

# GT Interactive

Article scanné dans le magazine 64 Extreme n°1 (Avril 1997)

Sujet de l'article : Interview

*The house that DOOM built*

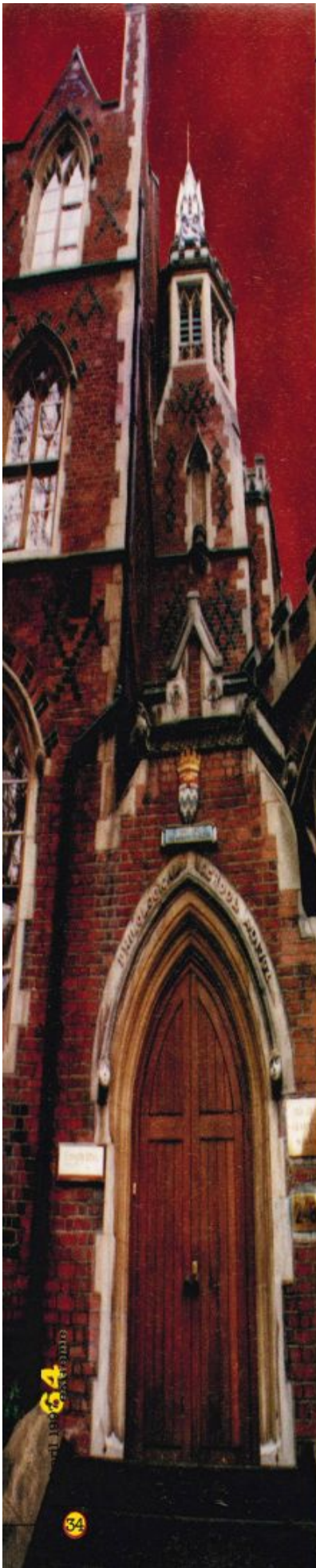
Scans réalisés par les membres du site Nintendo64EVER, usage exclusivement destiné aux autres membres du site. Toute reproduction, partielle ou complète, ainsi que la diffusion de ce fichier est interdite. Les magazines originaux sont la propriété intellectuelle exclusive de leurs éditeurs respectifs, les scans regroupés dans ce fichier ont un but uniquement documentatif et informatif, aucune exploitation commerciale ne peut en être faite.



# GT Interactive

## The House that Doom Built

GT Interactive are less than two years old but have already built a software empire that puts them in the same league as the likes of Electronic Arts. So what is their secret, does something sinister lie behind the doors of the publishers that brought terror home to the masses in the form of Doom and Quake? 64 extreme went to their gothic HQ in NW1 to find out.



# GOOD TIMES AHEAD FOR GT?

**M**uch like myself, I would imagine that most gamers have heard of GT Interactive, but have no idea where they come from or how they became so big, so quick. I mean, there I was, travelling up north to London, speeding away from the 64 extreme offices in Poole (home of the genetically challenged) and it suddenly struck me that I didn't even know what GT stood for. Golden Touch? Groovy Trevor?... "Gorgeous Tarts", offered Russ helpfully (my trusty photographer). No, surely not! Was it just me, did everybody else know? Was it

a turnover of \$10 million. Today they have 700 employees with a turnover of \$500 million. I think we can safely say that GT are a rather ambitious company. They have voraciously gone about either buying into or buying out numerous companies of all sizes. Amongst them is Warner (which has given them offices in France and Germany), Odd World Game Inhabitants, Apogee, 3D Realms, Wizard Works and several others (my memory isn't what it used to be!). Oh yes indeed, GT Interactive are major league players, nowadays. They must have their rivals Quaking in their boots. How about that for masterful control, over 300 words written about GT before I mentioned Quake! The clamour to get this hot property onto various console formats first, is reaching epic proportions. Personally, I think that only the N64 possesses the necessary power to handle a decent conversion of Quake, so N64 owners can't lose whatever happens. Besides which, we have the mouth-watering prospect of Doom 64 and Duke Nukem 64 to keep us going for a while.



