

Forthcoming attractions

This month has seen some changes in the *PC Advisor* office. Our news editor and Lifestyle *maitre d'*, the lovely Mr Rupert Collins-White, has packed his bags for Tuscany where he promises to write a non-IT-related book that definitely doesn't involve Java applets, out-of-band signalling or Z-buffering. Someone had to ensure we continue to bring you the best in new software releases so I, Spencer Dalziel, have offered my humble services.

Soldiering on

But we haven't quite heard the last of Rupert as he provides a swan song in the form of his *The Sum of All Fears* preview. See for yourself if Clancyesque paramilitarism really does it for him and whether he had it in him after all to award any game more than seven out of 10 points.

Maintaining the line in one-man machismo is the gory *Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix* and *Duke Nukem Manhattan Project*. I have seen what it's like to crawl through the Colombian jungle and platform-jump the rooftops of New York City. Both these games could well supply moral adjudicators with ample ammo for soapbox commentary, but we suggest enjoying them for what they are.

If the toys for boys aren't your kind of thing then it could be worth having a look at the kid-friendly *Universal Monsters: MonsterVille* and *Diva Starz*. Wendy Brewer takes on the role of Count Dracula and Faith Wardle finds out what it's like to glam it up and hang out in shopping malls with her glitzy mates.



→ Silly leg off: rain threatens play in EA's *Cricket 2002*

↓ Think tank: *Stealth Combat* requires wit and cunning, as well as big weapons



Sport fanciers might try *Next Generation Tennis* or *Racing World Kart 2002*. Ben Camm-Jones releases some cantankerous John McEnroe fuming while Emma Stroud enjoys taking on Schumacher. The more cerebral of you should join Ursula Seymour on a big RPG (role-playing game) adventure known as *Morrowind*. Be warned, though, she has barely recovered from her addiction to *Dungeon Siege* so she may not be entirely objective...

Stealth publishing

But, you cry, wither *Hitman 2*? A game so stealthy you can apparently complete all the levels without actually killing anyone. We gave a sneak preview of this a while back and, if it's as good as the first, it should be worth buying.

Hitman 2 was due for release aeons ago but developer Io Interactive has pushed this further back in the release schedules. We contacted a spokesperson for the publishers, Eidos Interactive, and were told it has settled on a September release, so watch this space.

← Hostile audience: light relief in *Gore* as one of the baddies charms his way out of trouble with a magic trick. Drum roll please



What the future holds

In the meantime we've been looking at games for our October issue and have left no stone unturned in Lifestyle's quest to appease all game players. We're covering a broad range of titles, so here's a sneak

preview of some of the games that our editorial staff were playing when they should have been working instead.

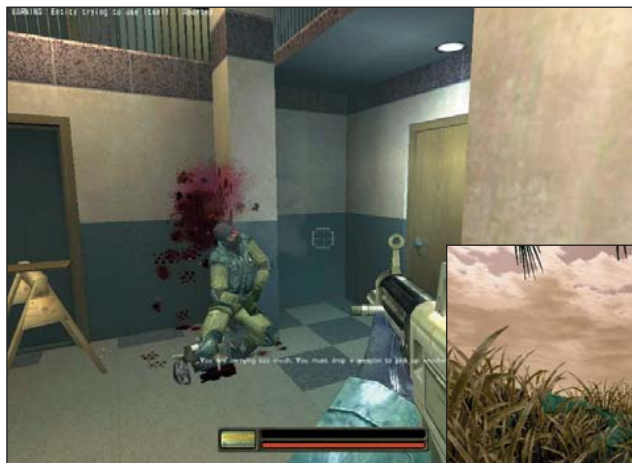
For adventure enthusiast, peace lovers and sci-fi fans we've got *Schizm: Mysterious Journey*, a non-violent single-player innovation in the adventure genre. It's written by acclaimed sci-fi writer Terry Dowling and it promises some fascinating non-linear gameplay and stunning graphics. At five CDs in length, it's a bit of a monster so you'll certainly get your money's worth.

Following on in the adventure/real-time strategy mould is *Starmageddon: Project Earth*. Similar to the excellent *Homeworld* in concept, *Starmageddon* looks beautiful and has a storyline that's integral to the gameplay.

