

IGS Assignment 2

‘The Creative Assembly Ltd’

Company History:

The Creative Assembly is a British video game developer, founded by Tim Ansell and established on 28 August 1987, progressing ever since, and now employs over 70 permanent staff. SEGA saw the potential in Creative Assembly with their wide expertise in sports games and the Total War series, and was acquired on March 9, 2005 for a sum of US \$30m. Initially dealing with DOS ports of Amiga and ZX Spectrum games such as Stunt Car Racer by Geoff Crammond, Shadow of Beast by Psygnosis, and FIFA International Soccer by EA Sports, The Creative Assembly made their presence known in the early 90's. The Creative Assembly is most famous for their Total War strategy game series (Shogun, Medieval, Rome and Medieval 2: Total War). Their latest being Medieval 2: Total War, developed in Brisbane, and published by Sega in November 2006. Although based in UK, The Creative Assembly did most of its work within Australia with EA studios, producing such games a 1995 RWC (Rugby World Cup), 1999 Cricket World Cup, AFL 98, AFL 99, Rugby 2001 (carrying the license of the 1999 RWC). The two AFL games developed were the only ones not licensed by them, and were given to AFL.

The major breakthrough for Creative Assembly was their first game in the Total War series – Shogun: Total War (2000). This broke away from their mainstream sports games. This game was a massive success with major sales, inevitably leading to an expansion and two sequels each with their own expansions.

George Fidler, previously the Head Operating Officer of Electronic Arts Australia is now in charge of the Studio in Brisbane. The two most important people in the company are Mike Simpson: Studio Director, and George Fidler: Business development director.

Target Market:

The Creative Assembly is well known for its wide involvement in sports games, working closely with EA Sports, capturing the youth as well as the older gamers. The games were designed for all generations, where anyone can pick up the controller and start playing as their favorite sports hero, with a high interest in the Australian market, as the AFL games were faithful to the original game and didn't compromise any qualities. While the Total War series capturing the hard core gamers. The Creative Assembly has two locations, a main one in Southwater, West Sussex (UK), and a rapidly growing studio in Fortitude Valley, Brisbane (Aus). Australia was classified as the ideal location because of the quality of the local talent and low costs.

The Creative Assembly is best known for their involvement of real time strategies. But their selection of sports games did not go unnoticed, the sports era gave three advantages to The Creative Assembly; enabling the production of low risk games (guaranteed success), allowing the use of state of the art 3D engines, and allowed reserves to develop the high risk, new to the company genres.

Main Products:

Full list of games produced:

GameCude

Spartan: Total Warrior

	PC	Extra's
AFL 98		
Cricket World Cup 99		
Medieval II: Total War	-	Limited Edition
Medieval II: Total War Kingdoms		
Medieval: Total War	-	(Battle Collection, Gold Edition, Viking Invasion)
Rome: Total War	-	(Barbarian Invasion, Gold Edition, Alexander)
Shogun: Total War	-	(The Mongol Invasion, Warlord Edition)
Total War: Eras		
	PS2	
EA Sports Rugby		
Spartan: Total Warrior		
	Xbox	
Spartan: Total Warrior		

What separated the original Total war from other games of the same genre is the interaction units had with the environment (terrain and weather conditions). It was a mix of the turn based KOEI's Nubunaga's Ambition, and a massive realtime strategy, allowing thousands of units battling at the one time. Set in the Sengoku period of Japan, it attracted many games with its fascinating 3D modeling of units. Although it came with industry standards of game play as all strategies, it was the actual story and concept of the game which lured and interested gamers. The reviews of the Total war series have been nothing but good, with all of them making reference to the unique features that developers had programmed; Horses jumping over infantry, elephants trampling infantry, and the most popular in the Rome: Total War, the burning pigs.

Area's of Strength:

With the Total War series being such a popular game, The Creative Assembly won a handful of awards for their products.

IGN Best PC game of E3 2004: Rome: Total War – It was the first strategy game to win the title, previously won by shoot'em up games.

