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Nintendo GameBoy Advance SP

Dear Nintendo,

My name is Spencer, I'm 30 years old and I dispatch this missive as a love letter to your new product – the GBA-SP (GameBoy Advance SP). Please forward my salutations and indebtedness to your research and development team. With nowt except the simple savvy of your design ingenuity and some tinkering, you've assembled a product that occupies a demographic niche befitting a man of my ilk.

I love playing games on your excellent GBA but, truth be told, it doesn't satisfy on all levels. The screen's dark, the AA batteries run out too quickly and – here's the clincher – I'm embarrassed to play it in public with everyone thinking 'Look at that grown man in his 30s who's trying to relive his teenage years with a kiddy toy. How sweet.'

Nintendo GameBoy Advance SP

- Nintendo: 0870 6060 247
- www.nintendo.co.uk
- £78 ex VAT

Overall rating



Well, no more. The GBA-SP may be pricier than the GBA but you're not just paying extra for the soberly coloured flip-top design – I've got my social dignity to think about. Then there's the improved display – the front-lit LCD screen is bright and allows me to play anywhere, regardless of the lighting conditions. It would also be remiss of me not to mention the rechargeable lithium battery that offers up to 18 hours of life.

Gone are the public's looks of self pity; they crane their necks to see the stylish gadget in my hands: 'Is it a new PDA? Is it a work-synched mobile comms solution?' No, my travelling friends, it's a GBA-SP and I am opening up a whole can of whupass on Super Mario Advance 3. ■

Spencer Dalziel



GAMES CHART, ALL FORMATS

- 1 Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell
- 2 Championship Manager 4
- 3 The Sims
- 4 Primal
- 5 Devil May Cry 2
- 6 FIFA 2003
- 7 Freelancer
- 8 Grand Theft Auto: Vice City
- 9 The Getaway
- 10 Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon

PC GAMES CHART

- 1 Championship Manager 4
- 2 Freelancer
- 3 Command and Conquer: Generals
- 4 Delta Force: Black Hawk Down
- 5 The Sims
- 6 The Sims: Unleashed
- 7 Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell
- 8 Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six-Raven Shield
- 9 ANNO 1503: The New World
- 10 SimCity 4

Positions correct for week
05/04/03-12/04/03



The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past

GameBoy
Advance

Some may consider Nintendo's decision to port The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past to the GBA as a cop-out. It's an easy way to make some money, giving customers the same game that came out 10 years ago. Well, that's one way to put it. Another way is that Nintendo is giving you a direct port of arguably the greatest SNES (Super Nintendo Entertainment System) game in a play-anywhere version.

Everything is still there: the graphics, gameplay and sound. Nintendo's even added young Link's voice from the N64 game. Playing

A Link to the Past is just as fresh, addictive, and entertaining as it was 10 years ago. Playing a classic like this makes you appreciate what good game design is all about.

Nintendo also bundles a second game, The Four Swords. The evil sorcerer Vaati captures fair Zelda and Link must set out to save her. Since the quest ahead is impossible for a single Link, fairies use the power of the Four Sword to duplicate our hero that number of times.

The competitive element will have you playing this quest over and over, especially if you have immediate access to another GBA. You must work together to lift boulders and fight bosses.

The only down side is that in order to enjoy the shiny-new graphics engine you need another GBA and a cable link. There is no single player option which is silly, as the game scales itself depending on the number of GBAs connected.

This is one of the best titles available for the GBA. No matter what genre you prefer, if you like videogames then you will enjoy this. And if you have never played A Link to the Past then there's no excuse not to invest in it. ■

Ben Worcester

← Approach carefully or you'll fall into the deadly hands of the evil sorcerer



The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past

- Nintendo: 0870 6060 247
- www.nintendo-europe.com/microsite/gbazelda/enGB
- £29.99

System requirements

GameBoy Advance

Overall rating



Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb

PC CD-ROM

If you have ever fancied yourself as Indiana Jones – you know, the whole hat-and-whip deal – then this game will fulfil all your fantasies for under £40. You get to play the part of the macho archaeologist from the comfort of your sofa, with no requirement to look as good as Harrison Ford.

Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb is a bit like Tomb Raider without the buxom Ms Croft, which might leave some of you wondering what the point of it is. You must negotiate your way around ancient ruins in the heart of Ceylon to the mean streets of Hong Kong, but we did think that Mr Jones was showing his age as he

doesn't half huff and puff as he swings from pillar to post on his trusty bull whip.

There are three levels you can play at – yep, you've guessed it, easy, normal and hard. We wimped out and chose easy, but even at this level your enemies require a sound beating before they lay down and die. Keeping it simple does mean you get helpful prompts – for example, you are told where to use your whip to swing and where to use your machete to cut through undergrowth.

