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PlayStation 2



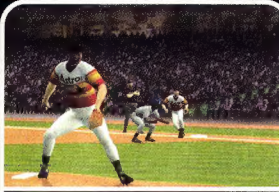
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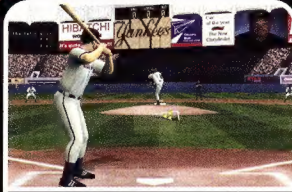


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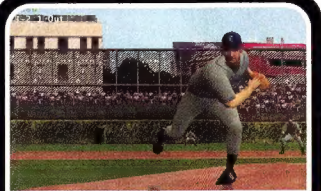
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COVER STORY

22 ONIMUSHA: WARLORDS

No one does survival horror like Capcom, and no one blows the lid off a blockbuster game like Game Informer. This month, GI dissects Capcom's newest permutation of the vaunted Resident Evil formula and comes away with an in-depth look at this monster title. Also in this issue is our massive Onimusha Play to Perfection and the very first review of the game!



GAMEINFORMER

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Xbox is coming, and the video game industry will never be the same. Never willing to believe the hype, Game Informer sorts through the facts, dispelling myths and unveiling the truth. Packed with screenshots of hot upcoming Xbox titles, this article will leave game junkies screaming for more.

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36 GRAND THEFT AUTO 3

DMA Design, the renegade Scotsmen behind the Grand Theft Auto series, is back for revenge. Kicking ass, taking names, and busting caps at their imitators, these hard men are out to change the rules of action/adventure games forever. Ultra-offensive, ultra-violent, and finally in 3D, GTA 3 is the bomb. Tick, tick, BOOM!



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44 PLAYSTATION 2: BASEBALL SPRING TRAINING

The name Andy Reiner is synonymous with baseball. He loves the sport so much that he goes to sleep every night cuddling his Sammy Sosa bobblehead doll. This year, he takes a look at the PlayStation 2 pennant race, and handicaps the contenders. Includes previews of High Heat Baseball 2002, All-Star Baseball 2002, Triple Play 2002, and MLB 2002. Put him in, coach, he's ready to play!

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"Loooooo...exciting and new...come abooooard...Dear GI is expecting yoooooouuu!" What happens when seven bitter hacks decide to open up their hearts and let the love pour out? Find out in Dear GI.

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The Game Informer paparazzi stalk the video game industry, bringing you candid photos of all the action.

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Is the Dreamcast going the way of the Neo Geo Pocket Color? Disturbing reports out of Japan seem to suggest so. After dropping this bomb, GI soothes your pain with a Game Boy Advance blowout. Also, hot gossip in Loose Talk and EverGolf in R&D.

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Traditionally, the month of March is a little slow in the world of video games. Not so this year, as we bring you explosive previews of Square's upcoming blockbuster Final Fantasy X, plus Resident Evil Code: Veronica X for PS2, and a first playable look at Gran Turismo 3.

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Life is confusing. Whether it's peer pressure, school, soccer practice, or hair sprouting in new places, the young people of today have a lot to deal with. At least GI is here to tell you what games you should buy. This month we help sort out your feelings about Onimusha: Warlords, ATV Offroad Fury, Star Wars Starfighter, and many more. There, there. It's going to be okay.

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This month's Classic GI takes us to the Holy Land of Gaming and investigates the strange tale of Wisdom Tree. Find out how this little company got away with making unlicensed Nintendo games for nearly a decade. Also, check out our ActRaiser strategy guide and retro reviews of Dynamite Duke and Chuck Rock.

106 ETC

The mysterious Scorpio surfaces, wearing a slick portable Game Boy Color battery pack. Also features an accessory that allows your Dreamcast to play imported games, and driver-Zed, the product that may save Erik and Matt's lives!





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EDITORS' FORUM

THESE ARE THE DAYS OF OUR LIVES



There were some interesting twists and turns in the video game drama this month. The biggest news was Microsoft's unveiling of the Xbox – perhaps the ugliest home console unit since the Phillips CD-i. Personally, I'm excited about the unit, but I am already tired of the Microsoft "anything you can do, I can do better" marketing mentality. Our cords are longer, our box is bigger, our machine is faster – classic American attitudes, but perhaps Microsoft will have the software to back up that longer cord. If not, all that video game manhood will be nothing more than an ugly box that blends in with your stereo.

The saddest news this month was easily Sega's cancellation of the Dreamcast. I hate to pull the old, "we warned ya..." on this one, but we did. Sega has promised to continue delivering software throughout the end of the year, but I expect many third-party developers to pull the plug on a lot of products. There is, however, a juicy rumor floating

around that Microsoft will announce the Xbox's ability to play Dreamcast games at the Tokyo Game Show this March, so the Dreamcast software library may get a stay of execution if this is the case.

The good news to this story is that Sega will bring its amazing software development abilities to other platforms. The biggest announcement yet is that Virtua Fighter 4 will be exclusive to PlayStation 2, which is excellent news for Sony, since Sega games on PS2 could make it nigh impossible for Microsoft to crack the Japanese gaming market.

There is still much to uncover in the coming months as to how this year will pan out. Nintendo hasn't delayed Game Boy Advance or Gamecube...yet! Plus, Sony still has to prove if they can get sufficient PS2s on the streets. The answer to all these questions and more will come in due time, most likely at E3 in May. I, like all of you, can't wait to see the final score.

Andy McNamara
Editor
andy@gameinformer.com



Game Informer Posse members left to right: Kristian, Scorpio, Paul, Andy, Reiner, Jay, Erik. Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh. Just hangin' tough. We're rough.

PAUL, THE GAME PROFESSOR

paul@gameinformer.com

What a month! Things have been hectic for me as I had to immerse myself into all that is Omimusha. Plenty of late nights went into playing that game and you should definitely try it if you have the chance. Making my life even more frenzied is the imminent arrival of my second child – my wife and I are pretty sure it's a boy. Basically, I was in a holding pattern the last couple weeks, but luckily Junior stayed in the oven and let daddy beat Omimusha a couple more times. On the day I write this it is zero hour, so I will basically be a papa in the next seven days or so. Obviously, this is a pretty big event and I'm sure we will let you meet him next month.

REINER, THE RAGING GAMER

reiner@gameinformer.com

At last we will reveal ourselves to the gamers. At last we will have revenge. For countless generations, I've scoured this rotting planetoid longing to find a source as corrupt, twisted, and evil as I am. Blinded by his goofy mannerisms, I never saw the hatred buried within Kristian. After watching Kristian beat the life out of Paul for no good reason, I knew my search was over. As my Padawan learner, I will teach Kristian the ways of the Darkside, and together, as master and apprentice, we will bring this pathetic magazine to its knees. Shudder in fear and prepare to be annihilated.

SCORPIO, THE DEATH OF ALL HUMANKIND GAMER

matt@gameinformer.com

I am Scorpio. In my quest to destroy this disgusting planet, I searched far and wide for the most retarded and ignorant group of individuals to bend to my will. Naturally, I selected the staff of GI to become my minions. I chose to execute the weakest member of the tribe, the bald one known only as "Matt," and built my fortress in his cubicle. I even attempted to review some games, until the stinky one, "Andy," thwarted my efforts. In return, I entered his house, pooped on his floor, and wiped my beautiful butt on his curtains. In summary, I hope you all die. Goodbye.

ERIK, THE PC JEDI

erik@gameinformer.com

If any of you are starting to get out off by the general lack of news in gaming, I highly suggest you have a lookie at moo3.quicksilver.com for what I expect will be the most groundbreaking strategy game since Civilization made its PC debut. I'm also looking forward to Mythos Game's first-person, full-motion approach to its turn-based strategy engine for Dreamland Chronicles, as well as the insane destructibility of the game's environments. Hit www.mythosgames.com for more details on that one. Of course, if you don't like strategy games, you're probably wondering why you wasted time reading my blurb.

JAY, THE GONZO GAMER

jay@gameinformer.com

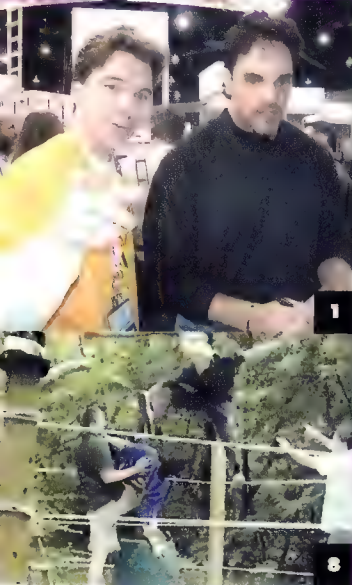
Having recently become a home owner, the phrase that people have been yelling at me for the past 15 years is finally making sense. The only things I can't figure out, though, are how everyone knew that I would one day own a house (you might say they guessed it was inevitable, but then why would they only yell it at me?), and why everyone insisted on abbreviating it home o. Is home owner to cumbersome a phrase to say in full? In any event, the next time someone calls me a home o., I'll say, "And proud of it!"

KRISTIAN, THE GAME DAWG

kristian@gameinformer.com

The era of the rookie editor has now drawn to a close. The dawning of a new age emerges, and with it, Reiner and myself will begin gathering hoards of loyal soldiers to join our newly formed Dark Informer Empire. Already, the GI staff quakes with fear when either of us enter the room. With our combined might, the foils cry for mercy as they wipe their noses on their snoot-starched sleeves. "Cower before us, worms!" We thunder. "Your world is finished!" Join us, loyal GI readers! Send in your application to be a Darkside soldier to our offices, Attn: DarkLords, and your journey will be complete.

GI SPY



CANDID PHOTOS FROM THE SEAMY UNDERBELLY OF THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY

1 Surveying the crowd at CES, baseball superstar Mike Piazza and GI editor Jay Fitzloff plan a savage attack on comedian Carrot Top. **2** "So the guy says to the doctor, 'But doc, I told you I wanted you to *prick my boiii!*'" Funnyman Bill Gates yuks it up with The Rock at Microsoft's Xbox conference at CES. **3** Ever wonder what happened to that car with the really gross battery? Here's what it looks like after sitting in the Game Informer parking lot for three months. It appears some local hooligans have turned it into a lovely beer sculpture. Breathtaking! **4** Jane Wiedlin and Charlotte Caffey, members of '80s pop-punk legends the Go-Gos, take a break from spreading girl power to sign some autographs at CES. **5** Kristian faces off with freelance journalist Tom Ham in a heated game of Speed Devil Online at Ubi Soft's Montreal complex. **6** "Yes, yes, I think we should be able to shelter some of your pre-tax income in a long-term annuity." Aging classic rocker turned CPA Peter Frampton dishes out financial advice at CES. **7** "Yo, you seen dat punk-ass C-3PO herb? Yo, tell him I'mma bust a laser beam on his fake gold-plated booty!" **8** The up and coming professional wrestling tag team FuncoLand (Chester Bittle and Duff) dishes out the gain to their long-time rivals Too Damn Good. This devastating move is called "Marble Madness." Look closely, and you can see the guy upside down on the trash can is wearing a Power Glove.



DEAR GI

♥ The Love Edition ♥

Sometimes, love has the power to soothe even the most savage of beasts. After narrowly escaping death by R/C car explosion, the notoriously bitter GI staff stared deep into the void and came away with a new appreciation for their fellow man. As a result, this month's Dear GI is free of our trademark caustic sarcasm, and is rather a celebration of the beauty of life.

SAFE AND SOUND

I wrote this letter to tell you that your magazine saved my life, and that all of you are my heroes. My dad and I were on our monthly trip to Guatemala City to get my new issue of Game Informer. We started our trip at 6 a.m. and we were talking most of the way. Two hours into the ride, I picked up an old issue of Game Informer. A few minutes later my dad fell asleep behind the wheel. When he awoke, he saw we were headed directly into an oncoming car. We hit it and began to spin around and around. I was knocked unconscious for several minutes, and woke up only when I was being pulled from the wreck. The medics said that the position I had been



in when I was reading GI saved me from serious injuries or death. Neither my father nor I suffered any serious injuries or broken bones. So thank you and adios amigos. I've included a picture of our car to show just how severe the accident was.

Jesse Anderson
Coban, Guatemala

Wow. Although we're glad we had some part in this miracle, we think that your thanks would be better directed toward your chosen higher power. Thanks for writing, and for being such a dedicated reader that you would actually travel for hours just to buy a copy of GI. If this isn't an example of how precious life really is, we don't know what is. Take care.

CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

Your mag is good...not. I give you guys props. It must be really hard to live with such huge egos. I'm sorry Software Etc. and company ever started to back you guys. Every month I read GI it just gets worse. You guys really should spend more time writing quality reviews than worrying about what kind of pictures of yourselves you can put in. Nobody cares about your personal lives! We don't care what super abilities you would like to have. Give me a quality mag and maybe I'll give you some respect.

