

1997

Produces the acclaimed strategy game *Total Annihilation* for Cavedog Entertainment.



1998

Founds Washington-based studio Gas Powered Games.

2002

Produces the hack-n-slash RPG *Dungeon Siege*, which is published by Microsoft.



2005

Produces the follow-up *Dungeon Siege II*, also published by Microsoft.



2007

Produces *Supreme Commander*, the spiritual successor to *Total Annihilation*.



# THE GFW INTERVIEW: CHRIS TAYLOR

The biggest kid in the gaming industry BY RYAN SCOTT

## INTERVIEW

**GFW:** You ran the show for both *Total Annihilation* and *Supreme Commander*, and your RTS designs have always been pretty ambitious. Is anything cooking up there in your head that you haven't been able to apply to any game designs quite yet?

**CHRIS TAYLOR:** Sure, there's always lots of that...and we hope to get another good round of ambitious features into our next RTS project just to prove it! And of course, those dual Quad Duo Core CPUs won't hurt our wild ambitions, either...more power, Scotty!

**GFW:** What do you think of some of the recent advancements that companies like Relic have made with RTS games in comparison to your own games?

**CT:** I think Relic's *Company of Heroes* is an amazing achievement in visual realism, and has production value unlike anything we've seen before...big kudos to that team! Generally speaking, it takes the game to a very tactical level, where *SupCom* goes for the big, strategic, theater of war-type experience. Both are valid, and very different—and hopefully, both [are] really fun!

**GFW:** You're also a big World War II buff—do you apply any of that knowledge to your strategy games' design and A.I.?

**CT:** I am, indeed, as I find the history [of the war] absolutely fascinating. Having said that, our A.I. engineer/designer, John Comes, has his own experience [that] drives his work. I use the World War II history to shape the unit design and the way the overall air, land, and sea components come together as a whole. And, of course, Gas Powered Games' team of amazingly talented people all bring something to it as well; it's a team effort, after all.

**GFW:** Humble as always! Speaking of which, you're something of a big name when it comes

to PC games. What's your take on "celebrity" game design? Do you think this sort of hype creates unfair expectations or hinders your development process in any way?

**CT:** For the most part, I really don't pay much attention to it. But it's definitely much easier to get a game funded when you have a history in the business than it is when you are an unknown designer. Past that, it doesn't really change the development process. I will admit that I can generate a little more buzz in the community—which never hurts—but the game concept has to support it. Otherwise, the hype vanishes pretty quickly.

**GFW:** If review scores are to be believed, the *Dungeon Siege* games definitely fell victim to overhype [the recent *Dungeon Siege II: Broken World* received a 6 out of 10 score on 1UP.com]. Do you have anything to say to your DS2 critics?

**CT:** We aren't happy with low review scores, and have asked some very serious questions about why the game was disappointing to the press. Each game has its own development story, and *Broken World* is no exception...but we can only aspire to correct past mistakes and endeavor to do a better job next time. Ultimately, we look to our customers to tell us what they think of our games, and make every effort to listen to that feedback...that's the feedback that counts to us the most.

**GFW:** How involved were you with the Uwe Boll-directed *In the Name of the King: A Dungeon Siege Tale*? How'd it ultimately turn out?

**CT:** During the time when the movie script was being developed and the actual movie was being shot I was very busy with *SupCom*. I had a hard time keeping up with every script revision process, and all the other developments in the preproduction phase. I focused my time here at Gas Powered Games, and only managed to visit the actual set once. I regret not getting up to meet Burt Reynolds...that would have been awesome. I did get a chance to meet Jason Statham, Claire

Forlani, and Ray Liotta—that was a blast, to say the least. The big shocker: I haven't actually seen the movie yet. For whatever reason, the stars have not aligned, and I'll end up seeing it the same time you do.

**GFW:** Following up on that, you've recently commissioned a *Supreme Commander* film script from screenwriter (and GFW contributor) Robert Coffey. Can you talk about this yet?

