



Issue 3

May / Jun 05

Whatever your game we've got it covered

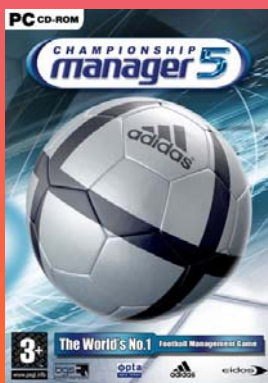
FREE

HITCHHIKERS
Enjoy the film?
Now play the **FREE** game!

Matrix Online:
Enter the world of the Matrix

Resident Evil 4:
It's scary, it's shocking
but how good is it?

Title Chasers:
What's the best
football management
game?



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Welcome

Welcome to issue 3 of the FREE online games magazine Dice2Mice in which you'll find news, reviews and features on games wherever and however they are played.

This issue we've gone Hitchhikers mad! So once you've enjoyed the film, read the interview, play the game and tune in for the latest instalment of the radio series! Now where's my towel gone?

We apologise for any inconvenience in the change in publishing date—this is necessary so that we can carry on bringing you Dice2Mice and launch a new magazine! Want to know more? Visit www.attitude4pc.com

We hope you enjoy this issue and remember that we always welcome your comments and suggestions via email to dice2mice@aol.com and please tell your friends and family about Dice2Mice!

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Next issue...

Dice2Mice issue 4 will be published online at www.dice2mice.com on June30th 2005.

Looking for those hard-to-find, rare and out-of-print games? Games like Ra, Ave Caesar and Homas Tour?

Or brand new, sold-out games at great prices? Games like Struggle of Empires, Oltremare and Fairy Tales?

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www.american.co.uk

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News

Guild Wars in simultaneous global launch

Guild Wars, the highly anticipated online role playing game, has launched simultaneously in Europe, North America and Australia after over 4 years in development.



Created by ArenaNet and NCsoft, Guild Wars is described as "the ultimate global online RPG, a transporting experience that transcends the boundaries of geography, technology and language". Guild Wars immerses players in a colourful, robust and detailed online fantasy world where success is determined by player skill, not by the time spent playing.

In it you can play with anyone, anywhere, at any time but perhaps of more importance is that there is no subscription fee required.

"By bringing together the best elements of action, role-playing and massively multiplayer games we have created a unique gameplay experience that appeals to casual and core players alike," Mike O'Brien, ArenaNet co-founder said. "Players throughout Europe, North America and Australia will now be able to compete in the Guild Wars world together."

Players can select eight of the more than 450 available skills to build competitive characters for each battle including warriors, rangers, monks, elementalists, mesmers and necromancers. Challenging gameplay forces players to use

their heads and make good decisions in a brains-over-brawn battlefield. Dramatic guild challenges, tournament play and arena combat will provide a unique game experience each time players log on.



Retailers across Europe and North America are anticipating impressive sales as Guild Wars enters the PC game marketplace. According to EB Games, Guild Wars is one of the best-selling preorder PC games year-to-date in North America, and European retailers are reporting equally

impressive results. More than 500,000 players participated in public preview events in the US and Europe.

Guild Wars is now available across Europe at £29.99 / €44.99. The special Collector's Edition featuring an art book, Internet chat headset and Guild Wars soundtrack CD is also available at £49.99 / €69.99. Although there is no monthly subscription fee there will be other chapters or expansion packs.



NCsoft Announces Fiscal 2004 Results

NCsoft one of the companies behind Guild Wars has shown just how lucrative online gaming is becoming. The Seoul-based game developer recorded total revenues of KRW (Korean Won) 246 billion (US\$246 million), an increase of 48 percent over FY2003. It marked the first time that NCsoft has reached more than KRW 200 billion in revenues and marks the greatest annual revenue ever recorded in the Internet games industry in South Korea.

NCsoft also reported operating profit of KRW 108 billion (US\$108 million) and net profit of KRW 77 billion (US\$77 million), an increase of 97% in operating profit and 145% in net profit respectively over FY 2003. Profits from royalty earnings also topped KRW 37 billion (US\$37 million).

First person RPG

Namco and Flagship Studios has announced Hellgate:London, a role-playing game set in the immersive first-person perspective that introduces a demon-ridden world where the last survivors of the human race must meld science and magic to survive.

"Hellgate: London is an incredibly ambitious title that will break the mould of conventional role-playing games," said Nobuhiro Kasahara, President and CEO of Namco Hometek, Inc.



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It promises to combine the depth of role-playing games with the action of first-person titles, while offering infinite playability with randomly created levels, items, and events. The player creates a heroic character, completes quests, and battles through innumerable hordes of demons to advance through experience levels and branching skill paths. A robust, flexible skill and spell system, highly customizable appearances, and a massive variety of randomly generated equipment allow players to create their own unique hero. For more information about the game log onto www.hellgatelondon.com

Bible study through a game

The Kingdom Game aims to make Bible study both informative and entertaining, pointing the way to the Kingdom of God.

Players draw cards from a deck and follow the printed instructions to move around the board, aiming to win the Crown by being the first into the Kingdom of God. Landing on a Penalty block involves forfeiture of Miracle or Repent cards or a trip to the Long Suffering block.

"In this age of moral and ethical decrepitude, when our young minds are being fed a steady diet of severely compromised values and godlessness, 'The Kingdom Game' invigorates the mind, challenges the "status quo," strengthens the Faith and increases Courage," says Elder R. E. Dean, Assistant Pastor and Bible Study Teacher at Hayes Faith Temple in Lithonia, Georgia. "I strongly recommend that each home have 'The Kingdom Game', and become familiar with it."

UK operation seizes 20,000 counterfeit games

In the early hours of an April Sunday morning, a team of anti-piracy officials swooped on illegal traders at a UK car boot sale, leading to the removal of 20,000 fake DVDs with an estimated street value of over half a million pounds.

The manoeuvre, led by Staffordshire Police and supported by ELSPA (Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers Association), Staffordshire Trading Standards, FACT (Federation Against Copyright Theft) and Customs and Excise, uncovered a total of 20 stalls at Himley, Wombourne selling copied games, films, music, business software, 30,000 contraband cigarettes and a quantity of Viagra tablets. Pirated copies of Doom 3, a title rated as suitable for adults only, was the most prevalent games title, while officers also discovered a small amount of previously unseen fake Gamecube mini discs.

Roger Bennett, director general of ELSPA commented: "This case illustrates the way in which piracy poses a threat to members of the public, allowing titles containing unregulated adult-rated content to be sold illegally without the enforcement of our rigorous ratings system, which is strictly adhered to by legitimate retail outlets. ELSPA would like to thank all those involved for their efforts to eradicate computer and video games piracy."

Cranium keyring

Ever wish you could take those hilarious Cranium moments with you wherever you go? Well now you can! There's a new collectible Cranium keychain that features a miniature, playable version of the classic board game – complete with clay, which is available in the US for only \$4.99!



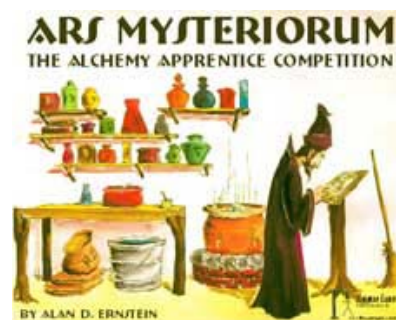
Making magic

Hangman Games, publisher of Tahuantinsuyu (winner of the Games Magazine 2004 Advanced Strategy Game of the Year and finalist for the International Gamers Awards' 2004 General Strategy Game of the Year) is proud to announce the release of their latest game, *Ars Mysteriorum: The Alchemy Apprentice Competition*. The game is for 3-5 players and lasts 90-120 minutes.