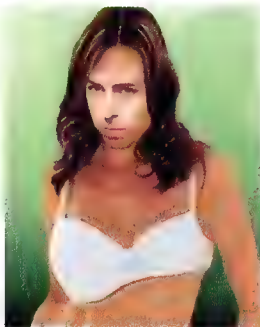
Joey
Via AOL.com

While we disagree with your views on the overall quality of Game Informer, we do take criticism from intelligent readers such as yourself to heart. As the Greek playwright Aristophanes once wrote, "The wise learn many things from their enemies." Thanks for your honesty, your wit, and your concern. Rest assured that your poignant observations caused us all to engage in some serious soul-searching. Keep up the good work, and keep on making Wayne's World jokes!

KRISTIAN'S ASSETS

What is Kristian's bra size?

The left side is a 34 B, and the right side is a 36 D.



A Secret Admirer
Via AOL.com

A JOB WELL DONE

I have recently subscribed to your magazine by signing up at Software Etc. At first I thought this would be just another magazine I could subscribe to, but after I got my first issue, it seemed to be that this was going to be a good magazine. I

totally agree on most of the things you guys have to say. Some things I would have rated a little higher, and some things I would have rated a little lower, but all-in-all I think you guys give good reviews. From what I have seen and compared between you and other magazines, it seems to me that your reviews and other features seem to be a lot longer than most. You also seem to get upcoming titles out faster than other magazines. Good luck, and keep up the good work.

Axle Babb
Lansing, MI

Gracias. We really appreciate your high praise of our magazine. Each and every month we work many, many hours to try to make the best video game magazine on the market. Generally, we feel we've succeeded, but it's sure nice to hear it from someone else once in a while. Please keep reading GI, as we will continue to make improvements in order to maintain the high level of quality that all our readers expect. God bless.

KISS & MAKE UP

After reading your review of Shennue, it's no wonder you guys are stuck in Eden Prairie. If it weren't for FuncoLand selling your rag, you would be back selling fries. Shennue deserved at least an 8.5!

Anonymous
Red Bank, NJ

Hey man, mellow out. You say to-may-to, we say to-mah-to. You say po-tay-to, we say po-tah-to. You say graphically amazing, genre-busting Dreamcast masterpiece, we say over-hyped,

bloated, and boring dud that failed to bring any new or compelling gameplay elements to the table. The point is that we all love games and we all love each other, 'kay? Let's have a hug and promise never to fight again. Also, please don't mention fast food jobs. Andy is still sensitive about getting fired from Kentucky Fried Chicken, and we don't want him to start crying again.

A BUDDING ARTIST

I am the mother of your recent envelope art winner, Jason Horvath. I cannot tell you how excited he was when he saw his art in your magazine. You truly made his day, and many more! But what really touched me is what I'm writing about today. His younger brother, Alex, who just turned 10, has never had much interest in drawing. Yet, when he saw the prizes you sent Jason for being the winner, he could not contain himself. It kindled an ambition in him that had never been awakened before. He sat down that very day and drew his first envelope art. As soon as he finished, he began another, both of which he is submitting this month. Thank you for your creative inspiration and interest in your readers.

Marianne Horvath
Lancaster, PA



Thank YOU Marianne. In these days when politicians are pointing fingers at video games, it's great to get a little positive feedback from parents. Our readers consistently send us amazing artwork; unfortunately, only a fraction can be displayed in our magazine. If video games and Game Informer have inspired your sons to become artists, that's great. What's equally great is how obviously involved you are with your children's activities, which is the true mark of good parenting.

TWO TALENTED YOUNG LADIES

What is this [expletive deleted] about a Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen video game? I was watching television and I saw a commercial for it. It made me want to vomit. What business do the Olsen twins have in the video game industry? In the commercial, they had screenshots of them snowboarding! Snowboarding!!! What do these brats know about snowboarding? It gives games like 1080° a bad name. I can tell you now this game will fail. How many gamers will actually buy this game? I don't know many 8-year-old gamers who like the Olsen twins. This is the kind of stuff that makes me want to throw my video games away.

Mike
Cheshire, CT



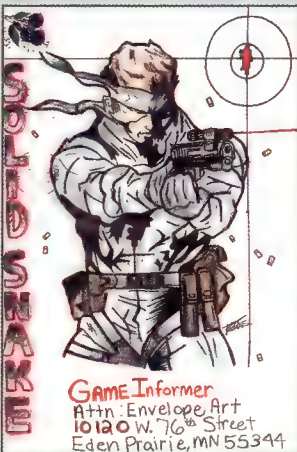
Hey Mike, take it easy. Sure, the Olsen twins are a pretty easy target, but let's not forget that these two child stars are some of the most talented young people working in the entertainment industry. From their early days on Full House, to their newest straight-to-video release, *Our Lips Are Sealed*, Mary-Kate and Ashley have charmed the American public with their cute 'n sassy hijinks. As for their snowboarding prowess, we suspect these pint-sized phenoms could easily master any sport they set their sights on. Remember, they were strong enough to star in a show with Dave Coulier and survive with their careers intact, which has to be harder than navigating any Black Diamond run we've encountered. You go girls! Be sure to check out all the latest Mary-Kate and Ashley news and products at www.marykateandashley.com

MARCH WINNER!



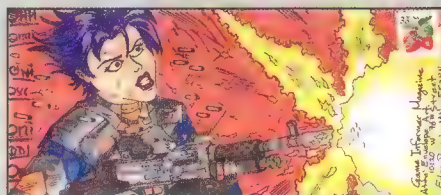
Guillermo Silva

"It started as a headache, and the next thing I know I have two girls growing out of my head."



Trina Owens

With a name like Solid Snake, he must have been teased endlessly as a boy.



Angel Arvizu

In this alternate world, all machine guns make a strange "Oni" sound rather than the classic "rat-tat-tat."



Dean Bryant

Walk softly and carry a big stick.

Enter the Game Informer Envelope Art Contest. All you need to do is draw, paint, scratch, spit, or carve the best damn envelope art you can think of and send it to us. Please include your name, phone number, and return address on the back of the envelope. If you're the monthly winner, we'll feature your work in GI and you'll receive a video game prize from the Game Informer vault.

Send to:

Game Informer
Envelope Art Contest
10120 W.76th St.
Eden Prairie, MN 55344



Matt Hennen

Neat envelope, but Zidane looks like a freaky Micheal Jackson wannabe. Who's bad?

**A DARK FUTURE...
AN UNCERTAIN PAST...**

NO ONE LEFT TO TRUST.

ONi™

**AN INTENSE ACTION THRILLER COMES TO
LIFE WITH EXCITING ANIME STYLE
CHARACTERS AND STORYLINE.**

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COOL, LIFELIKE AND REALISTIC MOVES.**

**THE ARSENAL OF WEAPONS INCLUDES
PISTOLS, ROCKET LAUNCHERS, ENERGY
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PlayStation 2



WWW.ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/ONI



Animated Violence



PC CD ROM



BUNGIE



GI NEWS

THE END OF A DREAM...

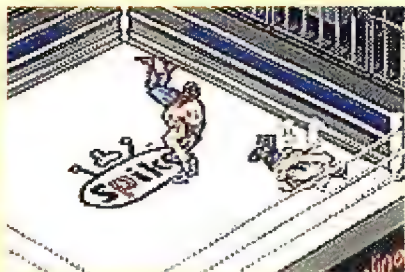
At 8 AM on January 31, **Sega** confirmed the rumors that had been circulating for months throughout the video game industry – the **Dreamcast** is officially dead. **Sega of America** President and COO **Peter Moore** broke the news in a worldwide teleconference, heralding the moment as a “dramatic change in this industry” and announcing that Sega was exiting the hardware business, and would reinvent itself as a “platform agnostic third-party publisher.”

Sega will continue to market and support the Dreamcast through December 31st of this year, but will no longer be manufacturing any new Dreamcast consoles. As part of the move to liquidate existing Dreamcast stock, Moore also announced that the retail price of the Dreamcast would be cut to \$99.95 as of February 4th. This move away from hardware production will allow the company to move towards profitability, expand revenue, and position Sega to become one of the leading software publishers in the industry. Moore commented, “The video game economy is changing, and it’s becoming harder and harder to become profitable in the hardware business.”

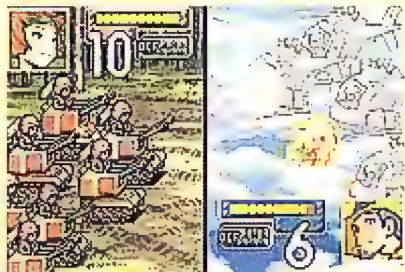
Although this news is certainly devastating to video game fanatics, Sega supporters can comfort themselves with the news that Sega’s amazing games and franchises will carry on in a number of new guises. Sega has already confirmed several titles for the **PlayStation 2**, including **Virtua Fighter 4** (an all-new PS2 exclusive in the series), **Space Channel 5**, **Sakura Wars**, and **Let’s Make a Pro Sports Team**. Also, **Acclaim** will be publishing a handful of DC to PS2 ports such as **Crazy Taxi**, **Zombie Revenge**, and **18 Wheeler: American Pro Trucker**.

Moore went on to say that negotiations were underway to bring Sega games to **Xbox** and **Gamecube**, and there is a possibility of bringing **Sega Saturn** titles to PS-X, but no official agreements had been made at press time. However, **Game Boy Advance**, **Nintendo’s** highly anticipated new handheld, will get a number of Sega titles like **Sonic Adventure Advance**, **Chu Chu Rocket**, and **Puyo Puyo**. In addition, a European company called **Pace Micro Technology** will be marketing a set-top box that utilizes the Dreamcast chipset and supports DC software. There are also plans to release Java-based games for **Motorola** cellular phones, as well as new games for the popular **Palm Pilot** series digital organizers.

As sad as we are to see the Dreamcast go, gamers can look forward to some amazing Dreamcast games in the next year (see article below) and anticipate the amazing games the company will continue to create for other platforms. Also, at \$99 the Dreamcast will be a great bargain for those who have yet to experience such masterpieces as **Resident Evil Code: Veronica**, **Virtua Tennis**, and **NFL 2K1**.



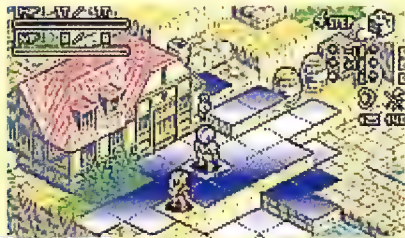
Advanced Pro Fire Wrestling



Game Boy Wars Advance



Mario Kart Advance



Tactics Ogre: Gaiden

OTHER DREAMCAST NEWS...

Keeping with its current support of the **Dreamcast**, regardless of the future of the console unit itself, **Sega of Japan** has announced a DC lineup filled with riches for the year. However, it isn't known which of these will make it over to America.

House of the Dead 3, **Shenmue II**, **Crazy Taxi 2**, **ToeJam & Earl 3**, **Virtua Tennis 2** (w/female players and online play), and more are sure to please with their updated wares. Meanwhile, it looks like **Space Channel 5** will get a sequel, despite reports that we'd never see another Ulala title in that particular guise. Other notables on the list include shooter **K-Project** and the online game, **Farnation**.

In other Dreamcast software news, **LucasArts** has decided to can the DC edition of **Super Bombad Racing**, and Sega says that the online RPG **Phantasy Star Online** won't need the services of the recently released Broadband adapter. Connection concerns or not, Net games **NFL 2K1** and **NBA 2K1** currently hold the top spots in Dreamcast sales.

THE GBA
MASTER LIST

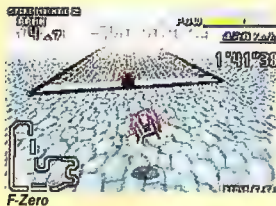
Please Note: Some of these titles may not appear in America.

