

AUTOSIMSPORT

Volume 2 Number 9

Slidin the Sport into the Sim



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All expenses paid trip to London to test BLIMEY's new sim—hotel, dinner, and supercar ride included—and don't forget to take your partner!

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PLUS WIN 2 copies of GTR2

In this month's issue:

- Logitech G25 Review!
- BRD—on nKPRO, Speed 7, and the future of sim-racing
- GTR2's Doug Arnao on Physics
- GTR2—get the BEST PHYSICS mod on the planet—inside!
- Full ARCA-licensed Sim Preview!
- Grand Am's Luis Diaz
- GTR2 Review!
- BMW vs. BMW—ISI vs. LFS—AUTOSIMSPORT Road-Test!
- Mitsu & Shinji!

PLUS! H2Epic, Madcowie, MMG's 2006 F1 mod, Oliver Day's photos, and so MUCH MORE!

PETER BROCK—1945-2006

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Wake up, brush your teeth, grab your overnight, and head for the airport. Get on a jet bound for London. Get off the plane and step into a supercar for a sexy dash down the M4 to the posh studios of GTR2 developers BLIMEY!GAMES. Spend the day testing their new (and yet to be named) simulator before spending the night at one of London's top restaurants where BLIMEY!GAMES will treat you to dinner before you head for bed in a luxury hotel for one night.

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All entries must be received no later than December 10th.

So what are you waiting for? Send your entry [here!](#)

GET TRACKING!

For more details, come visit the [AUTOSIMSPORT](#)' forums where we'll be glad to answer all your questions.

*You and your partner must be twenty-one or older to enter, and own a registered copy of GTR2. You will be traveling sometime in the summer of 2007.

**The prize is: Return Flight for you and your partner: Day at BLIMEY!GAMES studio. Dinner for two. Luxury hotel for two, for one night. All prizes are courtesy of BLIMEY!GAMES.

*** For entries larger than 10Megs, please contact us before sending to organize an FTP-Drop-Box.

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HeadOpEd

lxMartini



TIME TO ACT! TIME TO SAVE RFACTORCENTRAL!
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INDISPENSIBLE SITE. WE CAN SAVE IT IF WE TRY!

Congratulations!

Last month's winner of a beautiful copy of "1 1/2-litre GP Racing 1961-1965-Low Power, High Tech" from [Veloce Books](#) was Jelle de Vries, from Veendam, Holland.

Thank you to the many that entered and I did try to answer each email but I sort of got snowed under after about the fiftieth reply! So sorry to those who didn't win, and to those that entered and didn't get a reply from me!

The question—who was the last U.S. born winner of an official round of the Formula One World Championship, resulted, as I say, in many replies—most of them wrong! Mario Andretti? Born in Italy. Dan Gurney? 1967. Phil Hill? 1961. Sullivan? Never won a GP.

The correct answer was none other than the heir to the Revlon empire, Mr. Peter "revvo" Revson, who claimed a washed-out race at Mosport in 1973, as well as winning the British GP that same year after South African Jody Scheckter had decimated most of the field on the first lap. Revson, whose empire was worth a reputed one billion dollars, died while practicing for the 1974 South African Grand Prix, joining his brother, Douglas, who had also died while racing in 1967.

Fate, however, still had another hand to play: Tom Pryce, who inherited Revson's seat at Shadow, would also lose his life at Kyalami, three years later, in that very team.

And a further twist!

Our very own little magazine was this month quoted in one of the U.S.'s premiere NASCAR magazines, "NASCAR Illustrated", that ran a front-page feature on sim-racing. A must read for all who share this magazine's belief that our sport is on the cusp—on the verge—on the precipice—of finally ridding ourselves of the stigma of "video game" ... and, in fact, in this month's issue we will profile numerous examples of how sim-racing is slowly finding its use in the real world of motor-sports. That kind of validation will, sooner rather than later, expose our sport to those many in the industry feel are our core-market—motor racing fans the world over.

Of course, things would be far better were people like Bob Simmerman not quoted as "authorities" in these magazines! In fact, RSC had the right idea when they banned our Bob from their hallowed forum—after all, what use is Bob other than well, writing our spectacular GTR2 review!

GTR2

In this month's issue—in fact, in the very .pdf from whence you dragged this magazine—there is a little zipped bottle of magic ... it is a GTR2 physics mod that, well, changes the physics of GTR2 out-of-the-box. We will, next month, run a very extensive article on the whys, wherefores and how-dos of this mod, but, in the meantime, we hope that those of you who try it will enjoy the alternative to GTR2 standard.

What should be made clear, obviously, is that the underlying engine of GTR2 is what makes it possible for modders (for the first time welcomed {'Mod on', as the physics lead for developers Blimey! Games notes in his interview this month} to tinker about in in a GTR-franchise offering) to tweak the physics. Were there not a Ferrari under there, it wouldn't really matter what one did to tune the thing—it'd still be a pig.

GTR2 comes with a license—not only to (oh dear ...) thrill—but also to recreate one of the world's premiere racing series right there on your PC. \$20.00 in the U.S. is the price for admittance to one of the greatest sims ever made. We have also, courtesy of Blimey! Games, made available their MoTeC guide—you can download it [here](#), and you can also download an example [here](#). Or you can go to the [Blimey! Games website](#) and do it there! Indispensable!

Lasst Ask:

Please support our sponsors: They make this magazine possible. And thank you for reading—you make the sleepless nights worthwhile ... and I've had a fair few of those this month, believe me ... I hope to see some of you at the RACER Historic Event this weekend, October 7th and 8th!

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News



COMMENT

RSC And The Mystery Of The "Very Generous Person" Revealed

"RSC RULE 4.1 - Any content that is false, abusive, defamatory, or harassing is not permitted."

"RSC servers owned by SimBin?". That was the topic of a [thread](#) started by mickyknox at RSC earlier this month. Mickyknox, it will come as no surprise to anyone, is now serving a lifetime ban from RSC.

This thread, however, was an odd one, as threads at RSC go. If you haven't followed the link, you should know that it caused quite a stir: Over thirty posts by moderators, admin-staff, and section owners, from a total of about eighty, and not one of those posts was able to reply to the question, are "RSC servers owned by SimBin?" with one simple answer: "No, they're not."

Perhaps, you are thinking, this is because the fine staff at RSC is just too kind to ever say no. Maybe ... anything is possible in RSC-world, as you will soon see. Still, the answers that the RSC staff came up with were a little—at best—unconvincing. For instance ... take Giovanni Tifosi's reply: "Who owns the servers? Dunno, and I work here".

Was that a denial? A "No, our servers are not owned by SimBin"? Perhaps ... but mickyknox was not convinced, as evidenced by his post suggesting that RSC could perhaps call on someone a little more knowledgeable and who could deny the rumour a little more convincingly.

Enter James Burgess. "RSC's servers are not owned by SimBin," he posted.

Well, no denying *that* denial. Except for one little problem: He introduces his denial with, "Okay ... this is what I know (my knowledge, may be wrong)".

Oh well, still, it's a denial. Right? But then, why did Burgess feel the need to edit his own post—*five hours after his initial post*—by, yet again, stating that, "This is only information *to my knowledge*. I don't know very much about the server situation here at RSC—it's not my department"?

Why the need, *five hours* after his initial post in which he already noted that he *may* be wrong, to insist that he *may really-really* be wrong? Who knows—whatever the answer, it raised some doubts, and the thread continued. And in-between posts from moderators and admin staff, all of whom could not negate the allegation, there was a rather tantalizing post by one EdamSpeed, a member, who noted that RSC and SimBin, co-incidentally enough, *did* share something in common.

"It's actually quite easy to see where the Simbin 'rumour' comes from. You can do a lookup on the address of the server: forum.rscnet.org = 217.75.102.168. Then do a WHOIS lookup on 217.75.102.168. It's an IP address owned by a company called Port 80 AB, a co-locating facility in Stockholm, Sweden. Simbin are also a Swedish company. You see—easy to put 2 and 2 together there ..."

But that, of course, is not evidence. Just, as the poster writes, co-incidence, and probably the origin of the rumour, as he correctly stated. In any event, it was surely going to be the case that, at any moment, one of the moderators would squash this rumour like they would a member in breach of the feared Rule 4.1.

"I did not have financial relations with that company!" Even Bill had managed that—and he was talking about something as important as a ... oh, right ... well, never mind then, let's check if anyone has denied the allegation yet, shall we! Someone in a position to know, as mickeyknow suggested, would surely be able to deny the allegation easily enough.

Someone like Mikkel Gram Hansen, for instance ... sadly for us, Gram Hansen was nowhere to be seen on this thread—perhaps he was out of town, and out to lunch, and having his haircut, and sipping on a latte.

Tim Stelten, though, *was* around; he swanned in and posted a rather lengthy reply in which he managed to say ... well, not one word about whether RSC's servers were paid for by SimBin. Or not. He did, however, alluding to the question perhaps, write that, "To all other matters discussed in this thread I cannot reply at this point, but I assume we (the admins) will come up with a statement of

sorts. However I do not promise anything. Just take this as a self-defence, so I don't need to be replying to 3 million 'you said you would' kinda posts if we do not post anything".

Indeed. Then he asked for twenty-four hours ... before retiring. Leaving poor Tifosi to man the fort. Tifosi, of course, who had banned our Smokin Bob earlier in the month, promptly lost his cool, telling djellison: "Thanks for giving me a reason. F**k you and I'm outta here."

His avatar then immediately reflected the fact that he was an "ex" moderator. Alas, before anyone was able to send him a PM urging him *not* to reconsider, Tifosi was back in his role as an enforcer of 'instaban'.

And that was basically the end of it before 'thd' came along and shut it all down, stating: "I'm closing the thread now. We will start a new one in a couple of days on some of the issues discussed here, with some information from the forum admins ...".

Well, there it was—not one staff member at RSC was apparently able to deny a financial link to SimBin. Which leaves two questions un-answered: if it is true, why the secrecy? And if it isn't true, why the inability to squash the rumour publicly? Those who had followed the thread had only a 'couple of days' to wait.

And then, they waited some more. A couple of days turned into a week (clearly the use of the term 'couple' at RSC is open to debate—or rather, *not*, since, when djellison opened a thread asking this very question, it resulted in mickyknox being given a lifetime ban, and djellison walking away from RSC in disgust—not the first old-time member to have done that of late, to be sure, and certainly not the last) before we were finally treated to the [statement](#), by the entity known as RSC.org.

It started by saying: "No, our servers are not funded by SimBin."

Yes, only joking—here's a little of what it *did* say.

"Regarding the current server: Back in December 2004 our previous host (Boomtown.net) cancelled our hosting due to something that happened on one of our subsites. The exact reason is private between us and Boomtown and won't be discussed publicly. Because of this we incurred a downtime of about 6 weeks (IIRC). During this time a number of people and companies contacted us with offers for hosting. One of these offers was made by a very generous person who only had one condition: total anonymity. At the time this was the best out of all the offers: a decent server (back then), plenty of bandwidth, and ensured hosting for well into the future. The reason why we stay very tight-lipped about our server is very simple: total anonymity for the person paying for the server is the reason RSC actually still exists. It's the condition we operate under.

"We realize this doesn't really put an end to the rumors, and there have been plenty more of those, but you will have to live with that. We know that whoever pays for our hosting simply has nothing to do with the way the forum is run and we think that is the most important thing. You can either trust ua {soc} on that or not. If you don't that's unfortunate but it'll just have to be because this is all we are going to say on the subject."

The section that immediately intrigued those who had waited around to see it was this: "We know that *whoever pays for our hosting* simply has *nothing to do with the way the forum is run* and we *think that is the most important thing*. You can *either trust ua {sic} on that or not.*" {Our emphasis.}

So, what have we learnt? We now know that RSC's hosting is paid for by someone other than those directly involved as front-staff at RSC, and that this "person" wishes to remain, for whatever reason, anonymous.

What we also learn—and what is suggested by this strange sentence that seems to allude to it—is that this

person has, "... nothing to do with the way the forum is run". Odd statement, that. What does it imply? Does it imply, for instance, that should it become known who the mystery donor is, that it might leave some to infer that this person *would* have something to gain by having RSC run in a certain way?

A curious statement, but—they assure us—this is not the case. And what do they offer us as proof? Their trustworthiness ... So ... do we trust the current junta that runs RSC? Do we have any evidence that they may be, let's say, a little conservative with the truth?

What, for instance, would it mean should their statement—or, rather, one crucial part of their statement—be shown to be, at best, misleading?

"One of these offers was made by a very generous person who only had one condition: total anonymity. {...} The reason why we stay very tight-lipped about our server is very simple: total anonymity for the person paying for the server is the reason RSC actually still exists. It's the condition we operate under."

We, on the other hand, are operating under the belief that the above statement suggests that the "anonymous person", who came to RSC's rescue in 2004, is the self-same individual who is funding their servers to this very day. "{...} total anonymity for the person *paying* for the server {...} It's the condition we *operate* under." {our emphasis}

Can there be a doubt that this statement suggests that the two are one and the same? We don't believe so ... and, what's more, we can now reveal that this is patently *not* true.

The "anonymous person", we can confirm, no longer funds RSC's servers. And was not doing so at the time that this statement was written by the entity that is RSC.org. Which means that the statement falls rather short of Rule 4.1. Not to mention other, more common standards, such as 'truth'.

So, why does RSC.org insist their phantom donor is paying for the servers when it is not true? Why are they unable to deny any alleged financial link to SimBin? And why should that matter?

It is difficult to understand, really—if SimBin *should* turn out to have helped RSC with its costs, I doubt anyone in this community would do anything other than applaud their decision. RSC is a pillar of this community, an absolutely crucial piece of the whole ‘thing’ called sim-racing. If SimBin cared enough about this community—and, let’s face it, we’re far from their major customer base—to have aided one of our most important sites at their time of need, then kudos to them.

But the truth of the matter is—we don’t know. Yet. And I don’t think it really matters much who owns or pays for the servers. What does matter, however, is the fact that whoever wrote that statement would actually seek to mislead the community—and then, in the very same sentence in which they mislead, they would cynically ask us to trust them. Before, amazingly enough, suggesting that they may need to start a donation drive from their members! Really ... does it get any more cynical than that?

So why do RSC.org not just reveal the source of their funding? They claim it is because the person who funds them wishes to remain anonymous: But this person, whose anonymity was the sole condition for funding RSC, is no longer paying the bills. The donor is gone now. So what prohibits RSC from revealing details as to who is currently funding their servers? Or is it that they have found yet *another* anonymous donor, who also insists on anonymity as a pre-condition?

And why are they unable to clear up the whole mess with one simple statement: “Our servers were never, and are not currently, paid for by SimBin”?

Perhaps Tim Stelten or Mikkel Gram Hansen will publish that simple statement at RSC? It really isn’t that big an ask,

is it? After all, once done, all these rumours just float away into the ether. How about a—‘this is the truth, and we apologise to mickyknox for our actions, and those that published false statements will be dealt with in accordance to our own Rule 4.1.’? Or how about, while they’re at it, an apology to the community as well, for that misleading statement—whether it was intentional or otherwise.

It would certainly be in RSC’s interests to open-up their secrets to the cold light of day at this point, since any further attempts at obfuscation will result solely in them digging an even deeper hole than the one they find themselves in at present. And then, rather than wonder why RSC never admitted the truth (which isn’t so bad, is it?), people will begin wondering what else they’re hiding. That’s the nature of secrets, isn’t it?

Sadly, one suspects that whoever is calling the shots at RSC these days will merely continue deflecting direct questions with half-truths, spin, and libelous attacks. It seems *that*—and banning and otherwise harassing members—is about all this lot is good at.

“We dance round in a ring and suppose, While the secret sits in the middle and knows,” wrote Robert Frost. And so it is. But secrets will always be revealed: Otherwise they would not be secrets—they would be unknowns. But before we get into a Don Rumsfeld world of known unknowns, we’d best leave this whole debate to the wind ... because whatever the truth, the more you poke around into the current affairs of RSC, the more you realize how sim-racing’s jewel is being slowly chipped away into tiny fragments, and it is only a matter of time before the whole diamond collapses under the burdensome weight of those entrusted by this community to keep it safe.

And that is a loss to all of us.

“RSC RULE 4.1 - Any content that is false {...} is not permitted.”

SimBin were contacted and asked whether they funded RSC’s servers. They did not respond to our request.

NEWS

Roush Racing And John Henry In “Discussions”

AUTOSIMSPORT

Reports in various [outlets](#) have suggested that [iRacing.com](#)’s owner, John Henry, has been in negotiation with [Roush Racing](#) over the course of the summer. At stake is a share in a racing team that competes in all three of NASCAR’s series. And while hardly any media outlets have made mention of Henry’s sim-racing connection, it would be a brave man to bet that a part-ownership of a NASCAR team will not result in some sort of spin-off in Dave Kaemmer’s up-coming simulator.

NASCAR Sim-Racing News: NAWSCAR Mods Release Dates Set

James MacKinnon

Public Track Pack (PTP) Released Sept 4th 2006

This week, I have released the Public Track Pack (PTP). This pack supports all current NSR mods and has default pace and pits speeds as well as no added billboards: It does have the filters built-in, however, should a league wish to use these in an event, but not release a new track. This offers some flexibility to them.

This track pack also includes fixes applied by G8r (NAW_G8r AKA gator) for the Milwaukee Mile. The Milwaukee Mile released by EA did not allow pitting to work in the first pit stall, so we got this worked on by G8r, and it now functions 100 percent. Also, the Redball release made by EA did not count laps if you were running down the pits for your pit stop. We extended the pit line into the pits to count those laps as it should. This is also now a 100 percent working track.

Nextel Cup 2006 R2 Mod: Released Sept 9th 2006

This mod was only an update, mostly to the Nextel Cup 2006 mod done by JoeB. We removed the physics in the mod, and set it to the in-game physics. JoeB supplied us with updated models which we applied, and then did some driver updating and a few other items. NAWSCAR takes no credit in this mod's original development as that goes to JoeB; we just wanted to work on this to get it functioning for the community to use. This mod Supports the 2005 Cup season setups. Also, this mod installs as a 100 percent new mod in your sim, and does not overwrite anything.

GN70 (Grand Nationals 69/70) Car Mod:

This mod is soon to be released after months of work. We are just finishing-off some minor items before we release to the public. We are planning a mid-to-late September release of the mod right now, and it's a very nice mod to run. Very solid and crisp. We have had RTW, NARL and [NAWSCAR](#) doing beta testing on this mod, and we have been running more and more races together in it, and getting a lot of positive feedback.

This mod Releases with very solid base setups done by NARL. We will be including the Public Track Pack in the release of this mod for the community to reduce their need to finding and installing multiple items. The cars don't have parts falling off, but rather crunch and crinkle like they would have back in the day. Also, they are locked at 7,000 RPM as the engine output back in the day was within this range. The mod has been tested solely without assists in NSR, and is truly amazing. We have done pit signs for every car, and we had pit-boxes done, but are reverting them back to defaults as to ensure the quality frame rates. Also, this mod will feature amazing 3D renders done by ZZ3Malibu of NAWSCAR. He did an outstanding job on this.

Thanks for this mod goes out to Callihan, for obtaining permission from the USPits to allow us to release the mod in NSR, TheUSPits for allowing NAWSCAR to port this awesome mod they did for N2003 into NSR, JoeB for doing the porting from N2003 to NSR for NAWSCAR, ZZ3Malibu/FlyerDX for awesome renders in the cars, NARL for the smoking setups, RTW for feedback on top-end performance issues such as not having a limit applied to RPM output, and finally, NARL/RTW/NAWSCAR for the beta testing and quality assurance.

Lastly, I would like to have this mod dedicated to Dave (PsychoSix) of NAWSCAR who recently passed away from cancer at the young age of nineteen. Psychosix was instrumental in getting NAWSCAR where it is today by helping administrate the league during times when we had admin-level issues. He was a great kid and NAWSCAR is lost without him. We wish his family the best, and Psycho will never be forgotten by NAWSCAR or the NSR community in which he spent so many hours of each day sharing his enthusiasm and involvement.

{AUTOSIMSPORT extends its condolences—Bob Simmerman}

Trucks 2006/2007 Mod

We are not sure if we will release this in 2006 or 2007, but this mod is almost done. It is planned for release in late October 2006, but that might be held up a little to complete all parts of the mod and ensure quality. The mod uses the rFactor SRD CTS models, and was ported to NSR by JoeB for NAWSCAR to work on and release to the NSR community,

COT Mod

This is our newest venture. On the day that RPM 3D Inc. released this mod for rFactor,—on which they did a smoking job—I contacted Justin of RPM 3d Inc. asking for permission to have this ported to NSR. Justin was very willing and open

to have that done. JoeB has ported this mod to NAWSCAR, and we have a planned release date of late 2006 to early 2007. These dates are soft dates as again, quality releases are our goal and the great thing is, the release by RPM 3d Inc. is amazing and will make the quality part very simple as joeB did an amazing job once again on the port.

Holy Mowly! It's The Mower Mod

Bob Simmerman

With the seeds of creation resembling those associated with the real [Lawn Mower Racing series](#)—an April fools joke—the Mower Mod has gone from tongue-in-cheek to one of the most popular rFactor mods to date. With over 8,000 downloads shortly after release, the crowds have spoken, and the message is clear—give us our mowers!

But this is no joke. The real series features mowers capable of eighty-plus miles per hour—though they rarely go that fast on a track—which, on a lawnmower, really is no laughing matter. If you can fall down in the bathtub and crack your skull open in a million places, Lord only knows what a toss off (ahem ...) would do to someone at forty miles per hour on a race-built lawnmower. Fortunately, there is a sanctioning body that appears to be concerned with the safety of the drivers, and spectators, and mower racing—when properly approached—poses no more danger than any other form of racing. True, lawn mower racing is a bit of an oddity, but since coming to this country in a serious manner from across the pond around 1991, it has taken off and become the true grass roots racing movement in America, a space once reserved for the local Friday night race track or drag strip.

Like many of you, I have been following the development of the mower mod for rFactor, and was able to recently have a few words with Brian Zerkel, aka Tundra(Schumacher), to get some of the green and dirty lowdown on this burgeoning—but not by any means new—phenomenon. First thing I needed to know—*why the mower mod?*



"It actually started a couple of years ago as an N2003 April Fool's joke at the Us Pits' forum," says Brian, with a completely straight face. "What convinced me to make it a reality was the number of angry and disappointed PMs I received when they realized it wasn't a real mod. As far as the history goes, some work was done on the original version for N2003, but it was dropped when the iRacing fiasco developed."

Angry PM's? Well, when that starts to happen, you are either the editor of AUTOSIMSPORT, or a mod maker who some would feel is toying with the delicate emotions of the community—give us the mower, damnit!

Brian—along with a community of 'names' from the modding world—then spent nearly ten months in the creation in what is quite possibly the most unique and fun mod for rFactor to date. Just who are the 'names' you ask? A good question, and one that I posed to Brian who informed me that, among others, some of the major players in the mod were, "... C-one, TmCarthur, Rusty2b, DALum, Ian H, tats, madcowie, DDawg, willie64, dutch, motorfx, DT99, tigger76, DaveP064, free67, plus a few others had a hand in it. A great group of people, and without them, it would have never happened."



An impressive list, for sure, and one that lets us know just how serious this ultimately turned into. As Brian put it, it is easier to list who wasn't involved!

But what of the popularity? 8,000 downloads is some serious action, and I wondered around the grass clippings just why this thing is so sought after ...

"Well, some of the comments about the mod during the time we were making it did make me question our madness at times, but I never expected the download numbers it has gotten," states Brian, who goes on to tell me that, "...considering a fair chunk of the community that has at least tried it, and the lack of general comments either way on it, makes me think it must be rFactor's guilty pleasure mod. I'd imagine those who have it only play it late at night, with all the lights turned out. I believe we did capture riding lawnmower physics quite well, and we're probably some of the first to do that. *From scratch.*"

Impressive, indeed. The late night guilt mod! We can already imagine Team Redline with Dom and Greger riding high on the mowers! But the mod was not free from its own share of troubles during the

creation, and final release—in fact, the mod was being created with full permission as given by the very sanctioning body it chose to emulate—the USLMRA.

But it turned out that what started as an April's fools joke was actually, little to Brian's knowledge, a commercial product lurking in the background. As Brian puts it—"One of my mod team members races in the USLMRA and had the chance to play Vivendi eV's USLMRA sim at Mansfield recently. He found it a fun game (has no online though) and said the physics reminded him of some of our early betas. I'll probably pick up a copy myself just to see how they went about it. As far as affecting us, it did greatly. Originally, this was to be a USLMRA mod with their full permission. Unfortunately, them entering into the contract with eV put an end to all that."

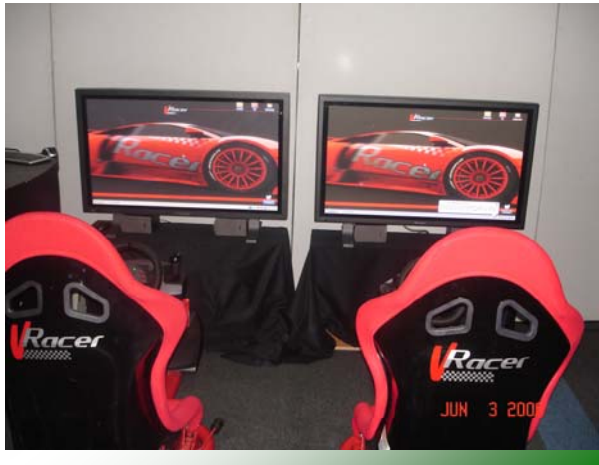
Brian, however, is not daunted—not only is work on the Lawnmower Mod continuing full steam ahead, but there is already talk, and a screenshot or two, of a new mod based on the Dodge Caliber SRT.

So what more can we expect from the Lawnmower mod? "I would like to fix the slight dropping problem it has in 1,150, so there might possibly be an update for that. As far as messing with the actual mod itself, I don't think it needs any digitized Banthas or Stormtroopers added! As far as other mods, we currently have a [Dodge Caliber SRT](#) mod in progress, and a 1960s [USAC](#) dirt mod planned. The Caliber mod is going well, and I think it will make for a fun series. We hope to have the R/T model included as well. The USAC mod should turn out be something special. We're working with TeamPlayers on this one, and hope to work with them on more mods in the future."

So there it is: The troubled history of Brian's mower mod—from canned N2003 mod to an almost licensed sim—has a happy ending thanks to Brian's endurance and perseverance.

GPLegacy Argentina Pays Tribute To Legendary Driver Jose Froilan Gonzalez

Bruno Martín, Translation and Introduction by Sergio Bustamante



Sim-racing received high praise in the historic 'Froilan Gonzalez Homage Race' in Argentina thanks to VRacer and Bruno Martín. V-Racer and [GPLegacy](#) have been working together for quite some time, and the synergy has been fantastic. Bruno is a natural born leader who shares the passion for motor-sports and the will to take sim-racing to higher levels. His first event was certainly a remarkable accomplishment for sim-racing, and we're proud to be working together.

Logitech, GPLegacy's ally, also received high commendations in [Argentina](#) thanks to V-Racer, along with Simbin's GTR simulator, boosting expectation for the FILSCA GTR2 World championship that is been promoted by GPLegacy in Latin America. This is definitely one of the moments where GPLegacy collaborators, founders, and friends can feel proud of sim-racing, and the team that's been steadily growing for one full year now.



V-Racer gear at the Tribute Race (left) for legendary GP driver Froilan Gonzalez (above).

"I was a nervous wreck, about 15 minutes before the race start, I couldn't hold any longer and I rushed to the restrooms, I entered the first door I found. I didn't even get to read the word 'Ladies', I just stood there, sitting down for a long time, all because of the nervousness. The British ladies should have thought that the lady sitting there wasn't exactly feminine. You couldn't possibly imagine their faces when they saw me come out of the bathroom."

This is just one anecdote that legendary driver Froilan Gonzalez shared about the Silverstone Grand Prix, his first victory for Ferrari in Formula 1.

Argentine motor-sports rendered homage to one of its best representatives, Jose Froilan Gonzalez, on June 4, 2006. About 50,000 people attended the event at the Oscar Alfredo Galvez racetrack in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where they enjoyed a total motor-sports celebration with one of its most popular classes, the TC2000.

The event's VIP lounge certainly lived up to its name; Daniel Scioli, Argentina's Vice President, driver Jorge

Cupeiro, and current motor-sport personalities mingled with football players like Kili Gonzalez, Javier Zanetti, and Juan Sebastian Verón. The item that caught the attention of everyone, however, were the V-Racer simulators.

V-Racer, alongside GPLegacy, are devoted to the organization of exhibition events at the top levels in Latin America, bringing accurate and professional sim-racing closer to real motor-sports. GTR was the simulator of choice for this occasion, running seamlessly with [V-Racer](#) Raceframes, which received high-praise at the event.

FILSCA GTR2 World Championship—Expectation Growing In Latin America

By Marcelo Lagos, GPLegacy International

With a quiet anticipation, people in Latin America are getting the itch for the FILSCA GTR2 World Championship as promotion begins to intensify over the following weeks.

With this announcement in Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, and now Chile, which is very interested in starting the activities of GPLegacy Chile, it is anticipated that the championship will reach a wide audience, leading to some very tough competition for the preliminaries where country's will select their representatives.

GPLegacy Mexico's website has been launched, coinciding with GPLegacy Argentina's continued growth thanks to the leadership of VRacer's Bruno Martín. Brazil will receive an invitation with the major exponent of sim-racing in Brazil, and we hope to announce something soon. For our part, we can tell that people in Chile are becoming more and more interested in Online Championships.

It brings a big smile to say that [e-sportracing](#) will begin activities quietly, but focused, for the promotion of this very promising championship, and we hope to bring more news as days go by.

The Ball In BRD's Court

T1

Jon Denton and Lx Martini spend some quality time along with BallRacing Developments who have been at the cutting-edge of hardware developments for over a decade. With sim-racing's flawed diamond in their hands—nKPRO—what does the future hold for sim-racing's most celebrated hardware manufacturer?

JonDenton

LxMartini





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[BallRacing Developments Ltd.](#), a British company based just outside of Reigate, Surrey, opened its doors in 1994 with the aim of, “developing high-quality steering wheels and pedal control systems for the PC”. The GP500—their first development—was one of “the very first driving control sets ever created for the PC” and, since then, BRD have gone on to create some of the most sought-after pedals and wheel sets in sim-racing history. At the same time, they have also been focusing on the “real-world application of simulation for training and design”.

BallRacing Developments {BRD} claim to be the first company to have inserted these controls into actual race cars, and, from there, the company has enjoyed successful partnerships with many real-world teams for promotional and exhibition purposes. But whilst their focus has been increasingly aimed toward the business-to-business arena in recent years, BRD continue to see their consumer-base as a key element in their overall strategy. BRD's pedals have long set the standard to which all others are judged, and they enjoy active partnerships with many in the sim-racing scene (sponsors of Team Redline, for instance), while their performance pedals power the best sim-racers on the planet.

In a bid to continue their dominance of high-end sports gear for sim-racing, BRD will soon launch their delayed Speed 7 wheels—the last word, by all accounts, on what can be done with current hardware technology.

But what has really been the most under-reported sim-story of the year is BRD's newly formed partnership with Stefano Casillo and his development team at Kunos

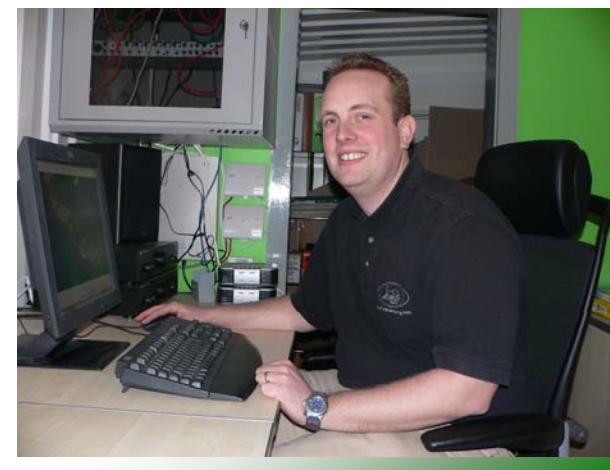
Simulazioni, a move which has brought nKPRO's magnificent, if flawed, software straight into BRD's lap.

