



The Amarr cruisers are tough but lack versatility.



Ever so pretty, but does it pack the firepower you need?



The Kestrel frigate is a superb missile boat.



Many enemies will find death at the end of a laser.

Main shot: a Galleon interceptor spotted lurking at a jumpgate outside of Yulai.

ABSOLUTELY NEBULOUS

ALL ABOUT EVE

Written by Jim Rossignol

Once upon a time it was lonely in space. It's not like that anymore

At about 3am I realised the true genius of it. The first hit had been bewildering, staggering, even intimidating. It was like playing *Elite* for the first time

only... bigger. I'd been playing for 12 hours. I'd go on to play for another eight months. Space was Really Big, in a Hitchhiker's Guide kind of way. I was baffled, star-shocked. But as I chatted away with a childhood friend who was at that time in the guise of a middle-sized spaceship, I began to be able to articulate what I've been feeling about this game. "Sitting out here mining is great," he said. "We get to catch up and I'm watching *Brotherhood of the Wolf* again."

The slow pace of the mining sessions left us time to do other things. I said something about Monica Bellucci. My friend concurred.

"I love this," he continued, "I really feel like some space-hick miner, gouging money out of the rocks in the arse-end of nowhere." And that's exactly where we were, ten jumps off the main space-lanes through Empire space. It was fairly safe out here though. One click of the map showed just how safe – perhaps twenty jumps from the dangerous, unpatrolled regions of the galactic periphery. We were raw. Beginners, newcomers. Nobodies on this new frontier.

"Damn, I'd love to be a pirate"

I studied the map. There was a war taking place on that outer rim. The display showed dozens of ships smashed and obliterated through various systems. Choke points into the dangerous 0.0 regions

ON THE DVD You can experience the deep-space thrills, spills and kills of *EVE* for yourself, with the screenshots on this month's disc > Galleries

were bright with the blips of pirates, the warpgate-camping killers who plague the miners, and traders, the more legitimate denizens of the space lanes.

"Damn, I'd love to be a pirate," said my friend. "Although I bet it's nerve-wracking when some harder crew comes along to whack you."

I agreed. I intended to find out. Not what it would like to be the pirate, but about that bigger crew. I'd want to be doing the whacking.

But all that was a long way off, and there was a hell of a lot to see and learn before anything like that was possible. *EVE* is game of a scale that boggles the imagination. There are ▶

■ Publisher
Crucial
Entertainment
■ Developer CCP
■ Review
PCG 124, 90%
■ Released 2003



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no server shards – it's truly massive, with the one galaxy hosting as many as 10,000 simultaneous players, sometimes more. I must have spent weeks on my own, out in space, visiting shattered old space stations, distant obscure reaches, teeming capitol systems, weird fiery nebulae. There's even a giant black monolith out there, if you look hard enough.

A few weeks on and our characters were tougher and wealthier. Now feeling more confident in our expensive frigates, we were trying something a little different. We were trying player versus player combat. Frigate duels – something that has become quite an art-form among the various corporations. If you're playing against other corporations you need to be in 0.0 space so that the police don't turn up to put a stop to the battle, but if you're in the same corp such 'practice' combat is ignored. The NPC faction in *EVE* actually held a frigate tournament, with player champions battling it out to decide who should become the next emperor of one of the major racial factions. I signed up, but even with my in-game pals voting for me, I was never even nominated. *EVE* is a game in which having the right connections really matters, and where the biggest corporations can genuinely make a difference to the order of things.

As we fought among ourselves we learned about turret tracking speeds, target jamming, propulsion jamming, the deadly nature of missiles, and how to counter them. Turret types, ammo types, crystal laser modulators, shields, energy management, gunnery skills – all these things came under scrutiny as we learned the techniques of combat.

But where could we go from here? Bounty hunting. It seemed impossible that we would track down our enemy in the vastness of space, but eventually we found him. A few discreet questions and a helping hand from a few of his victims and we caught the miscreant out. Our first attempt to hit him failed and was disheartening. The next night was better, but it was only thanks to his stupidity that we were able to catch him. His ship was snared by our scramblers and jammers. He was helpless. Missiles tore him apart. We saw just what frigates could do, something that was initially ignored by the players who rushed to get the biggest ships as soon as they could.