Sometimes games based on film characters are horribly naff and decidedly unabsorbing, but Indiana Jones doesn't fall into this category. It's good fun and the graphics are attractive, if nothing special.

This game has an 11-plus rating, which seems about right. It is too complex and violent for youngsters, but older children will find it a challenge without too much exposure to blood and guts. For all you big kids out there, we also enjoyed assuming the role of Indiana. ■

Ursula Seymour



↑ The good ol' whipping action comes into play

Indiana Jones

- Activision: 01753 756 100
- www.activision.com
- £39.99

System requirements

733MHz Pentium III; Windows 98/Me/2000/XP; 128MB RAM; GeForce 256 graphics or better; DirectX-compatible sound card; DirectX 8.1 or higher

Overall rating



← Take on the role of Indiana and soar through ancient ruins. Just don't forget your hat

Devastation

PC CD-ROM

Devastation

- Novalogic: 020 7324 8900
- www.devastationgame.com
- £29.99

System requirements

700MHz Pentium II; Windows 98/Me/2000/XP; 256MB RAM; 1GB hard disk space

Overall rating



It doesn't take a genius to work out that FPS (first-person shooters) don't require many skills other than firing – and Devastation is no exception. It dresses the experience up in an intriguing story with clues to be found and tasks to be completed, but if you can't run fast and shoot on target then you won't get far.

The setting is the usual post-apocalyptic world in which 'the company' controls everything and you are one of the few brave rebels trying to defeat the evil behemoth. Together with a motley band of freedom fighters you traverse the deserted city above and below ground, through corporate megaliths and dilapidated ghettos towards the ultimate showdown with evil. And you shoot a lot of people too.

Devastation is written using the new Unreal II engine, which is supposed to render more realistic surfaces, textures, faces and AI

← Face to face with the enemy: there's never a safe moment and the suspense always keeps your heart pounding

(artificial intelligence). There was no evidence of this in our review copy, which was rather buggy, but the public release may well be flashier.

For playability, though, Devastation has much to offer. While there is a constant stream of goons to blow away, there are enough distractions to keep the carnage from getting boring. The gaming environments are richly varied, each one bringing new developments in your weaponry, team mates and challenges. There is also the slowly unravelling mystery of what dastardly deed the company is up to and what you'll have to do to stop it.

Devastation allows you to choose between arcade and simulation modes so separating, at a click of the mouse, the men from the boys. While in arcade mode you hare about unleashing your arsenal on anything that moves, simulation requires a cooler head. Gone are the seemingly unlimited ammo and bulletproof team mates and with them the easy ride, making for a far more rewarding game.

All of which makes Devastation highly entertaining and worthwhile. As long as you like shooting people, that is. ■

Simon Easterman



Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield

PC CD-ROM



↑ Hold, aim and fire: this first-person shooter provides plenty of action-packed sequences

Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield is the third instalment of the very popular FPS (first-person shooter) based on a Tom Clancy novel. Indeed, when the first Rainbow Six title was released, it effectively created its own genre – the tactical shooter. It is quite different from the likes of Quake and Unreal. We are talking one-hit kills, limping when hurt and no rocket launchers.

You assume control of an elite team of counter-terrorist operatives assembled from the

very best the world has to offer. If you fancy lots of frenetic-paced action then this is probably not the title for you. However, the series has a wide fanbase and has been very successful since it first hit the shelves.

About the plan

It's been quite a few years since I've played a Rainbow Six title, so I was expecting a steep learning curve. Thankfully there's an excellent training sequence that helps you figure out the myriad options available to you in your war on terrorism.

Unless you're a huge fan, you may find this planning element too complicated. I'm sure there are plenty of gamers that will stage a scenario down to every last detail but, since the terrorists are never in the exact spot if you replay the mission, you can only take your planning so far. It's much easier to load the preplanned sequences and tweak them if necessary.

Following on from the other Rainbow Six titles, Raven Shield hasn't received a drastic makeover. During missions you'll be grateful for the simple and streamlined graphical interface, while the opening sequence is awesome. Unfortunately, though, with no real character development, excellent graphics is all this game has to offer. Ironic, when you think about it – what with Rainbow Six being associated with Tom Clancy, you'd think the storyline would be fleshed out. Instead, you're left with a skeleton plot.