In *Ars Mysteriorum*, each player participates in King Florim's Alchemy Apprentice Competition. As an apprentice, you will vie to see who can earn the most money

by the end of the competition. You will barter favours for basic elements such as Brimstone, Verdigris, and Salt. You will use those elements not only to gain entrance into Masters' tents but to demonstrate to the Masters your ability to successfully complete a recipe. For an alchemist, they are simple recipes like turning lead into gold or sand into rubies. As you complete the recipes, they are added to your Recipe Book, and you are paid at the end of each day for the best combinations of recipes. When the competition is over, the apprentice with the most money will be declared a new Master Alchemist.

You can get it from retailers such as Boulder Games, Funagain Games, RC Hobbies, or via Games by Pevans via <http://www.pevans.co.uk/Games/Mysteriorum.html#Top>



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Download games

More and more games are becoming available via the Internet as downloadable demos with the option to then buy an access code for the full version for typically \$19.95. As we're an Internet based magazine we can understand this as it bypasses all the usual distribution channels and opens up a new global marketplace.



In this and future issues we'll keep you up to date with the latest releases by these independent publishers with of course the links to the sites and the games.

Matrix Games

Matrix Games (www.matrixgames.co.uk) produces, markets and publishes a whole range of historical wargames so well worth a look. Latest additions include...

Gary Grigsby's World at War takes the Second World War and places you at the helm of one of five possible powers: The Western Allies, China, Russia, Germany, or Japan. Command your army and coordinate your attacks, gain supplies, resources, and factories to fuel your war machine to capture territories and press your attacks.



Uncommon Valor is a great way to get your feet wet in the pacific theatre before diving into War in the Pacific and the upcoming War Plan Orange.

Tin Soldiers: Julius Caesar features the complete conquests of Julius Caesar including his Gallic War campaign (58 B.C. to 50 B.C.) and the Roman Civil War (49 B.C. to 44 B.C.) It's a game based on a unique miniature tabletop look and game play with the onscreen units looking like tabletop wargame figures!



Nuclear Games

Nuclear Games (www.machinehell.com) has announced its first title, MachineHell, which is a fast paced shooting game that takes place in the future of Earth as it is being invaded by an alien force of mechanized warriors. You play the role of an advanced hovercraft pilot and must battle your way through hordes of enemy robots to lead the Earth to victory!

Glimmer Games

Glimmer Games (www.glimmergames.com) has released Pop-A-Holic which brings a number of new elements to the puzzle genre. One of the most interesting innovations is what Glimmer is calling "Frustration-Free Gameplay", which means that players can never be stuck on one level. Open-ended action and multiple solutions to every level ensure that players are always immersed in the action.

Rake in Grass Games

Czech company, Rake in Grass Games (www.rakeingrass.com) has announced Jets N' Guns, a fast action side-scrolling shooter that is available to purchase

from their website. In a genre known to be stuck in the last millennia, Jets N' Guns "brings side-scrollers to the modern day with an incredible sound track, blazing special effects, and a weapon variety to die for."

In Jets N' Guns you earn money for killing and destroying everything. The more money you make the more you can upgrade your ship with new armour, guns, bombs, missiles, cooling systems, shields, and so much more. In total there are 57 different weapons and 19 special devices to use to the fullest. You'll need them to blast your way through 200 different enemies across 21 long levels of play with three difficulty settings!

Positech

Democracy available at www.positech.co.uk puts you in charge as elected leader of a nation to solve everyone's problem, and do it in such a way they'll consider re-electing you next term. Every decision you make affects someone, for better, or for worse. Manage the economy, the environment, and a rather large body of very angry voters. Pull it off and you just may have a job 4 years down the line. Fail and... well... don't fail.

Caravel games

Caravel Games (www.caravelgames.com) has the sequel to the original Deadly Rooms of Death, or DROD, available for download and purchase from their website. Purchase currently includes a one-year membership providing access to online features. Though similar in style to fantasy role-playing games, DROD is about solving difficult puzzles while exploring a vast dungeon.

Study Reveals Widespread Gaming Piracy

Surveys carried out by Macrovision of 6,000 Xbox and PlayStation 2 Gamers has shown that 21% play pirated games. This high level of piracy on console systems, which are generally considered to be secure closed systems, is surprising.

The study also shows that 43% of all gamers who play pirated games download over 15 pirated titles a year. Over 74% of downloaded pirated games come from Internet websites or peer-to-peer networks, while 21% of the games are copied from friends. Of those who play pirated games, 64% have installed mod chips on their consoles.

"The prevalence of high-speed Internet, and the availability of pirated games on websites and peer-to-peer networks, have made downloading pirated games relatively easy and widespread," said Steve Weinstein, executive vice president and general manager of Macrovision's Entertainment Technologies Group. "Game piracy will increase rapidly over the coming months and years as gamers hone their downloading methods and behaviors."



Hitchhiker's Special - Interview

Our Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy Special begins with an interview with the author of the Infocom game, Steve Meretsky

On a frozen early March morning in London I met up with Steve Meretsky to talk about life, the universe and everything. We had met, only once before, in Las Vegas some 20 years earlier and now we were meeting again – amazingly to talk about the same game!

In an exchange of emails to set up the interview he described himself as being very tall, bearded and jetlagged; he was all three in large measure. He also gripped a copy of Bill Bryson's "Notes on a Small Island" as if it would be a lifesaver while in the UK.

London can be strange to the unsure visitor. For example, on the way to our meeting I saw an advert for bikinis being blown about in the snow storm – only in London!

In the next two hours we talked about Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy and how it was nominated for a BAFTA interactive award, working with Douglas Adams, his time at Infocom and now WorldWinner, Dice2Mice and the games he likes to play.

Infocom

Infocom was the home of the text adventure. In the early 1980s computers only had a few K of memory, not the mega and gigabytes of today, and so most adventures were of the "go North", "Hit troll" variety. Despite this limitation they were a massive genre of games rivalling conversions of arcade games. As computers gained a little more memory (often described in hardware adverts as a "massive 48 or 64K") some publishers started adding in graphics but Infocom stuck to its guns.

It believed that a poor picture took up a lot more space than a thousand good words and featured games that have become almost legends such as the Zork trilogy, Planetfall, Suspended, Deadline, the wonderfully named Leather Goddesses of Phobos and of course Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.

Infocom games were far from dull or dry as the text weaved fascinating stories, worlds only limited by the author's imagination and adventure puzzles that could cause



baldness with the sheer hair-pulling frustration they could inflict.

They also had amazingly complex packaging that included all manner of items such as police reports, scratch and sniff cards and the bag of fluff and the all-black sunglasses found in Hitchhiker's.

The way Leather Goddesses of Phobos came into being is typical of the company, as it started as a joke. "It was just before a corporate party for major investors and we had a board showing the progress of the various versions of games in development" explains Meretsky. "I then just added a made up game called Leather Goddesses of Phobos to the bottom to see if anyone would notice". The head of Infocom did and got it erased just before the party began.

After that, if anything ran late it was blamed on extra work caused by Leather Goddesses of Phobos until eventually it was made into a game and sold along with a scratch and sniff card and 3D comic.

Eventually, Infocom was bought out by Activision who promptly decided its games needed graphics and a few years later the adventure genre was dead.

The Wilderness Years

After Infocom, Meretsky set up his own company and entered a twilight world which was full of deals done that were then as easily undone.

"It was a difficult time as I got further and further away from what I loved, spending my time running a company rather than designing games". It was also a crazy time for example, "Companies would ask for games for the PC and PS2 and we'd say 'sure no problem' then try and hire someone who could do the PS2 version, only for it to be dropped".

In one story that sums up the era Meretsky pitched over 18 games to a company that had \$30 million dollars burning a hole in the bank. "They listened to all 18 and chose 11 and signed a contract that day". Unfortunately, that \$30 million turned out to actually be an \$18 million deficit and the deal was lost along with the company.

A few titles managed to make it but it was overall a time of frustration, of pitches, demos, prototypes that the market has yet to see. Now, Steve Meretsky has returned to games designing at WorldWinner.