We have a couple of games for the kiddies (don't worry, the educational slant is well catered for) in the shape of *Land of the Magic Stones* and *Adiboo*, so the young 'uns should be kept happy. We also find out if Aggasi's tennis game fairs better than his performance at Wimbledon and Cricket lovers will be, ahem, bowled over by EA's *Cricket 2002*.

As if that weren't enough we have a high-speed flight racing sim, music making software, *Stealth Combat* and *Gore*, an arcade action FPS (first-person shooter) containing – you guessed it – lots of gore. ■

Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix



← Great cornering: a visceral approach to interior decor

↓ Supergrass: be careful, your mates could turn on you at any second



Before I start this review I'm going to lay my cards on the table for all to see. I live, sleep and eat the deeply visceral gaming world that is SOF (Soldier of Fortune). Despite – or maybe because of – the looming threat of my 30s, I belong to an online SOF gang with a group of teenagers from Belgium. We call ourselves the Dark Clan and have waited with bated breath for the release of Soldier Of Fortune II: Double Helix. I will say I was slightly more ambivalent than my gladiatorial chums Warlord, Pantera, Nitro and Death Plague. For me, playing SOF is like slipping into a pair of comfy slippers and I wasn't sure if I wanted to buy a new pair. Could the fresh fur lining and unfrayed piping of SOF II tempt me to change?

Mindless violence

Released back in 1999, the original SOF is an immensely enjoyable plotless FPS (first-person shooter). Its horrifically bloody content is not for the faint of heart and got it banned in Canada while endearing it to millions of immature teenagers and grown men who should really know better. SOF II is somewhat different. Rather than following a logical progression from the first game, Raven Software has taken heed of its peers. The current FPS gaming culture requires scripted cinematics, tactical awareness, good artificial intelligence and a more considered gameplay. That means no more run-and-gun fragfest mayhem and instant gratification, which is surely a good thing. Well, good it is; Soldier of Fortune it is not.

In SOF II you reprise the role of weapons specialist John Mullins – a very hard man indeed. Recalled to do more freelance work for a shadowy body known only as The Shop, he must

investigate an insidious threat from a bio-terrorist organisation and a Gemini Virus attack. So far so dispensable, but the plot proves deep enough to set Mullins off on a transcontinental mission to unleash a veritable menagerie of punishment.

Brainy damage

SOF II is a hard slog, spanning 10 massive single-player missions and 70 different levels. It uses a heavily modified version of the Quake III engine to good effect and the notorious Ghoul II engine for the crème de la crème in body damage.

People can be shot in 32 different areas of the body and the motion-capture effects are truly stunning. However, I would suggest keeping it away from children – this kind of gore is a guilty pleasure. Enemy AI (artificial intelligence) is hugely advanced from the first game and the skins are some of the best I've seen. It's atmospheric and has a well implemented multiplayer section. If that weren't enough, there's also a random mission generator that'll breathe new life into the game once you've finished so replay value should be high.

My problem is that SOF II is not the game I was expecting: it doesn't feel like the developer has respected the lineage of SOF. When follow-ups aren't any good reviewers dismiss them with words like 'for diehard fans of the first instalment only'. In this case it's quite the opposite. If you didn't like SOF, you'll love this. ■

Spencer 'Two-hammers McClencher' Dalziel

↓ Explosive action: it's not a metaphor



Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix

System requirements: 350MHz Pentium II; Windows 95/98/Me/2000/XP; 128MB RAM; 665MB hard disk space.

Activision: 01753 756 100

Website: www.activision.com

Price: £39.99

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

Tom Clancy: The Sum of All Fears

In the grand, if somewhat overburdened, tradition of onscreen Clancyesque paramilitarism, SOAF (Sum of All Fears) is a 'terrorists have taken over the world and it's your job to take them down, soldier' kind of thing. It's based on the Tom Clancy Ghost Recon game engine rather than the tedious Rainbow Six one, so you can perform your close quarters battle and command your squad on the hoof rather than having to plan everything in advance.

SOAF is actually rather good – the enemies are predictable but then people

often are. The AI (artificial intelligence) is fair and the in-building tactics are different.

It's a little bit samey though. Recon's main selling point was its outside feel mixed with excellent gameplay. In SOAF you get the gameplay but it all feels a bit claustrophobic.

