Loading…

Strange things happen at sea but stranger things, it would seem, happen in London. Last week my editor arrived at the office with a digital photograph he'd taken that morning of a tent camped outside Electronic Boutique, a gameshop along Oxford Street. Returning from an assignment he noticed the tent and the wording 'Queuing for Turok Evolution', scrawled on the side. Who would queue to buy a computer game that isn't due out for another two months? It could only be an act of PR trickery or sheer lunacy – possibly even both. This I had to see.

It turns out that the occupant of the tent is a 25-year-old man by the name of Jason Read. After a brief chat I discovered that Jason is a genuine, 110 percent, bona fide queuer and in the short space of time I had to ascertain – minus the benefit of a degree in clinical psychology –

→ "I try to encourage clubbers to join me in a fireside song during the early hours. They call me mad… I say I'm just enthusiastic"

certifiably sane. You see, Jason is attempting to break the world record for queuing for a computer game by 20 days. An American currently holds the title for 30 days of waiting; Jason will be tent-bound for a total of 50 days.

The attempt is absolutely legit and is being overseen by officials from the *Guinness Book of World Records.* It's also particularly bold given that Jason is doing it smack-bang in the middle of London – not a secure haven for the average street camper at two in the morning, even if he is armed with a hefty slab of Kendal Mint Cake.

But what about the ingestion of comestibles, general ablutions and, dare I say it, going to the toilet? This time it was Jason's turn to look at me like I was the madman: "I've got loads of friends who come down and bring supplies. It's in the rules that I can leave my tent to get a shower and buy sandwiches."

As if to further convince us that he's not going without he added, "There's a nice takeaway down the road." ■

Spencer Dalziel

Sid Meier's SimGolf

Electronic Arts must have been pleased when it got the publishing deal for a Sid Meier game – rubbing its hands in anticipation at what classic big Sid would conjure. Well, this time Sid went small and came up with a golf management sim.

You know the score with sim games: you are god and you build your world, be it an amusement park, zoo or casino, and get it working to perfection. But SimGolf is set apart by the joy of its playability and attention to detail. Golfers wade through shallow streams talking about the game while dolphins play in the nearby lakes, below a sky full of blimps and eagles.

Conversations are governed by how much the characters enjoy the course: if they have a happy experience their chat will end joyfully and you'll be rewarded with a musical ditty. It's not a pot of gold, but better than nothing. To make your golfers happy, you must give them a course that is challenging without being aggravating. There must be benches to sit on, attractive landmarks, flowers and snack bars.

Once you've built your course, why not indulge in a game yourself in order to check for flaws? This is simple – select a stroke and hope for the best. Like an RPG (role-playing game), it allots you a certain number of points for luck, skill, strength and other golfing traits. Make a fluke shot and your luck will go up, fluff an easy shot and your skill will go down.

You must make enough money to keep the golf club going, but if you're happy with

↑ Balls up: golfing heaven or course from hell – the choice is yours

a mediocre course, you can stop building, relax and just enjoy playing golf. Then again, you might decide to tweak each hole until it gets nothing but accolades, or work to get your course accepted for tournaments by the SimGolf Association.

There is never any pressing reason to continue playing SimGolf, but I played hour after hour because I love golf and this is a great game. Nice one Sid! ■

Mark Brown

Sid Meier's SimGolf

System requirements: 300MHz Intel Pentium II; Windows 95/98/200/Me/XP; 64MB RAM; 300MB hard disk space; 8MB graphics card.

EA Sport: 01932 450 000
Website: www.simgolf.ea.com
Price: £34.99

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

Operation Flashpoint: Resistance

We loved the original Operation Flashpoint: CWC (Cold War Crisis) when we reviewed it for our December 01 issue. Since its release the Operation Flashpoint online community has been crying out for an extension – wait no longer, here it is.