NINTENDO GAMES

- *Baketsu Daisakusen* (Horse-Racing Game)
- *F-Zero* (tentative title)
- *Fire Emblem: Maiden of the Dark* (tentative title)
- *Flower Blooming Competition*
- *Game Boy Wars Advance* (tentative title)
- *Kuru Kuru Kururin*
- *Magical Vacation* (tentative title)
- *Mario Advance* (tentative title)
- *Mario Kart Advance* (tentative title)
- *Napoleon* – Nintendo
- *Ougon no Taiyo* (Golden Sun) (tentative title)
- *Tactics Ogre: Golden* (tentative title)
- *Wario Land 4*

THIRD-PARTY GAMES

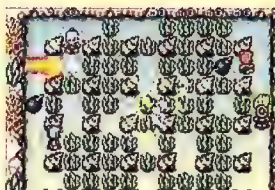
- *Advanced Fire Pro Wrestling* – Spike
- *Aerial Aces* – Majesco
- *Bomberman Story* – Hudson
- *Castlevania: Circle of the Moon* – Konami
- *Caesar's Palace* – Majesco
- *Digi-Communication* – Media Works
- *Dodge Ball Fighters* – Allus
- *Dokapon* – Asmik Ace Entertainment
- *Doraemon* – Asmik Ace Entertainment
- *Earthworm Jim* – Majesco
- *F-18* – Majesco
- *Fortress* – Majesco
- *Golf Master* – Konami
- *Hatena Satena* – Hudson
- *Hello Kitty Miracle Collection* – Imagineer
- *I Am an Airport Controller* – Tami
- *Iridion 3-D* – Majesco
- *Jelly Belly* – Majesco
- *Konami's Wacky Racing Adventure* – Konami
- *M&M's: Lost in Time* – Majesco
- *Mail de Cute* – Konami
- *Minna to Ishyo!* – MTO
- *MLB Sluggers* – Midway
- *Momotaro Festival* – Hudson
- *Monster Breeder* – Konami
- *Monster Rancher Mania* – Taito
- *Morita Shogi Advanced* – Hudson
- *Mr. Driller 2* – Namco
- *Ms. Pac-Man Advanced* – Namco
- *Namco Museum Advanced* – Namco
- *NBA 2001* – Midway
- *NFL Blitz 2002* – Midway
- *NHL Blitz* – Midway
- *Pac-Man Advanced* – Namco
- *Paintball* – Majesco
- *Pitfall* – Majesco
- *Pinobee Quest of Hearts* – Hudson
- *Pocket GT Advance* – MTO
- *Ready 2 Rumble Boxing Round/2* – Midway
- *Reiji Matsumoto's Space Hexcicle X* – Jordan
- *Rockman EXE* (Megaman) – Capcom
- *Sansara Naga* – Victor Interactive Software
- *Silent Hill* – Konami
- *Star Communicator* – Konami
- *Super Block Bus 4 Advance* – Namco
- *Tekken Advanced* – Namco
- *Top Gear GT* – Kotobuki System
- *Tweety and the Magical Jewel* – Kotobuki System
- *Unlimited Mystery Zero Tours* – Media Ring
- *Winning Post* (Horse Racing) – KOEI



F-Zero



Baketsu Daisakusen



Bomberman Story

NINTENDO GIVES
GBA GAMES GALORE

Perhaps more eagerly awaited than the **GameCube** itself is **Nintendo's** next handheld, **Game Boy Advance**. The system is preparing to come out in Japan on March 21, so it's only right that *GI* shares with you some of the new shots that have come down for the GBA and its games. Particularly of note are some newbies such as **Mario Advance**, **Monster Rancher Mania**, **Advance Fire Pro Wrestling**, and **Tactics Ogre**, and more.

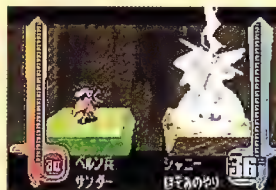
Launch day should see almost all of Nintendo's first-party titles in attendance, as well as these three console colors. While Americans won't get theirs until this summer, by then the third-party games should supply us with fun from **Tekken Advanced**, **Pitfall**, **Ready 2 Rumble: Round 2**, and a few other delights.



Napoleon



Dodge Ball Fighters



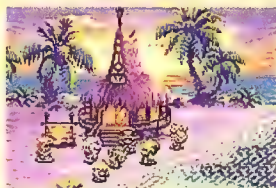
Fire Emblem: Maiden of the Dark



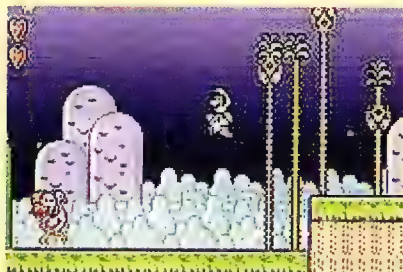
Mr. Driller 2



Golden Sun



Magical Vacation



Mario Advance



Monster Rancher Mania

ONIMUSHA 2 UNSHEATHES SWORD

Game Informer has come across footage and info for a sequel to **Capcom's PlayStation 2** samurai horror game **Onimusha**. No official release date has been set for **Onimusha 2**, but as Capcom likes to support its hit series, expect this one sometime in 2002.

The follow-up takes place ten years after the original, with a new hero holding the power of the demon gauntlet from the first game. New enemies present an age-old evil to you and other playable characters, of which we expect there to be at least one. With such a commitment behind the original, Capcom is already pulling out the stops to make **Onimusha 2** a PS2 experience. The following black and white shots were captured during a preview trailer which is unlocked after defeating Onimusha.



THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY

Good – **LucasArts** is bringing over **N64** shooter **Battle for Naboo** to the **PC**. **Force 5**, the crew behind **Rogue Squadron**, plans to have all the touch-ups done for a release in March. Rejoicing is in order, as the first-person aerial combat game was one of the bright spots this year for the **N64**.

Ugly – Watch what you wish for...After getting their **PlayStation 2**s some months after we did, several thousand UK residents are finding that their units just plain don't work. The BBC Network did an exposé on the platform revealing problems such as no power and faulty lasers, disc drawers, and dual analog controls. The problems were due to the system being rushed out. **Sony of Europe** falsely claimed that there was no problem, and that it could switch the defective units within 48 hours.

Good/Bad? – **Acclaim** has come clean on its next-gen plans. The publisher plans to bring **Turok 4** to the **Gamecube** and **NFL Quarterback Club** to anyone who'll take it. The **Xbox** and **PlayStation 2** have actually given the **Brett Favre**-endorsed series another chance at winning the console football title.

Ugly – *GI* editor Kristian's **Dell Dimension XPS B1000 PC** shows all the marks of being one big tower of crapola. The hard drive has crashed six times, with no sign of stopping for a rest anytime soon. Worse yet is the fact that the company staunchly refuses to send Kristian a new computer. When one brow-beaten Dell customer service member told him it would take an "act of God" for that to happen, Kristian declared, "Well then call me Jesus!"



Good – Online auction house **eBay** has halted the sale of any **EverQuest** characters and/or player enhancements. The move was done by eBay due to pressure from **Sony Online Entertainment** and the infringement of its copyright and proprietary rights. Earn your own damn Cloak of Flames!

Good – **Nintendo** is bringing **Dr. Mario** to the **N64** come April 9. In fact, now you can spread around the pharmaceuticals to three other friends without danger of the authorities getting involved! You'll be hooked, but it won't be the drugs talking.



LOOSE TALK

Wherever there's a juicy rumor in the industry, *Game Informer* experts are on it like a fly on stink. If loose lips are spraying hot gossip, we're sucking up the secret saliva and drooling it all over this section. Loose Talk exposes inside rumors for all to see. These leads may turn out to be 100% untrue, but then again, they could also be dead honest, and you've just learned about them months before anyone else!

Like an Umbrella virus, **Capcom's Resident Evil** series will soon be everywhere. First off is a remake of the original **RE** which should include updates in all categories. Secondly, a fourth **Resident Evil**, as well as **RE: Zero** (formerly of the **N64**) are slated to hit the **Gamecube**. Still, each of these titles is being prepared for next-gen consoles.

Don't get excited for a **Game Boy Advance** version of **Metroid**, says **Nintendo**. Although the game is rumored to be in development, the company doesn't want to hear your happiness until it says so.

Currently kissing and making up are **Square** and **Nintendo**. The former is courting the latter after an 11-year drought. Square wants to release remakes of **Final Fantasy IV, V, and VI** on the **GBA**, and is also working on an original **FF** title for the handheld.

Tony Hawk has been talking about a **Pro Skater 2.5** for the **PlayStation**, complete with new levels (and maybe even some of the best from gamers themselves) for this summer. Publisher **Activision** said that this may actually be the third installment itself.

Konami has received the final dev kits for the **Xbox**, and is busy bringing its **ESPN** sports titles to the system. Online play isn't planned, but games for football, basketball, baseball, snowboarding, the Olympics, and soccer are. Expect these to also appear on the **Gamecube** and **Game Boy Advance**.

VIDEO GAME TRIVIA

Wahoo! Game Informer's Trivia is back with a vengeance, and this time we're sinking our teeth into the hides of the world's totally tasty livestock! By answering our 10-question quiz, you'll see how well you can handle your meat. No, no! Get your hands out of your pockets and read on!

Question 1: Toe Jam & Earl will always be remembered for its obscure gameplay and over-the-top humor. Yet, as insane as it was, the funky alien brothers had to complete a task. What were you questing for?

- A. Find the flower of funkadelic life
- B. Locate parts for an intergalactic spacecraft
- C. Mark your territory on every kind of Earthen foliage
- D. Abduct humans for sinister alien tests

Question 2: Acclaim teamed up with Rare to create one of the NES' finest action games, Wizards & Warriors. Everyone played it, and everyone loved it. Yet how good is your memory? Do you remember the hero's name?

- A. Sir Malik
- B. Kuros
- C. Billy Bob Thornton
- D. Sir Jalloos

Question 3: Shigeru Miyamoto may be a genius, but he made a big boo-boo in naming his SNES 3D shooter "Star Fox." This name was already taken by Mythicon. For what system did Mythicon release its version of Star Fox?

- A. Sega Master System
- B. ColecoVision
- C. Nintendo Entertainment System
- D. Atari 2600



Question 4: Who developed the NES title, Adventures of Lolo?

- A. Hal Laboratories
- B. Hudson Soft
- C. Absolute
- D. Penthouse Interactive

Question 5: Publishing house FCI released four different Dungeon & Dragons adventures for the NES. Can you name all four?

- A. Heroes of the Lance, Forgotten Realms, Spell Jammer, Ravenloft
- B. DarkSun, Dragon Lance, Pool of Radiance, Hillsfar
- C. Hillsfar, Heroes of the Lance, Dragonstrike, Pool of Radiance
- D. GrayHawk, Dragon Lance, Eye of the Beholder, DarkSun

Question 6: During the full-motion video craze, some of Hollywood's biggest stars took a break from their movie careers to star in some low-budget games. Who is the star of the Digital Pictures release, Double Switch?

- A. Molly Ringwald shined as hapless teenage cheerleader
- B. Corey Haim starred as a kid trapped in a basement
- C. Christina Applegate delivered a brilliant performance as a ditsy kung-fu master
- D. Corey Feldman played the role of a wacky radio DJ

Question 7: Peter Molyneux won over the PC gaming community with the incredibly deep strategy game, Populous. Peter will return to the gaming scene shortly with what game?

- A. Project Eden
- B. Startopia
- C. Black & White
- D. Arcanum: Of Steamworks & Magik Obscura

Question 8: Mike Larol, the main character in Acclaim's Shadow Man, spouted memorable one-liners at any given chance. At the beginning of the game, what does he say?

- A. "Baby, was your face stuck in a cheese grater for a century?"
- B. "This is Deadside? God must have been high when he created this stankhole"
- C. "Is that your face, or does your butt have teeth?"
- D. "Deadside's the perfect hood for me — a nowhere place. The \$\$\$hole of the universe"

Question 9: Where did Samus Aran stage her battle in the NES game, Metroid?

- A. Zebes
- B. Planet SR387
- C. The Galaxy Federation Compound
- D. Planet Xebian

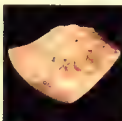
Question 10: Which of these celebrities did not make a guest appearance in NBA Jam Tournament Edition?

- A. DJ Jazzy Jeff
- B. Randall Cunningham
- C. Prince Charles
- D. David Letterman

Score and Rank



0 Beefloaf



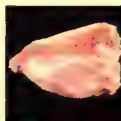
1-3 Smoked Pork Jowl



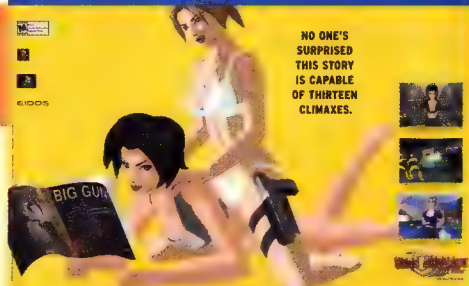
4-6 Heel of Round



7-9 Rump Roast



10 Porterhouse



NO ONE'S SURPRISED THIS STORY IS CAPABLE OF THIRTEEN CLIMAXES.

BANNED IN THE USA!

You can't hold two good girls down. Not unless it's for a little playful message between Eidos' *Fear Effect 2*: *Retro Helix* characters Hana and Rain (She likes to be on top). The above ad was banned by a few major gaming publications due to its visually suggestive theme. Looking at the ad, you'd be hard-pressed to see the actual name of the game, but then again, that's not what Eidos has burned into your brain. *Fear Effect 2* comes out for the PlayStation on February 20, but let's hope the ads roll on indefinitely.

AHEAD OF ITS TIME: FINAL FANTASY XII

Square has announced that preliminary work has already begun on *Final Fantasy XII*. Even though numbers *X* and *XI* have yet to surface, this dateless addition has been slated to appear on the PC and the PlayStation 2. Full online gameplay is expected, and by this time we should be able to do it across the two platforms.

Square says that *Final Fantasy XII* will be a more standard RPG, with *Vagrant Story*/*Final Fantasy Tactics*' Yasumi Matsuno and *FFIX*'s Hiroyuki Ito at the helm.