The enemy AI (artificial intelligence) is still as challenging, creative and adaptive as

→ Our reviewer's mission was blasted to pieces by an unsuspecting sniper, so it was time to revisit the team options

ever, so you'll need to keep your wits about you. In Raven Shield's third mission, for example, I altered the preloaded plan to include a gold team, consisting of a single sniper. I had him positioned to clear an area, while my other two teams took cover behind some cars. While he was able to snipe down a number of 'tangos', one of them escaped. He turned out to be playing dead, though, and when my teams ran past him he ambushed them from behind and killed three of my operatives.

Avoid the AI getting the better of you by having one team member equipped with a heartbeat sensor or simply look for blood surrounding the body on the floor. Sometimes, if your Rainbow member has a high enough assault rating, the crosshairs will auto-aim on the body and you can just pop 'em one.

No safety net

Not being an avid fan of the Rainbow Six experience, I based my judgement of Raven Shield wholly on its gameplay and features. It's an enjoyable title to get to grips with and I appreciated the time and effort that went into producing this title.

There is one element that I cannot overlook, though – why the development team failed to include an in-game save feature. Raven Shield is hard enough to begin with. If I'm on the last leg of a mission and everything has gone smoothly I want that feeling of security. I want to be able to tap F5 and zip back to that spot should some terrorist spring out of nowhere and kill the hostage I am trying to escort. If it weren't for the lack of this must-have feature Raven Shield's overall rating would have been a lot higher. ■

Ben Worcester

Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield

- UbiSoft: 0181 944 9000
- www.ubi.com
- £29.99

System requirements

800MHz Pentium III or equivalent; Windows 98/Me/2000/XP; from 128MB RAM; 2GB hard disk space; 32MB DirectX 8-compatible 3D video card; DirectX 8.1-compatible sound card

Overall rating





IL2-Sturmovik: Forgotten Battles

PC CD-ROM

IL-2 Sturmovik: Forgotten Battles

- UbiSoft: 01932 838 230
- www.ubi.com
- £29.99

System requirements

800MHz Pentium III; Windows 98/Me/2000/XP; 256MB RAM; 1.1GB hard disk space; 32B 3D video accelerator card

Overall rating



Initially conceived as an expansion pack for the brilliant IL2-Sturmovik, Forgotten Battles took on a life of its own and became a standalone project for Russian developer, Maddox Games. As a result it doesn't have the groundbreaking impact of the original but it adds superb elements to the best World War II combat flight sim on the market. More importantly, you don't have to be a dedicated flight sim anorak to pick it up.

The backdrop is World War II but it's the oft-neglected battle in the skies over the eastern front that Maddox brings to the fore.

There are 20 new single-player missions set in Hungary, Finland, Germany and Russia plus 10 multiplayer missions. While this might seem limited you can set up pretty much any scenario with the mission builder and this provides untold permutations

← Outstanding graphics and a wealth of planes makes for a fantastic combat flying experience

for some serious dogfight combat. I'm not au fait with the wealth of planes you can fly but *PC Advisor's* network administrator aka 'The Red Baron' was drooling with joy at the amount of playable crafts.

To be picky, the menu layout is awful and the manual is little more than adequate but Forgotten Battles is breathtakingly good in all the right places. The modelling, physics and graphical environments are beautifully realistic, making this the pinnacle of graphical achievement on any flight sim.

These all add up to a stunning sensation of flight. I knew I was gripped because I could barely sit down when I was barrel-rolling to get on an enemy's tail – all the more impressive with the lock-on view in place so your line of sight follows the plane you've targeted.

Don't be put off by the 'sim' tag. Forgotten Battles can be approached by the casual gamer thanks to a plethora of options that can be turned on or off. Try to play like an old pro and you won't last a second but start with everything set to easy and you'll be in the thick of the best combat flight action ever realised on a PC. ■

Spencer Dalziel



Championship Manager 4

PC CD-ROM

One of the most competitive genres in the games industry today is the sports management sim. It's misleading to use the word 'sports', though, as 99 percent of the games in this category are football-based.

Eidos Interactive has to take some of the blame for this crowded marketplace, responsible as it is for not just one but two of the top-selling games in this class: Championship Manager

02/03 and Championship Manager 4. Both titles are good but, it has to be said, there's more than an element of similarity between the two sims. Eidos is keen to keep the identities of the two games separate, however, so they are available on different platforms.

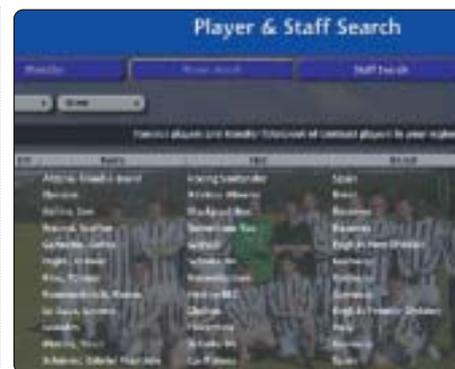
Whereas Championship Manager 02/03 is exclusive to the Xbox, Championship Manager 4 is only available for the PC. The latter title includes a 2D match engine, which lets you relive the game's action. However, it'll hardly blow your socks off as it's just an overhead shot of some circles moving about on a small pitch.