Operation Flashpoint: Resistance is an excellent improvement over the first offering and provides impressive, fresh ideas. It's a prequel to CWC with an in-depth story. You play Victor Troska, an ex-Special Forces soldier who now lives as a respectable civilian on the island of Nogova – a short distance from the original game's three islands. Naturally, the developers never intended this man to live a peaceful life so his idyllic dreams are shattered when Soviet Forces invade.

At first he's reluctant to return to conflict but he ends up leading the rag-tag Resistance effort. Nogova provides an additional 100km^2 of landscape with industrial buildings and your character navigates the island with an intriguing style.

There are more weapons and vehicles than in CWC but, as you're in the Resistance, you must scavenge. Use supplies tactically and you'll build an army strong enough to repel the Soviets, but it's hard going.

→ Giles at 2 o'clock: get off my land! You're frightening the Jerseys

Resistance looks much better than CWC and now boasts an in-game server browser to help you find online games more easily. The sound effects in Resistance are excellent and it all hangs together beautifully. ■

Spencer Dalziel

Operation Flashpoint: Resistance
System requirements: 450MHz Pentium II; Windows 98/2000/Me/XP; 64MB RAM; 300MB hard disk space; 32MB graphics card.
Codemasters: 01926 814 132
Website: www.codemasters.co.uk
Price: £14.99

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

Zoo Tycoon: Dinosaur Digs

Something strange is happening in the world of Zoo Tycoon. Yes, developer Microsoft has come up with a Jurassic twist to the original game in the form of an upgrade entitled Dinosaur Digs.

The object of the game is the same – the more you look after the animals in your care and the people visiting your zoo, the more cash you reap – but Dinosaur Digs presents you with a few more challenges than its predecessor.

Dinosaurs require constant attention, much more so than the animals in the first game, which makes it a greater challenge. They'll often trash the foliage in their pens. Replacing it quickly is made difficult, though, if you're already controlling several other dinosaur exhibits, not to mention keeping the guests happy. Multitasking is the name of the game.

A great section of the game, and my personal favourite, is when the electrified fences – which keep the dinosaurs inside their pens – wear out and your dinos go on a rampage into the visiting crowds.

Watch as they chase their keepers, catch and eat them. A brown cloud appears as your dinosaur munches away and a perfunctory message flashes up onscreen which says 'Allosaurus 2 has just eaten the scientist'. Satisfying stuff. If your dinosaurs manage to escape, you'll need to call the recovery team out in the helicopter to shoot the dinos with a tranquilliser rifle, á la *Jurassic Park*.

In terms of gameplay, Zoo Tycoon: Dinosaur Digs isn't that different from the original, but with 20 new dinosaurs to control and 100 extra items, such as giant dinosaur statues, tacky bronto-burger stands and fossil excavations, there's plenty to keep you and your guests entertained for hours. ■

Emma Stroud

← Great, steaming piles: "Mum, did they have to put the dinosaurs' toilet next to ours?"
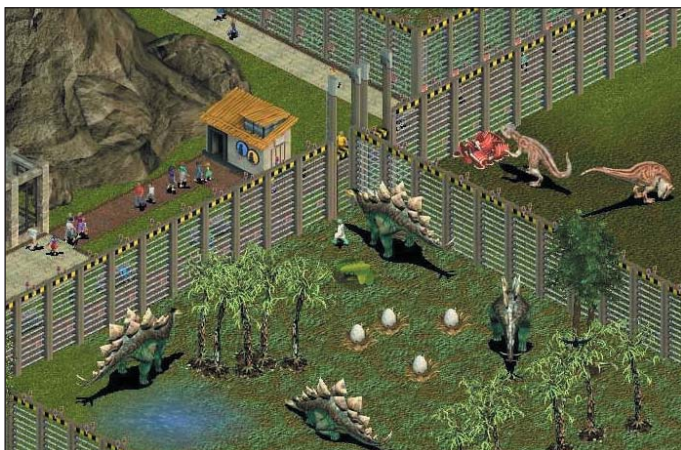
Zoo Tycoon: Dinosaur Digs
System requirements: 233MHz Pentium; Windows 98/Me/XP; from 64MB RAM; 300MB hard disk space; 4MB graphics card; Zoo Tycoon.
Microsoft: 0870 601 0100
Website: www.zootycoon.co.uk
Price: £19.99