In sim-racing terms, this is kind of like Iran getting a nuclear physicist along with a nuclear bomb, all in one package. Potentially explosive, and the reverberations are sure to be felt for a long time to come.

nKPRO, it is true, is a bit like an Alfa Romeo from the 1970s—when it goes, it goes like stink, but most of the time it's just stuttering along waiting for the next drama—but it is also, in the opinion of many who are in a position to know, the most authentic simulator currently available for the consumer market. Couple that with BRD's decade-long experience in the real-world of motor-sports, along with their contacts providing valid data for nKPRO—and you begin to get a glimpse of the full potential of what the BRD and nKPRO partnership will mean in the very near future.

In order to find out more, we had the opportunity of Skypeing with BRD's Managing Director Nik Ball, along with Creative Director Tim Ball, and we started by asking them how they see sim-racing developing, both for BRD, and for the market in general, and whether they feel there is any growth in the industry.

“I think I would say it is yes and no,” replies Nik, “in the sense that the sim-racing market *is* growing, but I don't know if it is necessarily the way we would like to see it growing. We couple two markets—BRD has business-to-business sales, and business-to-consumer sales and, that being the case, the business-to-business side—which has funded the majority of the things we do, like consumer products which have been funded off the back of professional work—is growing at the moment.



Nik Ball, MD of BRD

“This doesn't say that the consumer isn't important to us,” he adds, “they *are* very important to us, but to justify investments in product development—and the next generation of technology—we have to fund that off the back of our professional work, because it would be unrealistic to be able to do it just from consumer sales.”

This year, indeed, has been something of a watershed one for BRD: An official supplier to the Williams F1 Team, the imminent launch of their flagship Speed 7 wheels, their first foray into the world of software development, coupled with their laser track scanning technology—all have conspired, if that is the correct word, to place BRD in the rather enviable position of being, quite possibly, at the very leading edge of the sim-racing world, both in terms of hardware and software, as well as consumer-side and business-side.



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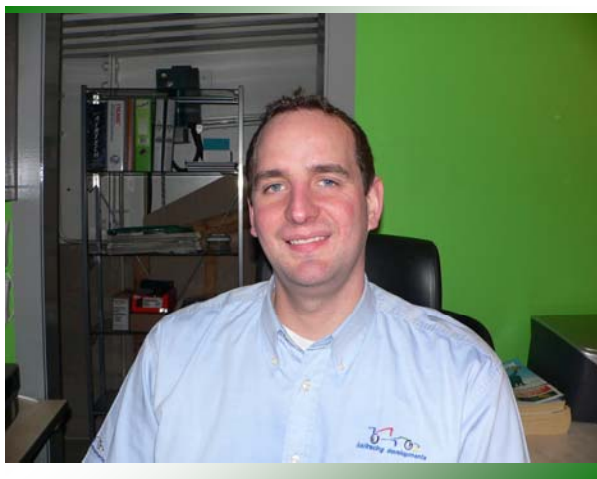


"We have a good synergy between business models," Nik confirms, "but this year particularly is the year that we are starting to see pro race-driver training using simulation equipment happening. So I think we are just at the start of this—we are at the start of a new industry opening up ..."

What becomes clear within minutes of speaking to Nik and Tim is that their vision for sim-racing is one that is shared by many of the big-hitters in the sim-racing world, particularly at iRacing.com: That is, finding ways to subvert sim-racing's stigma as 'video-games', and finding solutions that will see the sport validated by real-world motor-sports. Indeed, this validation—from real to cyber—is precisely that which they see as holding *the* key to unlocking the potential of the sport.

For BRD, this development is already well underway, particularly in their business sales side, and that is what Nik refers to as, "the complete package—that is, software and hardware, perfectly integrated, to allow simulators to perform as training tools for both race drivers and, more crucially, the engineers of real-world race teams".

Tim explains that, while, "it's fantastic to have a wonderful physics engine, if you can't actually *feel* it, and if it can't give you an understanding, from a racing drivers' point of view, there is no value in it whatsoever—it looks nice, and it may *be* nice, but basically, one plus one actually gives you more than two in context of software and hardware—more than the sum of their parts, in other words."



Tim Ball, BRD's Creative Director

All of which, then, explains their interest in, and current partnership with, nKPRO. Whilst we cannot divulge the exact details of this partnership, suffice it to say that many of the rumours that have been floating about are, indeed, correct. This is more than just a partnership in name—this promises to be an active working relationship in both the consumer and business-to-business side of BRD that will see the company's hardware and nKPRO's software merge seamlessly into areas which will promote sim-racing as a realistic—and useful—tool for real-world motor-sports.

"We see it as a natural progression," Nik explains, "which means, of course, that you have to work in

close partnership with software developers. We've had great relationships over the years—and still do—with software houses, but there's nothing like being able to work with a team such as nKPRO to help design software to meet your specific requirements. Most software companies have their own agendas to meet; they have the publishing house demanding certain amount of sales to a certain product sector, for instance, and that has limited them in the type of track or car they could develop. For us to continue in our professional field, where we are working in something of a niche market, it is very important that we develop specific pieces of software to meet our clients' needs. That is why, for us, it is very important that hardware and software technology continues to move along on both fronts."

BRD enjoys technical relationships with many top-line teams, and we asked whether they could share any anecdotal evidence as to how sim-racing and real-world racing is converging. Because it is here, in this convergence, that BRD see sim-racing's future; sim-racing's acceptance in the real-world of motor-sports as, for instance, a training tool, will validate the sport to those who have not yet realized that riding in a pretty-convincing Formula One car—on an razor-accurate track—is now within their reach. Once validated, the sport—no longer a video game for pimpled-kids with girlfriend issues—will expand into the market that both BRD and iRacing.com believe is sim-racing's natural market: Motor-racing fans from around the world.



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"This year we launched our BRD Pro Race Trainer," Nik explains. "This was a product that has really evolved because of the demand for this whole race-driver training area. This was a product we wanted to launch with everything tied together—so when we had that launch at Autosport at the beginning of the year, we had a lot of interest from a number of different drivers—from the more junior formulas like Formula BMW, up to GT-based classes—and that was the kind of response we were looking for. It was very encouraging. We have had other drivers using our equipment, like our Formula One cars—and Formula One drivers through to NASCAR drivers in the U.S.—but they use it in different forms; some just used the controls with different pieces of software, some have just used other pieces of software. It's been a kind of mix-and-match market, which, as far as we are concerned, is far from satisfactory. We plan to produce a complete package, in which we have complete control over the software and hardware technology to ensure that what we produce will be the most effective driver-training tool available."

In other words, BRD's hardware and software will be purpose-built to fulfill specific training functions for specific teams and drivers. A tool on the motor-sports market which will, at the same time, be a component of the sport that is sim-racing. This is the kind of validation that is required should sim-racing wish to capture the 'right' market, and it is perhaps what iRacing.com's Dave Kaemmer was alluding to when he said those now infamous words: *"The real problem is that we're reaching the wrong customers. If Papyrus were to have dumbed down the*

experience in order to make a console game, they would have had no competitive advantage."

"Just to verify," Tim says, "we had one of the GP2 teams—one of their engineers came down—they wanted to look at the Pro Race Trainer, and some of the nKPRO coding, and they were very impressed. They could see the value straight away, of things like the narrowing down of track-testing time, and getting their driver right on top of his game before he enters the race—even down to training engineers as well, they could see that there was real value in simulation now, and they really do see the future of simulation in the future of motor-sport."

"We have just had feedback from one of the Formula One drivers," Nik adds, "no names, obviously, but this is just to say that even we didn't think it would get up to that level that quick, but it already is permeating that far. One of the drivers we can mention is Oliver Jarvis—Autosport's Young Driver of the Year—he came down, and was very impressed by the level of what he can do with it—even to the extent that, even though we haven't got the track to the level where we want it to be, he was able to see its merits. For instance, in the higher level of concentration required for the jump from one formula to the next because obviously your races are much longer, and the actual degree of concentration is that much higher, and you need to maintain it for longer, so that alone is such a useful tool for drivers like him."

With the link between sim-racing as a training tool in the real-world, to sim-racing's validation as a bone-fide sport as a by-product of this, we were curious to know

how—or rather, in what ways—is BRD's equipment being used at the moment by both teams and drivers.

"Before, they used to look at PlayStation games," says Nik, "I know Jacques Villeneuve used to do that to get an understanding of the tracks—I was speaking to someone about that the other day—but now, it's much more about how the car feels, getting concentration levels up, hand-to-eye co-ordination, scenarios with some overtaking spells, training a driver how to overtake at the right points on the track. All these types of things are now coming to the forefront. Some of the race teams are now looking at using simulation, and one of the Formula One teams, when we went down to see them, showed us how they use their simulation software to basically set their car up to such a level that the engineers at the track only have to make minor changes."

"What is interesting," Tim says, "is that this team test all their wiring looms off the simulator. It was being heavily used by the engineering department as part of their testing of the actual hardware of the vehicle. Even things like the engine management system is a physical item located within the simulator, so you can imagine how simulation is becoming a key piece of the equipment for optimising car setups and other things."

The encroachment of the simulated into the real-world, both for drivers and engineers, will result, BRD believe, in the validation that will allow sim-racing to be taken not as a sub-form of 'online video-game', but as an indispensable tool for performance enhancement in the real-world of motor-racing.



Tim Ball testing the real-deal ...

BRD, in order to survive, and to grow commercially, have had to embrace change over the last decade, and this year has seen them, once again, having to find new ways of evolving in what is a changing (and therefore developing) market. We asked them how they adapted—and what their vision is for the company going forward.

"The way we're re-structuring the company at the moment," Nik explains, "is to have Tim heading up the consumer division. Because it is such a critical area of the business, we needed to put someone in there who is totally dedicated to that arena, so he's not being pulled off into every job—especially the professional applications. This restructuring reflects the importance of the sim-consumer to us.

"As for the vision for the business as a whole," he continues, "it remains what it has been from the very beginning, which is, to make motor-sport accessible to everybody. That encompasses a lot of what we're trying to achieve—our business-to-business angle is seeking to take sim-racing, and assimilated racing technology, and making it credible. We want both drivers and sim-racers to say, 'Hey, you really *can* train with it; it is a proper

sport'. The consumer side is really about—as I have said—making motor-sports accessible, providing equipment and technology that is as realistic as we can make it, and thereby hopefully opening the doors for a wider audience. We believe this is the most cost-effective model of allowing people to get racing."

Tim agrees, adding that, "we want to take simulation and turn it into an actual sport, which is why our consumer wheels are a little more expensive, but then the tech' that is in them makes them more expensive. It's like, say, golf—if you want to go out and play a serious game, you need a set of clubs that might cost serious money. We believe the high-quality of our wheels and pedals raises the actual perception of the sport itself. What we want to do is produce the equipment that allows raises peoples' perception of sim-racing as a sport rather than a game, and that was what Nik was saying about how the business side of BRD is actually trying to make this sport credible in the eyes of the real motor-sport industry, so peoples' perceptions of simulation start to change."

There are many who are attempting this very thing, most notable among them, iRacing.com, who seek to mesh the real and the cyber. How do BRD see this happening, in real terms?

"I think the reality is that the motoring press has featured sim-racing, but—I believe that most people don't really much know about it," explains Nik. "It still has an internet gaming sort of banner to it. We're trying to shift it from that. In this last week, I have been discussing with the MotorSport Industry Association ways in which we can work together to raise the level of education and understanding in this area. It's so much more than people racing online—it's actually using simulation-racing technology to take sim-racing to increasingly new levels so that ultimately it becomes a sport in its own right. That is why we are

working with the teams and trying to raise that understanding—people just simply don't know what you can do, it's still a minority of people that understand what sim-racing is all about."

Speaking to most of our readers, of course, is selling the already sold—sim-racing's use by real-world drivers, especially, is both well-known and well-documented. But while there are glimmers, like this month's sim-racing related cover-article in 'NASCAR Illustrated', the road ahead—the road to acceptance as a sport—seems a very difficult one, as it involves the dismantling of the stigma of 'games' and assigning to sim-racing a new mantle, that of a sport that sits comfortably with its real-world counterpart.

"It is difficult," Tim acknowledges, "BRD have been working with the marketing type of companies, and with the marketing side of motor-racing teams, and it is only in the last year that we have started to get into the engineering side of the Formula One companies, and other race teams, and *that* is where the perception starts to change. Crucial to it all is the development of our track-scanning technology, part of which is patented, because the teams and sim-racers alike can see how it is possible to measurably improve their driving skills on actual tracks. It is largely in this way that sim-racing will become validated as a sport."

BRD, market-leaders for a decade, are not only seeing this development take place first-hand, they are actively leading the development. From what was a marketing gimmick to what is becoming an enhancement tool for real-world motor-racing, sim-racing is evolving. And as more and more teams and drivers begin to rely on sim-racing and its related products for performance, so the overall nature of sim-racing itself begins to alter. When traditional motor-sports media report that teams are winning races because they have inch-perfect simulators at their base

on which they can train, so the average Joe will realize that he, too, can race a NASCAR. And the validation—that the NASCAR is authentic and ‘real’—comes from the fact that the ‘real’ guys use it to find an advantage.

This is not merely a shift for its own sake—or for the egos of those involved: What is at stake are the literally millions of motor-racing fans who are, each and every one, a potential customer for software and hardware producers alike. Take away the stigma and replace it as an ‘F1-trainer’, and suddenly you appeal to an entire segment of the market who have no idea this kind of simulation even exists, nor that one can get into it for what it would cost to spend one weekend running around in an old beat-up sportscar.

With that in mind, and knowing that BRD have access to many Formula One teams, we asked what the major differences are between the simulators used behind the scenes by real teams, and those used by the average sim-racer.

“They’re pretty close,” replies Tim. “The difference is, they have real-world validated models—they have three high-end PCs doing a different part of the simulation, as it were, and they will run up to ten megahertz. They can actually bolt their engine management system straight in, so they know a lot of their values are real-world values, and are validated, whereas more of the stuff that is out there in the sim-racing industry is not highly validated. But it is getting there, it is not a long way off, and with the invention of these physics cards and things, the physics engines will be able to run a lot faster, and be able to process a lot more data.”

“It’s fair to say,” adds Nik, “that the graphics were not as good compared to what we are running, or the best stuff on the market—anything from rFactor to nKPRO, and some of these other ones: On a decent spec’ machine, the graphics are better. But as Tim said, yes, they {the teams} have broken it down into multiple sub-systems where one is solving physics, the other solving graphics, and things like that. But technology moves so fast. I would say that what they are

running is visually inferior. However, in regards to the overall performance of the vehicle, that is obviously going to be very accurate, so they are able to validate it. I would say that where we are at the moment—because of the expertise of Stefano Casillo and his team—we have car models that *are* validated. We have had drivers who have compared different versions of software, and in nKPRO, they appreciated that the ‘feel’ was right. And they were actually able to engage with the software. So we are confident that we are moving in the right direction.”

“We had one of the drivers testing the nKPRO F3 car,” says Tim, “and another F3 car from a different sim, and straight away he picked up on the nKPRO being the better version, in that he felt that car was right underneath him, rather than there being a response delay sometimes ...”

“It’s one of those things with racing drivers,” Nik elaborates. “It’s funny how they seem to naturally slot into certain bits of software, and cars over others—I know Stefano has done a lot of work with some of the Italian F3 teams for some of his models.” Nik believes that this research has helped nKPRO’s F3 models, while, when the drivers climbed behind the, “Formula Ford models, they say they are not quite right, because there hasn’t been the validation work there. They really can tell the difference, even with the same piece of software, with the way the cars handles”.

The potential, then, is clear: With the reality of Stefano now having access to real-world teams in the highest echelons of international motor-sport, the spin-off for BRD’s consumers (read nKPRO customers)—the validation, as they refer to it, the authenticity of the software—becomes that much more intense. If nKPRO was this good with Stefano’s ad-hoc relationship with F3, imagine what it will be like once he has unfettered access to the data of those self-same teams ... not to mention other, rather more famous ones.



Tim in a Formula Ford ...

We asked them what BRD’s links were—and are—with motor-racing teams, and how they have managed to create such a successful business focusing on this market.

“Primarily,” explains Nik, “the involvement of brand promotion has been a lot of our business-to-business exercise over the last ten or twelve years with companies like Toyota and McLaren. Many such companies that we have worked with in this area have wanted to provide a link between the team, sponsors, Formula One fan, and general consumers. For example, someone like Panasonic, who have that nice logo on the side of the Toyota car, want to promote their link to Formula One at a trade show to demonstrate, by association, the advanced technological level of their products. How do they best go about it? What better way than by the use of a simulator which links directly and powerfully to Formula One, and all it represents. It is so much more than simply having a logo on the side of a car.”

Indeed, this adaptation to change—where global companies are starting to find innovative ways to get back ‘in touch’ with their consumers and customers—is very much part of the overall corporate strategy of late, and is well documented by Simon Caulkin, in the September Issue

of 'World Business' that includes a fascinating look at Toyota's process.

This aspect of the business side of BRD has them investigating new ideas, but much of what they are planning in the near future is not, at the moment, something AUTOSIMSPORT can report on: However, BRD are adamant that the sport of sim-racing is poised to take a major step in its evolution, that is, from a game to a sport.

"Take a sport like football," says Nik, "which has a huge fan-base like Formula One. You can watch football on TV, or you go down the pub, and you can actually participate in the sport as well—you can kick a football round the park, or join your local team, or whatever. With motor-sport, you can't do that—you can watch Formula One, and that's it—unless you're someone who is fortunate enough to have thousands of pounds to buy a car and go round the race track. So what we have is literally millions of people around the world who are not able to pursue their interest in Formula One in the way that is possible in virtually every other sport. Once again, through simulation, we want to make Formula One, and motor-sport at large, accessible to everyone."

With Formula One being the ultimate prize of validation, we asked whether it was now a situation of pay-to-punt, or whether Formula One teams were genuinely interested in what simulation could do for their performance on-track.

"We knew that our simulators would appeal within the lower leagues," says Nik, "but what has amazed me is the interest we've had from Formula One. There are a number of other things that are kicking off, and sim-racing is very much part of it. But this (sim-racing) is an industry in its own right which we want to take to the next level. Our intention is not to work on the professional side and ignore the consumer base, but rather, to ensure that the results of our ever-developing technology in the professional driver field are incorporated in the production of our sim-racer products. That kind of spin-off is at the core of what we are doing here at BRD."



One such spin-off, of course, is the Speed 7 wheel. The last word in the sim-racer's most-wanted wheel, it has now been delayed for over a year. But for those with orders already in—and for those that have been saving up—it's about time to break open the piggy.

BRD SPEED 7

BRD's much touted Speed 7 has yet to be produced commercially—we asked what has caused of the year-long delay, and when can we start seeing delivery?

"Primarily," replies Tim, "the delay has been down to trying to get the business as a whole sorted out, so we had to put the Speed 7, as it were, 'in delay' until we sorted out the whole BRD business. That was at the start of the year. We then got into some problems with the actual manufacturing of a few components and things, and also the electronics. We have been sorting out a few bugs which took a bit longer than we had anticipated. We

fully recognize the disappointment, if not frustration, of sim-racers which the delay in the Speed 7 has caused, and for that we are sincerely sorry. But I do believe that we have finally overcome the problems.

"We are looking to launching the Speed7 wheel somewhere at the end of November, or early December, barring any unforeseen issues. But certainly before Christmas," confirms Tim.

"The production of equipment," explains Nik, "is well under way, as opposed to last year when we were just doing prototype production techniques. So it is well advanced, and yes, we're looking at launching before Christmas. What we're looking at doing, very shortly, is to have the orders in for the first batch for delivery before Christmas."

And as for the price?

"Obviously I want to attract as many people to buy our wheels as possible," replies Tim, "and build up interest in the sport so, we're looking between £799.00 to about £1200.00 depending on what wheel you buy, because we are bringing out three wheels."

The Speed 7, of course, was only going to be available in two versions, so ... what and where has the strategy changed, and what can we expect from each of the wheels?

"The Speed 7 ST is our single turn wheel, Force-Feedback, same power as the others—that is, between six and seven Newton meters. The power has gone up since last year, and it will have the same sort of paddles as shown on the website. But," Tim adds, "we're not having a steering wheel on that one: What we're doing is, we're saying to people—there's a lot of wheels out there, you choose the one you want to put on, and we'll supply an adapter plate for it. This allows people to choose the wheel they want. I've had a lot of feedback over the year on the wheel we produced—some people love it, some people prefer other wheels—which means that, at the end of the day, I think it's better that

T1 The Ball In BRD's Court

continued

people go buy the Sparco or Momo wheel they like, and we'll bolt it on and make it fit ... so that's the ST."

Nik explains that BRD are trying to lower the entry level for the Speed 7, because, "What we don't want to do is cause people to be tied to one model with sophistications that they don't necessarily need. This means not loading up the price unnecessarily with buttons the average sim-racer is never going to use, for instance".

"It's really like creating a BMW range," Tim elaborates. "When a customer goes in to buy a BMW, he is offered a stock car, as it were, which is a good quality car, and then he decides whether he wants electric windows, and the rest of it—a lot of people don't want all this paraphernalia—they just want a good quality, solid wheel. So that, in effect, is what we are doing at BRD, which is to produce a really high-quality product, but allowing the customer to decide what add-ons he wants. That will allow us to bring the price right down, which means it will be significantly more affordable than the £950.00 previously charged.

"The next wheel," he continues, "is the Speed 7 MT—the multi-turn wheel that will allow you to adjust from 300 degrees to 1,080 degrees, a three-turn wheel, in other words. It's designed for those who like rallying, or formulas that require that sort of spin.

"The third one is the quick-release version—the one on the website—with all the buttons, switches, and so forth.

"There will also be sub-features that will be additional items, because the strength of the wheel means that it should not be bolted as a conventional wheel, but used on dedicated race frames. It is very powerful, and an Ikea desk just might get destroyed!"

"Definitely will," says Nik. "This is partly why the clamp we're going to do is extra, because we are going to do a Speed 7 race frame which has been purely designed to take this wheel. And even that race frame, as it is now, buckles a little because of the power."



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We asked them to elaborate a little further on the race frame.

"The idea," Nik explains, "is that we want to build a more cost-effective frame that is purely designed for our products, so we want to optimize a frame price to try and reflect the architecture that we've got—and then we'll be looking at our gear-box as well, which are the two key developments over the next year."

With companies like Logitech creating solid wheels for what is, comparatively speaking, much cheaper, we asked what they felt was BRD's strategy to remain competitive.

"I am always impressed by the Logitech equipment," Tim confesses. "Because what they do for that price is pretty clever, and there are some clever guys working there." Having said that, though, Tim does note that, "Although they have two motors in there {the G25}, they're probably two \$1.99 motors from China, which means they'll never be able to match the speed or torque of our wheel. From our point of view, it's great that they're in the market—in the shops—because they're seeding the market. We recognize that it is impossible for BRD to sell one hundred thousand units, but we are aiming at quality, not quantity. What's more, if we get the quality right, the quantity will eventually follow anyway. As we keep saying, we are in this business to produce control systems of the highest quality so that people can see that there is a difference, and difference is validated by their use in the real motor-sport industry, in the engineering departments of such and such a race team or whatever. As mentioned before, a lot of this has to do

with raising the credibility of simulation as a real sport as this is the long term future for this market.."

"The quality is great for what they—Logitech—are trying to achieve," says Nik. "But you're always going to be limited with your base hardware as to how far you can go. We've tried every route to try and keep costs as low as possible without reducing quality, and we've now gone as far as we can. With the motor, the gear-box, the steering shaft in there, and all the metal components that have to be machine constructed and mounted properly, not to mention the power supplies (and these are decent sized power supplies), it's just the case that you can't escape the basic cost of these factors. And then there are the electronics, which have to operate at a certain level, because, as soon as you start upping your torque levels from consumer wheel to ours, the cost goes up exponentially—this is all part of the basic core cost, and we can't reduce our wheel prices below where we are now unless the volume jumps into the tens of thousands. It's the core level cost that you can't get away from. It's the basic economics of producing a more durable and professional product—and this is proved by the fact that we have equipment being sent back to us, like old GP500 units which we began producing ten years ago, for upgrades."

So, in essence, how much does a ten-year-old wheel really cost, which is still running, as compared to one that cost a lot less—and broke down after a year or two—and never did come close to the performance of the BRD wheel or pedals?

nKPRO—A BRD Sim?

The leaders in the field of high-precision hardware acquire the full rights to what many believe to be the most authentic simulator on the market. Does it get any better than this?

"Because we are able to test software, as part of our validation process, we have taken on nKPRO as our base level software," explains Nik on why they decided to bring Stefano and his fledgling Kunos Simulazioni into the BRD brand. "We've had some race drivers coming down to us, and they turned around and said, this is awesome compared to other leading software packages some of which have been the base level of what we're using in the commercial field). To be honest, that was the thumbs-up that helped us go this route. The other thing is that Stefano and his guys are a very good team—he is working on professional development for us at the moment. He is not just a superb programmer. He is someone who has," Nik laughs, "communicating skills."

What Nik means is that, "Sometimes, you get software programmers who are extremely good, but lack the communication skills; explaining what he's doing with the software, explaining how the system works, and all that. Stefano and his team are people who are a pleasure to work with. We see them as very much an integral part of BRD in working closely together on future software development. And the fact that Stefano buys into our vision of the future is another reason why this is a really good team. So it's not just that this is, we believe, the best software available for what it is doing, it's the fact that we

have a good relationship, and he sees the market as we see it. We believe we have a long-term future together, to our mutual benefit."

Indeed, nKPRO will surely only grow in terms of its realism as it is exposed to BRD's business clients, and this will benefit the consumer—that is, the present—and future—customers of nKPRO.

"This is not a game anymore," Nik insists. "What we have is an integrated solution that is going to take sim-racing forward in a quantum leap—we're very excited—this is not to say that this sim is good or that sim is bad—all sims have their strong points, and many great guys are working behind them," but for BRD, Stefano and his team—and the code that lies behind the dirt-stained jewel that is nKPRO—is the perfect fit.

AUTOSIMSPORT, it should be said, had a not insignificant role in bringing these two parties together; or, rather, AUTOSIMSPORT's Jon Denton, in his private capacity, was instrumental in bringing nKPRO to the attention of BRD.

Contact, Nik explains, was, "initially through Jon, in the early days with his hillclimb stuff. There were potential contracts opening up, utilizing our hardware, and it blossomed from there. Our goals {nKPRO and BRD} seemed to be very similar, and it just seemed to fit together well."

Neither Nik nor Tim would go on record as to who owns the code to nKPRO.

"Basically, the bottom line is," Nik was willing to say, on record, "that while they {Kunos Simulazioni} are a stand-alone company, they are officially able to continue producing their nKPRO releases online—but because of the nature of where we're going, we're looking to see a convergence for them to be working with us as a separate development team."

"The worst case scenario for the consumer is—will the software I bought be phased out," notes Tim correctly.



"The answer is no. If anything, it is going to be enhanced by us working together. Just the fact that the software team is going to be exposed to racing teams at a much higher level means taking nKPRO to a new level; the professional contacts means that some of the new patches are going to spin-off with increased sophistication, just because of the work we're doing on the professional contracts."

"Especially in the race track development side," says Nik.

Current customers of nKPRO have had a very rough ride since the title's release in April. This magazine itself has been frequently attacked because of our involvement with nKPRO, and Kunos Simulazioni's rather, uhm, fanciful public relations machine ... that is, total silence about their product that arrived with a magnificent engine hiding under an extremely damaged body. Small things, mostly, and things that could (and should) have been fixed up in pretty short order. But weren't.

It also came with some pretty serious bugs, such as a very unpredictable online code, and, due to what many believe to be a small beta-test team, conflicts with graphics card and, should certain people be believed, even the breakdown of their shop window where customers were trying to buy the product! Add to that what amounted to zero support, and a siege mentality

that seemed to effect many of those around Stefano (who should, in fact, have been there shielding him), and what you have is the most bizarre release in sim-racing's history.

Now, almost half-a-year since its launch, word is spreading of a patch in the works, already in its second iteration. Those who know Stefano will be smiling about now, as they will know that with 'Kunos', there is no middle-gear—he's either leading the charge or he's having a nap in the shade! And at the moment, rumours suggest Stefano is in 'charge' mode, and this can only mean great news for the long suffering nKPRO fans.

AUTOSIMSPORT has been able to verify that the patch has already cured the '0km/h' bug, and that focus is now on curing instabilities, as well as bolstering up the online code. Rumour has it that, whilst things are improving, the optimum solution for this aspect has yet to be found.

We asked BRD what their involvement in nKPRO means for current customers.

"With our relationship," Nik explains, "it means that they {Kunos Simulazioni} have time to work out all these bugs. To the consumer, it will remain nKPRO."

Which is shorthand for saying that BRD accept that this is a product that must be supported, leading to the inevitable question—is there a commitment to current nKPRO customers to make it a working product?

"Definitely," says Nik. "It cannot be left as it is now. It *must* be a working product—and I know from the nKPRO guys that they are actively on it, and we can give them the time to do that financially. The online at this stage is important."

Does this mean that BRD will be offering new faces for Stefano's small but able team?

"No, Stefano will continue to work with his core team," confirms Nik. "But we are looking to bringing some people in to help develop the code, and Stefano is well aware of that."



After a decade, what was the rationale behind BRD effectively acquiring a software development team, and a simulator along with them?

"This is absolutely critical for us," Nik explains. "If you look at the professional side, our customers do not see the distinction between soft and hardware—we don't provide software solutions, so it's always been in our minds to have software in-house, and this is the most convenient time to be able to do it. This has always been in our plans—we cannot continue as a business without software, and the major contracts we are signing now are because we can offer a complete team package."

"It's like a building," explains Tim, "and you're missing a vital foundation. We've worked with software teams, and unless they are right on board, things have a habit of getting lost in translation, or things don't work out as you wanted, and that is what Stefano is on board for—he is part of the team."

We asked them whether this cuts both ways—can developments used in the professional side of their business with Formula One teams, for instance, find their way into nKPRO and, as a result, to nKPRO customers?

"When we model a Formula One car—and that has actually been done using nKPRO {AUTOSIMSPORT *might* have a little test-drive next month—Ed—you will be getting accurate knowledge, and even if we do change a few parameters and things like that, what you'll get will be very close to the real thing. We'll never be allowed to provide an exact carbon copy of any team, of

course, unless they have a specific marketing interest in doing that."

"Exactly," says Tim. "It's all to do with marketing. We're talking to some car manufacturers to allow us to release one of their cars—or all of their cars—into nKPRO, but it's all about getting that marketing angle right, and whether they feel they will derive some kind of benefit from that. And that would depend on whether nKPRO has a huge consumer base which would make it much more attractive for them. It's not impossible to do that—it's just finding the right way to do it. And certainly the tracks we create for the real-world teams we will probably release to the consumer through nKPRO."

"What you will see—if you guys come down and try the Formula One car—is that it's phenomenal—it's scary ..." adds Nik.

So the plan for nKPRO is that it will first be patched into a relatively bug-free, online capable simulator. And then what happens? Will there be further releases of nKPRO? Will we see nKPRO2, published by BRD, in competition with the big outfits like iRacing.com, and Blimey!Games, using laser-scanned tracks, and real-world data? Are BRD now officially in the software business?

"What you will see are further releases of nKPRO," says Nik, "and they will be under an nKPRO brand—and our brand will be associated with it."

Will there be track packs and extra cars for this iteration of nKPRO?

"There are track developments going on which might change some of the marketing strategies," Nik confirms. "That is purely to do with our track development side,

and how that is marketed and sold, because you could land up in an environment where we have a number of tracks and things like that, and people buy the tracks they want to use—but then we're dealing with real-world data, not fiction."

