

ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY

STAR WARS
EPISODE I
THE PHANTOM MENACE
THE VIDEO GAMES

Nintendo 64 • PlayStation • Dreamcast • 16-Bit • Handhelds • Arcade

May 1999
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118

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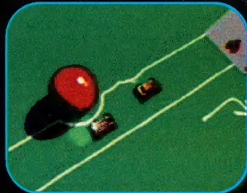
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It's a good month to be in video games

By John Davison • john_davison@zd.com



It's a good month to be involved in video games. I'll admit that I often sit back and think that, but this month has been truly spectacular for two extremely significant reasons. First, and most obviously, we've been lucky enough to spend a great deal of time with not one, but two Star Wars Episode One games. I'm sure you know what a big deal that is...and for many of you it's probably the reason you picked up this issue of *EGM*. I won't go into it any further here as we have plenty of information later in the magazine—and let's face it, Star Wars is every-frickin'-where at the moment. Needless to say it's all very exciting and we've got some stuff in this issue you won't see anywhere else.

Second, literally a couple of days before this issue went to print I was fortunate enough to be in Japan to see the unveiling of the "Next Generation" PlayStation. You can read more about it in this month's Press Start section—but I just wanted to impress upon you the sheer magnitude of this announcement. Sure, it's a pretty big deal to anyone who knows anything about video games—but it has to be said that it is quite possibly the most important announcement in video game history.

The PlayStation is now the most successful game system ever. Sony (in a fit of frantic and deserved wily-waving at the same event) celebrated the fact that they

"Not only is the new machine so incredibly powerful that it'll make your knees weak, but it is backed up by a plan that has repercussions throughout the home entertainment and technology world."

have now sold more than 50 million systems, and the rate at which they are shifting them doesn't appear to be slowing down. The prospect of a new system has been on the horizon for some considerable time—but we are now faced with both a system and an apparent strategy that would appear to ensure Sony's dominance for at least another five years.

Not only is the new machine so incredibly powerful that it'll make your knees weak, but it is backed up by a plan that has repercussions throughout the home entertainment and technology world. Sony is going to build a chipset that puts most computers and workstations to shame...and is then going to stick it in a box that will probably cost under \$300. Intel and all the other manufacturers touting hi-tech wizardry must be so pissed right now...because this is going to change the way people perceive the power of computing in the home forever—and everyone's going to expect it cheap.

If you think back, no one has ever been the dominant force in gaming twice in a row...the PlayStation has established itself as the interactive entertainment system, and along with the efforts of software companies and magazines like *EGM* and *Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine* has helped push video gaming as something that isn't exclusively for teenage boys. PlayStation 2 (for want of a better name at the moment) is going to take this...and turn it into something that hopefully everyone can appreciate—in the way that everyone can appreciate a good movie and a good piece of music. If the demos of Tekken, Gran Turismo and Final Fantasy are anything to go by...don't think they'll have too much trouble.

Group Publisher
Dale Strang
Editorial Director
J. E. Funk • joe_funk@zd.com

Editor in Chief
John Davison • john_davison@zd.com
Managing Editor
Dean Hager • dean_hager@zd.com
Features Editor
Crispin Boyer • crispin_boyer@zd.com
Previews Editor
Dan Hsu • dan_hsu@zd.com
Reviews Editor
John Riccardi • john_riccardi@zd.com
Consumer Hardware Editor
Shawn Smith • shawn_smith@zd.com
Associate Editor
Che Chou • che_chou@zd.com
Ninja
Sushi • sushi_x@zd.com
Contributing Editors
James Mielke • Gary Mollohan • Doug Erickson
Joe Fielder • joe@videogames.com
News Editor
Chris Johnston • chris_johnston@zd.com
Tricks Editor
Terry Minnich • tricks@zd.com
West Coast Editor
Wataru Maruyama • wat_maruyama@zd.com

Creative Director
Michael Stasius • mstasius@zd.com
Senior Art Director
Cyril Wochok • cyril_wochok@zd.com
Associate Art Directors
Andrew Burwell • Jim Cordanio

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Mixx Entertainment
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Matthew Galanti, Producer
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Yutaka Ohuchi, Japanese Correspondent

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Jo-Ei M. Damon • Gary Steinman

Production Director
Marc Camron
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Press Manager
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Project Leader
Mark Lefebvre • mark_lefebvre@zd.com
Analyst
Scott Parus

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Associate Circulation Director
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Advertising Inquiries Contact:
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50 Beale, 12th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105
Telephone: 415-474-9000 Fax: 415-547-8777
Account Executive
Suzanne Farrell
Tel: 415-547-8781 e-mail: suzanne.farrell@zd.com
Regional Sales Manager, Northwest
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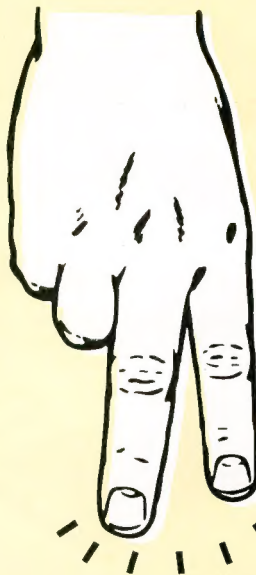


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fig. 1



fig. 2



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Curve



Griffey



fig. a) WHAM!



fig. b) CRACK!



fig. c) SLIDE!



fig. d) SLAM!



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STAR WARS
EPISODE I
THE PHANTOM MENACE



Star Wars: Episode One. You've heard of the movie, now read all about the games based on it. (pg. 342)



At the brawling begin. The Dreamcast has a new challenger with the PlayStation 2. (pg. 28)

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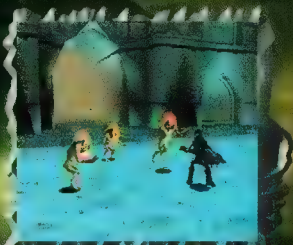
DESTROYING YOUR ENEMIES ISN'T ENOUGH...



"...very impressive indeed."

—EGM

As Razel, stalk the shadows of Nosgoth hunting your vampire brethren. Impale them with spears. Incinerate them with torches. Drown them in water. No matter how you destroy them, you must feed on their souls to sustain your quest – the ruin of your creator, Kain.



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- Dark gothic story

"Vampire fans get ready – Soul Reaver could be the ultimate thriller..."

—GamePro



A promotional poster for the video game Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver. The central image shows the character Kain, a pale-skinned vampire with a black hood and a blue cape, holding a severed, tortured human figure by the neck. The victim's body is covered in bloody wounds and red ribbons. The background is a dark, textured green. The text is overlaid on the image.

...YOU MUST
DEVOUR THEIR SOULS

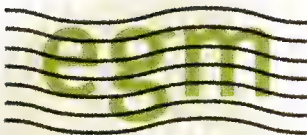
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letters

Compiled by Dan "Shoe" Hsu

Letter of the Month

To Each His Own

I've been a loyal *EGM* reader for a year or two now, and I've noticed a rather disturbing trend: Every month the letters section is littered with hate mail telling the Review Crew how stupid and incompetent they are for giving game X a 10 when it so obviously sucked or game Y a 6 when it blew MGS and *Zelda* out of the water. Now before the tomatoes begin getting lobbed in my direction, let me explain. I understand that a letters section should be used for readers to voice their opinions on what the editors of a magazine may have said. But people, you have to realize that the guys at *EGM* are gamers like we are, and their opinions, while hopefully more educated than most, are not always going to agree with our own and are certainly not definitive.

Please don't take this as me trying to defend *EGM*. For instance, Resident Evil is one of my all-time favorites, and we all know of *EGM*'s much-publicized "snubbing" of Capcom's survival horror-fest on its top 100 list. I suppose if I were paid to make a top 100 list, old Resident Evil would be pretty high up there. But alas, I am only a student, not an editor for a magazine. So while I strongly disagree with some of the views the guys have, I think it in bad form to tear them up and criticize their merits for it. I guess what I'm trying to say is, remember

what we're doing here. We are paying money for a magazine written by a bunch of gamers like us who have scored the ultimate job and get to play games for a living and tell the world what they thought. The Review Crew's rating system is the best I've seen (how can you tell if a game is worth your hard-earned dough or not if there are a thousand games an issue with straight fives out of five?), and I generally trust the guys' opinions. However, I simply use a game's score to formulate a smart game purchasing process; if it didn't get a gold award, I'm going to have to rent the thing first. There comes a time when the Crew bashes a game I've been looking forward to, so in those cases I rent the thing anyway. But we all have to remember that looking at the scores for a game is like asking your buddy who just bought Xengears if it's any good. Who knows, the muddy graphics and the horrid voice acting may just turn him off, but when you boot the game up you may be stuck on it for weeks, depriving yourself of sleep while playing through the latest Square masterpiece (not that I did that or anything...cough, cough).

So if you really think the guys at *EGM* are morons, then don't buy the mag anymore. Just don't riddle the letters column with hate mail.

Ryan Short
rls42@cornell.edu



Our readers have chosen the best of the best...
Read more about the winners...

LETTERS OF THE MONTH COVER PAGE, THE DRAWING, PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAN ANDERSON AND ALEXANDER P. O. ...

Game's Choice

Thank you for selecting Panzer Dragon Saga as Role-Playing Game of the year. We poor Saturn owners (both of us) need a little cheering up! At least Dreamcast is only a few months away.

David Hanson
DavidHanson@webtv.net

No need to thank us. We're sure it would've won our reader vote for RPG of

the Year as well, had more of you been given a chance to play this rarity.

By the way, that's all the feedback on our 1998 Game's Choice Awards we're going to print. Why? Because 99 percent of the other mail read like this:

"Dear *EGM*,

I (agree/disagree) with your choices for the 1998 Game's Choice Awards. I think (*Zelda*: Ocarina of Time/*Metal Gear Solid*) is (great/a piece of crap)."

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Please note: We reserve the right to edit any correspondence for space purposes. If you don't want your name, city/state or e-mail address printed, tell us so (but please include your phone number and mailing address for Letter of the Month consideration).

So we're sure you'll agree with us, we don't need to waste space this month printing *Zelda* vs. MGS mail...we've already beaten that subject to a pulp in previous editions of *EGM* Letters.

Too Subtle?

In your last issue (April, #117), on pg. 125, in Dan Hsu's review of *Bust-A-Move '99*, on the 15th line, the words are a little messed up, don't ya think?

Just thought I'd point that out. I'm bored. Where did I put my crayons...?

ShaoZero@aol.com

Here's that excerpt from my *BAM '99* review. Read between the lines: "I know *Acclaim* isn't the type to milk older titles or licenses, but *Money* talks..."

Don't make us spell it out for you any further. Just sit on this one for a while—we're sure it'll come to you... :)

And In Case It Hasn't Come To You Yet...

Hey Shoe, I really liked your "hidden" jab at *Acclaim* and the over-milked Mortal Kombat series in your *Bust-A-Move '99* review last issue.

Jeffrey Wilson
TerminusFactor@webtv.net

Thanks.

The Search For April Fools'

I went through your issue this month, when I realized that it was the April issue. I then searched endlessly (actually, it was more like 15 minutes) for the location of your annual April Fools' joke, and I think

got milk?



The Madonna, Stale Fish, and 720 McHawk. I've named my share of products.

My friends think I'm a milk drinker. Milk has more nutrients than sports drinks. Even if you're not a milk drinker, I don't have to be upside down to enjoy.

got milk?



letters

I've found it. Super Mario Bros. isn't coming out for Game Boy Color! Right? Right?! Or maybe I'm entirely wrong...

David Hamner
mrdhamner@softhome.net

Nope. We're happy to say you're wrong. (...happy only because we WANT a portable Super Mario Bros.)

About the April Fools' thing...that company profile on Attention To Detail must be false. That picture of the team looked fake, as did most of their credentials.

Justin Pearl
Virginia Beach, VA

Boy, we sure hope none of the folks from ATD are reading this.

I have read your magazine for years, and the one thing I have enjoyed the most is the annual April Fools' joke. I just got my April issue, however, and there's no mention of it whatsoever! Did you guys just not mention it, or is there no April Fools' joke this year?

John Glennon
glennons@hotmail.com

Read on...

When I first read your review on the GameShortz, I believed it. Then it hit me that this was your April issue, and that the GameShortz was the April Fools' joke. It wasn't the best April Fools' joke (that award goes to your April 1997 issue, he he), but it did make me laugh.

domino79@juno.com

Seriously, the April Fools' joke gets stranger and stranger every year. I thought I had it with the marriage proposal [in EGM Letters], but then I saw the Dreamcast fishing controller, and then the fact that

some people would want Ally McBeal made into a game...I didn't know if any of those could be real.

But then I stumbled upon the GameShortz review. All the hints were there:



GameShortz: fact or fantasy?

the price (\$41.99=4/1/99), the praise it receives, and the fact that it is not quite obvious what it does. I had only bought the www.madpropz.com domain you really could have fooled us all!

Kent Phillips
kaphilli@truth.mccallie.org

It didn't occur to us to register the URL until after we went to print. Damn our useless brains!

First it was Sheng Long. I remember arcade owners offering players \$100 in tokens if they could reveal him. Then it was the infamous GoldenEye hoax that had many gamers spending countless hours trying to open up the different Bonds. Now in 1999, millions of kids will be begging their parents for the hottest game accessory ever: the sensual GameShortz. I'll take a Dreamcast for my work in revealing this sick joke.

mrcr@fortwayne.infi.net

You will get nothing and like it!

The April Fools' joke has got to be the GameShortz. If it isn't, could you hook me up with a pair?

headbangers69@juno.com

Sorry! There's only one GameShortz, and we're using it.

Oh Brother

For those of us interested in checking out Choaniki: Great Brother [editor's note: the *fruity homosexual PlayStation shooter mentioned in EGM Letters, issue #115*], where can we find a copy of the game?

You guys haven't even shown us a screenshot. Why not? After all, you printed screenshots from Atlas' Thousand Arms, the RPG with heterosexual dating. Ugh! Why aren't the gay games getting equal coverage? There are thousands of gay gamers other than myself out there, who would be interested in buying any gay game we could get our hands on, good or bad. I'm sure there aren't as many, but you finally told us (although indirectly) that there is at least one, so how about full coverage of it?

Monroe White
steelylions@yahoo.com

Got a game-specific question for our resident ninja? Write him at:

Sushi-X
P.O. Box 3338
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3338
e-mail: sushi_x@zd.com

I was wondering if you knew whether the Final Fantasy IV-VI compilation your magazine casually mentioned in issue #116 had any chance of coming stateside. I'd gladly pay at least \$100 for this collection.

StrikerX@aol.com

Square EA will be bringing Final Fantasy Anthology (containing FFV and VI, the latter being what we called FFIII in the U.S.) here for the PlayStation later this year. I don't know why they won't be including FFIV in the package, but I intend to find out!

What's going on with Earthbound 64? DeMoNtHUGy@aol.com

It's been confirmed for the cartridge format, but the proposed 64DD version looks unlikely.

Whatever happened to the N64 Kirby game that was supposed to be out at the same time the system was released? I'm assuming it was tossed out...

LuvinPlats@aol.com

You're right. Kirby's Air Ride is gone baby, but there is a new Kirby game in the works from Nintendo.

Hey Sush! Your letters column should be longer. Heck, it's only one page long!
Shovisa@skynet.net

Eeeek! Don't give anyone any ideas. I have my hands full as it is. This month and last, they gave me a break since they needed my page for more previews. You won't see me complaining! :)

Question of the Moment

What do you want to see in the new Star Wars: Episode I games?

A playable Obi-Wan Kenobi or Anakin Skywalker. I would also love to see a battle against Darth Sidious or Darth Maul.
Ferrincm@aol.com

The original vector graphics arcade game hidden inside.
trex8me@netscape.net

An adventure game like Zelda with full freedom of travelling on and between planets.
god_9999@yahoo.com

Substance and visual dazzle. Most Star Wars games only had dazzle.
arasera@panam1.panam.edu

I want to see Ewoks! Cute, cuddly, shootable Ewoks!
DMKMG5@aol.com

Princess Leia in a bikini.
JarJar2002@aol.com

It needs multiplayer!!!
blaze192@yahoo.com

I'm hoping LucasArts does something innovative, like [Konami did with] MGS.
Juraiking@aol.com

I'd like to see a 10-minute FMV of Natalie Portman as Queen Amidala.
marc17@hotmail.com

Next Month's Question of the Moment: What does Sega need to do to compete with PlayStation 2?

Send your short but sweet responses to: EGM@zd.com with the subject heading: COMPETE

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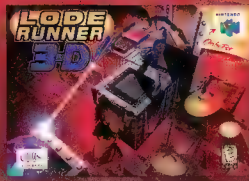
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letters

We'd love to show you some screenshots, but unfortunately, our office copy of Choaniki got lost (stolen?) during our move from Lombard to Oak Brook. We'll try to get another copy from Japan, but it's an older game which may be hard to find. If we do, we'll be sure to show you exactly what a gay shooter looks like, as per your request!

[Regarding Choaniki: Great Brother,] I think America is missing out on a great game. So what if the gameplay sucks, and the men are humping each other in Speedos...the idea of giant penis weapons rocks! This country is lacking video games with giant penis weapons used to smite the enemies. Bring us coverage of this overseas jewel. I just want to see one screenshot of this game in action. You have to expand our culture with this protein-enriched game.

Mark Tyree
marktyree@hotmail.com

Ewww.

Only The Lonely

I picked up the March issue of EGM, and turned to the story about Mario Party. What I found shocked me. Every guy except John Ricciardi had a woman clinging at his side. This was disturbing. Why couldn't you guys just kick down a few extra bucks and hire a high-quality "stand-in" for him too? It's the least you could do. I mean, look at the picture on page 116...he's holding his controller high, in a victory stance. But look deeper, further into his eyes...what do you see? I think there's genuine pain there...

Does this have something to do with the Bikini Ricciardi pic? Should we be worried about him? Should we urge him to import more than just video games?

Jeremy Fleissing
hazama@gport.com

First of all, those women are a lot more expensive than any hired "stand-ins" could possibly be...those are our wives and girlfriends. Second, Ricciardi seems perfectly happy without a local steady. "All the more money for memory cards," he always says. (We say "local" because he seems to know a lot of hot girls from the greater Niagara Falls area.)

Congratulations to Alisha Gerard and Ilan Meighan of Brooklyn, NY. Last month, Alisha proposed to Ilan through EGM Letters. After the issue came out, she called to tell us what happened. Apparently, Ilan screamed out loud after seeing his name (and the proposal) in EGM while reading it at work (a very appropriate place to be reading EGM, by the way), then called Alisha right away to give a resounding "yes." We're happy for the both of them. Let's just hope these two rabid EGM fans don't name any of their kids after Sushi-X...

Hey...ya wanna work at EGM?

The Ziff-Davis Video Game Group is looking for a pair of visual journalists to join us here in lovely Oak Brook, Illinois. If you like video games and can create cool Quark pages like there's no tomorrow, get your stuff together and send it to us. Here are the positions:

Art Director: Expert Gamer

Responsibilities include: planning and creating each month's cover and setting the overall visual tone of the magazine. This person will work with a pool of page designers and editors to create strategy pages which include easy-to-read maps and info our readers use to beat their favorite video games.

Associate Art Director: Electronic Gaming Monthly

Responsibilities include: page design and layout, feature page design, making photo and illustration assignments and washing Cy Wochok's vintage automobile every Saturday.

Both positions require solid Quark, Photoshop, color scanning and picture toning skills; Adobe Illustrator a plus.

This is your chance to work in a really, really fun atmosphere with very strange but friendly people. Please send a resumé, cover letter and five non-returnable work samples ASAP to the address below:

Meg Krida
Senior Human Resources Manager
Job Code: AD-MK
10 President's Landing
Medford, MA 02155

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Gabriel Echaveste
Ventura, CA

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Joshua Redfeare—Cheraw, SC



Rodolfo Mejia-Molina—Bellflower, CA

Close, but no controller



Adam Ross
Hyde Park, MA



Chao Sen Chen
Brooklyn, NY

The ASCII Control Pad

Put your creative skills to the test by decking out a #10 envelope (use your own unique touch). Send your letter art to:



EGM Letter Art
P.O. Box 3338
Oak Brook, IL 60522-3338

(All entries become the property of ZD Inc. and will not be returned)

*Or at least get your name in the magazine and win yourself a great prize (FIRST PLACE ONLY).

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- Official Playstation Magazine

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- GamePro

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- GameFan

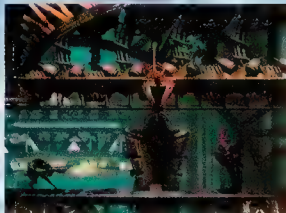
"...combines stunning graphics and engrossing gameplay."

(★★★★ out of four)

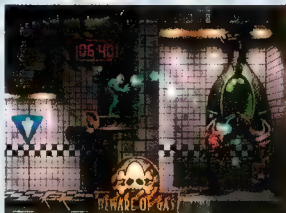
- USA TODAY

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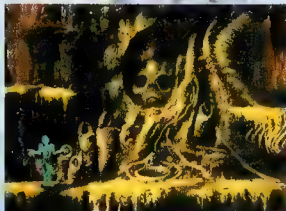
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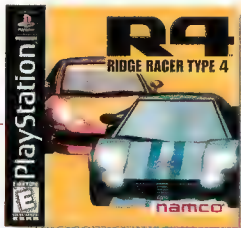
05...04...03...02...01





"R4 has to be the best-looking PlayStation racer ever (yes, edging out even Gran Turismo)."
- Official PlayStation Magazine, December 1998

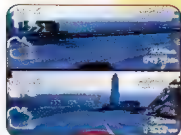
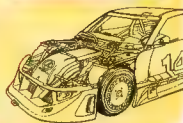
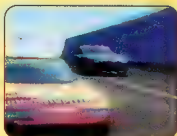
"The first great racer of 1999 could be a *Gran Turismo Killer*."
- Official PlayStation Magazine, February 1999



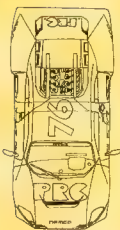
It is speed incarnate. Its sexy sheet metal restrains a 3000 cc power plant that hits 0-190 mph in the snap of a linguini. It is the Bisonte - just one of the automotive marvels that scorch the streets in R4. With over 300 new cars, 45 fantastic models, 8 thrilling courses, a 2-player split-screen mode and only one way to drive. Fast. R4's asphalt gulping graphics and spectacular racing environments deliver racing speeds that were once deemed impossible. But not anymore. Now you've got R4. Ciao, baby.

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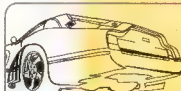
- Battle head-to-head in split-screen vs. mode



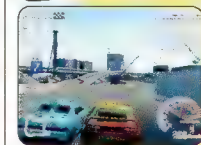
- Speed-tuned physics keep the arcade-style action fast-paced
- Championship performances unlock secret hidden supercars
- Don't be afraid to bump the other car, it's all part of a winning strategy
- Join one of four international race teams - each with individual strengths and weaknesses
- Design original logos to customize your car



- Race on gorgeous cityscape, countryside and racetrack courses



- Money can't buy victory. You've got to earn new cars with your race performance
- Experience all the ups and downs of a full racing season in the Grand Prix mode
- Includes a Ridge Racer Turbo Mode bonus disc with 8 60 FPS tracks



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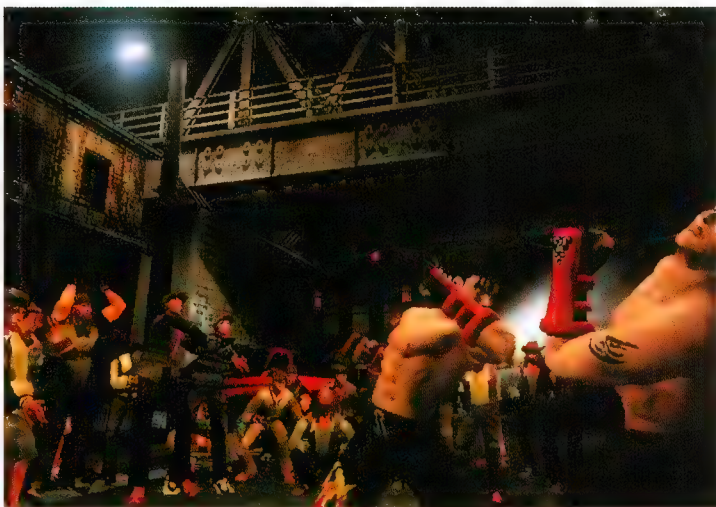
PlayStation Part Deux

March 2, 1999 will go down in history as one of the most significant days in the history of video gaming as the Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. announced the technical specifications of the "next generation" PlayStation. Presented before a crowd of nearly 2,000 journalists and third-party licensees from around the world, SCEI showed what the new hardware can do while at the same time providing an insight into Sony's strategy for PlayStation over the next few years.

Commonly referred to as PlayStation 2, Sony has refused to assign it a name just yet. "The name of the next system is not decided," explained SCEI boss Mr. Tokunaka. "We have a good idea, but nothing yet. Naming products at Sony has been a big issue for 50 years, and there were some people even at the top level who had some strong reservations about the name PlayStation." It's clear that PlayStation 2 will be upon us very soon—SCEI says the machine will launch in Japan this coming winter before March 2000, and in the U.S. and Europe in the fall of 2000. As you look on the following pages, you'll notice there are no pictures of the actual hardware—that's because Sony has not yet decided what the external look of the next machine will be.

At the core of the new PlayStation is a set of two extremely advanced chips—the "Emotion Engine," which is the world's first 128-Bit CPU, and the Graphics Synthesizer, a highly advanced graphics rendering chip (for the technical details of these two processors, check out the Specs sidebar on the next page).

The Emotion Engine is very much the heart of the new machine and integrates all manner of technical wizardry that allows the machine to not only process its socks off, but also decode MPEG2 images (the standard used



Namco's Tekken demo took the original code from Tekken 3 on the PlayStation and applied some incredible new graphics.

for DVD) and allow programmers to produce extremely complicated physical calculations through floating point operations. The net result is a processor that could allow programmers to produce 66 million polygons a second using the CPU alone. This compares to approximately 10 million polys achievable with the latest generation of PC 3D hardware, and the 4 to 5 million the Dreamcast cranks out.

It doesn't end there. The Graphics Synthesizer pushes things to a ridiculous level—and allows the Emotion Engine to get on with more important things—like processing the algorithms provided by what has to be a new breed of programmer to take advantage of the power. The chip is centered around a parallel rendering engine that contains a 2,560-Bit wide data bus that is as much as 20 times the size

Polygon Power

The following figures are the numbers of millions of flat-shaded polygons each system is capable of rendering:

75 Graphics Synthesizer (PlayStation2)

14 InfiniteReality 2 (Silicon Graphics)

4 PowerVR2 (Dreamcast)

Source:
Sony Computer Entertainment

The Specs

CPU:
128-Bit "Emotion Engine"
Clock Frequency:
300MHz
Main Memory:
Direct Rambus (DDRAM) 32Mb
Memory Bus Bandwidth:
3.2GB/second
Floating Point Performance:
6.2GFLOPS
3D CG Geometric Transformations:
65 million polygons/second
Compressed Image Decoder:
MPEG2

Graphics:
"Graphic Synthesizer"
Clock Frequency:
150MHz
DRAM Bus Bandwidth:
48GB/second
DRAM Bus Width:
2,560bits
Maximum Polygon Rate:
75 million polygons/second
Pixel Configuration:
RGB, alpha, Z-buffer

Sound:
"SPU2+CPU"
Number of Voices:
ADPCM 48 channels
Sampling Frequency:
44.1Khz or 48Khz

IOP:
"I/O Processor"
CPU:
PlayStation (current)
Clock Frequency:
33.8MHz or 37.5MHz
Sub Bus:
32-Bit
Interfaces:
IEEE1394, Universal Serial Bus(USB)
Communication:
PCMCIA PC card
Disc Device:
CD-ROM/DVD-ROM



The ballroom dancing sequence in Final Fantasy VIII is arguably one of the finest CG sequences in any video game. These PlayStation 2 screens prove the new machine is capable of producing exactly the same result in real time.

of leading PC-based graphics accelerators. What does this mean in English? Well, it means the GS can squirt all of its graphical cleverness around in massive chunks at a time. Think of the data bus like a hallway where the people walking through it are the bits of information. On a PC this is about the size of a school or office hallway—throw too many people in there and they get clogged up and there's an inevitable traffic jam. In the new PlayStation this hallway is more like a highway.

When drawing small polygons, the peak drawing capacity is 75 million polygons a second and the system can render 150 million particles a second (to simulate effects like smoke or sparks). With this capacity it's feasible for the new PlayStation to render almost movie-like images. With all of the effects turned on and the GS forced to perform multiple passes on the same image—i.e., adding textures, Z-buffering, lighting and alpha blending (transparency) it can sustain 20 million polygons a second...more than five times that of the Dreamcast and considerably more than even high-end graphics workstations like the Infinite Reality 2. As Sony puts it, "Imagine walking into the screen and experiencing a movie in real time...this is the world we are excited to enter."

"We're about, but I have to say I

think it scares the shit out of a lot of console developers," offered Naughty Dog's Jason Rubin at a cocktail reception after the presentation. "There just aren't enough people out there with the math and physics talent to take advantage of this thing at the moment. I could hire everyone from MIT and still not have enough good programmers. It'll come, but to start with I think most teams will only get 30-40% of the power out of the thing. I don't think that's ever happened before."

We also spoke with Alien vs. Predator developer Chris Kingsley from Rebellion who was seriously impressed with the system. "PC programmers are going to love this thing, because they're used to scalable technology. We're optimizing AVP to run on a serious PC with all the 3D hardware, but I reckon you

ing the graphics of original games "was something that we did consider during the R&D process, but we feel that it's more important to offer 100 percent compatibility and give the consumer the exact same experience they achieved on the current PlayStation technology." Sony plans to continue supporting the original PlayStation with software well into the life of the next machine.

The I/O Processor will also be keeping an eye on the USB port (Universal Serial Bus, which you know about if you've recently bought a PC or an iMac), PCMCIA (the standard for plug-in cards on portable computers—usually used for modems) and IEEE1394, more commonly known as FireWire because of its mind-boggling speed—the standard port for

"We're excited, but I have to say I think it scares the shit out of a lot of console developers."

could throw 10 times as much stuff at the PlayStation 2 without it breaking a sweat. As long as it does what they say it can...and I've got no reason to believe otherwise."

INTO THE DIGITAL FRONTIER

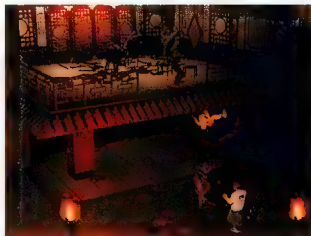
The guts of the new PlayStation are pretty damn powerful, but it doesn't end there. The new machine will also be 100% backward compatible with the existing PlayStation so you can play all your old games, thanks to the fact that the existing PS CPU will form a part of the machine's I/O Processor (the thing that looks after the joypad ports and other interfaces). Not only will the system be able to play all the original PlayStation's software, but you can also use your PlayStation peripherals—controllers, memory cards and more importantly PocketStation with the new hardware. This gives the machine an unprecedented edge. While it won't improve the graphics of these games in any way, it does mean that everything will work as it does on the original system. Phil Harrison, SCEA's vice president of third-party relations and research and development said that enhanc-

Digital TV and other digital devices such as camcorders and cameras. Not only will Sony's next generation PlayStation be able to connect with standard TVs of today, but it's also compatible with Digital TV standards so that when HDTV becomes a reality, you'll still be able to use your PlayStation.

"We want to see PlayStation side by side with TV receivers and other TV components," explains Tokunaka. "The PlayStation will continue to be a games system, but we are thinking that it could be connected to Sony's audiovisual products in the future. For example, maybe you could take your own pictures through a digital camcorder through the FireWire port and modify characters in games so you can be the hero. Maybe you would want the face of the hero in the game to be yours."

Does the PCMCIA slot mean that online gaming is also a major element of the new machine? Will a modem be featured as standard? Kutaragi tells us "online gaming is very attractive—but the infrastructure of the Internet is not satisfactory at the moment. It is very easy for us to give the system communication capabilities through the USB





Square's fighting game demo proved the new machine could render some extremely realistic environments in real time.

and PCMCIA interfaces, but it will all be down to the application of the software in the end."

The system is centered around a DVD drive, giving developers a possible 4.7 gigabytes of space per disc to work with. As it was explained, the system will likely begin with developers utilizing the CD-ROM format that is most familiar, gradually moving to DVD as games start to require it. At the time of the technical demo the team was still unsure as to whether the new PlayStation would be equipped to play DVD movies.

"Many stores are now expanding their space for DVD movies and many more people are enjoying them," offers Kutaragi. "It's a possibility. DVDs are obviously a very passive kind of entertainment, while the PlayStation is interactive. I would welcome the feature though. Technically the machine can do it, but we are not sure whether to or not at the moment."

One thing Sony is keen on using is DVD's ability to create amazing sound through both AC-3 and DTS output from the machine. This will give you a much more surrounding experience for games where atmosphere is everything. Just imagining a Metal Gear or Resident Evil game using 5.1-channel stereo sound is

enough to make a gamer's ears melt.

How much will all this cost? Sony is reluctant to say, but you can bet it will land at a competitive price. Sony has seen just how much success it can achieve in the gaming market, and isn't likely to release their grip voluntarily—even if it has to sell the machine at no profit to get there. According to recent reports, the machine will land at a consumer level price under \$500—meaning it could be anything (our guess is a conservative \$299). A price will be announced closer to the system's Japanese launch. There will not be multiple versions of the system at different price points. It will be one, full-featured system at a competitive price.

SHOW US THE POWER

Aside from shedding some light on the technical details of the system, the best thing we can possibly offer you are the screenshots found throughout this news piece. It's safe to say Kutaragi and his team put together an incredible demonstration—and as each of the development teams were wheeled out to show their demos (some of which had only been in development for two or three weeks) it was increasingly apparent the new PlayStation is more than another step forward from Dreamcast...this is a huge, great Evil Kneivel-type leap through flaming rings and over parked buses.

Polyphony Digital

"We've used some of the original GT code to piece together this demo," explained Polyphony boss and Gran Turismo producer Kazunori Yamauchi. On the video screens we saw a clip of a couple of cars racing around a corner over and over. It looks impressive...but uncannily like a rendering produced on a workstation or a PC. That is until Yamauchi-san picks up a PlayStation joystick and starts playing the thing. The entire track was in place, and the Mazda RX-7 model from Gran Turismo has been

given a serious facelift. If you thought the replays looked cool in the PlayStation game—this will make your jaw drop.

FROM Software

The developers of the King's Field series of games also showed off what they could do with the system. It showed a brief demo with dozens of skeletons rising from the ground. In this case again, a joystick is picked up and camera angles are changed. A fairy appears to smash the skeletons to pieces, and from their remains rises a huge skeletal dragon, built by the skeletal remains filling the screen. Impressive? You betcha.

Square

A bunch of demos were shown by

the Square team, each considerably more impressive than the previous. First, the old man's face now associated with Final Fantasy The Movie was manipulated and lit in real time. Joypads were twiddled to produce different facial expressions while the camera was moved around and lights were added and taken away. Impressive—especially considering it was rendering something in real time that looks far better than anything you've seen in a cutscene.

Next, a fighting game that makes the likes of Ehrgeiz and Power Stone look ridiculous. A huge brawl ensues in a room and it soon becomes apparent that everything in the room is modeled realistically. Pugilists are thrown against walls and pictures fall off their hooks to

Gran Turismo on PlayStation 2, and we've played it

Along with representatives from *Newsweek* and the *Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine*, EGM is proud to be one of the only groups to have had hands-on experience with the new Gran Turismo outside of SCEI's R&D department. It has to be said for a demo that is only a few weeks old (and just 15 hours before lacked any wheels!)

It's surprisingly impressive. The hi-res images are absolutely beautiful and hold a solid 60 frames per second at all times. Although only one of the tracks from the original game was on show—the jump in realism was simply astounding—it really was like playing one of the cinemas from the original, if not better.



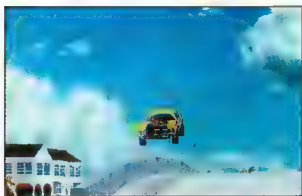


Red lights will be run.

Cap cruisers will be totaled.

And bank-robbing low-lives will escape.

If you're any good.



DRIVER

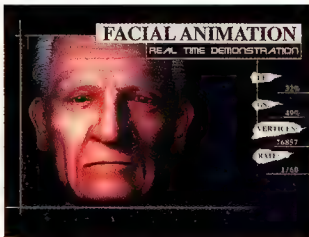
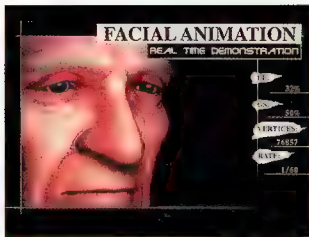
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knock out the dazed victims. Fighters are hit with objects and eventually thrown out of the room and into an adjoining garden. Beautiful stuff.

Seen the ballroom dance scene in Final Fantasy VIII? It's widely regarded as one of the finest rendered movie sequences ever produced for a video game. It has a grace previously unseen and took someone at Square an awful long time to render. The new PlayStation can produce the same scene in real time. Shocked? You ever heard the sound of 2,000 international journalists and developers' jaws simultaneously hitting the floor? If re-creating the scene wasn't enough, the team went on to prove how great the system was by moving the camera, changing the lighting—and changing the

characters and starting the scene back up again.

Namco

After showing off a fully interactive Namco Ridge Racer girl...the real crowd pleaser hit the screens. Talk about saving the best until last. A dark street lit with high-powered stadium lights, a crowd of cheering and chanting spectators, and then Paul Phoenix walks up in his leather jacket. He smooths back his hair, brings up his fists and starts to bob up and down in that oh-so-typically Tekken fashion. Who's he facing? Jin Kazama struts on, does his thing and also assumes the position. The camera swoops, moves and shows off the environment. The shadows look real, the crowd looks real (not just silly Street Fighter-ish two-frame

animation), and even the junk in the street looks real. This is a cool-looking demo.

Then the Namco team picked up a couple of joypads and started playing Tekken 3. They've ported all of the fighting code for Paul and Jin, so the demo was fully playable. An audible intake of breath from everyone in the room aptly sums up the collective feelings.

We were assured this demo was only produced in a couple of weeks, and the models for the characters are simply those from the PlayStation game. It will look a lot better when programmed specifically for the machine.

So is this a good indication of the launch games? "The demos were designed to show the technical abilities of the product," explains Kutaragi. "It's up to the individual software companies as to what titles they will prepare for the system launch. They are not necessarily a representation of launch games."

"How many games at launch?" asks Tokunaka. "As many as possible! We are very optimistic. We can expect the same number as we saw with the current machine in 1994. One thing is for sure. If the

software is not ready...there will be no launch. It's as simple as that. When we launched the first PlayStation we were concerned that companies would not be ready by the Japanese launch—but we're impressed by how they accelerated development times."

As a closing comment it's interesting to see who the SCEI team now sees as the competition for the PlayStation. The machine is so much more powerful than everything else on the market, it's sure to ruffle some feathers. Who are they competing with now?

Tokunaka offers some insight: "I do not know...maybe mobile telephones? Whatever holds the interest of individuals. Actually our president of Sony Music Japan claims the music industry is suffering because of the popularity of the PlayStation. If you define the term competition in its narrowest sense...not against Dreamcast, PC or N64...the real competition is anything that occupies the time and attention of people. For example, my son was a PlayStation fan until recently when he found himself a very pretty girlfriend. Now he is spending much more of his time and money on her. His playing time is suffering."

Like A Chatroom- Except Everyone's Packing Heat

Get the multiplayer experience on

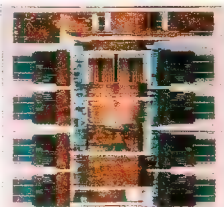
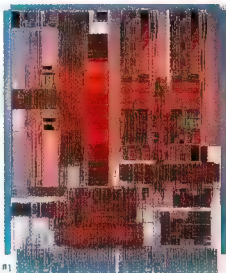


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PlayStation 2 Chipset

March 4, 1999 was another big day for Sony as it announced that in a joint venture with Toshiba, it would be manufacturing the Emotion Engine 128-Bit processor in new production lines at an existing clean room in Oita, Japan. This manufacturing

joint venture will see the production of 10,000 wafers of the 0.18-0.15 micron chips per month (there are multiple chips produced on each wafer) and sees SCEI investing 50 billion yen in equipment for the venture.



