

after hours

Diablo

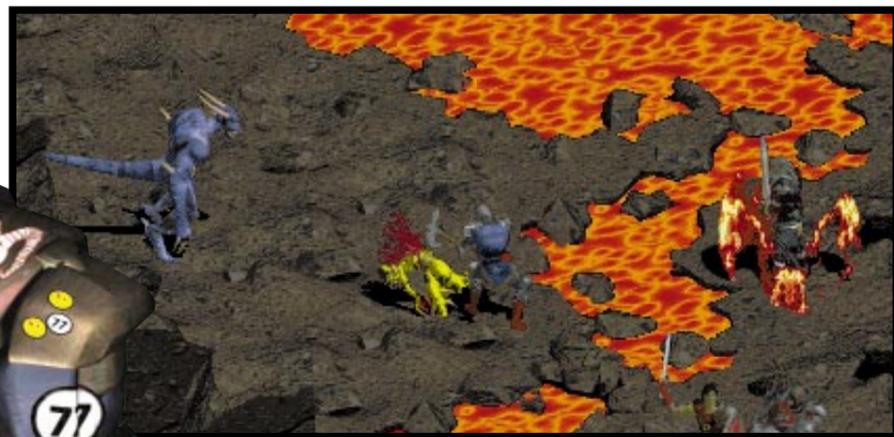
15 Fantasy role-playing games have been available for computers for as long as there have been computers but they've come a long way since those pages of descriptive text where you typed in phrases like 'hit dragon' and 'take potion'. Games with 3D graphics are the in thing and Blizzard Entertainment's new sword-and-sorcery epic uses the very latest in PC graphics – DirectX for Windows 95.

The graphics may be cutting-edge but Diablo's plot is as old as can be. You take on the role of one of three characters – Warrior, Rogue or Wizard. As you would expect, each has different strengths and weaknesses. The Warrior, for example, excels in hand-to-hand combat, the Rogue is handy with a bow and the Wizard unsurpassed in spells and the like.

The adventure begins in a village, where you have the chance to talk to various people and trade items. Talk to one person in particular though, and you'll be given a



This month we choose whether to turn into a warrior, rogue or wizard in a game using the latest PC graphics, explore a haunted vicarage in Cornwall to solve a mystery, and write off a few cars in a new racing game



games news

Kick Off '97 from Maxis is purportedly the most realistic football simulator yet. It features motion-captured images of Premier League players, including David Seaman and Ian Wright. Players can compete at home, in the Champions' League or the World Cup, with commentary by ITV's Jim Rosenthal. *Maxis: 0171 505 1500*



Coming soon from Blizzard – developers of Diablo, reviewed above – is **StarCraft**. It's a strategy game of galactic domination. In conflict with the rest of the galaxy, you must ensure the survival of the human race. StarCraft will also include support for network or Internet play using Blizzard's Battle.net, which united some 170,000 players of Diablo during its first three weeks after release. *Blizzard distributed by Ablac: 01626 332233*



quest. These start simply, such as ridding the town of the beasties that are poisoning the water supply, but they increase in difficulty as the game progresses.

All Diablo's action takes place in the dungeon below the village's church. This is randomly generated with each new game so there is always something fresh to explore. Everything in Diablo is viewed from an isometric perspective and this is the game's real strong point – the graphics are fantastic and the attention to detail is remarkable.

The dungeon is richly detailed and its denizens, everything from skeletons to winged demons, are all superbly animated. The atmospheric use of light and sound makes for a creepy feel and, since a room's contents are hidden until they come into your character's line of sight, it's easy to be surprised by a horde of zombies when you open a door.

Parts of the gameplay can, per-



haps, be somewhat monotonous – hack, slay, collect item. That said, the continual quest to improve your character and find ever more powerful weapons does add depth. Diablo can also be played by up to four people over a local network. This adds greatly to its appeal as it means that players can co-operate (or not) in quests. Blizzard also has a free Internet server over which Diablo can be played and a whole sub-culture has arisen around this. There is real-time chat and discus-

sions for Diablo players and you can join games with players of varying expertise. There are guilds to join and items can be traded between players, turning Diablo into a game of vast scope. **JP**

The premise of Diablo is simple but it's the implementation that really hooks you. Playing it alone is addictive enough but add three other players and it really can take over your life. A real winner.