The Crew and Ed

the yellow snow all over again?... "Actually, it's Good Times, but we try to keep that pretty quiet", said Peter Hawley, GT's PR whiz and resident games guru. Good Times! Hardly the sort of dark and moody name you would expect to belong to the home of satanic, first person shoot 'em ups. No wonder they keep it quiet.

Now we've got the name sussed out, what about the rest. A further bit of snooping and all was revealed. GT Interactive are an American owned outfit, who started life as video distributors (just like our friends, THE!) specialising in budget range films. This was obviously a good move, because in no time they had a huge, extremely lucrative distribution network. A mere 18 months ago, GT expanded into software. They had 50 members of staff with

GT Interactive are set to be, by far, the most prolific third party publishers of Nintendo 64 games, even rivalling the mighty Nintendo for software output over the next year. This rapidly growing company was kind enough to invite us along to their wonderfully gothic headquarters in Marylebone

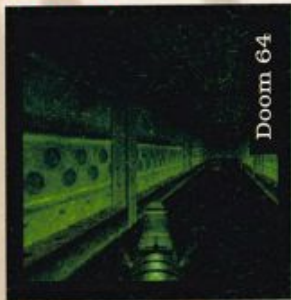


Quake

Road, NW1 and allowed us a preview of some of their forthcoming N64 games. Just to give you some idea of how fast things can happen at GT, when we arrived, they had five N64 games set for release this year. Not ten minutes had passed before that number had doubled! That's the way they do things at GT. Good Times indeed!

# GT INTERACTIVE'S HOT TEN FOR 1997...

## DOOM 64



The pull of Doom is as strong as ever, and about to get stronger, as soon as the Midway developed Doom 64 gets released to the grateful hordes of N64 owners. Check out our two page Doom 64 preview on pages 78-79 for the full low down.

## WAR GODS

War Gods is a promising looking, 3D, one-on-one fighting game unmistakably developed by Mortal Kombat's programmers, Midway. As the title suggests, all the fighters are Gods who are at war. Converted from the coin-op (which I must admit, I have



never seen in my life), War Gods has a fun, knock about feel to it. Two player games can often break down into noisy shouting and laughing contests as each player marvels at their luck/misfortune and outrageous special moves. If beat 'em ups with an emphasis on fun is your bag, you should keep your eyes open for War Gods when it is released in September/October.

## HEXEN 64

This was in a fairly early stage of development when we played it, but it is shaping up very nicely indeed. The

game engine is extremely smooth, although there is still a lot of detail to be added to the textures, which no doubt will all be there in the finished version. One of the most promising



features in Hexen 64 is the addition of a simultaneous, four player split screen mode, which utilises the N64's built in four controller ports. This holds enormous potential for some crazed slaughter-all-your-mates style gameplay. As in the original PC version, you can choose to play as either a warrior, a mage or a cleric, all of whom have different skills and forms of attack. Developed by Software Creations, Hexen 64 is basically a thinking man's Doom, that is to say, plenty of first person death dealing with a strong RPG element. The game is played over 31 levels and, like Doom 64, all the backgrounds are 3D polygon generated with texture mapping, but the sprites are 2D allowing many sprites on screen without slowing the frame rate. With only a handful of early N64 games using four player options, Hexen 64 could really be one of the surprise N64 games of this year.

## MORTAL KOMBAT TRILOGY

I must be honest, I'm a bit fed up with Mortal Kombat in its 2D form. You can only take a good thing so far and for

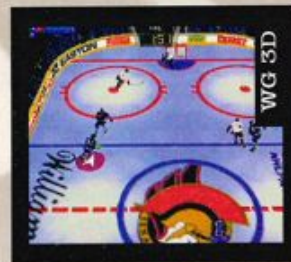


so long. Still, I know that Mortal Kombat has its fans and this version has got enough options to keep the most fevered MK fan happy. There are

26 immediately playable characters, four hidden characters, a new three-on-three Kombat mode, which delivers a marathon fight-to-the-finish, new Brutalities and 7 humiliation Fatalities. Expect to see a full review next issue.

