

DEUS EX



★ £34.99 • Eidos Interactive • Out now

He's been waiting for this moment for some time now... Paul Mallinson finally gets his hands on the finished *Deus Ex*



Phew, where to start? Having spent pretty much every spare hour playing *Deus Ex* this week, taking notes as we went, it came to our attention that we'd compiled and collected so many thoughts and feelings about the game that we'd run out of paper in our notepads... We played and played, and wrote and wrote. And wrote and wrote and wrote! What we're trying to say at such an early point in this review is: *Deus Ex* just has loads in it.

So we'd better get on with it, otherwise we're rapidly gonna run out of space here...

BEST BITS FROM OTHER GAMES

Deus Ex, as those who've been following its progress with interest will already know, is a deep, complex and involving game, mixing hardcore role-playing elements with full-on first-person action and talkie, adventure-y bits. In fact, it's an amazing amalgam of various gaming genres brought together in a superbly wholesome way. If, after perusing the screenshots here, you can't already picture how *Deus Ex* plays, imagine something of a cross between *System Shock 2*, *Thief*, *GoldenEye* (classic N64 shoot 'em up based on the Bond movie of the same name – Ed), *Half-Life*, *Soldier Of Fortune*, *Kingpin* and *SIN*. And, erm, *Unreal Tournament*. So that's a lot of games all rolled into one, then. A lot of great games, for that matter...

But what the creators of *Deus Ex* have done so well is collect and refine all of the best bits from all the above mentioned games and make them work

extremely well together in their game. And we do mean *extremely* well together.

BETTER THAN THE MOVIES?

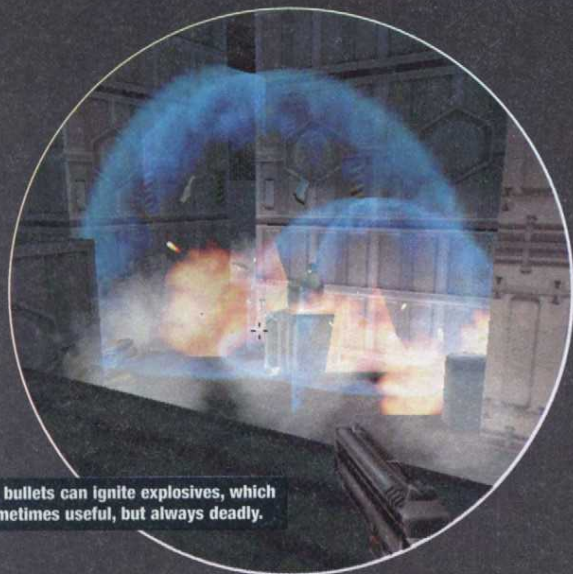
From our point of view, the most important feature in a game of this sort is the story. The game might have the best graphics, best engine and best interface ever, but you aren't going to give much of a toss if the story doesn't appeal to you. Nothing you don't already know, but you're still probably wondering what we're getting at here...

The tale of a cyber-enhanced secret agent on the trail of death dealing terrorists, *Deus Ex* plays out one of the most fulfilling and interesting storylines ever created in a computer game. Although there are obvious parallels to be drawn from films such as *RoboCop* and *The Matrix*, *Deus Ex* actually manages to cobble together a rollercoaster of a plotline that equals those in both of the aforementioned movies. A bold claim to make, but one based on rigorous playtesting and re-playtesting, and one that we think is right, too.

CONSTANTLY MONITORED

Deus Ex opens with a tantalisingly vague intro sequence. You're shown characters, unknown to





Stray bullets can ignite explosives, which is sometimes useful, but always deadly.

you until later in the game, engaging in techno-babble conversations about a killer plague called the 'Grey Death', and about some cure called Ambrosia being in short supply. No matter how hard you concentrate when you first watch this exquisitely scripted 'in-engine' cut-scene, most of it is guaranteed to go over your head. But that doesn't matter, because what the designers are actually doing is planting seeds in your subconscious, ready to be germinated as the chapters of the story unfold.

Not before long, it transpires that, for the duration of *Deus Ex*, you are to assume the role of Mr

the outset. But, considering he cost a cool \$50 billion to build in the first place, you'd expect that.

PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGE
Once all the cut sequence chatter dies down (and the black 'sim-ulo' widescreen bars disappear from the screen) you find yourself on your own in one tiny corner of a huge 3D representation of New York City's famous Liberty Island. Down the docks, to be precise. It is here that *Deus Ex*'s superb cast of characters begin to introduce themselves. First up, JC Denton's brother – your brother – who provides you with weapons, intelligence, and advice to be cautious, is a gruff bloke with a

transmitting instructions directly into your modified brain, also makes his entrance at this early point in *Deus Ex*. Alex Jacobson, a young kid, barely out of high school, is his name, and as the story meanders along, his comments and suggestions adapt to your style of play. In the real world we'd probably call that cheating, but, in *Deus Ex*, a voice in your head barking warnings and tips at you is clearly nothing more than 'professional advantage'. And when head shots count, as they do in this game, you need all the help you can get.

COMPLETELY EMBROID
As the concept of *Deus Ex* slowly permeates your brain, the cast of characters slowly reveal themselves, and the plot finally begins to make some sense, you'll find yourself completely embroiled by JC Denton's exploits. Until you reach the point where you actually begin to think you're him. No – really. *Deus Ex* is that involving. During a particularly tense scene you may find yourself gritting your teeth as a robot death machine howls "scanning area!" at the top of its voice only feet away from the shadows where you're hiding. Or you'll feel the dull thud of a sniper's bullet as you

nonchalantly stroll into an open area. In fact, the whole feel of the game is pretty much spot on. Creeping around (little finger outstretched, pushing down the 'crouch' key...), and evading patrolling guards is, in itself, immensely satisfying.

INGRAINED IN YOUR BRAIN

At first it's tough. Even on the easiest of the four skills settings. When you first start the game, dashing around like a madman, trying to play *Quake*, it doesn't take long to realise that the sound of your footsteps alone can give you away to the enemy. And that includes at a distance, or from behind a door. Untimely death abounds if you stomp your way around the place, so the instinctive reaction to change from walking or running to a silent crawl becomes ingrained in your brain from an early stage. It's a great feeling – sneaking past guards who are seen picking their noses or scratching their arses, unaware there's a highly-trained killer kneeling beside them...

Getting into the process of hiding, scuttling from cover to cover and silently dispatching sentries and guards is a slow process initially, but there are certain things to consider while you're at it. Firstly, sentries and guards follow set patrols. They may pause for a while, sometimes even conversing with other sentries (and moaning about "not seeing any action"), and will also investigate if they hear something, but generally it is possible to work out their routes. Secondly, you should always watch where you're going. Startling a flock of pigeons by inadvertently walking close to them can alert nearby guards. As can wandering into a limpet mine. Or staggering in front of a surveillance camera. Searching around – preparing for an attack before going in – is essential. Thirdly, that a silent takedown (with an electro prod, or razor-sharp knife) is often better than shooting everyone in sight. For two reasons: it saves you ammo (in short supply on harder difficulty settings), and also alerts less people to your presence in the area. If you stick to these hard

“Imagine a cross between *System Shock 2*, *Thief*, *Goldeneye*, *Half-Life*, *Soldier Of Fortune*, *Kingpin* and *SiN*. And, erm, *Unreal Tournament*. A lot of great games in one”

JC Denton – a state-of-the-art, straight-from-the-smelting-plant government agent with the ability to enhance himself with cyber implants, skill enhancements and a huge array of fancy weapons and gadgets. The first level being his first proper 'live' mission ever, JC finds himself being monitored by the government top brass from

neat goatee beard and the same attire as you. You also – JC Denton – sound a bit like Bruce Willis on Quaaludes, but the chatter between the characters is actually triple-A stuff, remaining gritty, sharp and adaptive the whole way through the game.

A voice in your head, or rather, a government operative



JC Denton: Blackmail of the U.S. government could not possibly escape the notice of the United Nations.

Brothers JC (left) and Paul Denton swap notes early on in the game.



The fantastic GEP Gun. In Hong Kong. Yesterday.