So there *is* a commitment from BRD that nKPRO customers will have a fully working simulator in the near future.

"Absolutely," Nik confirms. "What would be good is—if your article would provide [feedback](#) with bad experiences, or where customers got some clear things that do not work, we can introduce that into future working relationships—so we can build something that will be suitable. Tim is working on a common front-end and thread with people working on software and hardware, and I think we can then work at a much better level. Some of the inevitable problems, when you're working with a smaller development team, is that it limits the ability to deal with issues like patches, or the raw-end of tech' support. BRD already has a structure in place to deliver services like this and, what this means is, we can leverage this to allow Stefano and his team to be good at what they do, and us to develop a team to pick up the bits and weaknesses."

Not that we want to be stereotypical here, but what it sounds like to us is what happened to Ferrari when Jean Todt entered the scene ... and speaking of Formula One, will we see licensed content added to nKPRO going forward?

"We will have some licensed products, yes," confirms Nik. "The plan will be to have either licensed tracks or

vehicles in nKPRO. The commercial side is going to vary, so I can't be specific about which ones because that will be subject to each of those arrangements."

"It is," Tim adds, "our intention to have licensed tracks of every description."

"The plan," Nik echoes, "is to have a track database of all the major world tracks ... that is what we are aspiring to achieve."

So this places them in competition with some of the big boys—iRacing.com, ISI, and others that were once their customers—how do they see BRD's future in this arena?

"The reality is," Nik says, "that I think we can help each other, but, yes, there will be points where we will be somewhat in competition—there is no clear-cut competition though, because we are competing in different markets and different stages. But some of them," he concedes, "will overlap."

Before moving on, we thought it would be a waste not to ask about the fantasy of having a Formula One car in nKPRO. What's it like?

"You have tons and tons of grip," says Nik, "and suddenly you have no grip and you're off."

"It's an uncontrollable beast," says Tim. "Stefano put it up with no traction control, and it was impossible to drive—wheel spin in every gear, like a wild beast, you're off every corner, and you can hardly contain it on the straights, and the way it loads up the aero' package is amazing, and even the breaking away ... He's developed all those bits beautifully, he really has. When you step-up to that from the F3, it really is something else."

Will nKPRO customers ever get to see this?

Tim takes a moment before saying, "We'll probably have a variation, yes."

A variation being a generic Formula One car? For nKPRO?

"What you will see with the next patch that comes out with nKPRO," states Nik, "is that it will be issued with a licensing agreement, because, unfortunately, there are people who would otherwise rip it off. We have had problems in the past in the professional market where models that had been commissioned exclusively for us were released into the general market. That's why there will be a license agreement. It obviously won't affect the consumers' use of the software, but it will protect us."

Yes-yes, but what about the Generic GP car?

"It is possible that we will see a generic Grand Prix car, yes," says Nik.

nKPRO's future is now secure: With financial backing, real-world data and validation, and BRD's experience, current fans don't have long to wait to see their beloved (not to mention troubled) nKPRO mature and begin to seriously compete with the best sims on the market. And with the potential of BRD's business clients adding content to what is already a very impressive sim, the future for fans of nKPRO seems to be a very exciting one indeed. Oh, did we forget to mention inch-perfect tracks?

BRD's Track-Scanning Technology Headed For nKPRO?

This is clearly the next big step for sim-racing; That is, perfectly accurate tracks that will serve as training tools to professional racing. Consider, for instance, that Kubica, at the Chinese round of the Formula One World Championship, managed, in total, less than twenty laps of the track all weekend before the race started, and you begin to understand how crucial inch-perfect rendition of tracks can become in the training of race-drivers. This, in addition, is already being touted as one of the core selling points of iRacing.com's upcoming simulator. How does BRD's process work?

"Basically," Nik explains, "we go out with a team using laser scanning technology, and we take multiple scans as we go around the track, building up data, down to a couple

of millimeters of accuracy—millions and millions and millions of points, which we then use as a baseline for laying out track surfaces so that the physics model will have a much more accurate set of boundary conditions. The data is then used as a baseline for our graphic artist, and people working on the physics. It's as simple and straightforward as that," he adds.

Track scanning technology using lasers was BRD's ingenious idea—how did they come up with this solution?

"The credit comes back to Tim," says Nik, "who was working on a project back in 1994 or 1995 when we originally spoke to one Mr. Ecclestone in order to get the critical data of Formula One tracks. That venture, however, didn't progress as well as we had hoped. At that time, we were using a surveying technique as a way of providing accurate data around which we could build simulation models."

So is the process nothing more than a couple of dodgy looking geezers wondering around with a ray-gun?

"Imagine a tripod on wheels," explains Nik, and, "on top of this tripod, you have basically this laser head that rotates 180 degrees—some do 360 degree turns—which emits rapid pulses of light. As it rotates, it registers a 360 degree sphere of points—a radial footprint, in other words. This process is carried out at different, overlapping spots on the track in order to build-up a profile of the entire track. You then stitch the overlapping parts together, and you've got yourself a track."

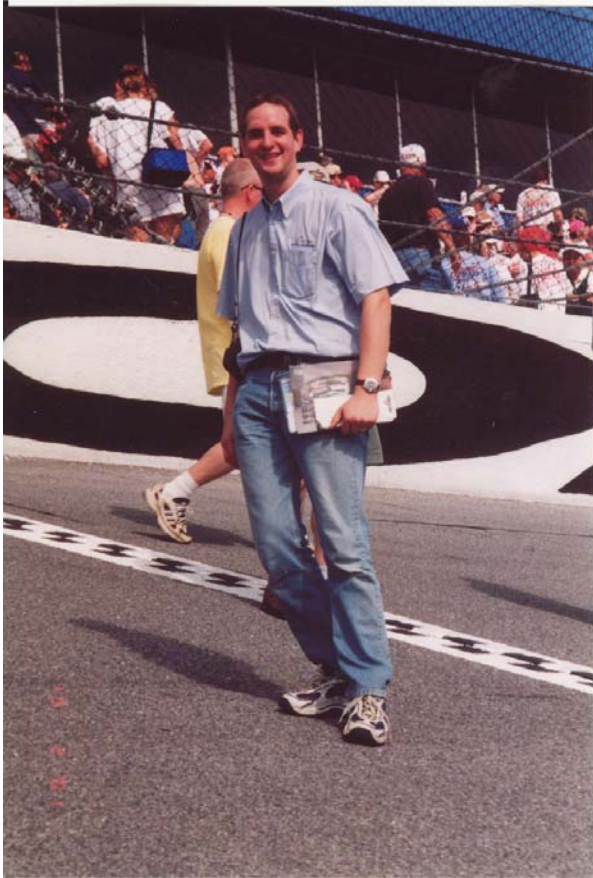
How defined is it?

"Effectively, you will get the edge of the buildings on the track, all the billboards, the tyre barriers, as well as the actual surface of the gravel trap—it'll even pick up all the surface defects. Its degree of accuracy is quite amazing."

"It'll give us real survey grade," Tim says.

Have we ever seen these tracks—in any form—in the consumer market before?

"Not yet," says Nik.



Do iRacing.com use the same solution?

"The same," says Nik. "I think we gave them the idea. We were speaking to Papyrus about three years or four years ago or so—before they broke up—and we worked with them on the project. Unfortunately, it didn't work out.

Nik continues by explaining that, whilst the process is the same, BRD have considerably refined their track technology over the interim period. "We've got not only

the latest scan data, but it is also survey grade, which we are incorporating into nKPRO. We now have something the race teams want to use."

"Because we now have a software team," Tim explains, "it means that the way we are doing it optimises solving schemes and things like that, which means we can have much more accurate tracks. Also, we can leverage the level of detail, because previously, we couldn't run very heavy models on current systems."

What about grip levels?

"You will be able to tell the surface of the track," Tim explains, "and therefore you can work out the abrasive qualities. So, yes, you will be able to apply friction coefficients through to the different stretches of track—to the point that we can see on the scan where there's tyre rubber left over from where someone's done a donut, or where they've laid the asphalt on the track badly. Interestingly, you can see all the surface depressions and so forth on our scan data which tells us that the tracks are nowhere near perfect. And we will be seeing this in nKPRO in the near future."

Much has been said—and imagined—in terms of sim-racing's slow evolution into a sport, which will mean finding new customers outside the traditional gaming platform. Dave Kaemmer alluded as much, when he suggested to Gord Goble, in his fascinating article for [gamespot](#), that, *"The computer game business is really becoming a toy business, especially with the popularity of console gaming. That's not the right market for a simulation"*.

Which is to say, sim-racing products will never enjoy the kind of commercial success they require in order to develop as long as they are targeted to 'gamers'; the real market for simulators is motor-sports fans.

A cursory look at the numbers—NASCAR being the U.S.'s biggest sport, Formula One and its hundreds of millions of fans—gives a very clear explanation as to why iRacing.com, BRD, and other big developers are actively

pursuing this market by actively promoting the real with the simulated.

In fact, the two companies—BRD and iRacing.com—when looked at from a certain perspective, are almost mirror-images of one another—BRD's hardware, and iRacing.com's alleged interest in the 301 Motion Simulator, their mutual laser scanning technology, their mutual insistence on the sporting side of sim-racing—why, even their websites seem to echo one another, BRD's being nothing other than [interactiveracing.com](#).

Synergy indeed.

And while BRD may not be ready to admit it, the future of sim-racing's sporting 'hook', when looked at from this precise moment in time, would surely be a two-horse race between them—along with their proven commercial record, and their partners such as Williams F1 and Toyota—and iRacing.com, with their proven record, their real-world licensing, and the financial backing of John Henry.

It cannot get any better than this, can it, for the average sim-racer; Stefano Casillo, with backing from BRD, versus Dave Kaemmer, with backing from John Henry. Both will be offering real-world validated simulators, both will be offering laser-scanned tracks, both enjoy active co-operation and partnerships with real-world teams. And both, it seems, are fully aware that sim-racing grows only when it is accepted as a sport.

Whatever happens next with nKPRO will give sim-racers a little peek into their future. And while the possibility of companies like BRD and iRacing.com succeeding at creating an entirely new cyber motor-sport is still open to debate, what isn't is the fact that the ride—for sim-racers everywhere—is going to be lined with some superb innovations as a result of their attempt ... just imagine nKPRO, with solid online capability, running Formula One-like cars around an inch-perfect rendition of Monza with a Speed 7 wheel ... would that be categorized as a sport? Or just plain fun!

ARCA RE/MAX Series Sanctions **Sim And** **Online Championship**

Bob Simmerman sits down with Bill Zimmerman, Co-Owner of The Sim Factory, who are, simply put, about to re-define sim-racing. Armed with an ARCA-license, real-driver beta-testing including founding member and current race-driver Ricky Sanders, an online ARCA-sanctioned fifth series that will be broadcast live, this sim is not only designed to capture the hearts of ARCA's twenty-million fans, but those of stock-car fans and sim-racers everywhere.

Bob Simmerman



ARCA Racing has done nothing except make global news this past week—not only will the ARCA RE/MAX series feature the debut of one rookie by the name of Juan Pablo Montoya (who?) come this Friday, October 6th, at the Talladega Food World 250, but the license for this series has been clinched by a development team named The Sim Factory, whose sim, based on this highly competitive stock-car series, is due out in 2007.

What makes this sim even more mouth-watering, however, is that the development talent itself is based around a current team running in the ARCA RE/MAX series. In other words, data doesn't come any more authenticated. And with an online series that will be the first officially sanctioned sim-series by a real-world body, and the possibility of the winner getting a chance to go through the fast track school in order to run in the real thing, this sim is destined to drag sim-racing into its promised land.

Bill Zimmerman, in charge of Marketing and Development for The Sim Factory, was kind enough to answer some of our questions about this new, stand-alone sim.

I started by asking him what prompted the creation of this new venture, and how they went about securing this highly sought after license for what is one of the world's premiere stock-car series.

"The development of this software comes as a result of several collaborations that led to us approaching ARCA," Bill explained. "Initially, we had been involved as a team in the ARCA RE/MAX Series, which helped open discussions with ARCA as far as the software. Obviously the NASCAR license is still unavailable, and when we looked at the available stock-car series being run, there simply was nowhere else to go besides ARCA for a solid brand name, and a highly competitive series. After becoming part of the ARCA RE/MAX Series as a team, we quickly realized that we were a part of a unique series that, in the next few years, will grow leaps and bounds. So it didn't take long to decide that we had found a home.

"It's amazing," Bill continues, "when watching an ARCA RE/MAX race, and then watching an online race, you will find so many similarities between the two. With so many



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developmental drivers and teams interweaved with the normal ARCA RE/MAX teams, it doesn't take long to see that there is a wide spectrum of experience levels and money levels on the track during a race. A far wider spectrum than you will find in the NASCAR or BUSCH series. As we all know, the biggest effect on the performance of a team is the amount of

money that team has access to. But besides the reasons for a team being slower or faster, it is the on-the-track decisions that we found so similar to that of online racing. With that being said, it was a big factor in inspiring us to look deeper into acquiring the ARCA RE/MAX Series license for the software.

"At that point," Bill continues, "we approached Daren Havens, the marketing director at ARCA, and began discussions about doing an ARCA RE/MAX Series software, and online sanctioned series. Over the course of the next eighteen race weekends, we continued our discussions, and finally inked in our three-year deal at Nashville, in mid-August. Since then, we have continued to bring in key ARCA sponsors as a part of the software, such as Hoosier Tire, Mr. Gasket, Accell, Mallory, Hurst, Landrum, and Stewart Werner. In the end, we will hopefully integrate every ARCA RE/MAX Series sponsor, and their respective brands, into the software. Each

connection we make also opens up the door for us to acquire data that can ultimately affect the realism of the software."

I asked Bill who were the key players behind the development of the sim, and were they still young enough to be recruiting any talent.

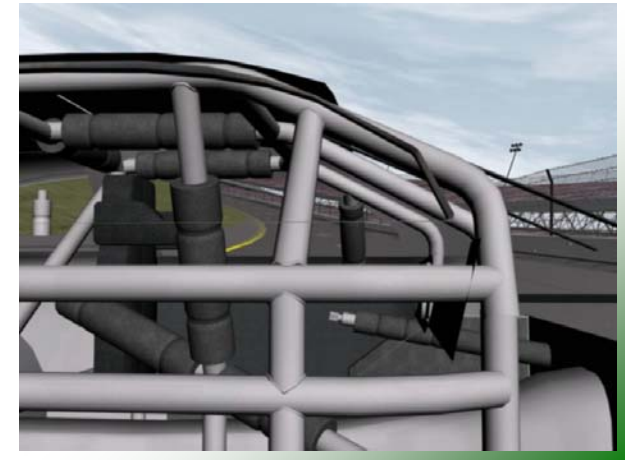
"At this point," Bill replied, "our team consists of the initial co-founders of The Sim Factory LLC, as well as several key members and strategic partners that are also working on the development of the software. Robert Couter, Nick 'Texashawk' Steelman, William 'Zippy' Zimmerman, Mark Carter, Chris Coulter, Mike Rohr, and Ricky Sanders are the co-founders of The Sim Factory, and each has their own key role in the development. Josh Buckwheat, Jason DeVriese, Brian Zberger, Justin Jacobs, and Timothy St.Jean are also part of our team, and each brings their own area of expertise to the project. For beta-testing, we have a select group of real-drivers, as well as sim drivers and/or teams.

And to the question of recruitment, Bill replies that, "Yes, as the company grows, we expect to expand the team as needed for support, development and acquisitions."

It is a difficult thing, to secure a license for a real-world series, especially one with the profile of ARCA. How difficult was it to obtain the licensing? And what, I asked, are they able to do with this licensing that would be difficult, or impossible, without it?

"Gaining the license was less difficult then it was time consuming," Bill replies. "Dealing with ARCA has always been a pleasure and not as stressful as one would imagine. The hard part was keeping the race program going, which was, at the same time, keeping us in front of ARCA. The

expenses were substantial, but when looking at the opportunity costs, it was, as our driver would say, 'a good deal'. In the end, we are very happy to have stayed focused on the license acquisition.



This is a "very-very beta" screenshot, says Bill Zimmerman

"The answer to what it provides us is simple," he continues. "Access to drivers, teams and information, premium branding, and marketability. The access to data and info from teams aids us in the physics development. The ARCA brand, with over twenty million fans, brings recognition and overall marketing ability. The fact that ARCA cars are almost identical to NASCAR also plays a key factor, as it is the second largest and second oldest series in the U.S. Our deal with ARCA also allows us the ability to market at the track for the next three years. We will be putting thousands of drivers, crew, and fans into cockpits at



every race to experience the software, and ultimately help sales. This also helps expand the simulation community and, from our experience in doing so throughout the 2006 season, it is highly effective. Our relationship with Adrenaline Computers and InVIRON Sim Devices also helps, as we have provided the opportunity to showcase our software at the highest level of detail and realism."

Sim-racing is now on the threshold of breaking into what many consider to be its target-market—real-world motor-sports fans. For this to happen, sims need to continue aligning themselves as closely as possible with the real-world data of the cars being simulated—will the ARCA sim make use of actual Series drivers?

"Absolutely. Without real-driver input, we are merely guessing, and we wouldn't be too bright in approaching a development of any sort that way," says Bill. "To start, one of our founding members, Ricky Sanders, is currently a driver in the ARCA RE/MAX Series, and has competed in NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series, Hooters Cup, NASCAR Sportsmen Series, and several other forms of racing. His experience, as well as relationships throughout the industry, opens up doors for us to gain needed information. Being a team in ARCA also helps a bit too," he adds, "as we have access to data from our cars on every track we run."

"In addition, we have spoke to over thirty drivers that are ARCA RE/MAX regulars, and have several working with us on the development team. Currently, Justin Allgaier, Jeremy Clements, and Kevin Swindell are our closest contacts ... however, several others are there for us if we need them."

I ask him when we can expect a first-release, and whether this is a one-off creation for the development house, or whether they have plans to follow in the footsteps of Henrik Roos' SimBin.

"Our initial release will be highly realistic in its physics, and will be integrated with league compatible features such as scoring and broadcasting modules, as well as statistical tracking. It will have the 2006 roster integrated with all team cars and schemes, and will have both single-player and multi-player capabilities. Overall, we will be continually upgrading the software for the next three years, as that is the length of our contract with ARCA."

And as to the question of whether they are now full-blown players in the sim-development arena, the answer, Bill says, is, "Yes, we do have plans for future software. The Sim Factory is planning to continue to develop other series of racing, and also flight software, as well as utilities that can offer more complex abilities within each area of simulation."

Des an official license, I ask Bill, mean the possibility for the Holy Grail of sim-racing—an officially sanctioned ARCA online event?. The answer knocked me off my chair!

"We will be running an online series starting in February of 2007 that is sanctioned as the fifth series in ARCA," Bill confirms. "Drivers and Teams will compete for points in a highly complex atmosphere, and each race will be broadcasted online for spectators to watch. We will have product and cash prizes for races, and the points championship, and we are hoping to put the winning driver of the 2007 ARCA RE/MAX Series Online through the fast track school to see how he or she fares in a real car. In a nutshell, we will do everything we can to provide the same

atmosphere and production qualities to our online race that you will find at a real life ARCA RE/MAX race."

Will this be a mod, or more along the lines of GTR/GTR2/GT Legends, that is, licensing the code base, and creating a brand new sim with features not possible with a strict mod?

"No, it will not be a mod," replies Bill. "It will be a standalone title as to allow us a more unrestricted structure and unique branding and interface. It will be released online at first, and then we expect to hit the store shelves sometime in 2007."

If this sim offers half of what it promises, it will, without a doubt, revolutionize sim-racing: Real-driver input, licensed cars, tracks, teams, an officially sanctioned online series, prizes ... and one of the most visible racing series on the planet. The future is on a countdown..

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GTR2 Review

Bob Simmerman reviews SimBin's GTR2, developed by Blimey! Games and published by 10Tacle.

T2

BobSimmerman





Introduction

The first GTR racing sim—a logical conclusion when you take into account the wildly popular and brilliant GT2002 mod for F12002—caused quite an impact with the sim-racing world. It was a race simmer's dream—full licensing of all of the cars and tracks of the 2003 FIA-GT season, encrypted physics that, among other things, made it difficult to cheat as well as difficult to mod, MoTeC software integration, LiveTrack Technology, and one of the best offline racing experiences to ever come out of a box—all of this assured its status as a ground-breaking sim.

However, it was not without its share of faults—the weak multiplayer component, no dedicated server, niggling physics issues, and support that, at times, left a lot to be desired, all contributed to what, at times, ended up with some rather pointed and strong criticism from the racing-sim community. But with all of that being said, in my opinion, GTR was one of the best sims to ever hit the PC, weaknesses and all. There was simply too much right with GTR to ignore it entirely, and soon after its release, speculation abounded at the prospect of a follow up—what would SimBin do with the next iteration of this revolutionary sim?

Features

Between the original GTR and now, rFactor came along. Showcasing the brilliance of Motor 2.0 and it's astounding graphical component, as well as what is perhaps the best multiplayer code to date, rFactor was also a true sandbox playground for modders. But what



many of us wondered was whether those technologies would be licensed ... such as in a new SimBin sim? GT Legends gave us our first answer—incorporating graphics technology licensed from ISI, this gem of a simulator put the new technology found in gMotor 2.0 to amazing use. Beauty, as well as brawn, made GT Legends another of those must-have sims—and probably the single-most overlooked sim in history.

So, moving on, shortly after the installation of GTR2, two things become readily apparent. Number one; there is no longer the StarForce of versions past, and number two; the user interface has been given a lot more polish that spit. This is the first indication that GTR2 is more than an exercise in slapping some lipstick on a (albeit pretty) pig and shoving it out of the door in the hope that its brand name will secure its sales. Should this sim turn out to be a steaming commercial flop, no-one can argue it was because SimBin didn't put in the work to make this into a solid sequel.



Even after AUTOSIMSPORT broke the news about StarForce being dropped, I had to actually get my hands on the thing to make sure—at which point, assured, I was ready to give it a 100 percent, and call it a day—for whatever else GTR2 may be, the dropping of StarForce was, without question, a sort of ... *massive improvement*. *Hats off...*

I should also say—before we move on from StarForce—that I never personally experienced any problems using it; but there were many who did, and they were probably not delusional or otherwise mentally-unsound (and if they were, it probably had little to do with what they were alleging StarForce was doing to their machines). Some software protection schemes are simply not good ideas; StarForce may be a good protection system, but its extremity may be better designed to keeping the bottle on the Death Star than stifling bootlegged copies of a simulator in Naples. And while I do not fault those who need to make money from sales of their products, there remains the very real possibility of going too far.



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My solution, if anyone is interested, is to spend a nickel and give us a groovy James Hunt Code Wheel that has to be spun to the proper spot to get the proper seven digit code that needs to be typed in the secret code box that pops on screen on that particular instance of firing up the game. A bit of a burden, perhaps, but far from invasive and potentially dangerous to our PCs in terms of whatever terms those things are dangerous in.

Long story short—StarForce is gone. And I can't think of one reason why I wouldn't be ecstatic about this.

LiveTrack Technology (LTT) makes a no-brainer return to GTR2, and remains one of the most innovative and properly implemented enhancements to the immersion factor of any sim to date. Not just an eye candy feature, LiveTrack darkens the groove and provides for grip changes due to the creation of that groove, just as in real-

racing. Complete with marbles galore if one ventures too far from the racing line, LTT has become, as far as I am concerned, a must-have item for any self-respecting sim. Coupled with the new graphical features of gMotor 2.0 and the dynamically changing weather—featuring, as was the case with GTR ... rain!—the on-track environment in GTR2 is not a stagnant and dead backdrop for racing, it is a living, breathing thing that evolves over time, forcing the driver the deal not only with the competitors, but with the track changes as well.

LiveTrack is not the only immersion feature to return; the dirty windshield is back as well, and if the changing track conditions were not enough, vision reduction only makes the equation that much more difficult to solve. Not only that, but catching a glimpse of a remarkably well done—and blindingly bright—sun through that grime creates one of the most atmospheric and unique moment in the world of sim-racing. Unlike LTT, the dirty windshield may be turned off but, for my money, it's just another bit of icing on the immersion cake.

Of course, full licensing is present, and with over 140 cars—most of those are variations on livery, but there are a few surprises—there will be no shortage of things to do on any of the sim's incredibly gorgeous track venues. Once again, the tradition of GTR returns, and you will be hard-pressed to find a more attractive racing experience anywhere.

Far from 'cartoonish' or oversaturated, everything at a track location appears to be hand placed after what seems like years of design and creation. If you have the PC to run it—and I mean a *real* fast PC, and a fast GPU(s)



as well—then you are in for a true visual feast. I am fortunate—I can run about a half field of cars—twenty-four or so—and get away with some pretty decent graphics settings in all race conditions; front of grid, back of grid, rain or shine (the shots in this review are 'stock' for the way I am running the sim). There are, however, many ways to optimize the graphics for older CPUs or graphics-cards. However, if you have been meaning to upgrade, now is definitely the time to do it.

New for GTR2 is the very interesting Driving School that I feel is a great addition. Sure, I've been driving sims for a long time, but there's always room from improvement, and I think this will be of great benefit to sim-racers, rookies or otherwise. By progressing through the various stages of the training modes, you not only unlock tracks and other items, you are also taken through using a variety of different cars, from the Lotus to the



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mighty Saleen, and a host of others. This method of training keeps the interest high by not bogging down the pupil down to a single slow car the entire time.

My favorite parts of the training module were the sessions dealing with learning the individual tracks. By breaking the track into various sections, the module exposes the user to the track in manageable chunks, and closed it all up with a couple of sessions that had the user driving the full track layout as sort of a final exam for that training lesson. Not only well done, the training mode is just one of the ways to unlock certain items.

But for those of you who gave GT Legends a pass because of the 'game'-like need to unlock the cars and tracks, you can rest easy; unlocking is not the hindrance it was in GT Legends in GTR2. That is, you don't need to unlock twenty-three gold chips to drive the Ferrari 550, for instance, but you may need to unlock a few things to get at the Custom Cups, for example. I like this approach as it provides for a bit more depth for those of us that want that sort of thing, but also allows full access to the

complete FIA-GT 2003 and 2004 cars, liveries, and tracks, for those who don't need the distraction of a 'game'—in other words, the core of the product is readily available at any time, and the rest is just bonus.

And if that wasn't enough—the Driving School mode also features three other complete modules; theory, covering tips for beginners for example; FIA-GT, a thorough compendium of information about the real series, as well as rules and regulations and; assists that describes the various aids offered in the sim, and what happens when they are activated. If GTR2 has one thing so far, it is depth—and off-track replayability is not a bad thing in a niche market product.

Open Practice is identical to the setup found in GTR, and allows for private sessions, or a few other AI to make it interesting. A complaint here is that you are not allowed to pick the type, or number, of AI cars, and I am disappointed that level of customization has been left out again. A minor issue, but one way for AI to appear 'smarter' to the non-AI player is simply to practice with them, and without the ability to assure the appearance of cars in the same class as the user is a bit of a shortcoming. Obviously, you can practice during the Race Weekend sessions, but that may be a bit overwhelmings, and does not match the experience to be gleaned from unlimited test-sessions against the AI.

Time Trials are yet another new feature and, much like the Driving School, I found this to be a welcome addition to the sim. Again, this is not a requirement in order to enjoy the product. Basically, in this mode, you pick a track of your choice and run laps. As you cross the start/finish



line, a ghost car immediately appears, and this car represents the best lap you have done should you choose the persistent setting found on the screen before entering the game mode. You can also download laps by the fastest drivers and try to beat them (or learn where you're losing time to the 'aliens'), or you can upload your laps to give others a chance to snigger at your slowness. As you get farther away from the ghost car, the graphics property of the car change, and it appears to be a solid object, allowing the user to keep an eye on it. Approaching the ghost car has the opposite effect, and is welcome when you are, literally, on top of your best lap time—the last thing you want in another car inside of yours!

The Race Weekend is pretty much the same as GTR—no new ground here, and this mode offers the full customization options as the similar mode found in GTR. It remains the perfect way to get ready for that Championship Trophy attempt.



24-Hour Races is where the men are separated (so to speak!) from the boys. Six events are offered, and each event features the option for the full-ride—full-length practice, qualifying, and warm-up sessions, followed by the 24-hour-long event itself. In this mode, the full glory of the dynamically changing track and lighting conditions come into play, and must be properly dealt with in order to stand a chance of finishing, much less winning. Thankfully, the Save Game feature makes a triumphant return, continuing to make the impossible possible—such as a full 24-hours at Spa...*that takes a week!*

I found the 24-hour attempt I tried with GTR to be grueling as well as fun, and though I only made it eight hours into the event due to a foolish radiator setting, without the Save Game feature, I don't think I could have got anywhere close to the eighth hour, much less the full twenty-four. Not only is the 24-hours mode a great way to test your favorite caffeine containing product, it is also a perfect opportunity to observe the brand new pit stop animations—very neat stuff, and definitely better than the yellow arrow man. Or the nebulously palpitating box of certain other sims!

Oh, and while we're on the subject on animations, GTR2 comes with the GPL-like racer shifting gears with a very neat and precise clunk ... looks great and adds a ton to the immersive qualities when you're behind the wheel of these magnificently rendered cockpits. Top notch!

Spa Francorchamps was the 24-hour event that shipped with GTR, but GTR2 bumps up the ante with not only Spa 2003, but Spa 2004, Monza 2004, Hockenheim—featuring only 911 GT3 RS 03/04 models—The Italian 24H with its starting grid of 360s, 550s, 575s, MC12s, and a Lamborghini to boot, and, finally, Zhuhai, host of the American Muscle 24H and featuring such usual suspects as the Corvette C5-R, Mosler MT900, Saleen SR-7, Viper GTS R, as well as the Viper Competition Coupe. There should be something for everyone here, and if 24-hours is too much, not to worry—the dynamic lighting is user selectable in terms of progression, so you could do the whole gig in one hour if you felt like it!

The true core of the offline component of the simulator is, of course,, the Championship mode that allows one to embark on the 2003 or 2004 FIA-GT campaigns, or one of the many available—and many unlockable—Custom Championships. Some may wonder, as I do—what about 2005? No clue, but it remains a valid question, and one that I hope is soon answered.

Blimey! Games' Ian Bell, when asked, replied that SimBin began developing the sim in mid 2005, which meant that they did not have the full season-stats for



2005 and, since they believe in the importance of starting the development cycle of a sim with a full compliment of data, they had to settle for the last full-season available to them—2004.

If you choose to try the real seasons, expect to see the accurate cars at the accurate tracks wearing the accurate liveries. The championship mode includes a fully-realistic weekend format, with all sessions available. This is a great time to see every aspect of the sim in action—the transformation of the track as LTT kicks in, the much improved AI battles amongst one another, weather and lighting changes, and, while driving—the great physics model in simulation mode. Employing full flag and ballast rules, this offline mode offers a full season racing experience that is part strategy game and part driving simulator. There is nothing quite like the feeling of making your way through a full-length race weekend.

Weather, track temperature, setup, opponent strength and behavior—all of it adds up to be something special, something more than the sum of its parts. This is the sort of immersion that can be found in Falcon 4.0, albeit a bit close to the ground. Suffice it to say that we are definitely fortunate to have a company willing to spend this much time and attention to detail in the face of, literally, not much competition—at least in terms of this class of racing. From the perfectly done livery to the Picasso grade tracks, a full season is a tasty meal indeed, and one of the best offline experiences available in a sim—or in a game, come to think of it.

MoTeC ADL and Telemetry

True to form, some of the cars do not feature the full bag of tricks offered by the MoTeC ADL unit—that dashboard deal found in the cars. For example, the Lister features the

full-LCD unit, the 550 has it sort of built into the wheel LEDs, and the MC12 lacks it in terms of offering tyre and brake temperatures, for example. All of which is to say—as in reality, as in GTR.