## WAYNE GRETZKY 3D HOCKEY 64

Already out in the States and selling strongly, Wayne Gretzky 64 is a fast and frenzied ice hockey game that has



a strong arcade feel to it, which is no surprise as it was programmed by Midway, who also programmed the classic NBA Jam series. It has no pretensions of being a serious ice hockey sim but places all its emphasis on fun, action packed gameplay. The four player option and some hilarious in-game brawls are just a couple of features that make Gretzky 64 one of those ideal 'after the pub with your mates' kind of games. Once again, we are looking at a late summer release and a full review next issue.

## NBA HANGTIME 64

Once again, already out in the USA, NBA Hangtime has been programmed



by Midway's original NBA Jam design team. There are options-a-plenty such as, a Create-a-Player mode, choice of various indoor and street courts, power-up codes and even some original music from the allegedly funky M. Doc. So is it any good? Don't ask me, this is only a preview, you'll have

to lace up your sneakers and buy next month's issue for our slammin' review.

## ROBOTRON X

"Tons of lightning fast, destructive levels plus bonus levels! All the original characters, plus new ones, each rendered in eye-popping 3D!", screams Midway's press release. But as we have seen nothing of this game yet, we'll have to take their word for it. All we know at the present time is to expect a Smash TV style shoot 'em up.

## JOUST X

I doubt if many of our younger readers have ever heard of Joust, that's because it's a classic coin-op game about Jousting. Does this mean the first retro game on the N64? We'll have to wait until GT shed a bit more light on this title next month.

## MK MYTHOLOGY

Mortal Kombat characters in an RPG, believe it or not. Sounds like a cracking idea for a good game, but at



the moment there is no more information on it. As soon as we get more, you'll be the first to know.

## DUKE NUKEM

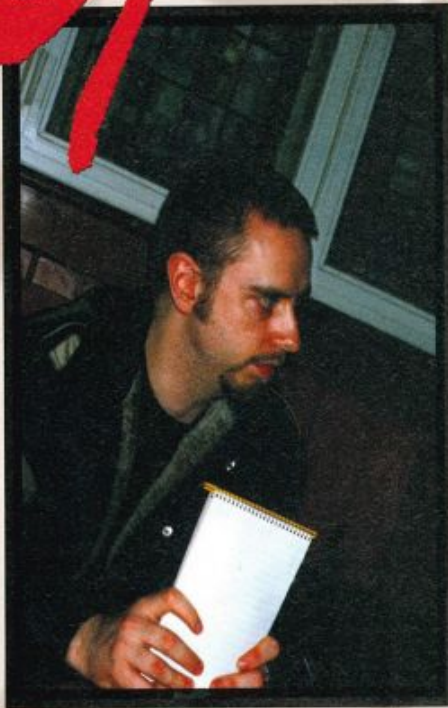
We know it's definitely coming, but so is Christmas! There are really no



details to relay at the moment. Doom's naughty, older brother should be with us by the end of the year.

# AN INTERVIEW WITH PETER HAWLEY

## PR SUPREMO OF GT INTERACTIVE



**PETE C:** How long have you been at GT and what did you do before?

**PETER HAWLEY:** I've been here for six months and before that I was a journalist on a couple of magazines, PC Zone and PC Home. One of GT Europe's main criteria for employment is that you have to be a games player, have experience within the market and know what you are talking about. We always like to take the approach when talking to people about games of pointing out things that are good about them, but not sitting them down and telling them that the game is good when it is obviously their job as professionals to give an opinion. Book publishers don't take books to newspapers and say this book is great because.... they leave it with the person who is going to review the book and that is the same approach we take here.