← and fast rules, combat in *Deus Ex* quickly becomes very compelling.

UNREAL ENGINE

Although *Deus Ex* utilises the famed *Unreal* engine to bring this exquisite combat system to us, the weapons in *Deus Ex* aren't very *Unreal*-like in look or feel.

Of course there's a sniper rifle, and this one can be modified and upgraded to startling effect. Recoil, clip capacity, range, base damage, reload time and ammo type are all changeable. Plus a silencer can be added for even better effect. On top of that, your

skill as a marksman can also be honed to perfection by spending skill points on the discipline, thus steadying your snooker arm as you aim at a faraway target. Which helps immensely. And you

with, and that's without even mentioning the *swords*... Yes, despite coming from the same development house (Ion Storm), *Deus Ex* manages to beat *Daikatana* at it's own game by bringing ludicrous swords into the equation. The end result is totally hilarious, but still in keeping with the spirit of the game.



Ⓜ Not sure how many seconds you have to 'comply' with these things...

can apply that to pretty much every other weapon in the game, apart from the crazy specialist ones such as the Plasma Gun and the GEP (Guided Explosive Projectile) Gun.

There are two types of shotgun (one rapid-firing), numerous pistols and a whole host of grenades to play around

AGGRESSIVE PARTNER

For the first few missions things go the way you'd expect them to. You meet your partner, an aggressive female cyber-babe called Anna Navarre; your boss – a moustachioed desk jockey with a

penchant for red ties; an alcoholic helicopter pilot who ferries you about the place; plus many, many other freaks, hookers, pimps, killers and junkies, all in the course of your duties. Conversations are both natural and logical, with every eventuality seemingly covered. Some conversations give you multiple choice replies, allowing not only the interrogation of suspect characters, but also the chance to model your own personality in light of your gaming style. Be aggressive and trigger happy and the other characters in the game react to that (some even try to reduce your ammunition supply if you're popping too many people!); be diplomatic and cautious and you'll easily gain the respect of the game's key characters.

At one key point in the game you are ordered to kill a suspect terrorist (see box entitled To Kill Or Not To Kill). Whether you kill him or not is down to your own better judgement, but you don't get a great deal of time to make the decision and the game suddenly turns on its head once it's been made. At this point in

One wrong move and you'll set the automatic sentry guns off. Never a good idea in a gas-filled corridor.



There goes Alex Jacobson – that voice in your head – again.



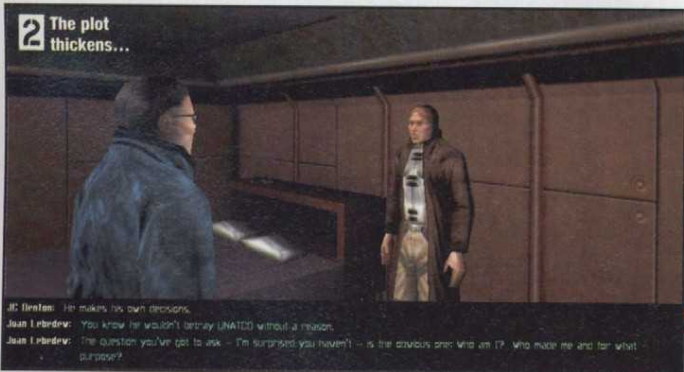
Be liberal with your Multitool device. It can save you the hassle of an enemy counter attack.

★ WALKTHROUGH

TO KILL OR NOT TO KILL? THAT IS THE QUESTION

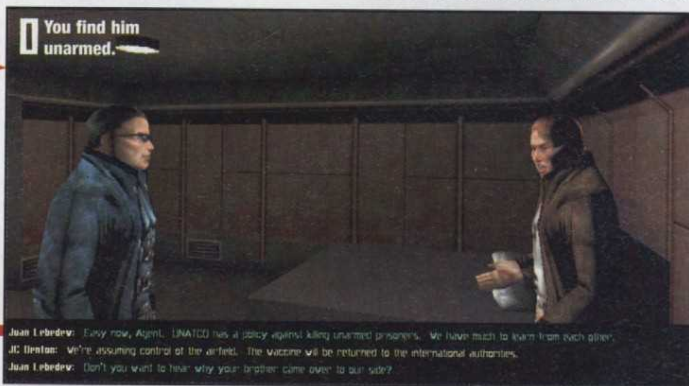
Deus Ex is not strictly linear

At one point in the storyline you are ordered to assassinate a terrorist leader. If you carry out your orders you're congratulated for your loyalty. If you don't – well – all hell breaks loose back at headquarters...



