

1701 A.D.

Kill them with Keynesian kisses

PUBLISHER: Aspyr DEVELOPER: Sunflowers/Related Design GENRE: Real-Time Strategy AVAILABILITY: Retail ESRB RATING: Everyone 10+
MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: 2.2GHz CPU, 512MB RAM, 3.5GB hard drive space MULTIPLAYER: 2-4 players VERSION REVIEWED: Gold Master

REVIEW

American RTS games divide and conquer with war-prone unit pluralities toting guns, slashing swords, or slinging magic. By contrast, European RTS games skew economically; they're still imperialistic empire builders, but methodologically roundabout: victory through globalization instead of annihilation.

Third in a series that's never received its due accolades, *1701 A.D.* is of the latter stripe, where your two- or three-unit military is good for stiff-arming sea pirates, but little else beyond. Instead, your goal is to colonize an island (on maps comprised of dozens) by building houses, markets, mines, farms, schools, and churches...and linking dozens more via roads and trade routes to whip bread-and-butter pioneers into kiss-my-ring aristocrats.

Smiles or frowns gauge your progress as your citizens demand a broader and more opulent range of goods, which you must provide either domestically or—lacking the native resources—by trading with competitors.

If you've played prior games *1503* or *1602*, *1701*'s big advance involves the usual 3D makeover, though its field of view feels slightly (though not brokenly) zoomed-in. You also get the "Lodge," which lets you spy on or sabotage opponent economies, something best tested against human players online...though you'll have to wrestle with the language barrier (the series is currently more popular abroad).

Otherwise, *Age of Empires* derivatives come and go, and every once in a while, it's nice to forgo fodder mobs and group-think lassos. Daisy-chaining raw resources to refined goods to end products hasn't been this gratifying in years. **•Matt Peckham**



• Clear your calendar, because a single sandbox session of *1701 A.D.* can last for days.

BUILD HOUSES. MARKETS. SCHOOLS. AND CHURCHES...EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE. IT'S NICE TO FORGO FODDER MOBS AND GROUP-THINK LASSOS.

VERDICT

▣ Vast and complex economic simulation; well-balanced economies; clever A.I.

▣ Over-zoomed field of view; small multiplayer opponent pool and language barriers.

8/10

GOOD

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HEROES OF ANNIHILATED EMPIRES

It came from the random fantasy-word generator

PUBLISHER: CDV Software DEVELOPER: GSC Game World GENRE: Real-Time Strategy/RPG AVAILABILITY: Retail ESRB RATING: Teen
MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: 2GHz CPU, 512MB RAM, 2.5GB hard drive space, 128MB videocard MULTIPLAYER: 2-7 players VERSION REVIEWED: Gold Master

REVIEW

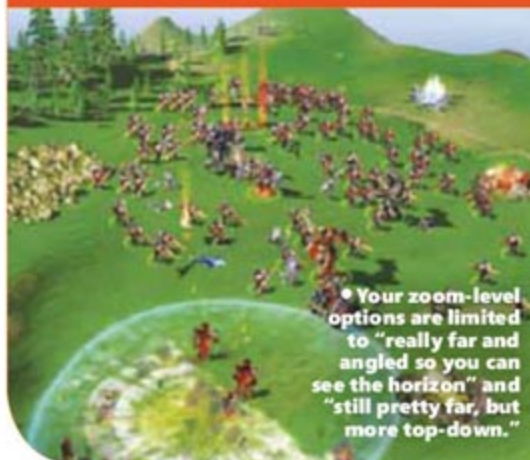
You can safely judge this book by its cover: *Heroes of Annihilated Empires* is as generic a fantasy RTS-meets-RPG as the name would imply, though it leans more heavily on the "RPG" than most other hybrids. For most campaign missions, your main hero can hold his own without the help of any backup army, but that's partly because your foes are dim-

wits with short attention spans. Maps contain pockets of monsters that you can essentially turtle to death—duck in, fire some spells and arrows, back off a few feet so they forget you, and repeat.

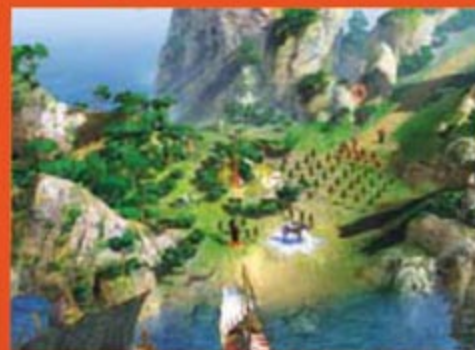
Things get more interesting when you're given an RTS base to build, as monsters rush you in waves early and often, forcing you to watch multiple fronts. Outside the campaign, skirmishes (choose elves, undead, dwarves, or the yeti-herding Cryo) offer an intriguing twist: In order

to summon the units required for base-building, your hero must become a statue for 30 minutes (so says the info box...it feels like forever), forcing you to choose RTS or RPG from the get-go. Interesting idea, but the RTS way proves superior, since your hero eventually emerges anyway.

GSC promises more chapters (this is allegedly part one of a trilogy), but that doesn't excuse the fact that *HOAE* feels unfinished: We get only three skirmish maps; the "comic-style" cut-scenes look like hastily doctored storyboards (poor stylistic decision, or out-of-time afterthought?); and the game inexplicably lacks a speed slider to accelerate the frequent dull parts. Waiting five minutes for a troop-transport ship to navigate a sea of molasses is exactly as exciting as it sounds. **•Sean Molloy**



• Your zoom-level options are limited to "really far and angled so you can see the horizon" and "still pretty far, but more top-down."



• The campaign stars a boorish, egotistical, unlikable elf ranger named Elhant...a change from suave, egotistical, unlikable elf rangers.

VERDICT

▣ Tons of units onscreen; well-developed RPG aspect for hero units.

▣ StarForce copy protection; slow pace; dumb A.I. makes for tedious turtling.

5/10

AVERAGE

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