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[Planet Half-Life](#) | [Features](#) | [Mod of the Week](#) | [2006 Most Wanted List](#)

2006 Most Wanted List

— By [D3pth Charge](#)

2006 seems to be *the* year that most of the modifications in development for Half-Life 2 have chosen for their initial releases. With a large selection of very groovy looking mods on the near horizon, gamers can only wait in nail-biting excitement for what will come. After over a year of a very modest amount of modifications being released, it seems 2006 is finally the year for the renowned Half-Life modding community to shine once again. We are going to look at some of the modifications that, in my opinion, are going to change the face of gaming forever, as well as a few mods that may come as a surprise to some!

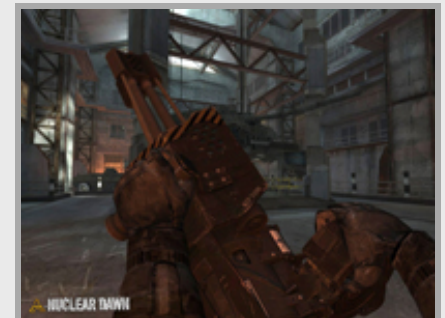
The "Natural Selection Phenomenon"

I like to refer to the recent wave of games that are combining the styles of play from RTS games and FPS games as the "Natural Selection Phenomenon." Natural Selection, a modification for Half-Life 1 was an early pioneer of the "commander" position—in which one player has a top-down view of the battlefield and can communicate with his teammates who are playing with a classic FPS viewpoint. While this ground-breaking concept never really took off in the Half-Life 1 community (with the exception of NS itself), many modifications for Half-Life 2 seem to be embracing the idea.



Iron Grip's fantastic, unique environment.

The first modification that comes to mind, and incorporates this NS-influenced style of play is Iron Grip: The Oppression. This game simply looks amazing, from the very creative storyline to the unique idea of one team consisting of a sole player in RTS view and the other team consisting of FPS gamers. The basic setting of the world of Iron Grip is one of fantasy; I assume the time period is supposed to be approximately modern day, but the technology of the world is much more akin to the Industrialization period in England/Europe during the early 19th Century. Hulking, smoke-belching machines inhabit this desolate, depressing world, and two enemies—the Resistance and Rahmos—are in a deadlock fight to the death. The main reason I am so excited about this mod is because it is so close to initial release and I cannot wait to see how the two gamestyles come together. The idea of RTS vs. FPS is very unique (well, other than Jeremy and Doug's idiotic spats in the early episodes of [Pure Pwnage](#)) and



This amazing weapon skin is only one of many impressive peices of work that make up the mod Nuclear Dawn.

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I can see games like this bringing a much larger crowd to the gaming table, as RTS players who normally wouldn't have anything to do with the Half-Life community can now enjoy the game as much as FPS players.

Another game, very recently announced, that promises both FPS and RTS gaming aspects is Nuclear Dawn. Unlike Iron Grip, ND plans on incorporating the RTS gamestyle in a fashion much more similar to that of Natural Selection itself. Each team will have a commander that can build defensive and offensive structures to aid his team and can coordinate attacks. I must admit though, the main draw to this mod for me is not the gameplay; it's the insane level of detail that the team has put into the mod. The maps not only look amazing, but the player models, gun skins, and even the props are all up to the same standard. Now, we all know that even the prettiest game will suck if the gameplay is no good, but as far as I am concerned, if the artists and modelers can do such quality work, then I expect the people planning the gameplay have the same amount of talent.

Insurgency is another mod that looks fantastic. Now in full beta-testing stage, Insurgency has seen many, if not the majority of its ambitious goals brought into reality. Incredibly realistic gameplay featuring accurate platoon formations, chain-of-command, and the opportunity for very high levels of coordinated teamwork looks to be a recipe for success with this mod. Gameplay is not the only area that excels either; one look at the beautiful, immersive and ridiculously accurate maps and models can tell you that this mod will look just as good as it plays. With a very large community already loyal to the mod, we can expect that the game will have no problem maintaining a large, healthy player base. As for myself, while I enjoy many different types of game styles, I also have seen a big lack of realistic mods and that fact only adds to my excitement for this mod, as well as the one I am about to mention...

The WW2 Mod We Have Been Waiting For!