I must say, though, that you have to watch your step and, just like Recon, the baddies will wax you if you poke your head round corners without thinking (stun grenades soon sort that out).

There's also a new style of gameplay, Lone Wolf, in which you alone must escape a baddie-filled map normally used for set-piece missions. It's fun and a quick fix, so you don't really lose anything by jumping out early if you dinner's ready.



↑ Boxed in: despite the smooth gameplay and riveting suspense, Lone Wolf is still crestfallen to find that he can't get out of the warehouse

Also interesting is the ability to record replays of your missions, although unfortunately they aren't adjustable.

All in all, SOAF looks good – especially for me, because I hated Rainbow Six and loved Ghost Recon. But, and it's a big but, I simply can't award this game top marks, for anything. ■

Rupert Collins-White

Tom Clancy: The Sum of All Fears

System requirements: 450MHz Pentium II; Windows 9x/Me/2000/XP; 128MB RAM; 1GB hard disk space.

UbiSoft: 01932 838 23

Website: www.ubi.com

Price: £19.99

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

Duke Nukem Manhattan Project

Do my eyes deceive me? Is this the Duke Nukem game the world has been waiting for? And what's this on the side of the box? Duke returns to its platform roots in this third-person 2D sidescroller? This must be a filler rather than a killer. How can it pass muster when it's a homage to gameplay we all enjoyed over 10 years ago. I made a bet with some fellow PCA workers that I'd eat my hat if Duke Nukem Manhattan Project proved to be any fun. Well, pass the Trilby, go light on the mayo, and watch me eat my fill.

You play the egocentric Duke and it's your job to stop an evil madman called

Mech Morpox from infecting New York City with Glopp – a radioactive substance that's turning the roaches, rats and all manner of foul beasties into gun-toting, paranoid creatures.

It wouldn't be a Duke Nukem game without pig cops, damsels in distress and Dukes glib borderline misogyny – just take heed not to play this game if Germaine Greer or Andrea Dworkin are within earshot.

The environments diversify nicely, from the streets of China Town to a Space Station, and they cover three levels in each of the eight episodes. Duke interacts with each environment according to different enemies and challenges so gameplay is kept interesting. It's not a long game and has little replay value, but that's reflected in the bargain price.



↑ Chinese take-out: these prawn crackers ain't big enough for the both of us

Being a 2D platform game means Duke Nukem's strictly linear and non-exploratory. However, it utilises current gaming technology to achieve some stunning results. The 3D engine means it looks great and allows for interesting changes in perspective when you're playing. This is classic addictive action – it's easy to pick up and play without having to engage your brain. Well worth the money. ■

Spencer Dalziel

Duke Nukem Manhattan Project

System requirements: 350MHz Pentium II or higher; Windows 95/98/Me/2000/XP; 128MB RAM; 300MB hard disk space.

UbiSoft: 01932 838 230

Website: www.ubisoft.co.uk

Price: £19.99

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

Morrowind: The Elder Scrolls III



I'm sorry, but Morrowind: The Elder Scrolls III just doesn't quite do it for me, which is a shame as I thought I'd finally found a replacement for Dungeon Siege in my affections. The graphics are gorgeous and the plot looks quite engaging, but what really sold me on Dungeon Siege was that it was simple to get to grips with and relatively easy to progress – unlike Morrowind.

Action replay

The main problem with Morrowind is that you can't save. If you're an ace gamer that's obviously no problem – you can sail through the easy stages with no need to obsessively save just in case your powers aren't quite as impressive as you thought and you end up dead. Unfortunately, this fate was repeatedly mine.

Time and time again I had to replay that initial walk off the ship, deciding my race, skills and star sign, until I was well and truly sick of it. Every time I managed to make it a few steps further, bang, I'd die again. I would then be transported back onboard and have to go through the same old rigmarole once again.

The other thing that I really don't like about Morrowind is the acres of text you have to plough through. Instead of speaking to the other characters, you must read the dialogue onscreen; any conversation is then carried out by clicking on text prompts and reading the response – mind-numbingly boring.

A further nail in the Morrowind coffin is the way you interact with your character.