BREAK DOWN

45% of our letters this month were from readers who wanted to save Petye the naughty puppy.

1% of our letters were from readers that wanted Petye put to sleep. Sick bastards!!

100% of GI editors are right handed.

.000078% of our hate mail this month came from nerds named Travis Dent who are actually dorky and delusional enough to refer themselves as "Trayhova"

2% The likelihood that Atari will score a come-from-behind victory in the next-gen console wars

DATA FILE

It has been learned that **Agetec** is planning to bring over a **PlayStation 2** *Armored Core* special edition from Japan called *Armored Core 2: Another Age*. While not a full sequel, this upcoming title will include double the areas in the first PS2 title, new armaments and mechs, and more. No US release date has been announced.

Tomb Raider the movie's producer **Lloyd Levin** has said there are plans to link the movie, future video games, and the eventual DVD of the film together. The latter format will unlock features in the vids, while the movie itself will have hidden codes which will lead to other game secrets.

Tecmo's Dead or Alive fighting series joins the swelling ranks of games being made into movies. **Mindfire Entertainment** is handling the transformation, something which it is also doing for *House of the Dead*.

Developers **Naughty Dog** and **Red Zone Interactive** have been bought out by **Sony**. While the former was known for bringing *Crash Bandicoot* into gaming consciousness, the latter should be forgotten for some of its **999 Sports** titles. This deal doesn't, however, make *Crash* a Sony exclusive again.

Throwing out the rules and the oval, **Electronic Arts** is working on a **PlayStation 2** title similar to **PS-X's NASCAR Rumble**. This new license-less game, *Rumble Racing*, looks to continue its off-the-beaten-track atmosphere in delivering the racing bead-down.

Konami has delayed its **PlayStation 2** football title **ESPN NFL PrimeTime** until next season. The publisher wants time to implement more features than were planned, one of which WON'T be online play. Expect to see *NFL PrimeTime* in August.

Publisher **Fox Interactive** plans to let others put out its licenses, which include **Croc**, **Alone**, **The Simpsons**, and more, so it can concentrate on developing titles. No news on how Fox's current products are affected by this restructuring.

PC action behemoth **Gleam's** *Citizen Kabuto* is heading to the **PlayStation 2** courtesy of **Interplay**. The title will largely be a port when it hits the console in the second quarter of this year.

Insiders tell **GI** that **Xbox** is ambitiously shooting for a launch with several million units in attendance. In support of this, **Microsoft** has manufacturing plants in Singapore, Mexico, Hungary, and parts of Asia either already running or in the planning stages.

Name That Game Answer:
Saturday Night Slammasters

EA/NINTENDO DOMINATE YEARLY RANKINGS

The year's top 20 listings for home consoles and PCs have been handed down, showing that the American game-playing public is a strict bunch. When people weren't busy calling the shots for others' lives in the **EA's PC** hit *The Sims*, they were busy training monsters for **Pokemon Silver** and **Gold's** sanctioned cockfighting. The next titles showed nerdy self-loathing, as gamers either wanted to be skater **Tony Hawk** or Regis Philbin's partner for the night. Play video games and get a life!

While **Electronic Arts** showed why it's the biggest third-party publisher/developer in the world, **Nintendo** ruled the console charts with a fist of iron. In the process, it squeezed out more than a few **PlayStation** titles, and the **Dreamcast** entirely.

TOP 20 BEST SELLING VIDEO GAME TITLES

RANK	TITLE	PLATFORM	PUBLISHER
1	<i>Pokemon Silver</i>	GBC	Nintendo
2	<i>Pokemon Gold</i>	GBC	Nintendo
3	<i>Pokemon Yellow</i>	GBC	Nintendo
4	<i>Pokemon Stadium</i>	N64	Nintendo
5	<i>Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2</i>	PSX	Activision
6	<i>The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask</i>	N64	Nintendo
7	<i>Tony Hawk's Pro Skater</i>	PSX	Activision
8	<i>Gran Turismo 2</i>	PSX	Sony
9	<i>Pokemon Blue</i>	GB	Nintendo
10	<i>Pokemon Red</i>	GB	Nintendo
11	<i>WWF SmackDown!</i>	PSX	THQ
12	<i>Tony Hawk's Pro Skater</i>	N64	Activision
13	<i>Pokemon Trading Card Game</i>	GBC	Nintendo
14	<i>Super Mario Bros DLX</i>	GBC	Nintendo
15	<i>Madden NFL 2001</i>	PSX	Nintendo
16	<i>Mano Party 2</i>	N64	Nintendo
17	<i>Perfect Dark</i>	N64	Nintendo
18	<i>WWF SmackDown! 2</i>	PSX	THQ
19	<i>Final Fantasy IX</i>	PSX	Square EA
20	<i>WWF No Mercy</i>	N64	THQ

TOP 20 COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE TITLES

RANK	TITLE	PLATFORM	PUBLISHER
1	<i>The Sims</i>	CD/WIN 98	EA
2	<i>Who Wants To Be A Millionaire</i>	CD/WIN 98	Disney
3	<i>Roller Coaster Tycoon</i>	CD/WIN 98	Hasbro
4	<i>Diablo II</i>	CD/WIN 98	Blizzard
5	<i>Who Wants To Be A Millionaire 2</i>	CD/WIN 98	Disney
6	<i>The Sims: Living Large</i>	CD/WIN 98	EA
7	<i>Sim Theme Park World</i>	CD/WIN 98	EA
8	<i>Age Of Empires II: The Age Of Kings</i>	CD/WIN 98	Microsoft
9	<i>Roller Coaster Tycoon: Loopy</i>	CD/WIN 98	Hasbro
10	<i>Roller Coaster Tycoon: Cork</i>	CD/WIN 98	Hasbro
11	<i>Sims</i>	CD/WIN 98	Masque
12	<i>Age Of Empires II: The Conquerors Expansion</i>	CD/WIN 98	Microsoft
13	<i>Sim City 3000</i>	CD/WIN 98	EA
14	<i>Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2</i>	CD/WIN 98	EA
15	<i>Sim Manga Pack</i>	CD/WIN 98	EA
16	<i>Unreal Tournament</i>	CD/WIN 98	Infogrames
17	<i>Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun</i>	CD/WIN 98	EA
18	<i>Sim City 3000 Unlimited</i>	CD/WIN 98	EA
19	<i>Frogger</i>	CD/WIN 98	Hasbro
20	<i>Starcraft: Battle Chest</i>	CD/WIN 98	Blizzard

Source: NPD 1997-2001 Video Games Service



Game Informer, in conjunction with Koto, Agetec, and Prima, is giving away everything a young mecha pilot needs to get their guns blazing on the field of battle. All you have to do to get your rail gun rolling is enter.

Grand Prize (3)

- Armored Core 2 Emerald Action Figure
- Armored Core 2 For PlayStation 2
- Armored Core 2 Strategy Guide

Your name will be placed in a pool of valid entrants for a random drawing to be conducted on April 2, 2001.

There Are Two Ways To Enter:

(1) Send a POSTCARD with your NAME, ADDRESS, & TELEPHONE NUMBER to:

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10120 W. 76TH ST
EDEN PRAIRIE, MN 55344

(2) Send an EMAIL with your NAME, ADDRESS, & TELEPHONE NUMBER to:
ac2@gameinformer.com

GAME INFORMER'S ARMORED CORE 2 GIVEAWAY OFFICIAL RULES
1. NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. To enter, send your name, age, address and phone number on a postcard to Game Informer's AC2 Giveaway 10120 W. 76TH ST, EDEN PRAIRIE, MN 55344. Or email your name, age, address and phone number to: ac2@gameinformer.com. Entries must be received no later than April 2, 2001. One entry per person. Duplicated entries will be disqualified. Game Informer magazine (the "Sponsor") is not responsible for lost, mailed, illegible, incomplete or misdirected entries. 2. PRIZES: Three (3) grand prize winners will receive the PlayStation 2 game Armored Core 2, an Armored Core 2 Emerald Action Figure, as well as an Armored Core 2 Strategy Guide (approximate retail value \$95). Sponsor reserves the right to substitute prizes of equal or greater value. If prizes are unavailable, prizes are non-transferable and no substitutions allowed. 3. WINNERS: Winners will be determined by random drawing of all valid entries received by the Sponsor, whose decisions are final. Drawing will be held on or about April 2, 2001. Winners shall be notified by mail and/or telephone. Please allow six to eight weeks for delivery of prizes. 4. ODDS OF WINNING: The odds of winning depend on number of valid entries received. 5. ELIGIBILITY: Participation open to residents of United States only. Residents of any jurisdiction not eligible to participate will result in disqualification and/or forfeiture of prize. If the winner is a minor, their prize will be awarded to their parent or legal guardian. By acceptance of prize, winners agree to this use of their name and/or likeness to promote all advertising, trade, or promotional future promotion, unless prohibited by law. Employees of the Sponsor are not eligible to participate and affiliated companies and their families are not eligible. Neither the Sponsor nor its affiliates, subsidiaries, divisions or related companies are responsible for any damages, losses, or expenses that winners may incur as a result of this sweepstakes or receipt of prize. 6. RESTRICTIONS: Void where prohibited or restricted by law.

ONI HITS DARK HORSE WITH A VENGEANCE

Oni's anime appearance, not to mention lead character **Konoko's** propensity for kicking ass, is making for a partnership between **Dark Horse Comics** and **Rockstar Games**. Starting this month, newsstands will be hit with a three-part miniseries based on **Oni's** deadly **PS2** kat and her battle with the Syndicate, which is to be written by **Dave Land** and illustrated by **Sunny Lee**.

Land wasn't sure exactly what exciting features of the action character to capture. "There were so many cool elements to include I didn't know where to start! Fortunately, I was able to prune it down to killer robots, android children, mutant henchmen, and a matter replicator." Sounds like a good day at the office.





鬼武者

ONIMUSHA: WARLORDS

ONIMUSHA...ODE TO THE DEMON WARRIOR

The evolution of Onimusha's

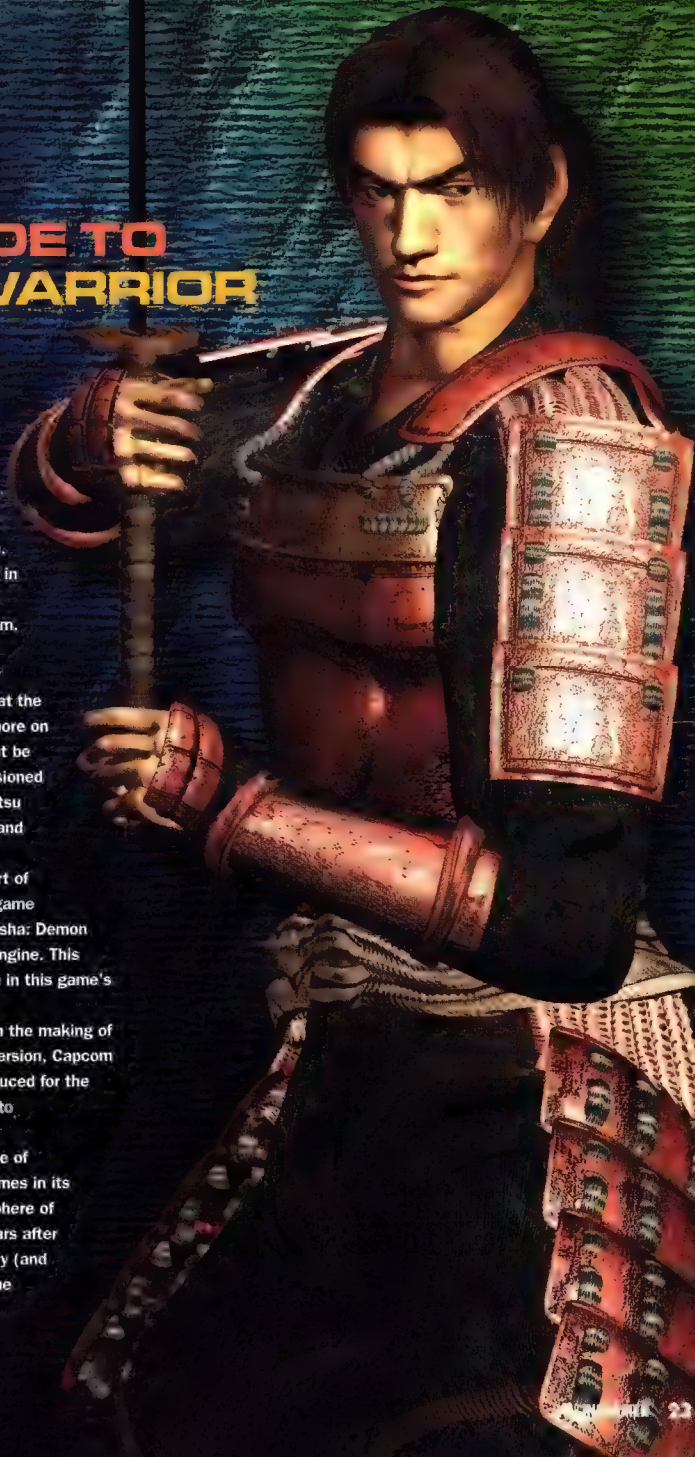
development has been well documented. In fact, information on what is now Onimusha began to surface early in 1997. One of Capcom's ace producer/directors, Yoshiaki Okamoto, told a Japanese gaming magazine of his idea for a "ninja version of Resident Evil." Okamoto went on to say that this was just an idea and not an actual game. However, despite this statement, things were set in motion to bring Okamoto's idea to fruition. Meanwhile, Okamoto's fellow producer at Capcom, Kelji Inafune, had other ideas for this game.