Graphics Synthesizer (above), Emotion Engine (left)

Jack Sorenson Uses The Force at LucasArts



Star Wars excitement won't just be felt at the movie theaters this year. LucasArts is planning a bunch of games based on Episode I so that you don't just have to see the movie dozens of times, but you can experience it at home too. We spoke with Jack Sorenson, president of LucasArts, to find out the company's plans for the future and his take on the state of the video game industry.

EGM: How did you get started in the industry, and when did you join LucasArts?

Jack Sorenson: I've been here a little over eight years, but it almost seems like I've always been here now. I used to be an investment banker, of all things. Before that, I tried to be a professional musician. So a little bit of extremes.

EGM: Lucasfilm has been known to take movie making to that next level. How do you see LucasArts as bringing that kind of innovation to the interactive market?

JS: I think we've been trying to do our share for an awful long time. We're obviously limited by the technology that's in homes, which is a little different than what ILM does and certainly what George is able to do. They're really pushing things where they'll have a task in front of them of "let's try and do this and make it look real," and we haven't had the pleasure of doing that. But when you look at things like where some of the PC technology is headed and then PlayStation 2, I think you're starting to see that soon we'll be able to do things in real time that ILM was able to do maybe three to four years ago.

EGM: Do you think this next push into DVD and really high-end graphics is going to necessarily mean that games get better?

JS: It never does. Just because an effects company can make a better-looking Godzilla walk around, it doesn't mean it turns into a better film.

EGM: Speaking of Godzillas, do you think Sony's next machine will dominate the next generation?

JS: We're going to be given a heck of a lot of power, but we're going to have to do something with it. I think if we all just fill it up with more full-motion video and higher quality sound and neglect to make decent games and that's all that was out on the Sony platform, then it

would have trouble. I don't think that will necessarily happen.

EGM: As a developer, are you excited about the possibilities that Sony's next machine represents?

JS: Absolutely. We think all this plays into our traditional strengths. Particularly when you also look at the fact that when you're able to do more in real time, and people start becoming more discriminating about performances, the actual animation performances and the characterizations, and how those characters become characters through narrative—these are all things we've been trying to do since Maniac Mansion, if not before. I think a lot of companies are going to be hard-pressed to figure out how to come up with a decent story and decent characters that will work in conjunction with a great control and gaming experience. It's not easy—just look at how many terrible TV shows and films there are.

EGM: Do you think five years from now we'll still have Sega/Sony/Nintendo, or do you think that will change?

JS: I don't think it'll stay the same. It's getting more competitive now and it's getting tough. I think both consumers and the industry, outside of PC anyway, certainly want two competitors, and there will always be at least two. I won't say who those are, but I do think that once it gets into three, it becomes very tough.

EGM: What do you think Sega's chances are with the Dreamcast, especially now that Sony has shown their hand?

JS: I think Sega's got a real shot if they're able to build software like they did before and like they've been capable of with coin-op. If they're very focused on getting out some great software, even from the first party, then I think given the hardware specs, which are relatively easy to use—and it's a nice system, that they have a shot, but they've probably only got one to two years, and if they can pull off some really great software then they'll be able to continue to compete.

EGM: What do you think of Nintendo's market position? Has the cartridge format affected them?

JS: I don't think it's too controversial to say that no one was really that excited about the launch of a cartridge system, principally because of the economics. But I don't think the position Nintendo is in now has anything to do with whether it was cartridge or CD-ROM. I think the bigger mistake from Nintendo, on a global basis, was having a breadth of software. It's been enough in the States to stay very competitive with Sony, but in Europe and Japan, it hasn't been. Keeping the number of developers and publishers limited on Nintendo, I think, was probably a bigger impact than the cartridge versus CD format.



Developer Profile

Factor Five

Location: San Rafael, CA
Web Site: <http://www.factor5.com>

of employees: 19
Gameography: Katakis (Amiga), R-Type (Amiga), Turrican (Amiga/ST), Turrican 2 (Amiga/ST), Turrican 3 (Amiga), B.C. Kid (Amiga), Super Turrican (SNES), Mega Turrican (Genesis), Contra 2 (Game Boy), Animanics (Game Boy), International Superstar Soccer Deluxe (Genesis), Super Turrican 2 (SNES), Indiana Jones (SNES), Rebel Assault 2 (PSX), BallBlazer Champions (PSX), Rogue Squadron (N64/PC).

Games other team members have worked on previously: Thornado, MOSys FX sound tools for Game Boy Color and N64.

The most difficult thing about making a game based on Star Wars is: To hit the deadline AND meet the expectations of Star Wars fans.

The easiest thing about making a game based on Star Wars is: The name—at least the first two words. **If there was one thing we could change about this industry, it would be:** Less development time until a game is finished—18 months is way too long.

During breaks from late-night programming sessions, we: Drink beer and compose German hump-music on the fly.

Our favorite game to play in the office (not by us) is: Robotron: 2084 (we have an arcade machine in the office—Eugene rules!)

Favorite snack foods: Honey Mustard Pretzels

Music that inspires us around the office: Definitely NOT the Star Wars soundtrack—aside from that anything Euro-techno-like with a bit of jazz and ambiance.

Story behind our name: Five guys from Germany (Cologne) got bored after school and wanted to create a few good games on home computers—that was in 1988 and since then we moved to California and did a lot of games...



"R4 has to be the best-looking PlayStation racer ever (yes, edging out even Gran Turismo)."
- Official PlayStation Magazine, December 1998

"The first great racer of 1999 could be a *Gran Turismo Killer*."

- Official PlayStation Magazine, February 1999



It boasts an American stock car pedigree. Built Tallahassee tough and water-moccasin fast. Its muscle-bound V8 unleashes 317 stampeding horses, as well as unlimited "Yee-Haa's!". It is the Detector - just one of the automotive marvels that torches the streets in R4. With over 300 new cars, 45 fantasy models, 8 thrilling courses, a 2-player split-screen mode and only one way to drive. Fast. R4's asphalt-gulping graphics and spectacular racing environments deliver racing speeds that were once deemed impossible. But not anymore. Now you've got R4. So long, pardner.

R4
RIDGE RACER TYPE 4

Think fast. Drive faster.

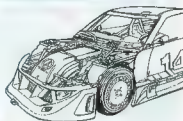
namco
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• Sensational graphics and lighting effects give every race a cinematic feel

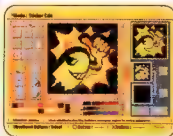
• Race at all times of day and night, even during dramatic sunsets

• Relive your greatest moments through the dynamic-camera replay mode

• Watch your race with all-new motion-blur effects



• Battle head-to-head in split-screen vs. mode



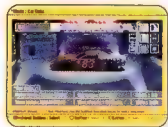
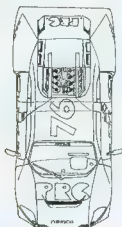
• Speed-tuned physics keep the arcade-style action fast-paced

• Championship performances unlock secret hidden supercars

• Don't be afraid to bump the other car, it's all part of a winning strategy

• Join one of four international race teams - each with individual strengths and weaknesses

• Design original logos to customize your car



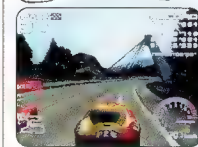
• Race on gorgeous cityscape, countryside and racetrack courses



• Money can't buy victory. You've got to earn new cars with your race performance

• Experience all the ups and downs of a full racing season in the Grand Prix mode

• Includes a Ridge Racer Turbo Mode bonus disc with 8 60 FPS tracks



Tidbits

Ninja Gaiden Resurrection

Been a long time—but Tecmo is considering bringing back Ryu Hayabusa for another adventure, but they need your input. Would you buy a new Ninja Gaiden title? If you would, drop an e-mail of support to tecmoinc@earthlink.net.

Dreamcast - \$199

Although Sega is still reluctant to put a price on Dreamcast, several sources are indicating that it will come in at \$199 with a modem when it's released in the U.S. this fall (September is the likely release date).

FF Collection in U.S.

It has been revealed that Square will bring Final Fantasy Collection to the U.S. as Final Fantasy Anthology later this year—a compilation with Final Fantasy V and VI (FFIII in the U.S.). Final Fantasy IV (known in the U.S. as Final Fantasy II on the Super Nintendo), which

is included in the Japanese Collection, will not make it into the anthology set that Square EA will release in the U.S.

Retro Pioneers N2000

Ex-Iguana Founder and President Jeff Spangenberg recently revealed his future plans—a new studio based in Austin, Texas, Retro Studios. The design philosophy of the new team is to produce new titles that apply a “retro” philosophy to gameplay. It would appear the new team has developed close ties with Nintendo and early indications suggest that Nintendo's intentions for Retro are to effectively become the U.S. equivalent of Rare. Projects will be funded by Nintendo, but then allowed to develop at their own pace until they are finished. Most interestingly, we are aware that Retro will not be working on any projects for existing Nintendo systems, making this one of the first indications that Nintendo's “next generation” system strategy is up and running.

International Bits

Square Sets Record

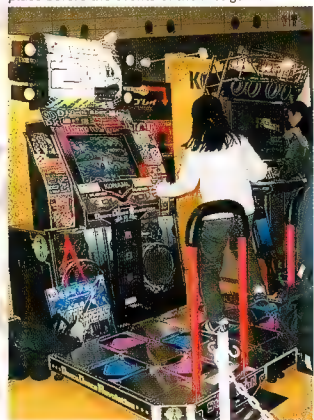
Square had a record-setting day on the first day of Final Fantasy VIII's release. The company sold a reported 2.21 million copies of the game, with day-one sales estimated at 17.2 billion yen (about US\$145 million). However, due to a software bug, a little over 3,000 copies of the game have been returned. As of press time, Square had sold 3 million copies of the game in Japan.

Nintendo Delays Space World

Nintendo hasn't held its annual Space World for quite a while—and it's postponed the show again. Now it will take place during the summer holiday in Japan—August 27, 28 and 29.

Resident Evil Zero to N64?

According to sources in Japan, Capcom is working on a Resident Evil title for the N64 tentatively titled Resident Evil Zero as it takes place before the events of the first game.



At AOU, Konami had upgrades of its music games, like Dance Dance Revolution 2nd Mix

NAOMI Rules AOU

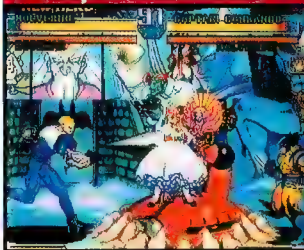
The Japanese Amusement Expo AOU 1999 was held this past February at Makuhari Messe in Chiba prefecture. Arcade companies from around Japan gathered to show off their wares at the show. Sega in particular had a strong show with a bunch of new NAOMI titles that will eventually come to Dreamcast including Airline Pilots (flight sim), Zombie Revenge (House of the Dead side story), Giant Gram: Zen Nihon Pro Wrestling 2 (sports), Kurutto Stone (puzzle), Derby Owners Club (horse racing), F35 Challenge (racing) and Boat Race 2 (racing). Konami had a bunch of new music-themed games and Namco showed off some of its latest, but no big surprises.

Capcom had Strider 2 footage on videotape at the show. The game is running off of PlayStape arcade hardware, so the game will definitely be part of Capcom's end-of-year lineup (as well as coming to Dreamcast).



Sega had a new Fantasy Zone title on show at AOU, but instead of a game, it's a UFO Catcher.

Import Calendar



Import Pick of the Month

Marvel Vs. Capcom - One of the Saturn's biggest strengths (R.I.P., ol' buddy) was that it had nearly arcade-perfect versions of Capcom's arcade fighting games. Now that the Dreamcast's around, Capcom is working the same kind of magic on that machine, bringing with it an arcade-perfect version of its Marvel Vs. Capcom title. This will be the first time the Dreamcast has been able to show what it can do with 2D graphics, making it a must-have for people that have invested in an import DC and fans of Capcom's fighting games.

PlayStation:

- 3/25 The King of Fighters '98, SNK (Fighting)
- 4/1 SaGa Frontier 2, Square (RPG)
- 4/15 Dance Dance Revolution, Konami (Misc.)
- 4/15 Bust A Move 2: Dance Tengoku Mix, Enix (Misc.)
- 4/22 CyberOrg, Square (Action)
- 4/29 Cotton Original, Success (Shooting)
- 5/13 Konami '80s Arcade Gallery, Konami (Compilation)
- 5/27 Racing Lagoon, Square (Racing)
- 5/27 Lunar 2 Eternal Blue, Game Arts (RPG)

Dreamcast

- 3/25 Marvel Vs. Capcom, Capcom (Fighting)
- 3/25 Blue Stinger, Climax Graphics (Action)
- 3/25 Superspeed Racing, Sega (Racing)
- 3/25 The House of the Dead 2, Sega (Light Gun)
- 4/1 Get Bass, Sega (Sports)
- 4/1 Buggy Heat, CRI (Racing)
- April Redline Racer, Imagineer (Racing)
- 5/27 Shutokou Battle, Genki (Racing)
- May Elemental Gimmick Gear (E.G.G.), Hudson (RPG)
- May Dynamite Deka 2, Sega (Action)
- May The King of Fighters Dream Match 1999, SNK (Fighting)

Nintendo 64

- 3/21 Pokémon Snap, Nintendo (Action)
- April Pokémon Stadium 2, Nintendo (Action)

Game Boy

- 4/14 Pokémon Pinball, Nintendo (Action)

* Schedule subject to change without notice. Consult your local import game store for the latest release information.

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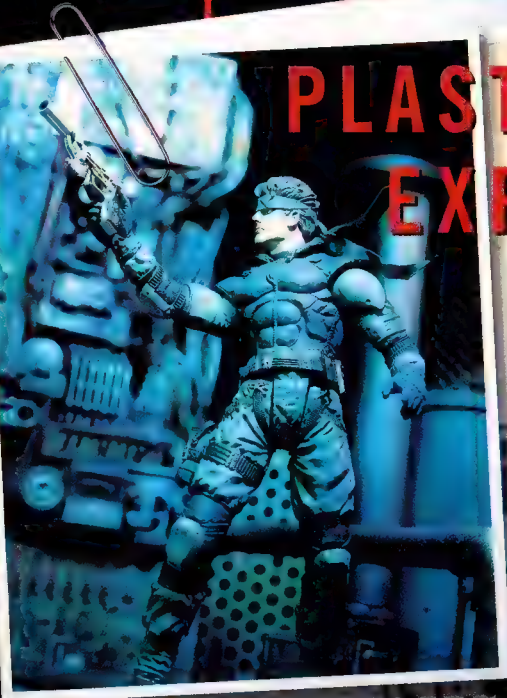
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CYBER SAMMY

NO ONE REMEMBERS WHO HAD
THE MOST BUNTS
IN A SEASON.



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TRIPLE PLAY 2000



Top 20

The Top-20 Best-Selling Games of January, 1999

1	WCW/nWo Thunder THQ		NEW
2	The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time Nintendo		1
3	GoldenEye 007 Nintendo		4
4	South Park Acclaim		NEW
5	Metal Gear Solid Konami		7
6	Star Wars Rogue Squadron Nintendo		2
7	Frogger Hasbro Interactive		19
8	Pokémon (Blue Version) Nintendo		16
9	Crash Bandicoot: WARPED Sony Computer Entertainment		3
10	Crash Bandicoot 2: Cortex Strikes Back Sony Computer Entertainment		11
11	Gran Turismo Sony Computer Entertainment		17
12	Pokémon (Red Version) Nintendo		---
13	Knockout Kings Electronic Arts		15
14	Spyro the Dragon Sony Computer Entertainment		---
15	Rugrats: Search for Reptar THQ		14
16	A Bug's Life Sony Computer Entertainment		13
17	Super Mario 64 Nintendo		20
18	Cool Boarders 2 Sony Computer Entertainment		---
19	Cool Boarders 3 989 Studios		---
20	WCW/nWo Revenge THQ		5

WCW/nWo Thunder

1

THQ proves once again that wrestling sells, no matter how good (or bad) the game is. OK, to be fair—WCW/nWo Thunder isn't all THAT bad, but it's nowhere near as good as its N64 cousin, WCW/nWo Revenge. Wonder how WCW Nitro 64 is going to sell...

6.5 | 5.0 | 7.0 | 5.5
Dan | Dean | Shawn | Sushi



2



Zelda: Ocarina of Time

Hail to the king! Zelda sold a massive 2.1 million units between Nov. 23 and Dec. 31 last year. Will it have the same long-term success as GoldenEye? Hmm...

10 | 10
John R | Crispin

10 | 10
Dan | John D

3



GoldenEye 007

Can you believe it? GoldenEye—a mid-1997 release—ended up being the best-selling game of '98! Expect Perfect Dark to break all sorts of records later this year.

9.5 | 9.5
Crispin | Dan

9.5 | 9.0
Shawn | Sushi

4



South Park

South Park may not be the best game ever created (heck, without the SP license, it'd suck), but it still managed to sell quite well in January. Look for a PS SP soon...

8.0 | 6.5
John D | Crispin

7.0 | 7.5
John R | Sushi

5



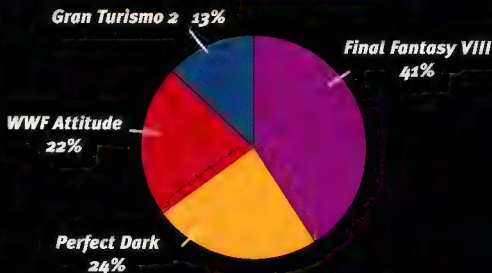
Metal Gear Solid

Konami's bad-ass tactical espionage thriller (and EGM's PS Game of the Year for 1998) makes its way back to the Top 5. If you haven't bought it yet, do so...now.

10 | 10
Crispin | John R

10 | 10
Dan | John D

Which of the following games are you most interested in?



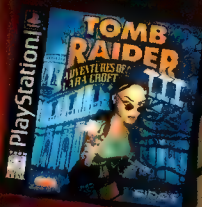
Source: NPD TRSTS Video Games Service. Call Mary Ann Porreca at (516) 625-2345 for questions regarding this list. Top 5 game descriptions written by the EGM staff.

Source: videogames.com poll results for Feb. 19, 1999

What are you waiting for?

Includes DEMOS of:
GEX 3: Deep Cover Gecko™
Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver™
Tomb Raider III®

Tomb Raider II Now on Greatest Hits



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GAMES WITH CHARACTER

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Top 10 Editors' Picks

1	All-Star Baseball 2000 Acclaim	 
2	Need for Speed: High Stakes Electronic Arts	 
3	Triple Play 2000 Electronic Arts	 
4	Beetle Adventure Racing Electronic Arts	 
5	Silent Hill Konami	 
6	Mario Party Nintendo	 
7	Lode Runner 3-D Infogrames	 
8	Guemori's Great Adventure Konami	
9	NBA: In The Zone '99 Konami	
10	Gex 3: Deep Cover Gecko Eidos	











Top 10 Japan week ending Feb. 21

Courtesy of Famitsu Magazine

1	Final Fantasy VIII Square	
2	Nintendo All-Star: Dairantou Smash Bros. Nintendo	
3	Dragon Quest Monsters Enix	
4	Option Tuning Car Battle 2 Jaleco	
5	Simple 1500 Series Vol. 1: The Mahjong Culture Publishers	
6	Sega Rally 2 Sega	
7	Pikachu Genki Dechu Nintendo	
8	Yugioh Duel Monsters Konami	
9	Space Battle Cruiser Yamato Bandai	
10	Pokémon Card GB Nintendo	

Top 10 U.K. as of Mar. '99

Courtesy of Chart Track

1	Star Wars: Rogue Squadron LucasArts	
2	FIFA 99 Electronic Arts	
3	Premier Manager 99 Gremlin	
4	Zelda: Ocarina of Time Nintendo	
5	Grand Theft Auto Take 2	
6	Tomb Raider 3 Eidos	
7	Tomb Raider Eidos	
8	V-Rally Infogrames	
9	TDCA Touring Car Codemasters	
10	Crash 3: WARPED SCEE	

Quartermann Video Game Gossip & Speculation

No more gossip about PlayStation 2. Big Daddy has arrived...and from what the Q-spy network can see, it's sending repercussions throughout the gaming world. We'll keep reporting on developments over the next few months—but in the meantime:

The Rumor - Sony is chasing a number of bands for Gran Turismo 2 and is courting some artists in an attempt to convince them to provide original material for the game.

The Truth - The list of artists that will appear in the game is by no means complete, and probably won't be for at least another month or two—but the Q-network has managed to squeeze a few details out of its sources...with the aid of alcohol. It would appear that likely candidates for the soundtrack aren't just Sony Music artists. Metallica has already been touted as having some kind of association with the new game, but alongside them we understand that Crystal Method, Prodigy, Everclear, Garbage, The Cardigans (who may provide a number of tracks from their Gran Turismo album, including "My Favorite Game") and the Foo Fighters will appear. We also understand that LL Cool J's management is in discussions with Sony Computer Entertainment concerning an original piece for the game, although this may just be conjecture as the Q's bullshit detector was starting to tingle a bit at this point in the conversation. As before, all the tunes will be used in game—and the whole thing will likely be followed by a soundtrack album before the end of the year.

The Rumor - Final Fantasy IX...PlayStation 2 launch game?

The Truth - Who knows? Maybe. It's more than apparent that Squaresoft and Sony Computer Entertainment are in bed together at the moment—and Square's involvement in helping to showcase the new PlayStation technology is hard to ignore. The Final Fantasy demo was extremely impressive...but Square's RPGs are always massive

production undertakings and it would seem unlikely that a game of such magnitude could be put together for a new system in under a year.

The Rumor - Sega...completely f****d?

The Truth - Not necessarily. The Q has spent the last week or so leading up to this issue of EGM going to print speaking to game developers, publishers, industry analysts and other journalists...and the general consensus of opinion from everyone is that yes...Sega is f****d, but only if they don't do something very clever—and soon. As with the Saturn, the Dreamcast looks destined to be an "enthusiast" machine when Sony finally releases the PlayStation 2. The good news is that a) Sega has a full year to endure the gamesplaying community to the considerable charms of the Dreamcast, b) PC developers love the fact that it's easy to port games to DC—so we could see a lot of games just after the U.S. Dreamcast launch in September and c) Microsoft CE, Direct X and the nature of the Dreamcast PCB mean that it's feasible to upgrade the Dreamcast at a later date. If this is the case—Sega will need to watch the market and anticipate the demands of all us game players over the next 12 months. Ways to help rescue the situation? Everyone the Q spoke to said that Sega should release the U.S. Dreamcast earlier than September...it should release it for an incredibly competitive price—and ensure that the modem is bundled in there too. Will it happen? Who knows.

The Rumor - Soul Calibur on Dreamcast very soon.

The Truth - A source in Japan informed us that a major fighting game, that isn't Tekken, was in development at Namco's offices. Our source didn't reveal any specifics...but let's face it. Major fighting game...Namco...what else could it be? We already know that SC won't hit PlayStation so a DC incarnation seems likely.

-The Q



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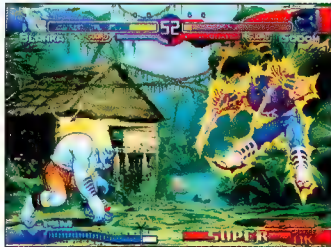
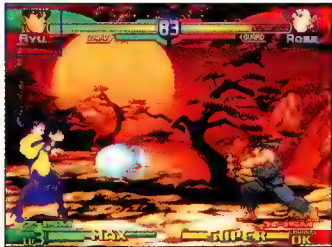




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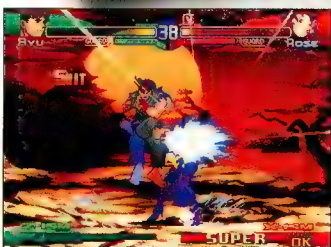
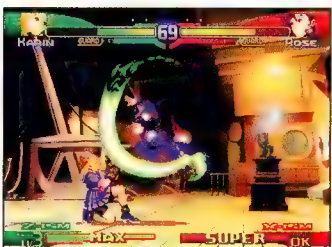
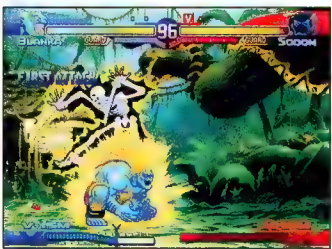
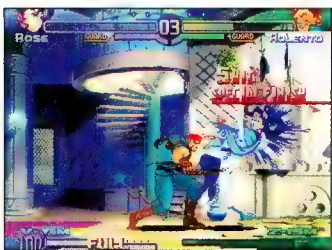


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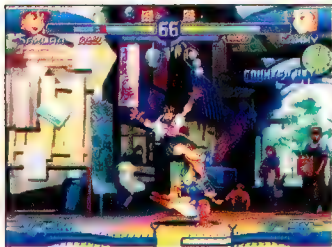
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PLAYSTATION
MAGAZINE



“STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 2”

— GAME INFORMER

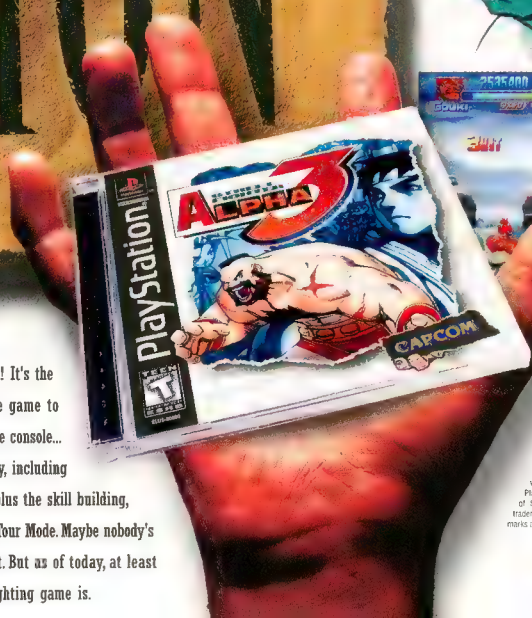
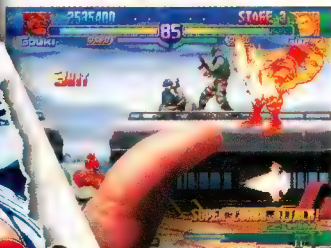
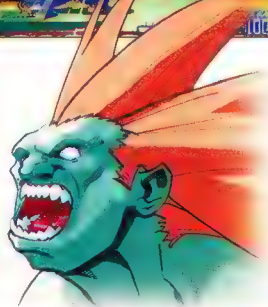
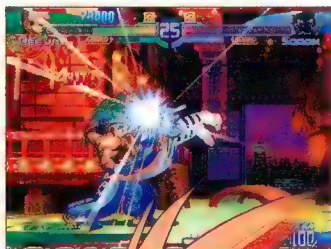




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Dreamcast

PREVIEWS

Warning: This is a preview of a Japanese title that may or may not be released in the U.S. It is designed to run on a Japanese system. Import at your own risk.



Power Stone

Capcom's
Got A
Brand-
New Bag

Capcom gets a bad rap for its endless sequels and related offshoots rather than credit for original ideas. A few minutes with *Power Stone* says right away that something different is afoot. Yes, it's a fighter from Capcom, but it has almost none of the usual clichés that come with that distinction save for solid gameplay. Surprise surprise.

First off, there's no blocking...at all. No holding backward or even a (gasp) block button. It's all about tenacious dodging with a healthy dose of ring marshalling around varied environments which have a whole lot of interactivity. You can pick up or push almost everything including chairs, tables, barrels and (if your character is strong enough) vertical support beams. Many stages have upper levels that can be climbed on or ceilings that your character can hang from until the right moment when you can swoop down with a precision strike.

With all the environmental stuff to worry about, the fighting engine is mercifully simple. You have a button each for Punch, Kick and Jump which can be pressed in combination with each other to accomplish tasks like picking up objects (press Punch and Kick buttons at the same time). There are no complex joystick and button motion moves of any sort. You can unleash a combo by hitting Punch or Kick consecutively or a combination of the two. The spectacular moves are achieved by collecting three Power Stones which transform your character into its alter ego with suitably powerful moves. Holding together either Punch and Jump or Kick and Jump will unleash one

out of two of the most powerful attacks the character possesses. It's that simple.

There are eight regular fighters to choose from with an additional three playable Boss characters that you can open up. All have individual endings and can unlock various features like new bonus items and VMU minigames (see sidebars). Currently, *Power Stone* is scheduled to be a part of the U.S. Dreamcast launch. ☺

Capcom's Little Games

The PlayStation version of *Street Fighter Zero 3* includes a character raising game that is played on the PocketStation. So what can Dreamcast fans look forward to? How about three different minigames that can be downloaded onto the VMU once they're unlocked in the Extra Collection book? Thrill as you pilot Fokker's biplane or throw some of Ayame's shirikens. Perhaps the simplest pleasure is Gunrock Slots! Jackpot!



This big and nasty customer will give you lots of headaches until you discover he's really a pushover.

Publisher/Developer: Planes/Games

Capcom
Capcom

1-2
Fighting

100

Now
Japan

Web Address: www.capcom.co.jp



The characters in *Power Stone* look great with a crisp and detailed cartoon style that matches the frantic action of the game.

Not Quite First-Person, But Close

Two of the coolest features you can unlock by beating the game with various characters are the Virtual Battle and Virtual Duel modes. Virtual Battle is a match with you against the computer except the camera view is slightly above your character which is as close to a Bushido Blade-style first-person perspective as *Power Stone* gets. Virtual Duel is a split-screen match with two Human opponents each with their own semi first-person view. Although not the easiest way to play, you'll be able to see parts of the environment that are normally impossible to see in regular battles.



THE SUSHI-X FILES

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EGM's Official Deadline Snack

After months of meetings with committees, panels and judges, and reading through stacks of legal documentation, EGM's Official Deadline Snack has been chosen. With joyously tear-filled eyes, Joe Funk, editorial director for EGM had this to say of the decision: "Crispin fondly calls 'em Abes; Hsu calls 'em Lincs; Burwell calls 'em that sweet, sweet, applay treat;

Davison is still trying to figure out why America would name a partially hydrogenated-packed pastry after one of our greatest presidents; and Cordano wonders how beef fat made its way onto the list of ingredients. But no matter what you call them, the Abe Lincoln Apple Pie is the undisputed heavyweight champion of snack treat goodness for our crack edit team." We couldn't be more proud of our little fruit-filled friend.



Wall Aids in Blocking View

You're sitting in your cubicle at the office, minding your own business, when someone has the gall to walk by—sound familiar? The masses have allowed this type of behavior to go unnoticed, not any longer. John Ricciardi, resident Band-Aid evangelist, recently decided to put a stop to this unacceptable behavior. When asked for comment, Ricciardi said: "Hey, I'm tryin' to work over here... I don't want people walkin' behind me to get to their frickin' cube."

Inventively, Ricciardi manufactured a false wall to put in front of the opening of his cubicle, so his peripheral vision would no longer be cluttered with images of his co-workers walking by.

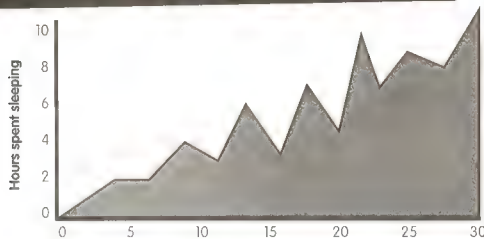


Shoe: A man disgusted with his own urine and feces

As reported in previous issues of the Sushi-X Files, the EGM offices have recently moved. Everything was fine until someone used the bathroom near the EGM section of the office. Here it was discovered the bathroom had no hand soap whatsoever. Accusations flew and bacteria prospered until Dan "Shoe" Hsu took control. "I reached a point when my hands smelled really foul," commented Shoe. "I'm not sure whether it was my urine or feces that did the trick, but they smelled bad." So Shoe took it up with the local building manager and the soap flowed freely. Thanks to this courageous citizen, our hands are now clean and free of excrement.



Scientists Speak



As illustrated, it is our belief the number of hours spent sleeping is directly proportional to the number of hours spent playing Irritating Stick. Furthermore, we believe the sleeping state is, in fact, induced by playing Irritating Stick.

*This study was conducted by a group of chemists

Editor Profile: Crispin Boyer



Hopefully, you're understanding our routine with these profiles. This time it's the elusive Crispin "Radio Shack" Boyer. Next month, look for Dan "Shoe" Hsu's profile. Until then, enjoy.

Real Name: Crispin John Boyer III, Esquire

Alias: Jocko

Occupation: Features Guy

Hobbies: Electronic game playing, roller blading, fake kung-fuism, porno, venting frustration on inanimate objects.

Musical Interests: Metallica, Iron Maiden, Garbage, Rob Zombie—any easy-listening tunes that help me unwind after a long day of putting my fist through my file cabinet 'cause I got beaten at Tekken 3 for the dozenth time by someone using cheapo Paul.

When I'm not at work I am: Relaxing. Cris is known for throwing the occasional temper tantrum. So he spends his off hours taking it easy, watching TV, sipping cool drinks and tossing sofas through plate-glass windows when he remembers getting trounced by cheapo Paul.

If I could be a video game character I'd like to be: Link. With a yank of his sword, he can skip most of those awkward teen years in the blink of an eye.

Most bizarre job ever held: Used to dress in a giant rat costume at Chuck E. Cheese's. And here's a little known fact: Those Chuck E. Cheese costumes actually augment the strength of wearers. Cris once lifted a bus off a group of trapped Japanese tourists while wearing his costume.

If I wasn't working for EGM, I'd be: Third-key assistant manager at Radio Shack, working the 4 p.m.-to-close shift. I'd look exactly as appear in the above picture, and I would require every customer to fill out annoying address forms in triplicate, even if they're only buying one 9-volt battery.

WEB SITES

AS COOL AS ICE

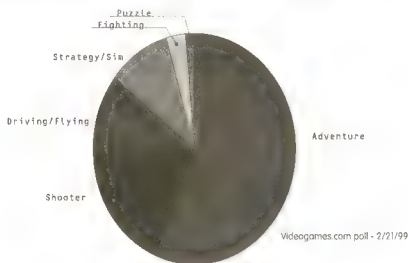
Thank you to all who continue to send us sites. This month we have all kinds of sites: Weird, gaming-related, funny, cool, stupid and so on and so forth. **Although not all sites below are Star Wars: Episode One related, be careful of spoilers on the ones that are.**

- www.hamsterdance.com
- silly-goose.com
- www.frontiernet.net/~jbennett/nerd/
- www.theforce.net
- www.doodie.com
- www.jedi.net
- www.conspiracy.com
- www.sirstevesguide.com
- www.peewee.com
- countingdown.com/starwars/
- www.maulrats.com
- queenamidala.com
- www.fandommenace.com

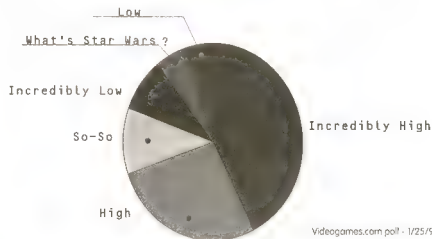
* We cannot be held responsible for any of the material presented on the sites listed above. Parents or guardians may want to verify the content of the site(s) before allowing their children to venture forth. Yes, it is the only way.

VIDEOGAMES.COM POLLS

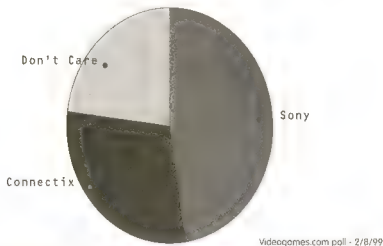
What kind of game would you want the first Star Wars - Episode 1 game to be?



How would you gauge your interest in the N64 Star Wars - Episode 1 games?



In regards to the whole PlayStation emulator issue, who would you like to see come out on top?



HOT & NOT @ EGM

The EGM Hot & Not list—a place where you can get an inside look at what the staff of EGM likes and dislikes. The list contains general and specific items, concepts, games, people and other such things. Once in awhile we even throw in an inside joke. Kick it old-school one more time.

- Austin Power 2 toys from McFarlane Toys
- Young Anakin Skywalker
- Darth Maul
- Obi-Wan Kenobi
- Qui-Gon Jinn
- The Tom Green Show
- Double-edged lightsabers
- Prequel action figures
- Abe Lincoln Apple Pie
- Slam dunking
- The Gex 3 chick
- Capcom
- Buca di Beppo
- Bennigan's 15-minute lunch
- Classic sports network
- New Honda s2000
- Yo-yos
- Selling your old stuff on ebay
- PlayStation 2
- Darth Vader
- Old Obi-Wan Kenobi
- Sony contests
- Sports Authority
- Oak Brook traffic
- Poor frame-rates
- Poor camera angles
- Resident Evil wanna-bes
- Fried cheese cheeseburger
- Global unrest
- Busted mufflers
- Chicago Bulls
- Impeachment bullshi*
- Wind-chill factors
- Snowboarding games
- Having to wait for games to be released for the DC
- Huge price drops on Intel processors when you just bought one the week before

EGM's Random Quote of the Month

"First I have to eat you, then I have to kick you."

- Andrew Burwell, Art Director for EGM
in reference to a particular move you can do in Smash Bros. on the N64

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you if
were
me

Could you **sink** the 3 with 2 seconds left?

would you **work** on your d?

venture into the paint?

seek out the **limelight**?

it's not so easy, **is it?**



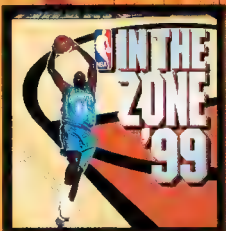
Move like the pros. **Swish, dish,**
drain it for the 3.



Take it to the paint with dunks
that'll rock the rim.



New totally realistic motion-capture
graphics. It's hardwood heaven.



GLEN RICE,
CHARLOTTE HORNETS

GAME BOY COLOR



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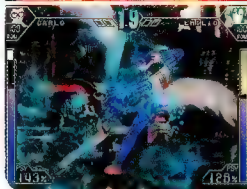
Warning: This is a preview of a Japanese title that may or may not be released in the U.S. It is designed to run on a Japanese system. Import at your own risk.



Psychic Force 2012

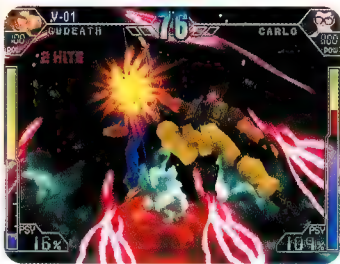
This Ain't No
Psychic Hotline,
Buddy!

Fans of Taito's original PlayStation hit *Psychic Force* can now look forward to the sequel, *Psychic Force 2012*, making its way home, albeit on Sega's Dreamcast console. Originally developed on Taito's proprietary Wolf arcade board, the conversion to the Dreamcast has been a seamless one. While the graphics are nice, they really just look like a beefier, hi-res, 60 frames-per-second version of the original. While that's not bad at all, you'd be excused for thinking they could have done a bit more in the polish department. Either way, the backgrounds are now fully 3D, and while the gameplay is basically identical to the first game, Taito has added a grab button that lets you execute a "hold" move. Strangely, there is no analog control, only digital. What sense does that make when the game is supposed to be a 360-degree smack-a-thon?