The developers of GTR2 have carried on the tradition of GTR and remain true to the licensing by offering accurate cockpits, and accurate functionality of those cockpits, at least as far as the ADL is concerned. Of course, the MoTeC telemetry feature returns, and it is just as welcome here as it was in GTR.

However, the MoTeC software is not shipping with the US release of GTR2 as it did with GTR—but it is still freely available at the MoTeC site. There are also a few road bumps using it, but, once past the rough edges, this software does the job nicely, and is a full featured product in itself, and quite a bit more than an afterthought—real teams have been using telemetry in one form or another for years now, and it really makes sense to see it shipping, or at least compatible, with top shelf simulators.

{For a look at how to use the telemetry, you can either download the definitive manual at the developers of GTR homepage—[Blimey! Games](#)—or you can find it on the AUTOSIMSPORT's website.}

If the time is spent to learn the ins and outs of the telemetry module, useful insights concerning the car behavior in terms of setup can be easily spotted. Unfortunately, at least with my rig, hitting the red MoTeC button in game can at times cause problems—lockups, for one—as the telemetry is closed and focus is returned to GTR2.

AI

I never really had much of a problem with the AI in GTR, but I sure did see my share of their, uhm, unpredictability on the track, and most of the time pure luck kept me out of trouble. The AI in GTR2 appears, at least about forty hours in, to be somewhat improved.



Immediately notable is the blocking tendencies they have when you begin to pull up on them, and then the surprise as they seem to know when they have been beat and either move aside, or stop moving altogether, allowing you to mosey-on-by. Practice with the AI, at a level of 100 percent and real aggression settings, is a must—much like it would be difficult to race in reality, at times, with drivers of wildly varying talent and/or car levels, the more you practice with and around the AI, the more you will be able to understand how they behave in certain situations, leading to a much more enjoyable experience. They are not perfect, far from it, but in this regard, they are as good as any other type of AI found in any other game. Grand Prix 4 level it is not, but I found it to be quite a bit better than that in GTR, especially the AI who takes over for you when you do a driver switch at a pit stop.

One annoying glitch I did discover, however, and one that would probably require that the AI needs, at the very least, some sort of tweak, is this: When restoring a saved game—championship practice session, for example—you will often be presented with the rather alarming vision of GT cars literally pushing nGT cars around the track, a bizarre ritual that usually ends with the hapless nGT car being tossed off the track at the nearest tight corner. When the game was saved, the cars were not



behaving like that, but when that save game was restored, it was, shall we say, a bit of an odd thing to see. It appeared to clear out after a while, but keep this possibility in mind when restoring a race—make sure you are not putting yourself in a bad position with crazed AI at your, uh, rear. One hopes that this will be quickly addressed, and also the AI's (at times) reluctance to move aside during the race, or a session. To make a boring story end, I found the AI to be challenging and, for the most part, non-wreckers for the sake of it. Of course, as always—your mileage may vary.

Sounds

As if I really need to say anything here ... but I will—what the hell happened to the Corvette? In some instances, it sounds pretty good, in others ... well it sounds far from pretty and no good at all, along the lines of a third grade BASIC computer program that pushes a single sound through a twelve cent Radio Shack speaker.

Ugh—that 'Vette sounds like crap sometimes, just way too buzzy for my taste, and while doing some of this review, the ALMS was at the last race of the season, and those Corvettes sounded nothing like this one. I realize that two years may make a difference in how a car sounds in terms of bigger/different engines, but this is just way off, at least to me.

Other than that, and as one would expect from the GTR franchise, one is assured of the sound perfection from the cars, the tyres, the wrecks, and on-and-on that you would expect—a true feat considering that the core base-product was in need of a new sound engine several years ago. I don't know how the guys do it, but somehow they get this aging code to cough up fantastic results, and GTR2 is no exception. Someday, I hope, we will have true Dolby 5.1 surround sound, but for now we have what we have.

Guys, please—fix the 'Vette ... it sounds like a Ford, and not the GT40 either!

Graphics

I have now owned three SimBin sims, reviewed two of them, and by far my favorite part is determining just how far the developers are willing to go with the visual representation side of this whole business. Of course, I would assume that the credit for this must go the developers of the sim, Blimey! Games, but, whoever deserves the credit, please help yourself to mine—I think that in some review I did within the last year, I described these guys as 'psychotic perfectionists' or something to that effect. Well, that sure was falling short of the proper term—these guys are flat out psychotic *freakshows* of perfectionism.

I look at the models in the sim—menu or in-game—and shake my head in complete awe at their ability at turning 1s and 0s into true art. Honestly, I don't really care how many two-headed monkeys they are giving shock treatments to, if this is the sort of graphical splendor we can expect, then whatever it is they are doing, they just need to keep doing it. Truly, I have never seen more from this code-base or the new rendering code to be found in gMotor 2.0 in terms of sheer beauty. Even the gem-like beauty of GT Legends is surpassed GTR2. Any single screenshot of any GTR2 track, too, is



suitable for framing, and not for crimes—art, folks, good clean art.

And one more thing—the wet weather that has been the land of Grand Prix 4 for the last eleventy billion years is no more *King Daddio*. GTR2 sets a new precedent in wet weather presentation and visuals straight out of the box, and it is Holy Palomino good. Reflections, shimmering water, the thinnest wisps behind the rear tyres as they cut through the water, wheel-spray that varies depending on which parts of the track may or may not have standing water, and the *coup de grace*—a drying racing line if the weather clears up. I could go on like a babbling idiot for days here, but if there is one area in which GTR2 is unequaled by any sim, current or past, it is in the visuals. Nothing else is even close.

There are no wipers, but you probably already knew that...

Of course, all of this glory comes at a price, and if your PC is more than a year old, or you have a weak graphics



subsystem, you may not be able to enjoy it to the full extent; that is, with all the doodads checked, and all sliders maxed. But even with compromises, GTR2 will look stunning. But I must warn you, yet again—this sim based around high-performance cars expects a high-performance rig to run it the way it should be run—all the bells and whistles turned up high. To give you an example: during testing to see what my rig would cough up, I found myself in single digits when at the back of a sixty-one car grid at *Spa*!

But I'll be damned—turning the car count down to 23 AI, and reducing the shadows and reflections settings meant that I was rewarded with more than beyond playable frame rates at the back of the grid—in the rain, mind you—at the super detailed *Spa*. Of course, your mileage may vary—it always does, but my 'paltry' AMD 3800+XP with an ATI X850XT PE PCIe video card, and 2 Gigs of DDR, provide more than enough power—when the sim was properly configured—to showcase the stunning beauty of this sim. Some good settings to turn off or reduce are the High Detail Cockpits, Shadows, Reflections, and Trackside Characters (*this not being Formula One, you'll find a few of them hanging about—Ed*). Although the Trackside Characters are not the FPS hog they are in GT Legends, they can be toggled off for a bit of a boost, and you won't know the difference. And if previous sims are any indication, GTR2 should scale nicely with those PC upgrades you are no doubt planning after spending a few hours with this sim ... I know I am!



Physics

Well, here is a fine and dandy giant hornet's nest, and I am about to take my baseball bat and give it a whack. Or two. For my money, the physics in GTR were more than adequate, although they did suffer from that low speed physics issue ... that many sims, in fact, suffer from.

Be it too much grip, not enough grip, or just the wrong grip, GTR just felt bizarre at times, and left you wondering just what it was you did to rip twelve foot wide slicks from their eagle talon relationship with the road and turn them into sand mixing tools at 11 MPH. Yes, sometimes those GTR cars would just spin around without much of an invitation at all, or, even more annoyingly, would instantly transform from docility into a pulverizing smash with schizophrenic-like unpredictability. I think it is safe to say that GTR2 has addressed the grip issue, and not in a subtle way either.

On my initial drives at *Monza*, I felt that perhaps the brakes were way off—that is, slam the damn pedal to the ground to get them to work. Then it slowly



began to change—the more I drove, the less the brakes wanted to cooperate and, as they overheated and began to fade, I found myself in a rather interesting situation as I presented my car to the *Retifillo*. Chattering and bouncing, that car did not want to stop and did not want to turn as a result.

So I'm going out on a limb here when I say that—well speculate anyway—that Blimey!Games have modeled the three regimes of the brake systems with this sim. Those

being: when they are junk at cold temperature, when they are amazingly grippy through their optimum temperature range, and when they return to being junk at too-hot temperatures.

The brakes, at first, felt odd, but after a few hour-long races, and about 200 laps of testing, I have grown to enjoy the game you must play with the brakes in order to get them to behave properly and, more importantly—lasting for an entire race.

During the wet weather stints, on some occasions, I felt that there was simply too much grip for a flooded track, and maybe there was. However, this was not a persistent feeling as it soon began to seem as if every single corner at every single track presented its own model of wet weather driving behavior—some corners were fairly easy to go through, while others saw me nearly always on the verge of disaster. While there may be a bit too much grip in some cases—and I could never say for sure—in the rain, it has nowhere near the grip found in the dry, so at least in that respect it fits. I think we have a mixed bag here, and perhaps a future tweaking is in order ... or it may be damn fine. Until I get that interview with Campbell—Walter, I will never know ... of course, if anyone should like this issue cleared up, you're free to invite me for a test at *Monza*, in the rain, for a few days in a Lister, just call ...

And that, indeed, is where the road leads to some stickiness—I won't pretend for one second that I don't know that some readers of this review may, in fact, know a great deal about slip curves and theoretical behavior of a tyre, and no doubt could demolish anything that any developer may come up with in this ultra-critical aspect of any hardcore sim—the *flippin slip curve*.

Is the slip curve in GTR2 wrong in some fundamental, possibly *consequential* way? Of course it is—just like Grand Prix Legends, N2003, Grand Prix 4, F1 Challenge, GT Legends, and even that sim many consider the king of tyre modeling, netKar Pro. Yes, dear readers, in every sim mentioned here—and any sim ever done, for that matter—the slip curve is flat out wrong in some way, shape, or form, to some degree or other, for some reason or other. But if you ever do find yourself sitting behind the Holy Grail, or, in other words—the perfect slip curve—my guess is that you will be sitting behind the wheel of an actual *race car with nary a Templar in sight*.

And if anyone saw the Formula One race at China, I would posit that no one knows a damn thing, really,



about making a *real* tyre, so I can only imagine how difficult it would be to incorporate perfection in this area without some sort of massively parallel computing solution. I realize that some models are better than others—Richard Burns Rally, for example, has a much more ‘realistic’ feeling than Colin McRae Rally 4, but I bet a nickel neither one is perfect, and they may even have the same *number* of flaws, but different flaws, different compromises, different approaches.

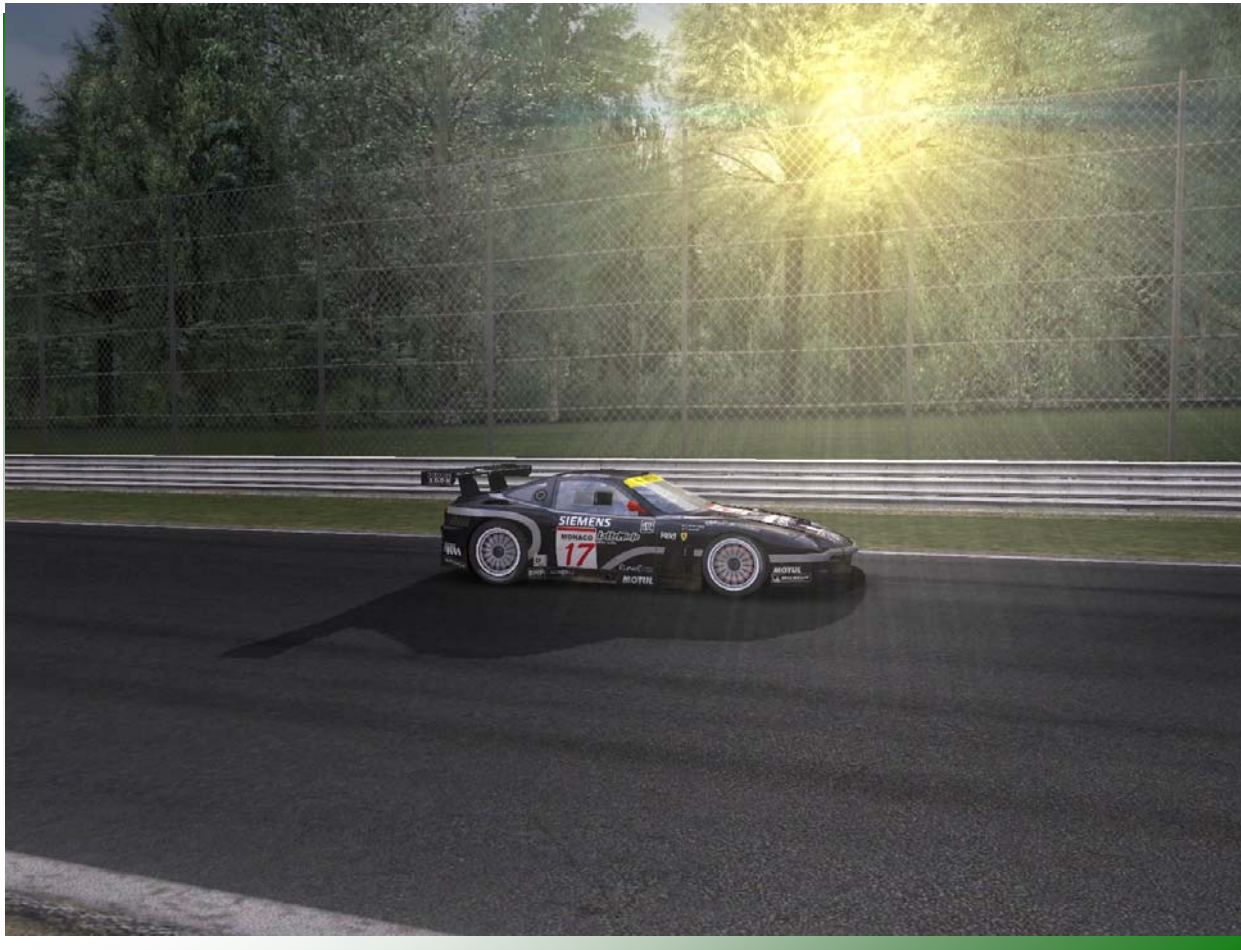
Modeling dynamic systems on home PCs is an exercise in two things—frustration, and compromise. I read the credits in this sim, like I do with all sims, and sure enough, Doug Arnao’s name popped up: That is good to see, as it tells me that a real-racer of real-cars has had some sort of input into what may or may not need to be ‘compromised’ for the sake of playability, or, more likely, the fact we possess a finite amount of computing power. Whatever the color of the smoke behind the mirrors, I can safely say that the physics in GTR2 are substantially improved over those found in GTR. And yes, for the non-

believers—you can spin-out in this sim. If you don’t believe that, just go to *Monza* in the 550, and while still crawling out of the *Variante Retifillo* with the steering wheel turned, stomp as hard as you can on the gas. If the car sticks, see what aids you have enabled. Or, for a more hear stopping attempt—try T1 at *Valencia*, and let your concentration slip just a bit as you break off the curbing for the run to T2. Damn that damn corner, anyway. On the other hand, there is without question more grip to be found in GTR2 than found in GTR. Have the physics been ‘dumbed down’ in order to boost sales? I don’t know—I like to think that we are just closer to how a car with probably 1,500 pounds of downforce and wearing five-mile-wide slicks grips the road. I am pretty sure these things have colossal amounts of grip, far above the stock-cars many are based on, and those stock-cars come out of the box with loads of grip.

And while I prattle on obfuscating something, let’s not forget that other modifier and variable of GTR2 simulator physics, that is, the *real time* modifier of physics—

LiveTrackTechnology. To provide the level of telemetry-aided physics models, and then to allow those models to dynamically interact with an ever-changing track surface is not only a brilliant idea, but one that is implemented fantastically in GTR2. The groove building effect can be seen after only a short time in testing, with perhaps three-to-five cars, and you can feel the difference through the wheel, as well. Toss all of it in the developing pot, and I am amazed they can come up with box-art, much less a system as complex and perfectly done as LiveTrack. Yet another step closer to what the real guys deal with every time they hit the track, LTT further solidifies the notion that this is a sim created for simmers, by simmers.

I may have only succeeded in describing just how little I know about tyre dynamics, but the fact remains—these physics don’t feel arcade, and they are definitely not the ‘it is real slippery so it must be real’ variety. They simply get the job done more convincingly than much of what I have driven in the sim-world, and I find them to be outstanding. I am sure the ‘Physics of GTR2’ is going to be



a much-discussed matter in the days, weeks, and months to come, but validation for a sim comes from three differing perspectives, and GTR2 has them all covered: That is, real-world data (which comes courtesy of the Series-license), real-world driver input, and the desire to get it right.

Multiplayer

I thought the hornet's nest was bad, but this is the grizzly bear den and I am covered in some sort of favorite grizzly bear food {*we have warned Bob about covering himself in baby oil—Ed*} ... ok, enough fantasizing and on to the matter at hand. First, the things that are my fault; after

moving to my new house out here in bear country, I also had to switch internet providers, and this particular internet provider provides a modem, and that modem provides a router, and the combination of that configuration provides me with plenty of feelings of incompetence. It wasn't a matter of knowing which ports to use, it was simply a matter of knowing how to operate the gear—and I failed miserably at it. No worries, I thought—I will just host a local dedicated server, and then start the sim on the same PC, and join, and race, and live happily ever after with Uma Thurman by my side.

I got booted from my own server. For cheating!

Ok, so with that idea proving a spectacular flop, I decided to go ahead and join one of those open servers, and I was only a little surprised to see quite a few folks online. The North American Continent was given the courtesy afforded Germany last time round, releasing GTR2 a full two weeks before anywhere else, and it was nice to see a free and open USA server up and running at Barcelona.

I got onto that server, joining it when the ping was around 150. For a while there, things went pretty well—the other drivers were smooth and cars were not hopping around like bunny rabbits on amphetamines and Viagra. Heck, I even went on to set the quick lap of the session ... and promptly saw my name in the BOOT DRIVER section! For some reason, though, no-one bothered kicking me off the island of bliss. Which is a good thing because it enabled me to note that, as the session wore on, lag began to creep into the mix, and even with only eight cars, it is painfully obvious that the multiplayer—at least in this particular case—is one component of Motor 2.0 that has yet to be licensed.

Now, if you are a fan like me, the offline content in GTR2 is so far over-the-top that MP is, for all intents and purposes, an option, not a requirement such as it would be in netKar, for example. But the fact remains—this is



not the MP rFactor has utterly spoiled us with, so be forewarned—you will need big-fat-pipes to push data if you even think about a large field, not to mention a willingness to dig around and optimize things should even the fattest pipe prove troublesome.

I did not have time to fully explore the dedicated server options, nor whether more power has been offered to the admin side of things, but I am sure a cursory glance at some of the forums boards will give you more information regarding this.

I truly wish I could have gotten the server setup, and, as I mentioned, that is completely my error—but when I finally did make it online, the experience was not all that it could be. In the menu setting, there is a limit of twenty-eight cars for internet or LAN hosting. I suspect this will be plenty.

Concluding Thoughts

For my money, GTR2 hits on all cylinders in all the right places. Much like GTR was a landmark event in the commercial sim world; GTR2 has taken what was great about GTR, added some very strong magic to it, and given us yet another masterpiece.

Oh yeah—did I mention it was only 20 bucks U.S.? Madness, and further testament to one simple fact—GTR2 is a must have for anyone even remotely interested in simulated car racing games.



AUTOSIMSPORT Split Second

GTR2 Advanced Physics Mod

Jon Denton introduces 'NAPMod', the GTR2 physics mod that comes bundled with this month's AUTOSIMSPORT ... hard-core physics for hard-core simmers!

JonDenton

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This mod provides updated physics for Simbin's GTR2 as a provision for those in the community who seek a more 'hard core' experience from the sim. The mod can be found bundled with AUTOSIMSPORT in the ZIP package.

Installation

The package contains two key files when extracted:

GTR2_NAP.EXE—This is the main installation file. Double click this to install, and point it to the location of your GTR2 installation (if it cannot be located automatically).

GTR2_OP.EXE—This executable, when run, will uninstall the NAPMod and restore the 'stock' physics for GTR2.

The package also contains some car setup files for certain cars, which need to be copied to the relevant directories under your GTR2 installation in order to be used. We would strongly recommend doing so.

Fundamentals

Because this mod changes some fairly fundamental aspects of the driving model, it is strongly advised that you read through the following guidelines before jumping in with both feet.

Don't rush into the fastest car and hit the track! You wouldn't do this in reality, don't do it in the sim either!

It would be advisable to start out with one of the NGT cars at first, I would suggest the Ferrari 360 Modena NGT or, if you feel you can handle a trickier manual gearbox, the 911 RS NGT. Unique setups have been created for

these cars specifically with the intention of making them a little more predictable and reasonably fast to drive.

When you hit the track, try to ignore what you have learnt with the 'old' physics; start slow and build up speed as if it were real-life and you do not want to get hurt! Drive the car fast but conservatively, and work your way up to the tyres' limits over the course of a few laps; this will prevent any frustration from 'wall time'.

Once you have become familiar and comfortable with the NGT cars at speed, you can move on to the much quicker, and harder to drive GT cars, which are far more sensitive to setup changes than their NGT cousins.

Choose the same track you where driving with the NGT cars and start out, ideally, with the 'drift king', the Chevrolet Corvette. Enjoy the forgiving nature of the Corvette's chassis and allow yourself to feel the tyres' slip curve and drop-off point. Once you have had enough fun with twirling the steering wheel around with monster slides, take a look at the Ferrari 550 BMS car, another front-engined beast that is manageable on the limit, but can deliver healthy doses of adrenaline with its 'buzz saw' V12! Enjoy the show, but remember that although fun, driving sideways all the time is not fast, nor does it do any good to your tyres. Once again use the provided setups to start with, as they will give you a good base.

Before trying the Maserati and the Saleen, we suggest that you read the setup guidelines below to better understand how to setup a car with complex underbody aerodynamics.

Setup Guidelines

'NAPmod' physics mod has tried to use realistic values where possible in order to recreate the complexity of modern-day racing cars.

To get the most out of these amazing racing cars, and to feel the formidable amounts of grip they can generate, you need to understand that, *being* racing cars, they are very sensitive to setup changes both aerodynamically and mechanically. The tyres are also very sensitive to temperature, pressure, and loads. If you correctly adjust the setup of the cars, and the tyre pressures, you will experience a considerable level of grip and nice, predictable handling characteristics. Conversely, if you're *not* able to set the car up properly, you will experience poor handling, unpredictability and frustration.

In this section, then, some general guidelines on how to setup the cars for getting the most out of them in racing conditions will be offered to help you avoid getting behind the wheel of a fidgety and nervous 500BHP monster.

Tyre Pressures

Keep your tyre pressures and temperatures correct, and you will be a happy driver! Start by doing sets of three-to-four constant laps, and check the tyres' pressures and temperatures across all four wheels. Ideal pressure for hot tyres is about 200kPA, so start with 150-160kPA static pressure, and work with them over short runs with the aim of equalizing (across all corners) the hot pressures as close to this mark as possible.

Temperature

Ideal tyre temperature is about 80 degrees Celsius for slick tyres, and about 90 degrees for grooved tyres (rain and intermediate). In all circumstances, you should aim to have a good spread of temperatures between I.M.O (Inside Middle Outside) of the contact patch. There is no need to have ten degrees of difference—as some believe: Just try to maintain as much of an equal spread as possible.

Wear

Tyre wear—and consequently management—is fundamental to endurance racing. In the FIA GT Championship, it is not rare to see cars going through two stints of fuel without changing the tyres at the pit stops, and in so doing gaining precious time. However, to do this you will need a very neutral setup on your car, coupled with the ability of being very smooth in your driving.

Camber

Depending on the tyre and car suspension configuration, you'll need more or less camber to get the maximum grip. Usually the front tyres give the maximum lateral grip at -4 to -3 degrees. What needs to be made clear here is that you should exercise caution, chiefly because more negative camber means less longitudinal grip for braking and traction.

Find the ideal compromise. Rear tyres are more focused on traction and wider, so they need less camber. -3 to -2 are good values to play with. Dunlop tyres seem to like big amounts of negative camber, while Michelins lower. Pirelli are between those two. Experiment in order to find the optimum setting not only for your car, but for your individual driving style as well.

Aerodynamic stability and efficiency

With the previous version of GTR, drivers would use softer suspension to gain as much mechanical grip from the tyres

as they could with no concern for the aerodynamic balance of the car at high speeds.

This is an aspect that has definitely changed with the NAPMod physics mod. The front splitter and rear diffuser are now much more sensitive to pitch, yaw and rake. This means that, while softer suspension can make the car easier to drive at low speeds, it could result in aerodynamic unpredictability of the car at medium and high speeds. This is because the softer suspension will cause the car pitch and roll as it progresses through braking, apex and exit, and these forces will effect the ride heights while on track on an almost constant basis. This creates a disturbance in the underbody airflow. When changes to rake occur due to pitch, the effectiveness of the diffuser is compromised, which can then have as large effect on the overall downforce being generated from the floor of the car. Obviously, the last thing anyone wants is for downforce levels to vary wildly during a lap.

When a very stiff setup is used, on the other hand, the car becomes much more predictable, grippier, and precise at medium and high speed; this is because it pitches and rolls much less. This keeps the chassis 'flat' to the ground, keeping ride heights, rake and wing angles consistent. Keep in mind though that the car will be harder to control at lower speeds, due to the stiffer setup. Again, you must find the correct compromise for every track.

Ride Height

With the NAPMod changes, some GT cars are able to run very low ride heights. Using low ride heights will benefit aerodynamics, and will also lower the center of gravity of the vehicle. It is, of course, not advisable to run the car too low on tracks with lots of compressions and bumps. Raise the car accordingly from the minimum values that you will find as default in the garage screen. Static ride heights and packers should be adjusted, and on-track ride heights monitored to achieve optimum

rake at high speed to maximize underbody downforce as well as overall aerodynamic efficiency.

A little background on intent

The makers of NAPMod hope that you will enjoy the new depth and complexity of the physics mod, and have many hours of fun trying to get the most out of your preferred car.

In creating the NAPMod physics patch, the makers tried not to compromise the original grid performances of the cars. Each car, although different in behavior from the 'stock' physics, should perform equally in relationship to each other, as they do in the original sim. Lap times with the NAPMod are now much closer to real life, and, at some tracks, virtually spot on. Only true 'aliens' will be able to better them, but beta-tests have shown that even *they* only best real-world times by a second or two. And this is obviously explainable by not only their unerring talent, but by the fact that they have no fear!

The makers' sincere hope is that this patch does not result in flaming and futile discussions in the community. You are encouraged to test it, but, if you don't like it, just ignore it and try not to flame. The makers are not trying to convince anybody about the authenticity of their mod, they 'just did it' because it is what they wanted in their sim.

Next month, AUTOSIMSPORT will feature a far deeper discussion on what has been changed from the stock physics, and how the makers came to these conclusions. If you have any feedback you would like to give the authors of this mod, please send them to: [Jon Denton](#).

Credits

NAPMod's authors would like to thank: SimBin, Blimey! Games for the amazing software that is GTR2 which is a great base to work from, SimLeague GTR2 Italian Championship, for beta-testing and support, and AUTOSIMSPORT, for all their support and the publishing of the mod..

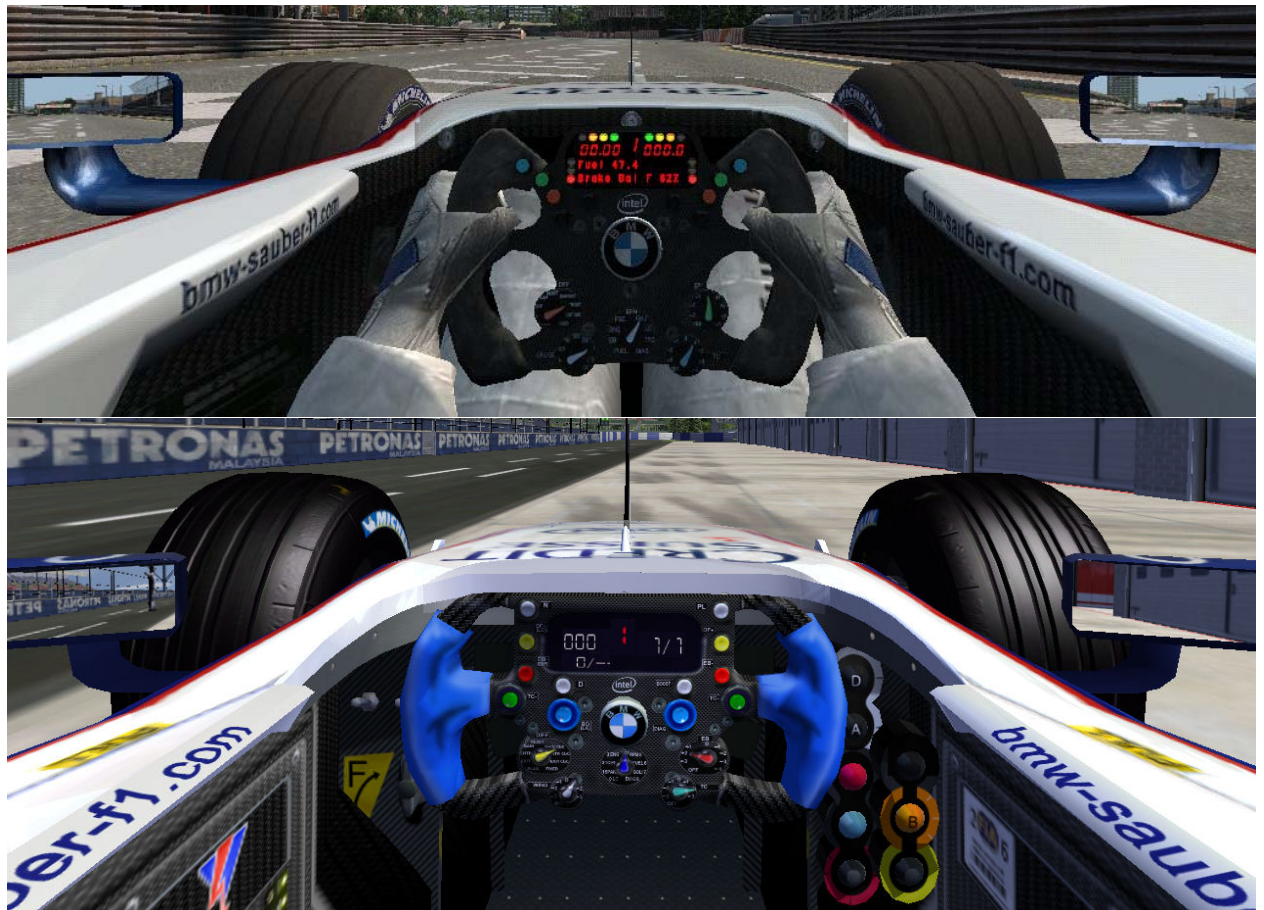
AUTOSIMSPORT

Test Drive

BMW vs. BMW ISI vs. LFS

Aristotelis Vasilakos spent the month testing the only officially-licensed PC F1s in the world in order to determine which is the best ride. So ... will it be LFS's BMW Sauber F1... or ISI's? Bob Simmerman acted as crash-test pilot.

Aristotelis**Vasilakos**



With the Formula One license safely in the hands of Sony, sim-racers are able only to get the occasional glimpse of one of these pure-breeds in a PC-simulated form. Both ISI and LFS have managed to wangle a license from one team during this year—and both have a cyber-version of a BMW Sauber F1 car. Which means that, in theory, they can be compared side-by-side ... even if they reside in two distinct universes.

The road-tests have been carried out using default setups. However, in order to gauge performance, we tested the cars using both maximum downforce, and minimum downforce. And while we are certain that we could get, for instance, a couple of km/h more out of one, or a second decimal more G-forces out of the other, we believe that, because neither of the two cars are simulated with extreme precision, that it would make sense for us to focus only on the major differences between them—rather than getting caught up in the small details.

