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[Command and Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars](#)

It might not be the brightest in the bunch, but it's surely one of the best looking so far

Tiberian Sun was one of the most definitive real time strategies of its time and literally shaped the future of today's games. In the early days of strategy, more precisely back in 1999, the force which struck the market was so huge (here personified by Command & Conquer, Tiberian Sun) that it imposed itself as a landmark and comparison title for all that followed. It wasn't relying on the player's keen sense of strategy and it didn't require much brain power and it wasn't too long until a lot of gurus appeared with infinite knowledge of every multiplayer map and intricacy. The simplicity of the gameplay allowed anyone to go neck deep and become a small expert. Needless to say, the multiplayer kept the game alive for more that it was planned to and turned it into a legend. The original developers, Westwood Studios, quickly reached a cult status but fell equally fast into bankruptcy and were forced to close their gates. The entire community was saddened by this event and even more when EA picked up the pieces. We all knew too well that the publishing giant could turn into commercial dust any franchise and the perspectives weren't too nice. The next titles in line, Command and Conquer Generals and its add-on Zero Hour made a good impression and with the announcement of Tiberium Wars, our hearts jumped up and down with joy. Maybe those long nights spent in Cyber Cafes could return once again. My job helped me stay in touch with the current development more than the average user and all I saw I liked, from the earliest concept art to the latest trailers right before the launch. Unfortunately, there were too many occasions when a game failed to deliver even if it looked just fine prior to launch. I hoped this wouldn't be the case and now I can say for sure that Command and Conquer Tiberium Wars is one of the few that actually looked and felt just like it was advertised. **Story** Unlike the late Command and Conquer Generals and company, which took place in the contemporary era, with actors like US, Russia, China and terrorists, this one was moved once again in the future, in 2047, seventeen years after the event that took place in FireStorm (the latest add-on of the old game). The GDI has taken some lead and started rebuilding the cities; even though the tiberium haven't stopped spreading continuously all over the earth. The Hand of Nod, the future version of religious fanatics, has gone silent for some time and there are even a few voices that believe the movement is dead. Its leader, Kane, has been reported dead (not even the body has been found) and the entire world has slipped into a nice and comfortable status quo. We have played too many games to know this is the wrong way to go. It resembles too much the classical horror theme where all the characters relax just before one of them is found with a knife shoved deeply in its back. They all realize that the guy they shoot a dozen times on the front lawn is not really dead because nobody bothered to check the pulse or pop him an extra bullet in the head, just to make sure. Now it's too late and everybody is going to die. As you already might have guessed, Kane is not really dead and furthermore, he has managed to mass a huge army. The Global Defense Initiative (GDI) is caught with the pants down, as usual, and it's all up to you to single handedly tip the balance of the war. I'm not going to spoil the plot, although some of you already know about the third race and about the true purpose of tiberium on Earth. One last thing I have to add here. Unlike other games that use CGI scenes to fill the gaps between missions, this game follows the original footsteps and presents the entire plot with real actors and real salaries, which eventually reflect on their performances. I don't have to stress the importance of acting to any of you, but I have to insist so the EA people can hear: It's not about the actors! Even if the acting is not all that bad, giving their record, this should have been at least memorable. I can only