**PETE C:** What is your position and what are your responsibilities at GT?

**PETER HAWLEY:** My official job title is PR Executive. We're not really led by job titles though, it's just something to put



on a business card. Basically, our job is to take the software throughout its various stages of development, to generate the information needed for the specialist press, the national press, the broadsheets and tabloids, the lifestyle

magazines and radio and television. We need to have all that information to hand to make sure that everything is organised and runs smoothly, that's the general idea of it. This also involves Europe, excluding France and Germany

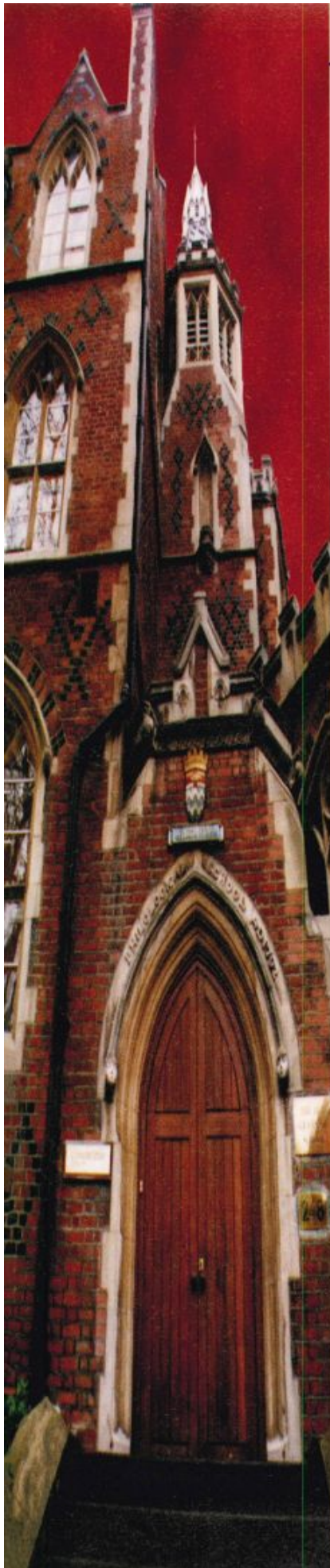
though, due to the recent acquisition of Warner, which has meant that we now have offices in those countries. We are responsible for all other territories outside of that, which can be quite daunting when you've got 93 titles out a year.

**PETE C:** Recent reports have stated that GT's financials are second only to Electronic Arts. How big can they get?

**PETER HAWLEY:** GT's policy has been very aggressive since its entry into the software side of the industry. They started out as Good Times Video in America and built up a huge distribution network through Hallmark and Blockbuster Video amongst others. Their growth was more or less strongly led by budget videos, costing five or six dollars a film. GT launched into software about 18 months ago with a staff of 50 people and a turnover of \$10 million, which has since grown to 700 employees and a turnover of \$500 million, so the rate of expansion has been massive. As to how things are going to go in future, I am not really in a position to comment, but we will continue to be aggressive and invest money in strong titles. Our acquisitions team in the US have proven in the past, and will continue to prove in the future, that they have a keen eye for what's going to sell, what's good, how to make the best deal, and obviously we are helped by our distribution background stateside. The aim is to be number one, and we've gone a long way towards doing that in a short space of time.

**PETE C:** What is it like to develop games for Nintendo compared to Sega and Sony?

**PETER HAWLEY:** From a PR point of view I look at things on the surface. Obviously, there's a massive interest in the N64 across all the magazine publishers in the industry, and as game players we are all very keen on the machine. As a company we have ten N64 titles in development this year, which is more than any other European company, probably more than Nintendo. From a development point of view, I do know that Nintendo's licence and system is very different, and you may find that any number of titles that we've got this year may be sub-licensed to Nintendo. What they are, we don't know, but because of the huge amount of money that is required to be invested up front for the manufacture of the hardware, then it does make a difference from a sales point of view. Development wise, obviously some of our key developers were named in the Dream Team such as Williams and Midway, so obviously Doom 64 has been in development since the beginning and that's why it is going to be one of the first titles available in the US and hopefully early on in the UK as well.