Inafune, who is the creator of Capcom's icon Mega Man, pulls plenty of development weight at the company, and thought the game should focus more on action. He told Okamoto that the scenario might be better centered around a samurai. Inafune envisioned close proximity sword fighting, rather than ninjitsu fighting tactics using long distance projectiles and stealth. We can see which idea won out.

Flash forward a couple years to the early part of 1999. New information surfaced on a Capcom game featuring a samurai warrior. It was called Onimusha: Demon Warrior, and was based on the Resident Evil 2 engine. This PlayStation title was yet another stepping stone in this game's long development cycle.

There were definitely more bridges to cross in the making of Onimusha. Soon after the unveiling of the PS-X version, Capcom decided to take everything they had already produced for the game, scrap most of it, and start over to bring it to PlayStation 2.

So, here we are. Onimusha has evolved into one of Capcom's most time-consuming and expensive games in its history. A game that Inafune hopes has the atmosphere of the classic film, *The Seven Samurai*. Nearly four years after the first whisper of this game, we bring you the story (and subsequent review and strategy guide) of some of the details behind this epic Capcom development.



OF SWORDS & SAMURAI

Onimusha's story is a pure tale of fantasy, but the plot surrounds actual events in 16th century Japan. The game's computer generated opening sequence reenacts a portion of Nobunaga Oda's famous battle at Okehazama in 1560 – a battle where Nobunaga lead an army of 3,000 men to victory over forces numbering 25,000. In turn, this victory allowed Nobunaga to become one of the most popular (and notorious) figures in the annals of Japanese history.

Certainly, Nobunaga's victory at Okehazama seems a little supernatural considering his army was outnumbered nearly 10 to 1. Onimusha's interpretation of Nobunaga's victory is purely paranormal. Both the history and the story portrayed in Onimusha agree that Nobunaga forces were victorious at Okehazama, but Onimusha spins a new tale portraying Nobunaga's death immediately after this historic battle. But is Nobunaga really dead? No, he has been mysteriously resurrected, and is heading for Inabayama Castle.

Meanwhile, strange occurrences have begun at Inabayama Castle. People are disappearing and stories are circulating that monsters are consuming the people and taking their carcasses underground. The keeper of the castle, Yoshitatsu Saito, is too busy with Nobunaga to investigate these problems. However, Yoshitatsu's sister, Yuki, has called upon a swordsman for assistance. As the story opens, our hero, Samanosuke, arrives at the castle, and the mystery surrounding the castle and Nobunaga's appearance will soon unravel.



CAST OF CHARACTERS



Samanosuke

This samurai takes the lead role in Onimusha. Samanosuke is a long time servant to the Japanese warlord, Yoshitatsu Saito, and a friend to Yoshitatsu's sister, Princess Yuki. He is summoned by Yuki to Inabayama Castle to assist against an attack by the forces of Nobunaga Oda. Upon his arrival at Inabayama, he soon discovers that there are supernatural forces at work. His courage and loyalty will take on new meaning as he attempts to save Princess Yuki.



Yumemaru

The adopted brother of Princess Yuki, young Yumemaru has hidden himself in the castle after he discovers his sister has gone missing. Seemingly too innocent and kind to be involved with such a monumental uprising, it is discovered that this boy's life is of great value to his captors.



Tokichiro Kinoshita (Toyotomi Hideyoshi)

Known in the circles of the Oda Clan as "The Monkey," Tokichiro is one of Nobunaga's prized generals. He leads the takeover of Inabayama Castle, and is a serious thorn in the side of Samanosuke. Tokichiro continually tests the loyalty of Samanosuke, and later takes a key figure captive.

Kaede

This cunning lady accompanies Samanosuke to Inabayama. Her feminine exterior masks her true battle skills as a fierce assassin. Trained as a ninja, Kaede plays a crucial role in this adventure. As a playable character, she will attempt to assist Samanosuke in discovering the whereabouts of Princess Yuki.



Nui

Introducing herself as the assistant to Princess Uda, Nui's intentions and true identity are uncertain. However, she proves to be an integral part of the story as it unfolds in Onimusha.



Shell Head

This strange creature has been summoned from the depths of the netherworld and takes a particular like to dissecting the human anatomy. His demonic brain crafts all kinds of hideous creatures from the scattered remains of human corpses, yet his origins and true name remain a mystery.



Princess Yuki

The sister of Yoshitatsu Saito, she has contacted Samanosuke to assist her in Inabayama. Yuki (like her brother) has been molded by her empty and troubled family life. The hollowness of her past has made her a very compassionate, but needy individual. To fill this void, she adopts a young boy, Yumemaru, as her brother. As Onimusha begins, he is kidnapped by what appears to be the forces of Nobunaga.

Nobunaga Oda

The fiercest and most notorious warlord of Japan, Nobunaga Oda appears to have died in the great battle of Okehazama. However, it seems he has returned from the dead to mastermind the attack on Inabayama Castle. Is he alive? Is he dead? Or is Nobunaga just a pawn in a greater plot?



MASTERY OF THE SWORD

Whereas the Resident Evil series

promoted survival by avoiding enemies, Onimusha encourages close combat, rewarding you for striking down foes. The heart of Onimusha's gameplay is fighting of the bladed variety. By Resident Evil standards, the combat is fairly constant in Onimusha. Most rooms take a while to clear, and battles are often prolonged by demons respawning a number of times.

The attack button will unleash a fairly standard slash, but can be pressed repeatedly for a three to four strike auto-combo. The combo is determined by the five bladed weapons (one is hidden) that can be equipped. Other attacks are determined by the enemy position and the use of the direction pad. For example, pressing back and attack will execute a kick that will knock most opponents to the ground. You can then approach the downed foe and finish it off with a stabbing thrust. One-strike fatalities can also be executed with a well-timed attack when a demon is rushing in you.

Players can further exploit the combat controls by using maneuvers to guard and evade. Demons come in all shapes and sizes, but also have different attack schemes. Some demons will come right at you, while others are more crafty and will attack and retreat. Guarding will use your sword to thwart nearly every advance – regardless of which direction the attack comes from. Likewise, evading can prevent your character from being

damaged by quickly sidestepping an attack. Using this strategy allows the player to quickly circle around the opponent and strike where it is vulnerable.

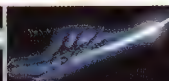
The multitude of demons are also vulnerable to two non-bladed weapons in Onimusha – the matchlock and the bow. Both of these weapons essentially give you a long range attack and make it easy to strike at enemies above or below. Each can also be upgraded to use more powerful ammunition.

Even more deadly are the special magic attacks which find power from one of three elemental orbs – fire, thunder, and wind. These attacks are limited in use due to the fact that they expend magic energy.

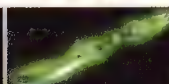
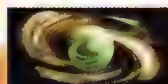
However, when your magic is plentiful, the use of these magic attacks will make quick work of many demons you face, and offer both short and long range attack capabilities.



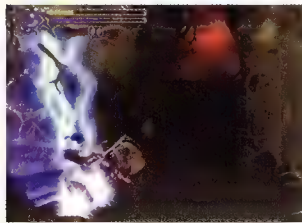
POWER OF FIRE



POWER OF THUNDER



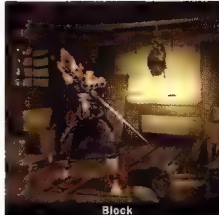
POWER OF WIND



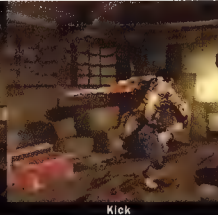
MATCHLOCK



BOW



Block



Kick



Sidestep

IN SEARCH OF SOULS

Taking steps to master combat in *Onimusha* will automatically introduce you to another important aspect of the game's playcontrol scheme – soul sucking. It's not actually called soul sucking in the game, but this is our way of describing this action.

Early in the game, Samanosuke is contacted by a subverted clan of beings who give him a powerful gauntlet. Through the powers of this large object attached to Samanosuke's hand and arm, he will be able to strike down the demons that occupy the land. After an enemy is defeated, its body will disintegrate and its soul will become an airborne energy sphere. The energy spheres take three different forms – vitality, magic, and power. Each is represented by a different color. Needless to say, defeating a succession of demons in one area will unleash a colorful show of light. Now it's time to do some soul sucking.

Capturing these blobs of energy with Samanosuke's gauntlet can have immediate effects on him by restoring portions of his health and magic ability. In the long term, the power acquired from the demons can be used to power up swords and accompanying elemental orbs. This gives you the ability to progress further in the game, as well as to kick some serious butt. Similar to a role-playing game, choosing which weapon and orb to enhance is important because you will have to return to battle and suck more souls to continue further.

This concept is a large part of the combat gameplay due to the fact that the energy of the souls will only linger in the area for a short time. If you wait too long to suck the souls, you will miss the potential reward. However, attempting to absorb the souls too quickly will open you up to attack, and likely cause more damage than good. The timing becomes crucial as you unleash attacks, soul suck, defend, attack, and soul suck again. Furthermore, the spheres of energy vary in size, and larger blobs take more time to travel through the air, meaning you will leave yourself vulnerable even longer if you so choose.



THE MAKING OF ONIMUSHA



After nearly four years in development, *Onimusha* is by far one of the biggest productions ever developed within the walls of Capcom. Keiji Inafune, producer of *Onimusha*, has said that he believes there may have been close to 500 people who worked on the game at one time or another.

It has been reported that Capcom spent close to \$10 million to bring this epic game to the PlayStation 2. Even though this is an enormous budget for a game title, the amount is not surprising given the fact that much of the work was scrapped when it moved from PlayStation to PlayStation 2.

Here is a behind-the-scenes look at some of *Onimusha*'s development, including some never before seen screens of the original PlayStation version.

ONIMUSHA 0.5

Take a look at what almost became *Onimusha*. The original development was started in late 1997 – around the same time as *Resident Evil 2*. Actually, this PS-X version of *Onimusha* used the same game engine as *RE 2*. However, as the development went on, the PlayStation 2 surfaced and things got interesting.

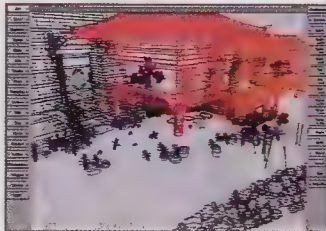
"There were two reasons for bringing it to the PS2; One was that the PlayStation 2 was fascinating, and the other was Okamoto-san (Capcom's director of R & D). Okamoto-san came in one day and yelled, "We're going to work on the PlayStation 2 from now on!" Commented Keiji Inafune.

Certainly, *Onimusha*'s current form is far more interesting than what was capable on the PS-X. The footage we saw showed a game that had extremely slow animation and showed no signs of being a compelling action game. Who knows what would have happened to *Onimusha* if it came out for Sony's original machine.

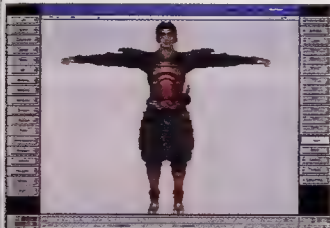


CONSTRUCTING A SAMURAI WORLD

Like the past *Resident Evil* titles for PlayStation, *Onimusha* uses pre-rendered backgrounds and real-time polygonal character animation. In other words, the environments in *Onimusha* are, for the most part, static and load similarly to a photograph. This frees the processors inside the PlayStation 2 to concentrate on things such as effects, lighting, and, of course, the characters.



Each of the moving characters in *Onimusha* – be it a demon or another figure – is constructed using an average of 10,000 polygons. This is particularly amazing due to the fact that in *Resident Evil 2*, the characters were made using 200. The detail and artistry is evident when you look at the game. Capcom's artists and designers should be commended.

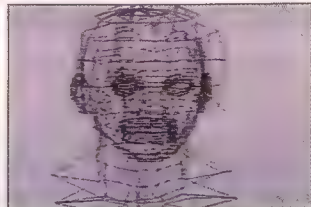


THE GUEST CREATOR



Takeshi Kaneshiro is the Asian equivalent of Brad Pitt with a signing voice. Both an accomplished recording artist and actor, Kaneshiro was recruited to star in *Onimusha*. Capcom dubbed him its Guest Creator, as his likeness and voice are used throughout the game. He was also involved with a number of creative meetings during *Onimusha*'s development, and actually began to work with Capcom on ideas in 1999.