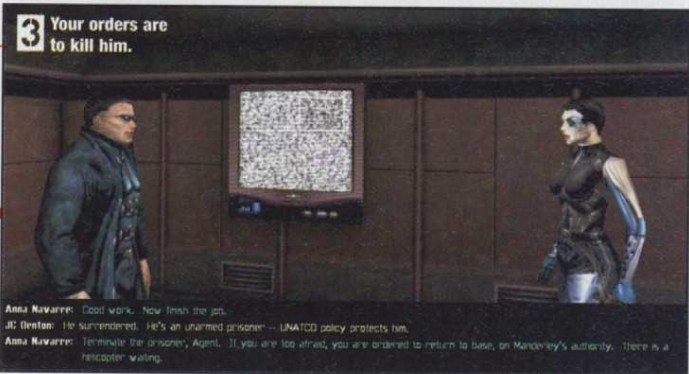
2 The plot thickens...

JC: Director: He makes his own decisions.
 Juan: I believe: You know he wouldn't betray UNATCO without a reason.
 Juan: I believe: The question you've got to ask – I'm surprised you haven't – is the obvious one: Who are IP, who made me and for what purpose?



1 You find him unarmed.

Juan: I believe: Every now, Agent, UNATCO has a policy against killing unarmed prisoners. We have much to learn from such gifts.
 JC: Director: We're assuming control of the airfield. The vaccine will be returned to the international authorities.
 Juan: I believe: Don't you want to hear why your brother came over to our side?



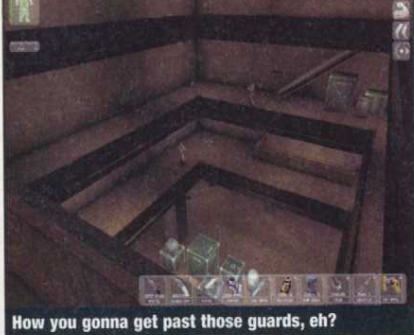
3 Your orders are to kill him.

Anna: Navarre: Good work. Now finish the job.
 JC: Director: He surrendered. He's an unarmed prisoner – UNATCO policy protects him.
 Anna: Navarre: Terminate the prisoner, Agent. If you are too afraid, you are ordered to return to base, on Marcolley's authority. There is a helicopter waiting.

“*Deus Ex* manages to beat *Daikatana* at its own game by bringing ludicrous swords in to the equation. The end result is totally hilarious, but still in keeping with the spirit of the game”



4 What do you do?



How you gonna get past those guards, eh?



Bingo! Lock bypassed. Augmentation Upgrade Canister plundered.



Jack
You just released poison gas into the lower levels. Find a hazmat suit or get out of there!

Oops - poison gas. That's torn it.

MIND THE CAT, MAN

Watch out for the irrational urge to squash pets

You can tread on rats and squash them for a laugh (hur hur!), but accidentally squashing a cat for the first time is an experience to behold. At first: abject horror at your unbelievable clumsiness, then a sudden urge to do it some more. You can also 'accidentally' squash dogs too, only it takes a run-up and a jump to do it properly. Oh, the horror.



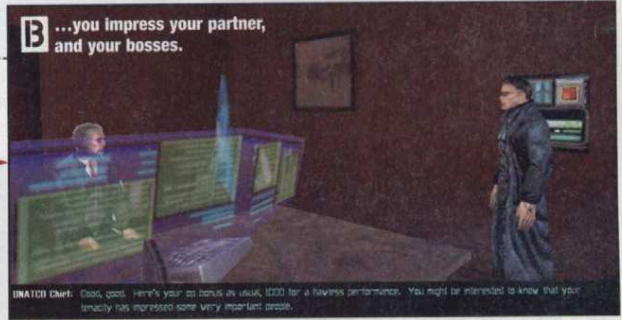
Animal cruelty is a recurring theme.