Welcome home at WorldWinner

WorldWinner specialises in simple, skill based games and makes its money by hosting tournaments in just the sort of

Douglas Adams story 1
The Biscuit Story

This is the story that Douglas Adams told to break the ice during the Hitchhiker's press tour – a story Steve Meretsky has heard countless times! If you see him, make sure you tell it to him again!
Maybe not.

Adams was at a London station waiting for a train and had bought a packet of biscuits (cookies for US readers) and a newspaper and started reading and reached for a biscuit. Then the person sitting opposite also reached for a biscuit. This happened a few times and as Adams was British he just didn't feel he had the genes to confront him. So together they finished the biscuits. Eventually, it was time to catch his train and as he stood up he saw his newspaper and his full packet of biscuits...

games that are popular with mousewives – women who have the time to play and enjoy fun and simple games. “The games are simple and fun and can be played as lightly or as seriously as a player wishes” explains Meretsky.

Due to US gaming laws, the games must be skill based and devoid of any luck, which would make them games of chance. “We had to make backgammon into skillgammon” says Meretsky.

He is not only the chief games designer thinking up new games, he also spends his time devising new tournament formats and ways to beat the cheats. “About 75-80% of our players are female who love the chance to play games, relax and win some money in the tournaments but we have to on constant lookout for the cheats as cheating to win is one thing, cheating to win money is another!”

Although there are larger tournaments, most players seem to enjoy quick and simple 2-5 player games with prize money at stake for the winner. WorldWinner aren't complaining as taking their small share of each stake is making it a massive Internet success story.



About the BAFTA

Initially Meretsky was surprised that a 20 year old game was being nominated for a BAFTA (British Academy Film Television Award) Interactive Award. When we talked more we realised that the game had never truly gone away. It had been played for many years at a variety of unofficial websites until the BBC took on the task of revamping it. “The timing couldn't be better with the film to be released at the end of April 05” says Meretsky.

Working with Adams

According to Meretsky, Douglas Adams was a delight to be with but he could challenge the patience of a saint. “He took procrastination to an art form and beyond” says Meretsky “He was the perfect dinner companion, knew all the best places, travelled everywhere first class and knew how to enjoy life to the full.”

After an initial meeting that agreed a quite ambitious seven month production schedule they agreed that he would email through “wedges of new stuff”. The day for a new instalment would come and pass, as would the next few. It was also the deadline for the Hitchhiker's book “So Long and Thanks for All the Fish” and he had yet to write a single word!

When the next batch of material finally did arrive it would be far less than expected but would also be so unique. "Only Douglas could come up with things like an inventory item called 'no tea' or that the game should lie to you" says Meretsky.

Eventually, his agent, well used to his ways by now, sent him off to a house in the country to write the book away from the distractions of London.

The game was also completed in similar circumstances as it seems that the one thing Adam's hated most about being a writer was the actual writing! As Adams use to say "I love the sound deadlines make as they whoosh by!"

"I was initially a little intimidated by him and so at first was a little hesitant to suggest ideas" admits Meretsky. As the development continued Meretsky would add in more and more so it became more of a joint project rather than just coding Adam's ideas. By the end of what Adam's described as a pear shaped game (thin or linear at the start, then wider before tapering off) he paid Meretsky the ultimate compliment by not being able to tell who wrote which bit!

Meretsky on Dice2Mice

Steve Meretsky is a games fan and we were delighted to hear his comments about Dice2Mice! Indeed, at times he seemed more interested in talking about what we were doing than Hitchhiker's! Yes, Steve we know what we're attempting here is ambitious but we love every minute of it! Just wait till you see our new launch Attitude!

What Meretsky plays...

Steve Meretsky lives and breathes games and finds time in between devising new games to play them as well!

He enjoys both a poker night and a games night once a month and plays games one hour a week at work during a gaming lunch break. WorldWinner sounds like a cool place to work!

Click for four vital Hitchhiker's Links...

[To play the game](#)

[To listen to the new radio series starting on May 3rd](#)

[To view the film website](#)

[To buy the books at Amazon](#)

Douglas Adams Story 2
How he thought of writing
Hitchhiker's

The idea of writing Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy came to Douglas Adams when he was hitchhiking in Europe. "One night I was lying in a field near Innsbruck looking at the stars and thought that someone should write a book about Hitchhiker across the galaxy. I then decided that that person could be me", said Adams on many occasions. He told me, when we met, that he'd told that story so many times that he couldn't remember if it was how it happened or whether it was just a story he told...

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Hitchhiker's Special - Then and now



In 1985 while working for Personal Computer World I wrote the following review. It's remarkable to think that its still current today! So here is Hitchhiker's then followed by a review of the updated version.

Are you searching for the meaning of Life, the Universe and Everything? Forget it! Tony Hetherington has found it in Infocom's humorous and impressive adaptation of Douglas Adams' Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.

In 1978 a radio series was broadcast on Radio 4 called *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. There then followed a second series and a book of the same name. Then a second book was written which was followed by another. Meanwhile it had become a television series and also a stage play. Now it's a computer game.

It is, however, unlike any other computer game that I have played. Published by the American software house Infocom, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* has all the trademarks of the excellent interactive fiction series, but there is a slight difference.

The game disk is accompanied by the demolition orders for your home and planet, a 'Don't Panic' badge, a piece of fluff, a small polythene bag (with which to attack microscopic space fleets) and the exceedingly useful peril-sensitive sunglasses - which you naturally cannot see through.

Adams is said to have enjoyed a number of Infocom's adventures and thought it would be a good idea to do one based on Hitchhiker's. He initially contacted the company via a bulletin board and further discussions followed in a series of English pubs (which was cheaper, although response time may have been slower) before Steve Meretsky was given the job of programming (Steve had previously written the Infocom adventures *Planetfall* and *Sorcerer*). The resulting game is a curious mix of the humour and imagination of Douglas Adams and the depth and quality of an Infocom adventure. It is also a difficult adventure to solve.

Strategy

As with the other Infocom adventures, *Hitchhiker's Guide* consists of a series of logical problems which form the plot

of a story in which you are the leading character. Your degree of success in tackling these problems determines the consequent route of the story.

You play the part of Arthur Dent and awaken one morning in a darkened room to discover that you have a dreadful hangover. On clambering out of bed and taking an aspirin you begin to feel slightly better: the irony of your situation is that this day will turn out to be the worst day of your life. In the next half hour your house is due to be demolished by a bulldozer (because it's simply in the way) and the Earth is scheduled to be destroyed by a Vogon constructor fleet to make way for a hyperspace bypass. Just in time you and your friend, Ford Prefect, whom you always thought was from Guildford but is actually from a small planet near Betelgeuse, hitch a lift on the Vogon spaceship and the adventure continues.

If you've seen any of the previous versions of Hitchhiker's and are now assuming that the game has the same plot and solution, don't. You're in for quite a surprise.

Although the characters are the same, and you'll come across similar creatures, places and situations, the difference is that you have to take a leading role rather than be lead through the action. A good comparison is *The Hobbit* by Melbourne House, wherein you play the part of Bilbo who is helped through the story but takes the leading role in the game.

Therefore, it's up to you to find the answers to the obstacles which are placed in your way: you do, however, have some help in the dubious form of the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. This is an electronic book that you can consult about many things - but don't be too surprised if the editor for the section you require was out at lunch when the guide was compiled. As already stated, the problems which you have to solve are logical and have logical solutions-but only if you apply the rather strange logic that exists in Hitch-hiker's.

To illustrate: the problem of getting a babel fish out of the babel fish dispenser. In the book and radio series Ford merely pops one into your ear but in the game you're not so lucky. After consulting the guide you realise that putting a babel fish in your ear is an excellent idea as it will allow you to understand and be understood by anyone or anything in the galaxy. Consequently you are determined to get one so you press the button on the dispenser, but the fish shoots out the slot across the room and through a hole in the wall. You notice that there's a hook above the hole, so you hang your dressing gown on the hook in order to block the hole, and try again. But this time the fish hits the gown and falls down a drain. Not to be defeated in your objective you cover it with a towel. However, when the next fish lands on the towel, before you've had time to do anything, a cleaning robot charges in, picks up the fish and disappears through a robot panel near the floor. After



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Did you know?