Test: Pure Performance

Speed Test

Wing Set For: Minimum downforce

Maximum speed: ISI—352km/h

Maximum speed: LFS—334km/h (and still going!)

We were unable to find a track with a sufficiently long straight that would allow us to reach peak speed for the LFS car. We did the testing at the oval, and we believe that, given a bit more runway, the LFS car would have at least matched the speed of the ISI BMW.

Wing Set For: Maximum downforce

Maximum speed: ISI—291km/h

Maximum speed: LFS—303km/h

It is clear that the LFS BMW is faster with full wings, suggesting that it exhibits less overall drag than the ISI version.

Lateral G-Force Test

Wing Set For: Minimum downforce

ISI—3.5G

LFS—3.0G

Wing Set For: Maximum downforce

ISI—2.9G

LFS—2.4G

This is a crucial test, in terms of overall performance, since it allows us to get a good look at the grip of the two cars. We can therefore conclude that the ISI BMW is 'grippier', and thus faster through turns—in any circumstances—and with quite a margin ... about 0.5G.

Since we were unable to find a skidpad that was big enough for our needs, we decided to improvise by setting second gear on the two the cars at 182km/h (at the limiter), and then, finding a nice long straight, we started weaving left and right, as balanced as possible, in order to obtain maximum lateral grip. The technique proved to be fairly accurate and, after extensive tests, we got the average numbers with what we are convinced is pretty solid precision.

From these tests, we can learn a lot about the performance of the two BMWs, but also, we can glean a little about the two sims themselves. For instance, from the telemetry graphs, one can clearly see that both physics engine are rather good at simulating low downforce situations. We can determine, from the graphs, how the cars, in low downforce situations, exhibit less-precise curves, thereby demonstrating instability as a result of the fast changes of direction. ISI's BMW, in particular, is much more 'critical' to drive, and the data confirms what we 'felt' was the case: That the ISI BMW is far more nervous than its LFS twin.

On the other hand, in high downforce situations, both cars are much more precise and stable to handle, as the diagrams show, and we can only, in this situation, turn to 'feel' in order to decide which car is the more stable.

Braking

We are not yet able to fully verify these parameters to the extent that we would like: however, we will note the maximum value for braking power in LFS is able to lock all of the tyres at 300km/h! We believe this to be an unrealistic force.

Setup settings

Browsing through the setup screens of both sims results in some interesting findings. For instance, the fuel capacity in both BMWs is different, with the ISI car able to carry about twenty liters *more* fuel than the LFS one.

ISI—115 Liters

LFS—95 Liters

On the engine settings side, we note that the possibility exists to alter the engine brake on both sims. This is, of

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course, a very interesting and useful feature of modern Formula One cars. However, here is where the ISI car becomes a little more involved than the LFS BMW: Only the ISI car offers the ability to alter the rev-range, and, equally, only the ISI car offers the ability to change the boost mapping of the ECU.

Another feature that is present in the ISI car and lacking in the LFS one is the positioning of the ballast that permits the cyber-engineer to change the weight ballast both at front and rear, and on both sides.

The ISI BMW Sauber F1 also contains some pretty complex differential settings which simulate power, coast, pump, and preload settings.

The LFS BMW, on the other hand, shows the strength of its physics engine by making available a very notable choice of various differentials (locked, viscous, open, and clutches).

Although both sims deliver well in this department, we believe the ISI BMW has the edge in terms of setup settings. Having said this, it is also important to point out that neither sim really *simulates*—at least, not to what we believe to be a validated level—the sophisticated active differentials of a modern Formula One car. Neither car, in fact, match the standard that was set by Richards Burns Rally in terms of simulating an active differential.

Both sims, as would be expected, contain both brake power settings, and a brake balance setting. However, only in the ISI BMW do we find the ability to set the brake duct, which is responsible not only for the cooling efficiency of the brakes, but also for a small amount of downforce. Equally, the brake disc thickness is one that can only be altered in the ISI BMW.

As we mentioned earlier, LFS exhibits what we believe to be some unrealistic force values under braking that, if turned up to the maximum, will lock all four tyres instantly at over 300km/h using maximum downforce.

On the suspension department, it is our belief that the ISI BMW wins hands down. Fast and slow damper settings, packers, third springs, you name it, and ISI delivers. Of course, there are certainly more values that can be changed in a real Formula One car in terms of suspension, such as rods lengths, different roll center configurations, and so forth ... but still, ISI does come pretty close.

LFS, on the other hand, falls short when it comes to suspension settings and values. Offering only a single bump and rebound damper setting (no fast and slow distinction), along with the customary spring and ride height settings ... it is no match for the ISI BMW in this department. We believe that not being able to put packers onto a modern Formula One car is a significant oversight.

But it's not all bad for LFS, because it absolutely dominates the ISI BMW when we move on to the crucial aspect of Traction Control. Yes, we all hate TC, but with the engine rattling away at 20,000 RPM, TC is an absolute must for a Formula One car.

LFS's setup screen offers the driver a virtually limitless platform for tweaking TC. The driver can change the TC settings to suit his desires, and this is precisely how the real-world TC operates. In fact, TC is used for various reasons in Formula One, such as to protect the tyres (higher TC) and for speed in qualifying (lower TC). Additionally, the LFS TC works and feels very good when you take the BMW out on the track.

ISI's BMW, unfortunately, only has a high and low TC setting, and that is not even in the garage screens—you have to choose the setting from the general aids menu of the sim.

Having said that, the advantage of an ISI-based sim is that we can go in and tinker around at length—and what we noticed was that there were, in the physics files of the ISI BMW, values that control the TC behavior pretty much

like the LFS setup settings. So we suggest that it would be, in theory anyway, possible to set the ISI BMW's TC in much the same way as that of the LFS BMW ... but it would be a pretty difficult thing to achieve, and it would also mean getting banned from official multiplayer servers!

ISI should take a lesson here from LFS: With not only the BMW, but their own OW Series, and CTD's defining Formula One mod now available, it is probably time for the TC to be improved in terms of usability since it would appear that the functionality is already present.





Personal feel and conclusion

So what can we conclude from these tests? The first thing we can say is this: If your life depended on selecting one of the two BMW's for a run around any track, the ISI car would be your logical choice ... it offers more grip, and, subjectively of course, it responds more like what our imagination thinks a 800BHP 600kg racing single seater would do in real-life.

The LFS BMW, on the other hand, feels a little ... 'soft' in its reactive moments. Having said that, it can be prove to be more fun to drive in certain situations.

Bottom line and thoughts

While both sims try to simulate a real Formula One car, we suspect that neither sim has taken the data and extended it fully into their mutual physics engines, as those very engines, we believe, would have enabled the two cars to perform to a much more realistic level.

For instance, both cars seem to offer way too much grip—3.5 lateral G at 183km/h seems, at least to us, to be a little optimistic. But we may be wrong.

What's more, there are still many ways in which both cars fall short of the 'real-thing'. Our assumption would be that both developers, understandably enough, took the interests of their community and fan base as paramount, and thereby created their BMWs to replicate the 'feel' of their sims as closely as they could. In other words, a BMW Sauber F1 in LFS and ISI's universe. Of course, we should also not forget the very real possibility of marketing heads exerting a certain amount of pressure on the developers for an operation of this type of visibility.

Still, a nice try. And a hell of a lot better than anything you'll get on any other platform, that's for sure!

Be SEEN!
For rates and further
information,
contact:

lou.magyar@autosimспорт.net

T3

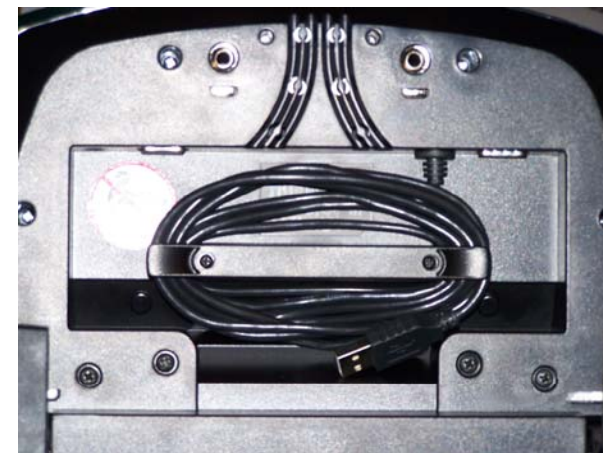
LouMagyar

The Logitech® G25 Wheel

Lou Magyar, with magnifying glass at hand, reviews the wheel that the whole sim-racing world has been eagerly anticipating—the G25 Racing Wheel—was it worth the wait?



Logitech®



So here it is October 3rd, 2006 ... Tuesday afternoon, three days after we would normally try to release AUTOSIMSPORT Magazine. By special overnight shipment, and after much anticipation, I have received the latest iteration of sim-racing wheels from Logitech, the G25.

Logitech has stepped into the realm of mid-range racing wheels with the G25, bridging the gap between their Momo Racing series, and sets like the soon-to-be released BRD Speed 7™, or the ECCI Trackstar 6000™—both of which cost three to five times the retail price of the Logitech G25.

A member of Logitech's extreme-performance G-series peripherals for PC gamers, the Logitech G25 Racing Wheel offers advanced features such as a six-speed gated shifter, a clutch pedal; a high-torque dual-motor Force-Feedback mechanism; 900 degrees of rotation; an eleven-inch wheel; and is constructed of premium materials such as stainless steel and leather.

The Look and Feel of it all ...

The mounting method of the G25 is what you would expect from most current Logitech sim-racing wheels. The now-standard screw-clamp mounting method expands to 2-1/16 inches (5.24 cm), and that is sufficient to clamp to almost any racing surface. The mounting system also comes with the traditional block spacers, and has a nice 'hide' feature that permits the clamp screw to practically disappear with a push-and-turn locking action for a nice clean look. There are also two 'places' to more permanently mount the wheel to a desk or table in the form of threaded sockets which appear to be 1/4-20 size. However, unlike the G25's little brother, the Logitech Momo Force wheel, there is not a template or extra bolts provided to permanently mount the wheel base.

Some features that the standard press haven't shown you are what brings the cream to the top for the G25. Things like the cable cleat recessed under the wheel. The cleat has enough space to completely wrap the non-detachable USB cable under the wheel base for storage.

Another striking feature, although not typically visible to end-users, is the stylish design of the shell base. Looking at the base from the front, it appears to be styled like a high-end sports car, with simulated mesh grill work and 'hood scoop'. The 11-inch (28cm) wheel is constructed of polished stainless-steel bound by genuine leather, with shifter paddles, and one button for each thumb.

The feel of the wheel is very comfortable in both angle and grip. There is a thumb 'rest' on either side of the wheel, placed so that the average user will be able to fit his/her fingers around the rim without the need to make adjustments for the spokes. The entire wheel and base unit is clean, refined, and very pleasing to the eye.

A USB cable more than 6-feet long (2 meters) provides enough cable to put your CPU box just about anywhere you please.

This all creates the feel that the G25 is clearly made with serious sim-racer in mind. Logitech's tag line for the G25 is 'Amateurs beware: The Logitech G25

wheel's uncanny realism could lead to moments of extreme exhilaration and fear'.

The shifter unit that ships with the Logitech G25 would look right at home in the center console of a BMW M5 with its stainless steel faceplate, genuine leather shifter boot, and stylish upswept angled design. It comes equipped with a 7-position gate that includes a push-down reverse, eight buttons, and a gamepad 4-way hat controller. The shifter mounting mechanism is similar to that of the wheel itself, with the exception that the shifter has a third clamp for additional stability and security—there's nothing more unsettling than components coming loose during the heat of battle—and the triple clamp will keep you safe from shifting disasters. For the hard-core sim-racers, there are two permanent mounting sockets are provided. As with the wheel base unit, the actual bolts and a template are not provided.

The shifter unit has an industry-unique feature in that it has a built-in ability to switch between 6-speed gated shifter or sequential shifter with the 'twist of a knob'.

An LED on the shifter-button panel indicates a positive lock into sequential mode. The ability to change from gated to sequential and back again in such a short time means that you can drive a tin-top with a gated shifter in one heat, and race a sequential shifted racer in the next with little-to-no effort at all. The paddles complete the trio, allowing F1-style shifting on any simulator. The Logitech G25 wheel's three different shifter modes are smooth and precise, with good tactile feedback. In gated mode, the shifter provides affirmation by an audible click accompanied by a detent and centering spring. The overall feel of the shift unit in gated mode is both positive and smooth.

The three-pedal set is an attractive, weighty unit with gas, pneumatic brake, and clutch pedals. The base has rubber feet for hardwood floors, and a unique carpet grip system so the pedals won't shift or slide across the floor during a heated contest. The carpet grip springs into

place by pressing a small lever on the bottom of the pedal base, and snaps back into its recess for hardwood floor-mode with a simple push. All three pedals are made from polished stainless steel with a stainless steel shaft and a spring-loaded damper mechanism. All three have a feel that is very similar to the pedal set of your very own street car, or perhaps a race-car! Once you get the pedals correctly placed on the floor, there is very little move with even the most vigorous pedal pushing, 'heel & toeing', or even brake checking your opponent.

All the cabling for the unit originates in the wheel base unit. Both the shifter and the pedal set are connected by polarized DB-9 connectors, similar to our standard serial port plug and socket. It is impossible to connect the units to the wrong port thanks to the male-female configuration. The power supply, unlike the Momo predecessors, is a laptop-style transformer, not a wall blister, and the lack of a bulky blister on the end of the power supply cord will have your power strip thanking you. In today's wall blister-rich high-tech race cockpit, surge suppressor overcrowding can be a big problem. When mounted to your race console or desktop, the wheel and shifter compliment each other very well; the pedal set just completes the whole smooth deal.\

Going out for a ... spin ...

Well, having crawled in and out of the hardware to the point where I'm itching to take this thing for a spin, I must say that, with it all mounted and placed on my desktop, it looks very impressive. The next step is the installation of the software.

Following the included instruction sheet—which I must say appears to have been written in Lilliputian (it's very small print to these old eyes, and had to be read with magnifying glasses!)—I got everything set up, and ready to go. The only connection remaining was to insert the



USB cable into an available port. Prior to doing that, the instruction sheet suggests that you install the software.

The Logitech G25 unit ships with an installation CD that auto-loads when inserted, and begins the install process automatically. The install program pretty much runs itself with only a few interactive 'affirmations' required. A brand new version of the Logitech Wingman software, and a full driver set, are then happily installed. After that's done, your system will need to be rebooted in order to complete the install process.

Once rebooted, the USB cable is then connected, and like USB magic, the newly installed Logitech G25 wheel driver software is found and configured. My first action item was to go to the control panel and open up the 'game controllers' tool to look things over. The Logitech G25 configuration in the 'Game Controllers' tool is an impressive thing. All button, pedal, shifter, and wheel

T3 The Logitech® G25 Wheel

continued



features can be tested from here. With the wheel, three pedals, and the shifter, there are also a total of sixteen (yeah—you heard right—*sixteen*) 'buttons' available on the Logitech G25 for you to configure at your whim and fancy. There are almost more buttons on this thing that a racer can use in a race—including space for the 'alien cheat mode'! The four gamepad-like buttons, along with their complimenting four-button rocker 'hat', plus the four buttons across the bottom of the shifter, and the two buttons and two paddles on the wheel, make for a dizzying array of possibilities.

While in the control-panel-game-controllers tool, you can test each function. Like previous Logitech software, they each have a cute 'effect' that occurs when the button is pressed ... from the dreaded 'tire blowout' to the unimaginable 'explosion', each button will present you with a feedback-inducing feature. Logitech hasn't dreamed up any new effects, but repeats the standard set. The proper function of each input is graphically and physically shown, and it is a simple task to confirm that everything works.

The 'Advanced' tab has pretty much the same look to it as previous versions of Logitech's game controller software, with the ability to split (or merge) the brake-gas pedal axis. By default, the axis is merged, although for the life of me I can not understand why, since no racer in his right mind would drive with a combined axis.

The next option is new to the Logitech G25. The wheel on the Logitech G25 is capable of a full 900 degree of rotation—yep, that's a full two and one half turns, in AUTOSIMSPORT-editor speak!



This emulates most real vehicles' lock-to-lock turns, and does so with convincing realism. The controller configuration has the capability of setting the rotation limit to suit any driving or simulator requirement. From a full 900 degrees of rotation down to something on the order of 180 (or less if you like), you can adjust the wheel's maximum travel limits. The two-motor Force-Feedback mechanism effectively stops wheel travel at the limit you choose. What this means to the sim-racer is that if you are running an open-wheel racer, for instance, with perhaps 200 degree lock-to-lock rotation, or a tin-top with two-and-a-half turns lock-to-lock, you can set the wheel up to turn precisely how many degrees of rotation that is required to emulate the real-world situation. The rotational degrees are set on a slider, so virtually any range up to 900 degrees is available.



The remaining options in the advanced section are similar to the rest of the Logitech wheel game controller family, with sliders for wheel force strength, feedback torque, feedback damping, and spring centering force, each with a check boxes to turn the feature on or off.

Ok, so Windows® Control Panel, Game Controllers finds the wheel, pedals, and shifter without problem, what about simulators?



Logitech has enlisted Image Space Incorporated's rFactor to show their stuff. Each new Logitech G25 wheel will come bundled with its very own demo copy of rFactor. Gjon Camaj of ISI tells me that they are providing a Logitech specific rFactor V1.150. Out of the box, it will allow the user to drive a ZR configured for the G25 wheel and one track, European GP (the modern Nurburg GP circuit). This is similar to their current trial verion. To unlock the whole simulator, it must be purchased with any of the options currently available to those wishing to do so.

The Logitech ZR demo version and the full version are completely configured to implement all the available features of the Logitech G25. All one needs to do is select the 'LogitechG25' in the controller options and load it. Some minor adjustments to the mapping to suit your individual driving style and button use may, obviously, be necessary.

Since rFactor is shipping with the Logitech G25, that's the platform on which I chose to test the wheel set. As I said, a simple matter of selecting the G25 from the controller options and loading it was all it took to get up and running with the basics. There is, however, the not-very-small matter of the sixteen buttons to customize. The pre-configured setup uses both the paddles and the gated shifter for shifting operation, with the result that, no matter which car you jump into, you will not need to re-configure

the mapping. The two buttons on either side of the wheel are mapped to 'look left' and 'look right', and that leaves us with twelve buttons on the shifter unit to map as we like. But never despair, because rFactor has plenty of map-ready features to apply to these buttons. The extra buttons on the shifter allow you to make better use of the keyboard buttons for logical features, something which I have had difficulty wrapping my brain around. For instance, the seat and mirror adjustment feature can be mapped to the 'hat' on the shifter—it isn't something that needs to be adjusted during a race—since it might be needed when switching from car to car. Having this feature mapped to an inherently intuitive hat just makes sense.

Once you have set up the extra buttons as they suit your needs, it might be a good idea to make a template of the buttons on the shifter and label what action each button performs. The peel-off protection sheet could help you with that ... failing that, you could just apply some transparent tape and hand label the buttons. Since the latter is quick and dirty, and appeals to my sense of perhaps wanting to change a configuration later, I chose to apply the tape and used a permanent marker to ID the button uses. And now fully customized, I went off to the races.

Since my league has been running the F1-1979 Demo mod lately, and we were at Mosport last week, that's where I started with the Logitech G25. At first, as with any new hardware, there is an acclimation period. Blown shifts, over-revving during shifts, stalls, and clutch-for-brake pedal substitution are all things that happen to you during the first few laps.

After having driven a two-pedal Logitech Momo Force Feedback as a left footed braker for many years now (many mostly trouble-free years I might add) switching to a more realistic three-pedal system takes more getting used to than a new pair of thong underwear—I dare ya to get *that* image out of your head!



For about five laps, I had to make a conscious choice to keep my left foot planted and use my right foot to brake. I'm no Hans-Joachim Stuck, so I don't even pretend that I can dance my feet across the pedals in a ballet of throttle, break, and clutch. I'll just stick to heel-and-toe driving, plain and simple. The Logitech G25's pedal layout is perfect for heel-and-toe driving. An easy reach from the throttle to the brake pedal, and the pneumatic feel of the brake pedal provides enough differential in the function of the two pedals to make heel-and-toe fairly easy to accomplish—once your brain gets over left footed braking.

On more than one occasion, I found myself going into a corner and not having any brakes ... oops. Press the clutch for the brake, and not only do you not have brakes, but you don't have any engine braking either—a combination not to be trifled with unless wall-time turns you on. After a few laps, I found myself bumping the clutch during shifts, and heal-and-toeing like a pro. That is, as pro as a guy wearing thong underwear on a plastic vinyl covered folding chair can feel in front of his computer ... hey, when I dare, you best be prepared!

I drove around Mosport for a few laps, and managed a fairly decent 1:20ish (decent considering the newness of the controller and my obvious lack of real-driving skill when compared to others). Next up was the ZR.

I went back to the desktop and changed the wheel rotation mapping to somewhere between 200 degrees and 900 degrees (540 degrees seemed about right to me), and went for a spin.

The gated shifter, wheel, and pedal set, I can report, perform extremely well, and are both smooth and easy to operate, no matter what kind of car you are in. For fun, I changed the ZR to a sequential shifter, and had a blast. Using the sequential shifter, the clutch need is negated, and rFactor tends to be forgiving in that department anyhow. I also took a spin in the BMW Sauber F1 car that is included in rFactor V1.150. Using the paddle shifters in this case, the only time I needed the clutch was when I was leaving the pits, getting off the start box on a green flag, or to prevent the car from stalling during one of my many and frequent off track excursions. *(Note: for increased realism, don't forget to disable the 'auto clutch' feature—F11 key toggles this by default.)*

In all cases, the Logitech G25 is a pleasure to drive. With just a few laps of practice, my feet and hands were driving the G25 like I was in the cockpit of a real car. The dual-motor Force-Feedback mechanism provides smooth, consistent forces, the pedals look and feel very realistic, and the shifter is accurate and provides positive engagement feedback.

My overall impression of this wheel set is that it is well-built and worth the \$299 asking price. One would expect to see the features presented with this wheel on a system costing easily twice as much. Logitech has a hit on their hands with this wheel, as it will surely become the hobbyist's wheel of choice for price, compatibility, features, and function. The next step in the Logitech sim-racing wheel market is worth the wait, and sure to please even the hardest of hard-core sim-racers.

As a concluding note: In addition to the obvious PC racing sim applications, the Logitech G25 is advertised as being compatible with Sony's Playstation® 2 sim-racing titles. Due to the magazine holding up for this review, I chose not to explore that claim ... perhaps in next month's issue.



Features:

- 6-speed gated shifter with push-down reverse gear*
- Dial on shifter allows gamers to select mode: 6-speed shifter or sequential shifting mode
- Included gas, pneumatic brake, and clutch pedals on a weighted base.
- Includes Logitech's carpet grip system and rubber foot grip for hardwood floors
- High-torque, two-motor force feedback mechanism
- Realistic 900-degree wheel rotation (2-1/2 turns lock-to-lock)
- High quality materials: 11" steering wheel with leather rim and aluminum spokes and aluminum pedals with steel frames
- Latest industrial design innovation: gas-assisted injection molding process was used during manufacturing, allowing the wheel to be created in a single, durable piece without any seams.
- Compatible with most PlayStation 2 titles

System Requirements

PC requirements:

- PC with Pentium® processor or compatible
- 64 MB RAM; 20 MB of available hard disk space
- CD-ROM drive
- USB port
- Windows® XP or Vista

PlayStation2 force feedback requirements:

- PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system
- Games that support a force feedback wheel**
- Game title capable of supporting G25 features**

** Six-speed shifter is only supported by PC titles (as of 6/5/06)*

*** Racing titles need to support this feature*

The Logitech G25 wheel has an MSRP of US\$299 and comes with a 1-year limited warranty.

Pros

- Easy install and configure
- Clean look
- 2-1/2 turns lock-to-lock
- 3-pedal system
- Smooth, positive shifter
- Appealing style
- High quality materials and craftsmanship

Cons

- Permanent mounting bolts and mounting template not included.
- Manual printed in micro type (but pictures are easy to follow).
- Included long-term repetitive motion leaflet indicates you might not be able to stop racing with the G25.

AUTOSIMSPORT Side-by-Side

JonDenton

Doug Arnao

Jon Denton sits side-by-side with GTR2 and Blimey! Games' Physics and AI Director Doug Arnao to discuss sensitivity, physics values, diffusors, tyre slip-angles, and—is GTR2 as moddable as rFactor?





Jon Denton: Racing cars, which have a heavy dependence on aerodynamic grip, are extremely complex and sensitive when it comes to setup, specifically rake and wing settings, and pitch sensitivity with regards to on track conditions.

In GTR2, the only sim from the SimBin series which is open to modding, we can see in the physics files that the sensitivity values for yaw are set at 0, meaning that there is no loss of downforce based on yaw angle at speed. Why has this setting been used? It would appear to be a physical impossibility in real-life for a car to lose no downforce when yaw is applied to the angle of attack.

Doug Arnao: Actually, some cars gain downforce when presented to the wind at a slight angle. NASCAR's rear spoiler, for instance. This parameter was developed originally for ISI's NASCAR Thunder 04 for that very reason. But truthfully, this was a drivability decision that put this parameter at zero.

Jon Denton: Also, the height sensitivity of the diffuser is using values which are 'off the scale'—in other words, the values used to denote when the diffuser should 'stall' are outside of the limits of rear ride-height settings on the garage setup screens. This is also the case for the settings denoting the effectiveness of the front splitter. Why have these settings been used?

Doug Arnao: These settings don't have any direct correlation to the ride-height in the garage per se. I think you are misinterpreting the way these parameters interact with each other. They are dynamic numbers while the car is in motion, not based off a static garage setting.

Jon Denton: The 'DropoffFunction' setting for the physics of each car is set to +1.0. This implies that the tyre drop-off

curve has been flattened in order to make the car more drivable on the limit, to the point that, when overstepping the limit, the tyre maintains a level of grip at, or very near, its maximum potential grip level. As such, lateral drift is constant, wheelspin has a negligible effect, and braking performance is hardly impaired at all by tyre lockups.

Naturally, a flatter curve would be expected with grooved or road tyres, but GTR2 is simulating big slick tyres with low profiles; can you explain the reasoning behind the choice to set the 'DropoffFunction' value to its current level?

Doug Arnao: From data from the tyre manufacturers. The FIA GT tyres are incredibly forgiving. I was blown away with how flat the plateau was after the peak. This was based on 'new' info' received after GTR1 was released. I even think the curve in GTR2 is not forgiving enough, but other parameters—like this drop off—go in that direction. The load and speed sensitivities, and so forth, all combine to give a dynamic feeling to the tyres that convey the slicks used in this series pretty convincingly, I believe.

Jon Denton: With this in mind, do you think the rFactor BMW F1 tyres (grooved, high profile) which use even negative numbers on the 'DropoffFunction', are wide of the mark when it comes to accuracy?

Doug Arnao: I don't think any current generation tyres should use a negative number there, in my opinion. Again, I think any current generation racing tyre is a lot more forgiving than most suspect.

Jon Denton: GTR2 is open and as easy to mod as rFactor, multiplayer is good, twenty-four hour simulation is in, rain is in, the physics is almost the same—do you think GTR2 is a better modding platform than rFactor?

Doug Arnao: Better? No, not really. rFactor was built fully with modding in mind, so I don't believe GTR2 is any better. I mean, we didn't do anything specifically to make it so, or better—other than leaving the files open, of course.

Jon Denton: You have always been seen in the sim-racing community as a hardcore simulation fanatic, a 'realism policeman' as has been said. Now that SimBin is moving to produce titles for a much wider audience, do you think that you are forced to 'simplify' the physics of their sims in order to aid peoples' enjoyment of driving them, and prevent user frustration?

Doug Arnao: I don't believe we will be doing anymore development work for SimBin, so I don't know what they plan for future physics. Blimey will continue to base our physics on as much realism as possible, then do what we need in the helps or aids department to make it as approachable as we need it to be (and we've been doing a lot of work there). So at its core, with everything stripped away, it remains a realistic model.

Jon Denton: If so, then where do we draw a line between a great title like Gran Turismo 4 (not bad physics), and GTR2?

Doug Arnao: See above. I believe in one physics model, with the right helps and aids to match the market, or user level.

Jon Denton: What do you think about people modifying the original physics of GTR2 in a bid to make it a more 'hard core' simulator?

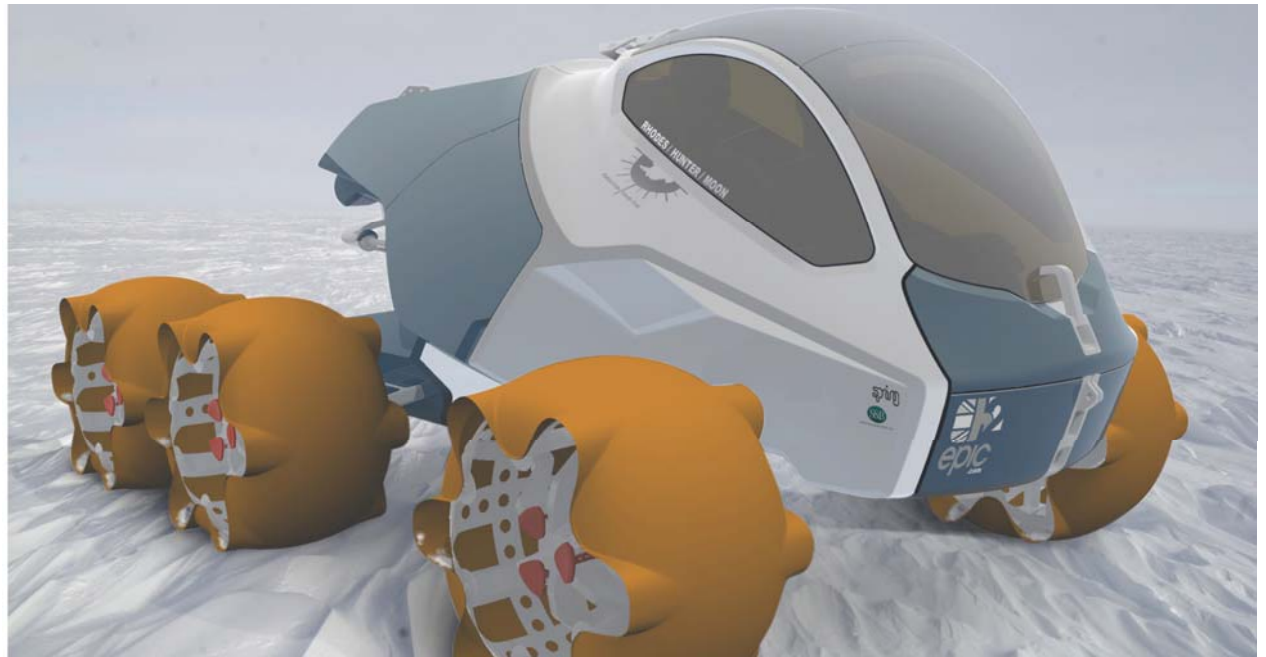
Doug Arnao: I love it. The need to 'make something your own' comes from liking what you have so much that you can't stand not to tweak it to your personal perfection. The desire to make it perfect, for me, is what got me started in this field in the first place! Mod on!

The Kink

H₂Epic— Expeditions Fuelled By Hydrogen Powered By Inspiration

Luisa Ghibaudo and Cynan Rhodes report on the inspirational quest of H2Epic in its ambitious journey from Pole to Pole striving to capture not only our imaginations, but our understanding of what is possible from an environmentally-friendly vehicle.

LuisaGhibaudo



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The constantly changing face of the earth's make-up and our endangered environment sees us confronted with a very real responsibility to preserve and protect our world. We are yet to reach a stage, however, where this responsibility is embraced by the average consumer on a mass scale. [H2Epic](#) seeks to excite, inspire, and encourage this crucial alteration of perspective.