END



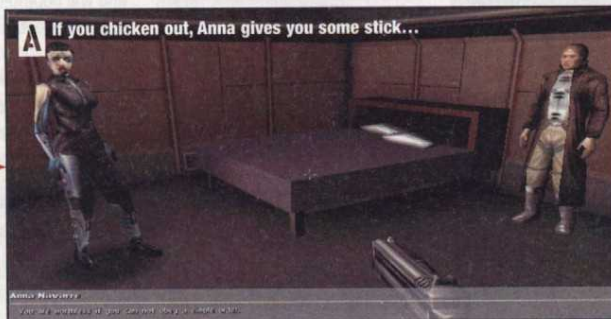
A If you kill him...

Dead Body (Alan Letbedev)



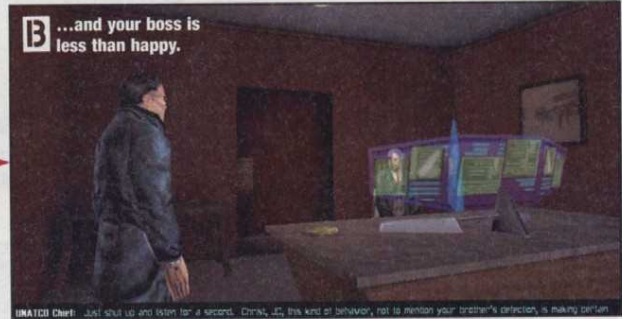
B ...you impress your partner, and your bosses.

UNATCO Chief: Good, good. Here's your 200 bonus as usual, ICEE for a flawless performance. You might be interested to know that your tenacity has impressed some very important people.



A If you chicken out, Anna gives you some stick...

Anna Navarro



B ...and your boss is less than happy.

UNATCO Chief: Just shut up and listen for a second. Christ, JC, this kind of behavior, not to mention your brother's actions, is highly objectionable.



A Or you can kill your partner,...



B ...head back to base, and try covering it up.

JC Drexler: I have some bad news about Agent Navarro.

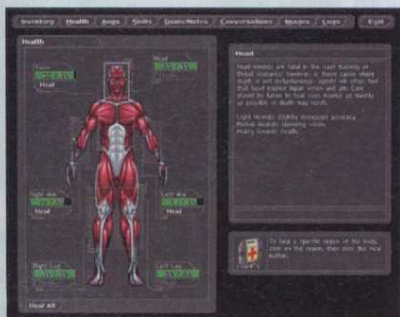
THAT MENU SYSTEM, IN FULL

An excellent interface always helps a game run smoothly, especially when there's so much ground to cover

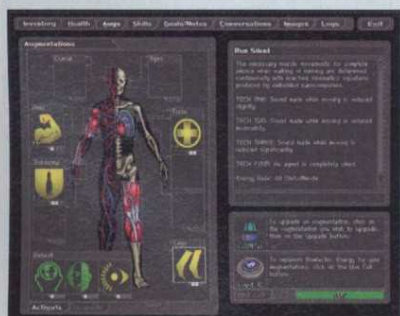
Although it may look like there are too many menus to deal with in *Deus Ex*, they're all reachable from one main screen and the action freezes when you access it. So you're given time to ponder major decisions and rarely feel overwhelmed into making costly mistakes due to ham-fistedness.



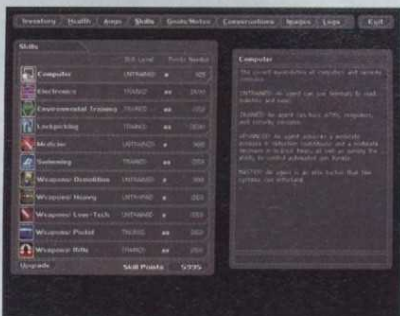
You can only carry a certain amount of gear, and, as Morrissey would say, some guns are bigger than others.