The infamous babel fish puzzle was nearly cut from the game as it was regarded as being too hard. Adam's insisted it stayed in and it has become one of the favourite parts of the game.

some frantic hair-pulling you borrow Ford's satchel and place it in front of the panel and confidently depress the button. Unfortunately, your lap of honour is interrupted by the following message:

"A single babel fish shoots out the slot. It sails across the room and hits the dressing gown. The fish slides down the sleeve of the gown and falls to the floor, landing on the towel. A split-second later, a tiny cleaning robot whizzes across the floor, grabs the fish, and continues its breakneck pace towards a tiny robot panel at the base of the wall. The robot ploughs into the satchel, sending the babel fish flying through the air in a graceful arc. A small upper-half-of-the-room cleaning robot catches the babel fish and exits."

Don't be surprised if your computer acts strangely. At one stage I was informed that there was an exit to port but when I tried it, I was told that I couldn't go that way. In frustration I typed 'starboard' but was told that I could and had gone port and that it had lied before!

And don't be too easily deterred: your progress through the game will undoubtedly improve as you tune into the game's 'brand of logic', a state which I only achieved half-way through the third sleepless night spent hitchhiking. To help you get there, here's a brief description of some of the characters and creatures in Hitchhiker's.

Ford Prefect is a researcher for the guide but unfortunately stayed on earth slightly longer than intended (six years) during which time he updated the guide's entry about earth from 'harmless' to 'mostly harmless'. For some reason beyond his comprehension he saved you, Arthur Dent, from the earth's extinction but then recovered his senses. Together you are thrown into space by the Vogons where, just before you expire, you are picked up by the Improbability drive propelled spacecraft the 'Heart of Gold'. The new owner of this ship is Zaphod Beeblebrox whom you once saw looking normal at a party, but now he has two heads. He is also the president of the galaxy for which he got himself elected with the sole object of stealing the new Heart of Gold.

On board ship you meet Trillian, whom you previously knew as Tricia MacMillian and first met at the same party. This is an incredibly improbable situation but, after all, the Heart of Gold is driven by the Improbability Drive.

The ship is also populated by the Sirius Cybernetics Corporation whose attempts to install Genuine People Personalities into machinery has unhappily resulted in Marvin the paranoid robot and an overprotective computer called 'Eddie'.

During your adventures you will also meet the Vagon captain who is green and blubbery and recites poetry

(aaagh!), a warlike alien wearing black-jewelled battle shorts, and the incredibly stupid but equally dangerous and ravenous Bug Blatter Beast of Traal. This incredibly stupid monster thinks that if you can't see it, it can't see you! If you try something a little silly (which *could* be the answer, so it's always worth a try), it doesn't respond with the all-too-usual 'You can't do that.' Instead it either gives you a helpful error message or passes a comment which can range from 'You're letting things get to you too much, try and relax' through to 'Are you sure you're allowed to be playing with this computer?'

Well, how do you solve the problems in Hitch-hikers? Here are a few tips that I've gleaned from the game.

Once you have tuned into the game's *peculiar* logic, you should ensure that you read everything carefully (including this review). Every word and object in Hitch-hiker's are there for a reason—even if the reason is only to confuse you. Also you should consult the guide about anything and everything as it contains some important hints. Be prepared to try anything no matter how dangerous or silly it may at first seem; but before you do, use the game's save facility so that you can restore it if things don't turn out too well.

Finally, don't assume for one moment that the game is the same as the book or radio series; even your main objective is different.

Conclusion

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy is the first Infocom adventure to have a strong outside influence in the shape of Douglas Adams. This has undoubtedly improved an already impressive format and produced a genuinely funny and challenging game. Infocom classes Hitchhiker's as a Standard Level game but it's hard Standard and more difficult to solve than some of the company's Advanced material.

There will be two groups of people who will particularly relish this game: the 'Hitchhikers' for whom this will be their first Infocom adventure; and the Infocom adventurers who will be introduced to the humour of Adams. Those lucky people who already know both won't be disappointed.

Last but not least, the *Washington Post* once said: 'If it's 2am it must be Infocom.' On the experience of the last few days I'd like to add: 'If it's 4am it must be Hitch-hiker's.'

Hitchhikers Now

Now 20 years later, after many late nights and copious





amounts of tea and biscuits, software engineer Sean Sollé (who had worked with Douglas Adams on his later computer game: 'Starship Titanic') and Multimedia designer Rod Lord (who won a BAFTA for his stunning graphics for the Hitchhiker TV series) combined their talents and impeccable Hitchhikers credentials to create the new version of the classic game for the BBC website.

There are in fact two new versions of the new version as while one features the graphics of Rob Lord the other includes the winning entries from a graphics competition.

The game is identical and what's really been added is a new interface that not only displays new graphics but has some icons to click to replace some of the more tedious typing such as "go north".

Is it better than the original? Purists will think not as they love the original so much and can't understand why the game needs graphics even now. The graphics are very much an additional feature and are best regarded as illustrations to a book.

This new version should be applauded for several reasons. It's very slick, has regenerated a 20 year old game that featured in our top 100 games of all time and is beautifully timed with the launch of the Hitchhiker's film. We're all about to go Hitchhiker's crazy again and we love it!

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Matrix Online

The Matrix Online is a massively multi-player online game based on Warner Bros Pictures' Matrix series of films. Set in an online universe in which millions of players around the globe can participate at any one time, the game promises cutting-edge graphics, real-time martial arts combat and a rich storyline that picks up where The Matrix Revolutions, the third chapter in The Matrix film trilogy, leaves off.

The truce between the machines and Zion is holding, but as we know peace is a fragile thing and it's a dangerous world that you emerge in as a recently freed human. You turned down the blue pill and left what you thought was reality behind. Instead you accepted the red pill and found to your horror that machines had grown you in a pod. Now you are free and about to enter the dangerous world of the Matrix Online.

It's a massive urban sprawl, which spreads for miles in all directions. There are subways, nightclubs, skyscrapers, and dark alleys that all seem normal on the surface but beneath this pedestrian exterior a secret war is being waged for the survival of humanity and machine alike.

Even with the Truce in place, the Matrix is by no means a safe environment. Once you jack in, you'll run into dangerous Exile gangs, redpills (other newly awakened players) working for other Organizations, and various enemies whose goals oppose your own. While negotiation is sometimes an option, more often than not you'll have to defeat them in combat.

The game features plot lines written by the Wachowski Brothers and features special events, missions, and monthly story cinematics, all of which affect the action in the game.

Apart from the determined humans, struggling to coexist with their one-time oppressors, there are the machines, working to assert their authority in a changing world; and the exiles, a



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shadowy group resembling a criminal underworld. While many will be tempted to be with the human good guys, playing a human in league with the machines or the exiles is an interesting option.

Part of the fun is creating your own Matrix persona where you select "Matrix style" clothing for them, create and customise your online persona and then "jack into" the Matrix.

You can improve your character by finding, creating, or trading Matrix "ability code"

that provides additional knowledge and skill to your character. Unlike other massively multiplayer games, ability code can be swapped out and exchanged like trading cards, providing unprecedented flexibility in the development of a character.

You can also gain experience, currency and loot by completing missions for one of the factions as you go in search of targets or objects.

Combat formed a key role in the movies, with dramatic battles and the now famous slowed down action known as "bullet time", that has been copied by so many others. Naturally, it plays a vital part in the game with locked one-to-one battles or larger gun battles.

The one-to-one battles system known as Interlock gets its name from the idea that you've "locked" an opponent into a battle with you, and is only used when characters are in Close Combat. While the system is engaged, you and your

opponent choose different tactics and special moves to use. When a Close Combat exchange happens, in a system that will be similar to many board and roleplay gamers those choices get a number assigned to them based on a random "roll" plus any loaded Abilities and buffs that increase your combat strength.