Powered by hydrogen, H2Epic will transport a team in Antarctica to the South Pole, and back, thereby not only pitting this eco-friendly technology against the harshest environment on the planet, but, at the same time, challenging the public's perception of what is possible from an environmentally-friendly vehicle.

Beyond boring buses

Hydrogen automotive fuel-cell applications have, to this point, largely been limited to functional vehicles for mass-transport purposes. While fuel-celled buses and urban golf carts demonstrate the application and effectiveness of the technology, they have failed to inspire the public as to the viability and desirability of eco-friendly vehicles. The current designs will not serve as a catalyst to the fundamental change that is required in order for eco-friendly vehicles to become consumer-demanded products.

This led H2Epic to create a futuristic vehicle that will stand out both in design and concept, and that will move a step beyond today's functional vehicles; a vehicle that will capture the public's imagination and conscience, that will entice and encourage the use of environmentally-friendly transport. A vehicle that will attract global attention.

This strikingly cool vehicle is eco-friendly, and can travel in the remotest parts of the planet. It has the power to change; it is the future.

Recently, Steve Wozniak, ex Apple co-founder, announced at Stanford's 'AlwaysOn' Conference, that he

will be leading a U.S. expedition to take a fuel-celled Hummer to the South Pole. Such a high profile prize cannot go unchallenged, particularly given the long-standing tradition of British Polar firsts. H2Epic have reconfirmed their goal of arriving at the South Pole during the International Polar Year (2007/2008), and before the American Team.

Exciting concepts

Designed by James Moon, and nicknamed '90DegreesSouth', the vehicle formed a part of James' dissertation for his Masters in Vehicle Design at London's Royal College of Art in 2005.

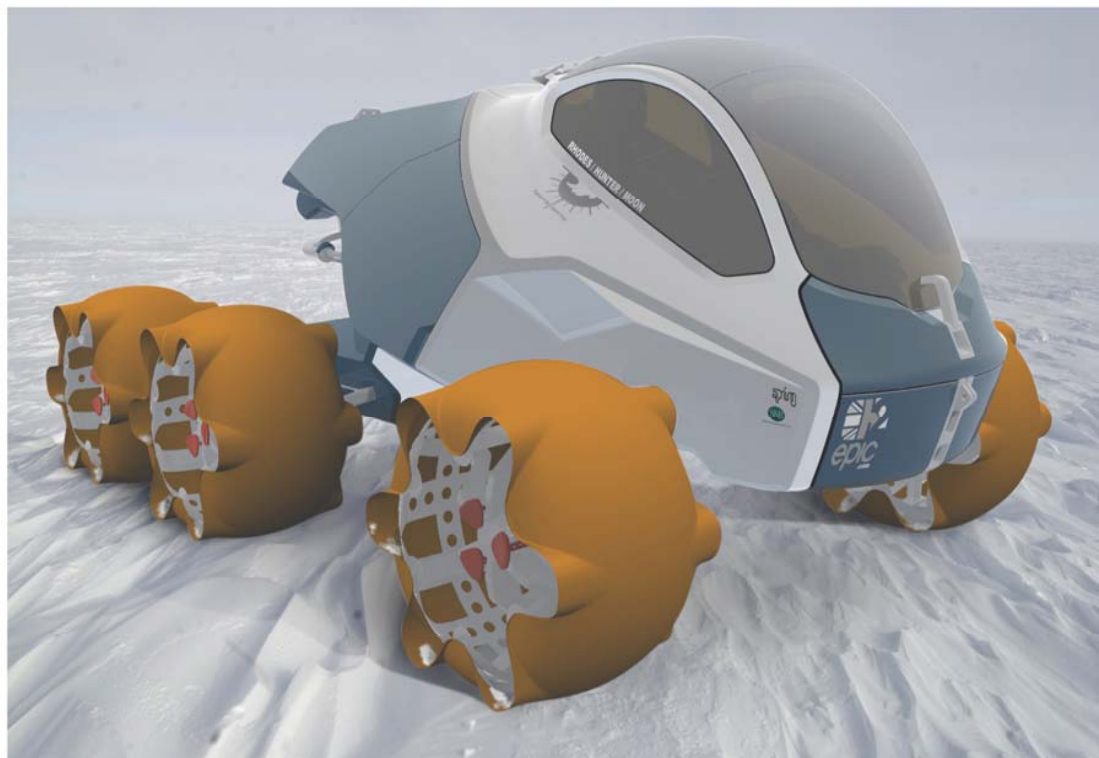
It was a well-researched project that attracted the involvement of, amongst others, the British Antarctic Survey [BAS], the Royal Geographical Society [RGS], and the London Guildhalls. The project went on to win a number of automotive and design prizes, as well as receiving international media coverage.

90DegreesSouth was designed with the Antarctic at its heart, but with an eye to working in all extreme environments and, as such, is perfectly suited to H2Epic's goals and vision for the future.

H2Epic will be combining James' design with environmentally-friendly technology.

Practical technology

H2Epic is the practical application of an emerging technology, and will partner with a number of companies to use existing fuel-cell power plants, drivetrain, and storage components. It will adapt the available technology to the harsh requirements of extreme, remote environments. The vehicle will be powered by a 10 kilowatt fuel-cell stack using compressed hydrogen. A fuel-cell works by combining hydrogen and oxygen to generate energy through electrolysis. The energy from the fuel-cell is used to drive an electric motor which then drives the wheels. The only waste product is water, H₂O.



H2EPIC Hydrogen fuelled expedition vehicle

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Extreme Antarctica

While it is the most extreme of the Earth's environments, Antarctica is also the most pristine. It is stunningly beautiful, largely untouched by people, and yet very fragile. We have an obligation to protect it. It is a huge challenge to live and to travel in this environment. If the technology works in Antarctica, it will work anywhere.

The H2Epic expedition will be undertaken by a team of two: Cynan Rhodes, and Charlie Hunter. They will

begin their journey at Patriot Hills, a base on the west coast of Antarctic. They will then travel to the South Pole, before returning back to Patriot Hills.

When: Dec 2007—Jan 2008

Distance: 1076kms each way (2152kms total)

Altitude: 1800m at Patriot Hills—2850m at the South Pole

Temperatures: H2Epic will be travelling in high summer only (Dec/Jan), and the lowest temperatures expected are -30 Celsius, with a maximum of 0 Celsius

Terrain: A mix between soft snow and hard ice. Similar to an ocean, the wind creates snow and ice waves which are very tough on vehicles

Team Members

Cynan Rhodes, Co-Expedition Leader. Cynan has eight years experience as a rally driver, a number of polar expeditions (including a Greenland crossing) under his belt, and five years experience in the international distribution of TV footage. He will be driving the vehicle in Antarctica.

Charlie Hunter, the Co-Expedition Leader. Charlie is a former member of the Honourable Artillery Company with wide expedition experience in all terrains. He will be driving the vehicle in Antarctica along with Cynan Rhodes.

James Moon, automotive interior, exterior, and concept designer. He has an MA from the Royal College of Arts, and will provide support and communications in Antarctica.

Peter Ball, marketing and sponsorship. Peter was the General Manager of Marketing & Communications at Toyota F1, and ex-Marketing Manager of Castrol International.

Kevin Traverse-Healy, marketing and public relations. With a DL, MA, and FIPR, Kevin is a principal of a London-based PR consultancy, as well as International Director for Communication Skills Europe, chairman of Astrolabe Communications (a financial PR consultancy), and director of the Centre for Public Affairs Studies.

David Beck, international sponsorship and marketing. David has eighteen years experience in international sponsorship, and has initiated sponsorships in Formula One, World Rally, and Tri-Nations Rugby.

Oliver Shepard, medic, dentist, scientist, and mechanic. Oliver was on the expedition led by Sir Ranulph Fiennes (1979-1982), the second and longest traverse of Antarctica.

Paul Rose, risk management. Paul is an ex-Base Commander at the British Rothera Research Antarctic Base, and has been awarded HM The Queen's Polar Medal, as well as the U.S. Navy Polar Medal.

Brigid O'Neill, legal. Brigid is the Head of Litigation for a FTSE 30 company, and has extensive legal and commercial experience in banking, construction, and telecommunications.

Scott Walker, human performance. Scott has ten years' experience at leading performance programmes in extreme

Championship, Land Speed Attempts, Water Speed Attempts, and aerospace/military environment. He is a two-time Winter Olympian (1994/1998).



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T4

Sergio Bustamante

Mad Cows And Englishmen

Sergio Bustamante examines how creativity, Radio Control Cars, a twist of gasoline, mad cows, Codemasters, Hump Backs, and the earliest computers resulted in the cyber-whirlwind known as 'Madcowie', AKA, Stuart Cowie, the man behind many of sim-racing's most unique and innovative mods (including his masterpiece, GPL Rally).



T4 Mad Cows And Englishmen

continued

Full Name: Stuart David Cowie

Birthday: 24/11/1972

Nickname: Madcowie

Hobbies: Computers, Tennis, Pool, and socializing with the right type!



Dedication, commitment, and perseverance—every modder worth his salt will have these qualities in abundance, and they are all very much in evidence in Madcowie's work, despite his reputation as being the mod-world's craziest creator. But what distinguishes him from the many talented modders in sim-racing is his wonderful and off-the-wall creativity—his mods always offer something new, something creative—something fun. Stunt tracks, GPL Rally, N2003 rallycross—Stuart has literally invented many of sim-racing's greatest moments, and his sheer madcap inspiration remains unmatched by any modder out there.



No surprise, then, that his name—Madcowie—should derive from a story as amusing as some of his creations.

"My nick name—Madcowie—goes back to my Radio Control days," Stuart explains. "I used to race 1/10 off-road for about six years, and eventually gave up due to women and money. But Madcowie comes from my racing buddies on a Sunday afternoon. I would class myself as very easy going and pretty laid back. But when it came to the race, I used to stand on the rostrum and grow horns out of the side of my head. I would be forever shouting at other racers whilst racing, and every now and again, I would get really mad with the back markers. At the time, Mad Cow Disease was new to England, and obviously with my surname being Cowie, the name Madcowie was established."

Madcowie is known for mods that span many different sims—but many believe that his best work was seen for Grand Prix Legends—I asked him what drew him toward racing simulators?

"Well, my dad got me into computers back in 1981 with a ZX 81," Stuart explains. "From there on, it never stopped. My first real racing simulator was Revs on the BBC with one track (*Silverstone*). I used to play this game to death ... and I mean *death*. From there, I moved onto Indy 500 on the Amiga, and then eventually GP1, 2, 3, and 4."

And when did his interest in modding begin?

"My first ever go at real modeling actually started when Monster Truck Madness came out," Stuart tells me. "Boy did I love this game! I didn't have an internet connection back then, so everything I made, I made for myself. I was easily pleased, looking back, but I managed to make fifty-five tracks for it in less than a year!"

Stuart is a rare breed in sim-racing; someone who has seen the evolution not only of the genre, but of computers themselves—the world has come a long way from the Sinclair ZX81, the cream of computer technology in 1981 with its astounding 1K of memory! Stuart has seen them all ...

"I sure have," says Stuart. "There haven't been many computers released in this world that I haven't had!"

Stuart's modding career, however, has not always endeared him to his fellow modders, especially in the very staid atmosphere of Grand Prix Legends modding, where authenticity remains, to this day, a high priority. Stuart has always been something of a maverick, and has frequently modded series and classes that others have ignored. One such example is his superb off-road racing mod for GPL—I asked him how this came about.

"Off-road racing obviously goes back to my Radio Control days," replies Stuart. "But the truck racing goes back to the early 1990s when I became a SKY subscriber. A channel called Screen Sport broadcasted every round of the Stadium Truck Racing series in the space of two weeks. I decided to video the lot and, until this year, I still owned that video. Unfortunately, it has been lost now, but I still have fond memories of it. Before all this editing started, a game called Leadfoot (by Ratbag) was released, and I could not wait for its release. This sim was based loosely on the stadium truck racing you used to see.

"But yes, most people do associate me with mad things and mad ideas. I know when I started editing for GPL, most of my ideas didn't go down too well. GPL has a great following, and also great bunch of guys {around it} who are very much focused on the era of the sim. So

when I came along with modern looking tracks and crazy ideas, it took a while for the oldies," he smiles, "to accept me. After all, in GPL, I did make some bloody ridiculous stuff. Including stunt tracks, rally stages, and auto tests!"

Mad ideas indeed! His stunt tracks are legendary in GPL—does he have any fond moments from those heady days?

"I think for me it would have been when I got in one night and clicked on Outlook, and one of the emails that came through was from one of the guys at Codemasters. He basically said, thank you very much for Hump Back. All of the guys at the Codemasters office had been having lots of fun with this track at dinner time playing online against each other. I think that was a highlight for me in my GPL era ..."

Sim-racing enjoyed a huge boost with the add-on tracks for GPL, and many sim-racers—especially the quick ones racing the new generation of sims—were all hardcore GPLers. Trying to race those 1969 jewels on Macowie's stunt tracks really brought a new dimension to sim-racing. When he made Hump Back, I ask, were there some stunt tracks already in the Tracks Database?

"Oh, definitely not," replies Stuart. "Or not that I know of, anyway. I believe there might have been something that was like the wall of death, but nothing as mad as a stunt track. Obviously, the tracks I made were based on good old Geoff Crammond who made a sim called Stunt Car Racer for various formats."

Stuart's fascination with the history of computers means he has seen sims come and go—I asked him which had been the most influential.

"Well, I think it has to be Grand Prix Legends," he says. "It's still installed on my hard drive, and every now and again I give it a blast to see if I still have what it takes to drive at a reasonable pace, as well as looking back on those mad tracks."



"I think the competition, GPL Rally 1 and 2, were a real success for me. The first one was a challenge, as I made the tracks when the competition started. I basically gave myself one week to make a stage for the rally, and also to set a reasonable time, along with all of the admin' that goes with it. It sure was a challenge to keep going for eleven weeks. GPL Rally 2 was a different story, as it had pretty much established itself before the competition started. RSC gave me a big build-up, and did reviews on the stages, and posted them on the main page before the rally had even started. So when the contest finally got going, I think we had over 900 competitors. On top of that, the guys at LiveForSpeed had backed the mod team, and we gave out prizes along the way. We also gave away a top-notch graphics card at the end of the competition. I thank all of those guys that supported me on this project, it sure was a lot of fun for the sixteen weeks it lasted! ..."

900 competitors! That's huge ... Are there any plans to make another GPL Rally in the near future?

"GPL Rally I very much doubt. Maybe an rFactor Rally, but at this time there are no plans."

Modding has always been about co-operation, and I asked Stuart who he feels has been the most instrumental to his success.

"Oh for sure," he replies, "in my GPL days, I would definitely say Robert Hunter (Border River). GPL Rally 1 basically put me in touch with Rob, and from there on to the end, Rob and I worked together—most of the time in harmony! Basically, I used to build the tracks, and Rob would make all of the objects that went around them. This help also carried me forward for when I crossed the virtual pond and moved from GPL to NASCAR 2003, because I could use a lot of the objects that Rob had made for me."

N2003, another fantastic Papyrus sim that holds a special place in sim-racing history—it remains, to this day, probably the most raced sim in the world. Has Stuart been involved in the modding of many sims?

"Not many, really. I don't actually own that many PC games. This way, I manage to stay focused on the project (or projects!) at hand. So editing in a linear way. I would say my linear progression has been Grand Prix 2, Monster Truck Madness, Leadfoot, GPL, N2003, and finally rFactor. Can't see me moving for a while either," he says, before adding that, "I used to make daft bloody things for N2003! Including Stunt Tracks (surprised? Not!), and rally tracks. I think the maddest thing I ever did in N2003 was to invent rallycross. One barmy night in November, I held a rallycross meeting online with about twenty competitors. I tried to run a format of twenty heats plus finals, and it started off as complete disaster which sent my blood pressure through the roof!"

I can imagine! On the personal-technical side of things, in his GPL days, what boosted his interest for N2003 and, furthermore, for rFactor?



"I think I got to the point where I pretty much wore myself out with GPL," Stuart replies. "I had done pretty much everything I had wanted to do with the great sim, and towards the end of my GPL life, it was becoming more a chore than an enjoyment (hobby). I remember, during the time of GPL Rally 2, my interest in GPL was slowly starting to evaporate, and I heard that Sierra had released a track editor for NASCAR 2003.

"I decided to have a look and, from that point, I never really looked back as N2003 editing was so much easier to do than GPL editing but, at the same time, I could carry a lot of knowledge over from my GPL editing days. I also loved the idea of having forty-odd AI cars to race against, and better AI compared to GPL's twenty cars ...

"So I spent the next few years working with tracks and trying out some mad things once again along the way. Back then, I had a big interest in rallycross, and I attempted to make a few rallycross tracks for this wonderful sim along the way, even though N2003, surprisingly, didn't really have the physics for such a mad idea.



"Then I went through a phase when life in front of the computer screen took a bit of a nose-dive, to say the least ... I lost interest in doing any editing for the next few months. When I returned back on the scene, rFactor wasn't too far away from being released, and despite not previously being the biggest ISI fan, I decided to give it a go. Right from the start, I was amazed by rFactor, and it had me hooked for the next few weeks online. I've always enjoyed editing more than playing nearly all the sims I've played so far, but rFactor was different. Early on, Lo's F3 mod came out for rFactor, and I would sit there and race this mod to death online. It was a fair few weeks before I decided to have ago at track editing for rFactor, and the release of 3DSimEd prompted me to make a start."

A comeback with a complete different platform, not from the Papyrus heritage ... This involves a lot of learning, and getting acquainted with new tools, file formats, the works—how hard was it to get acquainted with rFactor?

"To start with, it was a whole new ball game. I struggled like hell at the start. Not so much with the N2003 editing, but certainly with the rFactor editing. For us Papyrus modders who have swapped from the Papyrus way of

things to the ISI way of things, it is, at the start, like chalk and cheese. I think, to be honest, I got bloody lucky when I started rFactor editing. A couple of my buddies from the US Pits seemed to learn a few things early on, and that was enough to get me going. And then I met MotorFX, and he was my ultimate aid in track editing. We would regularly spend a few hours on the phone each week discussing how the hell I do this and that!"

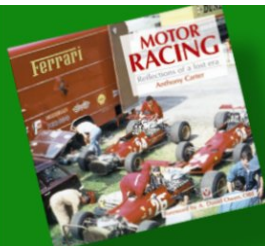
One of the great things, I imagine, about being 'Madcowie', is that he gets to test his own inventions before anyone else—kinda like a mad scientist in a horror flick! All the same, he has been a victim of some scathing criticism in his career—does he have advice for modders that are just starting out, and for those who reap the benefits of modders' work?

"I think that one thing most people should realize," replies Stuart, "is how much time all of these modders actually put into modeling and painting. These addons are certainly not the quickest thing on earth to create, and at times can take up a lot of free time. Something that really drives me mad is seeing negative comments in the various forums. I admit some conversions can be a simple click, click, and done, but this is not the case with most projects."

The life of a modder is always a difficult one, and frequently, the best they can hope for is a few dancing bananas on a forum somewhere—or some vicious attack by some troll who has very little else to do—does he have any advice for the punters?

"Well, first of all, I would say—if you haven't got anything worth saying, then don't bother. And if you have something negative to say, make sure it's constructive!"

I cannot agree more; no matter whether you like or dislike a project, and no matter whether one thinks a project meets with one's approval or otherwise, attacking a modder—who has spent days, weeks and, in many



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cases months building his mod—on a forum is just plain wrong, disrespectful and, ultimately, damaging to the community itself. Had Stuart not been completely mad (joke!), some of the criticism he received early on in his career could have seen this wonderful and unique talent quit the modding scene for good. And whether you enjoy his mods or not really doesn't matter—because what is for certain is that he enjoys a huge following, and all of them are now wondering ... what is coming next in the near future?

"Mmm ... What time limit does the word 'near' have written on it?" he asks laughing. "Let's see ... well, I've been working on a few mods now for last few months, and they're all getting delayed by one another. I am part



of a mod team called LPC. LPC have been working on rallycross, BRISCA, and Hotrods for about eight months now. My job for the team is pretty much track building. At the moment, we are putting a big push to get the BRISCA mod released to the general public, but don't hold your breath just yet. We think it's a couple of months away at the moment. The rallycross mod is gradually putting itself together as we go. Basically, each of our team members is working on a car each. I also landed myself a car with this task. But once again my main role is track building. The Hotrods tie in with the BRISCA tracks, so that pretty much kills two birds with one stone.

"... And then," he adds after a moment, "in the background, I am working on a mod myself called ORR,



which is getting nearer and nearer, but once again it's getting delayed by my LPC commitments. At the same time though, I am learning more and more every day, so that's improving my ORR mod more and more."

So there it is: one of sim-racing's most authentic modders is back on the saddle, and his rFactor mods are coming to an rFactor Central download near you. I for one cannot wait—I've been a big fan of Madcowie's work for a really long time.

I ask him whether he has any final thoughts ...

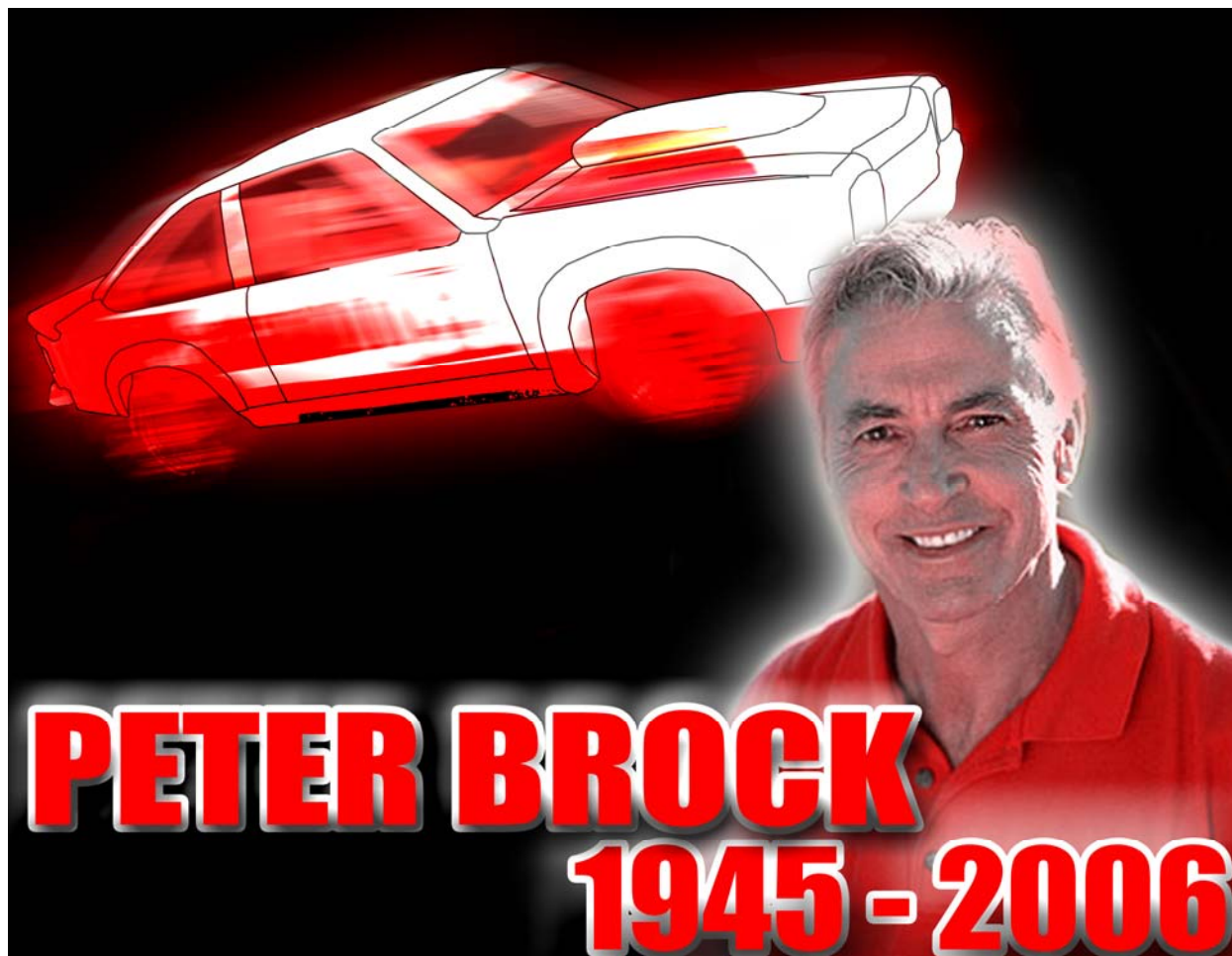
"Hey, it's been a real honour to be invited to do this interview for a great magazine. I would like to say a *big* thank you to all of you at GPLegacy, and also a *big* hello to my LPC mod team."

Thank You Brocky

Jiminee Smith pays a personal tribute to the life and career of one of Australia's most beloved race-drivers—Peter Brock—who passed away this month at age sixty-one.

JimineeSmith—

Photos Courtesy:



Friday, September the 8th saw the unfortunate loss of Australian motor-sports legend Peter Brock. At the wheel of his Chev' powered Daytona Replica, The King of the Mountain joined Steve Irwin, the Crocodile Hunter, as the second great Australian to pass within a week. Both were renowned for the infectious enthusiasm, wonderful spirit, and brilliant example to others. Both also had lives that deserve to be celebrated even as we mourn their passing. The feelings of shock and grief continue to be felt throughout the community, but their legacy will live on, and continue to inspire. I would like to pay tribute to Brocky and share my gratitude for the memories and encouragement he provided to all those that were touched by his life.

For most of us, our involvement in sim-racing is an extension of our love of motor-sports, a way for us to be actively involved, rather than just watching, reading, and talking about it. As well as all the challenges sim-racing presents, and the opportunities to learn, it also gives us a chance to emulate our heroes, those drivers that have something special about them—and who mean something special, to us.

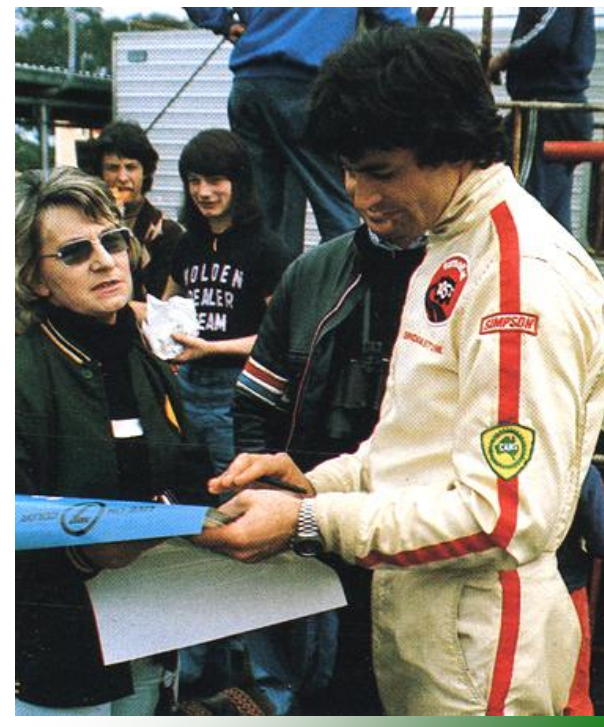
Just why these select few drivers reach a status above other successful drivers is often due to the way they carried themselves off the track, not just on it. Drivers like Jim Clark, Gilles Villeneuve, Ayrton Senna, and Dale Earnhardt, all blistering fast and immensely skilful, have somehow transcended their sport to become more than what they did—they symbolised something in us, they stirred something vital within us.

Whether it was the incredible determination and ruthlessness of Earnhardt and Senna, or the energy and car control of Clark and Villeneuve, these four men have somehow merged their skill with their lives, and their deaths have done nothing to dim our passion for their lives.



Even in their death, it is these men that we seek to emulate. All four were known for their honesty, and their personalities were somehow reflected in their driving style. There was never a dull race with those guys, and it was always a privilege just seeing them drive. Each was taken before their time too, doing what they loved—having a 'red-hot go.'

There is something uniquely inspirational about these men: men who will risk their lives doing what they love—men who will risk their very mortality in a personal quest for whatever it is that they seek to quell in their hearts. And motor-sports fans cannot help but respond because, when all is said and done, no-one ever doubted that when these guys got behind the wheel, they were going to go as fast as they knew, whether it was for the win or twenty-second place. They inspired us when they were alive; and they continue to inspire us in their death. Because the truth



is, it is us, their fans, that keep their spirits alive—it is us, our tributes, that afford them the immortality that their lives deserved.

Peter Brock was like that too. Just hearing his name would grab your attention, and seeing that famous 05 was always reason enough to watch, no matter what the car or track. Listening to, and taking on what he said, was always a highlight for me. It was rarely clichéd, always well thought-out, and usually inspirational.

Brocky had a unique view on the universe, and whether you agreed with him or not, he made you think, and he always got your interest. I was never lucky enough to know him personally, but I did meet him a few times, got his autograph, shook his hand, got a photo with him

... like thousands of others, even those few seconds was enough to make me feel like he was a mate.

Sports fans are, for the most part, fairly smart, and they can tell when somebody is going through the motions because their manager has told them to go out and meet the fans. Sure they do it—usually the minimum required—before heading off to do something more ‘important’. But being around Brocky was different. It was exciting, there was always a nervous buzz of excitement in the air generated by the people around waiting for their moment to meet the Great Man ... and yet, he always looked relaxed, a quiet calmness about him ... even when one of his team was suggesting that there were only five minutes before the next practice/qualifying/race, and maybe it would be a good idea if he would go and get ready! There would still be a hundred people waiting in line to see him though, so when he did have to finally turn and go, you could almost see that he was as disappointed as those who missed out, because *all* his fans meant something to him.

Upon hearing the first news reports suggesting that Brocky had been killed, a numb feeling kind of overtook me. They were unconfirmed reports at first, I was home that day with the flu, and had just sat down to have a short test at *Imola* for the upcoming RACER F1 series, when the phone rang and it was suggested I turn on the news.

I had a number of phone calls and text messages in the next hour. Everyone that knows me knows that I am a huge Brocky fan, so as soon as they heard the news, they felt they had to reluctantly pass it on to me. I knew my Dad was home that afternoon too, so when the news had been confirmed, and the hopes that maybe he wasn't dead—maybe it was just a mistake—were crushed, I gave him a call and passed on the news. Now the reason I have cheered for 05 for as long as I can remember is because Dad did, as often happens, so having to tell him Brocky

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was gone was one of the hardest things I have ever had to do.

Later that evening though, having read a number of tributes to him, and memories of him, I made a conscious effort to concentrate more on what made Brocky great as well as mourning his passing.

On one of my Peter Brock videos he says, "Don't be sad it's coming to an end, be happy that it happened", and that sums him up pretty well. As a driver, he had few peers, not just in outright speed, but also with his mechanical sympathy, his adaptability, his perseverance, his style, and his race craft. I honestly cannot recall seeing him bump someone out of the way with a desperate lunge or reckless manoeuvre. I am sure that somewhere it happened, as a lot of his racing was done before my time, but unlike some, he will not be remembered for controversial moments on the track. His influence will go on too; a look through the driver line-up for Bathurst this years shows names like Craig Lowndes, Greg Murphy, Mark Skaife, Brad Jones, and Nathan Pretty—just a few of the drivers he helped, taught or mentored onto greater things.

As great as he was a racer though, he was an even better man. Humble, composed, inspirational, generous—words don't do him justice. He may have earned the nickname Peter Perfect on the track, but he never pretended he to be anything like it—he had his faults, which some took great joy in exposing, but you don't grow to be so loved by so many if you're not doing something right.

His community and charitable work was tireless (as demonstrated by the [Peter Brock Foundation](#), that continues unabated), and set a fantastic example. His efforts to make Australian roads a safer place were also far reaching and long lasting. He lifted peoples' spirits, and made you want to do more, achieve more, set a higher standard, and become a better person.