No HUD, death messages or life meter will make their appearance in R&L.

I don't know about you, but if I were Valve, I would be very worried about an upcoming mod by the name of Resistance and Liberation. While Day of Defeat: Source was created by an extraordinary team of talented individuals, R&L promises to bring something to the table that no other WW2 mod or game (with the exception of Red Orchestra for UT2k4) has been able to provide: a completely realistic gaming experience that stays true to World War 2. While games like Day of Defeat: Source, Call of Duty 1/2, Medal of Honor and Battlefield: 1942 all pay homage to WW2, none of them are realistic. Many people are tired of the same recycled arcade-type gameplay that these games once pioneered, and instead want something fresh and new. While still diving into the well-charted sea of WW2 gaming, R&L has changed the gameplay by focusing on realism. There will be no crosshairs, ammo count, kill messages, or HUD of any sort in R&L. Instead, players must use iron sights (as they would in real life), and rely on their other senses—such as sound and feeling—to determine their immediate situation. To me, nothing is more aggravating while playing a game than the sheer amount of luck that is prevalent in so many games, such as Counter-Strike: Source, where someone can kill me with one shot to the head from 200 yards away with a pistol, simply due to the fact that they aimed in the general vicinity of my head. Things like this cause team work and strategy to be the only things that separate a skilled player from the regular kiddies playing in their parent's basement. I have a feeling that R&L will provide an experience that allows one's



Insurgency promises to bring the best of realism, teamwork and strategy together for an intense gaming experience.

personal skills—such as aim and reflexes— to separate player skill levels in addition to teamwork and strategy.

Team Fortress At Its Best

Speaking of teamwork, strategy and the ability to truly define oneself through personal skill, another modification that I can hardly wait for is Fortress Forever. As we all know, Valve dropped the ball in regards to bringing any sort of Team Fortress game to Half-Life 2. Both the anticipated TFC: Source and Valve's resident vaporware, Team Fortress 2, have not seen the light of day. In addition, Valve developers can't even be bothered to answer questions about the subject with anything more than simple responses like, "you'll see" or "we can't get into that." Luckily, Fortress Forever—a mod created for TF fans by TF fans—has taken the reigns and gone much further than any gamer had expected TFC: Source to go. Beautiful maps, player models, and weapons are no stranger to this mod. While they do not produce media updates as often as other mods, the ones they do have are so high in quality that it more than makes up for their relative scarcity. In addition, it seems that the majority of the TFC community has embraced this mod, which is a wonderful thing, as the TFC community was one of the closest-knit and most productive gaming communities of all time. The Fortress Forever team has stated that they hope to release their initial beta sometime in 2006, so all we can do is cross our fingers and hope for the best!



Fortress Forever: bringing you the best aspects of previous TF games while adding even more improvements.

A Few Surprises



Kreedz Climbing is a non-violent, "Gamer vs. Gravity" modification based off of climbing maps for CS.

Many of the mods that are coming out are not as hyped-up as the ones that I have already mentioned, but even some of these underdogs have me on the edge of my seat as I wait for their release. One of these mods is Kreedz Climbing: a non-violent, climbing-based mod influenced by the climbing maps in Counter-Strike. While this modification has not seen as much hoopla about its pending release as other mods, it nevertheless looks to be quite a gaming experience. I am very interested to see what kind of community evolves from the game, and to see how the game progresses as it matures. I believe KC is very close to an initial release, so hopefully we won't have to wait too much longer for this baby!

Another lesser-known mod that has me antsy is the next installation of the single-player mod MINERVA. This mod is based off of the Half-Life 2 universe and doesn't include new characters or weapons (at least not yet), but the quality of the story-line is impressive. The first installation was little more than an hour's worth of game time, but I had a blast playing it. The map was very well done, enemy/resource placement was excellent, and the plot itself was well thought-out. If the second episode is as well-made as the first, we are all in for quite a treat. If you haven't already, be sure to check out MINERVA's first episode [here](#).

Modifications Mentioned

[Natural Selection](#)
[Iron Grip: The Oppression](#)
[Nuclear Dawn](#)
[Insurgency](#)
[Resistance and Liberation](#)
[Fortress Forever](#)
[Kreedz Climbing](#)
[MINERVA](#)

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