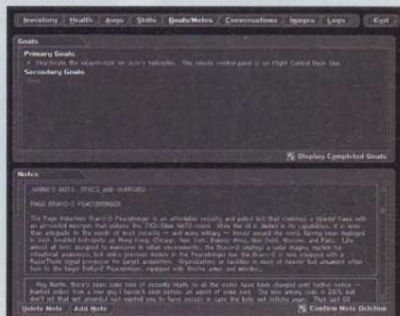
When someone shoots you it destroys part of your body. Head shots count – even when they're against you.



Plug-in add-ons that add a range of enhancements to your body. Each has four levels of effectiveness.



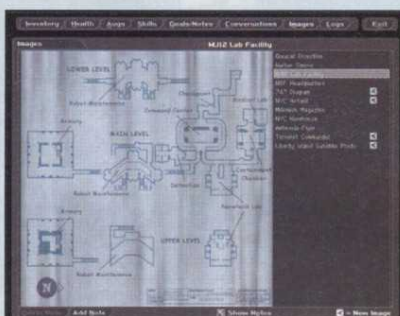
The core RPG element of the game. Skills can be increased by completing objectives and doing good.



Forgot what you were supposed to do? Every significant detail about your current mission is stored here.



There are reams and reams of conversations in *Deus Ex*. From this screen you can access every one of them.



Every now and then you'll be supplied with useful visual information (ie a map) which is archived here.



Want to know what the *Deus Ex* engine is thinking while you're playing? No, neither do we. But...



A magazine found within the game. Spot the deliberate mistake...

AMAZING ENVIRONMENT

One of the main factors in *Deus Ex*'s success is the environment modelling.

Each level is not only huge but also crammed with a glorious amount of detail. Almost every free-form object in the game can be picked up and moved around – boxes, chairs, cups, dustbins... even dead bodies. And if what you're trying to lift is too heavy, a 'strength' Augmentation upgrade will remedy the problem. Large metal boxes, all of which are initially immobile due to their weight, come into play when this happens, opening up previously out-of-reach areas and giving access to hidden power-ups and secret little nooks and crannies.

Hiding the bodies of your victims has a significant effect on the gameplay too. If you pop a guard and leave the body where it falls you run the risk of another guard stumbling across it and setting off the alarms. So it makes sense to sneak in and clean up afterwards – covering your tracks as it were. It must be said that we did encounter a slight problem with this aspect of the game, in that if your inventory is full and the body you're trying to lift is carrying something, the game won't let you do it. If it's crucial to move the body you have to first make room in your inventory, then loot whatever the cadaver is carrying, before being allowed to lift it. This 'bug' doesn't have a significant affect on the game itself, but is slightly annoying and will hopefully be remedied in the first patch available.

REAL-WORLD PHYSICS

The amazing 'real-world' physics engine (courtesy of *Epic* and *Unreal* don't forget) and the

the review we do find it a little difficult to continue without giving too much of the story away, as what transpires is not only surprisingly original, but also incredibly well structured.

REALISM

Despite the abundance of futuristic gadgetry (not to mention acronym-heavy in-character banter), *Deus Ex* always manages to feel contemporary and modern rather than outlandish and crass, as many other sci-fi games tend to appear. There are no floating vehicles; no big shoulder pads; no camp robots; and no daft monsters (well, not *that* daft anyway). And certainly no silly spells, which – again – is refreshing for an RPG.

We've been banging on about realism in games for ages now, and finally we're actually getting some. On the hardest difficulty setting, 'Realistic', we really are talking realistic. Two or three bullet hits will kill you. The enemy's senses are also much more acute, and their aim truer too, and – to be honest – you'd have a hard time getting past the first few levels if you started out on this setting.

IN PERSPECTIVE

If you have played *System Shock 2*, *Half-Life* and *Thief II* then you'll know what to expect. If not, why not?

- Half-Life
- Deus Ex
- Thief II: The Metal Age
- System Shock 2

IT'S NOT RICE PUDDING

It's Ambrosia, but not as we know it...



Ambrosia rice pudding may have been loved by generations, but the Ambrosia in *Deus Ex* is slightly more green and probably less tasty than the famous tinned dessert of the same name. In fact, the Ambrosia in this game is actually a rare-as-rocking-horse-shit cure for a deadly disease called The Grey Death, and is an extremely valuable commodity.