People are still in shock nearly two weeks later; the icon of Australian motor-sport is gone. But he will not be forgotten for a very, very long time. He was a great Australian, and will be greatly missed, but thank you

Brocky, thank you for the memories, the inspiration, the example you set, and everything you contributed to make the world a better place.

05 Forever!

AUTOSIMSPORT

The Wreck

IvanAskew

Mitsufumi

Mitsufumi-san!

Ivan Askew sits down with Japan's greatest sim-racing expert—Mitsufumi-san—whose industrious quest for sim-racing truth has entranced a generation of sim-racers. AUTOSIMSPORT has signed a deal with this internationally syndicated writer, and it is with pride that we begin our association with Mitsufumi-san with this world exclusive one-on-one. ...

It all started with [a post on RSC](#). "rFactor REVIEW!!! and introduce me" was the thread title. Mitsufumi-san was unleashed—the sim-san, the Japanese wunderkind—the ultimate sim-racing reviewer. Having shaken the very foundations of the sport of sim-racing, he then went on to pen a follow up [netkar review](#). So what's next for this sim-zen-word-warrior?

Ivan Askew: Hello Mitsufumi-san, a pleasure to meet you.

There is a long delay ... I can only assume he is struggling with the language.

Mitsufumi-san: Hi!! It is my great pleasure to accept your meat.

Ivan Askew: Believe me, the pleasure is all mine. Mitsufumi-san, I'm sure the majority of our readers have read your fabulous rFactor review. Why did someone as important as you decide to do a review?

Mitsufumi-san: The review rFactor is a virgin review for me. For the longest times, I have play the game and try to read comment on forum—but understood English cannot! It made for my immesurable frustrate. So ... I became the expert in English! In two month!! A grasp-handle is become higher over this year, so I write it. You enjoy it!

Ivan Askew: Two months? You learn fast. You also introduced a Japanese character in your review—one Mr. Hiroku.

Mitsufumi-san: Yes, Mr Hiroku is making my amusement, and many other mans and animal in Japan—constant

laughing!! Laugh with vigour so much that my bowel collapse!

Ivan Askew: Do you have a Mr. Hiroku joke you could share?

It takes a moment before:

Mitsufumi-san: I tell it one. Mr Hiroku makes for house of prostitute. Some time before commence the act of reproduction. Suddenly! The woman demand to see passport!! Suddenly.

"This is not appropriate?!" Say Hiroku with fuming! Shaft hovering!!! When woman refuse to consummate, Hiroku explode in frustrate! "Why? Passport!" Shout Hiroku!

"Because I need it view entry visa is stamped appropriate!"

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA—Are you transeate for your enjoyable time?

Ivan Askew: Oh yes, perfectly ... hhehahh ... errrrrrghhhhh. Anyway, getting back to sim racing—what got you into racing games in general?

Mitsufumi-san: Night Racer, on ATARI. And Gengki Desuka Super Race 5. You will play it!

Ivan Askew: I ... er ...

Mitsufumi-san: You play it!

Ivan Askew: No, sorry. Anyway, what was first real 'simulator' that you fell in love with?

Mitsufumi-san: The sim of Papyrus did initial excite! The Indy 500 sim. For it became my Mary, saviour of earth—

Hesus. First—the love of Crammond REVS dampen my appetite. Of which came first—it is not known.

Ivan Askew: Indeed. So what sims have you been looking forward to the most?

Mitsufumi-san: For me the simulation of West Racing became my enourmose erection. The initial World Sport Car and now the Racing Legend! The graphic and dream made for my amaze. My face *exploded* in joy! Fullness. Shinji purr loudly when visit west racing website.

Ivan Askew: Shinji?

Mitsufumi-san: My cat animal. Enjoy your scent!!! You are good with sim race—Shinji purr when good race. Please do not become!!

Ivan Askew: Umm ... no, quite. Your cat purrs when you race?

Mitsufumi-san: For some time—only the sim of good. He wavers in the judgement of not appropriate sims.

Ivan Askew: I see. And which sims does Shinji think are 'inappropriate'?

Mitsufumi-san: The sim of horror arousal is the F1 Challenges. I say once and am saying multiple time, I became the most ill when playing. I become born with motion sickness, throw vomit and spray urinate uncontroll. Suddenly! Shinji also becomes down with a malady when play! Sim.

Ivan Askew: How unfortunate. Are there any rFactor mods you are eagerly waiting for?

Mitsufumi-san: The mod of V8FACTOR did make for my exciting day ... A review may be born for this mod! I can say, immediate—MITSUFUMI-SAN APPROVE!

For mod of future, it is wanted with inappropriate lust the mod of F1 1979 and 1984 and 1992 and 1994. And JGTC. I hope also to have the GT4 mod, I think called JSC—street car with upgrade! It is my wishful. For Tsukuba drift!

Ivan Askew: *What sims have you been racing recently?*



Mitsufumi-san: The sim of rFactor is making the most *fun* time for me – for amount of mod is so large I am frighten my explode hard disk! Too much info! Most mod play is V8Factor, CTD and Boku no atama wa omoshiroi-factor.

Also also play the Rally of Richard Burn—this makes for my excite!

Ivan Askew: *What do you see as the future of sims?*

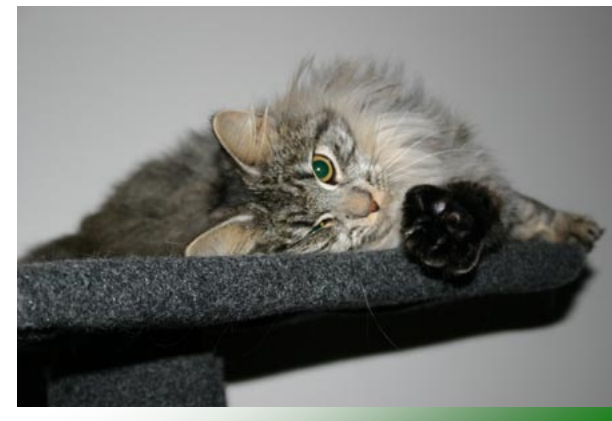
Mitsufumi-san: I think about this—a 3D display—attach to face! A G-Force arrangement in your seating, body moving to fool into believe you body will move! Electrode attach to body to electrocute you, when crash! Therefore we get a 'fear factor'. An electrocution guarantee you lift in Eau Rouge!—with electrode on scrotum. HAHAAHAHAHA. I require this future sim to be born IMMEDIATE!

Ivan Askew: Are you married?

Mitsufumi-san: No! Marriage cannot—not marry for many year. A bachelor life is had—more time for the

race! And to bed many other creatures without fear of reprisal. I have friend of life Kobi, he provide English help and assist in personal conundrum.

Ivan Askew: How would you like to write for AUTOSIMSPORT?



Mitsufumi-san: WHAT QUESTION!!

Ivan Askew: How would you like to write for AUTOSIMSPORT? You can have the back page to talk about whatever you want!

Mitsufumi-san: My love for you is growing! *Fast*. I write for magazine!! *Immediate*! I am mounting arousal. You enjoy it!

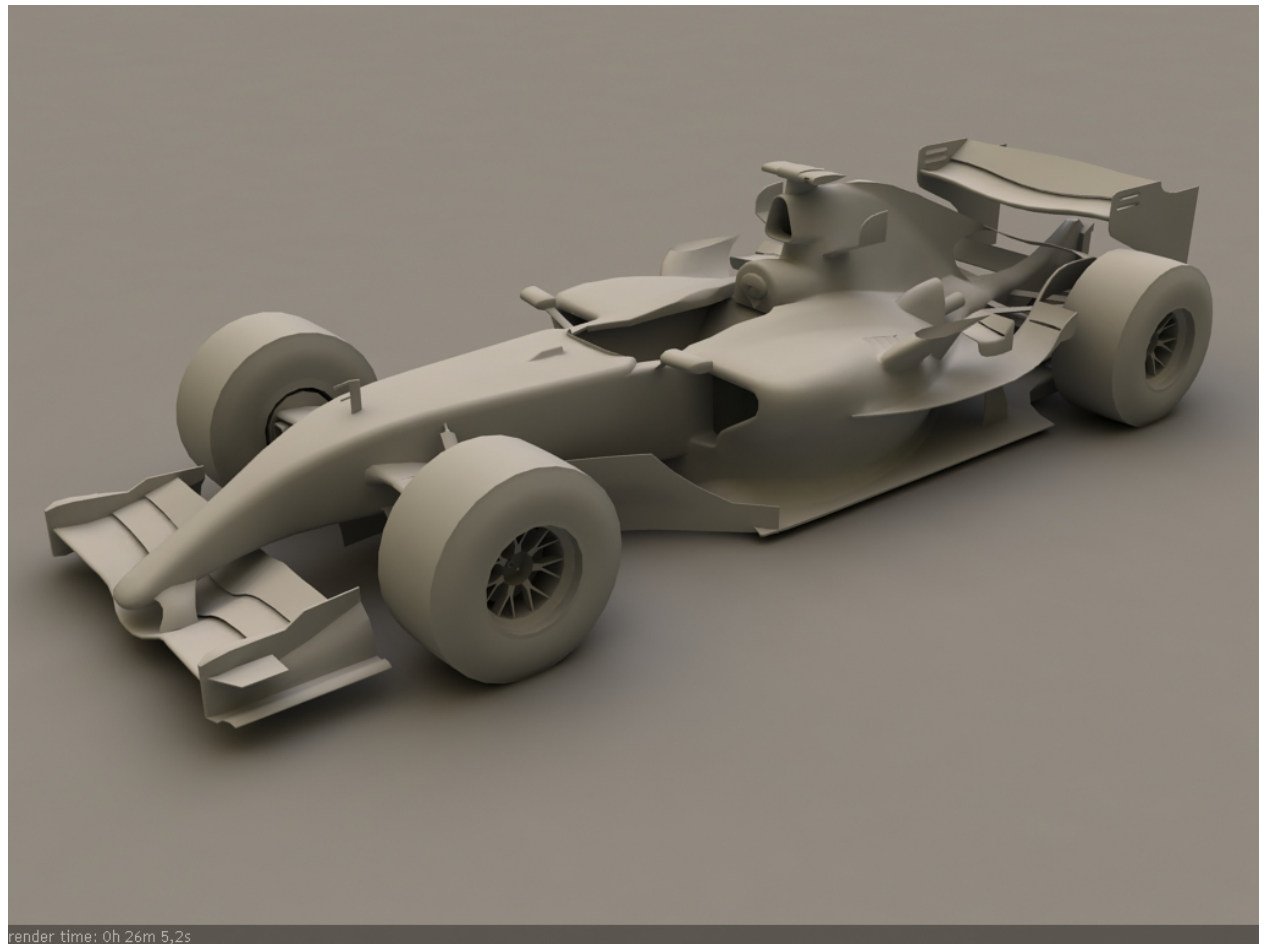
Well there it is—now that our readers have been introduced to 'Mitsi', we can confirm that we will be running his syndicated column every month. But if you can't get enough, you can always 'Talk to Interactive Mitsi'! If you have a question or some feedback for him, why not email him—askmitsi@autosimспорт.net. Perhaps, if you're lucky, an answer to your question will be published next month!

Backstraight

The Modeler

Ivan Askew sits down with Erik Schakel, MMG's chief model-designer for the upcoming 2006 Formula One Mod for rFactor, to find out all about the process—is it art, or is it craft?

IvanAskew





For those of you who read AUTOSIMSPORT's August Issue (Vol2 Num7), you will already be well-acquainted with Erik Schakel's work—he is the model-designer for the up-coming 2006 MMG F1 mod which was profiled in that edition.

Seventeen year-old Erik, who lives in Amerongen, "a little village in the middle of Holland", has always harboured an intense interest in racing sims, as well as being enthralled at the power of changing the visuals to suit his aesthetic eye.

"I have always been fascinated with changing things," he explains, "because for me, it either wasn't real enough, or I wanted to take a ride in one of my own creations."

Speak to almost all mod-makers, and you get pretty-much the same answer—the passion is always sparked by the desire to primarily please something within themselves. "When I got F12002," Erik says, "I started to learn a little about modding a sim, about changing the files."

The desire to mod started, for Erik, at a young age, when he was thirteen, to be exact, when his father got him a copy of PhotoShop. "I started to experiment with it," Erik recalls, "and I started to look on the internet for this-and-that, but I found I had too little knowledge to find what I needed. I was fourteen by the time I felt I was able to work with PhotoShop. I'd also got a copy of ZModeler, but hadn't got a clue how *that* worked, so I let it rest. It was about that time that I got into the WTM Team (Winter Test Mod Team), and there I painted my first car, BAR's test-car. That was the start of my modding career, if I may call it so."

Of course, painting cars has long-since been the entry-point for future modelers, a kind of apprenticeship leading on to the more challenging role of mod-maker. For Erik, modeling remained the ultimate goal, but, he confesses, "Because I knew very little about the process, it just wasn't possible at the time. But one of the WTM crew began helping me with some standard tools in ZModeler, and took the time to explain the process to me. That's when I decided to let painting rest, and to give modeling a try."

As is common for many modelers, the decision was met with a lengthy period of frustration as Erik began familiarizing himself with the process of creating models.

"In the end," he says now, "I got everything right, and I was able to begin modeling." It was at that time that he was approached by one of his friends, 'Race Speeder', who had the idea of forming a Mod Team.

"We started WDT together (Worldracing Design Team), and our first project was an F3000 mod, which," he adds, "was cancelled later on." With their first attempt aborted, the team went into an hiatus for a lengthy period, and Erik hired himself out: "I modeled here and there, some cars, nothing really serious, until, in 2005, we decided to make a mod called F1 2005." The motivation of taking on such a big project, Erik says, was, "Because we thought we wanted to compete with the bigger mod teams, and Formula One was the main racing series we liked."

Sadly, that mod, too, landed up not being completed due to various issues: "When we started the F1 2005 mod with WDT," recalls Erik, "we got in some really fast people

who wanted to help, and Danny Plinck and I started with the Minardi, and we finished the car pretty quickly. However, Danny was more interested in Track-editing, and he left us for the EuroModGroup. Due to bad organisation, WDT became messy, and in the end, nobody knew anything—it just wasn't able to go right anymore. WDT was one big mess."

It was at that time that they were approached by Petros Mak's MMG (who are working on the seminal F1 195-2006 mod for various sims). "We liked the idea of MMG," Erik says, "and decided to work further under the name of MMG. Some members left, but most of the members joined MMG."

With what remained of WDT now under MMG's umbrella, Erik began working on what is his current project—the F1 2006 mod for rFactor. "We're trying to finish the cars as soon as possible," Erik says, "but, unfortunately, 'Race Speeder' has experienced some problems with his PC, and isn't able to work on it anymore."

The McLaren, Erik explains, is the latest model to be completed, and it makes its debut in this magazine this month. I asked Erik a little about the process of modding: with what does one start, what is the canvas?

"Well, first of all," Erik begins, "I use the proportions of an average Formula One car. For the F1 2006 mod, I used the Midland for making a basic setup for the car, and I used my F1 2005 Minardi model to create the Midland."



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As for the actual process, Erik begins with a low-poly shape and, as he progresses with the model, he makes the model more detailed. "when you have a low-poly base," he explains, "you can easily change parts when you see they aren't any good, if they are too long or too high, or the incorrect shape."

Once the shape is more-or-less as he needs it to be, Erik then begins setting in the details. "Sometimes I have to start over four-or-more times before I have a part the way I want it," he says, adding, "I'm a bit of a perfectionist. I just can't let a part rest before I'm entirely happy with it, and I'm not easily contented or satisfied: The parts have to be 'perfect' and, because of that, every shape takes loads of time since I put so much effort into every little bit of the shape."

The Midland, completed, now serves as a base-model for the rest of the cars in the 2006 mod. For the McLaren, he explains, "I already had the base of an F12006 car, the tyres, and so forth, and a reference model. So the McLaren was created in way-less time than the Midland, though," he adds, "it still took longer than perhaps it should have due to, as I said, my perfectionist streak."

The act of creating a model is one that seems, for those not involved, to be a little like, well ... art? After all, the only thing Erik began with was the dimensions and proportions of the 2006 Midland. I ask him whether, for him, modeling is something that can be done by anyone with a good knowledge of ZModeler—or whether there is an innate ability that is required, a talent that separates the good from the extraordinary.

"You need, first of all, a very extensive knowledge of the program," Erik replies. "But it's about more than just knowledge. You have to be able to put 2D pictures in your mind in 3D shapes, and recreate it in the program. You have to be able to see how lines are running through the body. You have to have more than the knowledge of the program, I think—you have to be an analyst of sorts in order to be able to analyse the shape, and be able to see it; if you don't understand the shape," he adds, "you won't be able to recreate it. I sometimes spend hours just looking at a shape in order to understand it—just to understand how it flows."

I ask him what he sees, when he looks at other modelers' work.

"I look to see if their shape is logical," he tells me, "if it's possible in real-life what they've made."

Logical?

"Sometimes," Erik explains, "people have put loads of shapes on a place you almost aren't able to see, and have too few polys on a round surface, so it looks a bit messy."

So which modelers does he rate?

"Well, RH were always my favourites, because they are really accurate, with few polys. For the rest, I don't really pay that much attention to the work of others—I'm not really a community guy."

The issue of frame-rates is one that must, at this point, rear its beautiful head: Do modders, I ask, have to keep the performance of the original sim in mind when they create their mods, or should they be free to create mods that will run on specs far higher than the sim was intended for?

"You sure have to keep frame rates in mind," replies Erik, "because it doesn't really matter if you have the greatest mod of all time if no-one is able to run it. I always put a limit for the car. A limit, that is, on the polys that I can use for the car, and I try to add as much detail as possible under that specified limit. The only difference," he adds, "between a good and a really good shape, in my opinion, is the attention that is given to little parts. It's the little things that make the biggest difference."

I ask him what his motivation is.

"I just do it because it is a hobby for me, I like recreating shapes in 3D. It's a challenge to put down a nice shape with a poly limit. I just do it for the fun I get from creating the car. For the satisfaction it brings when a car is finished."

So no thought in pursuing this as a career?

"No," he replies immediately, "I'm gonna study at university, mechanics," he explains, "I want to get into the real business. But I probably won't quit this as a hobby, just because of the loads of fun I have with it."

I ask him how progress is going on the F1 2006 models.

"I have to disappoint you," he says, "it is months away from completion—I hope to be finished within two months or so, if Race Speeder gets back to work ... it's just too much work on my own. Like I said, I'm a perfectionist."

Erik's models will soon be mapped and running as the 2006 Season addition to MMG's F1 1950-2006 project for rFactor.

AUTOSIMSPORT Fifth Column

Sergio Bustamante
Photos : [GPLegacy](#)
Clara McLean
Bogart Escamilla
Fernando Cortina

Legacy Of The Real

GPLegacy's Sergio Bustamante examines how rFactor is becoming an important training tool in real-world motor-sports—the future of sim-racing is already here, and GPLegacy is laying the foundation by assisting drivers such as Grand Am's Luis Díaz—who carried GPLegacy's logo on his helmet to victory at Mid-Ohio—fight for success.





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Racing drivers are athletes, and the higher the level at which they must perform, the higher the training they require to succeed. Along with a healthy diet, and constant work-outs, there's the additional need to work at their concentration and mental level.

The physical side of their training can be taken care of in the gym; but their mental alertness, their preparation for the races, can benefit immensely from accurate simulators powered by equally as accurate hardware. As more and more drivers and teams begin to find innovative and competitive uses for simulated racing products—both hard and software—so do sim-racers play a more fundamental role in the behind-the-scenes preparation of their real-world counterparts.

GPLegacy has long been involved with finding ways in which sim-racing can be translated into the real-world, and this month, we will take our first look at how far the sim-racing scene has, in fact, grown, and how ISI's rFactor is being used by drivers in very competitive series to find that competitive advantage.

Luis 'Chapulín' Díaz, Grand American Rolex Sports Car Series (better known as '[Grand Am](#)') driver, who is currently fighting for the championship lead (he is in second position as of this writing), has been training alongside GPLegacy for a while. He has also been of incredible support in testing the physics, adjusting car set-ups, and helping out in every possible way with many of GPLegacy's projects.

Just a couple of weeks before the *Laguna Seca* round of the Grand Am Championship, Díaz began training in rFactor for the upcoming events on the Grand Am Schedule—*Mid-Ohio*, *Lime Rock Park*, and *Daytona*.



Luis Díaz is interviewed by Fox Sports "Palabra del Deporte" TV show regarding his training with GPLegacy

Laguna Seca would prove to be a fantastic race for the CompUSA Chip Ganassi with Felix Sabates / Lexus Riley car; fantastic, that is, until Díaz's team-mate, Champ Car veteran Scott Pruett, was bumped out of the race.

A week later, though, Luis and Scott would get their revenge by crossing the line first at *Mid-Ohio*. And proving that the link between sim-racing and real-world racing is becoming, with every passing day, more and more crucial, Díaz, wearing the GPLegacy sticker on his helmet, wasted no time in dedicating both his victory in Mexico, as well as *Mid-Ohio*, to GPLegacy for their support, rFactor, and Logitech.

Luis has long regarded rFactor (and, in particular, the PROTON mod) as the top of the sim-range, having already experienced Grand Prix Legends, Live For Speed, and GTR, all of which he has praised.



Escudería telmex Public Relations and media Manager Juan Luis Alvarez thanks GPLegacy for the support

A special word here needs to go out to rFrancis, the author of the PROTON mod. One of GPLegacy's proudest moments was to introduce the PROTON mod to Luis, and we consider rFrancis one of the best designers in the modding scene for rFactor. With Luis's testimonial, the community can take pride at how our sport—and the physics of this superb mod—are helping real-world drivers achieve success. We hope that this validation for the real-world of motor-sports will help rFrancis continue his outstanding work. Congratulations rFrancis!

Luis was introduced to the world of rFactor in front of a very selective audience at a private GPLegacy event at JJ Charlie's restaurant, one of the top Bar & Grill restaurants in Mexico City.



rFrancis PROTON Mod for Rfactor was also tested by Luis and highly acknowledged as a fantastic racing car.



Professional drivers supported by GPLegacy, Jonathan Briseño, Touring Cars Desafío Corona T4 current leader, Alan Williams (Test driver)



JJ Charlies offered a fantastic dinner to all the VIP guests at the event



INSERT jj-juan.jpg CAPTION : Left to right : Luis Díaz, Alan Williams, Jonathan Briseño, Carlos Aldana, Isidro Farfán, and rising star Juan Carlos Herrero.

Luis raced alongside other professional drivers like Jonathan Briseño (Latin American Touring Car Championship leader), Alan Williams (test driver for several brands in Latin America's most prestigious test-drive track, known as *Pegaso*), Rafael Palacios (Sport Racing Services Team owner), Jesus Rico (Sport Racing Services engineer), Alfredo Martinez (Monster Trucks Desafío Corona 2005 Champion), and Juan Carlos Herrero, current leader of the Touring Car Championship 'Copa Turmex', in Mexico. Also Rafael and Eduardo Rosas attended the event, both well known drivers in Mexico who enjoy excellent resúmenes, and remain great friends for GPLegacy's community.

Logitech Latin America—our eternal supporters, and most devoted allies—honored us with the presence of Raúl Esquivel, Logitech Latin America's Marketing Manager, Alma Almeyda, GPLegacy's long time friend and staunch supporter, and Daniella.

Fox Sports producers, Farfan Films Entertainment, assisted with the event, and helped out with the full coordination of it, and we'd like to extend our deepest thanks for all their help and coverage. 'Palabra del Deporte' TV show, and one of Mexico's largest newspapers 'Reforma', also covered the event, and we must thank Sandra Becerril for her help.

Sim-racing and Radio Control championships' key people also attended the event, and were able to drive alongside Luis, as well as being able to share great moments and experiences with him. Fernando Cortina, honorary co-founder of GPLegacy, manager of the ITEV Hispano Sim-Racing League, Cesar Leon (president of Femarac), Antonio Montes, 1/5th Radio Control manager in Mexico, also attended. And, of course, we cannot forget GPLegacy's co-founder, Raúl Valenzuela, who is one of Mexico's top ten drivers in Grand Prix Legends, as well as legendary track-maker and owner of www.racetrax.net.

Clara McLean, from GPLegacy's International board of director's did a terrific job as MC in what was her first event in such a position, and helped everyone feel right at home while we assembled the full-set for the exhibition racing, and set-up sessions in rFactor. Clara was assisted by Eduardo Borrego, Bogart Escamilla, and Alejandro Zaragoza from GPLegacy Mexico.



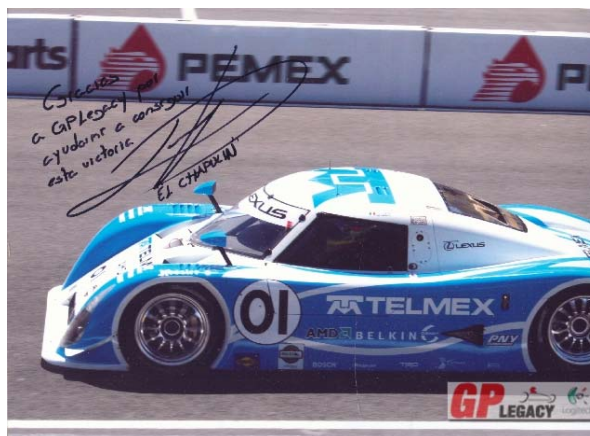
Logitech, Femarac, Cortinazo, Escuderia Telmex, Sport Racing Services and Motor-Review present at the event

I had the good fortune of introducing Juan Luis Alvarez, Escudería Telmex (www.escuderiatelmex.com) Public Relations and Media manager, and one of Latin America's largest Motor-sports teams, who had the honor of presenting Luis. Juan dedicated a beautiful speech towards the efforts of GPLegacy and sim-racing in supporting and helping young talents and drivers. After a round of applause and camera flashes, the stage was set to watch Luis set-up the Proton Mod Car for *Laguna Seca*, just a few days before the race.

Interviews were conducted for Fox Sports TV show 'Palabra del Deporte', and, of course, our host, Motor-Review (www.motor-review.com) who conducted a

fantastic interview about sim-racing's contribution toward driver's training.

A few races were then held with drivers, media people, A1 Team Mexico representatives, and the spirit of fun as they raced with rFactor's custom cars was simply fantastic.



Thanks GPLegacy for helping me reach this victory

Luis received a GPLegacy Antartida raceframe prototype, a full sim-racing kit granted by Logitech Latin America, including the Momo Racing Force Feedback wheel, Internet Desktop optical mouse and keyboard, and internet chat headset. Luis also received an Rfactor License courtesy of Image Space Inc.

A1 Grand Prix Team Mexico attended the event as well, and this was the opportunity for Carlos Obed Aldana, from A1 Grand Prix Team Mexico, to test-drive the A1 Legacy Mod for rFactor, which has been kept low-profile as a private development by GPLegacy International. A beautifully handcrafted mod, it has been developed under petition of A1GP Team Mexico. The fabulous car model is the work of

GPLegacy Netherlands' Raymond Schram, working with the team founded by Maurice Willems, alongside Shaun Field, better known as "GTVirus", and features overall 3D work by Morrow and Tago Kalbri.



Luis Díaz claims victory—with NASCAR Illustrated this month highlighting the very real ties between sim-racing and real-world motor-sports, sim-racing is indeed riding a wave.



Luis Díaz moments before the start of the Mid-Ohio Grand Am race—notice the GPLegacy logo on his helmet



left to right Eduardo Borrego, Raúl Valenzuela, Clara McLean and Sergio Bustamante

Professional drivers who are using sim-racing as tools

We are currently supporting professional drivers, both experienced and established, and rising young stars who have the dedication, devotion, and will to succeed. We are proud to announce that the following drivers are currently helping, and receiving help, from the Sim-racing community in Mexico, and in international classes:

NAME RACING TEAM—World Rally Championship, and National Rally Championships. Details to follow, website, by GPLegacy, is up.

BENITO GUERRA—Nextel Racing Rally Team. Current National Championship leader.



Benito Guerra and Francisco Name

SPORT RACING SERVICES TEAM—Stock Cars and T4 Touring Class championship. Rafael Palacios, Jonathan Briseño, Alfredo Martínez, Eduardo Ortíz, Abraham Calderón. Website to be announced soon, courtesy of GPLegacy.

H2MOTORSPORTS—Driver Juan Carlos Herrero is a rising star in Mexican Motor-sports. Website to be announced soon, courtesy of GPLegacy.

LABARDINI RACING—Mexico's KARTing sensation, with current offerings in Formula Renault, Formula X, and

Formula 3. Fernando Labardini is both receiving and granting support to Sim-racing.

BUGGYS MEXICO—Off-road series leaders in Mexico, Christian Salgado, Hector 'Seco' Olguín. [Website](#).

SALVADOR 'CHAVA' DURÁN—British Formula 3 2005 Champion, current A1 Grand Prix official driver for Mexico.



Sport Racing Services – Jonathan Briseño's car with Logitech and GPLegacy sticker



Alma Almeyda, Raúl Esquivel, Luis Díaz and Daniella

EricAlexander



The Lost Lienz

Eric Alexander goes back in time this month—first to remind modders about why using rFactor upgrades is always a good idea—and second, to remind us of sim-racing's first developer-sponsored race, the inaugural 2006 Lienz Festival.

Car-set modders take notice: [ORSM](#) has done a fine job with the Aussie V8 Supercar mod called V8 Factor. One really impressive feature is ORSM's use of rFactor upgrades, and the way they have integrated it within their mod should be used as a model of how to successfully use upgrades. As regular readers of this column know, I am a stickler when it comes to using my purpose-painted helmet in rFactor, and ORSM has come up with a very creative method for dealing with this sometimes overlooked aspect. I love to use my personal helmet in rFactor, and have taken issue with car-sets that don't adhere to ISI's helmet template. ORSM has used the upgrades feature to find the perfect compromise; they enable sim-racers the option to select the stock rFactor helmet model and template in the upgrades window, thereby making V8 Factor one-hundred percent rFactor compatible. It's a brilliant approach that allows them the freedom to introduce a new helmet design, while giving the end-user the option to override this.

Take notice future rFactor modders—this type of courteous outside-the-box thinking really shows a full understanding of the rFactor end-user market, and how to best please everyone. I hope to see this method employed more in the future. Especially from CTD P in their 2006 F1 mod (hint hint).

The Lost Lienz Interview.

The 2006 Lienz Festival was certainly a highlight of the year's sim-racing season. The Festival had close to 150 sim racers from around the world enter into intense competition, and

the month of speed was held through five hot weeks in June. There really hasn't been anything like it in the sim-racing world. Following the conclusion, I sat down with the Fast Five—the five drivers who won the combined eight races. The interview was lost in the chaos of AUTOSIMSPORT finding a new domain back in June. It's with great excitement that I present the lost interview of the Fast Five.

The 2006 Lienz Festival of Speed ended with Black Knight Racing emerging as 2006's Lienz Champions. It was an action-packed month that produced great drives, and some fair share of drama. Over the course of this year's Festival, teams competed in close to eleven hours of competition. And five drivers won the eight proper races. That's five drivers out of close 150 drivers who entered. Today, we're talking to those five racers ... the Fast Five. They are David Knight (Black Knight Racing), Ilkka Haapala (Team MooMoo), Darren Marsh and Brett Stone (Team AoR Vanquish), and Jon Edwards (Driving Force).

Eric Alexander: First off, congratulations on your victories. Lienz is obviously a test of driving skill and you five have tamed the track that's too tough to tame. I'd like to start with David—you were the first and only driver to win back-to-back stages (West stages 2 and 3), and that really catapulted Black Knight Racing to the top (tied with AoR Team Vanquish heading into the final stage). Tell us about those two victories.

David Knight: Quite frankly—Simon and I stuffed up when we entered in the West division. Being in the West division, and living in Australia, meant 1 A.M. (Perth-Me) and 3 A.M. (Sydney-Simon) race starts. Energy drinks, and the adrenalin of racing helped keep us awake.