Publisher/Developer	Players/Genre	% Done	Release
Taito Taito	1-2 Fighting	100	New Japan

Web Address: www.taito.co.jp

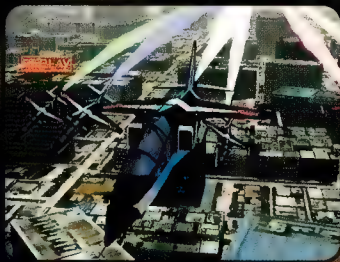


A good deal of the characters are completely new, like *Might*—the electric boy-wonder, although a portion of the original cast make their return as well. Other characters, like *Burn* and *Keith*, are hidden in the game, waiting to be unlocked. For replay value, the usual surplus of game modes are in: *Arcade*, *Story*, *Versus*, *Training*, *Watch*, *Options* and some other extras are included. Otherwise, this is basically just a straight port of the arcade game. No word on a U.S. publisher at this point, although this would make an easy conversion. ☹

Publisher/Developer	Players/Genre	% Done	Release
CRI CRI	1-4 Simulation	100	New Japan

Web Address: www.cri.co.jp

Aero Dancing



We figure 90 percent of you will look at these slick *Aero Dancing* screenshots and say, "What? You can't blow stuff up?" "Fraid so. Like *PilotWings* with war planes, *Aero Dancing's* challenge lies in perfecting precision maneuvers and wingtip-to-wingtip formation flight rather than dogfighting and moving mud with mavericks.

The game puts you through the paces of a pilot in the famous *Blue Impulse* airshow squadron. In *Mission Mode*, you progress through 20 tests, which rate you on everything from landings to barrel rolls to some pretty tricky formation stunts. Score well and you'll earn certificates and unlock new jets, including the *F-16* and *F-4*. Another mode, called *Sky Mission Attack*, sends you through aerial obstacle courses. You also get a free-flight mode that lets you soar solo or in formation with three squadmates and barnstorm buildings in the five different environments (which come in seasonal varieties). Most intriguing of all is the ability to link to the Internet and try formation flight with other online pilots.

Aero Dancing supports the *Puru-Puru* pack for force feedback, and you can record your best aerial performances on a VMU and watch 'em from multiple angles. Japanese game mags gave the game decent reviews, but we gotta wonder how well it will sell with Konami's combat-oriented *Air Force Delta* (formerly titled *Flight Shooting*) waiting in the wings.



Look familiar? Take out the jet and insert a gyrocopter and you've got a prettier *PilotWings 64*.

Warning: This is a preview of a Japanese title that may or may not be released in the U.S. It is designed to run on a Japanese system. Import at your own risk.



Puyo Puyo 4

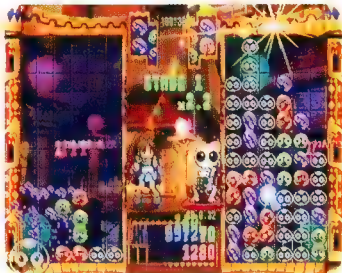
Ha Ha! Little Jelly Blobs! Funny Little Balls!

Not since the halcyon days of the 16-Bit era have we had the opportunity to lay hands on the globular delights that Compile/Sega's Puyo Puyo series has had to offer (except for the Japanese-only Puyo Puyo Sun). Originally seen on these shores as Dr. Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine on the Genesis and Kirby's Avalanche on the SNES, Compile has now seen fit to release (in Japan) the updated 128-Bit Dreamcast version. Puyo Puyo 4 (called Puyo Puyodon in Japan—"yon" meaning "four" in Japanese) is aptly titled, because it is not only technically the fourth installment of the series, but it supports up to four players as well. Now you and three of your buddies can attempt to out-blob each other, hopefully setting

Publisher/Developer Players/Genre % Done Release

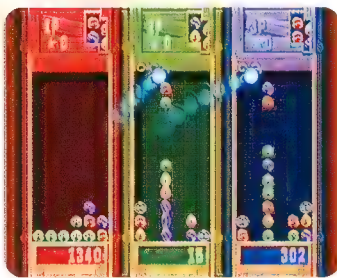
Sega Compile 1-4 Puzzle 100 Now Japan

Web Address: www.sega.co.jp



Arle is back to her blob droppin' business. This time her victim is poor of 'Skeleton-T. Poor bony buddy!

off scores of cleverly arranged chain-reactions along the way. Perhaps the best and most addictive puzzle-style game besides the original Tetris, Puyo Puyo 4's addictive powers are in a league of their own. With plenty of characters, sumptuous artwork and a story line to justify the proceedings, PP4 would make an excellent addition to the Dreamcast's launch line-up when it's released this fall. Much more so than Tetris 4D, that's for sure. ☺



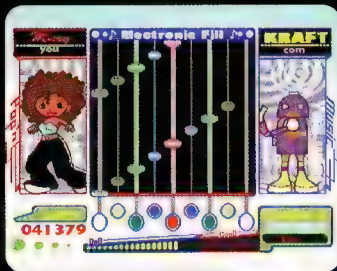
Puyo Puyo has always been a great two-player puzzle game. Now three or four people can play the game at one time.

Publisher/Developer Players/Genre % Done Release

Konami Konami Game Machine Div. Misc. 1-4 100 Now Japan

Web Address: www.konami.co.jp

Pop'n Music



In 5-Button Mode, you luckily only have to worry about hitting the middle five bars.

Mix PaRappa's cartoony art style with Beatmania's gameplay, throw a neat little controller into the mix, and what do you have? Pop'n Music, Konami's latest home translation of one of its popular music-themed arcade games. The concept is just like Konami's other music title, Beatmania—press the right buttons as colored bars land on the bottom of the screen.

Up to four players can play cooperatively. The easiest way to play with multiple people is to divide up sections of the screen and controller, with each person responsible for hitting only those buttons. If two or more players hit the same button twice, it can lead to "Bad" grades. There are three difficulty levels: Beginner, Normal and Hard, each with three stages apiece (but multiple songs to choose from in each stage). After you complete each difficulty, a new song opens up as an "extra stage" option for the last stage in each difficulty. To make it more difficult, in Normal and Hard modes opponents try to block areas of the screen and rearrange note positions.

You can select from a 5, 7 or 9-Button Mode, but if you're playing a one-player game, 5-Button Mode is advised. Konami has built-in a training mode so you can polish up your skills after trying each song in the normal game, and a Free mode where you can play any of the game's songs (The music, however, pales in comparison to Beatmania's tunes, with only a few memorable tunes out of the group). Pop'n Music is nice, but it's not the best of Konami's music games.



With Konami's Pop'n Controller, you can recreate the arcade experience, but watch out—it's ultra-sensitive.

Rigor Motorist



CARMAGEDDON 2

Apocalypse Now

CARMAGEDDON VICTIM
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"★★★★★...easily one of the coolest new ideas in PlayStation peripherals." PSM

"InterAct's DexDrive is by far the most incredible peripheral we have seen for the N64." IGN64

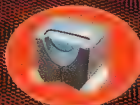
"The simple genius of the DexDrive never ceases to amaze me." Gamecenter

"This device is such a great idea, it's hard to believe no one has produced one before." Next Generation

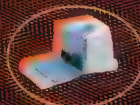


InterAct's DexDrive

In a game, as in life,
what goes around comes around.
Give an all-star roster,
take a level you didn't know existed,
brag about a high score,
accept someone else's to challenge,
whatever can be saved
can be traded.
Hook the DexDrive to your PC
and email saves to your friends
of your competition.
Even post or download from the Internet.
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Nintendo64



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Ready 2 Rumble Boxing

Here are some more shots of the Dreamcast version of Midway's upcoming arcade-style boxing game, *Ready 2 Rumble Boxing*. The DC version will feature network play, something that will (obviously) be missing from the PS and N64 versions of the game. Expect to see *R2R Boxing* on store shelves around the time of the DC launch, if not shortly thereafter.



Dreamcast Football

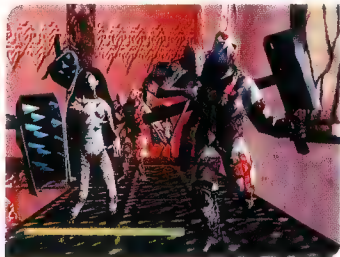
Last month, we showed you the first screens of Sega's football title for DC...here are some more to tantalize you until we get our hands on a beta. Check out the details on the player models, like the holes in the jerseys! Sega still hasn't assigned a name to the game, so we'll just call it *Dreamcast Football* for the time being.



Maken X



Developer Atlus, purveyor of less mainstream RPGs (*Persona*, *Soul Hackers*) will debut on the Dreamcast with *Maken X*, a bizarre 3D action adventure. As a *Maken* spirit, players must "possess" different host creatures to complete the game. *Maken X* will also feature 3D positional sound as well as 60 fps gameplay.



Web Mystery



Panasonic Wondertainment, unable to develop games for the M2, is now working on an internet-based murder-mystery title for the Japanese DC. This adventure game is made up of 70 percent full-motion video and 20 percent still photos. The remaining 10 percent has players browsing the Internet with the Dreamcast looking for clues. *Web Mystery* players will be directed to a mysterious Web site which will reveal a little bit about the murder case.

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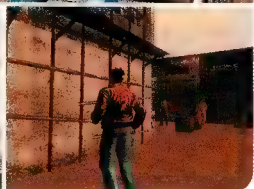
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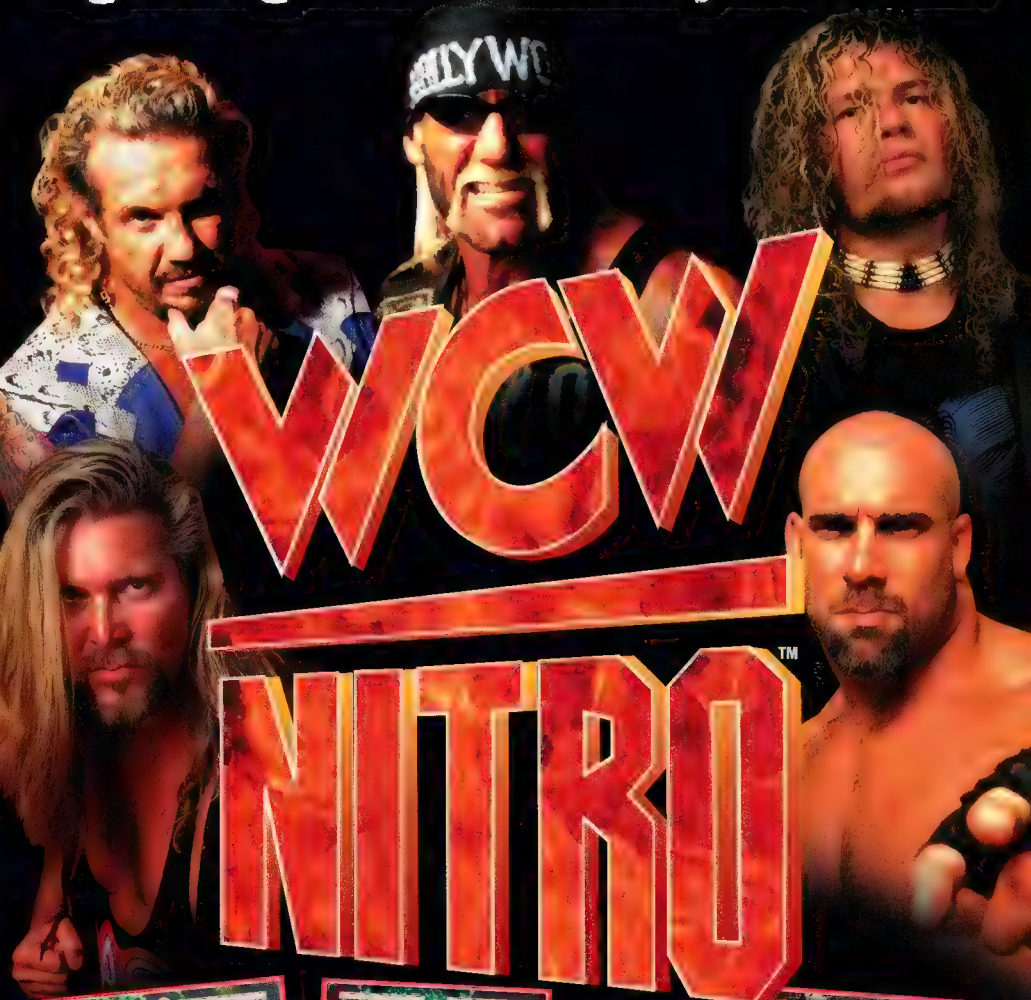
Shenmue

As Sega continues development for Yu Suzuki's ambitious RPG on the Dreamcast, we've come across a few more details concerning the heart of Shenmue's engine. The plot centers around protagonist Ryo Hazuki who travels to Hong Kong (circa 1986) to unravel the circumstances of his father's mysterious death. Events will be triggered by real-time exploration of the urban slums, but a part of the action will also take place via flashbacks to Yokosuka, Japan in the 1950s. You use the D-pad to move around Shenmue's 1,200 locations while the analog stick will dictate head rotation and perspective. To run forward, you press the L and R shoulder buttons. Shenmue will include minigames that involve anything from wage work and gambling to various side-quests for the inhabitants of Hong Kong. As cool as the QTE (Quick Timer Events) may appear, we're still hoping Shenmue will include the rumored Virtua Fighter-style fighting engine. More details will follow as Shenmue nears completion. In the meantime, drop by videogames.com for more screenshots of this highly anticipated title.

Warning: This is a preview of a Japanese title that may or may not be released in the U.S. It is designed to run on a Japanese system. Import at your own risk.



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ELECTRONIC ARTS

Nintendo 64

Game Directory

- Goemon's Great Adventure
- All Star Tennis '99
- A Bug's Life

Goemon's Great Adventure

Publisher/Developer Players/Genre % Done Release

Konami
KCE Osaka 1-2
Side-Scroller 100 May 1999

Web Address: www.konami.com

PREVIEWS

The Pipe-Wielding Kid From Edo Returns

Goemon, that spiky-haired, pipe-wielding wild child, returns for his second N64 adventure in Konami's Goemon's Great Adventure. Unlike his first 64-Bit outing, which was a non-linear 3D adventure, Goemon's Great Adventure is more of a Tomba-style side-scroller that marries classic platform action with minor role-playing elements.

Aside from Goemon himself, the game stars three familiar characters from the Goemon universe: Ebisumaru, a gaseous ninja with a ravenous appetite for dumplings; Sasuke, a clockwork ninja with an internal villain/altruist switch (kind of like the evil Krusty doll from *The Simpsons*); and Yae, a beautiful female ninja with the power

to transform into a mermald.

While each character has an impressive array of projectile, charging and weapon attacks, they pale in comparison to the carnage you can inflict by "piggybacking" upon a prone pal. While locked in this laughable embrace, one player steers, while the other attacks. You can even unleash powerful new subweapons.

Upon entering a town, players may visit a teahouse to swap characters, a general store to replenish

"Piggybacking" on a pal opens up a load of new attack options.

supplies, an inn to rest or a fortune teller to obtain secret info. You'll also meet plenty of oddball characters, who may invite you to embark upon side quests.

While its distinctly Japanese graphics and humor undoubtedly will turn off many casual gamers, fans of innovative play mechanics and classic platforming action will find Konami's latest N64 offering to be one adventure well worth taking. ●



Objects in the stages can be used to crush enemies.



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Publisher/Developer	Players/Genre	% Done	Release
Ubi Soft Smart Dog	1-4 Sports	80	April 1999

Web Address: www.ubisoft.com

All Star Tennis '99

Step On Center Court With A Tour Pro

N64 sports gamers can step onto center court as one of eight top tennis pros—including Michael Chang, Jonas Bjorkman, Amanda Coetzer, Richard Krajicek, Gustavo Kuerten, Conchita Martinez, Jana Novotna and Mark Philippoussis—in All Star Tennis '99, the latest tennis offering from Smart Dog and Ubi Soft.

While it may star real-world players, the game has plenty of over-the-top action fans of Ubi Soft tennis titles have come to expect. In addition to bionic super shots—including a shot that literally defies time and space by shooting from a magic portal—All Star Tennis '99 has an explosive new Bomb Mode. In this frantic mode, the ball creates a time bomb each time it hits the court, adding a whole new element of danger to this once-civilized sport.

In addition to four-player action, All Star Tennis '99 has eight three-dimensional courts with realistic clay, grass and hard court playing surfaces. Each motion-captured character serves, volleys and dives with amazing fluidity and actually changes facial expressions depending on performance.

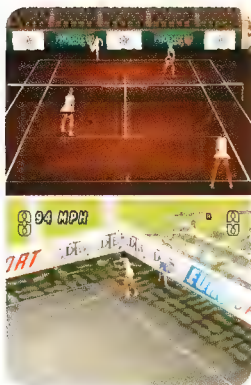
In addition to such touches as the ability to change ball color and camera angles to suit player preference, All Star



Bomb Mode adds an explosive twist to an old game.

Tennis '99 also has cool instant replays that zoom in dramatically on balls that land near a line, precluding the possibility of McEnroe-style tantrums. (Sorry, Sushi...)

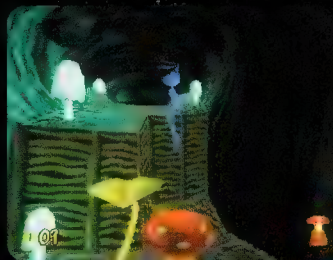
Just as Hot Shots Golf made the sport of golf fun and accessible for all PlayStation sports gamers, All Star Tennis '99 does the same for tennis. Even if you've never picked up a racket or leaped a net in victory, check it out.



Publisher/Developer	Players/Genre	% Done	Release
Activision Traveller's Tales	1 Adventure	80	May 1999

Web Address: www.activision.com

A Bug's Life



To reach new heights, you will have to grow plants by planting seeds.

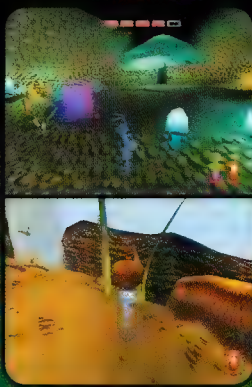
Traveller's Tales' adaptation of Disney/Pixar's computer-animated masterpiece *A Bug's Life* is coming to the N64 courtesy of Activision. Like a lot of games based on big licenses, the

PlayStation version of *A Bug's Life* had stellar production values (e.g. sharp-looking character models and animation, A-list voice talent, etc.) but came up a bit short in the gameplay department.

Apparently aimed at the younger crowd, the game required players to run around chucking berries at less-than-brilliant enemies while cultivating plants and mushrooms to solve minor puzzles.

Although it boasts marginally improved graphics and 60 new Challenge missions, the Nintendo 64 version appears to serve up a lot of the same—minus the cool movie clips taken straight from the big-screen blockbuster. (You do get to eyeball some static cinema screens, but it's not quite the same.)

On the plus side, players can expect to encounter some of the movie's more memorable characters—including Heimlich, Francis and Hopper—and embark upon a number of familiar missions, such as parasailing on a dandelion seed.





NOW YOU'RE BUBBLING, BABY!

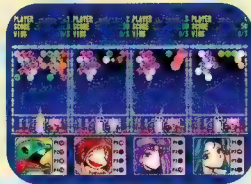
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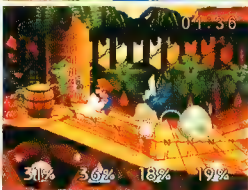
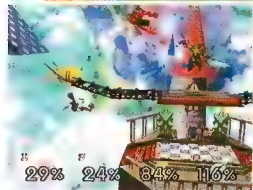
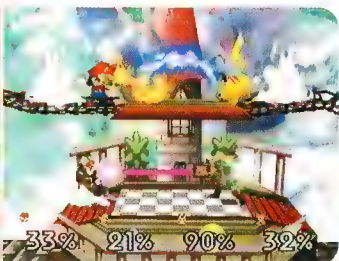
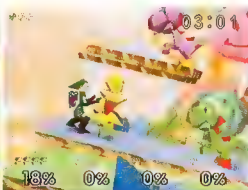
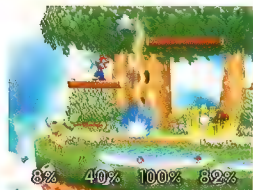


*FOUR PLAYER MODE IS AVAILABLE ON THE NINTENDO 64 VERSION OF THE GAME ONLY.

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WWF Attitude

Acclaim's sequel to last year's mega-hit WWF War Zone is going to make a lot of wrestling fans very happy. Boasting an unprecedented number of options and modes (Lumberjack, Corporate Royal Rumble, King of the Ring, etc.), WWF Attitude also has an extensive Create-A-Pay-Per-View mode that will replicate practically any championship from WWF's entire history. In addition to an increased roster of more than 40 wrestlers, a dramatically improved Create-A-Player mode allows gamers to customize the smallest details on a wrestler's face, add text to his clothing and more. WWF Attitude will be available this spring.



Super Smash Bros.

Another party-centric four-player Nintendo game is on its way. Due out April 26, Super Smash Bros. stars eight Nintendo legends (fictional, that is...Miyamoto is nowhere to be found here) like Link, Samus and Pikachu, all with their own specialized moves (Mario has fireballs, Link has a sword and hookshot, etc.). Not only can you play in a four-player free-for-all, but you can also team up for two-on-tuos. Until we get to the full preview, here are some more screenshots for you to enjoy.



Wild game, baby.

Next party, lose the piñata. New Point Blank™ 2 allows up to 8 of your gun-crazed pals to unload on over 70 wild and wacky shooting scenarios - from fish and fowl to ninjas and gangsters. Blast through an all-new Arcade Mode, Theme Park Mode, Endurance Mode - plus a VS. Mode for the perfect head-to-head (no pun intended) party game. Point Blank 2. Time to get pistol whipped.



Guncon for PS2 with software that displays the Guncon icon.
Point Blank™ 2 sold with Guncon and without.

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Nintendo 64

Harrier 2001

Unlike past console air-combat sims, Harrier 2001 was designed with realism in mind. You get multiple views, including a cockpit with working multifunction displays. Your Harrier handles like the real thing; you'll use every button on the joystick to guide your jet through vertical takeoffs and work its weapons systems. Choose your loadout from more than 50 weapons, including laser-guided missiles, rockets and three gauges of guns. The game packs more than 50 missions, as well as a multiplayer mode. It looks good, too.

Video System co-developed Harrier 2001 with Paradigm, the defense-industry contractor that crafted the visuals in PilotWings 64 and Beetle Adventure Racing. The game's due in July.



Pokémon Snap

Pokémonia hits the N64 this June, with Pokémon Snap, Nintendo's first 64-Bit entry into the wide world of Pokémon. In Pokémon Snap, your goal is explore Pokémon Island in your little safari vehicle, seeking out wild Pokémon and grabbing pictures of them with your trusty camera. As you add more Pokémon pictures to your portfolio, new areas of the island will open up. Strange? You bet...but we're sure Pokémon fans will eat it up.

Ken Griffey Jr.'s Slugfest

The sequel to last year's MLB Featuring Ken Griffey Jr. is on the way from Nintendo. Ken Griffey Jr.'s Slugfest features enhanced graphics over last year's game, not to mention an option to go hi-res with the Expansion Pak. In addition, the game features new animations, updated player rosters, uniforms and stadiums, and an all-new (and much-needed) player creation mode. Slugfest won't make opening day, but it should be on store shelves in May.





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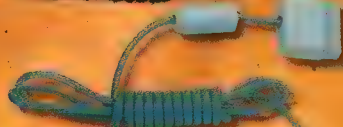


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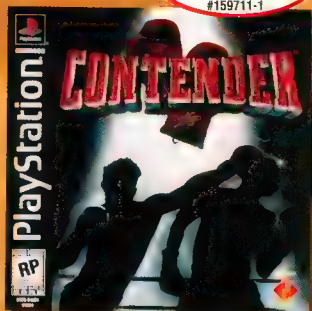
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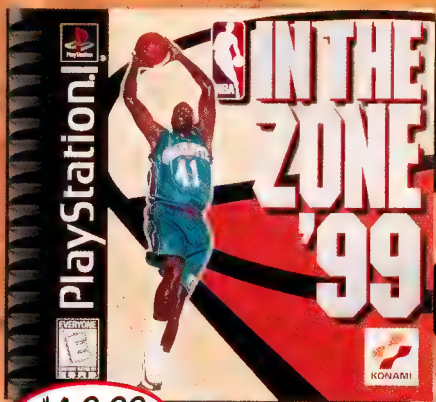
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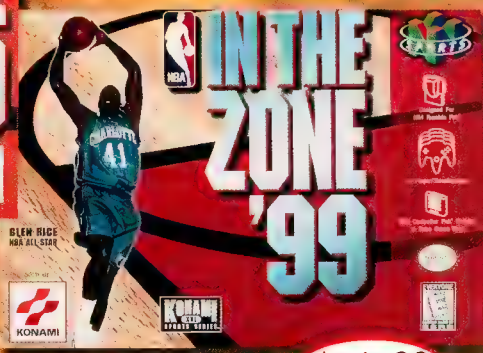
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Gex 3: Deep Cover Gecko

If you recall, Gex 64: Enter the Gecko didn't play so hot. Crystal Dynamics assures us Gex will play much better this time around. Besides that, Crystal D is adding four N64 exclusive worlds (Gex 64 only got the one Titanic stage). These stages will revolve around a new western theme, fairy tales, Greek mythology and a water-based world. Look for Deep Cover Gecko in June.

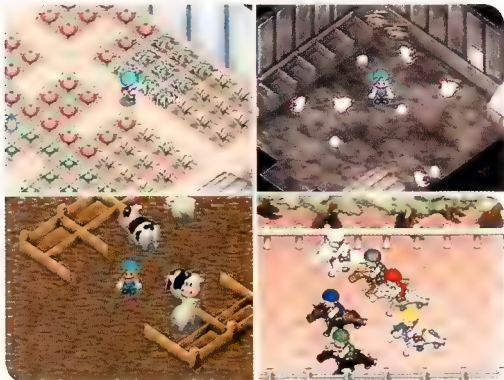


Re-Volt

Fans of R/C racing action can look forward to Acclaim's "racing" title Re-Volt. Imagine Micro Machines-type life-size environments viewed from a more traditional racing perspective and you've pretty much got it. Developed by Probe (Extreme G-2), Re-Volt is scheduled for a fall '99 release on the N64 as well as the PlayStation.

Harvest Moon 64

If you didn't get a chance to play Harvest Moon on the Game Boy or Super NES, don't worry, because the N64 version is due out later this year. In this role-playing game/farming simulation, you have to manage crops, raise livestock and even find true love. For this 64-Bit update, you can find all-new tools (which can be powered up), a larger world, new animals and veggies, beautiful 3D graphics and more than 50 unique characters to interact with. You can even earn extra money with a part-time job or by racing horses or dogs that you raise and train. Look for Natsume to release Harvest Moon 64 around August of this year.



Fisherman Bass Hunter 64

Bass Hunter is coming to the N64 along with host Al Linder, 3D graphics and lots of beautiful fish. The game will take the sim angle as represented by the huge amount of tackle, boats, environments and game fish. The title supports the Rumble as well as the RAM pak. Take 2 Interactive will release the game in July.



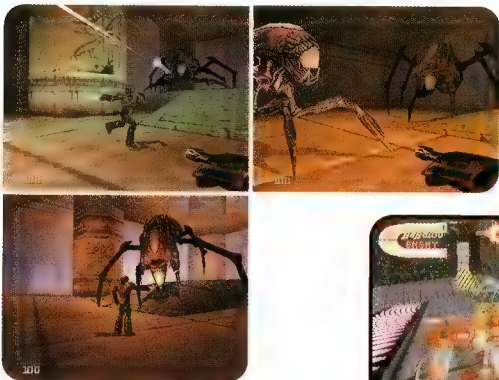
Road Rash 64

This new Road Rash, developed by Pacific Power & Light Company (which apparently is not a utilities company), features more weapons, characters and up to four-player multiplayer as well. We can't say how the game plays but we're hyped about the multiplayer mode. THQ will release Road Rash 64 in October.



Armorines

This winter, Acclaim will be bringing out its next big licensed project, Armorines. Based on the comic book, this action game has you saving the world from invading swarms of alien insects. This one- to four-player game can be played in the first- or third-person perspective and has both deathmatch and cooperative modes. It will also support the Expansion and Rumble Paks.



Last Legion UX

First shown at E3 two years ago, Last Legion UX (Hudson's Virtual On-like two-player mech combat game) has since been in hiding. Recently, the game has resurfaced in Japan with a tentative release date of May. In LLUX, you can customize your fighters' weapons and shields, and power them up through the use of special "Powerstones." Similar to the home version of Virtual On, two-player bouts can be played out via split-screen. Currently, there are no plans for a U.S. release.



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and Bonus
Alien Quest

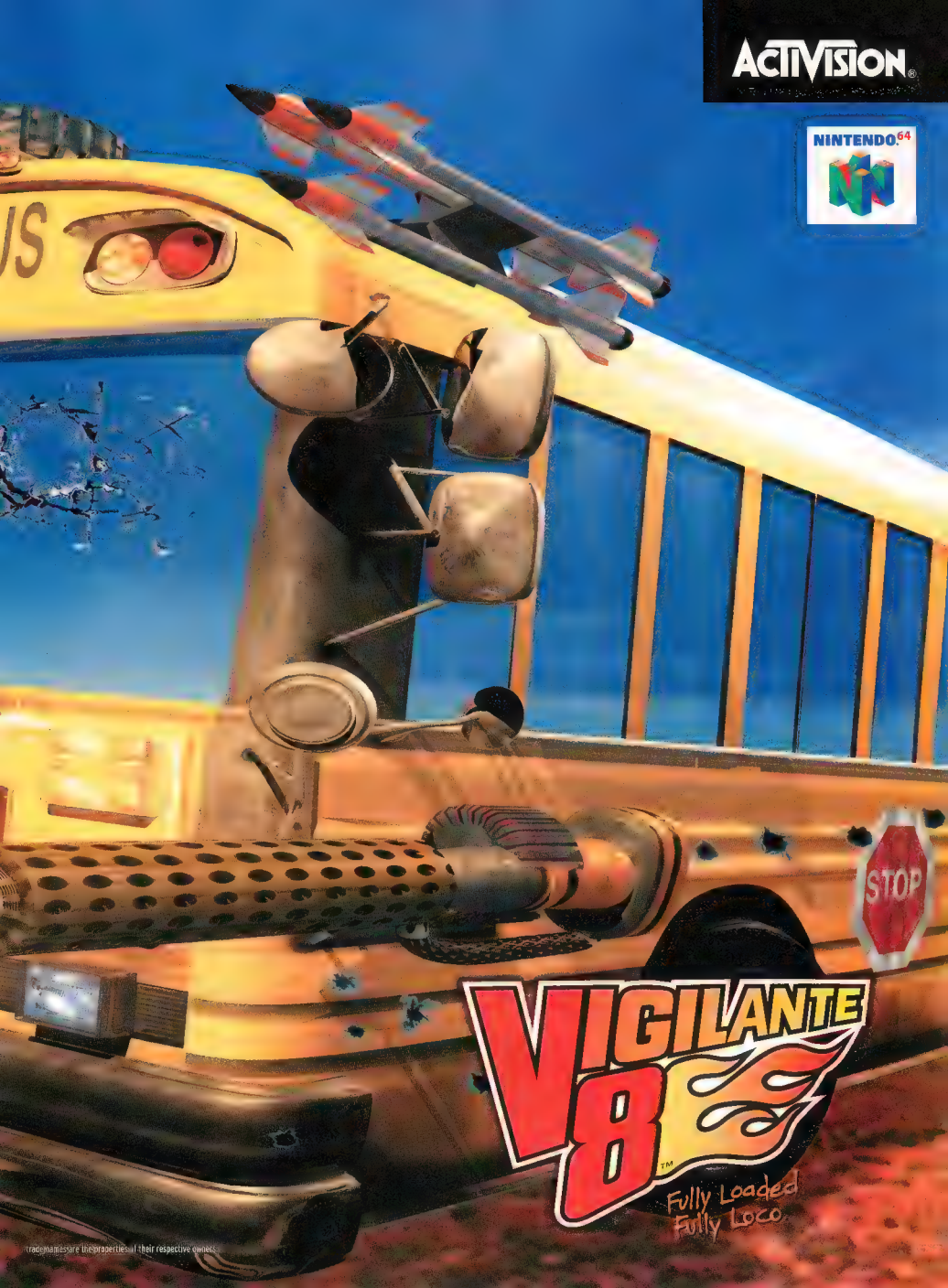


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PlayStation

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PREVIEWS

Final Fantasy VIII

God's Gift To Gamers

The training area of Balamb Garden (below) is a good place to get used to FFXIII's battles.

After spending the majority of 1998 at the top of every RPG fan's most-wanted lists, Square's latest installment of its ground-breaking uber-franchise, Final Fantasy, is finally out (in Japan at least). Taking the RPG genre a significant step forward into the future, the changes in the newest Final Fantasy are many. For the considerable bunch of you who thought there would be some continuity between VII and VIII (i.e., story lines resolved, Cloud back in action, Aerith back to life, etc.), think again.

To begin with, the most obvious change would be purely aesthetic. FFXIII eschews the previously dominant super-deformed look featured up until chapter VII, in favor of a more mature, more realistic lifelike set of characters. The backgrounds are still prerendered, but Squall, Zell, Seifer and just about everyone else are all represented as full-size models in every aspect of the game: on the world map, in towns, during battle sequences and in the normal exploration mode.

Clicking in at a whopping four discs (that's more than 2,500 Megs of Final Fantasy gaming), Final Fantasy VIII

redefines the term "epic RPG." FFXIII's overriding theme is that of "love." While that may make

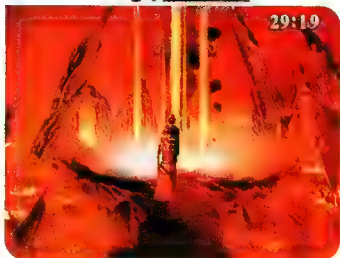
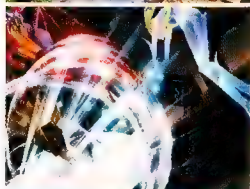


If you thought FFXIII had cool spell effects, just wait'll you see the visual wonders that await you in FFXIII.

more than a few of you gag, it keeps in line with the series' increasingly melodramatic story lines, that up until recently, could not be supported by the medium. So for any dissenters who believe the FF series should return to Nintendo, rest assured a game like this could not be done on the cartridge format.

The game begins at the top military academy in the world—Balamb Garden—with the main character, Squall Leonhart, about to join the ranks of a mercenary unit named SeeD. Along with his classmates Zell and Selphie, Squall and company wind up assisting a "rebel alliance" in a confrontation with the Galbadian Empire and a powerful yet mysterious sorceress named Edea.

As is custom with the FF games, basic menu operations aside, the battle engine is all-new.



Guardian Force monsters have their own HP now, so you can use them over and over until their health is depleted.

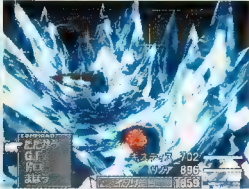
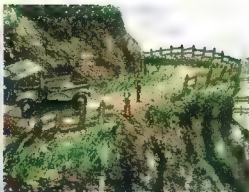


At certain points, you get to play as Laguna Loire, a mysterious character who exists in Squall's dreams.

Instead of the "Materia" system found in part VII, Square now gives us the "Junction" system (see sidebar). Casting magic spells is at once a simpler and more elaborate affair than any battle system before it. From the outset, powerful call spells, or "Guardian Forces," are available once you've found the right G.F. cards. In no time at all you'll be casting visually impressive mega-attacks courtesy of Shiva, Diabolos, Leviathan and more.

Instead of all the various weapons and armor you typically need to equip your party in previous Final Fantasies, part VIII simplifies it to no armor and only one weapon for each person. Another difference between VII and VIII is the lack of gratuitous minigames spread throughout the quest. Instead, Final Fantasy VIII features one largely influential minigame called the Card Battle. Depending on how well you do playing cards, you can earn various items, some of which can be used to increase the power of your characters' sole weapons as the game progresses.

FFVIII has all the makings of being the best FF yet, which, as many would agree, would make it the greatest RPG ever. With a grandiose, yet intimate story line that really brings you close to the characters, Square has closed the gap on melding the perfect blend of amazing cinematics and emotionally resonant scripting previously only found in movies. If this is any indication of things to come, Final Fantasy VIII could very well end up being gaming's *Gone With the Wind* (or *Titanic*, if you prefer). High praise indeed. ●



The monster designs and animation in FFVIII are a huge step above FFVII.

Junction, Junction, What's Your Function?

In FFVIII, there are three main considerations when heading into battle: the Draw system, Guardian Forces and the Junction system.

Instead of buying or learning magic spells, like you would in typical RPGs, you instead "Draw" magic energy from an enemy or a "Draw Point" (like a save point, but where you are given spells instead of the chance to rest and save). Each time you draw a specific type of spell from an enemy, (like Cure), you can use it for a limited number of times before you must draw it again. Powerful spells and even Guardian Forces can be drawn, so in battle (especially during boss encounters) you'll want to be sure to search your enemies for any new or unique spells. Some are so rare they only appear once during

the whole game!

The Guardian Forces are FFVIII's way of summoning monsters to aid you in battle. Each one has its own HP levels and stats and will gain experience after every battle, so long as you have it equipped.

Finally, the Junction system is the key to effectively using magic in FFVIII. Junctioning must be used in combination with Guardian Forces to increase the options and abilities at your disposal. Say for example, you "Junction" Shiva to Squall. Without a junctioned G.F., all Squall could do is attack. With Shiva junctioned (or "equipped") to him, Squall can now cast spells, draw magic or use items. Once junctioned, each G.F. can then learn new skills or powers ("Abilities"), kind of like the job abilities found in Final Fantasy V or

FF Tactics. And because some skills are only available once you learn certain other skills, choosing which abilities you will devote your Guardian Forces' experience points to lets you customize them to some degree. Will you steer your G.F. toward abilities which increase your magic power? Or how about some that increase your HP? Maybe a little of both? At the very least, it's complex enough for you to develop your Guardian Forces in hundreds of different ways, making for even more flexibility than that of FFVII's Materia system. So plan on spending some time mastering this system. While it at first may seem frustrating, once mastered, the Junction system is perhaps the most fascinating aspect of the Final Fantasy VIII experience.

Publisher/Developer Players/Genre % Done Release

AGETEC 1-2 70 June
 Ascii Fighting 1999

Web Address: www.agefec.com

Fighter Maker

Your Very Own Fighter Factory

Avoid time-consuming mistakes

Moving your hips

When animating a character, start with the hips since their movement affects the WHOLE body. There's nothing worse than customizing arm and feet movements only to have to adjust them again to get the hips moving correctly.

The chest

The other part that affects the upper body is the chest. Fix the chest after the hips, and then move onto the limbs and head.

Watch your body

It's important to note that your character will always remain at the same height level regardless of what you do to the legs or hips. If you want the character to get closer to the ground, you've got to lower the body.



Creation has been an aspect of gaming limited to God sims and the occasional player attribute/appearance option, but that has all changed thanks to Fighter Maker. You can now customize most everything you'd want in a fighter including sound effects, physics and every single character animation. Besides the kitchen sink, the only thing noticeably missing from the game is the ability to customize the look of your character. Regardless of that oversight, you'll be hard-pressed to say Ascii skimped on the features. Just take a quick look through the 72-page manual for the proof. Don't let that huge manual intimidate you though—it is possible to create all kinds of moves without ever looking at the thing. We got a couple cool-looking moves down in the first two hours of fiddling around with it, but reading the manual will be essential for serious creators.

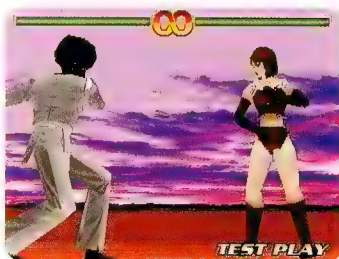
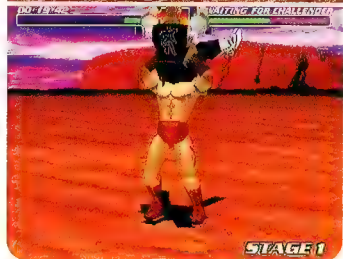
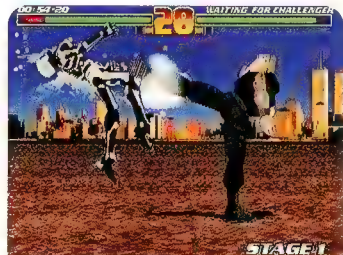
There are 20 regular characters available from the start, each with his or her own set of moves and special attacks. Between them all are about 600 moves that can be selectively added to your own



"Wow, you've grown up to be such a big boy haven't you? Yeah, you're a big boy. Such a big...heavy...boy."

custom fighter or edited to suit your tastes or needs. Editing existing moves is the easiest way to get started and requires the least amount of trial and error. You can also go to town with the sound effects for moves as well as altering the effects of an attack to an opponent. Make sure you have some memory cards handy because each custom character takes up a full 15 blocks of a memory card, which isn't too surprising considering you can pack so much into one individual fighter.