Any RPG (role-playing game) requires a certain amount of inventory management, but the way it's handled in Morrowind is unwieldy. To pull up menus requires a right-click mouse

← Imp peril: these little horrors aren't here to ask for their ball back

↓ Gare-de-l'eau: our hero picks the wrong time to pass behind the royal palace's latrines



action, and then you have to select anything you want to manipulate. This hardly leads to speedy gameplay – to fight effectively you really need a single click to swap to the most appropriate weapon.

If these problems weren't enough to put me off Morrowind, I also wasn't keen on the way you see – or rather don't see – your character. In other RPGs you can see your virtual self in action onscreen, but in Morrowind you are effectively behind his or her eyes. In other words you see what your character sees, not your character itself. This isn't the only

game to take this approach, but I find it off-putting.

Band of brothers

Now you may be thinking that I've been slightly harsh in my analysis of Morrowind: The Elder Scrolls III, and I'm sure that if you are a true RPG devotee then you will find the hours required to crack this game. The online fan sites clearly show that it's possible to build up a real devotion to this game, but you will need to put in the time. Apparently there are plenty of cracks that allow you to progress with more prowess than I showed, but I'm simply not hooked enough to look for them.

Morrowind is a game for true-blue RPG gamers. It is complex, full of clever twists and rich graphics. If you want to immerse yourself in Morrowind lore, there is plenty to get your teeth into. ■

Ursula Seymour

↓ Parallel universe: what would have happened if the Romans had built space ships?



Next Generation Tennis

I will openly admit that tennis is not my favourite sport. In fact, my attention span where tennis is concerned lasts about as long as the average British summer. I will, however, concede that tennis is more fun to play than it is to watch, so I'd rather a game on my PC than put up with more on the television, especially after two weeks of solid Wimbledon. With this in mind, I donned my headband, put on my best tennis whites, tightened my racquet strings and installed Next Generation Tennis.

I was quick to find out that the best thing about Next Generation Tennis is the Quit Game option. The difficulty settings seem to vary from 'very, very difficult' to 'you cannot be serious.' The controls are unresponsive, and whether you hit the ball or not seems to be down to luck far more than it is to judgement. If you so much as try to move your player to a different area of the court, you'll find your opponent has returned the ball, won the point, game, set and match and left the court of play after shaking hands with the umpire.

Another vital element that's missing from Next Generation is top-class players – presumably because they have all copyrighted their own names and would demand extortionate royalties. However, there is the celebrated journeyman Todd Martin, Chandra Rubin (world-ranked number six back in 1996? Remember?)

↑ Backhanded compliment: we wouldn't say this is a game to love

and a British chap, Tom something or other. In all seriousness, though, no-time Grand Slam tournament winner Tim Henman is one of only a handful of 'top' players in this game.

Try as might, I really couldn't find any redeeming features in Next Generation Tennis, so if you fancy a good (but expensive) laugh, go out and buy it. ■

Ben Camm-Jones



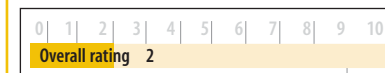
Next Generation Tennis

System requirements: 400MHz Pentium II; Windows 98/Me/2000/XP; 64MB RAM; 500MB hard disk space.

Wanadoo: 01256 707 767

Website: www.wanadoo.com

Price: £19.99



Michael Schumacher's Racing World Kart 2002

Compared to the roaring power of cars featured in Formula One games like Gran Turismo and F1 2000, racing karts might at first glance seem to harness all the power of a lawnmower. But it would be a mistake to dismiss Racing World Kart 2002 so easily. The trackside detail and the sensation of speed is as convincing as any Formula One offering, and once you start playing it's hard to stop.

Michael Schumacher stares out at you as the movie begins and we're transported to the scene of his pre-Formula One career. Initially, there are three circuits to complete: an indoor circuit in Japan, a

fast-paced outdoor track in Dijon and an Amsterdam circuit with a backdrop populated by a few too many windmills. On every course you can complete challenges like chasing ghost riders, setting new lap records and scoring championship points.

Once you amass a set number of points, you graduate to the ICA and FBA divisions. There, you will experience a range of tracks in other exotic locations. These encompass the sandy surface of the Las Vegas desert track that will test your grip on the road and the serpentine bends of the Italian track where you can hone your cornering technique.

