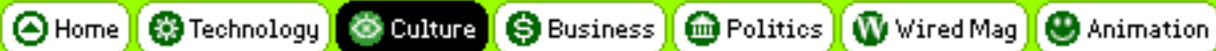


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Vaporware Phantom Haunts Us All

By [Leander Kahney](#) | [Also by this reporter](#)

02:00 AM Jan. 07, 2005 PT

Year after year after year, tech companies promise spectacular products that twinkle and shine in demos and press releases, but slowly begin to fade and dim as the promised release dates near.

Welcome to the shadowy, spectral world of vaporware, a product purgatory where goods are promised, but not delivered.

Now in its eighth year, Wired News' annual Vaporware Awards celebrate all the wonderful gewgaws of 2004 that sadly never saw the light of day. And 2004 was a very good year for vaporware. A vintage year, indeed.

Not only were there plenty of vaporous products floating about -- several companies are fast heading for the hallowed halls of vaporware fame.

Companies like Valve, TiVo and 3D Realms Entertainment have been nominated year after year, sometimes for the same elusive product, sometimes for different wares. But one thing doesn't change: These tardy firms continue to over-promise and under-deliver.

Take 3D Realms, the (so-called) publisher of the long-awaited *Duke Nukem Forever*. After years of waiting, in 2003 we gave the company our Lifetime Achievement Award just to get it off the list.

Nonetheless, readers this year still sent in scads of votes for the AWOL product, so many it might have been the winner. Still, it's worth quoting some amusing barbs.

Readers dubbed the game *Duke Nukem (Taking) Forever*, *Duke Nukem Neverever*, *Duke Nukem Whenever* and *Duke Nukem If Ever*.

"NASA has planned, designed, developed and successfully landed a rover on Mars in the time this game has been in development," wrote reader Ray O'Neill. "So much for deadlines."

Adam Smith noted the game is a joke even to its own creators, who issued a spoof ship notice in December. "Obviously taunting the fans has become a great source of fun for the boys down at 3D Realms!" he said.

Sean Christmann said, "*Duke Nukem* is a legend now. It's gotten to the point where even if they do release the game, people might reject it simply to keep the vaporware lore alive."

We sent 3D Realms a note congratulating the firm for qualifying yet again for a Vaporware title, and invited it to submit a short victory speech. We haven't heard back. (We haven't heard from any of the other winners, either).

And so, based on the votes of Wired News' readers, here -- in reverse order -- are the bottom 10 vaporware products of 2004:

10. Alienware's Video Array¹

Alienware's [Video Array](#) is a high-end bit of hardware and software that allows video cards to run in parallel, dramatically boosting performance.

Or so the company says. Alienware promised the technology in Q4 2004. Needless to say, it's still off-planet.

Reader Adam Black said, "So, Alienware bashes Nvidia's SLI (a competing technology), then jumps on the bandwagon, and now their 'amazing' technology is nowhere to be found? I could have sworn Q4 2004 doesn't mean 2005!"

Trevor Fuller said simply: "Completely vapor."

Story continued on [Page 2](#) »

1 Correction, 01/10/2005 01:02 PM: *The story initially quoted someone identifying themselves as Sean Pelletier, who until recently was an Alienware product manager. ([Return to the corrected text](#))*

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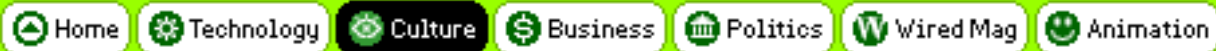
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9. Intel's Pentium 4 at 4 GHz

Intel was supposed to pump the [Pentium 4](#) to 4 GHz in 2004. It fizzled at 3.8.

"I guess scaling to 10 GHz was BS from the spinmeisters after all," noted reader Mikko Ruskola. "Well, it sounded too good to be true anyway."

"Intel flopped on this one, and now in this category -- just like any other -- Intel is following AMD's lead," said Chad Meirose. "It is about time that AMD gets the public credit that they deserve, and Intel (who also makes great products) is shown for what they really are, a PR behemoth."