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

Tomb Raider for Pocket PC

When we first heard that Tomb Raider was coming out for Pocket PCs we thought it would be an overhyped 2D port. How wrong we were: it comes in full 3D glory and takes gaming to a new level for mobile devices. For that alone it's worth a Recommended award. Tomb Raider for Pocket PC has been developed by Ideaworks3D and is the first title to benefit from its revolutionary Segundo technology, which enables console-quality gaming on mobile devices.

Most people know the Lara Croft mythology so we won't dwell on the background. Suffice it to say Tomb Raider is an *Indiana Jones*-style third-person adventure that shot PlayStation sales through the roof. It takes a bit of getting used to on an iPaq because you have to employ hardware and software controls to aid Lara through hazardous worlds.

You need to rotate the device 90 degrees in landscape mode, using the four-way pad to move around. The iPaq has four quick-launch buttons (Calendar, Contacts, Inbox and iTask) that are also reassigned for Tomb Raider. With all the buttons in use, seven further functions are provided by onscreen controls allowing you to run, jump, roll, look around, side-step left and right or perform an action. The button assignments work well, although they're quite fiddly.

→ Swimming with sharks: if only I'd brought my bubble bath…

We'd like to see the results on a more powerful PDA (personal digital assistant). Unfortunately it's only available on Compaq's 3630, 3660, 3760, 3850 and 3870 iPaq models. It's also only available online but we're certain that this is the start of something beautiful. ■

Will Head

Tomb Raider for Pocket PC
Hardware requirements: Compaq iPaq
Handandgo.com: available online only
Website: www.tombraidertogo.com
Price: £20

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

Freedom Force

Oh, to be a superhero. Tossing cars, swinging lamp posts like baseball bats and fighting evil – well, now's your chance. Freedom Force presents the heyday of superhero comics sans irony. It's a brilliantly conceived idea that's well implemented. We recommend donning pants outside your trousers for this enjoyable role-playing strategy romp.

Welcome to Patriot City, circa 1962, where a sinister plot is unfolding. An alien menace has unleashed the secret powers of Energy X on the unsuspecting populace, turning some citizens into superheroes and others into supervillains. You must help Freedom Force stop evil and preserve justice… for Patriot City.

Freedom Force is a high-concept tactical RPG (role-playing game) that relies on its audience's sense of nostalgia. The game's mood harks back to the age of comics, when Stan Lee and Jack Kirby were creating such icons as *Spider-Man, X-Men* and *Captain America.* The look, sound and presentation of Freedom force is completely old-school; you'd think that Jack 'The King' Kirby had returned from the grave to do the art for the game.

Luckily, this title lives up to its lofty goals, providing a tight, smart, tactical game along the lines of the combat in Baldur's Gate. Everything happens in real-time, but you can pause the action to give orders to your heroes. You can collect prestige points to recruit new heroes – even those you created yourself in the game's character editor.

With a growing number of websites out there for new skins and character models, you'll never run out of possible heroes to join Freedom Force.

At last, you get to live a comicbook adventure without having to worry about creasing the cover. ■

D-Pad Destroyer

← Comic relief: are you man enough to be a superhero?

Freedom Force
System requirements: 300MHz Pentium II; Windows 98/2000/Me/XP; 96MB RAM; 630MB hard disk space; 16MB graphics card.
EA Sports: 01932 450 000
Website: www.easports.com
Price: £29.99

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

Where's the Blanket Charlie Brown?