**PETE C:** So Doom 64 will be released around September, is that right?

**PETER HAWLEY:** We're looking at an August/September launch for a number of the titles, but it's still undecided.

**PETE C:** Has it been delayed because of the lack of N64 hardware units that are available at launch?

**PETER HAWLEY:** The official company line is that it seems a shame to have titles the magnitude of Duke Nukem 64 and Doom 64 and to put them out for a short burst. So we are kind of taking a back seat for now and just seeing how things develop. We'll take an official line over the next couple of months, but obviously the machine is important to us, as it is a step forward in technology and it is a real game player's machine, but from a sales and marketing point of view it seems a shame to waste money marketing Doom 64, when we could do it properly when enough units of the machine are sold through. That ties into some of the rumours we are hearing from THE and various outlets, that nobody is really quite sure how many machines will be coming into the country, which is part of the reason why that decision has been taken.

**PETE C:** Another thing that there is a lot of confusion about, and some pretty wild rumours have been flying around, is of course Quake. Who is it exclusive to, and is it going to be exclusive to one format or another, what has been decided?

**PETER HAWLEY:** With a title like Quake, obviously it is from the same developer as Doom, so I use it as an analogy. Doom is assigned to all formats. It had already achieved huge success on the PC, then Macintosh, Saturn and the PlayStation even to Jaguar and the 32X. No format could escape the spread of Doom. Quake has reached the same proportions on the PC, so there is a massive interest from the console developers and publishers like Nintendo, Sega and Sony. Their number one aim is to sell their console and if they can sign exclusive rights to a title like Quake, then it obviously suits them down to the ground. It doesn't make sense for us. There is no official line as yet, I know there is talk that it is being developed on PlayStation and the N64, maybe Sega will sign the rights to do Quake on the Saturn, but it is currently all speculation and rumour, nothing has been signed.

**PETE C:** How good a conversion could the N64 make of Quake?

**PETER HAWLEY:** I think it's quite apparent from what we've seen of Doom 64, that it will be able to handle it very well. Doom on the N64 is fairly close to the Quake engine, apart from the fact that it doesn't use polygon sprites, you can't look up or down and you can't jump. People have been surprised how good Doom 64 is, many people have been expecting a rehash of the PlayStation version, a straight port over would have been the easiest thing in the world to do, but Williams decided to do Doom 64 and design it from the ground up. But as far as Quake is concerned, it's obvious from the Doom 64 engine that a great conversion is possible. I think it would look quite special, but we'll have to wait and see. Our primary concern is to get Doom 64 out first, obviously if that was signed it would be fantastic.

**PETE C:** Who do you perceive as GT's main rivals?

**PETER HAWLEY:** Well everyone's got rivals, and with the announcement today that GT's profit margins are second only to EA then obviously, if GT's aim is to become number one, then GT will always consider the people who are the biggest now to be their nearest rival. I guess it's companies like EA and Virgin who are considered to be our nearest rivals.

**PETE C:** OK, thanks Pete. You can take your corporate hat off now and I'll put you on the spot and ask what your favourite game of the moment is and your favourite game of all time?

**PETER HAWLEY:** I've been asked that question before and I always have to break it down into two platforms console and PC. The best game of the moment is Quake, best game of all time on PC is Doom, closely followed by Syndicate. Favourite game on console of all time is the original Mario Kart on the SNES.

**PETE C:** Last question, who would you rather have under you in PR, Demi Moore, Pamela Anderson or Jack Nicholson?

**PETER HAWLEY:** I'll have to be a sad bastard and say Jack. Life is all about going out, having a good time and a good laugh. Besides, you'd always manage to pull with Jack by your side and if anyone gave us a bad review they would f\*\*\*\*\*g know about it!