If the character-creating madness going around our offices is any indication, Fighter Maker could be a big hit. The best part is that characters created by players across the country can be traded via the Net with devices like the Dex Drive. Who knows...we may be playing brand-new characters for years to come. Thoughts like this make us hold our breath for a U.S. appearance of RPG Maker (which has a remote chance of happening if Fighter Maker sells extremely well here). ●



This is just like that skit from *Mr. Bean* when he got a turkey stuck on top of his head. Except here, it's a man.

Not quite ready for prime time? Take your custom character into Test Mode to see if your new moves are any good.

Publisher/Developer Players/Genre % Done Release

SCEA Hudson Soft/Raizing 1-2 Fighting 70 May 1999

Web Address: www.playstation.com

Bloody Roar 2: Bringer of the New Age

The Beauty Of The Beast

Did You Know?

The first *Bloody Roar* was released to U.S. arcades as "Beastorizer."

The new "Beast Drive" attack transforms the battle arena into an abstract grid and gives true meaning to the word "overkill."

Despite its rather odd name, there's no denying that *Bloody Roar* was one of the more notable sleeper successes in 1998. Sporting flashy graphics and some of the hardest hits in a fighting game, it bore more than just a passing resemblance, play-wise, to Sega's *Fighting Vipers*, with one notable distinction: during battle, your character could, with the tap of a button and a pyrokinetic undulation of translucent glory, be transformed into a werebeast and execute combos even more brutal and over-the-top than they could as a mere human martial-arts master.

Well, the Beasts are back, and better than ever. Sure, the psychotically explosive play has been tamed a tad (the graphics, fortunately, are still as insane as ever) in favor of more precise and technical controls, but even the most avid *Bloody Roar* fan won't be disappointed by the massive roster of improvements, including hi-res graphics, a doubled frame-rate and the spectacular Beast Drive finishing moves. Combos are even more spectacular and painful than those in the first title, what with the ability to transform into a beast mid-sequence and tack on some sick, sick damage.

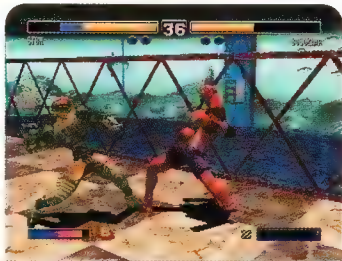
The all-new Story Mode allows players to tackle six foes and relive the struggles of their favorite beastly alter ego as they struggle against the evil human hunters out to end the werebeast race. Linking battles are more than 100 pieces of stylish artwork, which are saved and can be viewed later on in the art gallery. Analog and force-feedback support are also present for those looking to give their new *Dual Shock* pad a

good workout. Capping out the list of new features is the Custom Mode, which allows hardcore players to design their own combos



through the use of Raizing's "Any Cancel" system.

With its plethora of options, improved controls and almost faultless 3D polygon graphics, *Bloody Roar 2* should be a title any fighting game fan can sink their canines into.



Vs. Bloody Roar

The first *Bloody Roar* was definitely a stylin' game, but Raizing has really powered through with their sequel. In almost every technical aspect, *Bloody Roar 2* ravages its predecessor. Check out this side-by-side comparison between *Bloody Roar Parts Un* and *Deux*:

	Bloody Roar	Bloody Roar 2
Frame-Rate:	30 fps	60 fps
Resolution:	320x240	512x384
Backgrounds:	3D	Still 3D
No. of characters:	8	11
Story Mode?	No	Yes
Custom Combo (Any Cancel) Mode?	No	Yes
Analog and Dual Shock support?	No	Yes



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Pro 18's 3rd hole, Coeur d'Alene



Actual 3rd hole, Coeur d'Alene



“Honestly, if you're playing the course and you're playing the game, there is no difference!”

—Bill Reagan,
General Manager,
The Coeur D'Alene Resort



Lehman • Montgomerie • Singh • O'Meara

PRO 18

WORLD TOUR GOLF

www.psygnosis.com/pro18/

Publisher/Developer	Players/Genre	% Done	Release
SCEA Enix/Tri-Ace	1 RPG	75	June 1999
Web Address: www.playstation.com			

Star Ocean: The Second Story

Baby, The Stars
Shine Bright...

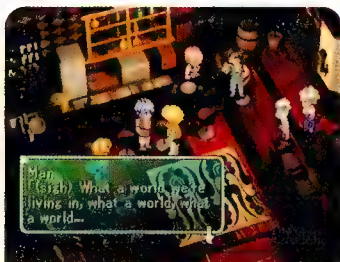
Anyone waiting around for Enix to finish up Dragon Quest VII is just going to have to wait a little bit longer, since the game isn't scheduled until later this year, in Japan no less. Meanwhile, RPG fans can get ready to cozy up to the next best thing, Star Ocean: The Second Story. Due to arrive early this summer, Second Story is the sequel to the old Super Famicom title, Star Ocean. While the original never quite made it to these shores, the sequel will.

As young Crawd C. Kenny, you're a soldier serving under your father's command. While on an expedition, you decide you're going to do a little freelance exploring. Despite your father insisting you move no farther, you accidentally trigger a spatial warp of some sort and find yourself in a strange, new world of unknown origins. After saving a young girl by the name of Lena, you embark on a quest of mythical proportions after the local populace has proclaimed you to be the prophesied warrior of legend.

While the beginning of the game is hampered by a great deal of tedious dialogue, after you reach the castle to speak with the king, the game picks up considerably. Utilizing an active-time battle engine, you are free to enter your commands in real time, have the computer do it for you, or a slight combination of both. Characters move around on prerendered backgrounds, kind of like Parasite Eve, while battles are fought on a 3D polygonal backdrop, similar to Xenogears. The level of detail in Star Ocean is what separates

this game from other RPGs. Geese fly past in the sky while your reflection mirrors your every move as you pass by a small stream. Light even affects the appearance of your sprite-based character as you pass by an open window.

Spanning two discs, with the occasional FMV sequence done by Links (the company responsible for some of FFVII and Shining Force III's CG movies), Star Ocean: The Second Story offers a considerable quest to hold you over until those "higher-profile" RPGs make their way home. ●



Publisher/Developer Players/Genre % Done Release

989 Studios 1-2 Sports 70 April 1999

Web Address: www.989studios.com

3Xtreme

Back To The Basics

This latest installment from 989 Studios shuns the excess of 2Xtreme and re-creates the simplistic, yet successful gameplay of the first edition.

In 3Xtreme, you can earn points for tricks and beating records. With these points, you can buy better skateboards, BMX bikes and in-line skates. This new equipment includes a load of brand-name stuff (Santa Cruz, Toy Machine, Creature and more for boards; GT, Trek, Haro and K2 for bikes; and Salomon and K3 for in-line skates).

You can race in five wacky locations with 27 regular and bonus tracks. Shred the asphalt with any of 13 different hep cats, each endowed with their own special skills and move abilities.

3Xtreme's game modes include: Season, Freestyle, Time Trial and Exhibition. Two-player split-screen will be the game's major attraction with old-school combat



A good shot of all three styles kickin' it at the same time. Notice the gigantic ramp on the bridge.

headlining the show.

With music from *Ultraspank* and motion-capture from X-games Gold Medalist Andy Macdonald plus notable Xtreme athletes Chris Potts and Todd Grossman, it's sure to look authentic. We'll let you know how it plays as soon as we get a playable here at EGM headquarters. ●

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MLB 2000

Baseball In
The Next
Millennium

Since all the major players (EA Sports, Interplay, Konami, Acclaim) have already shown their baseball lineups for this year, we were going to wonder when we'd get a chance to play 989 Sports' MLB 2000. Luckily it arrived just in time for this issue.

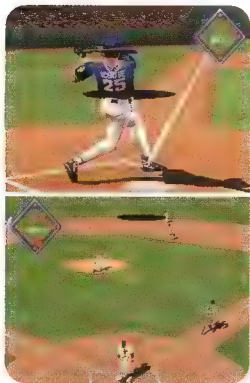
While MLB 2000 doesn't look wildly different from last year's edition, 989 Sports added a few nice touches. Generally, things look a bit more realistic, especially when looking at players' faces and body types. More than 175 individual batting stances help add some realism as well. The parks look about the same except for the noticeably more detailed skylines.

On the audio side, Vin Scully and ESPN's Dave Campbell provide the play-by-play and in-depth color commentary as only they know how.

As expected, full MLB and MLBPA licenses guarantee you'll have your favorite player or team. A Manager Mode allows you to make simple lineup changes. For a hands-on approach, the Enhanced Spring Training option lets you play your way up to the big leagues. Of course, poor play will land you back on the farm.

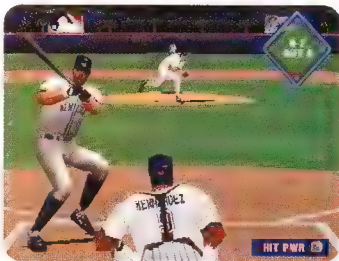
MLB's Create-A-Player has returned as

A sweeping, full-field view opens up the defensive play possibilities.



Publisher/Developer	Players/Genre	% Done	Release
989 Sports	1-2	90	March 1999
989 Sports	Sports		

Web Address: www.989sports.com



Face detail is nice and realistic. Here a surprised Chuck Knobloch watches a strike go by.

well as loads of stat tracking (90 categories per player). Other notable features include: Home Run Derby, Total Control Fielding and Batting, new animations and finally, faster gameplay.

Having played this version, it's obvious a bit more tweaking is needed but luckily, the gameplay is on the right track. With EA Sports' Triple Play 2000 for the PlayStation making a very strong showing (see this month's Review Crew), it'll be interesting to see which game ends up on top. ●

Publisher/Developer	Players/Genre	% Done	Release
Titus	1-2	95	May 1999
Yukes	Fighting		

Web Address: www.titusgames.com

Evil Zone



Some of the more unorthodox characters have special moves that depict demonic imagery—kids, don't try this stuff at home.

Evil Zone will mark the entry of veteran developer Titus into publishing for the PlayStation. Originally developed by Yukes in Japan and released overseas as Fretzvuju, Evil Zone is shaping up thus far to

be one of the year's most unique 3D fighters.

The game's most noticeable asset is its 10-character roster which features a welcomed variety of styles. Influences on character design range from live-action superheroes and high school uniforms, to more ominous combatants entrenched in the occult. Like other fighting games, battles in Evil Zone take place over diverse, albeit passive, backgrounds (11 of them) that correspond thematically to each of the characters. Additionally, the game will have a few different modes of play: Story Mode, One-Player Battles, Versus and a helpful Practice Tutorial.

In terms of gameplay, Evil Zone employs a simple control scheme but emphasizes fast-paced and offensive-based strategies. Aside from the usual text and voice translations, Titus will also include an original music score to suit the game. Despite its offbeat take on a genre which is increasingly becoming more insular, Evil Zone's gameplay is both solid and original—in the end, this is all that really matters. ●



A dynamic camera system will show the most dramatic angles for a move depending on the distance of the attack.

Publisher/Developer Players/Genre % Done Release

AGETEC 1 July
From Software Adventure 50 1999

Web Address: www.agetec.com

Echo Night

When it comes to anything but the Armored Core series, From Software seems to specialize in fairly slow-paced games (King's Field, anyone?). Echo Night is their latest adventure game that's currently out in Japan and is coming to the U.S. this summer.

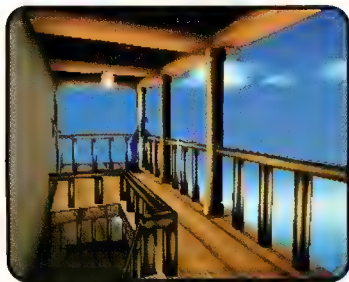
The story starts off with the main character, Richard Osmond, receiving a mysterious envelope addressed from his father. Inside the envelope is nothing but a key. At that very moment, a police officer calls, informing Richard that his father's house had just burned down. Thus, starts his "long and mystical journey," as the game likes to call it.

Echo Night is a first-person adventure game. Don't be fooled, however, into thinking this is Doom or GoldenEye. There's nothing to shoot, nothing to kill, nothing to destroy here. Instead, you'll have to solve a series of puzzles that are scattered throughout the 3D worlds.

We've played the Japanese version and can tell you, this IS a slow-paced game. We don't expect it to change much for the U.S. version.



You'd think "Gee, this looks nice, kind of like GoldenEye." You'd be wrong, however.



Go talk to that shadowy lonely fellow at the end.
Go on. Do it!

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locations

Warning: This is a preview of a Japanese title that may or may not be released in the U.S. It is designed to run on a Japanese system. Import at your own risk.



Publisher/Developer Players/Genre % Done Release

SCEI 1 80 Summer
 Polyphony Shooter 1999

Web Address: www.playstation.com

Omega Boost

Gran Turismo
 Team Tackles A
 Space Shooter

Gratuitous Plot

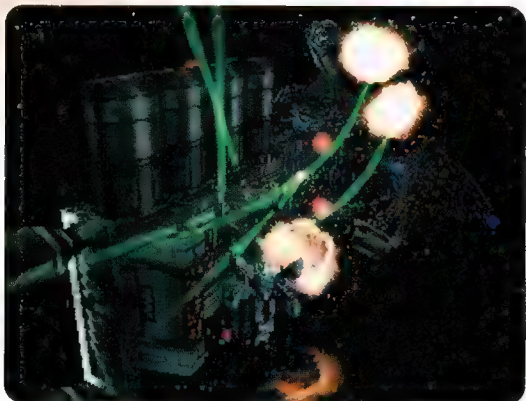
The justification for most shooters is usually pretty vapid, but *Omega Boost* really takes the cake when it comes to gratuitous and stupid-sounding background. OK, here goes. It's the near future, and all the computers are doing crazy stuff. It turns out that a criminal mastermind has gone back in time and screwed around with the ENIAC (the world's first computer). So...you have to go back in time to 1946 and replace a vacuum tube to ensure the safety of the future. OK, fair enough. But where does the flying through space in a giant robot suit shooting at other big robots fit into it then? Err...

With a game as big as Gran Turismo safely under its belt, Polyphony can thankfully shake off the reputation it gained from the Motor Toon series. Now that it has produced what was the biggest PlayStation game of 1998, it's safe to say that people are genuinely excited by any game the team may be working on. Elsewhere this month we have more shots of GT2 (watch for a big exclusive next month too) but the real surprise is this...a game revealed completely out of the blue when *EGM* recently visited Sony Computer Entertainment's offices in Tokyo.

Basically it's kind of a cross between the action parts of *Colony Wars*, with bits of *Afterburner* and *R-Type* thrown in for good measure. If you had to apply any kind of comparison you'd have to say that it's about the closest thing to a real-time, interactive incarnation of the space battles seen in *Macross*. Big robots, ludicrous weaponry and seriously, seriously big explosions.

You pilot the *Omega Boost*, a huge, flying, time-travelling mech-suit that is armed to the teeth with things that make other things go bang. The story line behind the game is suitably ludicrous (and outlined to the left) but the action stays pretty consistent throughout. Blow the crap out of stuff. Big stuff, little stuff, fast-moving stuff...you name it—it needs destroying. In order to do this you move a small cursor around the screen and lock your weapons on to certain targets (Panzer Dragoon style) before letting rip with a slew of impressive-looking missiles or, for more satisfactory results, a whopping great big Vulcan cannon. Shoot things in space, wipe out huge space stations and decidedly *R-Type*-like twisty-turny space snakes and then travel down to ground level to wipe out other stuff.

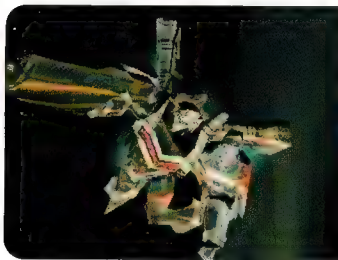
Although we only got about an hour with the game, it has to be said that *Omega Boost*, like *Gran Turismo*,



Everything is full 3D, and not on rails as games like *Star Fox* are. Everything looks pretty spectacular too.

is one of the most impressive-looking examples of its genre. The game engine somehow manages to sustain an incredibly high frame-rate while animating some beautiful objects. The lighting and effects used throughout are truly gobsmacking...and it all culminates in a spectacular final boss sequence that features real-time "liquid metal"-looking morphing stuff. It's all very cool-looking—and often makes you wonder how the guys at Polyphony managed to squeeze such great looking graphics out of the PlayStation.

Fancy effects are used all the way through. If you think *Colony Wars* looks cool...this looks cooler.



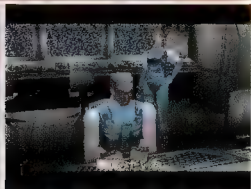
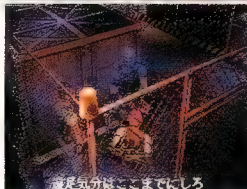
Omega Boost: Time-travellin', bad guy-blasting, space-shooting, vacuum tube-changing muthafunkster.

The green things are *Omega*'s missiles, locked onto the other robo-dude and about to kick some serious butt.



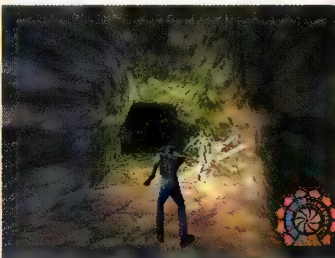
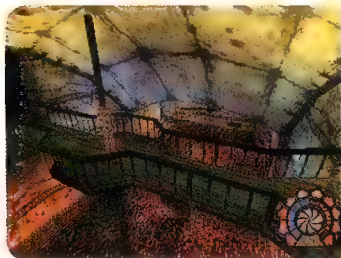
Dino Crisis

Capcom recently unveiled a new survival horror game for the PS called *Dino Crisis*. Produced by Shinji Mikami, the man behind both *Resident Evil* and *Resident Evil 2*, *Dino Crisis* could easily end up being one of the biggest games of 1999. The fully 3D adventure (yes—no more static 2D backgrounds) takes place in the near future at a place called Ibis Island. The story revolves around a scientific genius named Professor Kirk, who sets up a secret lab on the island to complete work on an incredible experiment. The experiment involves the development of a powerful energy source known as "Clean Energy," that has the potential to wipe out pollution and clean up the environment. You play the role of a special force operative named Regina who, along with her team of government agents, have orders to capture Professor Kirk and seize the details of his research. The problem? Ibis Island is littered with menacing dinosaurs. How they got there is up to you to find out. Detail-wise, *Dino Crisis* sounds awesome—the incredibly modeled dinosaurs will stalk, attack and toy with you. They can disarm you, forcing you to change weapons. If you get hurt, your player will limp like in *RE2*. Even better, if she's really injured, she'll leave a trail of blood behind her. And if she suspects something is nearby, she might even cower in fear. Very cool. There are surely plenty more details to come on *Dino Crisis*, so keep your eyes on *EGM* for future updates. Currently, the game is due to be released in Japan in July, with a U.S. release to follow this fall.



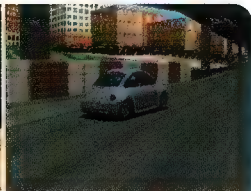
Shadowman

Developed by Iguana Studios U.K. and published by Acclaim, *Shadowman* is a 3D action/adventure that stands apart from others thanks to a disturbing and incredibly complex story line. It has a load of characters to interact with, items to find and fleshy levels to make your way through. Look for it later this year.



Gran Turismo 2

Sony's eagerly awaited sequel is edging nearer and nearer. Just before we went to print we were lucky enough to get our hands on some more pictures and details to slip to you before our big blowout next month. The game is still on course for a summer release (no firm date yet...although later looks likely) and it still looks like the team's ambition of having 400 cars to offer is likely. Recent deals with a number of U.S. and European car manufacturers have helped assure there's something in here for everyone—including Rally cars, muscle cars and tricked-out GTs.



Shao Lin

Those upset over the cancellation of Thrill Kill can now look forward to another four-player fighting game (only without the gratuitous violence). Shao Lin is currently the only fighter that will support four-player simultaneous play. To boot, the game has a promising Story Mode where you can raise a character that changes physically as he or she evolves (he/she can be super-fit or grow fat, depending on your actions and decisions). This Story Mode will have towns and buildings for you to explore (it's been described as a Tobal-style RPG mode with more depth) and will have two different endings and many alternative paths to get to them. Since last we saw it, the cast of fighters has been expanded to enormous proportions (although they only share six fighting styles between them). Shao Lin is currently slated for a late summer/early fall release from THQ.

THE COCOON HATCHES
JULY 14, 1999



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FIGHTING FORCE 64™



Hitting the Mean Streets April '99.

The year is 2001 and the Evil Dr. Dex Zeng is expecting the apocalypse. When nothing happens at midnight on the first day of the new millennium, Dr. Zeng decides a cosmic mistake has occurred and it is now his job to end the world at any cost. The scary part is ...he knows how!

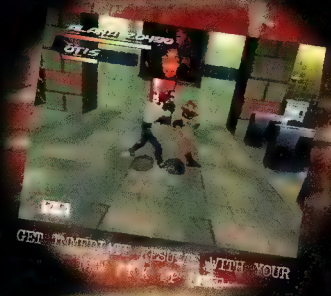
Fighting Force delivers unparalleled action and tons of attacks in a fully progressive 3D environment to bring you the next level in fighting games. Defeat the evil forces of Dr. Zeng as one of four different characters or in 2-player co-op mode.

Seven intense levels take you through office buildings, secret islands, submarines, shopping malls and more! Never before has a fighting game offered so much depth and diversity; Fighting Force is truly the next generation of fighting games.

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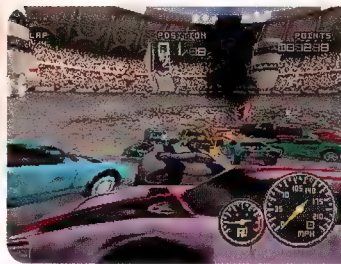


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Demolition Racer

Demolition Racer is the latest pileup from the producers of the Test Drive series. Demolition Racer will guarantee 16 cars in every race, with plenty of debris to populate every track. There are a total of 20 tracks on which two players may compete via a split-screen mode. Demolition Racer should fishtail into stores later this fall.



Ultimate 8 Ball

Coming from Mirage Technologies and THQ in June, Ultimate 8 Ball is quite a billiards game. Not only does it support up to 16 players in multiplayer and tournament play, it has 10 environments to play in, 14 different games to play, 15 types of tables (both in shapes and sizes) and 15 different players to choose from. It's a big one.



The Next Tetris

Hasbro Interactive will be releasing a puzzle title worthy of the Tetris name. In The Next Tetris, you need to clear the bottom row of blocks on the playfield to advance levels. The complexity of The Next Tetris lies with the new "cascading pieces" which fall to fill gaps otherwise unreachable by non-cascading shapes. The Next Tetris should hit store shelves in June.



T.R.A.G.: Mission of Mercy

Known as Hard Edge in Japan, T.R.A.G.: Mission of Mercy (Tactical Rescue Assault Group) plays a little like Resident Evil, without the survival-horror bit. In T.R.A.G., you control a team of four characters (you can switch between any of them, and they sometimes split up to take on different parts of the game) as they try to take out terrorists intent on blowing up a skyscraper (à la Die Hard). Check out the review of this Sunsoft game in this issue.





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Shanghai: True Valor

True Valor, the newest in a long line of tile-matching puzzle games, has three modes of play: Classic (the version we've all grown to love), Battle (a two-player vs. mode where you can match special tiles that will launch attacks on your opponent's stack) and Rolling (like Classic, but with four different boards you must rotate around to see). Otherwise, it's the same ol' Shanghai!



Alexi Lalas International Soccer

Become a big enough sports celebrity and someone somewhere's bound to make a game with your name on it. Developer Z-Axis and publisher Take 2 Interactive are looking to release Alexi Lalas International Soccer sometime in June.



Racing Lagoon

Leave it to Square. They'll take just about anything and slap the "RPG" tag on it in an attempt to create something new. In the case of Racing Lagoon, it seems as if they're trying to create the world's first "racing RPG." While not much is known about the story, the plot, dialogue and character interaction appear to take place in prerendered CG scenes, a distinct departure over the usual 2D or 3D RPGs. As far as the racing is concerned, it looks like Gran Turismo may have some competition in store—Racing Lagoon looks pretty damn good so far. The game is due out this spring in Japan...Square hasn't made any announcements yet about a U.S. release.

Monsterseed

Sunsoft's Monsterseed is a "monster collection" RPG as well as a turn-based combat game (a la Final Fantasy Tactics). As a "Ruler" of seeds, players breed an assortment of monsters and unleash them in strategic battles. A versus mode will allow both players to duel with their favorite monsters via memory cards.



Warning: This is a preview of a Japanese title that may or may not be released in the U.S. It is designed to run on a Japanese system. Import at your own risk.



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Dungeons & Dragons Collection

Perfect At Last?

The landscape of arcades in the early 1990s was distinctly characterized by the predominance of side-scrolling fighters.

Capcom, aside from pioneering the genre, also held the light for others to follow by proliferating hit after formulaic hit. Their Dungeons & Dragons series took 2D side-brawlers to the next level by incorporating light RPG elements and offering players spells and an inventory to manage. After a long and inexplicable delay, Saturn owners can now import Capcom's double-CD package, Dungeons & Dragons Collection.

The games compiled here are Tower of Doom and Shadow Over Mystara. Stylized anime interpretation of the western mythologies underlying Dungeons & Dragons makes this one of Capcom's best design efforts ever. For the Saturn port, Capcom once again makes excellent use of the machine's 2D capabilities and graces us with near-perfect CPS2 conversions. Four-Meg RAM cart enthusiasts will want to be sure to pick up the collection for Shadow Over Mystara, the more recent and ambitious of the two titles. For those who never played the sequel, one look at Shadow Over Mystara will draw comparisons to Treasure's Guardian Heroes. Some of the innovations found in Mystara include a real-time menu system to select spells or equip items, as well as the ability to choose which path to take (this affects which set of stages players will need to clear to reach the next level).

Despite all its graphical splendor, Dungeons & Dragons Collection has one major quibble that keeps it from attaining 2D nirvana. Surprisingly, the load times in Shadow Over Mystara are abhorrently lengthy, even with the assistance of Sega's 4 MB cart. To make matters worse, if one should change characters during battle, the game will freeze for two

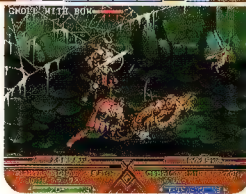
to three seconds to accommodate for the extra data. Fortunately, the action stays smooth even during the most intense moments.

Kudos to Capcom for finally releasing Dungeons & Dragons Collection. The project's suffered so many delays that fans were chalking it up as a casualty in the 32-Bit system wars. Unfortunately, Capcom's untimely release also means this title will never be out in the U.S. The good news is, of course, fans of the originals can finally add a little piece of history to their collection.

Although Tower of Doom is slightly dated graphically, it still stands as one of Capcom's best side-scrolling fighters.

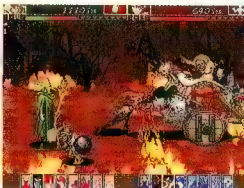
Publisher/Developer	Players/Genre	% Done	Release
Capcom	1-2		Now
Capcom	Compilation	100	Japan

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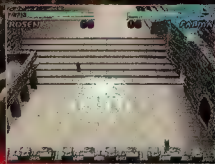
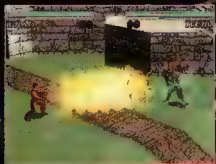


Straight from the Monster Manual

The Harpy and Manticore, circa 1979 vs. Capcom's redesign



LONG AGO, A SMALL COUNTRY WAS BESTOWED MYSTICAL OBJECTS POSSESSING MYSTICAL POWERS. BUT THESE OBJECTS, RELICS, WERE MUCH TOO POWERFUL. EVENTUALLY, THE EMPIRE DESTROYED ITSELF, SEALING ITS SECRET FOR ETERNITY. 1000 YEARS LATER, ONE MAN HAS UNLEASHED THE POWER AND ONCE AGAIN, THE CONTINENT FACES TOTAL DESTRUCTION. PIT RELIC AGAINST RELIC AS 12 INDIVIDUALS FIGHT FOR PEACE, POWER, GREED AND PROSPERITY. OBJECTS OF POWER FAIL, BUT THE SCARS REMAIN.



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GameBoy Color

PREVIEWS

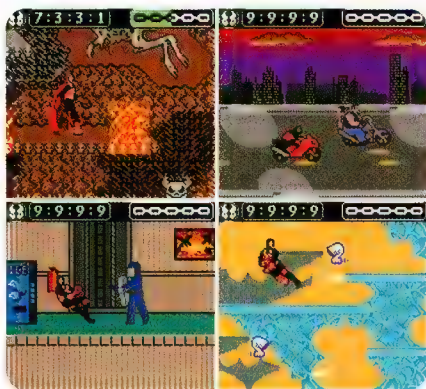
Conker's Pocket Tales

While you continue to wait for Rare's oft-delayed *Twelve Tales: Conker 64* for the N64, you may want to check out their upcoming GB Color action/RPG, *Conker's Pocket Tales*. Similar in style and structure to *Zelda: Link's Awakening*, CPT offers more than 20 hours of gameplay (or so they say), and is compatible with both the original Game Boy and GB Color. Look for it in April.



Spawn

Konami is bringing everyone's favorite hellspawn to the Game Boy Color. Judging from these early screens, *Spawn* for GBC will feature not only side-scrolling action elements, but racing and adventure ones too. Right now, the game is slated for a May release.

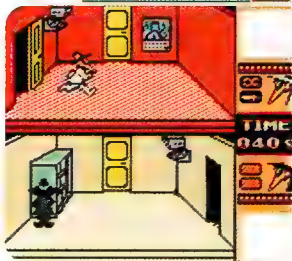
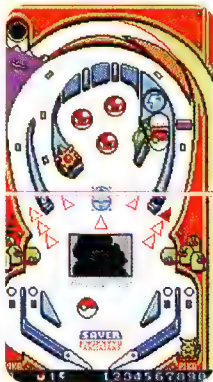


Spy vs. Spy

In May, Kemco will be bringing out a GBC version of a true classic: *Spy vs. Spy*. The game stars *Mad Magazine's* infamous duo, the black and white spies, who are competing to find four objects in each stage while avoiding deadly traps set by the other guy. This GB Color-only cart has 32 stages (with some all-new rooms and mission objectives compared to the original NES game) and supports the Game Link Cable.

Pokémon Pinball

The first Japanese game to utilize Nintendo's new Rumble Cartridge for Game Boy Color is none other than *Pokémon Pinball*, the company's latest attempt to cash in on the current Pokémon craze. The game features 150 different Pokémon, which can be captured if you can manage to reveal them on the pinball playfield. The cartridge requires one AAA battery for the rumbling function to work, but you can play without it if you wish. *Pokémon Pinball* will be released in the U.S. later this year.



Warning: This is a preview of a Japanese title that may or may not be released in the U.S. It is designed to run on a Japanese system. Import at your own risk.



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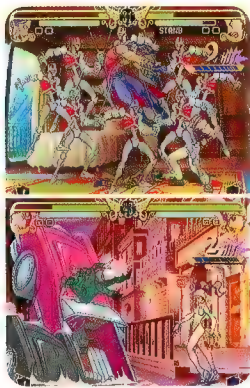
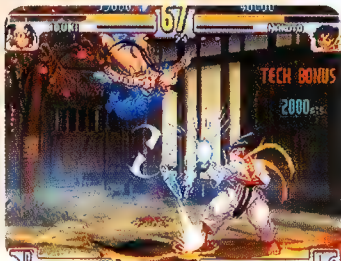
Arcade

Previews

Street Fighter III Third Strike: Fight for the Future

The latest update to Street Fighter III sees the return of Chun-Li along with four new characters. Makoto is "a girl with a sheer karate spirit" and is dressed in garb similar to Ryu's. Next is a guy dressed in a trench coat and hat with a weird mask. He's called Q, "the unknown." Fans of Dhalsim will probably want to check out Twelve, the "pale slaughtering machine" who looks like a cross between

an alien and a squid. The last addition is Remy, who is "in a cross between love and hate" (whatever that means) and bears a striking resemblance to Iori Yagami from the King of Fighters series. SFIII Third Strike: Fight for the Future was originally rumored to play on the Naomi arcade board, but it currently runs on the CPS III (according to Capcom). Look for it in arcades in late spring.



JoJo's Venture

Capcom's latest 2D fighter, JoJo's Venture, is set to hit U.S. arcades this spring. The CPS III-based, animation-heavy game features 11 characters, each with his or her own "inner personas" (known as "Stands") that can be brought out during fights. These Stands can be programmed to perform special attacks and combos in conjunction with regular attacks, making for some serious on-screen action. Expect to see PS and DC versions of JoJo's Venture later this year.

Fatal Fury: Wild Ambition

Following in the footsteps of Samurai Shodown 64, Fatal Fury moves into the world of polygons. Wild Ambition has most of the familiar faces like the Bogards, Joe Higashi, Mai and Kim Kapwan, plus a couple of new faces. It currently runs on the Hyper Neo-Geo 64, but may pop up on Sega's Naomi board in a later incarnation. FF: Wild Ambition is in arcades now.



Gun Beat

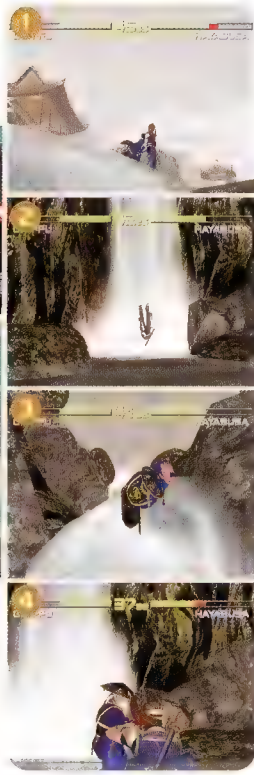
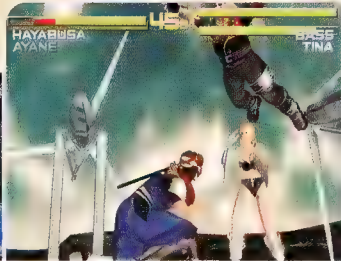


Treasure, the kings of action and mayhem, have revealed their first Naomi-based arcade game, Gun Beat. First shown at the AOU show in February, Gun Beat is a frantically paced "action racing shooter" that features various modes of transportation. No word yet on a U.S. arcade release, but a Dreamcast version is likely to surface in the coming months.



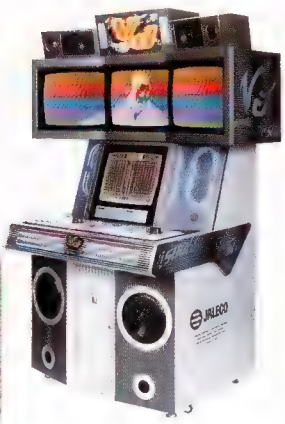
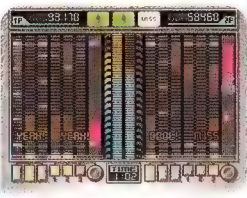
Dead or Alive 2

One of the most impressive-looking Naomi games unveiled at the AOU show in Japan was none other than Tecmo's 'jiggin' sequel, Dead or Alive 2. The game looks totally incredible in motion (far better than even Virtua Fighter 3) and features an all-new Tag Match option that allows for two-on-two or three-on-three matches. In Tag Match, you'll be able to switch out teammates at anytime (similar to Capcom's Vs. games). DOA 2 also has fighting on multiple levels. In one stage, we witnessed two fighters falling off a waterfall, only to continue their battle on the river down below (see sequence). No word yet on a release date, but a Dreamcast port is pretty much guaranteed.



VJ: Visual & Music Slap

In Japan, Jaleco is taking the concept behind Konami's Bemani series of music games and giving it an MTV charge. In VJ, you mix music and video clips (displayed on three big monitors) by pressing the buttons at the right time, following the on-screen commands. It includes music from various musical styles and even features popular '70s and '80s songs.

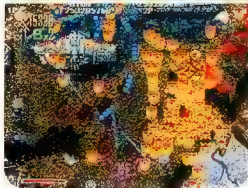


Arcade

Crazy Taxi



From the programmers at AM3 comes Sega's latest Naomi-based arcade game, Crazy Taxi. You play as a cab driver on the West Coast, and you've got to pick up customers and take them to various locations (including real-life spots like Pizza Hut and the Levi's Store). Similar to Harley Davidson, you can drive pretty much anywhere you want. Expect a U.S. release sometime soon.



Giga Wing



Capcom is working on a new vertically scrolling, two-player simultaneous 2D shooter in Japan called Giga Wing. The game employs a feature called "Reflect Force," which allows your ship to deflect enemy attacks back toward the enemy. No word yet on whether or not the game will be released in U.S. arcades.



LEGACY KAIN SOUL REAPER

LEAVY continues the story of Kain, evil vampire. Full 3D polygonal environments to explore with abilities to shunt from one world to another. Run, jump and fly while harvesting souls for the dark master. Eleven bosses, 20 different enemies, & 10 classes of vampires.

PlayStation 3



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Aku's Heartless	01/99	\$44.99	Dragon Seeds	10/98	\$46.99
Alien Resurrection	03/99	\$44.99	Dragon Vajor	07/99	\$59.99
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Danger Girl	09/99	\$46.99	Heaven	05/97	\$29.99
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Indivisible Days	08/99	\$57.99	Incredible Hulk	12/96	\$19.99
Iron Man	08/99	\$46.99	Incredible Hulk 2	12/96	\$19.99
Injustice	02/99	\$46.99	Injustice 2	12/96	\$19.99
Injustice 2	02/99	\$46.99	Injustice 3	12/96	\$19.99
Injustice 3	02/99	\$46.99	Injustice 4	12/96	\$19.99
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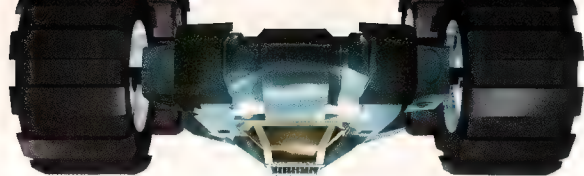
Driving on the ground is so 90's.

PlayStation 2



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Roll Cage

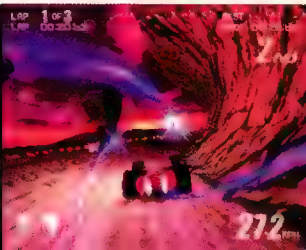
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Blast away at the scenery with 8 innovative weapons to slow down your opponents.

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Intense "Big Beat" DJ soundtrack, featuring songs from Fatboy Slim, EZ Rollers, Aphrodite and more!



Star Wars,
Nothing but
Star Wars...

No Jedi mind tricks here. The Force is with us in a big way this May, when every console gets a game based on

STAR WARS
EPISODE I
THE PHANTOM MENACE



For a couple of guys who've already seen "the movie," Dean Sharpe and Mike Ebert sure seem calm. The two men are president and vice president respectively of Big Ape Productions, LucasArts' development team working on one of the first games based on *Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace*.

And since *The Phantom Menace* can only be considered the Biggest Thing Ever when it hits theaters on May 19, you gotta figure Sharpe and Ebert feel the big movie's mystery has been spoiled a bit by the bombardment of super-secret *Episode I* source

material and pre-screenings that come from working on the game. "Spoiled? Absolutely," Sharpe says, rocking back in the chair of his toy-cluttered office. "I mean, I felt like that 18 months ago when I saw the first screening. It was like, 'Hey, I didn't wanna know that!'"