Poor little Linus has had to hide his security blanket from his horrible Auntie who wants the grubby cloth relegated to the dustbin. The only problem is he hid it at Charlie Brown's house and Charlie has managed to lose it. It is your job, as either Charlie or his older sister Lucy, to find it. As always, Snoopy offers no help. In fact, the only way to get him involved is by offering him treats – from sunglasses to a magician's hat – which you will find scattered around the house.

→ Genie in a bottle: Charlie refused to believe in magic carpets

Keep your eyes peeled as objects are hidden in the weirdest places – remember to check every nook and cranny. When you are able to open or pick something up the arrow icon will turn into a fist which you simply click. Pick up certain objects and you have a gateway to the outside world.

There are puzzles to work out, which have settings from easy to difficult. My favourite tasks were the Great Houdini's magic show, where you have to 'rearrange' one of Snoopy's victims, and finding books in the library. Remember to use the objects you've picked up along the way, as without a disguise Snoopy can't get into the library. Although, in true *Superman* style, a pair of cool shades is all he needs to fool the librarian.

Snoopy was always my favourite cartoon, which probably makes me a little biased in my praise for this game. Not only is this like stepping into the cartoon, but it's also very funny and really entertaining, with just the right levels of narration and interaction. ■

Wendy Brewer

Where's the Blanket Charlie Brown?

System requirements: 166MHz Pentium II; Windows 95 or higher; 24MB RAM; 40MB hard disk space; 16MB graphics card.

Tivola: 01268 531 245
Website: www.tivola.co.uk
Price: £19.99

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

Prisoner of War

Freedom is one of the most important concepts known to man – so imagine having yours taken away. This is the premise behind Codemasters' latest release for the PlayStation2, Prisoner of War. You play an allied pilot who gets shot down and captured by the Germans. Captain Stone and his co-pilot find themselves interned in a PoW camp; this is where you join the action, although I'm not sure if this is quite the word to describe such a slow-paced and thoughtful strategic game.

On starting PoW you will be struck by the level of detail in the graphics. The prison camp is very convincing and the soldiers have a variety of facial expressions. The action is moved forward by conversing with your fellow prisoners and fulfilling the tasks suggested by them.

PoW is a combination of stealth and puzzle-solving that starts off slowly but will soon have you addicted. If you've played Metal Gear Solid you'll recognise the style of play, where sneaking around is the modus operandi. Style is not the only aspect borrowed from MGS – the radar is similar, with cones of vision playing an important part in your success.

At the beginning, PoW allows freedom of movement and conversation. A certain repetitiveness creeps in, though, with fellow prisoners saying the same things until you have completed a certain task. This feeling is augmented by the structure of your time, which is ordered around free time and mealtimes. The devotion to realism is good but I'm not sure how well the tedious routine of being a prisoner lends itself to a computer game.

PoW is a unique idea, although some may find it a tad slow. ■

Simon Alveranga

← Conspiracy theory: use your free time to converse with your fellow prisoners

Prisoner of War

Hardware requirements: PlayStation2

Codemasters: 01926 814 132
Website: www.codemasters.co.uk
Price: £34.99

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

Delta Force: Urban Warrior

Wipe the dust off your PlayStation: NovaLogic has released a game right at the tail end of the PS' lifespan that is the embodiment of all things good. Fire up with Delta Force: Urban Warrior.

The real Delta Force unit, on which this franchise is based, was originally set up in 1977 and modelled on the SAS to deal with a growing terrorist threat. Of course, this doesn't mean it only employed short, hard Scottish men.

In DFUW the CIA suspects previously unrelated terrorist organisations are working together and it's your job, as a DF

➜ Target practice: who's just sneezed on my camera lens?

operative called John Carter, to work alone and undercover to eliminate this new threat.

NovaLogic has pushed the warfare gaming envelope not once, but several times with its Delta Force series and this new addition is no exception. It's all the more impressive given the poor show of FPS (first-person shooter) games on the PlayStation. They're notoriously difficult to control – such as the abysmal Quake III PC port – because they lack the invaluable mouse and keyboard combination. The only FPS game we've seen that pulled it off with any savvy was the original Medal of Honour – but now we can add DFUW.