If you want to play a good game of football then opt for a title from EA's FIFA series. But if you're mad for stats and have an axe to grind about the relative benefits of the 3-4-1-2 and 4-3-3 systems then you'll love this sim.

It's as close as you'll ever come to putting one over on Ferguson or Wenger. If unofficial reports are to be believed, Claudio Ranieri and Bobby Robson have already bought a copy. ■

Ben Camm-Jones

← Here's your chance to see if you could do a better management job than Fergie



↑ Not the most exciting visuals but perfect for stat-crazy fanatics

Championship Manger 4

- Eidos Interactive: 020 8636 3000
- www.eidosinteractive.co.uk
- £24.99

System requirements

600MHz Pentium III; Windows 98/Me/2000/XP; 128MB RAM; 500MB hard disk space

Overall rating





ToeJam & Earl III: Mission to Earth

Xbox

ToeJam & Earl III: Mission to Earth

- Sega: 0845 609 0090
- www.sega-europe.com
- £34.99

System requirements

Xbox

Overall rating



If you had a Sega MegaDrive in the early 1990s then chances are you'll have heard of ToeJam and Earl. The coolest aliens in the galaxy provided me with many hours of fun, laughs and funky tunes in my youth. So when I heard that they were going to make another appearance, this time on the Xbox, I jumped for joy.

Our favourite extraterrestrials have a brand-new mission: they must find the 12 Sacred Albums of Funk. The record collection has been stolen from Lamont the Funkapotamus and found its way to planet Earth. The guys will have to encounter more than 30 randomly generated levels and beware of the crazy earthlings who stand in their way.

So the girls don't feel left out ToeJam and Earl have got a new buddy, Latisha, and this is one sister

← Girl power! Latisha is always one step ahead, so watch you don't cross her

you wouldn't want to mess with. Brimming with attitude she'll put you down as soon as look at you. She's out to prove that girls are better than boys. You go, girlfriend!

Xbox Live subscribers will be able to download extra levels and will also have the use of three more characters, including ToeJam's cousin, Nerdy ToeJam. It's a huge game that looks great and plays well on its own, though, so there's still more than enough fun to be had even if you're not hooked up to this service.

There are many elements of the original game in ToeJam & Earl III, including the boogie men (who creep up behind you and shout 'boogie-woogie-woogie' right in your earhole and scare you witless) and there's plenty of humour as well.

This is one game that makes you laugh out loud on a regular basis and not many games are capable of that. The two-player option encourages co-operation rather than competition and this means the game remains exactly what it was intended to be – damn good fun. Cool as funk. ■

Ben Camm-Jones



World Championship Snooker 2003

PREVIEW

By the time this issue of *PC Advisor* is on sale there will be a new snooker world champion. The 2002 champion, Peter Ebdon, will be among those challenging for the title and I for one wouldn't be surprised if he wins again because he's a pretty handy player.

I found this out last summer when I played a frame with him. And before you ask, no, I didn't win. He absolutely thrashed me. But hey, I played snooker with the 2002 world champion and I even managed to pot a ball – not bad, considering I only got the chance to take four shots. Fortunately for me, I'm better at PC-based snooker games than I am at snooker itself.



← Down to the finest detail, the graphics supersede those of the original

CodeMasters' World Championship Snooker was a groundbreaking game when it hit the shelves at the beginning of 2001. It was the first title to realistically replicate the physics of snooker. As such, it sold thousands of copies and its playability ensured that it became the first true classic of the genre.

The eagerly anticipated World Championship Snooker 2003 will be released at the end of June and will be available on PC, PlayStation2 and Xbox platforms. We were lucky enough to get our hands on some preview code and were suitably impressed.

Though the code we saw was only 80 percent complete, the game looks great. The level of detail is incredible – everything from the baize to the balls looks much better than they did in the original. But this game isn't just about improving on its older sibling – there's new things to do as well. For example, if you fancy a game of pool you've got the choice of either eight- or nine-ball.

You won't regret buying this updated version. If you're a snooker fan and have played and enjoyed the original World Championship Snooker then you'll certainly to love it. ■

Ben Camm-Jones



↑ Helping hand: this feature shows you the path of both the colour and white balls

World Championship Snooker 2003

- CodeMasters: 01926 814 132
- www.codemasters.com
- ETBA

System requirements

TBA

Overall rating