remember the shaky camera and the fact that the nice girl that briefs me before every mission doesn't blink. This aspect alone was killing me every time. I actually had to watch some scenes twice because I couldn't take my eyes off of her weird look. **Concept**The concept of real time strategies has been made famous with the help of games like Command and Conquer so there is no need to explain what this is all about. If I were to be picky, I could strip the graphics to the bone and I could get an almost exact copy from 1999. Lucky that I'm not, so I can appreciate this game for what it is. Nobody will have any problems learning the simple concept on which the game is based upon and the producers have made it even easier by implementing a gradual system of missions that allows every player to get accustomed with the tech tree and most of unit mechanics before reaching the later chapters. Personally I have no problem with it, although I felt some of the missions were a little too easy even on normal difficulty. **Gameplay**Command and Conquer is not revolutionary and if you think about it, none of its features is even new. So what's all the hype about? What makes it tick? To answer this question, we must dissect the gameplay to its very core. Someone might think that after all those years of evolution and after tons of other strategies that have brought new features in the foreground; the new C&C should have presented itself with a new shiny concept to blow our minds. EA managed to ignore the impulse of transforming this lovely franchise into a simple commercial title and actually planned a different approach which involved getting down to the bases. Probably, this question was asked in one late night: what do we like to see in a strategy and do we need complicated tech trees and billions of unit simultaneously on the map? Well technically, there are two questions, but the answer is definitely no. As a producer (and publisher in the same time) you don't need to redefine something that's been invented a long time ago and that's working just fine. There is no need for innovation to develop something new. The answer to this question also implied that they literally had to go back in time when all the games were a lot more fun and a lot less painfully aggressive. 1999 is considered a good vintage year for games in general and the choice was obvious: Tiberium Sun. As I was saying in the preview, the game is made up of two major campaigns and a third small one. The main ones are each comprised of five separate chapters that culminate with a major decisive battle. The third one is only made available after going through both campaigns and has only four missions, just enough to clear up any loose end in the story. Unlike modern strategies, Command and Conquer: Tiberium Wars doesn't emphasize on unit efficiency. Not every unit you can build is indispensable in one particular way and you'll soon find that building troopers might be fun at first and especially through the missions that make this option mandatory, but the war effort must always go to the most powerful units like the Mammoth tank (maybe a little too versatile, good against units, builds, helicopters, planes and whatever you could conceive). This might be a two-edge sword, because many will see this as a downside that narrows the tactical choices available but I believe it makes up with the fun part. Yeah, sure I could send a gazillion soldiers and mercenaries on one flank and some tanks on the other but any well protected base will mow them in no time. The game has preserved the recipe from Tiberium Sun and Red Alert with the building queue on the right and the on the fly capabilities for unit construction, with everything very well economized for a better view of the battlefield, so reaching this objective is fast and accurate. Another interesting feature is that major difference between the NOD and GDI units which provides more fun and even if the morality line is not as thin as the producers suggested (NOD is evil and GDI is good no matter what EA is saying) they are quite well balanced. If you'll feel you're too powerful for the other side, then just wait for the next campaign and you'll see the first ones are in disadvantage. This alone is a testament of the numerous hours spent on leveling up the gameplay. The most important aspect that impressed me weren't the movies (especially not the movies) or some gameplay feature; it was the simple destruction and havoc that can be inflicted on the buildings and units. It's not only the graphic effects that make up for this; it's the sheer impact of weapons. The bullets and rocket are having a visible causatum on everything they touch. For this alone, the

feeling of accomplishment is overwhelming. There are some problems registered like the eternal pathfinding which has never stopped to be a bugger since 1999 and some AI issues. All the units can receive particular orders like aggressive, hold and guard and even if they seem pretty clear to me, they aren't too clear on the battlefield. I've lost snipers and several other units way too often because they chose to pursue an enemy even if I've issued the hold command. This presented a problem sometimes, especially when I was on a defensive position. The last thing that comes to mind is some small annoyances that have bugged me right from the start: Why give me engineers if all they can do is capture buildings and bridges? Why can't I use them to repair garrisoned buildings? Why are only three spaces for any building that can be garrisoned and why in God's name have you made the grenadiers so powerful? The latter units have the capability of clearing a building with one grenade. This is ridiculous.

Video The first version of this engine was called "Westwood 3D" and it was first used in Emperor Battle for Dune, in 2001. Later, it was updated and used in Command and Conquer Generals and renamed Sage. This version today doesn't have anything in common with the old one but it's interesting to see how a game engine evolves over time. This particular one is one of the most versatile I have encountered and any player can see this by comparing any of the old games to Tiberium War. I believe this is one of the most beautiful games on the market today with dynamic-lighting and the latest Direcx 9.0c effects that you'll ever need. Furthermore, by being in development for such a long time and with the experience of so many games, the Sage engine is extremely scalable, running even on lower configurations with no major fuss. And to top this over, the game is pretty modable, giving any interested player the possibility of creating mods and maps.

Multiplayer EA decided that even if the game itself will be old school, the multiplayer has to be updated to the latest standards. Some new features have been added, like the possibility of broadcasting your multiplayer match live (Battlecast) and support for leaderboards and Clans. As anyone can see on their official site, the battle is raging as we speak. The game comes with several multiplayer maps and even if you'll get bored pretty quickly by them, the community support should kick-in pretty soon. After playing through the campaign, most of the players will see this as the most attractive part of the entire game.

Sound There aren't any sound issues I can criticize, as everything can be considered almost perfect. Tanks, people and even the dynamic music is too well done to even hiss in that direction. The only thing that drags down the experience is the mediocre acting involved and the disappointment is even bigger as EA invited some notorious actors to feature: Joseph D. Kucan reprises the role of Kane, Michael Ironside (also known for the voice of Sam Fisher from Splinter Cell), Grace Park and Tricia Helfer (from Battlestar Galactica), Jennifer Morrison (she's not an actress I think but she's the one that doesn't blink) and several others. I found the script superficial and it seemed like it was made in less than a day and the lines didn't quite match the characters (except for Kane). Other than this problem, I could give them a ten out of ten.

Conclusion Once again, the Tiberium conflict will change the face of real time strategy. I think more and more developers will be returning to the old ways and I think we'll be hearing from EA very soon with an add-on. They have struck gold and they aren't going to let this one go so easy. I, for one, am more than happy to play some other two of three games based on this concept and I'm quite sure I will. Whatever you do this year, you mustn't miss this game as it will probably become the game of the year in its category.