Of course, such sacrifices are to be expected when you're working on an enormously high-profile project. And no less than five such projects are in the works in and near LucasArts' San Rafael, Calif., offices. While *Star Wars* fans start wrapping their mouths around tongue-twisting new names like Qui-Gon Jinn, Jar Jar Binks and Mace Windu, LucasArts is keeping things simple with the titles of its

first two announced games. Called *Star Wars: Episode I Racer* and *Star Wars: Episode I The Phantom Menace*, both games hit stores May 24, when demand for *The Phantom Menace*-related stuff will be hotter than the Death Star's supertaser.

Racer, based on the podracing event you've already glimpsed if you've seen the first trailer, will hit the Nintendo 64, alongside PC and Mac versions. This ultra-fast racing game will also arrive on the PlayStation, but not until the latter half of the year, due to Nintendo's limited exclusivity deal with LucasArts (which includes one remaining, and still unannounced, *Episode I* game for

the N64). A Dreamcast version is also highly probable. The *Phantom Menace* is a PlayStation and PC title, with a Dreamcast version likely in the works, too. The other three *Episode I* games will hit all the platforms (a Game Boy Color title is brewing, as well) and "cover every genre you can think of," according to LucasArts. So, will we see a *Phantom Menace* fighting game? A first-person shooter? A space-combat game? We'll find out when the remaining titles debut at E3.

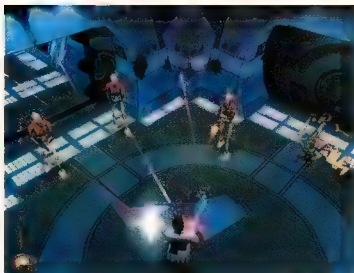
For now, we're ready to slice open the blast doors that have hidden *The Phantom Menace* and *Racer* since the beginning of their development.

By John Davison
and Crispin Boyer



Photography by Michael Sexton

Spoiler Warning: This feature reveals minor details about *Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace*. If you fear learning anything about the film, put this magazine down, back away and go hide under your house until May 19.



Editor's Note: Unfortunately, PlayStation shots of Phantom Menace weren't available at press time, so we've included PC pics that are representative of the gameplay. Fear not—we'll show plenty of PlayStation screens next issue.

Big Ape Productions' past work for LucasArts includes *Herz's Adventures* and the 16-Bit gem *Zombies Ate My Neighbors*. The team includes, top row from left, Dan Ross, Mike Ebert, Ray West, John Barnes. Middle row from left: Eric Wilder, Dean Sharpe, Robert Leyland, Denzil Kriekenbeek. Front: Brennan Underwood.

STAR WARS EPISODE I THE PHANTOM MENACE

The Phantom Menace, the video game, starts pretty much exactly as the film will: *Star Wars* logo, star field and straight into the music—*pow!* Followed by the now-familiar "crawl" explaining the story. Flash Gordon style. So, is the game going to follow the opening of *Episode I* exactly? "It will," explains Dean Sharpe, the aforementioned president and "programming guy" at Big Ape Productions, the development team working on the PC version on which the PlayStation game will be based. (A much smaller team is working on the PlayStation port a few miles away in LucasArts' San Rafael offices.) "It's very close to the original, but they've [Lucasfilm] changed it since we wrote that opening crawl. That's actually one of the challenges of working on something like this. They keep changing things without telling you...and they'll continue to change things up until the movie comes out."

Once the familiar *Star Wars*-ness is over, the game reveals itself to be just what its former working title, "The Adventure," suggests: an adventure game in the spirit of something like *Tomb Raider*, only with a fixed, higher camera angle that creates an isometric perspective. Your character explores and battles through polygonal environments straight from the film, about 13 levels in all. The game mixes

lightsaber battles, puzzle solving and lots of character interaction in a plot that closely follows the film's fast-moving story, which interestingly enough is set over only a couple of days.

The first in-game cutscene in *The Phantom Menace*, much like the opening sequence, mimics the movie very closely. Obi-Wan Kenobi and Qui-Gon Jinn are two Jedi sent to investigate trade sanctions imposed upon Planet Naboo by the Trade Federation. An impressive prerendered sequence of the Jedi's ship (no movie footage) leads into a further cutscene that utilizes the game engine as the characters follow lines loosely based on the movie script. Now seems as good a time as any to pose the question we've been itching to do: they have copies of the script lying around? "Are you kidding?" Sharpe says, laughing along with Big Ape VP and "art guy" Mike Ebert. "No way. It's all under strict lock and key and you have to arrange time to go look at it. The level designers pretty much fleshed out all the characters and what they wanted them to say, and then we farmed this stuff out to a writer who was able to work with the movie script, go over it and work it all out for us. We did a lot of initial dialog, but most of it was completely reworked by the writers."

The game's script is sizable. But what makes it even more impressive is the text is conveyed through digitized speech (along with interactive music—see sidebar on page 120). "There are close to 4,000 lines of dialog," Sharpe explains. "In a normal game that uses the SCUMM interface [LucasArts' point-and-click interface for adventure games that has been heavily modified for *The Phantom Menace*] there are 8,000 lines, but this is a different kind of thing. As far as dialog goes, this is more like *Zelda*, although *Zelda* was really bad; there was a lot of talking there without anyone saying a whole lot."

Sharpe talks us through the game as he guides the characters

Dateline: Episode I

Nov. 1, 1994

George Lucas begins writing the screenplay for *Episode I* in the same loose-leaf binder he's used for all his scripts since *American Graffiti*. He builds *Episode I* off the 15 pages of notes he wrote in 1975 to serve as a backstory for the original trilogy. Moviegoers—still fascinated by the exploits of a speeding, flying, exploding bus—have no idea what's in store.



around the first level. "You play Obi-Wan mainly. He's probably the main character in the game, but in other places you switch to other characters as dictated by the story—Qui-Gon Jinn, the Queen and Panaka, who's the queen's guard captain. In the level where you play the queen, you actually switch back and forth in order to flick switches

and open doors and stuff. Panaka isn't really a huge character in the movie, but for the sake of the gameplay he's a useful character to have around. We had to make a lot of sacrifices in order to follow the movie. Normally I wouldn't want to switch characters in the middle of a game because it spoils the flow—but to follow the story

How much of John Williams' score for *Episode I* is new, as opposed to classic tunes from the original *Trilogy*?

- A) It's all new
- B) 90 percent
- C) 50 percent
- D) John Williams didn't compose any new music

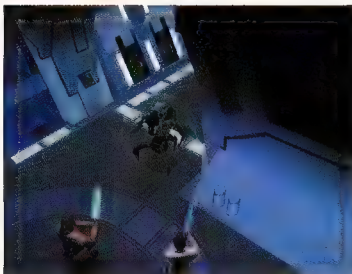
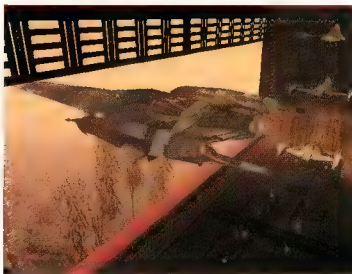
"When you see the movie, you'll see the Jedi are so not interested in anything that's attacking them. They're so cocky and so good."

—Dean Sharpe, president of Big Ape Productions

"...the first thing people do is wander into town and kill the first jawa they come across. They can get themselves a little jawa race war going on if they're not careful."

—Mike Ebert, Big Ape's vice president

By men percent Williams and the London Symphony Orchestra created a two-hour score for *Episode I*. Most of the music is new, with only a hint of the old tunes here and there. The new score has been modified to play interspersed throughout *The Phantom Menace*'s game.



The *Phantom Menace* is packed with cutscenes using the game engine (top). Many are shot-for-shot re-creations of scenes in the film. Although you spend most of the game on foot (bottom), you'll get to pilot a STAP and a tank.

accurately we had to make some compromises. Fortunately in this case, I think it works really well."

The first level is all about Obi-Wan, and as the game unfolds it's more than apparent that this is a bit different from what we normally expect from an adventure title. For a start there's none of the usual nignarole of building up your character. "You can see you're pretty much a bad-ass Jedi from the very beginning," Sharpe says, chucking as he moves Obi-Wan down a corridor, deflecting laser bolts with his lightsaber in a manner that could only be described as "nonchalant." "The characters start out at the beginning of the movie as real kick-ass Jedi, so it was hard to work in the whole video game 'powering-up' thing. We tried to just start the game off and say, 'Well, OK, they're bad ass,' so you can go in and pretty much kick the shit out of anyone."

The Jedi's fully powered-up abilities are ably demonstrated as Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon move into a room filled with the now-familiar Battle Droids. Laser bolts fly everywhere, and then, out of the blue, all of them are pushed back against the far wall and erupt into balls of flame. Cool. Looks like someone is using the Force. "You always have Force powers," Sharpe explains, as a wave of Force energy careens across the screen. "The only thing we have is the Force push and the acrobatic stuff like big jumps, though. We really argued with ourselves a lot about putting in loads of Force powers, but they just don't use anything in the movies. They use the Force push, and then there are some ridiculous acrobatics, but that's it. We went through the Jedi Knight game list of Force abilities and thought about putting some

of those in but, y'know, when was the last time you saw a good Jedi doing a Force grip on someone?"

Good point. After all, it's only dark Jedi who crush tracheas and shoot lightning bolts from their fingertips in the original trilogy. So is the gameplay just all wandering around and kicking the crap out of Battle Droids then? Or is there more going on than pure action? "There's actually an equal balance of action and adventure, puzzle solving and dialog," Sharpe explains, "but we don't let things get complicated. Everything will be triggered by using the Use, Attack and Direction buttons to keep things simple as you transition between gameplay styles. Even the blocking is automatic to keep things simple. When we first put auto-block in we thought, 'Y'know, this is way too easy.' But then we thought it was pretty fun just to walk around deflecting shots and stuff. It also makes the game pretty close to the movie, too. When you see the movie, you'll see the Jedi are so not interested in anything that's attacking them. They're so cocky and so good. They're just not worried about anything." In the end, though, *The Phantom Menace* is hardly a cakewalk. "You can't block everything in the game," he adds, "and you can screw up objectives and you can get caught in crossfires and things like that."

Sharpe demonstrates the differences in gameplay styles as he skips us to a level deeper in the game—which again showcases the gorgeous graphics engine and excellent art style that manages to capture the elegance of the *Episode I* imagery. "Puzzles are puzzles and pretty much whatever way we paint them they're going to pretty much work the same



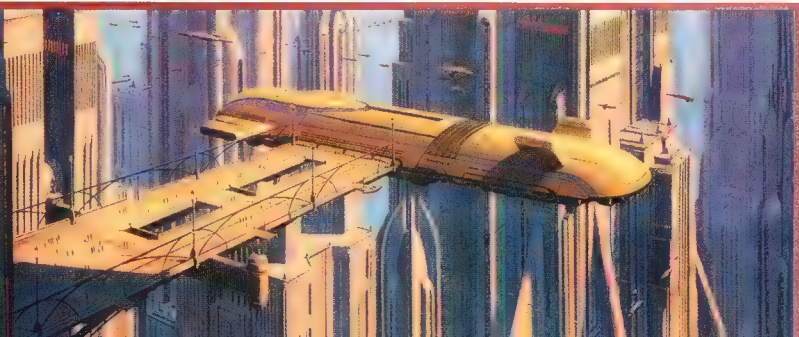
Obi-Wan Kenobi—Fresh from his Jedi training and already a bona-fide badass, Obi-Wan hopes to train young Anakin to be a Jedi.



Queen Amidala—A young queen (and the future mother of twins Luke and Leia), Amidala enlists the aid of Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon Jinn to protect her planet, Naboo.



Qui-Gon Jinn—A full-fledged Jedi master and Obi-Wan's mentor in the ways of the Force.



(Double) Handle With Care

We all saw it—that wicked double-ended lightsaber Darth Maul whips out near the end of the first trailer. Cool? Yes. Dangerous? Very. Imagine all the things that can go wrong when wielding one of those gizmos...



- You'd pretty much have to kiss that sucker goodbye if you dropped it. Its end-over-end tumble would cut to the core of the planet.



- Since each blade can be switched on independently, flicking the wrong switch could burn a nasty hole in your favorite Sith Lord T-shirt. And torso.
- Swing the top blade forward too far in the heat of battle, and that pesky bottom blade might leave you with one shoe too many.

Illustrations by Lisa Blackshear



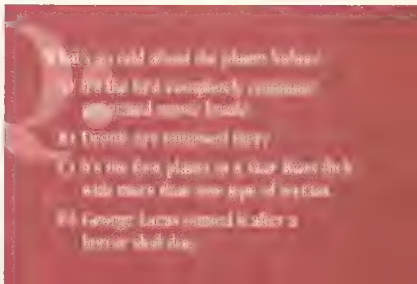
Captain Panaka—Queen Amidala's head of security and bodyguard.

way—whether they're push blocks or switches or whatever," Sharpe explains. "There were so many things we had to cover with different types of gameplay we decided not to focus too heavily on any one area. You pick up an item and you use it. It's not complicated. You don't have to use this item on that item. If you talk to someone and they need something, we'll guide the player along the dialog path according to whether they have the item in their inventory or not. We didn't want to get into a situation where we tried to push everything to new levels and end up not doing any of them well. We decided to put in all of the elements that we'd need as far as gameplay was concerned, and we wanted to do them so they were good. The only way we could do that was by not making them too complicated. The rules of good-game making dictate that you'd normally take one element and push it as far as you can. We've had to take a different approach and combine multiple gameplay

elements in order to capture the essence of the movie."

Of course, trying to capture the essence of any movie in a game is never easy—but imagine having to adapt what will surely be the most spectacular film ever. It led to more than a few headaches for the Big Ape team. "Moviemakers tend not to think of video game producers when they're making their movies," Sharpe and Ebert chime in together. "They set so much stuff in outside environments, and that's really not easy to do in a game. We've seen the movie and we've seen the sets, so we know what most things look like, but to capture the whole feeling of the movie, we have to cram a lot into what we're doing."

Big Ape had full access to everything Industrial Light and Magic was churning out for the film—although much of it came too late. "ILM supplied all of the art that we could possibly want," Ebert continues, "but because of time constraints we actually ended up not using it. These days



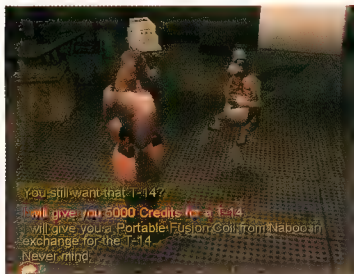
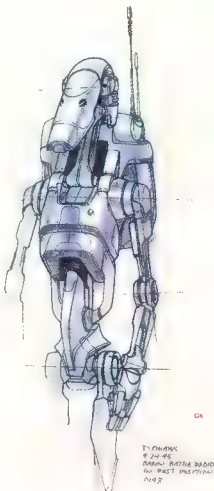


a kick-ass weapon that you really don't need to use anything else. All the other weapons are really for the non-Jedi characters.

"The weapons we've used are from the movie to some extent—there are thermal detonators, but I don't think I've ever actually seen anyone use a thermal detonator in the movies, but everyone has them. We've got blasters—but what blaster is what? We didn't go crazy. Most of the time you're Obi-Wan, so we focused on making the lightsaber fun to play with."

Ebert has gone through a similar movie-to-game experience before, and he says things can get bizarre when it comes time to see the finished film. "I worked on the Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade game years ago, and I was working on it for ages before the movie came out. It's weird working on a project because after a while you forget what's in the game and what's in the movie, so you go to the theater and start thinking there are bits missing."

The Phantom Menace's action and puzzle elements seem to fuse perfectly, but how does all that dialog fit into the gameplay? "The Mos Espa level on Tatooine is a good example of this," explains Ebert. "It's actually an example of the kind of game I would love to make, if I wasn't working on a game based on a movie. It's sort of a big, interactive world that you can play around in and talk to people. The whole town will pretty much react to whatever you do. If you just stroll into town and start killing guys, well, the town is going to react to you. I enjoy watching people play, because usually the first thing people do is



Still a LucasArts SCUMM game at its heart, The Phantom Menace is crammed with aliens—including parts dealer Watto above and the twin twileks below—to play with. Dialog trees step you through the 4,000-line script.

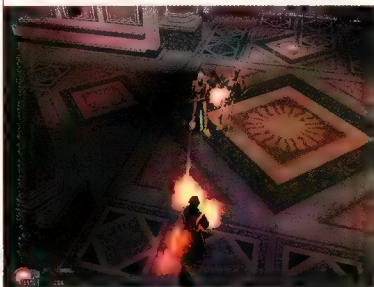


a game can take as long as a movie to produce, so by the time they'd done all of their rendering it was past the point where we really needed the art and we were pretty far in. We used some textures, but we didn't use any of ILM's models."

The challenges inherent in creating a game alongside the film meant the developers and filmmakers weren't always on the same page. In fact, the Phantom Menace even contains some cutting-room floor bits. "There are parts of the game that are based on scenes that were originally going to be in the movie that George [Lucas] has since cut," Sharpe explains. "We originally saw footage of all the main characters riding in a taxi on Coruscant, so we thought there must be a scene like that—so there's a bit in the game where everyone piles into a flying cab. That scene never materialized in the end, though. We suffer from the editing process of the movies. They'll maybe produce a scene and then for the sake of flow, they'll make a quick cut and leave something out entirely. But by that point we've already built something in the game around that visual so it ends up being somewhat irrelevant."

Sometimes, Big Ape strayed from the movie's plot intentionally for the sake of gameplay. "We took some liberties in places," explains Ebert. "The weapons, for example, aren't that prominent in the movie. You've got the big guns and all of that kind of stuff, but we really tried not to get too carried away with it. Basically we didn't want to give you a gun just for the sake of giving you a gun, and to be quite honest you don't need anything. The lightsaber is much

Since Planet Naboo lacks a molten core, its honeycombed crust makes for enormous cave networks that fill with water near the coasts, creating massive swamps around the forested inland regions. So, this home of the Gungans and Princess Amidala offers a mix of sea, swamp and forest terrain.

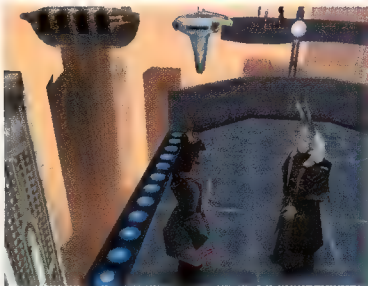
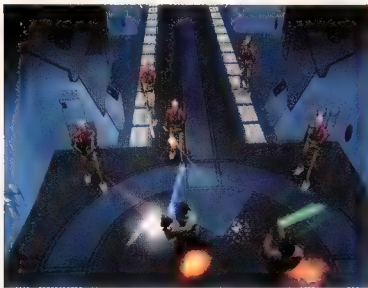


Dateline: Episode I

Sept. 26, 1997

Lucas winds up the last day of *Episode I's* principal photography after a 65-day shoot. Meanwhile, special-edition rereleases of the original trilogy give us a collective woodie for the new film.

Power-ups? Power-ups? Jedi masters don't need no stinkin' power-ups—as this shot of Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon Jinn wading into Battle Droids shows.



wander into town and kill the first Jawa they come across. They can get themselves a little Jawa race war going on if they're not careful. Once you get into the town it becomes more like a LucasArts story game, like Full Throttle or Grim Fandango or something. There are dialog puzzles and inventory-based puzzles throughout this section. The reason we wanted to go this way with the game was basically because the movie went this way. It's not an action sequence in the film, so we followed suit."

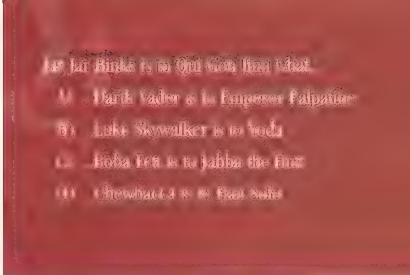
Mos Espa is certainly an impressive-looking section of the game. The level is huge and filled with characters wandering around, almost like a town in any RPG. "It's actually very cool because there's a lot going on that's independent of your character," Sharpe explains as he guides Qui-Gon around the city. "People are getting on with their lives and talking to each other—and it has absolutely nothing to do with you."

Characters familiar from the original trilogy are milling around here too, and interaction with them—what they say and how they treat you—depends on a lot of variables. "You can go to some parts of the level," Ebert

explains, "and you end up getting a certain smell on your clothes, and the people in the town will react to that too. You can talk to anyone. Some people will have proper conversations but everyone has some kind of response. You can piss off the guards and some of the characters without too much trouble, but if you mess with others you can find yourself in some difficult situations."

Amidst all the character interaction, puzzle solving and lightsaber dueling, you'll find a few vehicles and secret bits, too. "There are 13 levels, give or take a few," explains Ebert. "We're saying 11-plus at the moment... but that's pretty loose. You do get to ride the STAP, which is the thing the Battle Droids ride, and you also get to drive the tanks to go around blowing the crap out of stuff. We keep the gameplay and the view fundamentally pretty consistent though. We didn't want to do something like Shadows of the Empire where there were so many different gameplay styles. We change camera angles slightly for the vehicle parts—but basically this stays pretty much the same throughout. The vehicles pretty much equate to how the ones in Tomb Raider act: As far as camera angles and control go, things stay pretty consistent."

Before we leave Big Ape's offices to speak with the PlayStation-conversion team, Dean and Mike show us one last level of the game, just to get us even more fired up about the whole thing than we already are. Remember the scene in the first trailer where Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon are dueling with Darth Maul? When Maul draws that second blade on his lightsaber, you have to agree it's one of the coolest movie moments ever, eh? Well, in the game that whole scene is going on as you're playing another section. The 3D engine used is so impressive, and the feeling of depth provided by the imagery is so convincing, that action takes place on two different planes of the level. The lightsaber duel rages in the foreground, while you continue to explore sections in the background. It's surprisingly effective, and when the speech and final music is eventually dropped in, it's going to be an incredible moment, we're sure.



Wars on the Web

Surprise, surprise—the Internet is crammed with more *Phantom Menace* rumors than Chewbacca has fleas. But amidst the goofball reports (Charlton Heston as the voice of Yoda?) you'll find some bona-fide behind-the-scenes tidbits, pics, plot points and even shots of prequel toys. Thanks to their network of spies and insiders, the following fan-run sites consistently separate the facts from the bantha fodder. If you're a spoiler seeker craving the kind of *Episode I* deep-throat dirt they just don't post on the official site at www.starwars.com, click this way...

www.theforce.net
www.jedinet.com
www.newsroid.com
www.countingdown.com/starwars
www.starwarz.com
www.echostation.com
www.virtualedition.com
www.toshistation.com
www.maulrats.com
www.sirstevesguide.com



By Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn, who says Jar Jar looks early in the film, and Jar Jar soon becomes his inseparable sidekick, just as Chewie never left Han's side. Jar Jar, however, is fat, chunkier and whinier than Nabuat Chewbacca.



On the Portside...

They may be up against an ultra-tight deadline, but the small team of coders porting *The Phantom Menace* to the PlayStation have one thing going for them. "Big Ape originally designed the game with the console in mind," says senior programmer Nick Pavis, formerly of Codemasters and now working in-house at LucasArts to bring *Phantom Menace* to Sony's system. "The poly counts are about OK, the interface is pretty simple, save files fit OK on a memory card. It's just a really efficient setup."

Of course, porting the game wasn't simply a matter of fiddling with the poly count and sending it on its way. For one thing, the PC version of *Phantom Menace* makes use of LucasArts' patented iMUSE system, which blends John Williams' soaring score from one tune to the next depending on events in the game. And while interactive music isn't new to the consoles (listen to *Banjo-Kazooie*), a dialog-heavy game that spools changing music from the CD is a definite first. "They have something like 4,000 lines of dialog," explains Pavis. "They weren't gonna have all that speech on the PlayStation, but we said you have to have it, because it's an important part of the game."

"So we spent a little time researching how we were gonna do interactive music and dialog and create an iMUSE system for the PlayStation. It's pretty neat. It allows you to stream different tracks off CD and have them loop seamlessly and go from one to the next while having dialog at the same time. The closest thing to it is in *Metal Gear Solid*, where they have interactive music in MIDI, but this is actually original score spooled off the CD and being interactive."

Sure, the PlayStation version of *Phantom Menace* won't look as pretty as the PC game; it lacks the hi-res sharpness and filtered textures of the high-end hardware. But the PlayStation has its own bag of tricks. Expect to see plenty of slick lighting effects as you deflect laser bolts with your lightsaber. And ultimately, the porting team is relying on the system's knack for pumping out massive numbers of polygons. "We're from the console school," Pavis says, "and I really hate the mentality of 'you can't do this on the PlayStation' or 'you can't do that on the PlayStation.' I think we can in a lot of cases. Even though the PlayStation doesn't do perspective-correct mapping, even though it doesn't do bilinear filtering, it can still output a lot of



LucasArts programmers Pat Costello, Jon Menzies and Nick Pavis are bringing *The Phantom Menace* from the PC to the PS—with all 4,000 lines of dialog and nearly every poly intact.

polygons and pretty much match what they're doing."

With the deadline looming (the team is only getting about three months to port the game) Pavis and fellow senior programmers Jon Menzies and Pat Costello are facing a lot of long days and late nights in their cramped alcove at LucasArts. But Pavis is convinced that *Phantom Menace* will go beyond being a solid port. "I think it's better as a console game than a PC game," he tells us. "You don't worry about using the keyboard and which key turns on your lightsaber. You just pick up the joystick and go."



STAR WARS EPISODE I RACER

Dateline: Episode I

Sept. 25, 1998

Lucas ends months of speculation and name games when he announces that *The Phantom Menace* is the official title for *Episode I*. Outspoken fans, thinking the name is better suited for a *Goosebumps* novel, hope it's just a Jedi mind trick.

While Big Ape wraps up the Phantom Menace in the North Carolina offices, work on Racer proceeds in-house deep within LucasArts' San Rafael headquarters. The team behind the game came together from various LucasArts Star Wars projects, including Shadows of the Empire, Jedi Knight and Rogue Squadron. Racer is being developed simultaneously for the Nintendo 64 and PC, with all future versions building off those two. Although development nitty-gritty didn't kick off until last year, Racer has been in the planning stages since 1996, when portions of the new film became obvious candidates for video-game treatment. "Back in '96 ILM had done an early animatic of the podrace, so we knew early on that we wanted to do a racing game based on this sequence," Jon Knoles, Racer's project leader and lead artist, tells us.

But while podracing seemed a perfect fit for a video game, the Racer team faced hurdles from the get-go. "One of the challenges was getting a game based on a movie to come out when a movie comes out—which rarely happens, and when it does the game often doesn't resemble the movie," Knoles explains. "But we were fortunate early on to have good reference material, not final reference, but good placeholder reference."

So, working with sketches instead of ILM's own computer-generated models, the game's artists built their pods from scratch using 3D Studio MAX. The Tatooine track featured in the film was given a similar treatment, while the rest of Racer's courses are exclusive to the game and have nothing to do with the movie. "They had a sketch for the track in the movie," Knoles says, "and our Tatooine track is based on that sketch. But they ended up cutting out huge portions of the track to make the scene last a specific amount of time, so we have a lot of surprises in our track. You'll also see some familiar areas, scenes that look right out of the trailer."

The Racer team's next obstacle was a doozie: Since pods cruise at 600 miles per hour, how could they re-create this extreme speed in a game? "Imagine taking Daytona in a 15-second lap," Knoles says. "That's how fast you're going, and that presented a few technical problems for us. You end up driving a very small thing in a very large world, since the tracks need to be so expansive, and interacting with other racers is key. You really want a lot of bumping and grinding going on, because it's a big part of the race in the movie. When you're going at these speeds, it's like flying in formation with WWII fighters—it's a little hard to ride bumper to bumper."

Aggressive AI was one solution to keeping races tight, but, more importantly, the developers wanted to stick a lot of opposing pods in the race with the player. For the N64 version, they wanted to cram 12 other vehicles on the raceway, but that goal came with its own set of challenges. "These pods aren't all a Chevy with different paint jobs," Knoles explains. "They all have unique textures and unique models that look so different. Each pod model took more RAM than the usual car models in a car-racing game. We kept hitting that ceiling in the N64 in the amount of available RAM. You just can't load any more racers into the game. It took a lot of tucking, cutting and rebuilding to get the 12 racers on the track with the player."

Eric Johnston, Racer's lead programmer, adds that despite all the squeezing, the game's pods are still presented with a hefty amount of detail. "The poly count for the other vehicles is still pretty high as far as racing games go," he says. "They go from 20 polygons to 1000, basically." And here's a cool bonus if you have a RAM Pak: Not only does Racer take the Rogue Squadron route and jump to hi-res when you pop in the Pak, it also adds more opposing pods on the larger tracks. The number of extra racers varies per track, however. The game's target frame-rate is 30 frames per

Podracing 101

If you watched the *Episode I* teaser trailer, then you already caught a glimpse of pod racing, the often lethal, lightning-fast sport that makes up the meat of Racer's gameplay. The movie's race is held on Tatooine, on the rugged outskirts of Mos Espa, where young Anakin Skywalker is growing up in indentured servitude with his mother, Shmi. And lo' and behold if we don't see a familiar crime boss hosting the Mos Espa race—none other than Jabba the Hutt, a full 30 years before becoming the galaxy's most notorious blobster.

According to the film, hosting pod races is one of the ways young Jabba built his fortune, since the sport supports so many underworld activities. "Podracing's on the verge of being illegal, like those races we used to have in the Nevada desert," Knoles tells us. "You're not supposed to do it. The emphasis is not on safety here. Rather, there's a lot of gambling going on—gambling with lives as well as money."

Pay attention to the pod racer drivers when you see the film, too, since they're probably the craziest-looking critters to appear in *Episode I*. And they look like oddballs for a reason. "All the pod racers are alien," Knoles explains. "Many have multiple arms, because pods are such complex vehicles that racing them is something humans just don't have enough limbs or the reflexes to do. But Anakin has this thing with machinery, which will be with him for the rest of his life, and he has the benefit of the Force, of course."



When does George Lucas plan to have *Star Wars: Episode II* ready for theaters?


A) 2001

B) 2002

C) 2003

D) Never. This is his last *Star Wars* film.



A photograph of two men standing in a control room. The man on the left has a goatee and is wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt with his arms crossed. The man on the right is wearing a dark patterned shirt and light-colored pants. Behind them is a wall of monitors and control panels, some of which are lit up. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows.

“Imagine taking Daytona in a 15-second lap. That’s how fast you’re going, and that presented a few technical problems for us.”

—Jon Knoles, Racer’s project leader

“A couple courses are not road-based at all, and you feel like you’re on an off-road adventure.”

—Eric Johnston, Racer’s lead programmer

By Lucas, stated he tentatively plans to finish *Episode II* by 2002. He’s developing the film’s story right now—a story he said includes Boba Fett.

Dateline: Episode I

Nov. 20, 1998

The initial teaser trailer is released in theaters, three days after its pre-release in limited markets. The trailer is such a draw that even people who aren't female sit through *Meet Joe Black* to catch a glimpse of *Episode I*.

Dateline: Episode I

April 30, 1999

Grab your lightsaber and evok pets and hyperspace to Denver, Colo., for the *Star Wars* Celebration fan event. See games, *Episode I* celebrities and about 40,000 fellow *Star Wars* freaks. Call 800-TRUE-FAN for ticket info. Attendees wearing Klingon costumes will be teased until they cry.

second, and the PAK will only add as many extra pods as that frame-rate will allow. Note that higher-end platforms such as the PC, Mac and Dreamcast will support more racers on the track.

Just as the team needed lots of pods on the starting line, they also needed courses large enough to give the lightning-quick vehicles room to run. "A brand-new engine was built in-house especially for this game," Johnston tells us. "It was essentially taking some of what worked really well in *Shadows of the Empire* and tuning it specifically for a racing game. Our emphasis was that we wanted the tracks—rather than being trenches—to be worlds we could design from the beginning. They're a lot more freerform than in a typical racing game. For example, the Tatooine track looks a whole lot like the one from the movie, and you don't feel like you're racing at the bottom of a funnel the whole time.

"Our level builders were pretty much allowed to create any world they wanted and then lay a track through it, instead of the other way around. In fact, it wasn't even necessary that they have a road. A couple courses are not road-based at all, and you feel like you're on an off-road adventure."

In the end, *Racer*'s level builders created 23 tracks scattered across eight planets (seven planets host three tracks, while Tatooine hosts two). Expect a few bonus courses, too. In the game's Circuit Mode, players compete to become the podracing champion of the galaxy by beating the Boss racer on each track, which in turns opens that Boss' pod as a playable vehicle for the single-race mode, two-player mode or when you begin a new circuit career. Eventually, you'll go up against Sebulba, the droopy-faced final Boss whose pod is loaded with dirty tricks.

The planets pack the usual variety of fantasy-racing-game terrain. You'll see an ice planet, a lava world, a *WipeOut*-like city course set on an asteroid penal colony. None of these worlds appears in *The Phantom Menace*. "Everything's new, with the exception of Tatooine as it will appear in the movie," Knoles says. "All the planet names in *Racer*, all the planets themselves, those are all created from scratch, just classic *Star Wars*

stuff except 30 years in the past. We're trying to open up new territories, just like we did with *Shadows* and Jedi knight and any other game we worked on that had us inventing new locales. There are other planet locations in the film, but when you see the film you'll realize why they don't hold podraces on them."

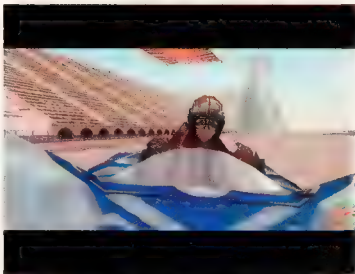
The courses all vary in size, usually according to their order in the game. "Since each planet has three tracks," Knoles adds, "the first one is shorter, the second one a little longer, and the third one a little longer, although not always. We have a track that's about five miles long and takes 30 seconds to lap. The scale of our final Tatooine track is approximately 30 miles, and you're covering 10 miles per minutes, so it works out to 400 to 600 miles per hour scale speed. That's a little faster than the pods in the movie, where they're hanging around 300 to 400 miles per hour and hit about 550 miles per hour when they're really booking. ILM plays with their numbers to make it feel right on film, and we fudge our numbers to make it feel right for us."

All tracks have multiple shortcuts and hidden paths, keep an eye out for breakaway walls and out-of-the-way routes you can only reach by jumping your pod just right. Advanced courses are also crammed with stomach-churning dips and gaping chasms. Put simply, this is a game that, like EA's excellent *Beetle Adventure Racing*, is heavy on exploration. "At any point, you can drive off the road and cruise through the country," Knoles says. "Like in *Tatooine*, for instance, at any point you can drive up on the hills, although you can't get too carried away. This is a racing game, after all. There will be a few surprises spread about here and there, although I wanted to be a little more obvious and give people the cool stuff in their face. The Jawa sandcrawler was going to be a bit more off the beaten path, but it's really cool to drive under that thing, so we stuck it in the middle of the road."

All the tracks pack hidden details that you'll want to hunt down and see. "On the penal colony world," *Racer*'s product manager, Brett Tosti, says, "we're gonna have a big interrogation-type ship in one of the shortcuts that I'll chase you and fire at you

What inspired the look of *Episode I*'s Battle Droids?

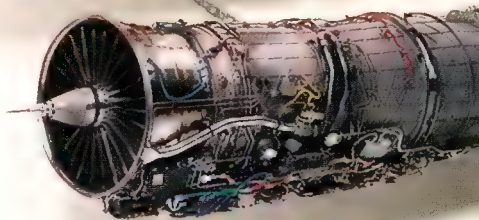
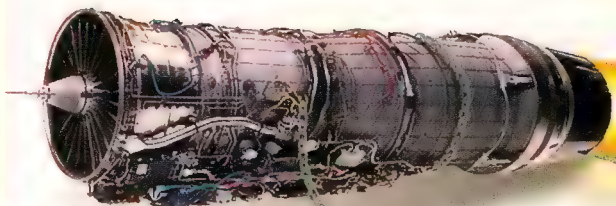
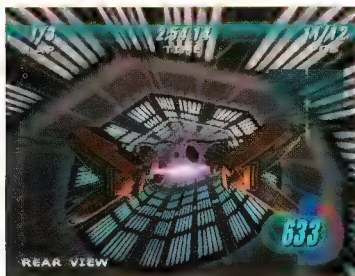
- A) Humpback camels
- B) Shogun warriors
- C) The original Imperial stormtroopers
- D) African tribal art



As you'd expect, *Racer* offers multiple control setups, but the developers are even toying with the idea of sticking in a configuration that matches what you'll see in the film. In *Episode I*, the alien racers steer their pods by working two throttles, one for each engine. The game may let you plug in two joypads to simulate this control style, with each analog stick controlling a separate engine. "You find yourself going like this," Knoles says, taking a joystick in each hand and holding them out as if they're handlebars. "You really understand just how hard these things are to drive."



© ILM concept designer Doug Chiang has stated that the Battle Droids are based on the stylized and angular forms of tribal African art. "There's a danger in designing the future," he told *WIRED* magazine. "Things that are too beautiful date very quickly. The future needs a past."

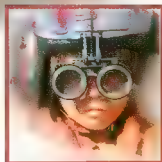


because he thinks you're escaping." Also look for asteroid-filled zero-g tunnels that your pod will glide through.

Since Racer features multiple tracks set in the same planetary environments, it's fallen back slightly on the racing-game convention of building later courses off previous ones. Yet it doesn't re-use track portions to the obvious extent found in Ridge Racer. "We have a planet called Endo Prime, for instance, which is a snow planet," Knoles explains. "The first track there just takes you on a little part and you see glimpses of areas where you'll be racing on the second and third tracks later on. They may be hidden behind an avalanche or something. Each track is more of an expansion on

the first, and sometimes they share a half-mile stretch, but really each track is mostly unique. In a couple of locations, we turn the race around so you drive backward and then we add a huge new portion. No one will feel like we added a little road and suddenly it's a new track."

One game Knoles and his team unabashedly admit served as inspiration was Wave Race 64, which offers a level of control finesse that applied well to Racer's chariot-like pods. "By pushing forward on the stick, you go faster but turn shallower, just like in Wave Race," he says. "By pulling back on your pod's engines, you can turn sharper but it slows you down. And you can do a lot of things in Racer that get through tricky areas, like



Anakin Skywalker—Before he became the infamous man in black, Anakin Skywalker was an adventurous boy on Tatooine with a knack for machinery. This gift gives him an edge in pod racing, a sport usually reserved for multi-limbed aliens with the dexterity to drive the complicated machines.



Sebulba—Tatooine's pod racing champion and the final Boss of Racer, Sebulba is a cheater who'll do anything and everything to win, including flaming you with his engines. Sebulba's a strange-looking dude, with legs that also seem to function as arms. Like all alien podracers, he uses every limb he's got to control his machine.



A Pod in Every Garage



This fully functional pod hotrod can be yours for a cool \$10,011,000!

Dateline: Episode I

May 3, 1999

A mountain of

Phantom Menace

merchandise will hit store shelves like a ton of ewoks, as this is the day Lucasfilm licensees will unleash their biggest wave yet of *Episode I* toys, trinkets and promotional tie-ins. Expect Hasbro's microchipped action figures and LEGO's vehicle sets to make the biggest splash.

rolling on your side."

Yanking back on the stick after you jump keeps you airborne longer, while pushing forward cuts jumps short. Holding forward also charges turbo. Once charged, you can boost to speeds exceeding 1,000 miles per hour in faster pods. Boosting too long overheats your engines, however, and you'll get a flameout if you don't ease off the gas.

Unlike *WipeOut*, *Racer* is not a combat-racing game. None of the pods, except *Sebulba's*, carries weapons. Instead, it's more like *F-Zero X*. You can damage opponents by ramming them, or take them out of commission (and earn access to their junked parts) by forcing them into canyon walls and such. In some cases, you can even use the terrain beneath your pod to screw pursuers. "One level has a methane lake you can cruise across," Tosti says. "If you do a speed boost on it, the whole lake catches on fire, so all the players who come after you will take a small amount of damage."