GameSpy's Best Strategy game of E3 2004: Rome: Total War - Winning this for the second year in a row.

Best on Show E3 2004: Rome: Total War

Best in Show E3 2004: Rome: Total War

Game Revolution best Strategy Game E3 2004: Rome: Total War

PC Games Developer of the Year ECTS 2003: The second successive year.

Best Strategy Game of E3 2004: Rome: Total War Voted by 40 leading outlets that cover games

IGN Best Strategy Game of E3 2003: Rome: Total War. Also runner up for Best on show.

PC Zone Essential: Award for Medieval: Total War Viking Invasion. "The expansion pack of the year."

In a Best Game of All time, in 2002 Medieval: Total war topped the charts after Half-life bowed down from its several years at number one.

GameSpot Best Strategy Game 2002: Best Single-Player Strategy Game on PC Award 2002, for Medieval: Total War.

GameSpy Best Strategy Game 2002: Best Strategy Game on PC Award 2002, for Medieval: Total War.

Bafta Interactive Entertainment Awards: For the music in Shogun: Total War Warlords Edition.

The October issue of PC Gamer UK magazine 2006 included an excellent feature that reviewed their top 50 most influential developers in the history of PC Gaming. The Creative Assembly was highly ranked at #11.

Amongst dozens more.

“For *Rome: Total War*, Creative Assembly went all out. Immense 3D battles incorporate dozens of real Roman-era unit types and put literally thousands of troops on the field. With the new engine you can zoom right in to see historically accurate soldiers depicted in stunning detail. When they fight, they fight for real: horses will leap over lines of men, soldiers will burst into flames when incendiary arrows hit, elephants will fling people through the air or crush them where they stand. Zoom out and you can witness hundreds of troops engaging in complex formation maneuvers or pouring over city walls in epic *Lord of the Rings*-style action. This was one of the PC highlights of the show, and for strategy gamers, it was hands-down the most exciting thing E3 had to offer” (GameSpy Review of E3 2004 *Rome: Total War* - <http://au.gamespy.com/articles/516/516868p15.html>)

Therefore it is easy to see the strengths of The Creative Assembly; they have great developers which provide their games with unique and fascinating gameplay abilities. Also the graphics of the games are of highest quality, depicting realism, immersing the players in the game. The historical background of all their games are accurate, symbolizing the research team as one of the best in the industry.

Potential Weaknesses:

With a wide variety of awards it is hard to determine if The Creative Assembly has any weaknesses, but with everything it has its flaws. “There has been some displeasure among customers with Creative Assembly's refusal to fix several significant bugs in *Rome: Total War*, some of which were introduced by the developer's patches themselves.” Although receiving E3 Game of the year, *Rome: Total War*, had several bugs which developers ignored to fix, even as newer patches were released instead of attending to the problem, developers simply proceeded with their own plans, not attending to the customer concerns. Therefore, a potential weakness is their ability to attend to their gamers complaints.

The Creative Assembly is currently looking for new staff for their UK studio, doing a potential full staff rehiring. Although mainly based in UK, the Brisbane studio is lately doing better than the UK, being in charge with the last 3 games. Having Sega buy out The Creative Assembly, could have ‘encouraged’ a full staff rehiring in the UK studio.

Main Competitors:

In the 2004 E3 Games, *Rome: Total War* took our the best in award, closely followed by *Half-life 2* (Vivendi Universal Games), which was on top for several years. The Creative studio had to compete with real time strategy games also being released that year and previous ones, such as *Warcraft 3: Frozen Throne* (Blizzard) and *Warhammer 40,000, Battlefield 2* (EA). All also being strong competitors. Although *Rome: Total War* may have not had better graphics than *Warhammer*, or popularity of *Warcraft*, but it did offer unique features, and an all round performance making it stand out from the rest. This year with the release of the latest installment of their Total Series, The Creative Assembly is hoping for another handful of awards.

When The Creative Assembly first started its Sports production, working closely with EA Sports, it was the only major company to work with sports games, allowing a full capture of its target audience.