£44.99 (inc VAT)
Distributed by Ablac:
01626 332233

Diablo

Overall ★★★★★

Minimum requirements: Windows 95, Pentium processor, 8Mb of RAM (16Mb for multiplayer), 2x CD-ROM drive, Windows 95-compatible sound card and mouse, DirectX-compatible local bus SVGA graphics card.

Realms of the Haunting

PG It's just typical. You wait around for a really good adventure game and then two come along at once. We've described

Diablo – now, we turn our attention to Realms of the Haunting (ROTH), the latest from British developers Gremlin, creators of huge hits such as Normality and Euro 96. It's been two years in the making, and is impressive simply for its bulk – it comes on four CD-ROMs.

You play Adam Randall, whose father Charles has recently died in Helston, a village in Cornwall. Before his death, Charles had begun to delve into a mystery which was to prove fatal. It's up to you to solve this mystery and ensure that Charles didn't die in vain.

As the old vicarage in Helston seems to hold the key, you begin to explore its haunted corridors, searching for information and, ultimately, an explanation. Informa-

Gremlin has promised two new games. **Reloaded** should already be out by the time you read this, a sequel to the PlayStation hit Loaded. It's a thoroughly gory adventure: you must solve puzzles to progress, but can't avoid fighting – not even your friends are safe. **Hardwar** is an arcade-style flight sim. Flying through a 3D city, you have a choice of starships. Work at salvage or sabotage to improve your ship; fight for your own safety or just for fun, but never forget that your ultimate goal is escape.

Gremlin Interactive: 0114 275 3423

Already out from Blue Byte is a mission disc to extend its god sim **Settlers II** to new continents and allow you to create your own maps, while coming soon is **Extreme Assault**. Driving tanks and piloting helicopters, you must save the world from alien invaders in what promises to be an action-packed 3D shoot-'em-up.

Blue Byte: 01604 232200

Bullfrog's **Theme Hospital** continues the simulation theme set by its earlier Theme Park. It's doctors and nurses like

you've never played it before, as you juggle the needs of staff and patients to earn promotion to the next level. It also includes a low-resolution option so it can be run on 486-based PCs. *Bullfrog, distributed by Electronic Arts: 01753 549442*

Finally, **Sim City 2000 Network Edition** updates Maxis's classic game, allowing players to compete – and co-operate – with each other across networks or the Internet. *Maxis: 0171 505 1500*





After hours games



tion is to be found in the letters and books abandoned around the house, and from the 90 minutes of full-motion video which cut in at critical developments in the plot.

The demons and vicious automatons who rise out of the floor round nearly every bend in the house's passageways may try to stop you, but you're far more likely to be stymied by the puzzles which bar nearly every door. You'll need a good bit of lateral thinking to get to the bottom of this mystery: Gremlin estimates that even the most dedicated gamer will need over 100 hours to complete ROTH.

If all you want to do is blow away your enemies with a pump-action shotgun, ROTH probably isn't for you. Although there's a good bit of blood and gore, together with a wide range of weapons, magic and 20 types of demonic adversaries, the main point of the game is the adventure itself.

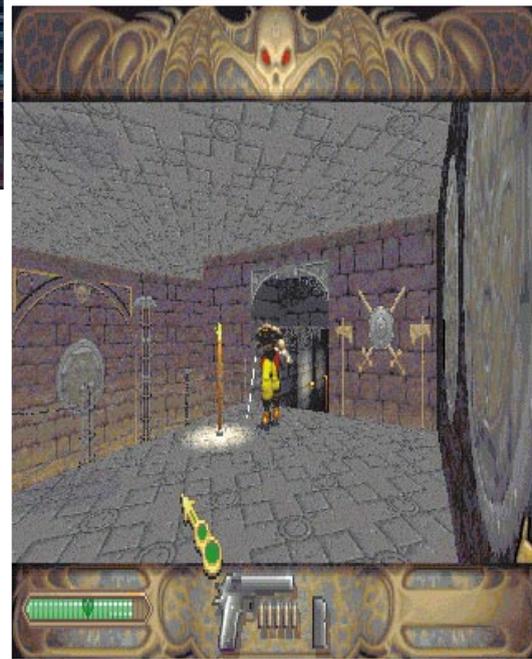
ROTH's graphics aren't quite up to the standard set by the likes of Quake, and objects can get blocky if viewed close up, but the attention to detail is superb. Shadows flicker in candlelight, light switches work, and you can run it at a resolution of 640x480 pixels to give far more detail than many games. **JS ROTH should appeal to everyone except the most bloodthirsty. It looks great and becomes compulsive - don't start it unless you've got a lot of time to spare.**

- £44.99 (inc VAT)
- Gremlin Interactive: 0114 275 3423

Realms of the Haunting

Overall ★★★★★

Minimum requirements: 486 DX2-66, DOS or Windows 95, 8Mb of RAM (16Mb for Win 95), 2x CD-ROM drive, VGA display, sound card recommended.