Roughing up opponents or flaming out your engines will take its toll on your own race performance. "We handle damage really subtly in the beginning," Knoles explains, "but over time, you begin to notice that your craft is pulling almost like you have a flat tire, and the engines will smoke and sputter and spark." Since the game's races don't have pit stops (although one's featured in the movie), your only recourse when damaged is to hold the repair button, which acts as an on-the-

fly pit stop. It slows you down considerably, but it keeps you in the race while your systems fix themselves. Of course, you could always go easy on the repair button and hope your pod makes it across the finish line in one piece, at which point special droids you purchase called pit droids fix your pod between races.

At least four pods, including Anakin's, will be available when you first start the game. From there, as you beat the Boss racer of each track and unlock his pod, you'll eventually open 23 craft. *Sebulba* drives the last pod, and you earn his craft once you beat him on the final track on *Tatooine*. And here's an interesting bit of trivia: *Racer* actually contains a few podracers that you'll never see in the film. "When they originally started out, there were going to be 22 racers in the movie's pod sequence," explains Knoles, "but they cut it down to 18. We got the sketches for the ones they cut and they were kinda cool, so we said, 'Hey, let's build them.' We end up having all 18 from the movie, plus the extra ones and the pilots that go with them, and a couple more secret ones, too."

As you'd expect, each pod has varied performance capabilities and is fully upgradeable (see *Pod Mods* sidebar). Anakin's compact pod boasts better acceleration than most, while bigger racers have higher top speeds and more efficient cooling systems for extended turbo. All the pods handle differently, as well. "You do feel different slipperiness on different surfaces," Johnston

Playing *Racer* had us craving the real deal, so we put together this shopping list of stuff you'd need to build your own, if not exactly street-legal, pod hotrod:

- **1969 Chevy Chevelle**—As the passenger-pod portion of your homemade machine, the whale-size Chevelle comfortably seats five, and you just can't beat that ol' Detroit steel for raw durability.

Price: \$5,000

- **Two Pratt & Whitney F100-PW-229 jet-turbine engines**—These are the same turbines that propel F-16 and F-15 fighters, and they look almost identical to the engines pulling Anakin's pod. A bit pricey, though.

Price: \$5 million each

- **210 feet of surplus Navy destroyer anchor chain**—Divided into two 100-foot strips, this chain will link your Chevelle to the engines, as well as support wiring for throttle controls, status readouts and the front turn signals. Use that last 10 feet to tie the engines together.

Price: \$1,000

- **Alpine CDA-7940 stereo system with eight XR 12-inch subwoofers and four MRV-1001 amplifiers**—What's the point of owning your own podracer if you can't cruise to your favorite tunes? And you'll need the power of Alpine's high-end system to hear your '80s hair-metal compilations over the turbine whine.

Price: \$5,000

We hate to poop on your party, but bear a few cautions in mind before you fire up your pod for that morning commute. Safety goggles are a must if you plan on punching the afterburners. Always wear your seatbelts. And if you're really concerned about personal safety, dive in the nearest ditch the second you activate this jet-powered sucker. "Two F100s would not really be a good way to get around," Pratt & Whitney spokesman Mark Sullivan tells us. "Each generates about 30,000 pounds of thrust, which works out to 24,000 horsepower per engine. If you hooked them up to a car, it would rip the thing to pieces quite quickly. I don't think you'll see these pods on the freeway anytime soon."

* Add tax, license and doc. fee. Prices based on qualification for all rebates or cash equivalent. All incentives applied. Must qualify for college-grad rebate. MSRP may not be the actual price at which podracers are sold.

Which *Star Wars* personality does not belong in this list and why?

- A) Anthony Daniels
- B) James Earl Jones
- C) Frank Oz
- D) Ian McDiarmid



LucasArts' Racer team includes, top row from left, Paul Topolos, Paul Zinnes, Lisa Wong, Armando Lluich, Christina Napier, Mark Blattel, Livia Macklin, Amit Shaley, Brad Post, Nathan Stapley. Bottom row from left: Mark Haigh-Hutchinson, Jon Knoles, Justin Graham, Eric Johnston, Brett Tost, Jacob Stephens, Sun-Inn Shih, Duncan Brown, Camela Boswell, Japeth Pieper, Dino Ago, Darren Johnson, Clint Young, Jim Rice, Bill Stoneham.



While the other guys reprise their roles in the new film (Daniels as C-3PO, Oz as Yoda, and McDiarmid as Palpatine before he was Emperor), only Jones doesn't return as the voice of Darth Vader (of course, young Anakin is years away from becoming the evil Sith lord).

Dateline: Episode I

May 19, 1999

Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace will open in theaters across the country. Everything not related to the film will cease to exist on this much-anticipated Friday.

made to not go the graphics route of games like *F-Zero X*, which, as fun as they are, aren't filled with a lot of eye-candy," says Knoles. "With this game, it's essential that it looks right.

You're going to come out of this movie and you're gonna want to play this game. The podrace sequence is going to be in your head just like the trench run in *Star Wars* or the speeder bike scene or the walker battle. If you turn the game on and just have blocks flying around on an invisible road somewhere, you're gonna be hugely disappointed."

The team's attention to graphical perfection is obvious as soon as you look at your pod, which bristles with animated engine parts, spherical shapes and dozens of other details. "Any one of the parts of Anakin's pod is as many polygons as a typical car in a typical car-racing game," Knoles adds. "The whole vehicle in its entirety with the cables, binder beam, flames and all that cool stuff is about 1,000 polygons, which is roughly a third of what the N64 can handle at a decent frame-rate. To do anything less would just be criminal, because you see these

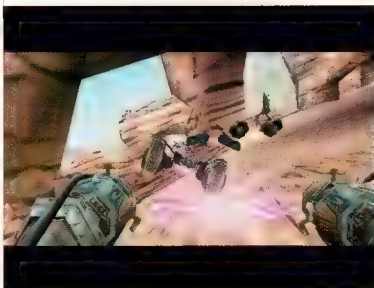
adds, "because the repulsorlift has sort of a gripping element to it. Certain vehicles have weaker repulsorlift generators so they fly around corners really wide, while others are really grippy and tight. There's a lot of vehicles. They all look very different from each other, so we want them to feel different from each other."

To get the right feel for these unusual craft, Johnston spent a lot of time experimenting with the game's physics models—and even got his two big dogs into the act. "I put a harness on both of them and let them pull me on my skateboard," he tells us.

"We rode around the neighborhood, and that gave me an idea on how the pod should swing back and forth behind its dual engines."

In the end, the game's Pods handle identically to those created just a few miles away in ILM's studios. "Early on, we had good communication with the head honchos ILM before they got swamped," Knoles says. "They were really excited to see our game and what we were doing, because they hadn't solved the physics problems either. After all, they just don't animate these things; they have to deal with the physics, too, or the pods won't look right in the film. And it was funny, when we first showed them the game and they showed us the first few shots from the race sequence, it was amazing how similar we were all working. Their pods act just like ours."

And that's really the overall goal of the Racer team—to make a game that looks and feels exactly like *Episode I's* pod racing sequence. That meant Racer had to look as good as it played. "Early on there was a conscious decision





Dateline: Episode I

May 24, 1999

Star Wars: Episode I
The Phantom Menace
will hit stores for the
PlayStation and PC. Star
Wars: Episode I Racer
will be released for the
Nintendo 64, PC and
Macintosh. Players will
squeeze in quick games
between visits to the
gigaplex to see *Episode
I* for the 20th time.

things in the movie and they're mind-blowing."

Such fancy visuals don't come without a price, though, and in Racer's case, the multiplayer mode took a bit of a hit. The game only supports two-player split-screen racing instead of four players. "Because of the complexity of our vehicles," Knoles explains, "a four-player mode would force us to cut down the overall level of detail to a point where you'd be flying kites through an extremely foggy environment. While it'd be cool to put four-player on the box, I wouldn't sacrifice the game to make it happen." Two players can race on any tracks and use any pods that have been opened in the one-player game.

Right, so we know Racer packs amazingly detailed pods and moves at blazing speeds, but does it live up to the stellar sound-effect standards set by *Rogue Squadron*? Well, what would you expect from developers who have a direct line of communication with Skywalker Sound. Trust us—the pods in the game will sound just as cool as their on-screen counterparts, and Racer supports Dolby Surround sound, too. But what the heck does a having podracer sound like?

"The sounds are in the same vein as X-Wing, TIE fighter and landspeeder sounds," Knoles says. "George Lucas is always looking for people to feel familiar with the objects he's putting on the screen, so there's a lot of car sounds that found their way into the podrace. There's a lot of that Formula One shiftbox pounding going on—pow-pow-pow-pow!"

Unlike *Rogue Squadron*,

however, Racer is much leaner in the music department. "We're not going to have a looping soundtrack throughout the game," Knoles says. "Music in racing games always annoys me, unless it's really cool like in *WipeOut*. Most of the time, the first thing I do with a racing game is switch off the music, and I think most gamers might agree." The game will blare short bursts of music for key events, such as when you enter a mysterious cavern or pass a track's Boss racer.

The Racer team is hoping to cram in a lot of speech. For starters, all the opposing racers will shout taunts in Jabba's language, Huttese. Watto will have at least 40 different things to say when you enter his shop. None of the speech will be digitized directly from the film, however. "We were able to use a couple of actors who did some of the voices in the movie," Knoles adds, "but everything they say is new, with the exception of Jabba going ooooh once in a while."

And although Knoles dealt with actors from the movie, saw update after update of the film's podrace and was generally bombarded by all things *Episode I*, he managed to avoid having the entire film spoiled for him as it was for the guys over at Big Ape. "Given my position, I was asked early on if I wanted to watch a screening in its entirety," Knoles says, "but I've consistently avoided watching more than I need to. I'll see any ILM shot of the podrace for the sake of the game, but I wanna go into that theater when the film opens like I did when I was 8 and saw the first one. I wanna go. Wow." ❖

Pod Mods

Like an intergalactic grease monkey, you can upgrade your podracer. After each race, you'll head to Watto's parts shop and spend winnings on pod enhancements in several categories, including acceleration, top speed, traction, air braking, cooling and repair. Each part category has about six levels of upgrade, so you can either focus on improving one area of performance or spread enhancements across your machine. "The better cooling part you get, the longer you can hold the boost button without overheating your engine," Knoles offers as an example. "And the maximum cooling part you buy will allow you to indefinitely hold down boost, if you can handle the race at those speeds."

As an alternative to buying new parts, you can force opponents to crash, then pick apart their wrecked pods in Watto's junkyard and snag damaged parts dirt cheap. The more enemies you wreck, the more junk parts you'll find. Damaged parts don't boost performance nearly as much as new stuff, but that's where Watto's pit droids come in. Not only do these

expensive droids fix your pod between races, they also take your junkyard parts and make them as good as new. "The more pit droids

you buy," says Knoles, "the more of those customized parts you can get fixed. So you can buy a bunch of crappy parts and they'll get fixed really quick and be good parts."

In the end, you're gonna need a well-balanced supermachine to beat Sebulba, whose pod packs the best of everything—even nasty secret weapons. "If you won all the races and bought all the best parts," Knoles says, "by the time you face Sebulba, it's gonna be pretty close."





Who you
callin'
a pussy?



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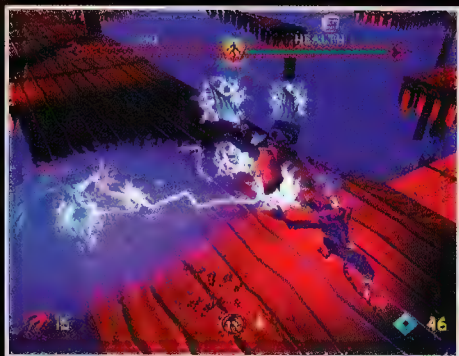
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Wrath of the Tiger

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www.activision.com

Peripheral Reviews

Shock Hammer

by: Thrustmaster
for: PlayStation
price: \$29.99

7.0

This Dual Shock pad should be a sure winner with fans of the Saturn Analog controller. Design influences aside, our main problems are the awkward placement and closeness of the shoulder buttons, and the location of the Start and Select buttons. Overall, it has a solid feel and an above-average look.

www.thrustmaster.com



MC Sports Pad

by: Mad Catz
for: Nintendo 64
price: \$19.99

7.5

The MC Sports Pad feels great for the most part. Like some other Mad Catz products, it has a sweet, grippy coating underneath. We also like the placement/spacing of the A, B and C buttons. Although, some of the buttons themselves feel a little shotty.

www.madcatz.com



The analog stick is just too tight.



StingRay 64

by: Thrustmaster
for: Nintendo 64
price: \$29.99

8.0

Like the ShockHammer, the StingRay has a sweet-looking design. And really, the only thing that bugs us about this pad is its tight analog stick.

www.thrustmaster.com

These shoulder buttons don't feel right--maybe they shouldn't be so close together.

Dual Analog Controller

by: MadCatz
for: PlayStation
price: \$19.99

7.0

This Dual Shock-compatible pad grew on us—its intense rumble and solid feel works quite well. We especially like the rubberized coating on its underbelly. Still, its design is pretty standard otherwise, and the start button is placed awkwardly.

www.madcatz.com



The HandyPak is cool in a transformer sort of way—but it's really clunky.

Memory Rocker Pak +

by: NAKI
for: Nintendo 64
price: \$16.99

On one hand you have a memory/rumble pak that's slightly unstable when reading and writing saves. In addition, it doesn't fit perfectly into the N64 pad. On the other hand, it rumbles without batteries—and does so really well. For the price, it's worth it. They come in a variety of colors.

www.nakiusa.com



6.5

The lights under the magnifier create a nasty glare on the GBC screen.

HandyPak Color

by: InterAct
for: Game Boy Color
price: \$19.99

Now this one isn't practical in the least. Look at the thing—it's huge. Well, it is cool how the Pak can collapse onto itself to become somewhat smaller—kind of like a Game Boy Transformer. Still, the HandyPak just isn't that smart of an add-on for a portable system seeing how big it can get.

www.interact-acc.com

3.5

Color Protector

by: InterAct
for: Game Boy Color
price: \$6.99

9.0

The Protector is one of the most practical GBC items we've ever seen. This rubbery sleeve protects the edges and screen of your GBC from bumps and falls. It fits onto the unit perfectly and comes with a nylon strap. Plus, it's licensed.

www.interact-acc.com

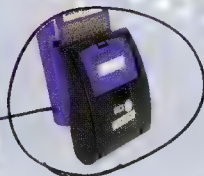
PowerPak Color

by: InterAct
for: Game Boy Color
price: \$19.99

Like the protector, this GBC add-on is quite practical. It'll save you tons of money in the long run, it has this cool LCD that shows you how much battery life is left and has a slot in the back of it for your GBC's battery cover to snap into. Plus, it's not all that bulky.

www.interact-acc.com

8.0





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RACING

Review Crew

EXCELLENT

10

9
8
7
6

AVERAGE

5

4
3
2

CRAP

1



Platinum Awards go to games that get four 10's, the best possible review a game can get.



Gold Awards go to games whose average score equals 9.0 or higher.



Games that average at least an 8.0 receive Silver Awards.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

EGM rates games based on how they compare with other titles on the same system. The highest score we'll give a game is a 10. When a game receives a 10, you can rest assured it's one of the best games ever made—a revolutionary title that truly stands above everything else in its genre for its time. At the other end of the spectrum sits the lowest score a game can receive: a 0.0. This is the kind of game you want to avoid at all costs. It's pure crap, as our scale (above) explains.

In the middle lies the average grade, 5.0. We repeat: 5.0 IS AN AVERAGE GRADE. Simple, ain't it?

Current Favorites

Hydro Thunder (Arcade)
Gex 3: Deep Cover Gecko
Goemon's Great Adventure
Final Fantasy VIII.

Favorite Genres:
RPGs, Action

Crispin Boyer



Amidst all the crap games (and there were a lot of 'em) that buried him this month, Crispin found a few rays of hope. First, the PlayStation 2 specs have him dreaming of future Final Fantasy and Tekken experiences so real they defy description. And then there's *Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace*, the movie to end all movies. Yes, Crispin, there is light at the end of the tunnel.



John Davison

John has an inflatable sofa in his office. It's comfy and has plenty of give in all the right places (it also has a leopard print cover on it, but let's ignore that for now), but the fundamental thing is that it's inflatable. So when John was shouting "stupid, crappy, boring, muth+*****" at Rampage 2 while slamming the joypad into the sofa... you can imagine the consequences. It sounded a bit like a fart...only it lasted longer.

Current Favorites

Power Stone
Beetle Adventure Racing
Sega Rally 2
Crazy Taxi (Arcade)

Favorite Genres:
Action, Adventure



Dean Hager

As the fresh crop of baseball titles begin to crowd Dean's desk, thoughts of sunny summer days spent at Wrigley Field begin to cloud his mind. "All-Star Baseball 2000 may be mighty realistic and fun but it can't hold a candle to the real thing," he says. Judging by the amount of empty beer cups and peanut bags left in his cubicle you'd think it came pretty close, but nonetheless he's probably right.



Current Favorites

NFS: High Stakes
All-Star Baseball 2000
Hydro Thunder (Arcade)
Sega Rally 2.

Favorite Genres:
Sports, Racing



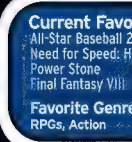
Dan Hsu

Wanna hear something strange? Shoe's not 100% excited about the PS2 machine...but he's afraid a lot of developers will now write off the Dreamcast and jump into Sony's all-encompassing embrace. Shoe wants Sega to stick around for the long-term. Wanna hear something else strange? Watching *Episode 1* trailers makes Shoe teary-eyed.

Current Favorites

Hydro Thunder (Arcade)
Puyo Puyo 4
Lode Runner 3-D
All-Star Baseball 2000

Favorite Genres:
Strategy, Puzzle



John Ricciardi

All this Star Wars craziness has John running scared. What if he somehow stumbles upon an important piece of the plot before the movie hits? He'd be crushed! Knowing this, John has locked himself away from society. Not only is he completely ignoring everything Crispin and Johnny England say (they yap about the flick daily), he's also shut down his Net connection. Talk about dedication...



Current Favorites

All-Star Baseball 2000
Play Speed: HS
Power Stone
Final Fantasy VIII

Favorite Genres:
RPGs, Action



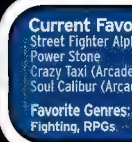
Shawn Smith

Shawn has PlayStation 2 on the brain. That's all he talks and thinks about, for crying out loud! He's especially excited about Sony's upcoming system from a technological standpoint. The PlayStation 2 truly is a symbol of what's to come since it integrates many aspects of computer and home audio/video technology. And since Shawn is the Consumer Hardware Editor for EGM, this pleases him to no end.

Current Favorites

Street Sk8er
NFS: High Stakes
Gex 3: Deep Cover Gecko
Hydro Thunder (Arcade)

Favorite Genres:
Action, Adventure



Sushi-X

Sushi's been in and out all month. We've hardly seen the guy! In the short time he was here, he kept babbling on about Soul Calibur and how we'd all be playing it at home a lot sooner than he think. Could he be talking about the rumored DC version? Hmm...in other news, Sushi had a chance to try out Crazy Taxi recently in Japan. He says it's one of the coolest arcade games he's played. High praise, indeed.

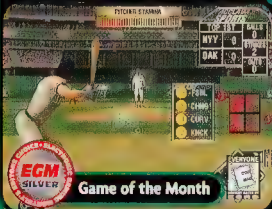


Current Favorites

Street Fighter Alpha 3
Power Stone
Crazy Taxi (Arcade)
Soul Calibur (Arcade)

Favorite Genres:
Fighting, RPGs

ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2000



Game of the Month

Publisher: Acclaim

Developer: Iguana

Featured In: EGM #117

All-Star Baseball 2000 is a perfect example of how a sequel should be done. Iguana didn't go and make any drastic changes to ASB '99's impressive game engine. Instead, they merely tweaked the crap out of it and added a bunch of cool features to make it an even more well-rounded game than before. Let me tell you, they did an amazing job. All-Star Baseball 2000 is a hardcore baseball fan's dream. The graphics and animation are outstanding (at first glance, a friend of mine thought I was playing a Dreamcast game—no joke), and the gameplay is spot-on. What impresses me the most is that the game is really user-friendly. There are a ton of entirely optional features that real baseball fans will love (3D Batting being the most innovative and fun of the bunch) that novice players can choose to ignore if they so desire. This makes for a game that's instantly playable for non-fans of the sport (like Crispin, for example), while keeping rabid fans (like myself) totally satisfied. Many of the problems from ASB '99 have been fixed (the batting interface is much more precise, baserunning isn't as much of a chore, etc.), and the AI is very, very good. GM options are more in-depth this year too, with an improved draft and the ability to make multiple-player trades. The commentary is kinda weak, but it's a small gripe.

John R

While ASB 2000 doesn't play much different from '99, it's even prettier (if you can believe it), and faster overall. New animations and other "nuance" extras have fattened ASB's realistic punch. For sheer graphical beauty it's unrivaled. I wish it was a bit faster with more authentic sounds, but I can deal. The same cursor-style batting interface is back but I swear it's harder! You have to be quick to consistently hit well. Great game.

Dean

The various improvements Acclaim and Iguana added to this year's ASB have refined it into being the best baseball game on the system by far. Everything is impressive, from the new 3D batting to pitch location guessing and so on. It all leads to a very thorough game that can be as in-depth and strategic as you'd like, while still being intuitive enough for rookies to enjoy. And boy, does the game rock in the graphics department!

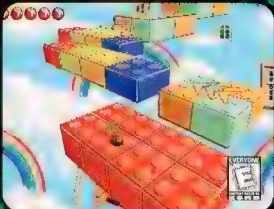
Dan

I'm no hardcore fan of sports games, but I like to take them in now and again, which is exactly why All-Star Baseball 2000 appeals to me so much. It's easy to get into, has a very intuitive control scheme and its graphics and animation are simply outstanding. I was able to jump right into it quickly without having to worry at all about stats or sim details. But if you are into stats and realism, ASB has plenty to offer in that arena, too.

Shawn

VISUALS	SOUND	INGENUITY	REPLAY
10	7	8	9

CHAMELEON TWIST 2



Publisher: Sunsoft

Developer: Japan System Supply

Featured In: N/A

In the same way Goemon has a bunch of weird enemies and silly story line tidbits that make you laugh, Chameleon Twist 2 features loads of strange enemies and weird levels that leave you emotionless. I played level after level without feeling one bit of anything. Well, actually I did feel something—anxiety when I died and realized I had to play through most of a level again, and uneasiness when I walked anywhere near a platform or ledge. This uneasiness is thanks to awkward control when walking around and using your tongue. For example, I am close to an edge—yikes! I automatically feel like I might fall off. I think it's a depth thing. It's too hard to tell where you are in the 2 plane. In addition, the whole sticky tongue swinging thing just doesn't work for me. After 20 times of trying to make my way across a chasm by swinging from pole to pole with my chameleon tongue, I realized it should be much easier to do. And from a gameplay sense, the game is way too easy. At least, if there was some challenge beyond the game, the trouble with the control would be somewhat rewarding—but then that's not a very good way to look at things. At least the graphics are better than the original, and the characters actually look like a chameleon's. Wow...stunning good points, eh?

Shawn

Like the original, Chameleon Twist 2 is fairly short and geared more toward kids. It does look better, with bright, colorful levels and some imaginative enemy oddballs (yes, those are cheeseburgers attacking your lizard). You'll come across a few fun minigames, too, but nothing to make CT2 more than a week-end diversion. Bosses are lame and too easy. The entire game is too easy, except for some platform bits and the final level.

Crispin

Believe it or not, I actually enjoyed the first Chameleon Twist. Yeah, it was short and it had a corny premise, but it was fun to play and it had a fair amount of technique. Unfortunately, CT2 is no longer than the first game (took me four hours to beat), and the level designs and bosses are even simpler this time around. They cut out the AP mode, too. Kids may get a kick out of it, but even still I'd recommend a rental at best.

John R

The graphics may be OK, but there are some seriously dodgy elements to the gameplay in CT2. The whole sticky tongue thing is a nice idea, but it isn't backed up with any particularly enjoyable gameplay. In places it's difficult to judge where things are within the 3D environments, and the "puzzles" that are some obviously thought were clever are just annoying. Poking yourself with a fork is more fun...and it'll last longer.

John D

VISUALS	SOUND	INGENUITY	REPLAY
6	5	3	3

FIGHTING FORCE 64



Publisher: Crave Entertainment

Developer: Eidos/Core Design

Featured In: EGM #109

It's not like the PlayStation version wasn't crap enough. It may have sold 400k copies...but that was because of Tomb Raider II demo as much as anything. Why would you want a bad conversion of a bad PS game? The graphics are awful—they're slow, badly animated, appallingly drawn and topped off with some spectacularly awful effects. The fighting engine is sub-Final Fight in quality...I had more fun fighting alongside Chop Chop in PaRappa the Rapper than I did here. The appeal of the "gimmick" that allows you to pick stuff up and use it as a weapon soon wears off, and you find yourself just wanting to tear the cart out of the system and hurl it against the wall. The three different characters were far from endearing in the original incarnation...and still have no appeal whatsoever. You want more? The backdrops look bad, the story line is laughably clichéd, the camera system sucks like an over-powered vacuum cleaner, the bad guys are dumb, the bosses look like crap and absolutely no effort has been made to take advantage of the N64. This is terrible. It's so bad, in places it's just embarrassing. I would rather be locked in a room and forced to listen to Britney Spears than play this. A lazy port of a game originally touted simply as being "from the creators of Tomb Raider." Yuck.

John D

I remember when I really enjoyed playing games like this—but that was like seven years ago. The PS version wowed me not too long ago but times have changed, even though this version is essentially the same. I just want more from a game now—not just the same old punching and kicking over and over again. If FF64 had a truly inventive spin on the normal Final Fight-style of gameplay, then maybe I'd be worth buying.

Shawn

What we have here is a straight port of a game that was nothing special to begin with. A few levels are interesting, and your ability to use nearly anything as a weapon is still a cool idea, but the gameplay is so dull you're ready to quit after a few stages. You just fight waves of the same enemies over and over while mashing the same buttons. Two-player mode is sluggish; it sometimes feels like you're fighting underwater.

Crispin

Fighting Force on the PlayStation brought back memories of the 16-Bit Streets of Rage. We weren't sure what the story was, but it was a damned good excuse for some ultra-violence in a seedy urban locale. Fighting Force 64 is almost identical to its PlayStation counterpart, except the textures look a little better. Still, the game's glaring lack of aesthetic style and lethargic controls make this a most tedious 64-bit experience.

Sushi

VISUALS	SOUND	INGENUITY	REPLAY
5	4	3	3

Number Of Players: 1-4

Best Feature: Amazing Depth, Great Graphics

Worst Feature: 30-50 Commentary

www.acclaim.net

Number Of Players: 1

Best Feature: Nice Graphics

Worst Feature: Mindless Gameplay

www.sunsoft-games.com

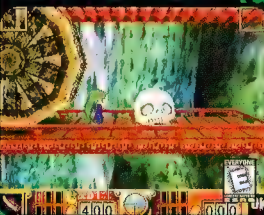
Number Of Players: 1-2

Best Feature: It Doesn't Have One

Worst Feature: The Fact That It Exists

www.cravegames.com

GOEMON'S GREAT ADVENTURE



Publisher: Konami
Developer: KCE Osaka
Featured In: EGM #118

Number Of Players: 1-2

Best Feature: Two-Player Co-op Mode

Worst Feature: Cheap Instant Deaths

www.konami.com

This game earns instant brownie points for offering something I crave—a cooperative multiplayer mode. And two players can do more than just battle through the stages side by side. They can even piggyback on each other to wild souped-up attacks. One player controls walking and jumping, while the other attacks baddies. It's an odd way to play and it takes some getting used to, but it's fun. Yet even as a one-player game, GGA has a lot going for it. Its side-scrolling stages—and there are a lot of them—pack old-school charm. You will run into some cheap bits, such as platforms that drop you onto spikes without warning. And the foreground graphics can get in the way sometimes. But otherwise the levels deliver a good balance between twitch gameplay and puzzle solving (later levels when you switching between characters and using their unique abilities to pass certain obstacles). The robot boss battles are cool, too, but then you already knew that if you played Mystical Ninja. Only the town-exploration portions of the game drag, since you pretty much need to talk to every yokel to find all the miniquests. GGA is also crammed with the odd humor that defines the Goemon series. Why all the muscly men? The ghost of James Dean? It's funny, sure, but what the hell does it mean?

Crispin

Yes! If you're a fan of old-school side-scrolling platformers (who isn't?), you HAVE to check this game out. It's great! Not only does GGA feature two-player simultaneous play, but it's got great level designs, challenging (and interesting) bosses and a long quest. It's like the game came into the future from 1989 or something. If you've been longing for a "true" platformer with some real meat (forget all this 3D crap), you *must* check out GGA. **John R**

GGA is a goofy game with strange enemies and bosses, and a whacked-out story line—and that's exactly why I like it. Sure, there are a couple of areas where the camera gets screwed up, making it hard to judge when you're going to get hit by an enemy and when to jump. But overall, GGA is highly addictive, and offers plenty of interesting gameplay elements and puzzles. I really enjoy the two-player mode as well. It's a fun one. **Shawn**

We all should be pretty thankful we're still getting traditional side-scrolling games—magical titles like this one are few and far between. Goemon's Great Adventure is not only packed with very old-school-style gameplay, but it's sprinkled with innovative bits as well, like the town parts and the giant robot battles. Just be warned: This game is very Japanese. The mainstream video game may not be too thrilled with it. **Dan**

VISUALS 8 SOUND 7 INGENUITY 7 REPLAY 6

LODE RUNNER 3-D



Publisher: Infogrames
Developer: Big Bang Software
Featured In: EGM #113

Number Of Players: 1

Best Feature: Extremely Clever Puzzle Designs

Worst Feature: Graphics

www.infogrames.com

If you're a fan of the classic Lode Runner games like I am, you may be a little frightened by the "3D" in Lode Runner 3-D. Don't be. I'm happy to report that this isn't a free-roaming, classic gameplay-destroying, three-dimensional update that has forgotten its roots. Although the worlds are in 3D, the game still plays on rails, so you can only move in two directions at a time (thank God for that!). Does this new format work well with the addicting Lode Runner formula? For the most part, yes. That's mostly due to the absolutely brilliant puzzle designs of Big Bang Software. Each of the well-over 100 stages is well-made, and require plenty of thought, a lot of careful planning and even some quick reflexes to get through. And just when you think you've gotten the hang of Lode Runner 3-D, it hits you with new gameplay elements and even tougher puzzles. (Yes, this game can get very, very frustrating at times.) The solution to a stage may often seem unattainable, but this game is so well designed, you can't help but keep trying and trying (because you know victory is only a few attempts away). Lode Runner 3-D is extremely addicting with plenty of variety to keep you going for days. If you can look past the grainy graphics, give it a shot. You may find yourself seriously hooked. **Dan**

Like Asteroids on the PlayStation, Lode Runner 3-D is a proper update of an old-school classic. Not only does the game feature upgrades both graphically and in the gameplay area, but it retains the incredible playability of the original as well. You can tell some real thought was put behind this game—it's not just some half-rate title someone slapped together. Besides, who can resist a good puzzle game? Not me. **Shawn**

Does the 3D curse strike again? Thankfully, no. This 3D incarnation of Lode Runner is far removed from the original but still manages to be entertaining to play. The level of challenge spans from amazingly simple to mind-numbingly difficult. Luckily you have a lot of lives to work with. The simple controls are complemented by competent and creative level design. Overall, it does what it's supposed to do—it keeps you playing. **Dean**

For a puzzle game to be truly great, it needs not only long-term replay value, but a good learning curve as well. Lode Runner 3-D delivers big-time on both counts, with more than 100 extremely well-designed levels that get increasingly tougher as you progress, not to mention the same feverishly addictive gameplay that made the original game such a cult hit so many years ago. A great game to play over a long period of time. **John R**

VISUALS 6 SOUND 6 INGENUITY 8 REPLAY 8

RAMPAGE 2: UNIVERSAL TOUR



Publisher: Midway
Developer: Avalanche
Featured In: EGM #115

Number Of Players: 1-3

Best Feature: Saving The Original Characters

Worst Feature: Gets Mindless After A While

www.midway.com

Like its PlayStation cousin, the N64 version of Rampage 2 is an improvement over older Rampage titles. It still retains some of the repetitive play the series is known for (OK, maybe a good amount of that repetition after the 30th level or so), but for the most part Universal Tour is more of a true game instead of just a brainless arcade smash-up. For example, there is a wider range of monster types to choose from now—and more than once you open up the original three characters. Plus, each of the monsters has unique strengths that come through during gameplay. Some walk and climb slow but punch faster, and vice-versa. In addition to this, there are different types of weather to deal with, combo moves and more of a variety of levels than usual (once you make your way further into the game). These relatively small additions add up to make this version of Rampage stand out more so than previous versions. When you throw the addictive multi-player mode in there, you get a lot of blow-up buildings and tasty humans for your money. Overall, it's not the slickest package around but it's pretty darn good for a Rampage game. If you're into the series, it shouldn't do you wrong. If you're looking for something revolutionary though, you should definitely rent this one first. **Shawn**

Is Rampage the most boring game in the world? I'm not sure, but I can't really see why anyone would want to play this over the original. The gameplay mechanics are basically the same—thumping buildings and grabbing goodies—but it's just dull, tedious and mindlessly repetitive. I feel numb. I don't care that there have been game play tweaks and added goals. It's boring. It makes Chameleon Twist 2 look like a worthy purchase. **John D**

OK, I can only smash so many cities before I start to get bored, and I got my fill of that with the last Rampage game. Other than some cool space levels and nifty new monsters, there's really nothing here to hold my interest. It's still a much better two- and three-player game than a solo experience, and the monsters' animation is especially smooth. But the game delivers too much of the same after the first few levels. **Crispin**

I liked playing Rampage 2 for the first hour or so, but eventually the repetition got to me. Nonetheless, little kids and fans of the series (one and the same?) will be happy with this new-and-improved edition. Primary improvements include new characters, sharper visuals and a huge amount of levels (over 130). Multiplayer games are quite fun as well. As a mindless smash-then-with elementary objectives, Universal Tour is decent. **Dean**

VISUALS 6 SOUND 5 INGENUITY 3 REPLAY 5

TRIPLE PLAY 2000



Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Trey Arch
Featured In: EGM #117

While its PlayStation counterpart turned out to be an extremely solid, fun baseball game, the N64 version of Triple Play 2000 didn't fare quite as well. TP2000 seems like a rushed port of the PlayStation game that could've used another month or two of gameplay tweaking before being released. The graphics are adequate, but hardly revolutionary (they look like crap next to All-Star 2000), and much of the animation is rather choppy. The camera movements are terribly awkward and jumpy, which can make it difficult to tell what's going on in clutch situations. The game speed is actually too fast—so much so that novice players will have a hard time adjusting to hitting, and will be hard-pressed to ever field on any mode other than auto-fielding, which is a shame. The analog controls are overly sensitive, too. And if that's not enough, the AI (particularly on the bases) is unpredictable at best. You'd better take full control over your guys if you want them to behave properly. On yeah, one more thing—no draft in the N64 version (sigh). Any good things? Well, for one there's a decent amount of options and GM-like features that'll keep stat fans somewhat occupied, but then again, they can get all that and more in the PS version, and it's a better-playing game to boot. Bottom line: a rental at best.

John R

TP 2000 tries to fuse arcade and sim play styles together. Sadly, it's a poor mix. Not only is it a bit choppy, but the batting and pitching interfaces aren't as accurate as they should be. **Aiming pitches is unpredictable and touchy.** Hitting is a combination of timing, precision aiming and luck. The multitudes of quick-cut, TV-style views are a good idea but can be a hindrance. Bottom line—I just didn't have much fun playing this one.

Dean

It's not a terrible game overall, but **everything about Triple Play 2000 seems off the mark.** The graphics are just plain uninteresting. The fields and players are flat and unnatural, even though animation is pretty decent. The graphics even glitch for a split second when your bat hits the ball. I never really got the hang of pitching, either; it just seems too touchy. Casual fans like myself will be turned off by all these little problems.

Crispin

While I'm happy to see EA bring the Triple Play series to the N64, I'm disappointed that it's getting the same half-assed treatment. The N64 versions of NHL and NBA Live got the PlayStation version is much better than the N64 one, and to be honest, there's a much better N64 baseball game out there anyway (All-Star Baseball 2000). **The controls are too sensitive and the game speed is too fast for its own good.** A letdown.

Sushi

VISUALS 5 SOUND 6 INGENUITY 5 REPLY 6

WCW NITRO



Publisher: THQ
Developer: Inland Productions
Featured In: EGM #115

WCW Nitro is getting a lot of flak from critics, but I think for the most part, that's due to the presence of two superior products on the market: WCW/nWo Revenge and WWF War Zone. On its own, it's a fairly decent title. It has a lot of common and wrestler-specific moves to learn, so if Revenge was a bit on the simplistic side for you (because all the wrestlers share the same no-brainer control scheme), Nitro might be something you may want to fiddle with. Chances are, however, you won't fall in love with this game. **Both Revenge and War Zone have much better wrestling engines than this game.** With Nitro, it's very difficult to tell who has priority when two wrestlers clash—it feels very random and hit-and-miss. At the same time, some characters possess moves that have too high a priority and work a little too well (i.e., Goldberg's Spear). Either way, the game will have you scratching your head a lot, wondering why a move you think you executed didn't happen. Nitro is also a lightweight when it comes to features. The multiplayer modes are extremely lacking, with no cooperative play to be found. The game also bogs down with four wrestlers on the screen—it's very noticeable since the normal game is pretty fast-paced. Overall, Nitro is fairly fun, but it has a very incomplete feel to it.

Dan

If you crave a WCW game, **get WCW/nWo Revenge and avoid WCW Nitro.** If you already have Revenge and really, really want another WCW-licensed game, avoid this anyway and see what EA does with the license. Nitro is a slightly speedier port of the PlayStation game, and it's lackluster throughout. The animation's clunky, and control seems stiff (I prefer Revenge's simpler system). At least you can open a lot of wrestlers.

Crispin

Putting this title out now is a little mystifying since it's basically been around as a PS game for over a year. Compared to its better half (WCW/nWo Revenge) or WWF War Zone, Nitro seems dated. No create-a-wrestler. No weapons. **It's too limited and not a whole lot of fun to play.** I like the simplicity of moves and the overall speed, but not enough to give it a good score. Unless you're a hardcore wrestling geek, you can do better.

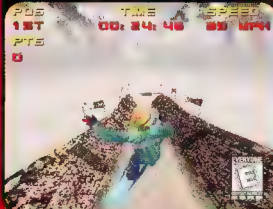
Dean

I never liked the PlayStation version of Nitro, and now, over a year later, I'm no more a fan of the N64 version. The wrestlers look a little better, the game speed is a bit faster and the roster is (obviously) updated, but none of that matters to me, because **the control still stinks and the gameplay is as boring and repetitive as can be.** If you want a good N64 wrestling game, go with WCW/nWo Revenge or WWF War Zone. This one stinks.

John R

VISUALS 5 SOUND 4 INGENUITY 3 REPLY 5

BIG AIR



Publisher: Accolade
Developer: Pitbull Syndicate
Featured In: EGM #110

Big Air won't win any awards for originality, nor will it astound you with its speed and gameplay. Sadly, it's rooted firmly in mediocrity. On top of that, it's battling closely in a very crowded year for snowboarding games. Part of the problem stems from its long development period. Much time and care was taken to include plenty of boards, clothing and interesting characters. Unfortunately those things don't add much to the package. **The time would've been better spent tweaking gameplay or finding a way to increase the frame-rate.** Granted the fps isn't horrible, but it's far from being consistently fast, who holds a straight line during a race you'll pick up decent speed. But, when you deviate, it tends to really slow you down. It's similar to Test Drive 5 in that regard (they use the same engine). The tricks interface consists of old-school button combos and stick turning. It works fine but remembering what does what is a hassle, especially in the half-pipe where quick thinking is a must. Of the three variations within the game, Big Air Mode offers the most promise. Here, pulling off high-level tricks is somewhat entertaining. But that's about the extent of it. Two players could've been a lot better—it's slow and awkward. If you're a snowboarding fan, rent Big Air first. Otherwise, beware.