The trap we set wouldn't work anymore, at least not in Empire space, the relatively safe

WHIRR CLICK

Technology

The sound of inevitability

Developers CCP are slowly expanding their game, developing on the fly, if you will. There's constant tweaks and upgrades, as well as things that the developers can simply drop into the game at will, server side. Most important, however, is the forthcoming mega-patch, Shiva, which will overhaul large areas of the game, most significantly player-owned structures, some of which already exist in-game. The plan is to make the investment bigger and the commitment of the alliances even greater to their Empire-building cause.

CORPORATIONS

"We are not the evil ones..."

For money and adventure, join a corporation today!

How could a corporation change your life in *EVE*? We talked to Douro from I-Q. We asked him if the effort to get involved in a corporation was worth the time he invested. "Was it worth it? Yes, completely. I was in a Corp from day one, and I didn't have to go through any trial process as I was a friend of a senior member in real life, I had full hanger access. I was very easily able to kit out my ship, replace my ships and experiment with whatever I could find in there. Even more helpful was having the Corp channel. Q-Labs channel was fairly small and most people were based around Europe so there was almost always someone available to answer my stupid questions. It also let me jump in on ops straight away. I was mining down in 0.3 space within a few weeks which there was no way I'd have been able to do without Corp help.

"These days the Corp is probably what's keeping me in *EVE*. I'm fully based down in 0.0 space, right in the middle of our Alliance space. Working down there is so much more fun than anywhere else and most importantly a challenge. As 3-1 are a part of the Xetic council, we have a lot of responsibilities within the alliance with a biggie being defence."



DOURO I-Q

core of the galaxy. The game has changed, moved on. The security has evolved to deal with the ever-increasing threat and inventiveness of the pirates.

Where could we go from here?

Nevertheless, the memory of his ship exploding into the void still makes me smile. It was our first kill, my first taste of the tricky and challenging world of ship-to-ship engagements.

After a couple more weeks bounty hunting in the frigates proved frustrating and we dabbled in other enterprises. There's always NPC hunting: the AI pirates populate the various asteroid belts and special spawn points, such as the wrecks of old space stations and mysterious rock formations that I'd previously been exploring. We made money from the bounties and also picked up the loot that they dropped. If we were lucky we'd find ourselves some rare items that could be fitted to the ship, provided we had the skills to use them.

The more we played, the more the complexity of *EVE* filled me with awe. There are dozens of skill types, everything from specialised mineral refining to the control of drones, the tiny ships that can be deployed to orbit your craft, helping out with mining or fighting. We researched navigation skills, social skills, manufacturing skills. We bought blueprints and manufactured ammunition, then missiles, and then ships. I wandered the trade lanes in my vast industrial

hauler, making safe profits from buying up cheap trade goods and selling them on where they'd be highly valued. It was a slow business, but gave me time to listen to the radio, sit back and browse the web on my second PC, as well as chatting on the in-game channels or reading pages made friendly for the in-game browser. All the time learning, soaking the game up, sponge-like, obsessively building a fortune and a personal fleet. More importantly though, we were making friends and making enemies. You always want someone to ask about this module or that



Frigates will outpace these larger ships in warp.

skill. And the more friends you have the better deal you're likely to be able to rustle up on that next ship. As for enemies, well, some people go to extreme lengths to avoid conflict in *EVE*, wanting to stick to peaceful mining and trading, but me, I love it when that red blip comes up on the HUD. Combat makes it all worthwhile.

In travel and combat there's so much to take into account – such as the endless possibilities for electronic warfare. There are so many different types of jamming, sensor dampening, warp scrambling and weapon jamming that it's hard to know how to approach the subject. The intricacies of combat are enough to blow our tiny minds. So we experiment, ask wiser, more experienced players. There are even four different damage types to consider when arming for combat. Knowing who you're going to be fighting becomes all the more important as a result. An early encounter with pirates saw me narrowly escape two blackbirds – weak but highly



Missiles are one of the most effective ways to kill. Different types damage shield or hull more effectively.

adaptable ships that ambushed me on my way to collect a precious cargo. The two cruisers were able, by virtue of electronic jamming systems, to disable a much larger battleship that came to my aid. They couldn't destroy him though, as he'd installed a hefty array of shield mods. Eventually the two sides were forced to concede and withdraw, both swearing to come back "with mates" at a later date. I watched from the safety of the station,

my cruiser badly mauled. I repaired and went on my way, carefully choosing a different route back home.