8. Apple Computer's G5 Chips at 3 GHz

Intel's in good company. Nobody hit the chip speeds they promised. In June 2003, Apple CEO Steve Jobs said IBM's G5 chips would be at 3 GHz within 12 months. It's been 18.

In response, Justin Evers submitted a "Reading from the Book of Apple, Chapter 4, Verses 16 to 20":

"Then did St. Steve raise on high the Holy G5 of Cupertino, saying, 'Bless this, O Lord, that with it thou mayst blow thine Dell enemies to tiny bits, in thy mercy.' And the people did rejoice and did feast upon the renderings of lambs and toads and tree sloths and fruit bats and orangutans and lickable icons.... Now did the Lord say, 'Thou in 12 months, thou must count to

three. Three shall be the number of the GHZ and the number of the GHZ shall be three. Four shalt thou not count, neither shalt thou count two-point-five, excepting that thou then proceedeth to three. Five is right out. Once the number three, being the number of the GHZ, be reached, then thine will be great and powerful in my sight, however if thou shall have more than one button on thou mouse, who, being naughty in my sight, shall snuff thine's life."

7. Team Fortress 2: Brotherhood of Arms

Valve wormed its way off this year's dishonor roll by finally shipping the long-awaited *Half-Life 2*. But worry not, the company's still on the list with *Team Fortress 2: Brotherhood of Arms*, a team-based actioner that's been missing in action since '99.

"It seems that when they called this game the 'warfare of the next century,' they meant it would be coming to store shelves next century," said reader Christopher Meacham.

That doesn't deter retailers. James Morgan noted EBGames is [selling the game](#) with an "appropriately sliding release date," despite the possibility the date may keep sliding.

A reader called Mr. Cheech said the last official news about the title was posted to Valve's website Jan. 23, 2001.

"Soon we're going to have to send in archeologists and historians to see what they can recover from the ancient lost language used on their website," he said.

6. Gran Turismo 4

Gran Turismo 4, the latest installment in Sony's wildly popular racing series, was supposed to allow PlayStation 2 racers to chase each other over the internet.

"Rabid fan" Seth Daam noted the game was originally promised in mid-2002. Then it was postponed to late 2003. Then early 2004. Then simply 2004. Now it's "the January-to-March window" of 2005.

"This title has been in development forever now, and a simple Google search reveals its impressive (and maddening) release history, dangled in front of this fan's greedy fingers like a carrot on a string," Daam said.

"Twelve more months of delay and they could release it for the PS3," said Peter Waldrab.

Adding insult to injury, Sony said in November that the game's online component would be dropped.

"I am tired of waiting," said Donnie Morrow.

Story continued on [Page 3](#) »

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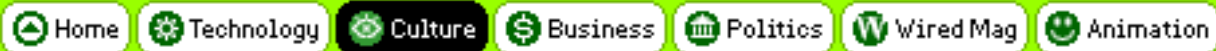
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5. ATI's Radeon X800 series of video cards

ATI Technologies' high-end X800 series of video cards shipped at the end of the year, according to a [December press release](#). Or did it? No one seems able to get hold of them, especially the X800 XT Platinum Edition, unofficially renamed the "Phantom Edition."

"(ATI) says they launched, but no one except reviewers can seem to get a hold of them," said Reverend Love. "WTF? Vaporware."

In addition, the X700 XT also seemed hard to get hold of, unless you were reviewing it for a gaming magazine.

"If you know anyone who believes that ATI's Radeon X700 XT cards actually exist, tell me about them. I have some real estate on the moon that they may want to buy," said Pablo Barros.

4. TiVoToGo

TiVo scored a Vaporware gong in 2003 for the HDTV version of its digital TV recorder, and just squeaked in this year with TiVoToGo, which allows recorded shows to be loaded onto laptops.

TiVo announced the service at CES in January 2004, and released it Jan. 3, 2005. That was cutting it very close, TiVo! And the product still doesn't support the Mac or DVD burning!