Dean

When not much more than a game's soundtrack impresses you, it's time to move on to something else. This is the case with Big Air. The graphics are all right, the frame-rate is decent in 3P games and there are a healthy number of racers, boards and courses to choose from. But then, you **actually race and realize how boring the game is.** The courses are short and unimaginative. Plus, the two-player mode is REALLY choppy.

Shawn

Showing its Test Drive 5 roots in some pretty bizarre ways, it has to be said that Big Air is yet another one of "those" snowboarding games. It's no secret that I'm sick of the lack of originality in this genre, and Pitbull's game does nothing to tickle my fancy. The courses are short and boring, the two-player mode sucks big-time, and the sense of speed is down-right sloth-like. I'm not into the button combo trick thing either. Too fiddly.

John D

It's becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish one snowboarding game from another. Despite its brand-name licensing and a mostly excellent soundtrack, **Big Air still gets lumped into the bunch for its generic game physics and controls.** You can 1080* and Lien Air until the cows come home but it won't make Big Air's gameplay any less stale. But hey, if snowboard games are your thing, why not play one with a cool soundtrack?

Sushi

VISUALS 5 SOUND 7 INGENUITY 4 REPLY 4

Number Of Players: 1-2

Best Feature: Lots Of Options, Features

Worst Feature: Touchy Controls, Awkward Cameras

www.esports.com

Number Of Players: 1-4

Best Feature: Lots Of Moves

Worst Feature: Mediocre Game Engine

www.thq.com

Number Of Players: 1-2

Best Feature: Big Air Mode

Worst Feature: Chippy Two-Player Mode

www.accolade.com

BOMBERMAN FANTASY RACE



Publisher: Atlus
Developer: Hudson
Featured In: EGM #115

Number Of Players: 1-2

Best Feature: Racing Requires Some Strategy

Worst Feature: Poor Two-Player Mode

Bomberman Fantasy Race isn't the cheap Mario Kart rip-off everyone expected it to be. What I found here is a surprisingly interesting racing game that has a lot more depth than most games of its type. BFR offers several mounts to choose from, each with different characteristics, and having to decide which one to buy for which track gives this game a nice hook (and replay value, to boot). Even better, this game requires more strategy than the average cartoony action-racing game. You'll have to learn how to throw bombs skillfully, because they can either give you a boost of speed or hinder your opponents (and if you're not careful, they can even hinder you). You'll also have to learn how to take advantage of shortcuts and how to bounce off walls, in order to take light turns better. But while Bomberman Fantasy Race has some unexpected and fun in-depth gameplay, it also has its share of bad points, which is very unfortunate. The digital-only controls and the minuscule number of courses (even with their mirrored equivalent) hurt. Worst, the two-player Vs. Mode is not a lot of fun. It's rather uneventful since only the two humans race (no CPU opponents), and it's plagued with bad pop-up. Bomberman Fantasy Race is definitely worth checking out, but it definitely could've been better.

Dan

BFR is pretty cool in that it offers a distinctly "different" style of racing with some neat innovations (wall jumps, betting on 2P games, etc.). Sadly, it's plagued with various problems that hold it back from ever becoming truly enjoyable. The lack of analog control is unacceptable, and the amount of slowdown for a game with such simple graphics is absurd. Plus, it's pretty easy. Worth renting? Definitely. But that's about all. **John R**

John R

Although it superficially looks a bit Mario-Karty, beneath the cartoon visuals, BFR is actually a pretty strategic race. Managing your weapons is vitally important, as is keeping an eye on your finances to open up new tracks...which I can't decide if I like or not. Don't think I do. If you're any good at this kind of thing, you'll probably open the whole thing up in a few hours...which is a bit limp. Two-player mode is a bit crap too. **John D**

John D

Bomberman Fantasy Race is a hell of a lot of fun, and has many more gameplay options and racing techniques than you might think at first. The game's graphics aren't that impressive and neither is the music, but the one-player game has a lot of interesting aspects (like being able to upgrade your animal and buy various power-ups to use while racing). Lastly, the two-player mode is decent but suffers from unsightly pop-up. **Shawn**

Shawn

VISUALS 5 SOUND 5 INGENUITY 6 REPLAY 7

ELIMINATOR



Publisher: Psygnosis
Developer: Magenta
Featured In: EGM #114

Number Of Players: 1-2

Best Feature: Wash-Wah Guitar Soundtrack

Worst Feature: Frustrating Aiming Controls

At first glance, Eliminator looks like just the type of game we'd expect out of Psygnosis: a vehicular arena combat game set in a bleak distant future. Unfortunately, Eliminator lacks some of the qualities that made other Psygnosis titles (Wipeout, Colony Wars, G-Police) stand out among their genres. As a jailbird in a highly fortified prison, your goal is to survive endless waves of mechanized death. For all intensive purposes, this is Smash T.V. without the sense of humor. The stages are set up so that you have to "eliminate" all enemy opposition before a gate leading to the next area will open. The challenge, of course, is to blow through these areas under a certain amount of time. Not a bad premise, but the controls in Eliminator leave quite a bit to be desired. The mindless action and the droil level design wouldn't bother me so much if aiming vertically was more intuitive. This game needs an option to turn on auto-aiming (on the Y-axis). Even in 2P deathmatches, the action inevitably degenerates into strafing circle fights with little strategy except to "grab the biggest gun." Whatever happened to levels streamlined for two-player deathmatch? There's very little here to recommend, except perhaps the funky soundtrack by ex-Stone Roses member Aziz Ibrahim. Groovy stuff!

Sushi

"Blah" best describes my feelings about Eliminator. It's vaguely enjoyable, but mostly repetitive and annoying—certainly nothing that merits a purchase. It has some cool levels and enemies, and a decent concept but that's about it. On the two-player front, Eliminator is no better. There's nothing to this mode—you just go around in different arenas killing each other. If Eliminator came out two years ago, it might've been decent. **Shawn**

Shawn

Eliminator is about as generic as action games get. The plot is pure cliché (you fight for your life on a futuristic game show). The maze-like levels are monotonous, despite a few crude puzzles. Two-player deathmatch is equally dull and seemingly just an excuse to note a multiplayer mode on the jewel case. Yes, Eliminator looks nice (especially the Bosses), and you get some nifty bonus racing levels, but it's just too mindless. **Crispin**

Crispin

This very dull, very repetitive action-arcade game is a technology showcase more than anything...and it doesn't even do that as well as it should have. Besides a very nice frame rate, Eliminator has nothing on similar, competing titles, like the older Tunnel B-1 from Acclaim (which looks better and is much more fun to play). Since the action is so generic and straightforward, even a 2P mode doesn't really help matters any. **Dan**

Dan

VISUALS 6 SOUND 6 INGENUITY 4 REPLAY 3

GEX 3: DEEP COVER GECKO



Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Crystal Dynamics
Featured In: EGM #115

Number Of Players: 1

Best Feature: Tons Of Secrets And Objectives

Worst Feature: Camera Still A Pain

Even moreso than Gex 2, this game dumps tons of objectives, collectibles and secrets on you. You'll want to perfect every level. You'll want to track down every secret. This thing will keep you busy forever. The gameplay is bent tweaked and cranked up a notch. Gex dons loads of new outfits, many of which give him cool abilities this time around. Most—such as the superhero, Dracula and mech costumes—let Gex glide, which opens new puzzle possibilities (although some puzzle are a bit obscure). The hub worlds give you more to do now, and the secret and bonus stages have been given a new treatment. You'll uncover lots of minigames and vehicles, including a tank, a kangaroo and a crocodile. Find enough stuff and you'll earn access to a cheat-packed vault. As in Gex 2, the levels are imaginative and well-designed. I especially like the anime stage, although the superhero level is frustratingly tough.

Most of the difficult sections in the game can be attributed to the camera system, which still suffers from its share of problems. I guess the big question here is whether Gex gets it on with his new non-lizard coxer, Baywatch's Marlice Andra. Beat the game yourself to find out. All we'll say is Gex is one lucky lizard, and Marlice may be breaking some laws of nature.

Crispin

Gex's humor is getting a bit old. The controls in Gex 3 aren't what they should be. The camera can make you yank your hair out in frustration. But I still like the game. Why? The level designs, like in the last Gex, are great. This isn't your standard 3D platform fare—the wide variety of non-traditional stages keeps things interesting. The worlds are also different enough from Gex 2's to make this sequel worth checking out for Gex fans. **Dan**

Dan

If you've played Enter the Gecko, you pretty much know what to expect from Deep Cover Gecko. The two games look and feel virtually identical, though the stage designs are more varied and interesting this time, and the new FMV clips add to the game's "visual" appeal (wink, wink). The camera can be extremely frustrating at times, and the analog control doesn't feel very "analog," but otherwise, Gex 3 is definitely a worthy sequel. **John R**

John R

Gex 3 will keep you playing for hours and hours finding all of its items and obscure secrets. And for the most part, you'll enjoy the experience. The main thing that stands out as a problem is the camera. Granted, it's fairly controllable, but it still gets screwy at times. Still, the game has a ton of imaginatively themed levels, excellent graphics and a lot of good, witty humor—stuff that's truly funny...and not annoying. **Shawn**

Shawn

VISUALS 8 SOUND 7 INGENUITY 6 REPLAY 7

www.atlus.com

www.psygnosis.com

www.eidos.com

NBA IN THE ZONE '99



Publisher: Konami
Developer: KCE Tokyo
Featured In: EGM #116

Number Of Players: 1-8

Best Feature: Great Animation

Worst Feature: Sloppy AI

www.konami.com

In general, basketball games are steadily advancing by way of improved animation, "TV-style" camerawork and comprehensive special moves. NBA in the Zone '99 is no exception, but unfortunately the game's **innovative stuff is partially spoiled by maladjusted AI.** It's obvious the lower levels are made easy by cheap, dummed-down AI. Case in point: a computer player will stand under an open basket and pass the ball out rather than take the easy hoop. Transversely, they'll leave that area wide open for the human player. On the bright side, cranking up the difficulty to Hard or Very Hard seems to cure the bone-head stuff. Here steals are rampant and most of the money plays are non-existent. Overall the title's saving grace is its above-average animation and special moves. They include great block, spin and steal maneuvers. Little things mean a lot. For example, rather than simply stopping when a collision occurs, the ball-handler will lose balance and stumble backward. Also nice is a lunging steal move which often results in a fast break jam situation (fom), 2P works well, especially if you like stealing and blocking shots. I give the game points for animation and decent playability, but it's still not in the same league as NBA Live 99. It is, however, a big improvement over last year's ITZ. **Dean**

ITZ '99 offers gorgeous graphics, impressive animation and fast-paced, fun gameplay. It's also the only b-ball game to offer "post-lock-out" rosters and an accurate 50-game shortened schedule. **The AI is a little quirky** (even on Very Hard, the CPU isn't all that bright), which detracts from solo play a bit, but 2P games are still fun. The 3-Point Shootout and Dunk Contest modes are entertaining as well. Definitely worth checking out. **John R**

This is one of the best PS basketball games I've played. For the casual sports video gamer like myself, ITZ '99 has everything I'd want: fun three-point and dunk contests, fantastic graphics (the animations are incredibly lifelike with a lot of attention paid to the little details), solid controls and plenty of options. The AI is not the brightest, but overall, this is still a great game. This is a **big improvement over last year's edition.** **Dan**

Despite the obvious improvements made to this year's In the Zone, I still prefer NBA Live 99. The more casual basketball fan will likely enjoy ITZ for its flashy graphics and monster dunks, but those of us who are in it for the long haul will be **destroying CPU opponents by the 10th game of the season.** The AI just isn't smart enough for my tastes. Still, it's a solid game, and it at least has the correct rosters. Not bad, but not the best. **Sushi**

QUALITY	FOUNDED	INGENUITY	REPUTATION
8	7	6	7

NEED FOR SPEED: HIGH STAKES



Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: EA Canada
Featured In: EGM #116

Number Of Players: 1-2

Best Feature: Hot Pursuit Mode

Worst Feature: Confusing Level Progression

www.ea.com

Even though High Stakes is a tad slower than last year's NFS offering, its graphics are much more detailed. In fact, the whole game—from the interface screens all the way to the actual races—has a very slick and realistic look to it (thanks to an array of sweet-looking effects). Visuals aside, this game has many more winning features. First, the control of each of the cars is amazing. Jumping into a BMW Z3 Roadster has an entirely different feel compared to a Jaguar. And when you buy performance upgrades for each of these cars in the Tournament Mode, the handling changes again—you can feel it in the control. Next, we have the way the gameplay works. In a sense, **being able to jump from one race mode to another in order to advance takes this game to a different realm than most racers.** High Stakes gets slightly confusing because of this. But being able to save, step back and play the Hot Pursuit Mode, or some of the incredible head-to-head modes for a while kind of cleanses the palette and readies you for your next Tournament attempt. It gives this racer more depth. Lastly, although it may seem like there aren't enough tracks at first, when they're flipped and mirrored, they really do play like whole new tracks. Overall, this one's definitely worth looking into—it's a solid and very challenging game. **Shawn**

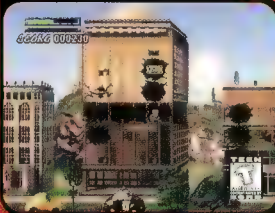
High Stakes has retained the appearance and great speed emulation of NFS III while adopting gameplay similar to Gran Turismo. It's an awesome combo! Car selection is more than adequate (Jag, Corvette, BMW, "Ghini" and more) plus they're upgradeable. Tracks are long, snake-like and designed with top speed in mind. Two-player is good but sadly, **slow-down occurs when traffic gets heavy.** It's the only lame thing about this one. **Dean**

NFS: High Stakes is a **surprisingly enjoyable racing game that excels in just about every area of play.** The tracks are large and well-designed, the controls are excellent and the game is just remarkably fun to play. 2P races are a blast, and being the cop in Hot Pursuit rules! I'm not too keen on the High Stakes Mode (losing a car like that is just...wrong), but the money aspect is very cool. NFSIII did have a faster frame-rate, though. **John R**

One of the best and oft-overlooked racing series just got better... for the most part. High Stakes is a worthy successor to EA's continually improving line of racing games. The new money system (for buying/repairing/upgrading) adds a nice dimension, as does the ability to play on the "good" side of the law, but what happened to the nice frame-rate from NFS III? Is Gran Turismo too serious for you? Don't miss NFS: High Stakes. **Dan**

QUALITY	FOUNDED	INGENUITY	REPUTATION
9	8	8	8

RAMPAGE 2: UNIVERSAL TOUR



Publisher: Midway
Developer: Avalanche
Featured In: N/A

Number Of Players: 1-3

Best Feature: Hard To Say Really

Worst Feature: Pretty Much Everything

www.midway.com

If the big deal about Rampage 2 is the fact that it's some kind of "world tour" to rescue the three monsters from the original—can someone tell me **why all of the levels look basically the same?** The game is spread across three major continents giving you vaguely Oriental, American and European-looking cities to bash...but at no point do you ever manage anything recognizable. If you could hammer at the Eiffel Tower or, I dunno, the John Hancock building, you'd get a bit of an *Independence Day* buzz from seeing something established getting the crap kicked out of it. But oh no...not here. Boring, generic buildings are the order of the day. You see stuff in some of the bonus rounds (which are also dull...involving the same gameplay mechanics as the main levels, only with tighter constrictions) which are vaguely familiar, but since when was Chicago's pride and joy, the Sears Tower, in Europe? Duh? If you think the buildings look boring, well—they're a pretty good metaphor for the gameplay, jab, jab, jab on the buttons. Crash, crash, jab on the screen. Yawn, yawn, yawn from the player. There are new combos and stuff for the combat, but at the end of the day who really cares? It's so utterly, mindlessly dull you'll pass out from brain freeze. A good cure for insomnia. **John D**

Rampage 2: UT is a pleasant surprise—it's more than just a mindless arcade game now. I played early versions of R2:UT and figured the finished product would be the same old repetitive style of game I've grown tired of. I was wrong for the most part. **It does get a bit repetitive after some time, but you can tell some real work was put into this title to ensure it lasts longer than other versions.** It's still Rampage—just cooler. **Shawn**

First, read my review of Rampage 4 for the N64. OK, ditto that for this PS version. Except for annoying load times, it's the same game. Graphically it's prettier than World Tour and there're more things to eat and destroy. Yet it's **still very narrow and repetitive in scope.** Each tour features roughly the same style buildings and enemies—more variety would've been nice. Multi-player is fun though, and kids will love it anyway. **Dean**

I really have to be in a certain mood to get into Rampage 2. This is the kind of game you break out on a lazy Saturday, when you don't want to worry about thinking too hard, when you just want to drink beer with a few buddies and break stuff. It's **mindless and repetitive and dull.** But it looks nice. Monster animation is fantastic. The FMV is hilarious. There's not enough new here to get me excited about the tired gameplay. **Crispin**

QUALITY	FOUNDED	INGENUITY	REPUTATION
6	5	3	5

RUSHDOWN



Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Canal+Multimedia
Featured In: EGM #116

Number Of Players: 1-2

Best Feature: Sensation Of Speed

Worst Feature: Two-Player Mode

www.ea.com

Outwardly Rushdown appears to be another hum-hum, extreme/gen-x game offering like so many before it—but looks can be deceiving. Rather than using a trick-based system, Rush concentrates on straight time-trials and one-on-one racing. As the title suggests, the angle is the “rush” of racing a mountain bike, snowboard or kayak down a mountain at considerable speeds (kayaking isn’t fast but it’s very realistic). Not coincidentally, the speed emulation is the best part of the game. **30-60 fps action is not out of the question.** No doubt it’s a movin’ mother with a firm handle on sharp and accurate control as well as authentic sound effects. But sadly, while single-player is killer, 2P split-screen is not good at all. Awkward viewing angles, slowdown and wacky, unpredictable controls virtually dismantle any functionality in that mode. Obstacles seem like fly-paper hanging you up at every opportunity. I got so frustrated trying to untangle myself from a grove of trees I launched my controller into the wall. Overall, as a racing fan, I really like Rushdown for its intense mountain biking and snowboarding thrills but I’m disappointed that two-player is so nasty. If you like the challenge of besting your own times, you’ll probably like the game. Of course anyone interested in two-player will be **5+*** out of luck.

Dean

Surprisingly, I like Rushdown quite a bit—even though it’s another extreme sports title. No matter—**RD’s fast frame-rate, magnificent graphics and simple gameplay concept go beyond its genre classification.** What’s most impressive is how the control is consistently good throughout all three types of play. It’s too bad the game has some minor hit detection problems, lame music and a below-average two-player split-screen mode.

Shawn

I really enjoyed Rushdown. At first I wasn’t really expecting the macho extreme sports thing to really tickle my fancy, but all three events are well-represented. The graphics aren’t particularly great, but the sense of speed you get in the snowboarding (although it’s the least fun section—there are no stunts), along with the sense of being at the mercy of nature in the kayaking and biking makes this something special.

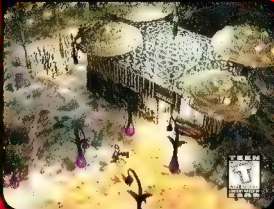
Dan

It’s ironic that the PS snowboard game with the greatest feeling of speed is actually only a third of a much greater game. **Rushdown captures the sense of recklessness involved in the three sports simulated almost perfectly.** The feel of trying to tame something as it is pulled along by the forces of nature is captured incredibly well and it’s matched by a great control system that keeps things exciting and challenging throughout.

John D

VISUALS: 8 SOUND: 6 INGENUITY: 7 REPLAY: 7

SHADOW MADNESS



Publisher: Crave Entertainment
Developer: Graveyard Studios
Featured In: EGM #113

Number Of Players: 1

Best Feature: Interesting Story

Worst Feature: Disappointing Gameplay

www.cravegames.com

Shadow Madness has two things going for it that keep it from being a complete disaster: It’s got a really good story, and a fairly decent soundtrack, too. Unfortunately, that’s about it. The game engine suffers from a horrible lack of originality (it’s like a total rip-off of FVIL, only not nearly as good in any way), as well as weak design elements. The character models throughout (enemies included) are horrendous, and the spell “effects” (I use that term loosely) and FMVs are atrocious. I hate to bag on the game so much, because I really liked the story. The lengthy quest (40+ hours) is loaded with witty, interesting dialogue and a cool plot, not to mention good character development. Being able to avoid battles is pretty cool, too. Sadly, the archaic game engine drags everything down. The battle system is totally unbalanced—you can max out half of your characters before you even get off disc 1, making most of the game a cakewalk. You’ll never need over 95% of the spells in battle, either. Shopping is a pain, since you can’t see how equipment affects your party’s stats. And there are TONS of pointless, stupid items, not to mention an inventory that’s way too small. **I only wish Crave would’ve worked more on making a decent “game” out of SM,** because they got the hard part (the story) done pat.

John R

Yes, I know graphics aren’t everything, but if you’re playing an RPG that in many ways mimics Final Fantasy VII, you at least expect it to be kinda pretty. Shadow Madness isn’t. The characters, backgrounds and FMV all look blah. It makes the game hard to get into, particularly since **the story doesn’t get good ‘til you’re about seven hours in** (but it gets very good). Despite some innovations to the battle system, combat’s a bore.

Crispin

I know what you’re all thinking. Shadow Madness looks like a blatant Final Fantasy VII rip-off. But before you condemn this ambitious RPG for what it is (or isn’t), definitely give it a try first. While combat in Shadow Madness is lacking the complexity of the Final Fantasies, **a decent script pulls the player into the whirl of its plot.** On the other hand, the poorly rendered FMV makes this game look rough and unpolished.

Dean

I’ve always felt that a good story can make or break an RPG, and in this case my feeling really shines through. Why? If not for the interesting, well-written story that accompanies Shadow Madness’ insidiously crappy game engine and god-awful character designs (wait! I see the hand-drawn “portraits”), I’d have probably given the game a 1.0. But alas, **the story is pretty good**, and for that reason, I say give it a try.

Sushi

VISUALS: 3 SOUND: 7 INGENUITY: 4 REPLAY: 2

SPORTS CAR GT



Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Westwood Pacific
Featured In: N/A

Number Of Players: 1-2

Best Feature: Decent Gameplay

Worst Feature: Somewhat Cartoonish Graphics

www.ea.com

Sports Car GT is a little dated when compared to Gran Turismo or Need For Speed: High Stakes. Chunky backgrounds and slightly cartoon-looking vehicles make it appear first-generation ish. Also, the motor sounds are pretty hideous. All the cars sound something like a mini-van. The drum-machine and synthesizer soundtrack is nothing to write home about either. OK, I’m on a roll; the follow-view is a little too long, often obscuring the oncoming track. Whew! So it looks bad on paper but let me assure you Sports Car has its strong points. **For one, it’s the only racing game with a GT1 license.** That means it’s got a load of licensed, exotic road machines like the Callaway Z and Vector M12 (to name a few). These are cars you won’t find collectively in any other racer. But more importantly than that, the gameplay is tweaked to a fine arcade-inspired point. Nailing corners with just the right amount of drift is lots of fun. If you get it right you can skate the edges at close to full speed. Other notables include a “Pink Slip” mode which lets you play for your opponent’s vehicle. Two-player racing is really decent as well. Overall it’s in the top third of PS racing games but it’s definitely not in NFS: High Stakes’ league. At best it’ll keep you hooked for a decent haul. After that you’ll probably never play it again.

Dean

On its own, Sports Car GT is probably one of the better PS racers I’ve played. The graphics are adequate (nice weather effects), the frame-rate is solid (even in 2P), and the level of challenge is high. The game speed really picks up as you progress (the GT2 and GT1 circuits are insanely fast), but on the whole **the experience just isn’t quite as fun and/or rewarding as in Gran Turismo or Need For Speed: High Stakes.** A good rental.

John R

Sports Car is a poor-man’s Gran Turismo. Yeah, it has a decent number of cars you can upgrade and tweak, and a variety of courses but there’s just not enough meat to it. Besides, the graphics are unimpressive—everything has a certain cartoonish or simple quality to it. On the good side, the head-to-head mode remains speedy, and the Pink Slip Mode is a unique way to play against someone. Still, I wouldn’t buy it.

Shawn

Steer clear of Sports Car GT if you like your racing games pretty. **This thing looks like a 74 Dodge Dart compared to NFS: High Stakes.** On the plus side, the visuals were designed with speed in mind, and things move along lightning fast in the later circuits (to the point where control gets tricky). You do get to tweak and tune your car’s parts, and you’ll face nasty weather, but SCGT just isn’t as fun as it is realistic.

Crispin

VISUALS: 5 SOUND: 5 INGENUITY: 6 REPLAY: 7

STREET SK8ER



Publisher: Electronic Arts

Developer: Micro Cabin

Featured In: EGM #116

Number Of Players: 1-2

Best Feature: Simple But Fun Gameplay

Worst Feature: Trick System Is Too Simple

Although I've grown more and more annoyed with these gen-X extreme sports games (i.e., the barrage of snowboarding games that have come out in the past year or so), Street Sk8er is extremely fun and worth looking into. Yes, SS has some "dude" dishing out in-your-face cups when you successfully complete a kick-ass stunt or smack into a tree ("C'mon! Bust out some moves!"), and it features a variety of music tracks from real ska/punk-type bands (which are quite good and fit the game well), but all in all I can handle its hipness. Other than this, the graphics are pretty sweet-looking with little or no pop-up, and the frame-rate stays very speedy. But this exterior stuff isn't really what stands out about this game. I like SS the most because it's so darned easy to get into and have fun with. I haven't been this genuinely interested in a game of this type since 1980!

Snowboarding on the N64. I would've liked more courses, but the different paths that open up in each of them add a bit more variety. Another key feature is the number of opportunities each course has for pulling off some death-defying tricks. Some games have four or five areas per track at most—SS easily has double or triple that. Overall, with its solid gameplay and all of the secrets you can open, SS is worth a purchase.

Shawn

The first level is unreasonably hard, especially for inexperienced gamers, but once you've got into the swing of things, SS is actually reasonably fun. The automatic tricks are a bit off-putting at first, but after a while you learn that it's finding where you can perform them that's important—not the actual tricks themselves. It's not EA's finest hour by any stretch, but it's an original take on the usually staid racing/boarding genre. Not bad.

John D

It's not a particularly deep game. Tricks are a cinch to pull off. There's no split-screen two-player mode. But you know what? Street Sk8er is still fun. Despite its lack of analog support, your skater controls just fine—even if turning seems a tad touchy when you're getting the hang of it. The tracks pack trick-maximizing bits that aren't so obvious your first time around. The game's a fun, brainless take on Sega's Top Skater formula.

Crispin

An alternative to the oversaturated snowboarding genre...and it's fun as well! SS is the slant is on earning points and finishing races, not memorizing frustrating button combos. Its unique "user-friendly" trick interface and speed-saturated tracks are a nice mix. The drive to conquer course after course is high. Control is swell, but would be better if the game used analog. For a simple, Xtreme-like offering SS is good fun.

Dean

www.ea.com

VISUALS 6 SOUND 7 INGENUITY 7 REPLAY 7

T.R.A.G.: MISSION OF MERCY



Publisher: Sunsoft

Developer: Sunsoft

Featured In: EGM #118

Number Of Players: 1

Best Feature: Separating Team Members

Worst Feature: Controls

Can you imagine how cool a Resident Evil-style game with a futuristic, anti-terrorist theme (instead of horror) would be? How about the same game, only you control a team of characters, who can split up (and you can switch between them, so you can play out different areas of the game)? Well, keep imagining, because while T.R.A.G. is all of those things I mentioned above, it's check-full of ugliness. For one, it's extremely easy to miss "pick-upable" objects (basically, you have to be constantly hitting the button as you inch along the walls in order to find things). Also, the puzzles are all no-brainers (in fact, the answers to the coolest puzzle, a numbers game, are posted up just a few rooms away!). All of these complaints are nothing when compared to T.R.A.G.'s worst feature: the R.E.-style controls. Turning is way too slow, making you a sitting duck for many attacks. And if you decide to use the right analog stick (where you move in the direction you point), you'll find much better controls at the cost of awkward hand placement and really messed-up, looping viewing angles (because you're moving in one direction, the camera flips, and now you're moving back toward where you just came from). I really hope for a sequel with fixed game mechanics. This is a very cool concept for a game.

Dan

Think of Resident Evil, except not at all scary. Think of dialogue that's about as bad as RE, if not worse. Finally, think of Burning Rangers, except without the fires. Put all of these elements together and you have T.R.A.G. The game's not especially bad—it's just not that good. Certain cool gameplay elements pop up now and again, but they're just not enough to hold my interest very long. I'd give it a rent, but I don't think I'd buy it.

Shawn

T.R.A.G. is a game with the right idea and the wrong implementation. The game is overly easy, from its simple puzzles (half of which are explained to you, taking all of the solving out of the phrase "puzzle solving") to its overabundance of health power-ups (the only time I died was when I wasn't paying attention to my health meter). The sluggish controls is the only thing contributing to any sort of "difficulty" this game has.

John D

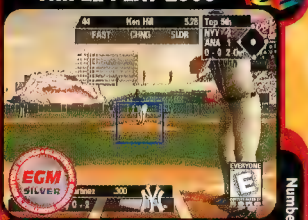
Having played Hard Edge (the Japanese version of T.R.A.G.), I was really hoping for a lot of fixes for the U.S. release. After all, the game has a great premise, but a lousy game engine. As you can tell by my score, I am rather disappointed. The silly combos make combat a drag, the puzzles are either way too easy or way too obscure and the constantly changing viewing angles are annoying. Why didn't Sunsoft fix this one up???

Sushi

www.sunsoft.com

VISUALS 8 SOUND 6 INGENUITY 7 REPLAY 3

TRIPLE PLAY 2000



Publisher: Electronic Arts

Developer: EA Canada

Featured In: EGM #116

Number Of Players: 1-2

Best Feature: Improved Frame-Rate

Worst Feature: Cheesy "Trail" That Follows Ball

Last year, EA's Triple Play '99 would've been the PS baseball game to own, had it not been for one glaring problem—the frame-rate stunk. Fortunately, this is no longer an issue in Triple Play 2000, and as a result the game is much more enjoyable to play. Feature-wise, there's not much new—the Tournament Mode has been axed (no big loss), and you can now make multiple player trades. In addition, the Home Run Derby has been replaced with a Home Run Challenge that I'm really not fond of (it's different from the way the MLB does it during the All-Star Game). Finally, you can now alter your stance at the plate (this rules). Graphically, the game looks great. Everything is a heck of a lot smoother than last year, and the player and stadium models are very nice. An option to turn off the cheesy trail that follows the ball would've been nice, but oh well. I'll live. The sounds are amazing (no surprise), and the play-by-play is superb. As far as gameplay goes, TP2000 excels big-time. The analog control is great for fielding, and batting is much more manageable this year than it was in TP99 (the animations were improved tenfold). Manual base-running can be a pain at times (you'll see what I mean), but otherwise I really have no complaints. If you're out for an enjoyable, realistic baseball game, TP2000 won't disappoint.

John R

TP 2000 is far better than '99. It's not only great-looking and innovative, but smooth and fast as well. Quick-cut cameras add flair to HRs, close calls and pickoffs. Betting a homer is accompanied by rocket sound-effects, ball-cams and wild cheering. It's very cool. The batting interface works nicely but the pitch aiming is touch-and-go. You'll need to mess with the difficulty levels a bit, too. Even so, it's the best PS baseball game to date.

Dean

I'm not a big fan of console baseball games, but I still found a lot to like in Triple Play 2000. The graphics are fast and well animated, although they lack detail. And although control isn't as intuitive as in other baseball titles, I still learned the ropes with a minimum of fuss. In the right mode, this game has a great arcade feel that will appeal to casual fans of the sport. It packs enough realism for stat-spouting fanatics, too.

Crispin

Finally, baseball games are coming of age! Triple Play 2000 is an all-around better game than any of last year's PlayStation baseball games. The graphics are sharp and smooth (no more choppy frame-rate), and the gameplay is very polished. Some of the little tunes they play when batters come to the plate are incredibly lame, and the ball trail is rather corny, but these fortunately don't detract from gameplay. A real solid effort.

Sushi

www.easports.com

VISUALS 8 SOUND 9 INGENUITY 8 REPLAY 9

Reader Reviews

PlayStation
Nintendo 64

Game Boy

Here's your chance to vent your views on recently released games. If you have something you think needs to be said about either one of our reviews or a game you've recently bought, e-mail us your thoughts at review.crow@zd.com or write to us at the following address: EGM Reader Reviews, P.O. Box 3338, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3338

Mario Party

What we said:

"Mario Party is an extremely well-designed party game....This cart is loaded with well-designed mini-games that are fun and easy to pick up....Play Mario Party with friends and you'll never want to play it alone again."

How we rated it:

8.5 8.5 8.5 9

What you said:

I just got Mario Party and what a disappointment it is! Not only does this game suck with one player, but it's really not much better on multiplayer! Some of the minigames are fun, but overall it's pretty stupid. The stupidest part of the game is the fact that you have to BUY the minigames! What the hell is up with that?

Cyborg #17
juananagou13@hotmail.com

My 5-year-old cousin enjoys this game a lot more than I do. I am 27 years old and I am constantly disappointed at how Nintendo is aiming all of their games to little kids. Who wants to control overweight plumbers, an ugly princess, an overgrown lizard, and other kiddie characters in a game with such boring, easy minigames? I would rather see a deathmatch-type game with these characters so I could kill Mario!

Jürgen Erlandsson
bwabb@hotmail.com

Castlevania

What we said:

"Castlevania reveals itself to be an atmospheric and superbly designed adventure that seems to increase in quality the further you progress...an overall great game."

How we rated it:

9.0 9.0 8.0 9.0

What you said:

I love Castlevania games. They are the coolest games without a doubt. And this game is no exception! Smooth animations, hi-res videos, multiple characters and a variety of cool enemies are what make this game cool. I think 3D is definitely an improvement on 2D.

Michael Harper
dumbdumb27@hotmail.com

As a Castlevania fan, I expected the worst from this game. While it isn't as good as Symphony of the Night or the TurboDuo Dracula X, Castlevania 64 has excellent sound and music, good stories for both characters, a good frame-rate and cool endings. Unfortunately the graphics are blurry and grainy, but if you give the game a chance, you might be pleasantly surprised. I was!

Raymond Burgos
raysaber@webtv.net

You couldn't have been more right when you said that Castlevania gets better as you go through it. Once at the third stage it's obvious this game is one cool S.O.B. I had no problems with the camera, although there was some annoying slowdown.

Alex Garnecki
sxesoldier@hotmail.com

I cannot disagree with you more regarding Castlevania for the N64. I thought the graphics were OK with some noticeable slowdown. Konami must have gotten lazy on us; no rumble pak or RAM pak support. The controls are not very good. My final complaint is that it is too short! I finished it in 11 hours. This includes both characters and seeing the different endings. I would have given Castlevania a 4.5.

Michael Wright
xuaxs@hotmail.com

Silent Hill

What we said:

"Probably the most genuinely disturbing 'survival horror' game around....Controls could be tighter, and the writing/voice acting is a little weak....Silent Hill pushes all your fear buttons....Do not let your children see this game."

How we rated it:

8.5 9.0 8.5 8.5

What you said:

After just getting four hours into it, I'd have to say this game is scarier than Resident Evil could ever be, and its graphics are better too. The place for improvement would be better dialogue, and make the game longer.

The PsYcHo
Silent_T_SiAlker@hotmail.com

In Silent Hill, you are in a constant state of fear. When that creepy piano starts playing, the hairs on your neck will stand up.

Ryan Worley
zanizbar64@hotmail.com

This game is the most frightening and disturbing game I have EVER played. The voice acting is quite up there, but not the absolute best. Only gripes are, as with Metal Gear Solid, it is a tad on the short side, but the new weapons in Hard Mode make it a worthwhile undertaking to play it again. As for the graphics, the fog and darkness make for an extremely creepy environment, but after a while become only slightly bothersome; and the lo-res color palette make for faded and washed-out environments.

RaNMa
pplloanokk@geocities.com

Syphon Filter

What we said:

"Syphon Filter takes a lot of cool Metal Gear Solid-inspired ideas and crams them into a slick package.... For edge-of-your-seat, sniper-fueled action, SF outshines both MGS and GE."

How we rated it:

8.0 8.0 6.5 8.0

What you said:

You guys gave Syphon Filter three 8's and a 6.5! But yet you give Metal Gear Solid four 10's! What the hell is wrong with you guys??? I mean sure MGS is graphically better, had more hype, and came before Syphon Filter; but MGS was so much easier than Syphon Filter. If you gave MGS four 10's, then you should have at least given Syphon Filter a 9.5!!!

D. Sambo
dsambo@gateway.net

989 Studios has made a semi-winner. The scores you gave it were for the most part right-on, except Johnny England's 6.5. I think it deserved a silver award. There are several graphics glitches, as well as control problems. There are, on the other hand, several fun levels, and most of them are challenging (I spent about an hour in the destroyed subway. Don't laugh). Some of them leave you with no idea what the fudge to do, especially Rhoemer's Hideout and the Expo Center Reception, but overall, this is a fun and interesting covert ops game.

Peter Jurmu
HVSL93A@prodigy.net

Syphon Filter rocks! It has great graphics, and great sound and quite possibly the greatest gameplay in the genre! I like it better than Metal Gear Solid because it's more fast-paced and

exciting. The gameplay engine is good and the target locking feature is a much needed innovation.

Suraj Das
wet-paint@prodigy.net

I just purchased Syphon Filter and what I was presented with was a well-rounded game with intense action, great graphics, excellent story line and, most importantly, fantastic gameplay. One note to make, every reviewer made reference to MGS. This game isn't, and doesn't pretend to be the same game. If you want to play a great action game, buy Syphon Filter. If you want to watch an espionage movie on your PS, buy MGS.

Clinton Spindley
llivw@hotmail.com

Now I read your magazine carefully so I know that three 8.0's is hardly a bad score. But I personally find this game to deserve a Gold award. The levels are incredibly well thought-out and the interaction one has with the environments is amazing. The enemy AI is stunningly realistic (not to mention damn cool) and to top it off, your character has access to some of the coolest weapons around. I'll admit that the control is occasionally a little shabby, but I had gotten used to it after just a few hours. The graphics are solid with some nice textures and the sound is some of the best ever heard in a video game.

Wes Mize
Arcata.CA

I enjoyed the game's varied missions which expose you to a vast assortment of objectives, as well as a myriad of ways to meet them. Also nice is the manner of weaponry available, and the designers have provided quite a few ways to use them. Also nice is the automatic lock-on targeter; this system makes hectic firefights far easier to manage. It's refreshing to have a game that moves the focus of art of aesthetics in favor of solid, engrossing, consistent gameplay.

Brad Shoemaker
bkshoema@unity.ncsu.edu

Syphon Filter may start out slow, but by about the fourth level you'll be hooked. The stealth-based levels are some of the best I've ever played, and the sniping is done almost perfectly. The targeting system needs a little bit of work, but overall Syphon Filter is worth every dime.