**CT:** I have, indeed—and Robert's done an excellent job. It's all part of our wanting to be much more proactive about the whole filmmaking process...and we have agents who will properly represent us and everything, all professional-like. Big time, here we come!

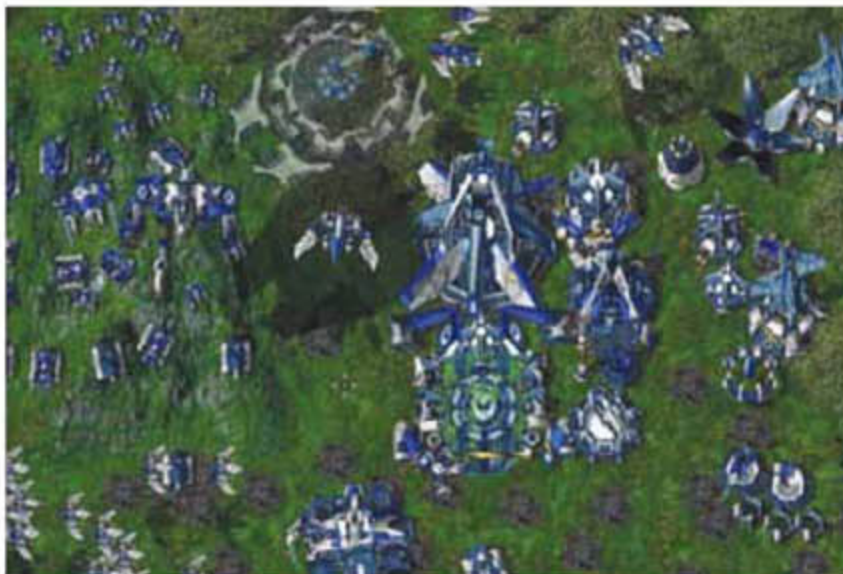
**GFW:** Easy there, Chris—you've still got games to make. What else have you got on tap? Are you still wholly devoted to PC gaming, or have you looked into entering the console market?

**CT:** Absolutely. We're always looking and, believe it or not, we have a brand-new, original game that we're working on that hasn't been announced yet. I can tell you that it's being developed for the Xbox 360—and that's because we love the platform and think the 360's online experience is world-class.

**GFW:** It's a different experience, for sure. I know you're a technology nut, though—and PC tech is currently moving faster than most of us can keep up with. Got any thoughts on recent PC hardware advancements?

**CT:** Lately, it has really become a contest between the incredible advancements in rendering technology and the huge technological leaps in available CPU power. We game developers are in heaven, because there's no end in sight to this progress. Ultimately, what this means is that we'll have plenty of resources to deliver the most awesome game experiences anyone has seen yet. Outside of these key advancements, the next biggest advancement goes to Internet providers who keep adding more and more bandwidth to our networks—we can play multiplayer games with people across the country and around the world. It's really something we might only have dreamed about when I started in this business. And now the leap to a 64-bit operating system solves our addressing space problems. It's a technology love-fest and it's awesome! ●

I THINK RELIC'S *COMPANY OF HEROES* IS AN AMAZING ACHIEVEMENT IN VISUAL REALISM...BIG KUDOS TO THAT TEAM!



● *Total Annihilation* (1997): Chris Taylor's much-revered cyber-future real-time strategy game.



● *Supreme Commander* (2007): Taylor's long-awaited, just-released TA follow-up. How does it measure up? See our review on Page 78.

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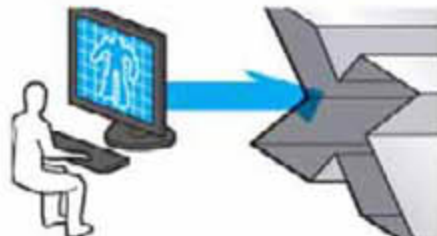
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