterwards. ■

Ben Camm-Jones

F1 2002

System requirements: 400MHz Pentium II; Windows 98/2000/Me/XP; 128MB RAM; 250MB hard disk space.

EA Sports: 01932 450 000

Website: www.easports.com

Price: £27.99

0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10
Overall rating **8**



Gore

Does the world need another FPS (first-person shooter)? It's hard to make a mark in an increasingly overcrowded field and most new entrants unabashedly display a monkey-see-monkey-do mentality. The end result is a quagmire of poor imitations and lack of variation. How can a game diversify when all about them are aping their peers?

This problem must have vexed 4D Rulers in a creative meeting about four years ago, and it has taken that long for them to show us the answer. The answer is Gore: an old-school homage to the FPS gameplay of yesteryear, and we love it. The words 'originality' and 'FPS' stopped being used in the same sentence in 1994 when Doom II was released, so Gore isn't as innovative as it wants us to believe. However, it's still a breath of fresh air in a stagnating market.

Back to the old school

The year is 2085. The world is in chaos, the large cities of the past now just ruins. The government is unstable and the streets are run by gangs federated to the mob. The government decides to take action: new soldiers are needed in the UMC (United Marine Corporation), men capable of controlling a situation that has become uncontrollable. But before sending them out on to the streets to meet their destiny, they are trained in a simulator called the Meat Machine. Gore starts with this training session, and just when you think you've got the hang of the controls you're told the simulator has been hacked – cue presence of contemptible foes wanting to perform base things to your person with a range of weaponry. The scenario is familiar, but it's well implemented and good fun.

It makes more sense to assess what's left out of Gore rather than what's left in because gameplay is stripped down to the bare essentials. There's no puzzle solving, premission shopping or background scripting – just run-and-gun fragging that doesn't take itself too seriously. The only nod to realism is the endurance effect, which means your character slows down if you work him too hard. The action is comicbook, the gameplay lightning fast.



← Blaze of gory: get rid of the small fry early on

↓ Avoid the droid: this fella has a hell of a handshake



How to meet fiends and injure people

4D Rulers went back to the drawing board to develop its own 3D engine for Gore, and the result is one of the smoothest running we've ever seen on an FPS game. Graphically it's not the pinnacle of excellence and some of the skins look a little dated, but there are some beautiful environments and lighting effects.

While the single-player element is fun it's the multiplayer option that will keep you coming back for more. Almost all visible objects in Gore can be destroyed so, if an enemy is hiding behind something for a power-up or is trying to dress his wounds with a health bonus, you can take him out by exploding the object.

Gore is a fun game that won't tax the brain cells and over time will help you develop the reflexes of a Shaolin Monk. Oh, did we forget to mention there's some gore? Thought you might have guessed that. ■

Spencer Dalziel

Gore	
System requirements: 400MHz Pentium II; Windows 95/98/Me/2000/XP; 64MB RAM; 700MB hard drive space.	
Mindscape: 01664 481 563	
Website: www.mindscape.com	
Price: £29.99	
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Overall rating	8

← Lively debate: the group have a frank and open exchange of views

EA Cricket 2002

With cricket not being the most popular sport in England, it must become a bit of a struggle for cricket-based computer games to really take off. That said, with its good mix of fun and realism, we think that EA has definitely found a winning formula that could take this unpopular genre higher in the gaming public's collective consciousness. While you may think that cricket isn't the most enjoyable of sports to watch on the television, EA has made it a lot more enjoyable to play.

The first time we played Cricket 2002, we found it quite hard to get used

to the controls; veterans of the previous games in the series will be at an advantage in this respect. However, once you get more familiar with the game you will quickly become addicted to the slow build of tension in each innings, experiencing an acute desperation to beat the opposing team. If you are a first-time player of the EA cricket series it will take you quite a while to finally win, causing you to become frustrated but ensuring you keep on coming back to do better than you did last time, whether it's in a one-day international or a test match.

Choice shots

The game is given more variety by the number of playing options available. Even though none of them extends the game beyond playing cricket matches, they do give you a chance to try out your game plan in different tournaments and give your squad different rewards for winning. A few options can only be unlocked once a certain tournament has been won at either normal or difficult settings. These include all-star teams from the greatest cricketing nations and even an all-star squad for the world.

Cricket 2002's gameplay is impressive and involving. Whether you are batting or bowling you have, respectively, a wide repertoire of different shots or types of delivery. Batsmen can choose to play anything from a forward defensive to a sweep or a cover drive. Similarly, bowlers can deliver an out-swinger, a cutter or a googly.