The development staff painstakingly recreated Kaneshiro in virtual form by making a cast of his face, then converting it to polygonal form. They also worked on motion-capturing his facial expressions to match the spoken dialogue in the game.



The Joy



(actual size)

Of X

THE JOY OF X

Filling the Las Vegas Convention Center, the surrounding hotels, and all the parking lots in-between, the Consumer Electronic Show is an enormous event. One can wander for days, gawking at all manner of high-tech gadgetry, and still fail to see it all. Yet, for all the gizmos, doohickeys, and thingamabobs vying for attention on the floor, CES has been a veritable video game wasteland since the inception of E3 in 1995.

Leave it to Microsoft to change all that. For the grand finale of his CES keynote address, Bill Gates unveiled the Xbox to thunderous applause. Exhibiting an unbridled enthusiasm for Microsoft's first attempt in the hardware market, Bill spent over a half-hour singing the praises of his company's coming console. On the large screens set up in the theater, two playable games (Malice and Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee) were demonstrated on a prototype unit with only "one-fifth the power of the final console."

Mr. Gates even garnered celebrity support for the Xbox, calling The Rock to the stage. Once the crowd's reaction to seeing the world's most electrifying man with the world's biggest nerd calmed, The Rock was able to ask Bill Gates, "Do you know what The Rock would be like at one-fifth of his power?" Gates began to mutter an answer before being cut off with a curt, "It doesn't matter what you think!"

After seeing the unit, the games, and The Rock, the audience was completely wowed with the Xbox. But then, probably 95% of the crowd weren't avid video game players. Consisting mostly of reporters from traditional media, buyers for retail stores, and executives there to see other Microsoft products shown in the presentation, the spectators to which the Xbox was unveiled could hardly be considered to have an insightful opinion.

Luckily, not only was Game Informer at the keynote speech, we were given a private showing of the Xbox in action behind closed doors. While we can honestly say that Microsoft does seem to be making all the right moves when it comes to putting together a competitive console, we're certainly not about to announce Xbox's imminent takeover of the video game industry. Instead, we're here to give readers all the information available – both positive and negative – regarding Microsoft's big black box.

**"This is a
breakthrough device."
Bill Gates,
Microsoft Chairman**



Big, Black, and All That



America is a country where everything has got to be huge. Cars, homes, and even glasses of soda come in larger sizes than they do anywhere else. It seems appropriate, then, that America's first contender in the home video game realm since 1985 would be bigger than all the rest. Comparatively, Xbox is a giant friggin' machine. Measuring in at 12.25 inches wide, 9.75 inches deep, and 3.5 inches high, the Xbox is about 1.7 times bigger than PlayStation 2, 2.7 times bigger than Gamecube, and 2.8 times bigger than Dreamcast.

Does this extra girth equate to more processing power? Assuming that the technical specifications that Microsoft supplied aren't a flat-out lie – yes. In pure hardware power, Xbox outperforms all consoles past, present, or presumed in the video game marketplace.

The heart of the Xbox is its 733 MHz Intel CPU, but its soul is the custom designed 250 MHz nVidia graphics processor. With these two chips working in conjunction, along with the unit's 64 MB of RAM, developers are going to be more limited by their ambition than they are the hardware. Able to deliver twice the polygon performance of the PS2, games on Xbox are capable of having more characters onscreen in larger, more detailed environments, all with more defined textures and richer shading – and this is without even taking into account the hard drive.

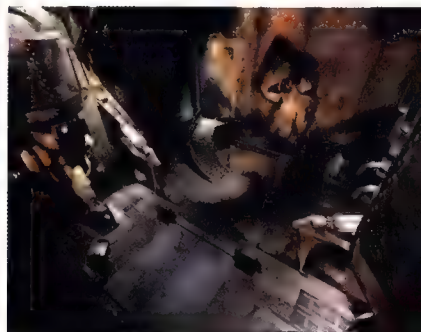
Eight gigabytes large, the built-in hard drive is the Xbox's most unique feature. More than just a glorified memory card (although it could certainly serve in that capacity as well), knowing that there will be large storage space for their games allows developers to easily do things that were difficult or impossible before. Large chunks of data can be transferred from the game disc to the hard drive, to be called upon quickly when the need arises, like a kind of virtual memory. Not only does this severely diminish loading times, it allows for more and/or much larger game environments, and better looking ones at that. The hard drive even opens up aesthetic functions, such as assembling your favorite songs from your CD collection to create a personalized game soundtrack.

Those with access to broadband Internet connections (Xbox does not come with, nor will it ever support, a 56k modem) will be able to access features, bonuses, and upgrades that PC gamers have been enjoying for years. Save file and created character swaps are sure to become commonplace sections on many sites, and publishers in the know will likely create new characters, levels, weapons, vehicles, and so on to continually revitalize their games' appeal. Xbox will also be able to follow in Sega's footsteps, bringing online gaming to the television. Microsoft has hinted that there will be at least three online multiplayer games available when the system launches for those that want more than what the four controller ports allow.

It seems about the only thing Xbox won't be able to do out of the box is play DVDs inserted into its front-loading logo-embazoned tray. This decision was probably made to avoid the fees inherent with having built-in DVD playback features, and thus help lower the launch price. Those wanting to watch movies on their Xbox will simply have to buy a remote control add-on that, with the receiver plugged into one of the control ports, will open up viewing functions.

Compare & Contrast

	Xbox	PS2	Gamecube	Dreamcast
CPU	733 MHz	294.912 MHz	405 MHz	200 MHz
Graphics Processor	250 MHz	147.456 MHz	202.5 MHz	speed not available
Total Memory	64MB	32MB	43MB	16MB
Polygon Performance	125 million/sec	66 million/sec	6-12 million/sec	3-5 million/sec
Compressed Textures	6:1	No	6:1	5:1
Storage Mediums	4.7GB DVD 8GB Hard Disk	4.7GB DVD 8MB Memory Card	1.5GB disc .5MB Digiocard	1GB disc 128KB VMU 8MB Memory Card
I/O	4 Controller Ports Ethernet (10/100)	2 Controller Ports USB 1394	4 Controller Ports 2 Serial Ports Parallel Port	4 Controller Ports Serial Port 56K Modem
Audio Channels	256	48	64	64
Broadband Enabled	Yes	Add-On	Add-On	Add-On
DVD Movie Playback	Add-On	Yes	No	No
Maximum Resolution	1920x1080	1280x1024	N/A	640x480



1906: An Arctic Odyssey



(actual size)

When Controllers Collide

Once the look of the Xbox was revealed, many were quick to complain that the controller looked like an amalgamation of all other systems' input devices. This is a bad thing? Being the ultimate interface to the console, Microsoft knew that the design of the controller was of utmost importance, and spent mucho dinero on focus testing and design.

Indeed, the final result is much like a Dual Shock crossed with a Dreamcast gamepad. Two analog sticks are on the left and right side, but rather than being directly across from one another, they are almost diagonally placed, with an eight-direction digital pad on the left being opposite the analog stick on the right. Six analog buttons are on the right side of the pad: four labeled (A, B, X, and Y), and two being slightly offset with only their black and white coloring to identify them. Both analog sticks can also

be pressed in, much like the L3/R3 of the Dual Shock. At the bottom center of the controller are the Start and Back buttons. Start will act much like it does on any other system, and Back will serve the function the B and \odot do on other consoles.

In the back of the controller are two analog shoulder triggers, one on each side, and two slots to be filled with your accessories of choice. Fortunately, a rumble pack won't have to be one of them, as this feature will be built in. At this time, the only thing to plug into the gamepad that's been officially announced is a memory card with eight megabytes of storage capacity – as much as memory cards for PlayStation 2.

Other interesting features of the Xbox's controller are the extra-long cord – measuring in at a touch over nine and a

half feet long – and a holographic logo image smack in the middle. It was once thought that, just like the Dreamcast's pad, a VMU-like device would be a part of the design, but that obviously didn't make the final cut.

Like the unit itself, the Xbox controller is big (a smaller version will be made for the Japanese market), but after a hands-on experience with it, we can affirm that it is quite comfortable, at least in the short term. Our only concerns were that the shoulder triggers felt a bit cheap, and the analog sticks a little loose. As long as it can withstand the impact from a frustrated throw, however, we feel most will be quite happy with the ergonomic design Microsoft has adopted.



Armada 2: Exodus



Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown

Confirmed Games

Although over 150 developers have said they intend to make games for Xbox, relatively few titles have been officially announced. Here's the ones we know of, and the companies behind their creation. All titles are tentative, and no release dates can even be approximated at this time.

1906: An Arctic Odyssey – DarkWorks
Armada 2: Exodus – Metro3D
Black & White – Lionhead
Blade of Darkness 2 – Rebel Act
Breed – Brat Designs
Brute Force – Digital Anvil
Celestial Realms – Fat Tuna
Crash Bandicoot X – Konami
Crazy Car Championship – Synaptic Soup
Crimson Skies – Microsoft
Desert Storm – Pivotal
Devil Inside – Cryo
Dragon's Lair 3D – Dragonstone
Druid King, The – Sidhe
Engalus – Crytek
Farlight – Edge
F1 – Electronic Arts
F1 World GP3 – Video Systems
FIFA – Electronic Arts
Giants – Planet Moon
Grand Theft Auto 3 – Rockstar
HalfLife 2 – Sierra
Halo – Bungie
Harry Potter – Electronic Arts
James Bond – Electronic Arts
Jurassic Park 3 – Konami
Knockout Kings – Electronic Arts
Last Ninja: The Return – Studio 3
LEGO – Microsoft
Madden – Electronic Arts
Malice – Argonaut
Mass Driver – Amazing Games
Mechwarrior X – Microsoft
Metal Gear Solid X – Konami
Mutant Chronicles: Warzone Online – Paradox
NASCAR – Electronic Arts
NBA Inside Drive – Microsoft
NBA Live – Electronic Arts
NFL Fever – Microsoft
NHL Hockey – Microsoft
New Legends – THQ
Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee – Oddworld Inhabitants
Project ABC – 3000AD
Psychotoxic – NuClear Vision
Quarterback Club – Acclaim
Ready 2 Rumble X – Midway
Republic – Eidos
Rocket Power – THQ
Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown – Cinemaware
Robotech – Mattel
Silent Hill X – Konami
Soldier of Fortune – Majesco
SSX – Electronic Arts
Stunt Driver – Climax
Thing, The – Konami
Title Defense – Climax
Tomb Raider – Eidos
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2x – Activision
Toxic Bunny – Twilyt
Triple Play – Electronic Arts
Tyco R/C – Mattel
Unholy, The – Otherworlds
V.I.P. – Ubi Soft
Warhammer Online – Climax
Wings – Cinemaware
WWF Raw is War – THQ
X-Isle – Crytek

Developmentally Challenged?

The fact that the Xbox is a powerful machine certainly isn't in question. However, a console is only as strong as its library. Wise to this gaming maxim, Microsoft has seemingly gone out of its way to entice the creative community to design games for its hardware. Listening to and working with developers around the world – not just those in America – Microsoft has succeeded in attracting pledges to create titles from almost every company under the sun.

Much of Xbox's appeal comes from its developer-friendly architecture. Programming for the PlayStation 2 is almost completely different than it was for the PS-X, which forced companies to throw out five years of experience and start over at square one. Xbox, on the other hand, is structured similarly to a PC and, if all the developers we've spoken with are to be believed, is a relative breeze to work with.

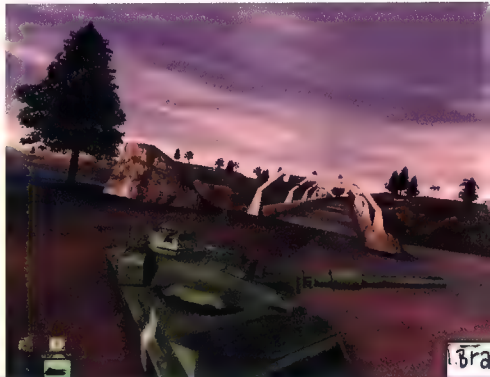
One might assume that since developing for it is comparable to a PC, Xbox is destined to be plagued by computer game ports. Not so, according to Microsoft.

Although the company certainly isn't demanding that all titles that appear on its system be exclusive, it is asking that anyone bringing a game to Xbox take advantage of the hardware. So if all goes according to plan, you may see a game that's available for PS2, Gamecube, and Xbox, but the X version will most likely have extra features, characters, and/or levels.