Reader Crystal Hurst said, "I've been waiting for TiVo's stinking TiVoToGo feature all year!... I love my TiVo, but this sort of string-'em-along attitude of TiVo's is really getting to me! I want my TiVoToGo and I want it now."

Miles L. said, "Maybe we should start referring to TiVo as 'ToDo.'"

3. Microsoft's Longhorn

Microsoft's successor to Windows XP was originally promised to ship in 2004, though the company subsequently pushed the launch date to 3015 or something. Obviously, Microsoft won't be able to finish the code until it's had a peek at Apple's forthcoming Tiger.

Bill Restemeyer suggested it be renamed "Longwait."

The company also cut a core feature, a new "revolutionary" file system called WinFS.

Steve Story said, "WinFS has been vaporware for over a decade, and recently a delay of many more years was announced. (2008 has been bandied about.) Somewhere, Microsoft programmers are spending their entire careers on a single piece of vaporware."

Steven "Harley" Davidson said, "If Microsoft keeps on pushing back the dates for Longhorn and removing features from it, they might as well just promise to bundle *Duke Nukem Forever* with the OS."

Story continued on [Page 4](#) »

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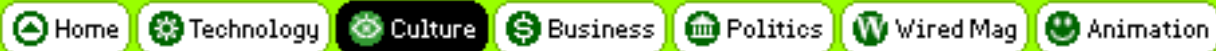
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2. CherryOS

In October, a hitherto-unknown Hawaiian company, Maui X-Stream, rocked the tech world with [news of CherryOS](#), a Mac emulator for Windows PCs that supposedly ran wicked fast and cost only \$50. The software was offered as a download, but the stampeding hordes of closet Apple lovers at Slashdot crashed the servers before anyone could get it.

Then the company quickly withdrew the software, a move that was followed by [allegations of fraud and plagiarism](#). Maui X-Stream promised CherryOS would be reborn Nov. 25, and when that [failed to materialize](#), pushed the date to Q1 2005.

Wired News' readers weren't very kind about this one. Most felt -- perhaps uncharitably -- that CherryOS is a nonexistent product or, at best, a copy of the open-source Mac emulator, PearPC.

"I will eat my left toe if this software gets released," said Wayne Bloss.

"CherryOS -- if not an outright scam -- is the biggest steaming pile of vaporware in my lifetime," said Curt Meinhold.

Marty Gittins said: "CherryOS -- this stinks all the way to vaporware hell."

"We will probably see a cure for death before we see a true platform emulator," said Tony Lunde. "It's still a pretty interesting idea, though."

1. Phantom Game Console

Infinium Labs' elusive games-on-demand console, the appropriately named [Phantom](#), is climbing the Vaporware charts. Last year's No. 3 entry, the Phantom is this year's most vaporous product. Way to go, Infinium!

Matthew Szymczyk said, "By the time this thing ever comes out, we'll have solved the chicken-and-the-egg question, colonized galaxies, cured disease and famine and, most importantly -- moved on."

Reader Derek Chatwood said, "You quoted me last year for the awards; you could go with the same quote this year: 'Not a more aptly named product in the world. The Phantom is a scam. It will never be anything more than maybe a couple of old Dells shoved inside repainted Xbox cases to fool some gullible press or second-round investors.'"

Chatwood noted that even the [FAQ](#) on Infinium's website is "Coming Soon!"

Bob Marietta said, "Infinium Labs' Phantom is the quintessential textbook definition of vaporware. This undelivered product has been lingering around for years now.... The company has been surrounded by a cloud of lawsuits, website revamps and even a stock scandal. A [website](#) with a large cult following has even sprung up to follow the story."

Tim Harwood said, "The only thing they seem to produce is lawsuits."

"Any used-car salesman can slap together a shonky PC and market it as 'the world's greatest and most powerful video game console,'" said Matthew Green, "but only Timothy Roberts and his band of henchmen were able to drum up all the hype, lies and lawsuits that have kept hundreds of people like me entertained throughout year."



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