It's intuitively easy, despite needing to utilise the full range of combinations on
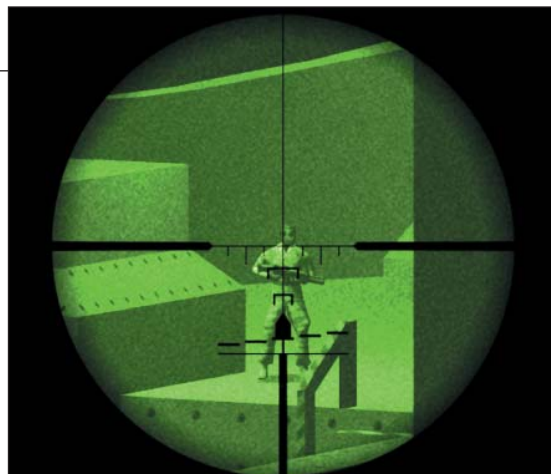
the controller, and the ensuing gameplay is a joy thanks to the fluid movement.

Urban Warrior boasts as much graphical detail as is possible on a near obsolete machine and sound is used to good effect throughout. Combined they offer a tense, nail-biting experience. Indeed, if only this title had been released a few years ago during PS' heyday it would have been hailed a classic. ■

Spencer Dalziel

Delta Force: Urban Warrior
Hardware requirements: PlayStation
NovaLogic: 01908 575 600
Website: www.novalogic.com
Price: £14.99

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

Oscar the Balloonist and Vicky the Viking

Oscar the Balloonist is a very simple title with an attractive user interface. Oscar appears in his balloon with a crate, a book and a trunk, each containing a different set of activities. The crate is full of things to make, such as finger puppets, animal masks and all the components of a toy farm. It's just a question of choosing, printing it out and then getting to work with crayons and scissors. The book is a similar proposition – you can make and print out

bookmarks, calendar pages, greetings cards and invitations. The trunk contains a set of rather ordinary games, such as Spot the Difference, a fishy jigsaw and a general knowledge quiz.

Oscar the Balloonist will help a bored child pass a few hours on a rainy day, but the £14.99 price tag seems steep when the internet offers similar games for free.

Vicky the Viking is an interactive game for children aged from four. Vicky wants to go on a voyage with her Viking father, but to do so must pass various tests of skill – like catching fish or hitting targets with a bow and arrow – each with three levels of ability.

Fine. Except that it took several hours for two of us – combined age 80 – to complete the tests at the first level of skill. This isn't

← Hats off to ya: Vicky failed to notice that there was a tortoise on her head

because the tests are impossibly hard or because we are irredeemably stupid, but because the software is so badly designed you wonder if the makers bothered with any usability testing.

It's a shame, because Vicky the Viking looked like fun and the basic idea is a promising one. Avoid if you don't want tears of frustration. ■

Kim Thomas

Oscar the Balloonist and Vicky the Viking
System requirements: 166MHz Pentium; Windows 95/98/NT/2000/XP; 32MB RAM; 16MB graphics card; 30MB (40MB for Vicky the Viking) hard disk space.
Tivola: 01268 531 245
Website: www.tivola.co.uk

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

Price: £14.99 (Oscar the Balloonist)

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

Price: £19.99 (Vicky the Viking)

NewNovelist

If you've ever had writer's block you'll probably read this review with scepticism. NewNovelist claims to take the pain out of creativity – a possible solution to looking out of the window while staring at a blank piece of paper and drinking endless cups of tea.

NewNovelist breaks down the process of writing a book into five stages. It's still a blank piece of paper, but it's made less daunting by the helpful instructions.

Once you have chosen a title for your novel, you're guided through the first three

→ Writing by numbers: use the wizard to help you pen a masterpiece

stages: story concept, story category and story type – which are set up using a Story Wizard. Initially I sniggered at the thought of writing an entire novel using a wizard tool, but within a few minutes my cynicism had vanished when I considered which category of epic I would choose – a love story, chase or revenge. There are then 14 story types to select from.

