

# sci-tech.



**DID YOU KNOW?**  
*Test Drive* is the name of one of the longest running racing game franchises ever. Originally published by Accolade, which was later bought by Infogrames, the first title saw the light of day in 1987 and has since been followed by a stream of sequels. The *Test Drive* games are now published by Atari, the name which Infogrames renamed itself to in 2003

## website



**WWW.FUNNYMOS.COM**  
 The Web site www.funnymos.com is all about Funny news, pictures, videos, quotes and other weird happenings. The site is updated daily and is usually a good source of free entertainment. The most interesting section of the site has to be weird news. Definitely check it out when you visit the Website

# FANTASY WORLD

**Matt Slagle** embarks on a long, probably epic journey through the world of the Forgotten Realms, courtesy the latest version of *Neverwinter Nights*



Anyone who's played *Dungeons and Dragons* the traditional way—a pen, some paper and a fistful of multisided dice—will feel right at home in the world of *Neverwinter Nights 2*.

This PC title uses the same statistical rules and is set in the Forgotten Realms, one of the game's most popular fantasy settings.

As a sequel, *Neverwinter Nights 2* is packed with new features that players of the original will appreciate.

The biggest revisions: updated D&D rules, new races, advanced class specialties, a new but still cumbersome crafting system and the ability to control a party of four adventurers instead of just two.

It would be easy to criticise *Neverwinter Nights 2* for being yet another video game with magic, monsters, dungeons and precious treasures. There are plenty of others with the same old premise. But few adhere to such a specific, well-paced vision.

This comes into play from the beginning, where you'll likely spend hours 'rolling'—or creating—a new character to your exacting specifications. There are dozens of options to choose from—including race, alignment,

background story, even the colour of your character's eyebrows.

*Neverwinter Nights 2* is definitely a throwback to older adventure computer games, where slow pacing, deep character development and story mattered as much—if not more—than all the hacking and slashing.

One of my favourite things about *Neverwinter Nights 2* are the ethical choices you frequently make. Do you talk your way out of a confrontation or just run in with swords swinging? I was routinely surprised how far diplomacy got me.

Though the game's old-school pen-and-paper roots are evident, players are fairly well shielded from having to know what a "3d6" roll means. The game calculates the many random, statistical elements in the background (as a geeky reminder, you can still view these computed rolls on screen).

There are some excellent online options for co-operative play, as well as some insanely powerful and complex tools to create your own adventures.

But it's not without some problems. The graphics are good, not stunning, yet the game still performed poorly on my home comput-

er. Even after I turned off higher-end settings, like detailed shadows, I had a lot of stuttering graphics and voiceovers that were out of synch with the characters' on-screen animations.

The biggest glitch that I'm still adjusting to, however, is the controls. Just moving around requires an endless series of mouse clicks to go in the right direction, and positioning the 3D view into something acceptable was a constant chore. AP



Masaaki Nagumo, an engineer of Japan's machinery maker Sakakibara Kikai gets into a 3.4 metre tall two legged robot 'Land Walker 01' for a demonstration as part of an art exhibition in Japan

**NEVERWINTER NIGHTS 2**  
**Rating:** 3/5 **Platform:** PC  
**Publisher:** Atari **Developer:** Obsidian Entertainment  
**System Requirements:** 2.4GHz Processor, 512MB RAM system memory, 6.5GB HDD space, ATI Radeon 9800 or NVIDIA GeForce 600 or higher video card, DirectX 9.0c compatible soundcard



## Realistic driving and more in the latest *Test Drive*

This game does laps around the competition when it comes to realism. An entire Hawaiian island is rendered in all its digital splendour, where speeding around is not a part of the daily commute—it's a lifestyle.

What's really unique about *Test Drive Unlimited (TDU)* is the online multiplayer feature for races against other real people around the world. We've all played massively multiplayer online games involving dragons and dwarfs, but this is a first for race-car fans.

You can still play off-line, but clearly this game was meant to be enjoyed with others.

So what does one do here? Like most open-ended online games, it's really up to you. You can drive around, soup up your vehicles, win prize money from various races and even move into nicer dwellings eventually. Customising and exploring



are key draws here. If your idea of a perfect Sunday afternoon involves motoring around curvy country



roads in some exotic sports car, this could be your game. If not, you might get car sick from all the driving around. AP

**TEST DRIVE: UNLIMITED**  
**Rating:** 4/5 **Platform:** PC, Sony PlayStation 2 and PSP  
**Publisher:** Atari **Developer:** Melbourne House and Eden  
**System Requirements:** 1.8GHz processor, 300MB RAM System memory, 64MB videocard, DVD Rom drive, DirectX compatible soundcard

## Soy drink boosts bone density in older women, says study

Research shows that women who drank a soy drink every day for 12 months had better bone density in the spine than those who didn't. The effects were also much greater for women than for men.

The compounds found in soy are phytoestrogens (plant oestrogens), including isoflavones, which have been linked to lowering the risk of heart disease and reducing menopausal hot flashes.

Around 150 patients aged 50 to 80 had a daily soy drink containing 83ml of isoflavones, while the others had a drink containing almost none of the compounds.

The bone density of the hips and spines were measured before and after the trial.

The results showed a slight improvement in the bone density of those who had the treatment drink, while in the other group there had been a decline.

The researchers from the University of Washington say that the protein containing isoflavones showed a benefit in preserving the spine, but that there was no similar effect for the hips.

"Treatment effects on spine bone density were significantly greater in women than men," they added. AGENCIES