When the numbers for you and your opponent are compared, the highest number wins. After the comparison is done, the fun really begins.

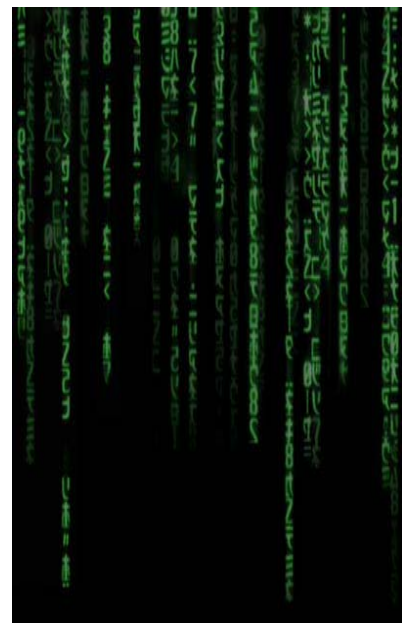


The game takes into account the winner and loser of each exchange, what tactic or special move was used, adds any combat abilities wielded by the opponents, and then generates animations based on those factors. Unlike other games, animations for both opponents are synchronized to create realistic combat. For example, when your punch connects with your opponent's head, his head snaps with the hit. Sometimes you'll even throw feints that your opponent will duck away from before you hit him with the real thing.



As you gain experience you can load higher-level combat abilities and new special moves. With multiple combat styles loaded, you can choose your preferred style before or even during combat. The game takes these styles into account and generates combat animations based on it. For example, countering an attack using Aikido may result in grabbing and throwing your opponent to the ground, while countering using Karate may result in striking your opponent's arms away forcefully.

The Interlock system also allows for special bullet-time animations; where time seems to slow down as your character executes a particularly devastating move on an opponent. This just happens when the game feels you deserve it and you'll be in the middle of an exchange when everything suddenly goes into slow motion. The first time a player goes into bullet-time is always a memorable occasion. Of course, so is the first time someone bashes you in bullet-time.

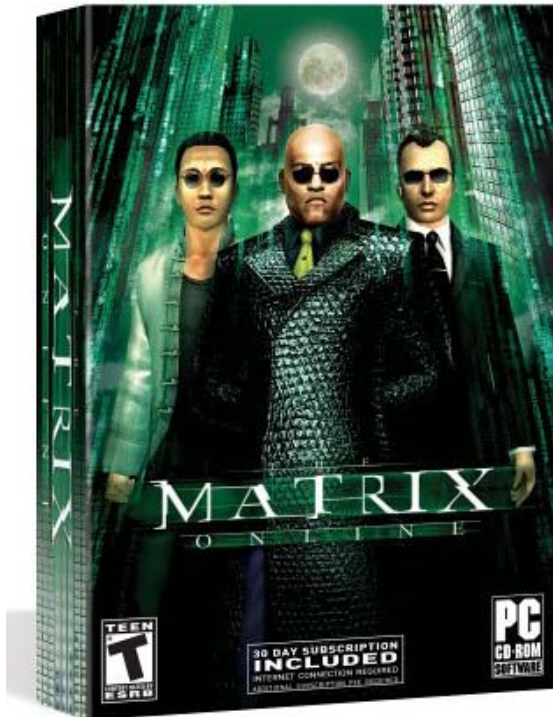


Not all fighting is close combat as the game also features ranged weapons and viral attacks. Combat that doesn't use the Interlock system is called "free ranged" and covers both weapons and viral attacks. These are programs that are used as weapons unleashed by hackers and other specialists.

Ranged combat is usually used to support those in close combat who can also



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be backed up by patchers (healers) but sometimes alone as assassins. For example, a sniper can even hide within the Matrix code itself and inflict immense damage with specialized weapons. Whether using stealth or brute force, these fighters can turn the tide of combat for a group.

Players can group together to form crews and multiple crews to create a faction which is equivalent to a guild in other games of this type. In some key ways Matrix Online is a very different game.

Apart from the cool combat system that's already been covered the game gives you more freedom than other role playing games because, as in the films, any ability can be learned by anyone. Your character decides how good you'll be at it, and will improve with experience but the knowledge is there to be accessed by all.

You'll also find a lot of code fragments around the game and if you pick these up and take them to a Coder they can be used to create useful items such as guns or clothing and repair any items created in the Matrix from breaking down normally.

The biggest draw for Matrix fans has to be the story, as told by a development team of 35 members. If you join Zion, you will get to meet Niobe. A real person will be playing her so she can give you orders and answer your questions. The same is true of other factions where these characters serve an important role. By constantly giving you something to do they keep you involved and immersed in the unfolding story and it's this story that gives Matrix Online the edge over the competition

You may also get to meet a Wachowski Brother who are somewhere in the game although they are apparently keeping a low profile so you may never know until after you've met one.

There are a few issues as there are with any online game such as the monthly subscription fee (about £9) and your PC needs to be well equipped to play the game without lagging, especially in areas where there are a lot of players. To get started you'll need a game pack which you can get from most PC stockists including Amazon. Load that in, set up your account and immerse yourself in the Matrix – just try to remember that there's a real world too!

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Saitek is poised to bring a new vibrancy to the usually drab world of input peripherals with the upcoming "Power Of Colour" mouse collection and we have some to give away!

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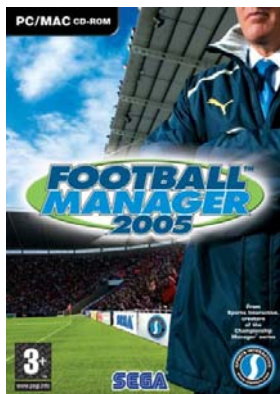
The Saitek Notebook Optical Mouse is a fully featured 800 D.P.I. USB Optical mouse, with the requisite three buttons and scroll wheel. Previously available in only three colours, the Saitek Power Of Colour range introduces four original and vivid colour schemes.

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Title Chasers

It's been billed as the ultimate showdown comparable with any race for any title anywhere in Europe. Now Football Manager 5 goes head to head with Championship Manager 5 in the battle of football management games. We present our results and a surprising winner.

In the beginning there was a home computer called the Sinclair Spectrum (Timex in the USA) and on that machine that boasted "a massive 48K memory" was a game written in BASIC called Football Manager. It allowed you to take the hotseat of your favourite football team, whether it be the giants of Chelsea or Liverpool or the Doncaster Rovers and Cambridge Uniteds of the lower leagues that may be lower down the football pecking order but have fans just as passionate.

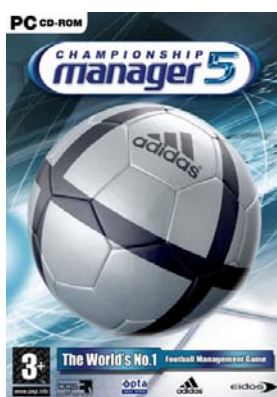


They say that every football fan knows better than their club's current manager, knows exactly what players should be bought, and which ones should be shown the exit, the tactics and formation that should be employed and that success is just a season away.

This first game in 1982 began a whole genre of such games that have grown from strength to strength, year after year. Perhaps to the bewilderment to US readers whose sports games to date have been dominated by action games such as the excellent Madden series.

In recent years, despite many pretenders, two franchises have dominated with Eidos and Championship Manager leading the way over Football Manager. It only had to be rumoured that a new version was about to be released then it topped the preorder charts at Amazon and other sites.

Then in a move that will be admired by most Premier League Chairmen and equally feared by their Managers, Eidos dumped the long time and successful Championship Manager developer's Sports Interactive and switched to an in-house team called Beautiful Game Studios instead. Sports Interactive promptly signed up with Sega and created Football Manager 2005. Now they go head to head for the Championship crown.



Championship Manager 5

CM5 hasn't had the smoothest of starts. Bugged by delays or delayed by bugs and surrounded by stories of the need for emergency patches to make the game playable is not

the bright new start Eidos was looking for with its new development team.

