A perfect sequel

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Special to QMI Agency

Blizzard Entertainment set the PC gaming world on fire when it released the original *StarCraft* more than 12 years ago. Considered the greatest real-time strategy game of all time to its legions of adoring fans, it's been a long wait for a sequel.

Now, with the release of *StarCraft II: Wings of Liberty*, those fans will get what they've been waiting for. Like a good wine, Blizzard's games are best when given the proper time to mature.

At its core, *StarCraft II* is a game about managing an army and the resources to maintain that army. Players decide what to buildings to construct and what types of units to train to fight on their behalf.

Where the game gets interesting is the inclusion of three very distinct factions. Whether players choose the technologically advanced Protoss, the frenzied Zerg swarm or the valiant Terran underdogs, each have their own unique abilities and strategies for success.

The 30-mission single player campaign tells just the Terran third of the overall *StarCraft II* story; over the next few years Blizzard plans to release two more games focusing on the other factions. However, despite the narrowed focus the narrative never feels stilted.

Like any great space opera, *Wings of Liberty* focuses on the human element of interstellar war. The guns and the aliens are just tools to tell a story of protagonist Jim Raynor's road to redemption and all the treachery, self-doubt and heartache that litters his path. *StarCraft II*, above any RTS before it, relishes in its story, providing both beautifully rendered cutscenes as well as plenty of in-game dialogue between each mission.

Most players will likely spend the majority of their time playing online in the newly renovated Battle.net system. With Facebook integration it's extremely easy to find friends who own the game, and with persistent cross-game chat and achievements it's even easier to play with them.

StarCraft II is a massive game with a seemingly infinite number of components that have each been carefully polished to Blizzard's exacting standards.

StarCraft II: Wings of Liberty
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Could RPGs help med students choose their future practices?

Medical students would embrace using video games to help them train, a new survey shows.

Students at the University of Michigan and the University of Wisconsin-Madison were surveyed and 98% said they liked the idea of using technology to enhance their medical education, a study published online Tuesday in BMC Medical Education.

"Due in large part to their high degree of technological literacy, today's medical students are a radically different audience than the students of 15 to 20 years ago," former medical educator Dr. Frederick W. Kron said in a release. "They are actually more comfortable in image-rich environments than with text."

For example, a virtual environment could help medical students learn how to interview a patient or run a patient clinic. In the survey, 80% of students said computer games can have an educational value.

Among the more than 200 medical students surveyed, 77% said they would participate in a multi-player online health-care simulator provided it helped them to accomplish an important goal.

"Role-playing games may have special educational use to help students envision what their life would be like in different types of professional practices," said Dr. Michael D. Fetters, an associate professor at University of Michigan.

"Allowing students to step into the shoes of practitioners in different specialties, health care settings and economic systems, in an immersive and authentic way, could help guide their decisions regarding which career choices would be the best fit with their values and personal characteristics."
— QMI AGENCY

Tech-challenged? Cisco's got a router for you

Having a wireless network in the home is incredibly convenient. But for a lot of people — especially those without much computer experience, and no tech-savvy friend or relative to act as a guru — setting one up is simply too difficult. Cisco is making a real effort to change that with their new Valet line of wireless routers. From the elegant (and let's be honest, female-friendly) design and packaging to the instructions and built-in software aimed squarely at inexperienced users, it's by far the easiest router I've ever set up. Heck, they box doesn't even describe it as a wireless router, choosing instead to use the less techy, more Starbuck-y term "hotspot."

The Valet comes in two sizes and prices: $99.99 for small to mid-sized homes, and $149.99 for the Valet Plus, with extra range for larger homes. It really is remarkably easy and user-friendly enough for even a novice to get it working, as long as you don't hit some unforeseen computer quirk that the Valet simply isn't designed to handle. If that happens? Better just call me.
— STEVE TILLEY, QMI AGENCY