At length I got involved in some huge mining operations. Dozens of ships worked together to strip whole belts. The money was rolling in, and I and my friends, all now in different corporations, were riding in cruisers. But still we saw the intimidating mass of battleships drifting by, and wondering what ▶

MAX POWER

"These are the voyages of the starship OmGRoXor!"

Boldly go, get blown up by pirates and boldly go back again. A galaxy of spacecraft lie at your fingertips



1 **TRISTAN Frigate Class**

The Gallente make some beautiful ships, and this is one of the most beautiful of the frigates. Small and powerful, it's a ship many beginners will aspire to.



2 **PUNISHER Frigate Class**

The punisher is one of the heaviest frigates, typical in its Amarrian design. Players taking on the long haul of agent missions could make good use of this.



3 **HOARDER Hauler Class**

The vast amounts of materials required for trade and manufacture mean that haulers like this are one of the most common ships in space.



4 **BELLIPOSE Cruiser Class**

A fairly rare cruiser of Minmatar origin. These ships are tougher than they look: Minmatar ships make up what they lack in looks with versatility and punchiness.



5 **THORAX Cruiser Class**

Argued by some to be the very best of the high-end cruisers. This centerpiece of the Gallente fleets has loads of turrets and massive drone capacity.



6 **SCORPIAN Battleship Class**

The configuration of equipment slots on the Caldari ships means that they're superb for electronic warfare. This is the boss, although the low armour levels worry some people.



7 **TEMPEST Battleship Class**

The flagship of many a fleet, the Tempest is a formidable vessel. Best equipped with projectile weapons, the Tempest is an almighty gunboat.



8 **MEGATHRON Battleship Class**

One of the most impressive-looking ships in the game, the almighty Megathron is a favourite amongst pilots who want to be able to mine and still engage in serious combat.

ABSOLUTELY NEBULOUS



Shuttles are a quick and cheap way to get around, but they can't be improved with modules.



Ships can be modified for speed and agility in space.



The mighty Armageddon.

it would be like to pilot them, when it would be that we could take control of them. *EVE* is aspirational, always giving players something to look up to. Even once you plateau, swanning around in the most expensive battleships, there are dreams of the future, of what the game will introduce next. Not to mention equipping that ship of yours for the most dangerous situations. Rare modules give you that extra percentage and will fetch an enormous sum on the open market.

The leap to the battleship is an enormous one, a scale of magnitude that dwarfed our own personal fleets of frigates and cruisers. These ships are seriously huge, enormously expensive. And it is the battleships that fight the wars of the Alliances.

The Alliances at first seemed distant, monolithic. But they were populated by players just like us, only a little more determined, a little more motivated to get out of Empire space and reap the rewards of 0.0 space. We'd been out into periphery space a dozen times by now, using our cruisers to take on the weaker NPCs and do some mining where the more valuable minerals lay. We'd made some serious cash from these trips, but we still had little idea of the immense fortunes it was possible to make from a large-scale deep space operation.

After a few weeks of messing about on the edge of 0.0 space we began to get involved with alliances. We were making contacts everywhere, trading, chatting and even helping out battleship gangs as they attempted to catch pirates. Sadly, in one over-enthusiastic foray into pirate-riddled territory we were far from our new-found allies when the pirates struck. Their sensor dampeners, combined with our own weak set-ups, meant that we

were helpless. A small but highly effective band of pirates known as The Jokers made us just another statistic on their endless extermination-list. We watched ourselves die in the cold vacuum. Back at HQ, our clones received a letter from their former incarnations, gently informing us that we'd

clearly messed up somewhere along the line – along with a list of who was to blame. We laughed it off as a silly mistake, all the time secretly vowing to get brutal revenge at some later juncture.

A month on and I'd joined another corporation. We were part of the Curse Alliance, a massive syndicate of corporations that lay claim to a huge swathe of 0.0 space. I helped out with hunting the rarer NPC ships, and saw the profits from mining and hauling the rarer minerals. Previously, it had taken me months to scrape together 20 million ISK, the in-game currency. In one operation we made that in a single evening.