In the divorce settlement between Eidos and Sports Interactive Eidos kept the name, the brand that almost guarantees this to be a success and so let's start on a positive note. CM5 is fast. Beautiful Game Studios has made a big issue of CM5's much improved speed right from the beginning, and making the whole managerial experience faster was always the main agenda here. Whether it be the games and league setup where minutes now become seconds or during the game itself, CM5 is faster than its rivals meaning that games come around more quickly – which keeps the action flowing.

Distinctly less impressive though is the games layout and design. The side panel has been done away with completely for CM5, with all the menus and options instead being placed around the existing top header in the form of drop down tabs. These tabs can present a nasty, cluttered feel and the continue button is badly placed, again proving more uncomfortable than it needs to be to progress through the game.

With the split Eidos lost the Sports Interactive database that formed the backbone of previous versions of CM and sadly it shows. There are fewer leagues to choose from, and even in the bigger European nations some of the lower leagues are missing. Club finances also seem to be a mess with massive club debts wiped out and some player demands just simply unrealistic. This may sound picky but this is supposed to be a simulation.

The match engine that displays game highlights also seems to be flawed with static players and feeble goalkeepers, none of which seem to respond to your tactics. The result is a feeling of disappointment.

This is such a shame as the tactics and training areas are the best on offer and give you full control down to a free-hand sketch on when and where you want a through ball played.

Overall the feeling is disappointment, like you get when that new striker who promised so much can't score now he's signed for your beloved team.

Football Manager 5

If it wasn't for the split between Sports Interactive and Eidos this is the game that would have been Championship Manager 5 and it would have made a worthy extension to the brand. Instead, the true winner in this is Sega, which has leapt into a competitive market at the top of the game.

There's a lot in this game that will be reassuringly familiar to Championship Manager fans, such as the same highly de-



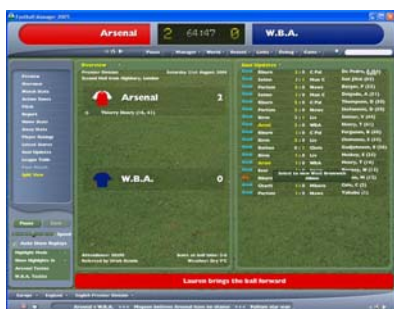


tailed database of thousands of players and hundreds of teams throughout Europe.

The tactics section, player search and main news screens all remain similar but each now offers a little extra as the game has evolved further. This is the same evolution that we've seen in each new version of Championship Manager and so we shouldn't be surprised by this.



The main aspect that Sports Interactive has tried to incorporate into the game is the interaction between you, the players, the media and the board. You can even engage in the infamous mind games with your rivals by rubbing it in after a key victory in the manager insults feature. These comments can become repetitive and out of context but it's definitely a fun new feature in the game.

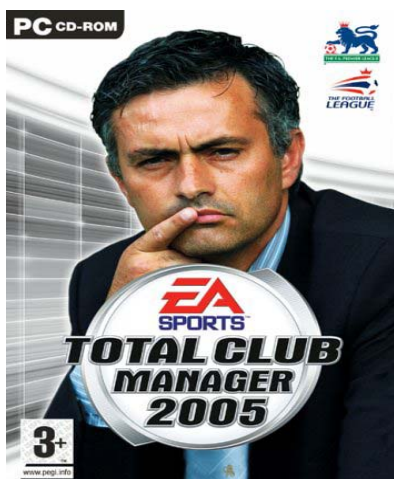


The control you have over your players is unlikely to be rivalled by any other management simulation. You feel like you can really interact with your players whether in off-loading unwanted players to the new tactics and training system that allows you to dictate exactly what you want. The 2D match screen has been refined, and it is now easier to watch. The ball is a bit bigger and the players look more like players rather than spots. You can also view the 2D engine in a split-screen view, allowing you the other half of the screen to be monitoring other things, such as player ratings or other scores. This is vital as it allows you to track the general movement and flow of the game while watching out for weak spots such as tiring or injured players.

There are a few new features that may take some getting used to but if this game came in a box titled Championship Manager 5 there would be no title race as this would still wear the crown.

And the winner is...

When trying to decide the winner between Championship Manager 5 and Football Manager 5 a strange thing happened. We realised we much preferred a third game. As the two old giants battled it out a third game has slipped past them both and that game is our winner ... Total Club Manager 2005 from EA Sports.



Total Club Manager 2005

If you ignore history, database detail and other statistics and concentrate on which game is most fun to play then there can only be one winner. In our opinion Total Club Manager 2005 supplies the right balance of game options and ease of use that allows you to concentrate on the on-field action rather than the stats that drive it.

You can take control of almost any team in any European

league of play a career in which you take the jobs that are offered to you and try and prove your worth to get the top jobs.

You can offload many of the more mundane tasks to assistants, after all I want to be a football manager not a fitness instructor or accountant. I want to pick the team, decide formation, tactics and style of play and then yell like a madman during the game until they get it right on the pitch.

You can almost feel the grey hairs grow as your best laid plans are laid waste by a team you're supposed to beat easily, so it's back to the tactics drawing board or the transfer market for the answers.

Each individual game can be simulated in seconds or watched in full 3D. No limited 2D views here, this is full 3D as in EA's football action games but with you on the sidelines. Unlike other games that leave you monitoring stats to time your substitutions and tactic changes you can take a proactive role by yelling instructions onto the field for your players to drop back, push forward, press and play hard. This can add to the tension especially when hanging on for victory in a particularly tight game.

The media plays an important role and you as the manager are often asked questions with multiple choice answers to choose from. These aren't just to add atmosphere but affect the morale of your players and the opinion of you held by the fans and the board. This is far from minor as these guys can get you sacked.

Reality is sacrificed in the name of fun as you're also offered the chance to manage an international team to World Cup qualification and glory and European Championship or African Nation's Cup as appropriate. That's the key in this game; the developers don't mind sacrificing some statistical accuracy in the name of fun.

After each round of games, highlights are presented in mock magazine cover that all adds to the feeling that you're in football and loving every minute.

Fun is the key word here as only this game can have you battling relegation with Rotherham United one week while guiding Georgia to victory over Italy the next. It's the type of fun that has been central to this most enjoyable of gaming genres, the fun that eats up the hours and keeps so called sensible adults screaming at a computer screen in the early hours of the morning.



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Resident Evil 4

The Resident Evil franchise has been evolving faster than a mutant and as it returns in its latest and sixth incarnation as literally all hell is about to break loose. You take the role of Leon Kennedy sent on a mission to rescue the President's daughter and about to find a lot more than you bargained for. I don't want to spoil the game for you but there is a religious cult, parasite infested villagers, mad monks and terrifying mutated monsters all with a common aim – to kill you.

The game oozes atmosphere through a powerful mix of sound effects, music and themes and the headline-grabbing horror graphics. The start of a theme announcing that there are zombies close will have your fire button finger twitching like never before. Music can be so emotive and it's used so well in this game.

It is a genuinely shocking game, not so much in the gory graphics, and squeamish gamers should be wary that they can get very gory at times, but it will leave you open mouthed at what you have to face next and will make you jump at least once - probably the first time a chainsaw wielding maniac sneaks up behind you and separates your head from your body.

Luckily, fighting back isn't a problem as our hero begins the game with a handgun and a few grenades but can soon find new weapons and new supplies of ammunition. These are hidden in the furniture in buildings and in breakable barrels and boxes littered throughout the game. Useful objects can also be dropped by the enemy as can treasures such as money or jewels.



Once you've fought your way through the first part of the game, that gives you a flavour of what's in store, you meet a very useful character – a merchant. He buys any gems and objects you've found and sells you new weaponry and tune ups. These are vital to your chances of success as you won't be able to survive long with just a handgun and a few bullets.