The fourth stage, World creation, has seven components that allow you to create environments and characters. You can describe physical and emotional traits

using the tools and prompts. All this is preparation for the fifth stage.

Story creation is made up of 12 steps that break the text into manageable chunks. This is where you finally turn your concepts into a story. For each step there is an editing screen and tutorials to guide you through. You can also keep notes and store references which are easy to retrieve.

NewNovelist is clearly structured with easy-to-follow instructions. You can work through the program one stage at a time or use the navigation tree to skip from one section to another. But I'm not too sure what Charles Dickens would think. ■

Faith Wardle

NewNovelist	
System requirements: 233MHz Pentium II; Windows 95/98/2000/Me; 32MB RAM; (64MB for 2000); 10MB hard disk space.	
Creativity Software: 020 7341 0762	
Website: www.newnovelist.co.uk	
Price: £39.99	

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

Print Artist 15.0

Aimed at those without any formal design skills or training, Print Artist provides a vast database of predesigned templates which can be adapted to suit individual needs, or simply used exactly as they are. This latest version of the package comes on seven CDs, five of which are loaded with clip art. So, for anyone who likes cartoon illustrations – albeit ones that are rather cheesy and predominantly US-oriented –

Print Artist's 150,000 images and photos will be like manna from heaven.

While the majority of projects on offer (10,500 of them) are home-based, with categories covering party kits, invitations, napkin rings, coasters and so forth, there are plenty of ideas here for teachers and office workers alike, including a range of classroom projects and envelope, Avery label and business card print support.

The templates may not be to everyone's tastes, but the sheer variety means inspiration is one thing that won't be lacking. There's even a selection of quotes you can insert at will, and then experiment with text styles using the collection of 300 fonts.

The package is extremely easy to use and provides all the help you could want, giving cut-and-fold lines for projects that, once printed, need assembling with a pair of scissors and a Pritt Stick.

While a professional designer might debate whether or not the word 'artist' is a strictly accurate way to describe Sierra Home's vast package, Print Artist's strength lies in being an all-in-one solution for creative home projects of every kind.

If you've got a colour inkjet printer sitting idle at home, Print Artist will see it earns its keep. ■

Emma Northam
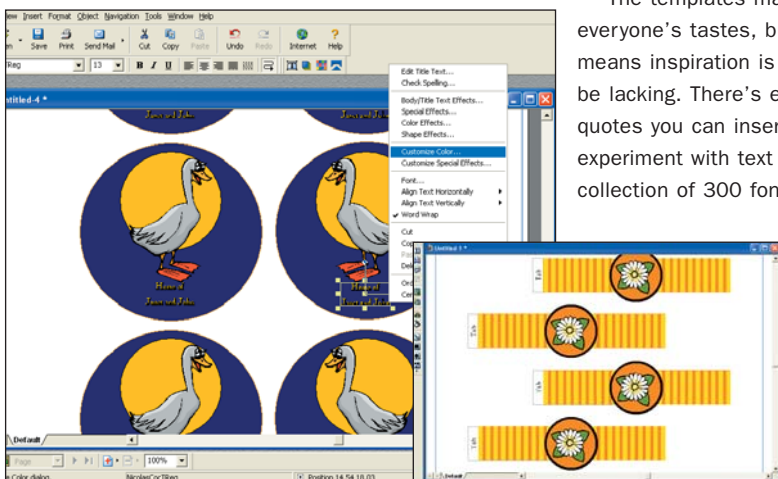
← What's up Doc: quacking good fun for all the family

Print Artist 15.0	
System requirements: 200MHz Pentium; Windows 95/98/2000/Me/NT/XP; 32MB RAM; 425MB hard disk space.	
Sierra Home: 01268 531 245	
Website: www.sierrahome.co.uk	
Price: £19.99	

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