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In March of 1994, Apple Computer introduced the Power Macintosh — that speed demon Mac gamers have come to know and love. The debut party was flooded with demos of native rendering programs, graphics applications, scientific tools... and one ground-breaking game that harnessed the new machines' horsepower. Domark's Flying Nightmares was the first-ever native game, a tactical flight sim that ran on older Macs, and flew on the new Power PCs.

Domark was founded a decade earlier, in 1984, by two twenty-something workers in a London Advertising firm. As they entered the growing video-game industry, they pursued licenses aggressively and made a name for themselves with titles like James Bond — A View to Kill, and Trivial Pursuit. For a number of years, they worked away at producing PC and console titles, partnering with companies like Time Warner and Spectrum Holobyte.

One of Domark's games, Super VGA Harrier, was a pioneer in the PC flight sim world. Unlike most of the day's DOS-based games, it took advantage of high-res SuperVGA graphics providing the visual detail that Mac gamers had always experienced in less complex games. In 1993, as Apple worked feverishly to complete the PowerPC Macs, they approached Domark with a challenge -- create Super VGA Harrier for the Mac and make it Power Mac native. Domark rose to the occasion and began work on what was to become Flying Nightmares.

The game was a first for the Mac market, not only with its PowerPC native speed, but its detailed combat environment. The player controlled numerous units in the battle for an enemy-held island, sending in ground forces, choppers, and other Harriers while flying in his or her own plane. This element was critical. After knocking out a SAM site with choppers, the Harriers would be safer when flying over the territory. If sites were left alone, players suffered aircraft losses for the oversight. In the same manner, sending in Navy SEALs with lasers a few days before an attack would increase the accuracy of laser-guided munition strikes.

The Mac gaming community's response was positive, to say the least. Though

some blasted the game for a "PC-like" interface, it won rave reviews. Promotional information included with the new Power Mac also boosted sales — in the two years since its release, Flying Nightmares has sold over 50,000 copies and is still selling today.

After the success of Flying Nightmares, Domark began work on several new Mac games. Out of The Sun, a W.W.II dogfighting sim, brought the simulation depth of Flying Nightmares to 1940's Europe. Absolute Zero moved into the world of Sci-Fi and offered an emerging plot inside of a detailed space-flying sim.

Late last year, Domark and several other gaming companies banded together to form Eidos Interactive. Big Red Software, Simus, Centergold, and several sub-labels have merged allowing them to share technologies and marketing resources. For the time being, not much will change for gamers — titles will still be published under the Domark label, and the individual publishing houses will remain as divisions of the Eidos mother ship. "In the Mac market, [our name recognition is great], and we have a good rapport with the Mac market," says Gary Keith, Eidos PR guru. "Flying Nightmares II will be published by Eidos, but we want to keep the Domark Publishing label."

Of course, Eidos isn't sitting on its laurels after the wheeling and dealing. A number of new Mac games are in the pipeline, including Flying Nightmares II and a new AH-64 Apache simulator.

According to Brian Walker, Eidos' product manager for flight sims, the goal for both games is a frighteningly accurate recreation of the battle environment. While that doesn't always mean that a player must punch every button and toggle every switch that a REAL pilot would, it does mean that they're trying to reproduce the feel of the overall combat situation better than any have before. "One of the things that we've been really focusing on with Flying Nightmares II and Apache for the Macintosh is to bring the Mac, kicking and screaming if we have to, up to the production quality that PC [flight sims] have long enjoyed. It doesn't mean a great flight model and weak graphics, it doesn't mean doing great graphics and a weak flight model. It's the whole shooting match."

Obviously, everyone claims to have the most realistic sim. Brian, however, has actual experience as a former Apache attack pilot and is a Desert Storm veteran. He got his start with the gaming industry while he was in the military, reviewing software for Computer Gaming World. "My first review, actually, was Gunship 2000," he says with a laugh. "I take back all my vitriolic comments; now I know how hard it is!"

The realism he longed for in those days is part of the vision for Eidos' newest sims. AH-64 Apache features a detailed, technically accurate flight model for one of the military's favorite choppers. In addition, the game will incorporate a complex personality/morale model for the pilots under the player's command. Each pilot will have a unique personality and be affected by a number of factors in different ways. Your two best chopper pilots, for example, may not get along with each other. Try to force them together and their performance will suffer. If a wing man gets shot down, some pilots will be "psyched out" and perform poorly. In a limited way, the game will even simulate the politics of the battlefield. If you think an assignment from headquarters is foolish, you can stand against it. Do that too many times, though, and you may be replaced!

Flying Nightmares II seeks to smooth the learning curve more than a hyper-realistic sim, while still preserving the accurate "feel" and results. "One of the consultants we have with Flying Nightmares II is an engineer that actually worked on the Harrier test program. We've got a number of Harrier pilots from the real Flying Nightmares unit and other Desert Storm veterans helping us out.

Flying Nightmares II will also allow players to jump into the cockpit of a Cobra chopper, though that machine's controls will need to be tweaked. Compromises are necessary, as the Cobra normally requires a gunner and a pilot. "We don't want people to have to hit 10 different switch combinations to punch off a single missile... The bottom line is to make games that are fun," says Brian. "In Flying Nightmares II, if people want a stupid amount of realism, they can have it... [But] if someone wants to fly an invincible aircraft all day, with unlimited ammo, they can do that, too — it's their game."

Other games are in the works as well — Internet-based multiplayer flight sims, science fiction epics, and more. Eidos has an impressive lineup of in-progress titles for the Mac market, all produced by the "Domark Studio" division. In a nutshell, Brian and the rest of the Eidos team are working on games they want to play. What would his "dream game" be if resources and time were no problem? "I'm doing it," he says.