Each weapon can be improved in four areas and money must be spent on each in turn. Obviously its up to you which order but firepower is probably the first to be improved, then capacity, reload speed and rate of fire. After a few trips to the various merchants you'll think that you're fully stocked with a TMP (machine gun), shotgun and ammo and grenades leaving your briefcase or object screen full. Then the merchant has more to offer, bigger better guns to tempt you to discard that trusty shotgun for a rifle with a telescopic sight, a mine gun that fires little mines that then explode to my favourite, the powerful and none too subtle rocket launcher. It only has one shot but it makes a mess of even the biggest creatures – and is great fun too!

You'll also be offered larger cases, treasure maps to help you find your way and more upgrades for new and existing weapons. You thought that you were ready for action – you are now!

Action is what you get in this game from exploring new areas to surprise attacks when you must press the correct key combinations to avoid a trap you've triggered – miss time or hit the wrong buttons and you're dead. It can be as brutal as that. Luckily, there's no limit to the number of times that you can restart from either just before you died or from a save point.

Traps aren't the only things that can kill you in one go. The enemy you are up against is well organised and far from stupid. Even the humble villagers can pose a



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serious threat as although they look vaguely human they are actually zombies enhanced by parasites and it will take many shots to down them. Meanwhile they are attacking you with pitchforks and scythes, hurling axes and occasionally wielding chainsaws. Most weapon hits damage you, indicated by the loss of health on the screen, but a lucky shot or a chainsaw will end your game – again.

Sometimes villagers and their monk cousins just refuse to die and will rise again this time with the parasite in full view flailing deadly tentacles. You'd better shoot fast and well or you'll be dead again.

Later on you'll face even tougher mutants including regenerators that must have each and every parasite removed from them or they will regenerate quickly and then take a huge chunk out of your neck.

You'll be no stranger to death as you start this game, it can be quite a challenge as it throws you quickly from gentle explore mode into one of the pitch battles. These go beyond the usual open a door and kill the critters mode to a brief pan over a whole area and the welcoming committee that's ready to greet you. These battles are fun, a lot of fun. First you find a reasonably safe place to defend yourself, safe being a relative term meaning somewhere where they can't sneak up behind or above you and start shooting as wave after wave come towards you. After a few kills you may feel brave enough to rush out and collect items that have been dropped. Then there is time for further exploring as you go on the offensive until either they ambush you and you have to start again or you manage to clear the area. You have to retry these large battles at least once to make sure you use your sniper rifle to take out the two guys on the rooftop that ambush you later.

Cut scenes or snippets of movie action autoplay at times to link the action and to weave the storyline usually before a fight with a Boss creature or as the adventure moves from one location to the next.

It begins in a village, then through a graveyard to a castle, on through mines to an island and a dramatic final fight to the death. All the time the clock is ticking as both Leon and Ashley (the President's daughter) have been infected with parasites...



You'll soon discover your favourite weapon; mine are the shotgun for general use, semi automatic rifle for sniper shots and the rocket launcher for all out destruction. There's no therapy quite like unleashing a rocket launcher into an enemy to get you through a hard day.

At times you will control both Leon and Ashley, telling her to hide while you fight a particularly nasty battle or monster but don't get too far away as if the enemy find her they'll carry her off and the game will end with a failed mission. In one section you'll even have to control Ashley on her own with a lot of running away and dodging as she has no weapons and is killed with a single hit. You'd think the President's daughter would be better prepared.



In its earlier versions the Resident Evil franchise lived off the shock headlines but now while it still likes to shock it is also an excellent game. The controls are easy to use, especially when in crisis mode which is extremely important and far better than in previous versions. The action is mainly from behind Leon's shoulder making it more a first person shooter than previous games, which take you deeper into the action. Add in the superb sound and music and stunning graphics and you have a game that takes full advantage of the Gamecube's capabilities.

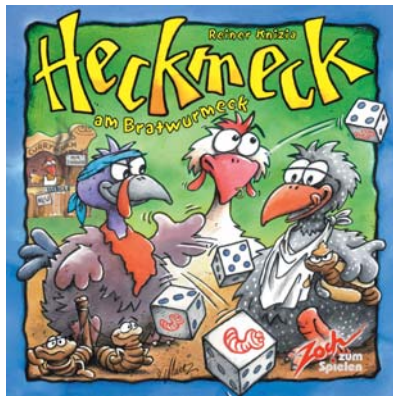
Once you've completed the game, and it drives you on and on until you do, there are a host of bonus features including a mercenaries option. This takes Leon and others into battle action where you score points for killing enemies and collecting treasures you can gather time and scoring bonuses to get the required points to open up new characters and challenges.

Tips

1. Always buy a treasure map as it will more than pay for itself in hidden treasures that you'll find.
2. Some treasures can be combined to increase their value. Examining them will reveal these so try not to cash these in too early unless you need an upgrade.
3. Flash grenades destroy parasites so always keep some in stock as these flailing menaces can cause a lot of damage.
4. There are few problems that can't be solved with a rocket launcher – but they are single shot and very costly.
5. Protect Ashley as losing her ends the game.
6. Don't underestimate the enemy. They are clever; they will attack in numbers, sneak up behind you and ambush you.
7. If faced with a multiple attack, shoot a few legs to give you time to deal with others as those shot will take time to recover.
8. Save whenever you can.
9. Buy the biggest meanest weapons you can.
10. Every monster, even the biggest, has a weak spot that can be exploited.

Factbox
Capcom
1 player
Gamecube
Categories: action, horror

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Factbox
 Zoch
 2-7 players
 Categories: dice, family,
 fun

Heckmeck am Bratwurmeck

Heckmeck is fun dice game that will soon become a family favourite with a new challenge for lovers of dice games even if not based on the most logical of themes. Each player is a bird, a crazy chicken from a previous Zoch game, fighting for helpings of worms on a barbecue grill!

These helpings are represented by tiles ranging in value from 20 up to 36 with between one and four worms on them. By throwing the special dice the players attempt to win these worms to win the game.

During a turn a player throws the eight dice to try and build as high a total as possible to claim a high value worm helping. They can roll as many times as they like, in practice this is three or four times on average and five as a maximum. This is because after each roll the player must select a number to keep and must keep all of that number – as long as they haven't kept it already. The six on a standard dice is replaced by a worm symbol, worth five, and a throw must have at least one worm to score at all.

So a first roll may consist of a worm, 2 5s, 1 4, 3 3s and a 1. The player is then faced with a dilemma of what to keep. A worm is essential and the 2 5s are tempting but they would have hoped for more to get a higher score.

This game can challenge your sanity as you become convinced that the dice are evil and are plotting against you, as in the example above if you didn't keep the single worm no others would appear but if you did four would appear next throw and be useless.

You can stop at any time and claim a tile that matches the number or is less than your total, if there are gaps on the grill, and can even claim a tile from an opponent if you throw the exact number. Tiles that are won are kept stacked in front of each player with the top one being vulnerable.

The top tile can also be lost if a player doesn't make a successful roll. If they don't match the lowest tile available or if there aren't any numbers on the dice that haven't already been saved then the top tile is placed back on the grill and the highest value tile on the grill is turned over.

When all the tiles are taken or turned over and lost the game ends and the player with the most worm symbols on their tiles is the winner.

This is fun dice game with quality components in a small portable box – another winning combination in our eyes from top designer Reiner Knizia!



San Tasi

A wooden base and 30 metal pieces combine to form an innovative and challenging strategy game for two players, which is a race to build three towers to win the King's daughter in marriage.

The pieces come in two colours and 5 sizes and can be placed on the board by either player so that their colour shows at the end of the game. The only rule is that a new piece must fit a previous piece by either being a size bigger or smaller but no more.

The rule that you can play pieces of either colour is unusual and produces a lot of fun in the game as you hide your opponent's pieces inside the tower with no hope of scoring.



When all pieces have been played a point is scored for every visible or partially visible piece, with the winner usually being decided by a single piece.

The components are of top quality making this a wonderfully tactile game to play and is sure to gather a crowd ready to offer advice to the players and a queue of others waiting to play this excellent game.