Bob McTague
rjm018@rit.edu

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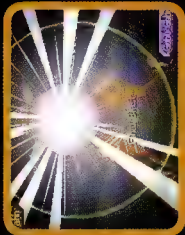
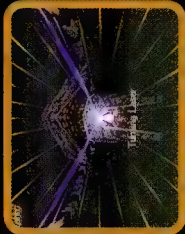
PlayStation
Game Boy
Saturn
N64

Game	Publisher	Best Feature	Worst Feature	Scores	Issue #
BattleTanx	3DO	Big Guns, Big Bangs	Average in Every Department	5.0 6.5 6.0 6.0	115
Beetle Adventure Racing	Electronic Arts	Awesome Course Designs	Not Enough Tracks	9.0 8.5 9.5 9.5	117
Bottom of the 9th	Konami	Scenario Mode	No MLB License	6.0 8.0 7.0 6.0	117
Bust-A-Move 99	Midway	Four-Player Mode	Windows Too Small During Four-Player	8.0 7.0 6.5 7.0	115
California Speed	Konami	Silly Arcade Feel	An Overall Sloppy Game	4.5 4.0 4.0 4.5	117
Castlevania	Midway	Kick-Ass Game Design, Music	Frustrating Platform Gameplay, Camera	9.0 9.0 8.0 9.0	116
Dual Heroes	Konami	Motion-Captured Moves	Weak Gameplay	4.5 3.0 3.0 1.0	115
Extreme-G 2	Acclaim	Really, Really Fast Gameplay	Occasionally Choppy Frame-Rate	6.0 7.5 5.5 7.5	114
FIFA 99	Electronic Arts	Realistic Gameplay	Frame-Rate...Again	8.5 9.5 8.5 9.0	114
Fox Sports College Hoops 99	Fox Interactive	College Atmosphere	Opponent AI	5.0 3.5 2.0 4.0	115
Glover	Hasbro Interactive	Glover (The Character)	The Stupid Camera	6.0 5.0 8.0 6.0	114
Golden Nugget 64	Nintendo	Realistic AI	No Multiplayer Poker	8.5 6.0 8.0 6.0	115
The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time	Nintendo	Absolutely Incredible Dungeons	Where's The Classic Zelda Music?!	10 10 10 10	115
Magical Tetris Challenge	Capcom	New Garage Blocks	Getting Hit By Those New Garage Blocks	7.5 7.5 7.0 8.0	115
Mario Party	Nintendo	It's The Ultimate Party Game	Not So Great For Solo Play	8.5 8.5 8.5 9.0	117
Micro Machines 64 Turbo	Midway	Awesome Eight-Player Game	Having To Sit So Close To Your Friends	8.5 9.0 7.0 8.5	117
Milo's Astro Lanes	Crave Entertainment	The Sound Of The Falling Plis	Wacky Space Premise	3.0 3.5 3.5 4.5	115
NBA In The Zone '99	Konami	Much-Improved AI	Sub-Par Graphics, Animation	7.0 6.5 6.5 6.0	117
NBA Jam 99	Acclaim	Bill Walton	Bill Walton's Repetitive Commentary	8.5 6.0 8.0 8.0	114
NHL Blades of Steel '99	Konami	Gorgeous Graphics	Bad Control	4.5 3.5 6.5 6.0	117
NHL Breakaway 99	Acclaim	Good Commentary	Some Poor Fools Will	4.0 4.0 4.5 4.0	115
Nightmare Creatures	Acclaim	You Don't Have to Buy It	Camera Problems	5.0 3.0 4.0 7.0	114
Penny Racers	THQ	Atmospheric Graphics	Not Enough Tracks In Circuit Mode	6.5 6.5 7.0 6.5	115
Snowboard Kids 2	Atlus	Trading Car Accessories	Annoying Characters	7.0 8.0 7.5 7.5	116
South Park	Acclaim	Cool Courses	No Two-Player And It's Kind of Short	8.0 6.5 7.0 7.5	115
Star Soldier: Vanishing Earth	Crave Entertainment	Great Combo/Scoring System	Extreme Difficulty of Final Stages	7.0 4.5 4.5 7.0	115
Star Wars: Rogue Squadron	Nintendo/LucasArts	Detailed Graphics	Too Few Save Points	8.0 8.0 8.5 8.5	115
Turok 2: Seeds of Evil	Acclaim	Hi-Res Graphics (w/VRAM Pak)	Music Is Pretty Non-Descript	8.5 9.0 8.0 8.5	117
Vigilante 8	Acclaim	Plenty of Play Modes	Some Questionable Physics	6.0 6.0 6.5 8.0	115
Virtual Pool 64	Crave Entertainment	Purty Graphics	Poor Control	4.0 4.5 6.0 4.0	114
A Bug's Life	Sony Computer Entertainment	Original Concept	Not Particularly Difficult	7.5 8.0 7.0 6.0	116
Akuji the Heartless	Eidos	Good Bowling Physics	May Be Too Cartoony For Some	6.5 6.0 6.0 6.0	115
Animaniacs Ten Pin Alley	ASC Games	Rooftop Level	Platform Bits	5.5 4.5 6.0 7.0	114
Apocalypse	Acclaim	Two-Player Mode	Flawed Save System	8.0 7.5 6.0 8.0	117
Asterix	Acclaim	Addictive Gameplay	Story Targeted Toward Young Audience	4.5 4.0 5.5 4.0	114
Blast Radius	Psychosis	Slick Visuals	Graphics, But Who Cares?	8.5 8.5 8.0 8.0	114
Buster Bros	Square EA	Deep, Engaging Gameplay	Stupid Lyrics On Some Songs	8.0 3.0 8.0 8.0	115
Brigandine	Atlus	Great Music (Mostly)	Missing That Easy Shot	6.0 8.0 6.0 8.5	115
Bust A Groove	989 Studios	Series Should Be Nearing Retirement	Huge Step Backward From BAM 4	10 10 3.0 6.0	117
Bust-A-Move 4	Natsume	There Isn't Any	Dry Presentation	5.5 8.5 5.5 9.0	114
Bust-A-Move '99	Acclaim	Coaching Tips, Lots Of Games	Unbearably Long AI "Thinking" Times	9.0 9.0 8.5 9.0	116
Caesar's Palace II	Interplay	Epic Gameplay	Repetitious Gameplay	5.5 7.0 7.0 5.0	116
Civilization II	Acclaim	Easy To Get Into	Naughty Dog's Last Crash Game	9.5 9.0 9.0 9.0	114
Contender	Sony Computer Entertainment	Incredibly Tight Gameplay	Some Animation Loss	7.0 6.5 6.0 7.0	114
Crash Bandicoot: WARPED	Capcom	Graphical Style	Lots of Graphical Glitches	6.0 4.0 4.5 4.0	115
Darkstalkers 3	Capcom	Like Twisted Metal, But in Water			

Destrenga	Koei	Intense 3D Flights	8.0	7.5	7.0	8.5	115
Eggs of Steel	Atlus	Wacky And Funny As Hell	4.5	6.0	6.0	6.5	114
FIFA 99	Electronic Arts	Best Soccer AI Around	9.5	9.5	9.0	8.5	115
Fisherman's Bait	Konami	Two-Player Mode	7.5	7.0	6.0	7.0	116
Formula 1 98	Psygnosis	Slack Driver AI	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	114
Freestyle Boardin' '99	Capcom	Number Of Courses	4.0	3.0	5.0	4.0	116
The Game of Life	Hasbro Interactive	Colorful Graphics	3.5	4.0	5.0	4.0	115
Guardian's Crusade	Activision	Packs A Few Cool Innovations	5.0	6.0	6.5	4.5	117
Invasion From Beyond	GT Interactive	Very Nice Graphics, Frame-Rate	8.5	8.0	7.5	5.0	117
Irritating Stick	Jaleco	Strangely Addicting...	5.0	2.0	4.5	1.0	115
Jeopardy!	Hasbro Interactive	Thousands Of Answers...	7.0	3.5	7.5	8.0	115
K-1 Revenge	Jaleco	Convincing Realism	8.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	117
Kensei: Sacred Fist	Konami	Nice Combos	3.0	8.0	6.5	7.5	115
Knockout Kings	Electronic Arts	Great Selection Of Boxes	8.0	7.0	5.0	8.5	114
Legend of Legaia	Sony Computer Entertainment	Long Quest; Cool Battle System	8.0	7.5	7.5	8.5	117
Lemmings & Oh No! More Lemmings!	Psygnosis	TONS Of Levels	8.0	8.0	7.5	6.0	114
March Madness 99	Electronic Arts	Realistic Animation	6.5	7.0	6.5	7.0	116
Marvel Super Heroes vs. SF	Capcom	Much Better Port Than XMenSF	7.0	7.5	8.0	7.5	116
Metal Gear Solid	Konami	Incredible Story	10	10	10	10	113
Monkey Hero	Take 2	Well, It's A Lot Like Zelda	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	116
Mr. Domino	Acclaim	Stage Environments	7.0	8.5	7.0	7.5	114
NBA Live 99	Electronic Arts	Improved AI	9.5	9.0	8.0	8.5	114
NCAA GameBreaker 99	989 Studios	Hard-Hitting Gameplay	8.5	8.0	8.5	7.5	114
Nectaris: Military Madness	Jaleco	Easy To Learn, Hard To Master	8.0	7.0	8.0	7.5	115
NCAA Final Four 99	989 Studios	Great Player Moves	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.5	116
Ninja	Eidos	Some OK Special Effects	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	114
Odoworld: Abe's Exoddus	GT Interactive	QuikSave Feature	9.0	9.5	9.0	9.5	113
Pro 18: World Tour Golf	Psygnosis	Decent Graphics	2.0	7.5	6.0	4.0	117
Psybadek	Psygnosis	Vans License	2.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	114
R-types	Ascii	Classic R-Type Gameplay	7.0	7.5	8.0	6.0	116
Rally Cross 2	989 Studios	Racing Gameplay	8.5	9.0	7.0	8.0	114
RollCage	Psygnosis	Speedy Frame-Rate	6.5	6.5	6.0	7.5	117
Rugrats: Search for Reptar	THQ	Lots Of Minigames	4.5	8.0	6.5	7.0	115
Silent Hill	Konami	Spooky Story	8.5	8.0	8.5	8.5	117
Street Fighter Collection 2	Capcom	Classic Street Fighter Action	8.5	8.0	7.5	7.5	114
Syphon Filter	989 Studios	Lots of Cool, Original Stuff	8.0	6.5	8.0	8.0	116
Tai Fu	Activision	Simple, Old-School Gameplay	6.0	4.0	6.5	5.5	117
Test Drive Off-Road 2	Acclaim	Lots Of Big Trucks	6.0	5.5	6.5	6.5	114
Tiger Woods 99: PGA Tour Golf	Electronic Arts	Big Drives	7.0	6.0	4.0	7.5	115
Tiny Tank: Your Arsenal	MGM Interactive	Interesting Levels	5.5	7.0	6.5	4.0	115
Tomb Raider III	Eidos	Enormous Environments	7.0	7.5	5.5	7.5	115
Twisted Metal III	989 Studios	Smooth Visuals	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.5	114
Uprising X	3DO	Lots Of Action	3.0	7.0	5.0	7.0	115
Xenogears	Square EA	Great Story	9.0	9.0	9.0	8.5	113
WCW/nWo Thunder	THQ	Lots Of Moves To Learn	6.5	5.0	7.0	5.5	115
Wheel of Fortune	Hasbro Interactive	Playing With Friends	8.0	7.5	7.0	8.0	116
Magic Knight Rayearth	Working Designs	Beautiful 2D Graphics	7.0	7.0	7.5	7.0	114
Game & Watch Gallery 2	Nintendo	Highly Addictive	8.5	9.0	9.5	5.5	115
Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening DX	Nintendo	Classic Zelda Gameplay	9.0	9.0	9.5	9.0	116
Pocket Bomberman	Nintendo	Solid Gameplay	6.5	6.5	4.0	8.0	115
Pokémon	Nintendo	Incredibly Addictive Play	9.0	8.0	8.0	9.0	113
terris DX	Nintendo	Two-Player Link-Up Play	9.0	9.0	8.0	8.5	115



Name	MP	Effect	Targets
←Dark→ Nighto	33	Hell's Music	Single Enemy
←Dark→ Puro	120	Dream Illusion	All Enemies
←Earth→ Mitsuha	60	Crazy Driver	All Enemies
←Earth→ Kenano	72	Fang	Single Enemy
←Earth→ Jota	90	Odd Dimension	All Enemies
←Fire→ Gimard	19	Burning Attack	Single Enemy
←Fire→ Zanoir	36	Vertical Hammer	Single Enemy
←Fire→ Gola Gola	40	Fire	All Enemies
←Light→ Vera	6	Mystic Care	Single Ally
←Light→ Orb	18	Restore all Companion	All Allies
←Light→ Spoons	45	Holy Eyes	All Allies
←Light→ Aluru	90	Final Blaster	Single Enemy
←Thunder→ Theeder	24	Turning Laser	Single Enemy
←Thunder→ Viguro	64	Plasma Storm	All Enemies
←Thunder→ Giltum	160	Space Cannon	All Enemies
←Water→ Gorem	28	Bubble Crush	All Enemies
←Water→ Freed	90	Freezing Point	All Enemies
←Water→ Slippery	110	Deadly Rain	All Enemies
←Wind→ Swordle	32	Sanicizen	Single Enemy
←Wind→ Nera	48	Violent Wind	Single Enemy
←Wind→ Barra	85	Hell Dive	Single Enemy



earned, the rest of them can be activated once you have enough speed to enter it.

The story is also very cool, and it changes and curves many times throughout the game, keeping you involved throughout the entire 60+ hours you will play.

The game's fighting system is pretty cool, focusing more on the individual attacks of the players than simply smashing the buttons through another series of menus. Each fighter's combinations can make or break a battle if they are poorly executed. You can also learn new combos as you go through the game that will make your fighter a new and more powerful adversary for the enemy. Only the Hyper arts moves need to be

Learning The Fighting Arts

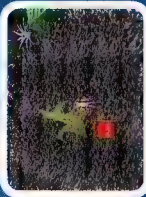
Fighting in Battles: As you go through the game, you will learn some of the Hyper Arts that will deliver high damage. These combos here are "Vahns." You can activate all of these if you have enough of a combo bar. The only exception is the Hyper arts, these you will need to earn while you go through the game. You will usually earn a Hyper art after defeating a boss. You can also earn the first two combos as the first move for the next combo.

Miracle Arts =

Super Arts =

Hyper Arts =

Command	Move Name	# of AP
▲▲▲▲▲	Vain Special	90
▲▲▲▲▲	Rolling Combo	66
▲▲▲▲▲	3F-Spoons	60
▲▲▲▲▲	Maximum Blow	54
▲▲▲▲▲	Fire Tackle	54
▲▲▲▲▲	Power Slash	54
▲▲▲▲▲	Fire Blow	40
▲▲▲▲▲	Tornable Hammer	30
▲▲▲▲▲	Cyclone	24
▲▲▲▲▲	Hurricane	24
▲▲▲▲▲	PK Combo	24
▲▲▲▲▲	Spin Combo	24
▲▲▲▲▲	W-Upper	24
▲▲▲▲▲	Cross Kick	24
▲▲▲▲▲	Power Punch	18
▲▲▲▲▲	Slash Kick	18
▲▲▲▲▲	Somersault	18
▲▲▲▲▲	Bubble Crush	18
▲▲▲▲▲	Hyper Elbow	18



Secret in the East Vox Forest:

Before you reach the end of the game you should be able to check out the East Vox Forest. There you will find a gem that if brought to Zalan will give you access to a powerful secret. Ra-Seru.

The Dance Contest

Once you reach the city of Sol you will be able to participate in a small dance contest. To get into the club where the contest is being held you will first need to go to the casino where you can win the old card. Anyone familiar with Pakappa the Rapper should be able to get the timing down easily.



Use your triangle specials early to get a good lead.

The Casino

The best way to get started, to get anything from the casino, you will need to first collect some points. The easiest way to get points is to play the Baka fighter video game. Once you get these points you can either enter the arena or you can play the slots to get a lot more. I recommend the slots because they are easier.



Try to get three punches or kicks for the really big money.

Some of the Special Prizes

Evil God Icon	30,000
Lost Grait	5,000
Die Amboard	5,000
Die Amboard	4,500
Vitality Ring	1,000
War Soul	800
Spirit Jewel	500
Magic Ring	400
Guardian Ring	400
Incense	200

WORLD MAP

- Rim Elm
- Fresh Spring
- Drake Kingdom
- Mt. Rikuroa
- Bron Monastery
- East Voz Forest
- West Voz Forest
- Zeto's Dungeon
- Ancient Water Cave
- Jeremi
- Vidna
- Octan
- Gate of Shadows
- Dohati's Castle
- Sol
- Buna
- Usha's Tower
- Uru Mals
- Nivora Ravine
- Mt. Dhimi

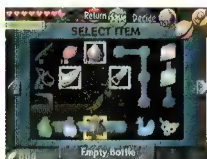
Secret Ra-Seru

When you are near the end of the game you will get the opportunity to wander around the world a little. Take this time to find some of the scattered items that contain these extremely strong seru attacks. As an example, the Ra-Seru egg you get from Cara. If taken to Zalan, provides the Horn magic. Another really cool one can be obtained if you go back to the East Voz Forest and examine the area around the dead genesis tree. You will find a dark orb that if given to Zalan will provide the Jedo magic once equipped.

Name	MP	Description	Affects
Dark → Ra-Seru Jedo	200	Deadly Promise	All Enemies
Earth → Ra-Seru Palma	200	Meteor Cluster	All Enemies
Light → Ra-Seru Horn	200	Resurrecter	All Allies
Water → Ra-Seru Horn	200	Deep Avian-Che	All Enemies
Fire → Ra-Seru Mals	240	Inferno	All Enemies
Thunder → Ra-Seru Ozime	240	Voltago	All Enemies
Wind → Ra-Seru Terra	240	Queen Twister	All Enemies
Earth → Ra-Seru Aggression	255	Unknown (Dark Eclipse)	All Enemies



Top ten tricks



Choose any one of the **EMPTY** bottles you have. Find a shallow pond with a fish or find a fairy. Swing the bottle and in mid-swing, press Start. On the Select Item Screen, choose any weapon or item (except the ice, fire or light arrow) and equip it to the spot where the bottle is. Now you will have a bottle in place of the weapon. The best part is if you use the bow or a special arrow the bow will still work with the special arrows. When you collect ammo for the item it will go back. Warning: if you cover a needed weapon, you may not get it back!

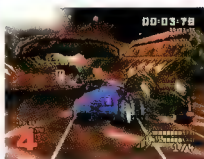
S.C.A.R.S.

Cars and Cups

On the Option Settings Screen, move down to the "Password" option and enter one of these codes for the results shown:
 Crystal Cup - LGSSXX
 Diamond Cup - CRKYY
 Zenith Cup - DZPKKK
 Master Mode - PXPRTS
 Scorpion Car - SDSRRT
 Cobra Car - TRTLL
 Cheetah Car - NRNRNR
 Panther Car - YMSITR
 All Cars and Tracks - WLWDD

Open All Secrets

At the Player Select Screen, press Left, Up, Right, Down, Z, R, Down,

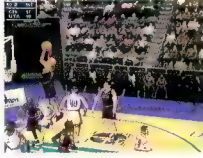
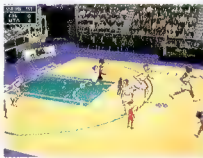


Left, Up, Right. Every cheat will now be opened.

NBA Jam 99

Multiple Cheats

These codes are to be entered after pressing Start to pause in the middle of the game:



For Giant Players: L, L, Right-C, L, L, Right-C, L, L, RIGHT-C, Z.

For Tiny Players: L, L, Left-C, L, L, LEFT-C, L, L, LEFT-C, Z.

Automatically make your next shot: L button, L button, C-Up, L button, L button, C-Up, L button, L button, C button, C-Up, Z.

Dunk from anywhere: L button, L button, C-Down, L button, L button, C-Down, L button, L button, C-Down, Z.

Super push: L button, L button, Up (on D-Pad), L button, L button, Up (on D-Pad), L button, L button, Up (on D-Pad), Z.

Tie the score: L button, L button, Down (on D-Pad), L button, L button, Down (on D-Pad), L button, L button, Down (on D-Pad), Z.

Turn team on fire: L button, L button, Right (on D-Pad), L button, L button, Right (on D-Pad), L button, L button, Right (on D-Pad), Z.

Cancel activated cheats: L button, L button, Left (on D-Pad), L button, L button, Left (on D-Pad), Z.

Magical Tetris Challenge

Line Clear Graph



Here's a hidden feature that's not mentioned in the manual for *Magical Tetris Challenge's* Endless Tetris Mode. Begin a game in Endless Mode and press A+B simultaneously while playing. This will go to a display on the other side of the screen that shows how many lines of singles, doubles, etc. you have.

Contender

Main Event Characters in Two-Player Mode

Start a new boxer in the Main Event. Pick one of the boxers and immediately save him to your memory card. Exit, then repeat with another character. When you have saved each boxer start a two-player match. At the Character Select

1 The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time

Hidden Pictures

Find the place in the Hyrule Castle courtyard where you meet Princess Zelda for the first time. To your left and right, there will be windows. Look (with Up-C) to the right window and you will see pictures of Yoshi, Mario, Luigi, Bowser and Princess Toadstool. Now, take aim with your slingshot and shoot at the window. A red rupee will pop out and you can collect it for a gain of 20 rupees! If you take aim and shoot the window on the left, a guard will pop out, scold you and throw a bomb back at you!

2 Star Wars: Rogue Squadron

Many Cheats

Infinite Lives Cheat: At the Passcodes Screen enter IGIVEUP.

Fly the Millennium Falcon: At the Passcodes Screen enter FARMBOY.

Fly the Tie Interceptor: At the Passcodes Screen enter TIEDUP. The Tie Interceptor is hidden behind the Millennium Falcon.

After you have entered both the Millennium Falcon cheat and the Tie Interceptor Cheat, go over to the Millennium Falcon then press Up on the analog stick. The camera will pan around to the Tie Interceptor!

All Power-Ups: At the Passcodes Screen enter TOUGHGUUY.

3 Crash Bandicoot: WARPED

Free Apples

When you are playing a level that has the rock-throwing monkeys, after you have destroyed the vases that they occupy you can jump on the monkeys and get free apples.

Top ten tricks

Continued

4 GoldenEye 007

Secret Level Editor

Finish all levels on the "00 Agent" difficulty setting (plus bonus levels 19 and 20), a special "007 Mode" will open. This is an Editor Screen in which you can configure options such as Enemy Health, Enemy Damage, Enemy Accuracy and Enemy Reaction Speed!

5 WCW/nWo Revenge

Cool Codes

Nitro Arena Trick:

When fighting in the entranceway, throw your opponent into the black door at the very end. He will disappear for several seconds and then will come running out like he just hit the ropes.

Playable Managers:

Go to One-on-One Exhibition match and choose wrestlers that have managers. After play begins, press Z on the third and fourth controllers and you will take control of the managers.

6 Tomb Raider III

Incredible Cheats

In the middle of the game without pausing, enter any of these cheats as shown:

All Weapons: L2, R2, R2, L2, L2, L2, L2, R2, L2, R2, R2, L2, R2, L2, L2, R2, L2, R2, L2, R2. You will hear a scream.

Level Skip: L2, R2, L2, L2, R2, L2, R2, L2, R2, L2, L2, L2, L2, L2, L2, R2, R2, R2, R2, L2, L2. Lara says "No!"

7 Metal Gear Solid

Tuxedo Code

Play as Solid Snake in a Tuxedo; you'll have to beat the game twice using your old save data to reload new games. Then on the third game, Snake will change into his tuxedo when he is on the elevator coming out of the dock.



Screen, press the Square button to pick any of the other boxers from your memory card.

Spyro the Dragon

99 Lives



In the middle of the game, press the Select button and then press Square(Gx), Circle, Up, Circle, Left, Circle, Right, Circle, Start. Then check your life counter and you will see that it has increased to 99!

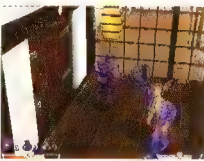
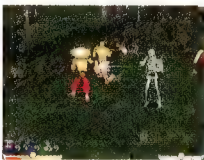
Dennis Vosburgh
Albany, NY

Ninja: Shadow of Darkness

Invincibility and Level Select

Invincibility - Pause the game at any time and press L2, R2, L2 3 times, R2 three times, then Circle, Triangle, Square, Circle, Triangle, and Square. Listen for a chime to verify that you entered the code correctly. When you unpause, you'll now be a skeleton with infinite lives, energy, smoke bombs, magic potions and full scroll power! To revert back to a ninja, simply pause and re-enter the code. However, when you do, you'll get to keep all of the maxed-out items you got when you were the skeleton!

Level Select - Remove your memory card then turn on the PlayStation. When the screen says "Checking



Memory Card" quickly press L2, L2, R2, R2, R2. The words "DELTA LEVEL CHEAT ON!" will briefly appear. Start a new game and you'll access the Level Select Menu.

O.D.T.

Many Cool Codes

Press Start to pause the game in the middle of play and enter these codes for the results shown:

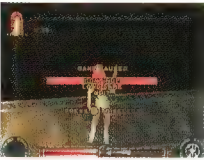
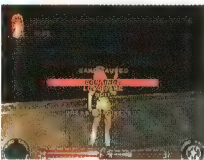
Full Health - Left, Right, Left, Right, Square.

Full Mana - Left, Right, Left, Right, Circle.

Full Ammo - Left, Right, Up, Down, Circle, Square.

Power-Up Weapons - R1, L1, R2, L2, Left, Right, Up, Down.

Raise Abilities -



Square, Circle, Triangle, Select, Left.

Full Experience -

Circle, Square, L1, L2, R1, Select.

Turn Off Monster Energy -

Triangle, Square, Circle, Triangle, Circle.

50 Lives -

Triangle, Up, Circle, Right, Select, Square.

Raise Level for Each Spell -

Down, Triangle, Select, L1, R1, Select.

Rogue Trip

Invincible Weapons, Unlimited Jump and Play as Big Daddy

First, you must enable the Cheat Mode. Press and hold L1+R1+R2+Select in the middle of a game. Now enter this code after you have enabled the Cheat Mode

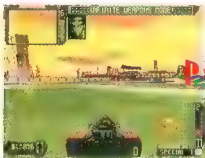
Top ten tricks

Continued



View all FMVs -
At the Main Menu hold R1, then press Up, Down, Left, Right, Square, Circle, Triangle, Circle, Square, Circle, Up, Down, Left, Right.

Invincibility -
While playing a game, hold R1, then press Circle, Triangle, Square, X, Down, Down, Circle, Triangle, Square, X.



(Don't pause the game):

Infinite Weapons -
Press and hold L1+R1, then press Up, Down, Up, R2

Enter these codes as a Password under the Options Menu:

Unlimited Jump -
Press Circle, Square, R2, X, Triangle, R2.

Play as Big Daddy -
Press Triangle, Square, R2, X, Triangle, R2. Then pick challenge mode and choose "Nuke York" as your level. Big daddy will appear on the Character Select Screen.

Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus

Cool Codes

Level Select -
At the Main Menu hold R1, then press Down, Up, Left, Right, Triangle, Square, Circle, Triangle, Square, Circle, Down, Up, Left, Right.



NHL 99

View Arenas

Enter these passwords to do a "fly-by" of the following stadiums:
ANA: Arrowhead Pond of Anaheim (Anaheim)
BOS: Fleet Center (Boston)
BUF: Marine Midland Arena (Buffalo)
CGY: Canadian Airlines Saddledome (Calgary)
CAR: Greensboro Coliseum (Carolina)
CHI: United Center (Chicago)
COL: McNichols Sports Arena (Colorado)
DAL: Reunion Arena (Dallas)
DET: Joe Louis Arena (Detroit)
EDM: Edmonton Coliseum (Edmonton)
FLO: Miami Arena (Florida)
LOS: Great Western Forum (Los Angeles)
MON: Molson Center (Montreal)
NAS or NSH: Nashville Arena (Nashville)
NYI: Nassau Veterans Memorial

Coliseum (New York Islanders)
NYR: Madison Square Garden (New York Rangers)
OTT: Corel Center (Ottawa)
PHI: CoreState Center (Philadelphia)
PHO: America West Arena (Phoenix)
PIT: Civic Arena (Pittsburgh)
STL: Kiel Center (St. Louis)
TOR: Maple Leaf Gardens (Toronto)
VAN: GM Place (Vancouver)
WAS: MCI Center (Washington)

Akuji the Heartless

Debug Menu and Invincibility

Debug Mode -
Press Start to pause the game then hold L2 or R2 and press Left, Up, Up, Triangle, Right, Square, Left, Triangle, Up, Down, Right, Right. Then press X for the Debug Menu to appear. You can choose many options, including your starting level!

Invincibility -
Press Start to pause the game, then hold L2 or R2 and press Right, Left, Triangle, X, Up, Circle, Left. Akuji will be invulnerable to all hits.

Bust-A-Move 4

Another World

You'll get an entirely new set of levels when you enter this code. At the Title Screen, press Triangle, Left, Right, Left, Triangle. You will hear a sound and see a little green spinning icon in the lower-right corner of the screen to confirm that it worked. From the Game Menu, choose Puzzle and then pick Arcade. Choose your difficulty level and then you'll be able to play a plethora of new stages!



8 Turok 2: Seeds of Evil

Enter any of these codes at the Enter Cheat option on the Main Menu Screen, or when paused, access the Enter Cheat option and enter a code. Access the Cheats option to turn on the cheats of your choice.

To get **Big Head Mode** enter: **LIBERNOODLE**
To get **Stick Mode** enter: **HOLASTICKBOY**
To get **Big Hands and Feet Mode** enter: **STOMPPEM**
To get **Tiny Mode** enter: **PIPSQUEAK**
To get **Pen and Ink Mode** enter: **IGOTABFA**
To get **Gouraud Mode** enter: **WHATSAETUREMAP**
To access **Juan's cheat** enter: **HEERESJUAN**
To access **Zach's cheat** enter: **AAHQGOO**

9 Twisted Metal III

Sweet Tricks

Infinite Specials:

Enter L1, L1, R1, R1, R1 as a password. Then you will return to the Main Menu. Now begin a game and quit. When you begin a game again, you will have an unlimited amount of your character's special weapon.

Play as Sweet Tooth:

Enter Left, Left, Left, Right, Right as a password. Then you will return to the Main Menu. You can now select Sweet Tooth at the Vehicle Selection Screen.

10 NASCAR 99

Hidden Announcer

To play as the commentator, Benny Parsons, just follow this method: On the Main Menu Screen, choose a Single Race. On the Single Race Screen, move down to "Select Track." Now choose the Richmond Track. Move up and highlight the Select Car Option. With this option highlighted, enter this code very quickly (within four seconds): Up-C, Right-C, Down-C, Left-C, Z, Z, Z, Z, button, Z, Z. The Benny Parsons car will now appear!



Toys

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Get Some!

Cool stuff you could probably live without, but shouldn't

Hasbro Is Definitely Making Us Smile

The upcoming release of *The Phantom Menace* also means there's a load of **Episode One Action Figures** on the way from Hasbro. Some are slightly modified reissues of existing figures with Episode One Flashback Photos included, while others are directly from the upcoming movie—like the STAP w/Battle Droid and Mace Windu* shown far below. Dozens of others are on the way, but Lucasfilm doesn't want them to be covered until May! Price: Around \$8 each www.hasbro.com



LEGO My DEGObah

Star Wars is so cool, even LEGO is getting in on the hot licensing action. They have five **LEGO Star Wars sets** to choose from: The Landspeeder, the Snowspeeder and the X-Wing, Speeder Bikes and a TIE Fighter/Y-Wing combo pack. Each set also comes with a figure, or various accessories. Look for eight more LEGO packages coming in early May based on *The Phantom Menace*, and an R2-D2 LEGO Mindstorms kit in September. Darth Vader doesn't look all that menacing when he's a LEGO man—in fact, he's downright adorable (see right). Price: Landspeeder - \$6, Speeder Bikes - \$10, Snowspeeder - \$20, X-Wing - \$30, TIE Fighter/Y-Wing combo set - \$50 www.LEGO.com

DVD Release List as of 03/05/99

April

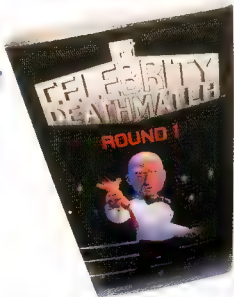
Adventures Of Baron Munchausen
American History X: Special Ed.
Amistad
Apt Pupil
Armageddon: Special Edition
Beautiful Girls
Birds Of The World
Born On The Fourth Of July
Bug's Life
Bulworth

Clay Pigeons
Dawn Of The Dead
Dragon Ball Z: Arrival
Dragonheart
I Still Know What You Did...
Jackal
La Bamba: Special Edition
Lord Of The Flies
Meet Joe Black
Monty Python: Life Of Brian
Presenting Felix The Cat

Punisher
Relic
Space Ace
Travel The World By Train (2 Vols.)
Very Bad Things
War Of The Worlds
White Man's Burden
X-Files: Fight The Future

May
Edge, The

Jewel Of The Nile
Kingpin: Special Edition
Romancing The Stone
Romeo + Juliet
Travel The World By Train (2 Vols.)
True Lies
Vampyros Lesbos
What Dreams May Come
Your Friends & Neighbors



Gumby On Crack

You've watched the show on cable—now bring the claymated carnage to the privacy of your own home with these **Celebrity Deathmatch Videos** from MTV and SMV. Each video contains six commercial-free all-star bouts, plus bonus behind-the-scenes footage and interviews with the show's creator Eric Fogel. The second volume features Stone Cold Steve Austin as himself. Look for the first video to arrive in stores the first week of February.

Price: Around \$13 each
www.mtv.com

The Shape Of Things To Come

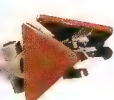
This **USB-compatible PC video camera** from Philips is both technologically impressive as well as visually pleasing. Not only can it capture video at 24 frames per second, it has a built-in microphone to record audio. All this is transmitted digitally via the USB connection. It's possible a still camera as fashionable and functional as this might make its way to USB-ready console systems like the PlayStation 2. Hmm...

Price: Around \$100
www.philipsUSA.com



"Note To Self..."

If you want to get into the whole voice memo craze that's sweeping the nation right now, you might as well kick it in style with the **ICD-V23 Portable Recorder** from Sony. This stylish little recorder offers 10 minutes of recording time, and holds up to 99 messages (as long as they add up to 10 minutes). In addition, 20 of those messages can be played back randomly for some reason. Weird.
Price: Around \$90
www.sony.com



The Final Word

Humble Advice From Your Friendly Neighborhood Editor

The other day, Sega asked me what I thought they should do to make sure the Dreamcast is a runaway success. Being the big (and disappointed) Saturn fan that I am, I was happy to

offer some advice, for whatever it's worth. I truly want to see Sega do things right this time around. After all, wouldn't you agree that a market dominated by three video game powers is much more fun than a market dominated by just...shudder...Sony? So here are the tips I gave Sega, minus a few of the universally obvious ones (get good third-party support, blah blah blah).

1.) Don't model the Japanese DC launch. Why? It had garbage in the starting lineup (Godzilla Generations??). Come on...that is NOT something with which you want to showcase a brand-new system. Good thing Sega's not bringing that one over here. I know big boss Bernie wants to have a dozen or so titles for the U.S. launch, but he has to make sure none of them make customers want to vomit in disgust. Is that asking too much?

2.) Don't shove all of Dreamcast's goodness down our throats at launch time—spread out the killer apps a little. I know this may sound a little backward, recommending holding back some titles come September...but if all the awesome titles are available at the same time Dreamcast hits the stores, we'll have nothing to look forward to for a while. One reason why the PlayStation had a great first few months was because it kept you coming back for more. Remember? One week we got WipeOut, another week we got GameDay, another week we got Tekken, etc. Keep us visiting our stores week after week, wondering what new DC game we can get our grubby little hands on.

3.) Please spend these few months before the September release tweaking the U.S. versions of Sonic Adventure, Sega Rally 2 and Virtua Fighter 3tb. The complaints on the Japanese versions are widespread: Sonic needs camera work, Rally 2 needs a steady frame-rate, and VF3tb needs some more modes of play. Everyone knows it: These games need work! (Sega Enterprises Vice President Tadahiko Hirose did say in a press conference that Sega is planning on "enhancing" the U.S. VF3tb, which is a good sign they give a damn.)

4.) Here's another seemingly backward one: Don't rely on arcade translations to keep your boat afloat. Sure Sega Arcade has some kick-ass coin-op games, but those don't necessarily make the best console games unless you throw in a lot of extras (like you did with Sega Rally 2). Take a look at the Saturn. Sure it was cool to play Virtua Cop and Die Hard Arcade at home, but after zipping through them a couple of times, they got boring. I'm not saying you shouldn't port Sega arcade games to the Dreamcast—people want to see home conversions of Super GT and Lost World. Just don't lean on them so heavily.

5.) You're thinking about it right now aren't you? C'mon admit it...you want to cut costs and leave out the modem, making it an optional add-on for a few extra bucks (note to readers: Sega is thinking about this). Let me tell you right now, forget about it! The modem is so key, I mean, everyone's drooling over the device, from the promise of four-player Rally 2 to the dream of a multiplayer, networked Unreal Tournament. But why is it imperative the modem is included with the Dreamcast and not sold as an extra? Simple. You need to have a modem on every Dreamcast sold in order for developers to embrace it wholeheartedly. Hardly any games today support the PlayStation Link Cable because hardly any PS owners have one. Who wants to spend the time to make a linkable mode for that silent minority? But if you make sure every DC owner automatically has a modem, you'll make it worthwhile for developers to include online multiplayer modes (they'll sell more games since millions will want to play online, they won't fall behind any competitive products that do have online play, etc.). Charge a bit more if you have to, but give all DC owners a modem, whether they want it or not!

6.) Get people so psyched for the launch, they'll be lining up to buy up their Dreamcasts on day one. Remember how excited people were to get a PlayStation on Sept. 9, a date engraved in our collective heads? Use that as a model, not the secretive, anti-climactic Saturn release. Use in-store demos, teaser campaigns, advertising and VHS demo tapes to escalate the hype. (I still remember watching a Donkey Kong Country videotape put together by Nintendo. By the time I finished watching it, I rushed to EB to prepay for the game. Now that's marketing!)

7.) Now that Sony's announced PlayStation 2, a significantly more powerful piece of machinery, think about upgrading the Dreamcast hardware sooner than later. (Although we don't see how this can possibly be an easy task, Sega says the DC can be upgraded to DVD, and they'll do it when "the time is right.") Yes, we all know it's the quality of the games, not the number of polygons or fancy effects they have. Yes, we all know games won't utilize DVD to its full potential for a long time. But be realistic: People ARE excited about more advanced technology. No matter how much more expensive PS2 might be, people aren't going to be as enthusiastic about a DC purchase if they know there is a more super-super-system out there. We know it can't and won't happen, but if you upgrade the machine now, before the U.S. release, you can insure that all American DCs are the most powerful they can be. If you wait a couple of years and ask people to upgrade, when the DC installed base is in the millions, it will bring back terrifying visions of 32-X and Sega CD, no matter how different this situation is. You don't want consumers to say, "Upgrade? Yup, it's Sega back to its old tricks again..." do you?



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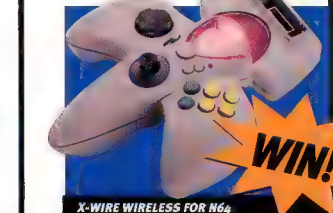
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ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTH!



The Review Crew will finally have a chance to bust open 989 Sport's MLB 2000.

June 1999
On sale April 6

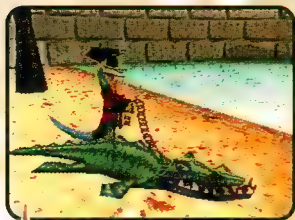
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GT2

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EXPERT GAMER™



May 1999
On sale April 20

Gex 3 will be a fairy tale if you read *Expert Gamer's* May issue containing the complete strategy.



XG's Quake II guide describes which weapon will take out what foe the quickest way.



Amaze your friends with your Super Smash Brothers moves by memorizing our guide.

Multiplayer games mean an instant party, especially when the game is Super Smash Brothers. Next issue *Expert Gamer* will provide tips on how to wow your friends when playing in the multi-player mode, spill a few secrets (like the hidden characters) and how to win in one-player mode.

In XG's Gex 3 coverage, the guide will contain strategy on how to navigate through the game's wacky levels and show you where all the items are located.

Lastly, with huge level maps, enemy and weapon stats plus Boss techniques, Quake II will be a breeze if you use our guide!

May 1999
On sale April 16

We take an exclusive first look at the PlayStation incarnation of what may be the film of the millennium.

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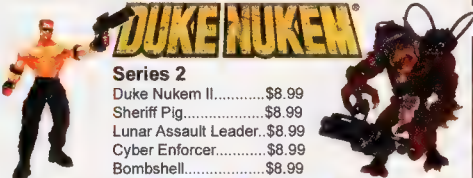
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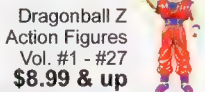
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