If you're a cricket enthusiast with a knowledge of tactics, you can use these shots and balls effectively straight away. If not, you'll slowly but surely get to grips with the subtle variations of the game.

EA Cricket 2002	
System requirements: 300MHz Pentium II; Windows 95/98/Me/2000/XP; 64MB RAM; 300MB hard disk space.	
EA Sports: 01932 450 000	
Website: www.uk.ea.com	
Price: £29.99	
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Overall rating	8



↑ Stop the spin: use your cricket knowledge to get a bit of edge

← Boxing clever: the Aussies talk tactics on their way to the crease

↓ One slip is all it takes: fast bowlers will punish a lapse in concentration



Faces of 2002

On the down side, though, it has to be said that Cricket 2002's graphics could seriously bear some extra attention to make it an all-round better game. You are continually distracted by the various visual bugs – for instance, out-fielders' heads showing through the top of their caps. The players themselves in general don't look particularly similar to their real-life counterparts, which sports gamers will know is increasingly an unforgivable fault these days.

Apart from that, EA seems to have taken a slow and, for some, a rather dull sport and translated it into into a gripping and enjoyable computer game. No doubt cricket enthusiasts will constitute the majority of Cricket 2002 players, but slick action and tactical play may tempt people who do not particularly like cricket into giving it a chance. ■

Michael Werbowy

Adiboo Reading & Maths 5-6

Adiboo Reading & Maths is a curiously misleading title for this software. If you're after a package that's genuinely going to improve your child's reading and mathematical ability, then save your money. If, on the other hand, you want your child to enjoy some entertaining and imaginative games with excellent animation, then Adiboo fits the bill on all counts.

There are two CD-ROMs in the package: Adiboo Land and Adiboo's Travels. Adiboo himself is a cutesy little American boy who,

→ Human barn: a distressed horse warns Adiboo about the talking out-building

accompanied by half a dozen other characters, guides you through all the various activities on offer. On the first CD-ROM, players can visit Adiboo's house, a garden, a cave of wonders and a games dome with different games to play in each place.

But this bald description doesn't do justice to the quality of the animation and the level of interactivity, both of which put Adiboo head and shoulders above the competition. A particular favourite in our house was a mesmerising football game played in a swimming pool. Another game involving wizards and magic potions was so much fun it took us a while to realise it was actually nothing more than a version of scissors-paper-stone.



The second CD, which covers reading and mathematics, was a disappointment. It's difficult to believe that any child will learn to read by looking at a picture of a cat and then clicking on the word 'cat'. Some of the workshops were also fairly confusing.

Having said all that, this package really is excellent value for money. There is so much in it that you can safely ignore the duff bits. Just don't use it as a substitute for sending your child to a good school... ■

Kim Thomas

Adiboo Reading & Maths 5-6

System requirements: 266MHz Pentium II; Windows 95/98/Me/XP; 64MB RAM; 110MB hard disk space.

Knowledge Adventure: 01268 531 245

Website: www.knowledgeadventure.co.uk

Price: £19.99

0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10
Overall rating **8**

Land of the Magic Stones

A clumsy dragon has created havoc in the land of the magic stones and taken up residence in a castle owned by a friendly bat. The bat is scared away (although the dragon is actually quite cuddly) and goes to find shelter and someone to help him. The player of this point-and-click role-playing adventure game becomes a courageous apprentice who helps the bat evict the dragon and

restore the land to its former glory. To do this you need to collect different ingredients to make potions which create six magical stones.

You make your stones using ingredients such as flea hair and daisy extract. There are seven different activity areas with increasing levels of difficulty, including The Laboratory where all the potions are made and stones are kept along with a record of your progress throughout the game.

You will need to help such characters as Baron Bucky, Princess Helium, Ginger Root and the Happy Elves to fill in the blanks in The Great Book of Knowledge, rebuild houses, refloat a bubble castle and free the sheep from the maze. Each time you complete a task correctly you will be given an ingredient such as pickle leaves,

← Fire in his belly: this dragon has a chip on his shoulder

dandelion extract and toad spit to take back to the laboratory.

You can keep going back to each game to obtain more ingredients, though you will need to add the ingredients to the cauldron in the correct order to make a new stone. Once you've created all six stones you enter into the final battle with the dragon.

This logic and puzzle-solving game has been created by teaching specialists to initiate scientific approaches and develop creativity. It is simple, colourful and makes learning fun. ■

Faith Wardle

Land of the Magic Stones

System requirements: 166MHz Pentium; Windows 95/98/Me/XP; 32MB RAM; 60MB hard disk space.

Vivendi: 01189 209 100

Website: www.vivendi-universal-interactive.co.uk

Price: £12.99

0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10
Overall rating **7**