Your appointment to FEMA should be finalized within the week. I've already discussed the matter with the Senator.
If you don't like 'cyber talk' or 'techno babble' you might not like Deus Ex.



James Reyes: "Yeah, well, the drug's pretty nasty, which means you'll soon have access to upgrades from standard 'augmentation canisters'."
Augmentation canisters boost the strength of your biological enhancement.



Crikey – the characters in Deus Ex even blink! Now that is attention to detail.



“There are no big shoulder pads, no camp robots, and no daft monsters. And certainly no silly spells. Very refreshing”

Some of your victims explode when they die. So you have to be careful when you fight them.

abundance of moveable objects combine to provide the most tactile 3D gaming environment ever seen in a computer game (at this point in time), and the possibilities for sick, twisted hijinx are endless. For example, ever wanted to throw a dustbin out of a window? Or launch a TV off a hotel balcony on the tenth floor? Or chuck a dead body off the top of a skyscraper? This game allows you to do such things (and, in the case of our latter example, we saw tiny figures run towards the mashed body to investigate! Amazing...) And not only that, but there are also numerous pool tables, basketball courts and dart boards to be found in *Deus Ex* too, all of which – *gasp!* – work, providing a slight distraction from the blood, sweat and tears of the main plotline if needed.

leapfrogged *System Shock 2* as the current benchmark in the role-playing genre. “Why is that?” you might ask. To which we’d reply: non-player characters. In *System Shock 2* (the previous benchmark RPG) you were out on your own – in this there’s a proper cast of characters and their interaction is a joy to behold. *System Shock 2* is slightly scarier, but *Deus Ex* is bigger, harder and more satisfying to beat. It’s a cracking game – a real blood, guts and bullets comic book story with depth, flexibility and staying power. *Deus Ex* presents not only physical and mental problems for you to solve, but also numerous moral dilemmas to overcome. It is a giant of a game and another step forward for the role-playing genre. Don’t hesitate to buy it when you see the box in your local computer shop – you will not be disappointed. **PCZ**

DARK AND SERIOUS

In terms of atmosphere, *Deus Ex* remains dark and serious throughout. There are humorous interludes and quiet bits, but generally the game exudes a gritty, tough exterior. This is reflected in the music (predominantly a collection of trip hop and ambient techno tunes), the weather atmospherics, and the brilliant sound effects – all of which combine to make, as we keep saying, an unbelievably realistic stage on which to act out your killer cop fantasies.

So, finally, Ion Storm delivers a game worth shouting about. The developers may still be smarting at the reception *Daikatana* received from the general public, but they should now put the whole sorry episode behind them and focus on this game. A game that, in our opinion, has just

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P300
 Memory 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES**
 3D accelerator card, 500Mb HD space
SUPPORTS Have to turn detail right down on min spec PC. Need Pentium III and at least 128Mb RAM for full detail.

PCZVERDICT

- UPPERS** Superbly atmospheric • Surprisingly interesting storyline • Amazing attention to detail • Very tense and extremely challenging • Re-playable
- DOWNERS** Can't lift bodies if inventory is full • Possibly overwhelming for some

94 The new action role-playing benchmark

CAST OF CHARACTERS

There are shedloads of non-player characters in this game. Here's a selection of the key players...



Alex Jacobson
Your 'in-head' sidekick



Janice Reed
UNATCO Secretary (nice legs!)



Joseph Manderley
Boss of UNATCO, New York



Sam Carter
In charge of UNATCO ordnance



Anna Navarre
Your tetchy female cop partner



Jock
Helicopter pilot friend of yours



Men In Black
Sinister government agents



Smuggler
Underground arms dealer



Gunther Hermann
Meathead metal combat cop



Joe Greene
Journalist – nosin' around



NSF Terrorist
Initially your main foe



UNATCO Troop
There to help you win your battles



Jamie Reyes
The doctor who built you



JoJo Fine
Local Manhattan thug



Paul Denton
JC's more experienced brother



Walter Simons
Another shadowy government agent