But it was a bigger investment out here. Four people hauling minerals, four guarding in heavily armed battleships, another half dozen mining in the huge Amarrian capitol

**We
watched
ourselves
die**

ship, the Apocalypse. It was only with the protection of powerful craft such as these that we could hope to make this kind of money. And it wasn't long before we paid the price for it. A Crow, one of the new breed of high-speed interceptors, hit our

AUCTIONS

Leaky realities

Playing *EVE* can affect the real world

Yes, eBay again. It seems that the amount of time and effort required to make it in the world of *EVE* is abhorrent to some people. This has led to quite a hefty trade in virtual resources on eBay, with everything from lump sums of cash to whole character accounts being auctioned off to the highest bidder. OK, so things are not quite at *EverQuest* levels yet, but there's no doubt that pirates will be making themselves a few quid by selling off the odd 100 million ISK. The thieving scum.



Vast alien ships carry piles of loot but also pack formidable firepower of their own.



A gallente cruiser rendezvous with a vast megathron battleship at a distant asteroid field.

haulers. One of them couldn't get away in time. I was the pilot. Just another death, but this time with millions of ISK spinning away into the void. God damn.

The investment of time required by *EVE* means that such losses come as a big hurt. The buzz that comes from risking it is even bigger. It's like gambling. You're risking something palpable in combat: your time spent accruing ships, money, precious rare implants and modules.

And when you get killed, well, you want blood.

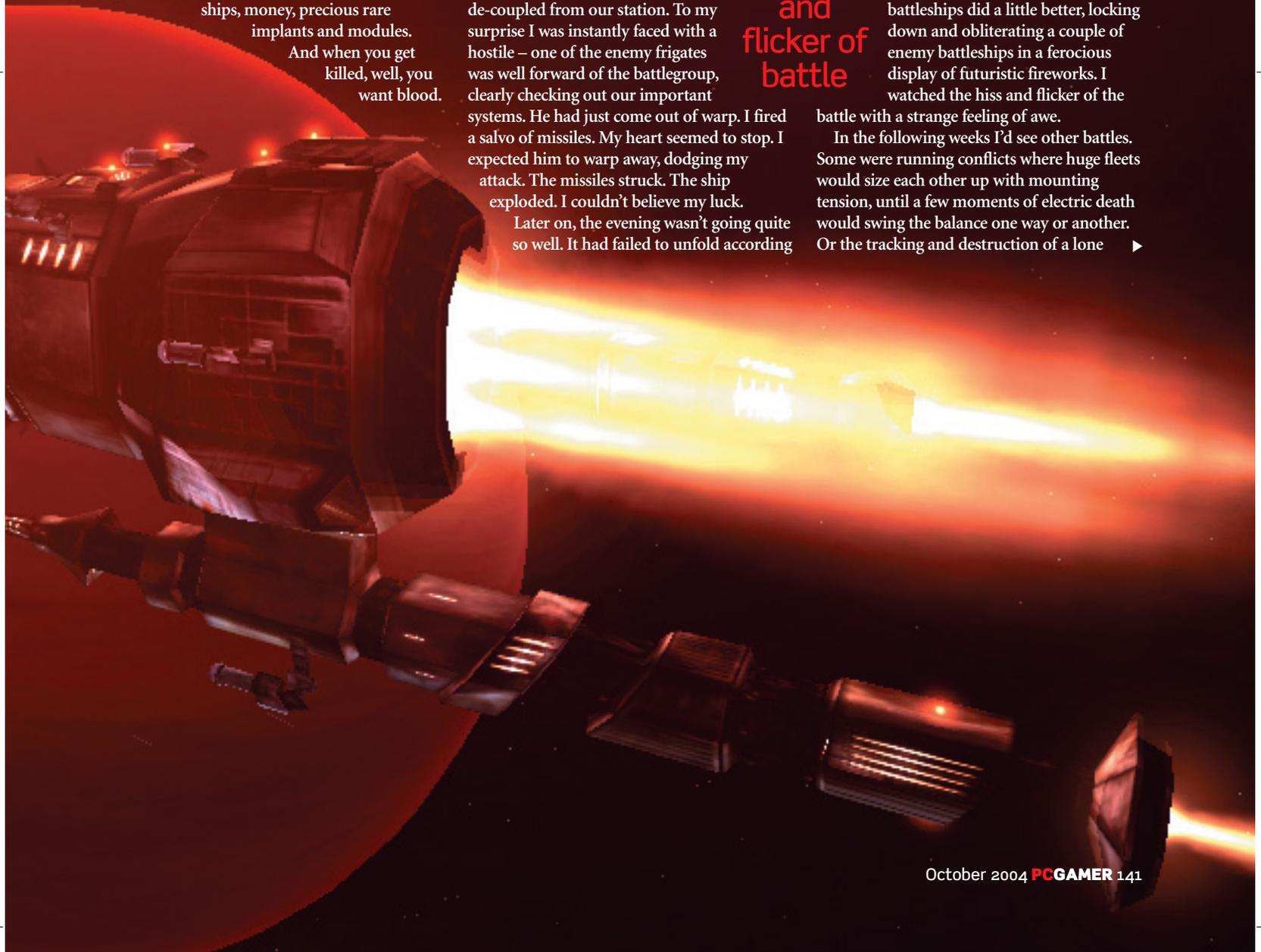
And so to war. One evening I logged on to find the Alliance mobilising in response to enemy incursion. Battlegroups of ships were forming, moving in to engage an enemy fleet. Our own high-speed frigates were tracking them, bringing us reports on what we faced. I was back at base, a few jumps away. With my cruiser armed for jamming and packed with missiles, I de-coupled from our station. To my surprise I was instantly faced with a hostile – one of the enemy frigates was well forward of the battlegroup, clearly checking out our important systems. He had just come out of warp. I fired a salvo of missiles. My heart seemed to stop. I expected him to warp away, dodging my attack. The missiles struck. The ship exploded. I couldn't believe my luck.