Destruction Derby 2



Collectively, the driving members of the *What PC?* team have a no-claims bonus of approximately nought percent.

We have written off more cars than Damon Hill, and we're about as safe behind the wheel as a joyriding Stevie Wonder. So, when *Destruction Derby 2* came crashing through the office door, we were at last given the chance to reduce our insurance premiums by restricting our automotive smash-ups to our PC monitors.

On the surface, *Destruction Derby 2* is much like any other racing game with just one (oh-so-fun)



Sega Rally Competition

- 1) Which two cars appear in *Sega Rally*?
- 2) Which operating system does *Sega Rally* require?
- 3) What rating did we give the game in our review last month?

Entry coupon

1
 2
 3

Name

Address

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Tick here if you do not wish to receive promotional material as a result of your entry into this competition

Send this coupon to: Sega Rally Competition, *What PC?* Editorial, VNU House, 32-34 Broadwick Street, London W1A 2HG. The closing date is April 30, 1997. Employees of VNU, Sega, and their agents are not eligible to enter.





After hours games



difference: you're allowed, nay, positively encouraged, to smash into your competitors' vehicles and attempt to run them off the track. To facilitate this there's a total of seven tracks, each wide enough to allow for good ramming angles. During the course of a race you might choose to just clip the odd bumper or three, or go all out to destroy another vehicle by launching from a ramp to land on its roof. Naturally, we soon become masters of the former. And we just couldn't resist attempting the latter.

For those of you who cannot stomach the intellectual involvement of a full race, Destruction Derby 2 also offers four 'destruction bowls'. These are literally-named bowl-shaped arenas where you simply drive as fast as possible into everything that moves. This is great fun – for each and every one of the 10 seconds that you are likely to survive.

The game runs both swiftly and smoothly in low-resolution mode, although visually it's not very

appealing. Things look much better when playing in high-resolution mode, but you'll need a powerful machine to get the best out of it. Even on our Pentium 166MHz MMX test machine the performance was disappointing. SC

A racing game which rewards you for smashing up competitors' cars is a great concept. Destruction Derby 2 is just such a game, but one which demands an exceptionally powerful PC.

○ £34.99 (inc VAT)

○ Psygnosis (Sony Interactive):
0151 709 5755

Destruction Derby 2

Overall ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Minimum requirements: Pentium 90MHz, 8Mb of RAM (16Mb for Windows 95), CD-ROM drive and 57Mb of hard disk space.



TOP TEN CD-ROM GAMES/LEISURE TITLES

Last month	This month	Title	Label
1	1	Red Alert	Virgin
2	2	FIFA 97	Electronic Arts
4	3	Tomb Raider	Eidos Interactive
8	4	Championship Manager 2	Eidos Interactive
3	5	Flight Simulator 6.0	Microsoft
5	6	Encarta 97	Microsoft
6	7	Rally Championship	Europress
7	8	Formula 1 Grand Prix 2	Microprose
-	9	Diablo	Blizzard
9	10	Screamer 2	Virgin

TOP TEN DISK GAMES/LEISURE TITLES

Last month	This month	Title	Label
1	1	Return of Arcade	Microsoft
2	2	Aladdin	Virgin
5	3	Best of Windows Entert.	Microsoft
4	4	Jungle Book	Virgin
3	5	Scrabble	US Gold
7	6	Sim Tower	Maxis
-	7	Mini Office	Europress
-	8	Premier Manager 3 Deluxe	Gremlin Interactive
9	9	Mickey & Crew Print Studio	Disney Interactive
-	10	Encyclopedia of Science	Dorling Kindersley

Age ratings: We have assigned viewing suitability ratings for each game. U = Universal; PG = Parental Guidance; 15 = suitable for viewing by 15-year-olds and above; 18 = suitable for viewing by 18-year-olds and above.



Figures for both charts from Chart Track Ltd - month ending 31.1.97