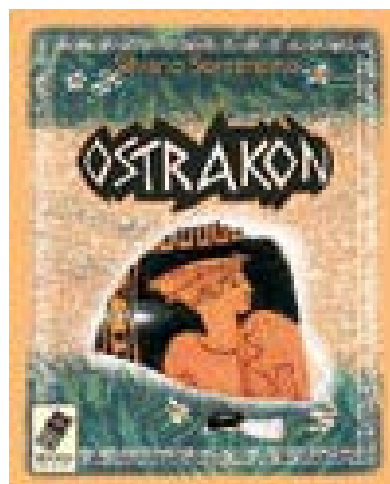


Factbox
Zoch
2-player
Categories: strategy

Ostrakon

Ostrakon is the first of a new range of party card games from innovative Italian games company DaVinci games that is based on the idea that you have a gathering of 5-12 guests, the conversation is floundering and a game will save the day! To work it has to be a very special type of game. It can't include a board, dice or anything that is too complex to explain – especially if your guests have been drinking.

Ostrakon is the perfect game for this moment as it can be simplified down to stating an opinion and voting for or against it. If your guests can handle it, you may explain that each of them represents a great philosopher of ancient times who tries to determine the great and worthy issues of the day.



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Factbox
 DaVinci Games
 5-12 players
 Categories: party, family
www.davincigames.com

In its simplest form a philosopher is chosen and a category on which they will pose a great question. These categories are chosen slightly in advance so that the great philosophers have thinking time and aren't heard to say "duh I can't think" too often.

The categories are wide and varied and include as diverse topics as sounds, magic, UFOs, Rome, parties, attraction, sport, drawing, sorrow, wealth, radio, hotels and so on and form the basis for any related question, no matter how tenuous. These questions can only have an either/or answer that can be assigned to the black and white stones printed on either sides of the philosopher cards.

For example, you could ask which is better dice games or card games? Tea or coffee? London or New York? And so on. The aim of the question setter is to try and choose the question that will split opinion and then guess which side will win as they only score if they guess right and points are earned for every negative vote.

That's probably all you need for most dinner guests but if

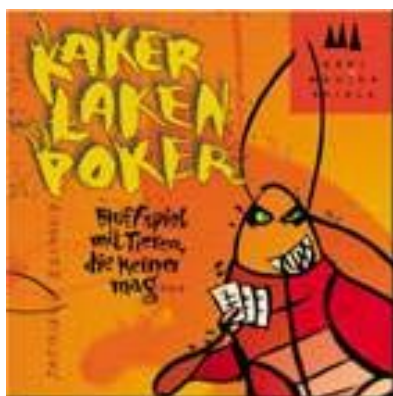


you need more the game is packed with extra cards to create a quite confusing scoring track with the special tiles and the movement of the sun and moon to complicate things further.

This is an excellent game that will get your guests talking and keep your party going and going. Perhaps you may want to start posing questions like "do party guests know when its time to leave?"

Cockroach Poker

This is a fun family card game that has more to do with cockroaches than poker as the cards feature creatures that no-one likes: bats, flies, toads, rats, scorpions, spiders and stink bugs.



The aim is try to be the last person to get a set of four of the same creature as this eliminates you from the game with the other's sharing the victory.

The skill of the game lays in a player's ability to bluff and to read when the others are bluffing. This is how it works.

A player takes a card from their hand and slides it to the next player. They announce with as much conviction as possible that the card is, for example, a scorpion. The next player now has a choice. They can either believe what it is or doubt it or hedge their bets and slide the card onto

the next player. If they guess correctly that either the player was honest or read their bluff correctly then they pass the card back. If they guess wrong and are bluffed they must keep the card in front of them.

If they pass the card on the player is allowed to peek at the card before they claim what it "really is".

Slowly cards and part sets will build up in front of each player as they all begin to approach the dreaded four card maximum. As soon as one person gets this palmed off on them they lose the game and the others share the victory.

This is a fun family game with enjoyable gameplay, bluffing and yucky creatures on the cards that kids of all ages will love to go eww at. As poker and gambling gains more and more popularity so will more games like this that offer poker style fun without the pain of losing money.



Knowing me Knowing you

This is hugely enjoyable family/party game where all the questions in the game are about the people you're playing with. How well do you know them? Who in the group are you most in tune with? All these questions will be answered in a fun game.

Each player is given a scoring device in which tokens can be slid in to match the other player's colour whenever a match is made. However, this scoring device keeps the totals hidden until they are revealed at the end of the game.

In turns a player reads out five questions about the player on their left and everyone writes down their answers. These are then revealed and points are scored for matching answers with the subject (as close to a correct answer that you get in this game) and for matching wrong answers with other players.



Fact box
Drei Magier Spiele
2-6 players
Categories: family, card
game

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Fact box
 Parker
 2+ players
 Categories: party, family

Sample questions include (from a single question card)
 Which is X's favourite room in the house?
 What does X prefer a bikini or a one piece swimsuit?
 What is the highest man-made structure X's ever climbed?
 Who's X's favourite author?
 What was the last thing X faked?

There are 300 double sided cards in the box and on average you'll need about two cards per player for an enjoyable game and since everyone will give different answers this game will never get used up or exhausted.

At the end of the game the scoring devices are opened and the winner is revealed (the one who has collected the most tokens) along with some other interesting facts such as to which players matched best and worst with other players.

This is a firm favourite with the family and is comparable with games like Personal Preferences where the right answers are down to the people you're playing with.

Fact box
 Goldbrick games
 2-5 players
 Categories: family, card
www.goldbrickgames.com

Perpetual Commotion

If you like your card games to be fast and furious then you'll love this game from Goldbrick Games as it's based on the racing demon style of game.

Each player is given their own deck of special cards as the round begins and first deals out five cards as "the front five" and then 13 cards as the feeder deck and stores the rest as their deck that can be run through in a patience style "three count" when they player has no other option.

The real action takes place in the middle of the table (the arena) as piles are opened by a start card and then played on in numerical order by any player that is quick enough to lay their card first. Cards are laid from the front five which is then replaced by the feeder or from the deck on the

three count (three cards are counted and turned over and the third card can be played.

With new start cards appearing from every player's deck the game can become frantic for moments and then have deceptive lulls as piles are closed or await key cards or while players refill their front five. Soon the frantic play returns in a race to empty the feeder deck and end the round.

Whenever a player has emptied their feeder pile they



may yell out and end play immediately or they may carry on playing and call out when it best suits them. Then the scoring begins. One point is scored for every card played by that player into the arena, so its just as well that every player uses a deck with an entirely different colour and then 2 points are deducted for every card left in a player's feeder deck. These points are tallied and the first to 150 points wins the game.

Goldbrick Games is a new company, set up in just 2003, and we're delighted that thanks to the internet we've discovered them and this excellent game.

DDD Pool

DDD Pool is a 3D pool game that offers the chance to play both the versions of pool popular in Europe (8-ball) and the USA (9-ball) against either a human or computer opponent of varying skill levels.

The fact that both versions are included is a major plus as in Europe we rarely get to play 9 ball and vice versa and they're both very different games.

In 9 ball pool the game is played with just 9 numbered balls that must be potted in order, except that you can pot any other number at any time as long as you strike the next one in order with the cue ball. It is possible to aim for the one ball and knock the nine ball in and win the game. It can be that quick.

European style 8 ball pool is played with 17 balls, one black, and 8 each of two colours either red and yellow or solid and striped. The players must pot all of their colour first then the black ball to win.

The 3D table rotates and zooms in and out so you can plan your shot and execute it with differing power as well as spin etc in an attempt to clear the table to win either a single frame of a 5-frame match.

There's also a practice mode to perfect those angles, and a challenge mode to pot all the balls on the table to set a time to reach the high score table.

DDD Pool is available at the Paprikari download that gives you a limited trial. If you like it then you spend \$19.99 to buy an access code. If you love pool then follow the link and start downloading.



Fact box
Paprikari
PC

1 or 2 players

Categories: sports

<http://www.paprikari.com/>



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