Later on, the evening wasn't going quite so well. It had failed to unfold according

to my secret plan, and an hour after that I was limping back to base in an escape pod. The engagement had been an incredible sight, but not one that my little cruiser could handle. Perhaps twenty missiles had scythed down towards me as I attempted to jam the nearest enemy craft. They knocked me spinning and reduced me to space flakes in mere seconds. Our battleships did a little better, locking down and obliterating a couple of enemy battleships in a ferocious display of futuristic fireworks. I watched the hiss and flicker of the battle with a strange feeling of awe.

The hiss and flicker of battle

In the following weeks I'd see other battles. Some were running conflicts where huge fleets would size each other up with mounting tension, until a few moments of electric death would swing the balance one way or another. Or the tracking and destruction of a lone ▶



ABSOLUTELY NEBULOUS



The titanic uber-ship of the Caldari: the Raven. This beast will set you back the best part of 100 million bucks.



This is the mauler: a mining and hunting workhorse.

raider in Alliance space. A daring enemy raid that was cut off and smashed by the rapid response of eager combat pilots. Swarms of frigates over-running enemy battleships, haulers saved from pirates by a last-second arrival of friendly ships...

My alliance, like many of the others, has many experienced and dedicated combat pilots, people for whom the ship-to-ship engagements of *EVE* are something of an artform. They refine the set-ups of their ships endlessly, sometimes coming up with just the right combination for a certain situation.

The current focus of their concerns are the interceptors – super-fast frigates only recently introduced to the galaxy. The pilots of these craft are working to create the fastest, most deadly ships, while the battleship pilots are working out how best to target and lock down these annoying pests – quickly and ruthlessly.

They're so fast that they can deliver missiles and be out of range again before the great big guns of the battleships can track them – new techniques are required for hunting them. The immensity of the range of equipment available to the *EVE* pilots means that the capacity for tweaking and refinement of set-ups, for whatever purpose, is near endless.

I still need a cup of tea and a lie down

All this will continue to change and evolve. *EVE* is slowly introducing a new wave of technology into its trade economy, both from loot drops of dead enemies and from the blueprints that players use to manufacture their own kit. Tech II is just coming into common use and there are a proposed five tech levels to be introduced over the coming years. New ships, including the vast Titans and the hugely desirable mobile refineries, will soon make their debut. They will make our

enterprises in space more profitable, more risky. More aspirational than ever before. We look out into the heavens and think: "I want *that*."

All this means the activities of the player alliances have much more impact. The rare 0.0 stations are becoming fully conquerable, which will make attacking, holding and defending regions utterly essential. With the introduction of player-built stations in the forthcoming updates, the battles will only become ever more intense. The machinations of the players already make up a soap opera of conflict, backstabbing and betrayal. Spying is rife and the alliance leaders work ceaselessly to defend strategic systems and stay one step ahead of the enemy conglomerates and the splinter groups of pirates that plague the galaxy. ("I don't care who your friends are," screamed the beleaguered Texan tactical officer. "If that was my dad out there he'd be space dust, just

BOB A JOB

Work is play. Work is hard. There is no other truth

Occupations are various in *EVE*, but you can expect to try your hand to anything and everything from war to peace



1 Mining might be laborious, but it's a relatively safe and efficient way of bringing in the readies. Work with other players to make larger and larger sums of cash.