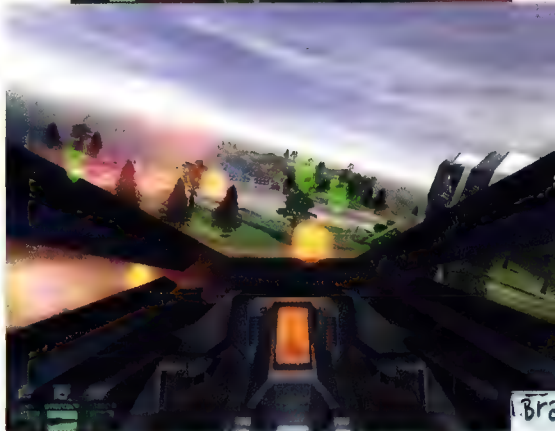
Speaking of X versions, one of the features the Xbox will have is a content lock-out option. If parents feel that certain games would be too strong for their kids, they'll be able to render titles of a certain rating unplayable. Exactly how the lock-out will work hasn't been specified, but it does bring up some interesting questions. How do parents keep their more tech-savvy children from simply unlocking the lock-out? With content in the hands of the consumer, does this give publishers carte blanche regarding the level of violence in its games, or will it force them to tone things down so they don't risk part of its buying audience being unable to play?

"[Developers] are going to take this awesome technology that we have and translate it into totally unforeseen gaming experiences. They're going to use their enthusiasm for the Xbox to blow away gamers' minds."

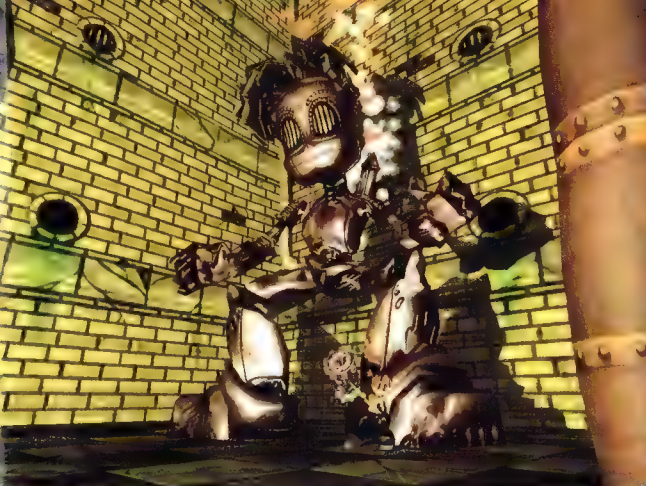
Seamus Blackley,
Xbox Technical Officer



Last Ninja: The Return



Breed



Malice: A Dark and Comic Fiery Tale

Argonaut Games

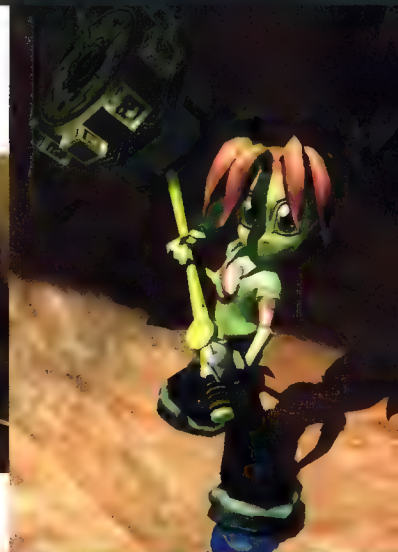
"The depth of detail just hasn't been possible on any other console. We've been freed from the constraints we normally have to put up with in consoles." **Herman Serang, Argonaut**

One of the two games demoed for the Xbox, *Malice* – even in its early stages – shows just how gorgeous graphics can be on Microsoft's baby. Normally, when you see screenshots like the ones that appear here, you assume that they are touched up to look this good. After seeing *Malice* in action, we're here to say that these pictures actually don't do the game justice! This fact is even more amazing when you consider that these shots aren't from CG outscenes, but actual gameplay.

Set up like a futuristic fairy tale, the game follows its young heroine (whom we believe is named Alice) in her quest to recapture a fire god which she accidentally unleashed upon her world. Through 30 levels, Alice must learn to manipulate elemental powers and different weapons to overcome environmental puzzles and mutated enemies.

The demo showed only a small part of one level. After moving the camera around Alice to illustrate the character detail, she performed a bit of platforming over a series of large pipes. She soon ran into a horde of giant cockroaches, which she turned into green goo with different moves from her Clockwork Hammer. This same hammer was then used as a key in a giant lock, which activated a gargantuan robot version of Alice. The robot imitated Alice's moves, and the demo ended with it trying to do a super jump and embedding itself in the low ceiling.

If done right, *Malice* could be the Xbox's answer to *Super Mario Bros.* That's a high level of expectation to hold against a game at such an early stage, but considering that Argonaut still has over half a year to refine something already so far along, it's not completely unrealistic.



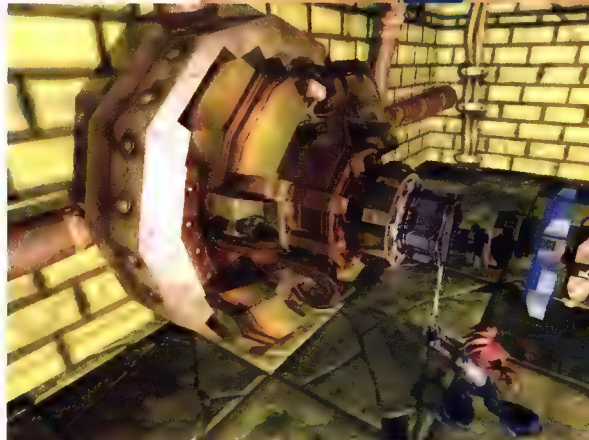
WWF Raw is War

Anchor/THQ

"The exciting thing for us when we think of WWF coming to the Xbox is really the enhanced realism that the hardware allows us to bring to the genre. You're gonna see musculature bulging like you've never seen before. You'll probably see veins pulsating, cloth will be waving, hair will be flowing. You might even see somebody get goosebumps if the game calls for it." **Mike Rubinielli, THQ**

When it first came out, we said Ultimate Fighting Championship on Dreamcast could be transformed into an excellent wrestling game, and now it turns out that our fantasies are destined to become a reality. Although not necessarily using UFC's engine, *WWF Raw is War* is being put together by the same developer – Anchor.

Around 40 WWF superstars, the ability to grab clothing, highly developed announcer commentary, audiences that scatter when the action goes into the stands, backstage areas that change at different venues, and the ability to attack opponents on their way to the ring are just a few of the things to look forward to. The direction THQ has taken with its wrestling games has always been well received both critically and financially, and it sounds like *WWF Raw is War* will continue to advance the genre.





Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee

Oddworld Inhabitants

"Oddworld going exclusive on the Xbox is extremely exciting because the life that's in Oddworld and in our minds is going to manifest itself clearly. Nothing is more exciting because we know when the world sees this, it's going to go crazy." **Lorne Lanning, Oddworld Inhabitants**

This ultimate defector was the first game shown at the Xbox demo. Although we'll never know how the game would have turned out on PlayStation 2, it certainly was impressive on Xbox.

Set in the appropriately titled Oddworld, it's the player's goal to use both Abe and Munch (control is apparently switched on the fly) to overthrow the Glukkons, save Abe's mother, and restore the Gabbits, Munch's lost race. As with other Oddworld titles, interacting with the environment and proper use of psychic powers are the keys to success.

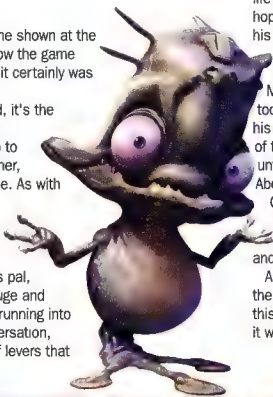
In the demo, Abe and Munch started out together, but Abe quickly parted ways with his pal, climbing down a ladder, running around the huge and gorgeous factory environment, and eventually running into a group of fellow Mudokons. After a brief conversation, Abe had the group follow him to a series of levers that opened a door.

Play was then switched to Munch who, due to his being more acclimated to sea life than land, hopped around on his single flipper until he found his wheelchair. Munch then toolled around in his squeaky form of transportation until he ran into

Abe and was flung off his chair.

Control was put back in Abe's hands, and it wasn't long before he ran into trouble. Being chased by a Slig, Abe soon ran headlong into a Big Brother Slig. Sandwiched between the two, Abe was mercilessly mowed down by their guns, and the two baddies then shared a laugh over the Mudokon's demise.

Anyone who followed the Oddworld story on PlayStation has to be excited about the continuation of the tale on Xbox. Even the uninitiated can only be impressed by this gigantic leap in an already completely unique series. After the demo was done, it was clear that Oddworld going exclusive to Xbox was a huge coup for Microsoft.



Possible Problems

Microsoft is certainly doing its best to make Xbox the best console available for both developers and consumers, yet even the best-laid plans can go awry. It's too far out to make any predictions of doom – or foretellings of success, for that matter – but there are a few naysayers making some rumblings already. These are just a few of the roadblocks in the way of Microsoft's goal of video game dominance.

Unproven on the Battle Grounds

Microsoft is very good at what it does, but it's heading into uncharted territory. It's one thing to take a first stab at hardware, it's another to bank on your initial attempt taking over the market. Not only is Microsoft unproven in making consoles, it has no experience in making console games. It does have some successful PC titles under its belt, but designing games for the console market is practically a different matter altogether. Since creating bankable first-party titles is the key to success in this business, this could be Microsoft's greatest challenge.

Simultaneous Launch

Not wanting to give PlayStation 2 any more time alone than absolutely necessary, Microsoft intends to release Xbox in North America and Japan simultaneously. Its nVidia graphics processing chip is barely off the drawing board, and, presuming it spends a portion of the \$500 million it has set aside for marketing, Microsoft could be setting itself up for a unit shortage problem similar to the one recently suffered by Sony.

Japanese Support

Although plenty of Japanese developers have declared they intend to make games for the Xbox, few have stepped forward with any progress. It seems many are waiting to see how well the Xbox does before committing to a project. Even if Japanese developers do warm to the possibility of Xbox succeeding, it could be well into 2002 before a game from any of these companies is ready for the shelves, which could mean a shortage of high-quality titles in the console's infancy. Plus, is anyone excited at the prospect of an American-made RPG?

The Hard Drive: Blessing or Curse?

The 8GB hard drive will open up new vistas previously unseen in gaming, but it could also turn into a major pain in the ass for players. Although mostly a reliable device, anyone who's ever worked with a computer for an extended amount of time knows that a problem with the hard drive can turn into a major headache. Further acerbating a possibly troubling situation is the fact that the hard drive is an internal device that cannot be casually swapped out. If a slight error is made in production, Microsoft could have more returns on its hands than planned for. Could it happen? Let's not forget the early problems with the first run of PS2 memory cards.

Too Many Cooks

People were questioning if there was room in the market for three consoles when the Dreamcast released. Now one has to wonder if there's room for four. By the time Xbox arrives, people will have Dreamcast, PlayStation 2, and, eventually, Gamecube and Game Boy Advance trying to keep them away from their American cousin. Of course, if there's one company with the funds to come out on top of such a marketing war, it's Microsoft.

Dragon's Lair 3D



Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2x Neversoft/Activision

"More realistic environments, more objects to interact with...fans of Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 are going to be blown away when they see the Xbox version."

Dave Stohl, Activision

No pictures for this title have surfaced yet, but the mere mention of it at the CES keynote made our brain tingle. An enhanced version of the greatest game around has got to be making more than a few people eager for the Xbox.

From the official press release, it can be gleaned that Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2x will have more populated environments, more levels, better lighting effects, and smoother animation. It will also take advantage of Xbox's online capabilities by offering multiplayer games and tournaments via the Internet. Web scuttlebutt has it that many of the parks from the first Tony Hawk will be included in the game, and may be sometimes merged together to create some pretty expansive levels.

It's also interesting to note that THPS 2x is but one of six titles that Activision has planned for Microsoft's machine. Once Pro Skater hits, can Spider-Man and Tenchu be far behind?



Halo



Launch & Beyond

Aside from knowing that Microsoft intends to release Xbox this fall and hopes to have around a dozen games at launch, details about the console's entry into the market will remain hush-hush until May. At E3, announcements regarding an exact launch date, initial shipping numbers, and retail price will be made. Considering the cool half-billion earmarked for advertising, it surely won't be long until everyone in the world knows when Xbox is coming.

After launch, Microsoft expects between 40 and 50 titles to be available before year's end. Concrete plans beyond 2001 haven't come into focus yet, but general manager J Allard has spoken about the total number of Xboxes Microsoft intends to sell over its lifespan – 100 million. Bold words, but when you consider what Microsoft is attempting (and even ponder the rumors about Xboy, Microsoft's possible attempt at entering the handheld market), the Xbox is one of the boldest ventures video games has ever seen.

GRAND THEFT AUTO 3

PROFESSIONAL
E KWON DO LOTTO CANDY
GREETING
CARDS

POLICE

RETURN OF THE ORIGINAL GANGSTERS

Respect is the true currency of the streets. No amount of popular success, no amount of money, can buy respect. Money can be won, lost, or stolen, but respect is something that must be earned – or taken by force. Respect is what separates the contenders from the pretenders, the real from the fake. DMA Design, creators of the influential Grand Theft Auto series, is a company in search of the respect it's due. With the release of Grand Theft Auto 3, which boldly reinvents the series in three dimensions, DMA should go a long way in winning the respect and admiration of video game fanatics (and budding criminals) the world over.