With some fast names floating around, to be honest, victories were not on the agenda. However, Simon and I had figured out a game plan—even before the qualifier stage. We felt that the championship was going to be very high in attrition. Our game plan—sacrifice lap times to drive well within our capabilities. Stage 2 was an excellent example of the game plan paying off big time. I was sitting in third for almost half the race at a safe pace before second place 'pinball-alleyed' right in front of me, then right near the end of the race, first place handed me the victory by doing me the same favour. Perfect execution of the plan!

Stage 3 I'm really proud of. Even though there was a driver lapping a second a lap faster than me, and this driver seemingly claiming the race before it started—it seemed the race was a foregone conclusion. However—I managed to race more consistently, and it was enough to cause an upset by finishing first. The plan worked again!

Eric Alexander: Ilkka and Jon—you both won your divisions first and final stages. Was there a difference in the mindset between the first stage where everyone was on a level playing field points wise, and the last stage where you went into it knowing what needed to happen?

Ilkka Haapala: Of course going into the very first race was very exciting. We all knew that anything is possible with this event. For me, at that point, it was impossible to say who were the fast ones in the West Division, so it was exciting to see how the race goes. But then again, speed was only one aspect of the whole event.

I was pretty well prepared for the *Altstadt* race, and knew that I could fight for the win and I also wanted to give a good grid position for my teammate in the next race. Knowing that Jon won the East Division race, I sort of had to win too!

Jon Edwards: For the first stage I was driving for my teammate as well as myself, so there was a little bit of

pressure on me not to make a big error that would cost us later in the championship. The last race was a one off event in many ways, so I drove for myself with the knowledge that, even a victory and bonus points would not be enough for the team to take top honors. So really, there was no pressure going into that last stage, and I was able to enjoy the challenge of racing for two hours through day and night.

Eric Alexander: Darren and Brett—Team AoR Vanquish really had one of the best driver line-ups. In fact, it was the only team to have wins by both its drivers. Tell us how you prepared for the event as a team?

Darren Marsh: We ran a league at AoR on Thursday nights in parallel to the official schedule, with the races at half the length of the official event. It was a great way to get your setup sorted, see how it fared the distance, and see what the best pit stop strategy would be. It also gave us the opportunity to try out each others setups, and find what we liked. After that, it was just a matter of doing laps, laps, and more laps.

Brett Stone: Due to some time constraints, I wasn't able to put in a lot of practice with Darren for the time trial or the first two races. But since we had agreed on Darren doing the first two races, it worked out well. AoR had set up a server on Thursday nights so those who were able to practice had a few people from the club to race around with, share setups and generally joke around.

For the two stages I was running, I made sure I put in a lot of effort tuning the setup and getting to know the track. Darren had provided me with his setup, I just had to tweak it a little to match my driving style. Getting to know the track was the greatest challenge, especially for the longer stages. There are so many areas where just one little mistake can end your entire race.

Eric Alexander: Darren, Australia is quite the hub of some fine sim-racing organizations. In fact, Australian drivers did an amazing job in Lienz this year. What's the secret down under?

Darren Marsh: I'm not really surprised at the strength of the Australian contingent. There are several great clubs here; AusORC, Austeam, ASRG, and AoR. Probably too many really, but all have plenty of talented drivers, and strong competition pushes everyone to a higher level.

There has always been plenty of fast drivers down here, from the likes of Greg Stewart, to the current quicks like Michael Palladino. We're just in a time zone that doesn't often give us the opportunity to show our stuff on the international scene. Maybe that's why we spend so much time hitting the hot lap ranking sites.

The secret? Well, if I told you then it wouldn't be a secret, would it? Aside from our usual passion for sport, I think a strong foundation was laid by the very successful GPLAC (which is still going strong) at ASRG. The scene has grown steadily from there, branching out as new clubs and sims came along.

Hopefully the success of this event will result in even more Aussies having a go in future events. It'd be good to see representation from all the clubs.

Eric Alexander: Brett, you drove a brilliant race in stage 4. AusTeam's Garry Cross led off the line and you waited patiently in second for the first twenty minutes. After Garry's mistake, you took the lead, but that was cut short with an engine failure. Tell us about that.

Brett Stone: I had good preparation for stage 4, if I remember correctly I had completed 100 odd laps of the track in practice, most of those were at night. From the start I was expecting Garry to take the lead into Turn 1 (second place is on the racing line for the corner). So the plan was to keep as close as possible to Garry for the first stint with the view to overtake in the pits or at night. I felt that I should

have had greater speed at night—in practice I was lapping around one-to-two seconds off my daylight times. When Garry ended his race at the top of the mountain, I changed my strategy to being consistent and maintaining the twenty-five second lead I had over second place. Unfortunately it all went pear shaped when I noticed smoke in the mirror, I checked the engine temps (all normal), and figured that it was terminal. I pitted shortly after hoping that maybe the pit crew would be able to fix the problem, but alas, the engine gave way just after the rock wall on the out lap ... Perhaps I wore out the engine with all those practice laps I did.

Eric Alexander: Ilkka, you produced some of the fastest lap times ever in the final West Division stage (The Flying Finn currently holds the FILSCA Track World Record for Lienz 24-hour). Tell us about your preparation leading up to a race.

Ilkka Haapala: I did testing with my teammate John "RevBalls" Brown. All setups we made were more or less a team effort, with Rev coming up with the base setup. Preparing for last stage was actually quite easy, because we had a good setup from Time Trial stage. GP and twenty-four hour layout are using a lot the same roads, so that setup was a very good base.

I like fiddling with setup, and I always try to make it as good as possible for myself. We always had the whole race distance in mind—setup that is perfect at the start of the race won't be as good after ten or fifteen laps. Venom is a really good car for learning setups, because setup options are quite limited in it and changes are very noticeable.

Eric Alexander: Tell us about your sim-racing set-ups—gear-wise.

Ilkka Haapala: I have a very basic rig myself. Only thing great in it is my precious Red Momo. I drive from a basic office chair, which doesn't exactly give the best feedback what the car is doing!

Eric Alexander: How about the rest of you—what are your set-ups like?



Jon Edwards: My setup is pretty normal, there is nothing special about it. I didn't construct a cockpit to sit in or buy an overly expensive wheel and pedals. Instead I sat in my not so comfy garden chair (with two pillows!) and used my trusty old Driving Force Pro to do the business, and yes, my butt hurt at the end of the race.

Darren Marsh: I use a Momo Force, the red one, BRD Speed 7 pedals, and I sit at a desk. The Momo is four years old now, and after a couple of hundred league races and many thousands of laps, it's becoming a struggle to keep it running. The Speed 7 wheel can't come soon enough for me.

Eric Alexander: Ilkka and Jon. Tell us what it was like driving through the night at Lienz waiting for sunrise in that final race.

Ilkka Haapala: Gotta say that Scott has done amazing job with this track. Lienz looks gorgeous at night. At one point I noticed myself admiring the scenery a bit too much, even though there wasn't too much to see in that darkness! I've always liked racing at night, and this race was no exception. Racing is so much different when it's dark, and I rarely get the opportunity to do 'all-nighters'. It was a really nice feeling coming down from mountain roads and seeing the town lights.

Eric Alexander: And Jon, how about your thoughts of the all-nighter.

Jon Edwards: Those thirty minutes in the dark were awesome, and it was then that I knew I had an opportunity to close down the rather large gap to the leaders due to my first lap dramas. So I maybe took more risks in the dark than I should have but really, I had no choice in the matter if I wanted to win. I only had one drama in the dark, and that was when I forgot which of the two crests I was going over on the straight after the bridge. I very nearly took the fifth gear corner at the end of the straight flat thinking I was going over the first crest. Luckily I only damaged the car a little when I smacked the hay on the outside of the corner. A big thanks must go to Scott as that hay saved my life even if it was a bit on the hard side!

Eric Alexander: That's the first time I've heard "hay" and "saved my life" used together. We were constantly amazed at the Austrian's ability to tightly pack their hay bales. In Race Control, we used the term "Hay-crete" more than once.

David, we noticed that Black Knight Racing was only one of a handful of teams that had both teammates in TeamSpeak for every stage. Tell us how you and Simon Black approached the stages using TeamSpeak.

David Knight: Simon and I are always in TeamSpeak when we are racing online. It's a habit we picked up from racing online at AusORC—our local club. During this event, it was mostly about pre-race support. However, it was also handy to have a teammate twiddling their thumbs waiting to do

some quick calculations when the driver is requesting an early or late pit stop. We had a little rule that only the driver was allowed to initiate any coms. This was to prevent possible carnage if the teammate spoke right before "Pinball alley" or something—it's something that affected me more than Simon. A negative is that as the teammate listening—you would occasionally hear the frantic wheel action and hold your breath and hope not to hear the possible 'Ohh Noo!!'.

Eric Alexander: So in the final race after the opening lap accident, do you believe the use of Teamspeak was vital to Black Knight Racing making its way up through the field to a finishing position high enough to claim the 2006 Championship?

David Knight: Simon did let me know at the time it happened. No one is ever happy of being turned around, especially if it is while they are leading. This was made worse by the damage caused to the car. However, Simon is cooler than most and didn't let it get to him. We had a brief talk about it after Simon limped back to the pits and was waiting for the wing to be replaced. We were now about a minute behind—second to last. At that point, we thought it was all over. For a while there was very little chat—until Simon told me he was in sixth looking at fifth. He requested that a double check the position he needed to finish which would make Black Knight Racing the champions. My calculations still showed fifth, and I let him know. He later grabbed fifth spot and settled down in to a comfortable pace and the rest is history.

Eric Alexander: Ilkka, a fair question here mate, and I hope for an honest answer—you were involved in a first lap incident in the final stage that had to be reviewed by RACER's Race Control board. Without getting into details of the incident, how do you feel Race Control performed?

Ilkka Haapala: If I had been in Race Control and similar thing had happened in the first lap, sure I would have wanted to review the incident too. Don't think there would have been better way Race Control could have done it.

Eric Alexander: And what about the way RACER as a whole ran the Festival?

Ilkka Haapala: RACER did an excellent job putting this event together. I have to confess that I didn't know much about your fine organization before this, and boy was I surprised by the level of professionalism you guys have there. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Eric, Gonzo, Scott and all others involved in making this thing happen. You can definitely count on seeing me on starting line more from now on.

Eric Alexander: We'll certainly be glad to have you! Final questions gentlemen. I'd like each one of you to tell us what your thoughts of the 2006 Lienz Festival are overall, and did you come away learning anything? Jon, you first.

Jon Edwards: From my perspective, the event ran very smoothly and my two stages were trouble free but I do understand there were some technical issues at some of the stages I was not involved in, but I am sure they will all be sorted for next year. Also, it was a very competitive event, so the ground work has been set for an even more competitive 2007 event—congrats to Black Knight Racing for the consistency they showed throughout all four stages, and they really are a shining example of how consistency wins championships.

Darren Marsh: It was a great series, very well run. I had a great time, thanks to all involved in running the event. I really enjoyed the races, and it's good to be able to compete in an international field. I like the team idea too. It was a little nerve wracking watching my teammates races unfold via RaceCast. I had a great time, thanks to all involved in running the event and thanks to Logitech for

sponsoring it. I'll certainly be back for more RACER events in the future.

What did I learn? That Scott Juliano is a bastard! Who else but a bastard would put a section like Pinball Alley in what is already a difficult and dangerous circuit? Having to drive through it 100 times at speed was certainly a challenge.

Brett Stone: Firstly, congratulations to Black Knight Racing for taking out the Festival, well done guys. Thanks to RACER for putting up the event, Darren for pushing me to win and for giving me a position I could win from, Scott Juliano for the track, ISI for rFactor, and to everyone who raced!

The overall event was very impressive, from the initial organization to the marshalling, it was very well thought out and executed with efficiency, even when problems arose.

I took away from the Festival the belief that you don't need to be the fastest person on track (although it helps) to win. An event such as this rewards the consistent, and those who can finish.

Ilkka Haapala: This event has been a real showcase for what consistency means in sim-racing. 2006 Lienz Festival also showed what teamwork really means in sim-racing. I've had so much fun practicing and preparing with my teammate. Like Jon said, next year will be even better. Team MooMoo is now looking forward for the 2007 Festival of Speed.

David Knight: When is the next one? I'm in! The event was excellent. The class of drivers represented was the best field of drivers I've ever had the privilege to race with. There was only one exception, and I'm very impressed the way RACER handled the bad sportsmanship and behaviour of this driver. It is obvious that RACER is committed to presenting the best possible events, and with the best possible class of drivers. RACER will continue to be the best league to race in! Well done guys!

Eric Alexander: Excellent! Thank you for your time and best of luck in any upcoming events here in 2006!

AUTOSIMSPORT
Nascar HEAT

Magnus**Tellbom**

SCORE

A Dirty Group, See?

Magnus Tellbom gets down in the dirt to sling some mud Dirt Track style before washing up for the refinery of Group C Racing, the much-talked about HEAT mod that is being transformed for rFactor.



GroupC Review!

GroupC/GTP race cars have always fascinated me. They are the perfect mix of purpose-built race cars and more normal Grand Touring cars. They are fairly light, enjoy massive horsepower, and are absolutely stunning to look at. To this day, there are few race cars that can match the combination of speed and control that these cars offer. And now, I'm allowed to drive one.

Well not in real life of course! I have yet to plant my rear-end in any form of race car quicker than a Go KART. But I still get to test a GroupC car. Several actually. There are no less than nine cars in this mod I'm about to write about.

The Group C mod has been around for quite a while, but few outside of the NASCAR HEAT community know about it, and even fewer have driven it. This is a shame, because it's such a great piece of work. The cars are modeled with care, and the paints are as accurate as one can wish for. In fact, it's so well made that it has attracted interest from one of the big rFactor modding teams, and the models will most probably be seen in that sim in the future. But I am ahead of myself here. Let's start from the beginning.

On the download page, you'll find a little history lesson about these cars. There you'll learn that at one point in history, these cars attracted bigger crowds than the Formula One circus. You also learn that the cars in this mod come from the later part of the 1980s when the GroupC/GTP races where at their peak. Last and not least, you'll learn that this mod ships with nine cars (Lola T86/10 Chevrolet, Ford Probe GTP, Jaguar XJR-9, Lancia LC2/88 Ferrari, March 86G Buick, Sauber C9 Mercedes, Porsche 962C, Nissan GTP ZX-Turbo, Toyota 88C), and twenty-nine paint-jobs in all.

Jolly good! But now it's time to get to the download page. The current version is 1.22, and it's a two-step download. First get the 1.21, and then the tiny update. All



in all, it's about 54MB in size. The download is fast, and the install painless. I was up and running in less than fifteen minutes with this mod. That was including download and controller setup. There is also a paint-pack featuring some of the 1984 Porsches if you'd like, but for now, let's settle with the basic install.

It's time to hit the track, and I chose *Brands Hatch* since there's real racing going on to this day with these cars on that track. If you know nothing about these cars, you're in for a surprise. My bet is that the first time you put your foot down on the accelerator and let go of the clutch, you'll spin out. After you have managed to get the car rolling, it gets easier, but you may very well spin out on both first, second and third gear if you're not careful. These cars need to be handled gently in order to find speed.

When you reach speed, the downforce grabs the car and the ride becomes more stable. And you really have to learn to trust in the downforce, like Vader trusts in the Force. If you chicken out in a turn and reduce speed, the downforce is of no use to you, and you'll mess up. Much like in a formula car, you need to keep the speed and the



momentum in order to perform a good lap. Scary at first, but you'll soon get used to it. I chose the Toyota for this test run, and its engine sounds like a snarling tiger when I force it around *Brands Hatch*. It seems to like high revs—around 7,000-to-8,000—and when it reaches its peak at around 9,000, it makes a sort of a pleased sound, like it has done something good and is very pleased with itself. Just shift to next gear and keep enjoying.

The interior of all the cars are very well put-together, and it's easy to read the gauges. RPM, shift light, fuel pressure, oil and water temp, it's all there under your nose, ergonomically placed. You don't have to take your eyes off the road to know what's going on, and that's a good thing, because I wouldn't want to take my eyes off the road for any reason in these cars. Anyway, the good look and feel of the interior is very well matched by the exterior of these cars. All twenty-nine paint-jobs look so darn good that one might think the creator of this mod once painted the real cars back in the glory days of this race class. Together with millimeter perfect models, the result is nothing but astonishing.



Yes, I'm in love.

The physics under the hood of this mod is in a class of its own. There are faster cars for HEAT, but the creator of this mod has really gone for realism. When you reach 155MPH, you really feel you're going fast, and when you reach 170MPH at the end of the straight past *Pilgrim's Drop*, you become almost blind from the shaking, and your vision becomes a blur. Sensational! If you put as much as one wheel off the track, you pay the price instantly, 'cause these cars were not made to go off-road. And even though most tracks for HEAT have a pretty forgiving off-track surface, it's enough to upset the car beyond rescue if you stray from the tarmac. Of course, all cars have individual physics, and they all have their strengths and weaknesses, but none of them are easy to a point where you can just sit down and drive without paying much attention to the setup.

Luckily for all of us, there are plenty of setups available on the homepage for this mod. It really helps loading a good setup and, for a newbie, it might just be the difference between a half bad lap and total



disaster. The setups, along with records of best times on a lot of circuits, allows anyone new to this mod a chance of being competitive within just a week or so of practice. And this last part has to be taken into consideration when passing out final judgement on this mod. Another, and very important thing about this mod, is its performance on your computer. The creator has gone quite some way to tweaking the whole package in order to allow the mod to perform well on even low-end machines, and still look as good as butter.

So what is there to say about a mod that has perfect graphics on perfect models with stunning physics and top-of-the-line sounds? And that's just in the basic package! There are, as I said in the beginning, more paints to download for those who like to have some 1984 stuff to go with this mod. That, together with a perfectly built support site that offers setups and custom paints made by drivers that have participated in any online series with this mod, all means that the final judgement has to be a simply perfect 10 out of 10. Well done Cholerix!

The mod is available [here](http://www.autosimsport.net), at speedsims.



Jennerstown Dirt Review!

Dirt Racing is usually not my cup of tea. But, having said that, it's still good for relaxation every now and then, sort of a way to take my mind off the next important event in the TouringCar series and, perhaps, even the kind of no-hassles fun that allows me to come up with that last piece of the puzzle when solving a tricky setup for the next big championship race. This last month has been a great one for the NASCAT HEAT Dirt Racing crowd—a sweet number of new tracks have seen the light of day, and one in particular—situated in Jennerstown—caught my fancy.

The track is, as the name implies, located in Jennerstown. It's a .522 miles long dirt oval with a measly nine degree banking in the turns, and only six degrees on the straights. Front straight is 550 feet long and that's about it. A lap takes about eighteen seconds in the Vintage TransAm cars (for me, that is) and you soon lose, uhm, track of whether you're on lap ten or thirty-two. Still, as far as a dirt track goes, this one stands out as a gem in the dirt!

First of all, it has working pits. Not all dirt tracks have this feature, and that usually means you race until the race is over, or you can't move anymore—whichever

comes first! On this track however, you can pit for repairs (always a good thing on dirt races!), and you can refuel and change tyres if you really mess up.

Second of all, it's wider than most dirt tracks I've seen, which should make it good for beginners. You can actually find places to pass and still have your car in one piece. Wider tracks also means you can find time for a breather, which means that you do not always have to drive on the knife's edge.

Graphics wise, this track has its ups and downs. The thing you see first is the simply stunning sky-box. What clouds, what colours! You actually expect to hear the thunder and see the lightening at any given moment. Next thing about the graphics is the well-placed and very accurately drawn sponsor banners situated on the outside of the turns. No shabby five minute work there, I tell you. Come close enough, and I'll swear they are pixel perfect. The grandstand (only one) is crowded and looks alive—so alive that it is able to almost fool me into hearing a cheer every time I go by. Very well done. Even the floodlights and the Team Trucks parked in the infield look great. So how come the artist ran out of inspiration when he made the buses? Even when going by them at high speed, you have time to notice that they look a bit like painted-up shoe boxes left out in the rain. Sad really, 'cause it takes away a good deal of that overall feeling of quality.

Technically, the track is well made, but there is some 'stuff' under the hood that could do with a little more work. For instance, one would expect a dirt track to be packed with a setup made for one of the dirt mods, but all we get is the same mediocre Cup car setup that is also found in almost all road courses. I found that the mod that made best use of this setup was the Vintage TransAm (VTA), but even then I had to tweak it for half-an-hour to get something remotely similar to a dirt setup. There is, of course, an AI line, but it's no good

unless you find a mod that makes use of the custom AI parameters in the physics. Far from all mods use this, and so the cars end up in the walls. This, of course, means that there is no offline practice with the AI.

Final judgement on this track will have to be a 7 out of 10, and I can really recommend it for some late night relaxed fun, or perhaps a dirt league for newbies like myself. It's not the ultimate dirt track, and it has its flaws, but overall, it's a good one and I think I will have a lot of fun here. Thanks goes to Q for creating this piece of track for us. Go get this track and more like it at [here](#)—at [slidingdirt.com](#).

Appeal For News Items To Post!

I do my very best to hunt down any and all news items in the NASCAR HEAT community, but I'm no search engine. Some things are bound to be missed due to lack of time, or just plain human error. So I ask anyone with the slightest bit of NASCAR HEAT related news to send it to me by [email](#). Anything newsworthy goes. Got a new site? Setting up a new league? Are you releasing a mod or a track? A new utility for the NASCAR HEAT platform? Anything at all. Just send it to tellbom@hotmail.com. No news is too small. And ... any news sent in will not only be posted here in AUTOSIMSPORT, but will also be posted on the main page of SCORE.

NASCAR HEAT News!

SCORE Gets A Facelift!

It was long overdue, but finally, the freshened up SCORE site is in place. It should now look okay in all major browsers, and it should also load faster. Much faster for those still on dial-up connections. This update also means that any and all NASCAR HEAT news sent in will be posted on the front page of [SCORE](#).

Having Trouble Setting Up?

Jr. has released all his personal Super Late Model setups to the public. It will prove a great help when setting up for a dirt track for the first time. Setups are available [here](#), at [slidingdirt](#).

Car Of Tomorrow For Heat!

Blaxman has got the green light to convert the COT mod for rFactor to NASCAR HEAT. Pictures look stunning, to say the least, and this promises to be one heck of a mod. It's scheduled to be released the week after the current Nextel Cup is over and done with. More on this item can be found [here](#), at the modsquad.

Nextel HEAT 2006 Pictures!

Gonk has posted pictures of the upcoming Nextel HEAT 2006 mod. Good looking pictures that promise a lot. He also asks for experienced painters. Please read more in this [thread](#) at the modsquad. :

SCCA Announce Late Model Series!

The admins at SCCA have busy days, organizing a new series using the Weekly Racing Series mod. Fifteen races in all will make up the season. More info [here](#):

Tracks, Tracks And More Tracks!

There seems to be some sort of release festival of Dirt Tracks over at the Slingin Dirt site. Belle-Cair, NAORA, Ohsweken, O'Reilly, and DuQuoin are just a few of the new releases. Go sample this and [more](#) at [slidingdirt](#).

And Even More Tracks!

Dirt tracks seem popular these days. There are two more available at DRT Editing. Lyons and Warner were released September seventh. You'll find them, and more, [here](#), at DRT Editing.

Labour Day Weekend Grand Prix of Mosport

Oliver Day takes the day-away and brings us some parting-shots from the American Le Mans Series—all photos are Copyright ©Oliver Day 2006—you can see more of Oliver's beautiful shots [here](#).

OliverDay



Parting Shot

continued





/

Chequered Flag

continued

AUTOSIMSPORT

Chequered Flag

SteveBopple

JaapWagenvoort

If you would like to see your series of league featured in these pages, please contact us at alex.martini@autosimспорт.net.

GPChampionship.com nKPro Returns— TPG League Recruiting

World's premiere nKpro championship is gearing up for season 2—do you have what it takes to beat the best? TPG League and Racing are recruiting for their GTR2, GTL, and rFactor Championships.

GPChampionship.com nKPro FR2000IC Returns!

World's premiere nKpro championship is gearing up for

season 2—do you have what it takes to beat the best?

GPChampionship.com announces season 2006.2 of the



AUTOSIMSPORT www.autosimспорт.net

Volume 2 Number 9

Formula Renault 2000 International Championship.

2006.1 Review

GPChampionship.com (GPC) was one of the first organisations to organise a full series with nKPro's predecessor, 'namie'. Earlier this year, nKPro was delivered to the sim-racing world. GPC also stepped up as the first organisation to bring nKPro championship racing to sim-racing drivers all over the globe. The inaugural Formula Renault 2000 International Championship was a massive success, and proved that nKPro, even in its current state, guarantees intense and immersive sim-racing.

After a highly competitive and successful opening 2006.1 Season that saw (despite some existing bugs in the current version which are currently being worked on by Kunos Simulazioni) a massive driver-turn out at every event, GPChampionship.com now announces the return of the much-anticipated FR2000IC to the sim-racing world. It promises the same excitement and professionalism that was a feature of the 2006.1 season, along with many improvements that have been made in some important areas, such as the league structure, and the schedule.

Are you interested in competing in a very competitive, yet friendly environment, on a worldwide level with the nKPro racing simulation?

The Racecar

The amazing FRenault 2.0 racecar (a lively open-wheel racecar with downforce that requires razor-sharp concentration and accuracy from the driver) will again make its appearance in the 2006.2 season. This car combines power along with great driving characteristics, and allows for great close racing.



The League Structure

In 2006.1, it was all about getting into the top fifteen in Pre-Qualifying in order to make it into a race. With over fifty drivers competing in PQ, this was very tough for a lot of drivers.

Season 2006.2 features two groups which will make it in to the race after PQ. The first fifteen drivers from PQ will compete in Group A. The drivers who end up between positions sixteen and thirty will compete in Group B.

This means that thirty drivers can enjoy the thrill of FullMode nKPro racing in races scheduled for Saturday evening!

The System

GPChampionship.com developed the GPCOS league management system over the past years and now successfully deploys it for the championships.

GPCOS enables GPC to offer full league management, media center, automatic results, standings, statistics, and even allows a full Live Timing system that shows the situation on-track in Pre-Qualifying, and the official races on Raceday—live on the site.

Everyone can tune in to GPChampionship.com and follow the progress of the events, and even discuss the results as they happen with fellow-viewers.

Realism

Of course, nKPro's challenging FullMode will be enabled in the league—and for those that are not familiar with nKPro, this effectively means you have *one* race car, and any changes and damage will be fixed in real-time only. Drivers have to be very careful with their precious FR2.0 car in both qualifying and race. Damaging your car will result in the possibility of missing the first race. Crashing out in qualifying could cause missing out the first race as well, should the crew not be able to fix the car in time for the start of the race.

No pitstops in the race are required (as is normal with FRenault 2.0 events). However, if a driver runs into a tyre problem, or a driver suffers car damage, it is permissible, of course, to allow the crew work on the car to try and fix the problem. It is not permitted, however, to ESC back to the pits. Doing so will result in a penalty due to FullMode being enabled.

The Points

The introduction of two separate group races in FR2000IC causes the point system to change as well. Group A drivers will always score more points than Group B drivers, thus creating an incentive to go as fast as possible in PQ. However, drivers will always drive in a competitive field where drivers of their own pace compete—competition, close racing, and fun are guaranteed!

The point system is as follows:

Group A point system:

#P1: 40
#P2: 36
#P3: 34
#P4-P15: 32 down to 21

Group B point system:

#P1: 20
#P2: 16
#P3: 14
#P4-P15: 12 down to 1

One additional point is given to the driver who records the fastest lap in every race, both in Group A and Group B. There are no points for qualifying anymore.

Two races per season are discarded. This means that for each driver, the best eight race results count for the Driver's Championship. This is all automatically supported in the league management system GPCOS as developed by GPChampionship.com.

The Schedule

Just like in 2006.1, season 2006.2 will feature five events consisting of two races per group per event. So, every driver that comes through Pre-Qualifying to race in one of the groups will do two races on Raceday. The season will run from October 28th to December 23rd, 2006.

The 2006.2 schedule is as follows:

- #2006-10-28: Dijon
- #2006-11-11: Aviano Full GP
- #2006-11-25: Montreal
- #2006-12-09: Prato Short Track
- #2006-12-23: Zandvoort

An important change is the bi-weekly schedule. This releases some pressure from the drivers and the officials. The races will be short. The season events feature a sprint race, and a feature race.

Pre-Qualifying

As mentioned before, season 2006.2 features a full Pre-Qualifying session just like season 2006.1. This is where the Groups are formed.

Pre-Qualifying will be longer than in 2006.1. For 2006.2, Pre-Qualifying will last five days.

PQ will start on Saturday 0:00 and will last until Thursday 0:00. This gives the GPChampionship.com officials more time to verify telemetry and complete PQ scrutineering before Raceday.



Raceday

The schedule on Raceday is as following:

- #21:00CEST: Briefing Event Group B
- #21:10CEST: Start Qualifying Event Group B
- #21:30CEST: Start Race 1 Event Group B
- #21:50CEST: Start Race 2 Event Group B
- #22:30CEST: End Event Group B
- #22:30CEST: Briefing Event Group A
- #22:40CEST: Start Qualifying Event Group A
- #23:00CEST: Start Race 1 Event Group A
- #23:20CEST: Start Race 2 Event Group A
- 00:00CEST: End Event Group A

2006.2 Preview

Less than four weeks to go until the start of the new season. Do you have what it takes to prequalify for the races, and maybe even challenge for podium positions, or even race wins? GPChampionship.com is the venue where you can show your sim-racing qualities against a world-class opposition.

... I want to compete! How do I get in?

It's not so hard, you need to follow the procedure:

- #Sign up at the GPChampionship.com GPCOS site.
- #Activate your account using the e-mail you will receive
- #Wait until the account is validated by the GPChampionship.com officials.
- #Login in and request a position in the league: In your own team, an existing team, or the GPChampionship.com team (latter means you will be an independent driver).
- And that's it—we'll see you in October!
- Get prepared! Professional international nKPro league racing is restarting!
- AUTOSIMSPORT is hoping to have full coverage of this Championship.



TPG League And TPG Racing Announce Season 3

TPG League and Racing are recruiting for their GTR2, GTL, and rFactor Championships.

[TPG](#) League and TPG Racing are pleased to announce details concerning Season 3, which has a start date of October 04, 2006. If you are interested in participating in any of the series, simply register an account on the league news and statistics website (it will automatically be activated). This is as simple as following the link and creating a TPG Racing [account](#).

Creating an account will allow you to join the race series of your choice, create teams, pick cars, and have your race-stats tracked. While you're doing that, you can also create an account on the TPG League forums, and keep up-to-date on the very latest news and events related to TPG Racing. This is, again, as simple as following the link and creating a TPG League [forums](#) account.

The following race-series will be offered during Season 3.

GTR 2

Both of following series will be full-grid, no assist events consisting of a forty-five minute open practice, twenty minute qualifying period, five minute warm-up, and forty-five minute race. There will be two test days followed by ten rounds of racing. Round 5 for each series will be held at Spa, which will be a special endurance event of ninety minutes with double the points at stake.

North American Championship Series: Monday nights qualifying period start time—8:45PM NYC

European Championship Series: Wednesday nights qualifying period start time—8:00PM London

GTL

This series will be a full-grid, no assist event consisting of a thirty minute open practice, fifteen minute qualifying period, and forty-five minute race. All cars are available, and grouped into custom classes (Groups A-F) for the most competitive racing possible.

There will be nine rounds of racing. At the end of the season, TPG Racing will make financial donations to the Make-A-Wish Foundation on behalf of the season ending first, second and third place finishers for each car group.

Make-A-Wish Classic Series: Thursday nights qualifying period start time—8:45PM NYC.

rFactor

TPG Racing will begin beta-testing rFactor during Season 3 on selected Sundays, with the intention of offering an open-wheel series beginning in Season 4 (January 2007).

The league will, of course, be featured in AUTOSIMSPORT.

Steve: www.digitalbluesky.net

EXPOSE YOURSELF!
Have Your Championship Featured On These Pages:

lou.magyar@autosimsport.net