2 Pirates can be 'farmed' for both their bounties and the modules that they drop. For beginners the process can be difficult. Best to have an experienced wingman at all times.



3 Player versus Player combat is not easy. Beginners would do well to steer clear of such dangers, or they'll end up looking a little like this. Gates are always a danger outside the core.

CHOONS

EVE radio

In space, everyone can hear you DJ

EVE supports one of the best game-based online radio stations we've ever encountered. Run for the community, by the community, this is a radio station that really tends to the needs of the average *EVE* player. They're always on the lookout for new DJs too, so it's worth taking a look at www.eve-radio.com. Perhaps you could make them play some decent music... (Sorry guys.)



The Kestrel is fast and versatile. It's very cheap too, making it a hugely popular ship.

like the rest... so help me God.") Corporations are constantly manoeuvring for more power, or just trying to stay unmolested by the political blocs that dominate various parts of the system. Getting involved with this circus of money, power and influence is one of the most entertaining activities any game could ever offer. Genuine politics in a digital world.

The scripted in-game stories are slowly playing out too. The political machinations of the various NPC empires are followed daily by

a steadily unfolding drama of events and news. And there's still a vast area of space that has not been unlocked, a no-go zone into which players have not yet been able to pass. And between that void and Empire space lies the equally unknown Jovian space. This strange race of hi-tech aliens have caused some massive events to stir in the *EVE* universe, not least of which was the recent teleportation-death of a Jovian emissary. Fragments of the alien's body were scattered across the whole universe, into the hangars of players. What will become of these fragments? Do you even care? It's just another piece of the *EVE Online* multiverse. Just another reason to pay attention and see what happens next.

Of course the real reason to care about *EVE* is that it is unlike any other game out there.

The time-based levelling means that you can play as much or as little as you like and still make progress. The slow pace of agent missions and mining ops mean that many people will multi-task, playing *EVE* on one PC, working on another. My first corporation had more than one IT worker who spent more of his day managing his business in *EVE* than his business in real life. *EVE* becomes a second life, always there in the background. Always there to be taken into account. It's an investment of time and concentration that dwarfs most other games.

Writing this piece I tried to come up with an apt closing statement, something that would capture both the human interest and the sweeping epic beauty of the game. Perhaps the best way to summarise this was inadvertently spoken on a teamspeak channel, moments after a furious defence of a key system in Curse space. "I've been playing this game for almost a year," said an anonymous pilot. "And I still need a cup of tea and a lie down after all that."

I clicked to detach my glinting battleship from the station and, as I suddenly became aware of just what it had taken to get this far, I knew exactly how he felt.

ALLIANCES

The periphery player alliances

"You Rebel scum," and other worn-out references

Khal Dominicus, one of the leaders of the large and powerful Curse Alliance had this to say: "The alliances in *EVE* are a way for corporations to grow together and work together efficiently without giving up their identity. The most important feature of an alliance such as Curse is the team play. We are able to bring massive amounts of players together within a very short time to combat a situation. This keeps players active and interested in the game, and also provides a good learning platform for everyday skills.

"Last night for example, with a small but efficient battle group of three battleships, three cruisers and two frigates, we set out to defend our borders from hostile intruders. We acted upon several hostile groups the same size as ours, and overtook their positions by surprise. This was attributed to our intel, which is provided from numerous covert sources. We eventually came upon another hostile group at least twice the size of ours, suffered heavy casualties, and lost the position.

"During our travels, we got to know each other. We chatted, and made a friendship on a personal level, I think that's where our efficiency came from."



KHAL DOMINICUS Curse Alliance

Still need to know all about EVE?

www.eveonline.com

The official site is a behemoth of information and filled with vital tools.

www.eve-i.com

Focusing on Europe, this huge site has great forums and regular news.

www.evegate.net

A UK based site with lots of news and views, as well as a big old database.

Have you had an epic gaming experience?

We want to hear all about it:

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