If you particularly enjoy finetuning every nut and bolt of the parts of a racing car before you play,

→ Low-rider: there's speed behind these souped-up lawnmowers, so don your helmet and start racing

Racing World Kart may not be for you. The choice between karts is limited really to the red, green or blue one. However, there's a variety of ways in which you can play it, both on- or offline. The game is also compatible with a steering wheel, joystick or gamepad.

Formula One it ain't, but for a game that doesn't pretend to be anything more than a race against the clock, it is certainly very entertaining. ■

Emma Stroud



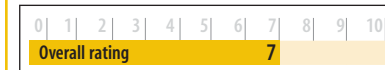
Michael Schumacher's Racing World Kart 2002

System requirements: 450MHz Pentium III; Windows 98/Me/2000; 64MB RAM; 380MB hard disk space.

Jo Wood: 020 901 7300

Website: www.jowood.com

Price: £19.99



Universal Monsters: MonsterVille

If you remember Grandad Munster developing potions in the basement, Herman trying to look normal in the outside world and little Eddie gearing up to perform some creepy antics, then you are almost picturing a scene from *MonsterVille*. Although the characters aren't anywhere near as complex as those in the hit TV show, *The Munsters*, they are as strange and as sweet.

You can choose to be Frankenstein, the Metaluna Princess, the hunchback of Notre Dame or an incredibly cute version of

Count Dracula. However, instead of trying to scare your fellow ghouls half to death, you have to gain their support in the local *MonsterVille* election.

You must take control of buildings throughout the levels to hamper the other candidates' election aspirations and make your presence felt in the city. One hint is to take over the cemetery which is fairly difficult but invaluable to your campaign – you receive support from the Mummy, who turns out to be a helpful addition. On your travels you must pick up various objects that will help scare off opponents – a well-placed mirror, for example, will scare Quasimodo away as he can't bear to look at himself.

Fed up with tedious canvassing? Simply gather yourself a group of minions, build them some dwellings and let the grateful



↑ Universal deliveryman: 'Where would you like your livestock, ma'am?'

ghouls take care of the legwork. Why not do a bit of DIY on some well-known monsters' houses then they'll pay you back with their support and a few extra votes?

MonsterVille gives a whole new insight into running for a local election though, hopefully, the real-life candidates won't be pulling such ghoulish tricks. All in all, this is a quirky, funny game that can become a little tedious at times. ■

Wendy Brewer

Universal Monsters: MonsterVille

System requirements: 350MHz Pentium II; Windows 9x/Me/2000/XP; 64MB RAM; 250MB hard disk space.

Cryo: +33 1 4465 2553

Website: www.cryo.fr

Price: £24.99

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

Diva Starz

The Diva Starz are based on a line of interactive talking teen dolls, and in this game you get to hang out with them at the mall. It's an activity-based adventure where you, Nikki, Tia, Summer and Alexa share secrets, play games, style your hair, pick out outfits, mix music tunes and play arcade games.

You need to get to know the particular tastes of each Diva Star to make them look as 'glam-a-licious' as possible. The more you get to know them, their secrets and what they like, the more 'groovy' diva tokens you can earn. You need to pick out the perfect hair, outfits and music to make

them look 'coolerific' during their trip to the mall. If you get the choices right, you earn tokens to play in the arcade, which in turn can earn you credits to buy gifts for the other diva starz.

The mall areas include: The Fashion Shop, where you choose outfits; The Style Spot, where hairstyles are chosen; and The Music Spot, where you design the right tune. These activities can be played in Challenge Mode, where you earn tokens for the arcade or free-style mode.

Once you've earned enough credits and your Diva Starz look 'fabulicious to the max' you can go to the 'Secrets and surprises spot' in the mall and buy gifts for the other Diva Starz.

→ Options and preferences: this game isn't quite the best way to get the most from your PC

There is also a link to Divastarz.com which is a bit slow to load, but once it's finished, you can go into each of the girls' rooms and look at their things.

Diva Starz will appeal to most young girls, but probably doesn't contain enough features for the appeal to last longer than a couple of plays. It's a shame that the CD doesn't contain more of the features available on the website. ■

Faith Wardle

Diva Starz

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

Vivendi: 0118 920 9100

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

Price: £19.99

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