The first two games in the Grand Theft Auto series were very successful in Europe, and solid sellers in the US. But DMA is still lacking the

breakout hit that would establish this Scottish development house as one of the premier companies in the video game industry. No doubt this will all change on September 15th of this year, when the company will unleash its latest felonious juggernaut on an unsuspecting public. This game takes bloody underworld action to the next level, and the streets are already buzzing with anticipation.

The action contained within is unashamedly bloody and amoral, and might well cause the game to come under the microscope of would-be cultural watchdogs. It will most certainly earn a well-deserved "M" rating. DMA wouldn't have it any other way. In fact, it's welcomed. Jenefer Gross, Product Manager for Rockstar, claims, "We wouldn't want to do it with anything less than the

M rating. I think we have to accept the fact that it's a violent game and go with it." Now that's what we've been waiting to hear. Instead of cowering in the corner, trying to cover their tail, Rockstar is standing tall in the face of the critics who say Grand Theft Auto is beyond the pale. Finally, someone in the video game industry has the cojones (no offense, Jenefer) to accept the controversy that comes with pushing the envelope.

GTA 3 should prove to be the shock to the system that the thus-far sedate PS2 lineup is in sore need of. Read on and learn all the bloody details as Game Informer's Scottish operatives dish the dirt on one of the most explosive titles ever to grace a home console. Don't say you weren't warned.





Notice the lens flare in this breathtaking picture



Grand Theft Auto 3 shows off a great deal of architectural diversity

ROAD TO THE RICHES

DMA began as an independent, but was purchased by Gremlin, one of the longest-running British publishing companies, in 1997. As Gremlin began to falter in the late '90s, it found itself seeking refuge under the umbrella of the giant French conglomerate Infogrames. Eventually, the brave Scotsmen at DMA fled French tyranny and allied with Take 2 Interactive. When Take 2 formed Rockstar Games, a publishing wing that would specialize in edgy, pop-culture-driven titles, DMA had finally found a perfect home for Grand Theft Auto – the violent, urban epic that would become its flagship game.

The original Grand Theft Auto was not visually impressive – almost a throwback to the 16-bit era in its top-down view – but underneath the game's ordinary husk lies some fantastically innovative and addictive gameplay. For the first time, players were given near total freedom of choice. Instead of being tied to a linear storyline, you were free to make your own way through the shadowy urban netherworld, picking and choosing your missions and alliances at will. In addition, it was one of the first games to mix driving and more traditional action sequences into the same gameplay engine. The mission-based gameplay and the hard-boiled, Tarantino-esque aesthetic of game's characters were very influential in the game development community. The most notable title to be inspired by the GTA series was Driver, which took much of GTA's malevolent ambiance, as well as its mission-based racing concepts, and placed them in a three-dimensional setting. These lush graphics came at an expense, however, as Driver was solely a racing game that tied the player to a very static plotline. Despite its shortcomings, Driver was an extremely entertaining game, and racked up huge sales, making it one of the biggest hits of 1999.

Driver's success seemed to beg the question, "When will Grand Theft Auto make the jump into 3D?" Fortunately for gamers, DMA already had a bold plan up its

sleeve, and was looking toward the power of the next-generation consoles to make it a reality. Originally, the GTA team had slated its next-gen title for the Dreamcast, but quickly realized that Sega's wunderkind did not have the processing power that was required for this ambitious project. Thus, the Dreamcast version was scrapped, and the project moved to the greener pastures of PlayStation 2 development. By the time it is released in September, GTA 3 will have been in production for 26 months, and this huge expenditure of time and effort is readily apparent even in an unfinished state.

DMA is looking to Grand Theft Auto 3 to become a true "A-list" title, one that will rocket the company into the upper echelon of the industry. Jenefer Gross comments, "We are all really excited about Grand Theft Auto 3 and feel that it's making significant steps forward. It's really putting the game back on the map as a benchmark title, reminding people where the nonlinear, urban-based crime/gangster games started and showing them where they can go next."

As for the imitators, DMA doesn't appear to be visibly worried. Obbe Vermeij, the technical manager at DMA Design, explains, "To be honest, we don't really feel that anyone has actually managed to match what DMA has done. In Driver, you just basically race through the city from checkpoint to checkpoint. It's not the same as what we've done in the GTA series in terms of variety and non-linearity. We've found that, in making GTA 3, the reason no one's done it is that it's actually quite a lot of work [laughs]."

While the present focus is clearly on PlayStation 2 development, GTA 3 will also be making appearances on PC and Microsoft's Xbox as well. The PC and Xbox versions will be released concurrently, and should hit retail shelves shortly after the Xbox makes its much-ballyhooed debut in the US.



THE LIVING CITY

The cornerstone of Grand Theft Auto 3 is Liberty City, the fictional metropolis designed and constructed by DMA that serves as the setting for the game. Although Liberty City exists only in the imaginations of the DMA Design staff, much of the architecture in the game was influenced by New York City. DMA art manager Aaron Garbut took some time off while visiting Rockstar's headquarters in the Big Apple to wander the streets, taking pictures of bricks, sidewalks, and buildings. Although he garnered a few odd looks from normally jaded New Yorkers, he came away with hundreds of photographs which served as a reference point for creating the game's structures and textures. This attention to detail is evident in GTA 3's intricate cityscapes. In fact, the maps soon became so enormous that they overwhelmed the PlayStation 2's memory capacity. To overcome this hurdle, DMA has utilized continuously streaming environments. This allows the designers to use an unlimited number of building models, which means you will not often see repeated buildings or generic texture sets as you navigate Liberty City. In fact, observant gamers might find it advisable to pay close attention to the environments, as there are numerous in-jokes strewn around the city. For example, in the theatre district (modeled after NYC's world famous Broadway) there are some rather amusing, and off-color, musicals advertised on the theatre marquees. If titles like Saturday Night Beaver and 69th Street are any indication, there is no doubt that some of us at Game Informer might develop a newfound interest in musical theatre.

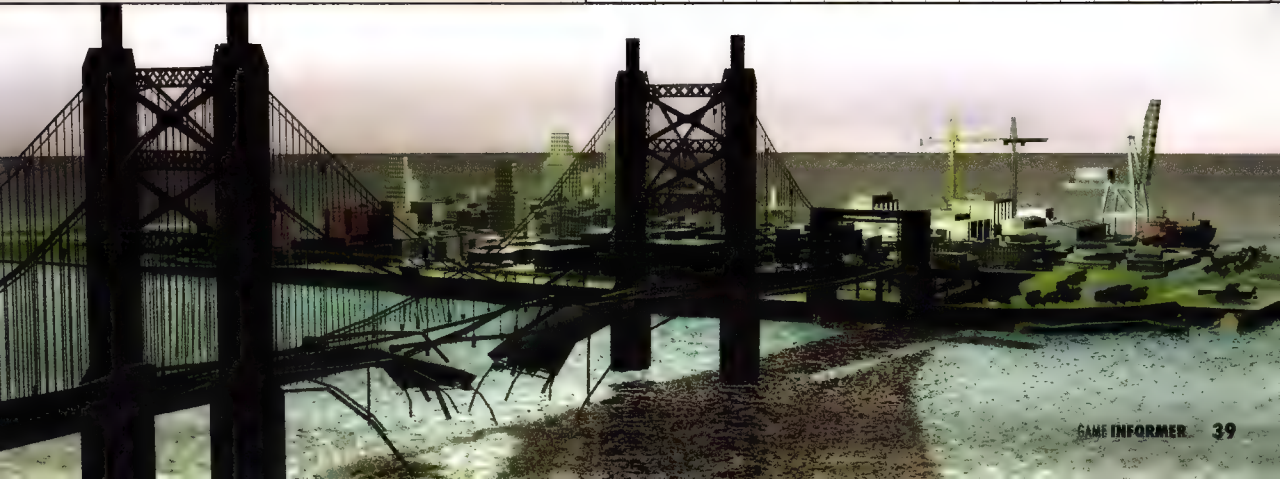
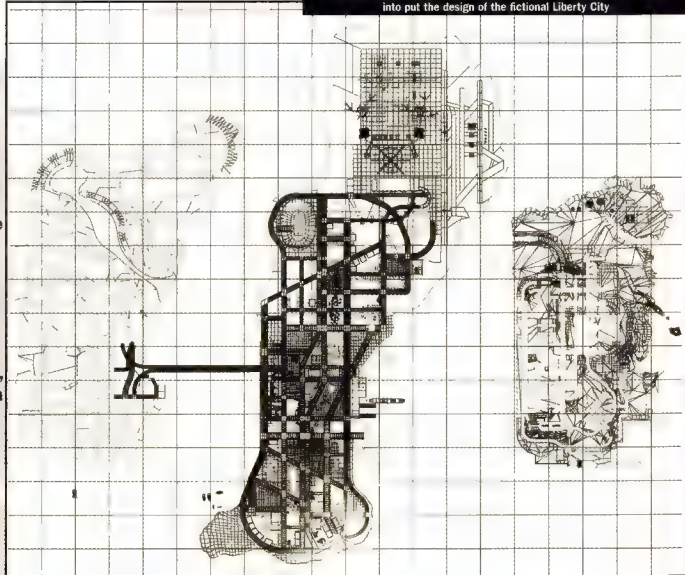
More impressive than the diversity of the buildings is the way that DMA has brought its urban wasteland to life. In a similar (albeit less ambitious) fashion as Yu Suzuki's Shenmue, Grand Theft Auto 3 has implemented real-time day-to-night changes and weather cycles. In the morning, you see businessmen hurrying on their way to work. As the sun sets, you see ladies of the night and gang members overtake the city, and hapless pedestrians flee to the safety of their apartments. These time changes are not just window dressing; frequently your missions are time-based, as you must meet someone at a specified time, or complete your mission before the clock runs out. Throughout the day, different sets of extraneous pedestrians are cycled in and out, and will even recognize each other on the street and stop to chat for a bit. There is also an elevated train system in the city, which runs on a schedule of its own. The train is used as your primary mode of transport for some missions, requiring you to become accustomed to the routes and departure times.

Weather changes bring rain, wind, and even fog, all of which affect the handling of your vehicle. Subtle graphical touches illustrate these climatic shifts with spectacular water effects, reflections off of wet

pavement, and even lens flare caused by the bright noonday sun.

The audio effects have received as much attention as the graphics, and help to immerse the player in the action. Instead of a standard soundtrack, DMA has developed the concept of dividing the music amongst a handful of separate radio stations. Every car is tuned to a station, each of which will feature both original and licensed tracks. No word yet as to what artists have been recruited for the soundtrack, but given Rockstar's stellar record in that department (their Thrasher: Skate and Destroy soundtrack remains the finest video game soundtrack ever assembled), we can expect it to feature a bevy of today and yesterday's finest musical acts. In addition to the music, the radio stations feature a squad of disc jockeys. Also, special news broadcasts will interrupt regular programming to detail your latest criminal escapade, and possibly give you a heads-up on police presence in the area.

These concept maps show the massive amount of detail that DMA has into put the design of the fictional Liberty City



A LIFE OF CRIME

When the first GTA was released, it met with controversy from those in the media who felt that it went too far in endorsing the criminal lifestyle. In light of these criticisms, DMA has changed...absolutely nothing. If anything, GTA 3 should be even more controversial than its predecessors due to the much more realistic graphical presentation. From the very first missions, one of which involves shuttling hookers to their johns, it becomes apparent that the game's protagonist is riding on the fast train to h-e-double hockey sticks.

Simply put, there are a ton of missions. The mandatory missions number at well over 50, with over 30 "odd-job" missions (for example, jacking a cab and picking up fares for extra money) that can be completed at your leisure. Although odd-jobs are not necessary to finish the game, completists will be rewarded at the end with special items and modes based on the number of these side-missions they've done. As in the past, you can drop in and out of missions at any point, and simply kill time by mugging innocent pedestrians. Basically, GTA 3 sets players loose in the city and lets them run amok. The streets are yours.

While the non-linearity and freedom of movement that is the hallmark of the GTA series is still present, DMA has gone to great lengths to ensure that the game's storyline is much more immersive and coherent than in games past. There are a ton of real-time cutscenes, complete with voice acting, that help flesh out the plot. Although details are scant, we do know a few basics. You are on the run from the law after being set up to take the fall for a botched bank heist by your (now) ex-girlfriend. Rest assured, this femme fatale reappears throughout game to drive the knife deeper into your back. While evading the fuzz, you delve further into the world of crime by pulling jobs for Mafiosi like Frankie Leone and Tony Facile, two of the kingpins that rule Liberty City. Along the way you are aided by your new love interest, Maria, and Eightball, an explosives expert who is the only person you can truly trust. All in all, there are over 60 characters that you interact with in your missions, an impressive number by any scale.

The missions are extremely varied, with about 60% being car-based and 40% out of the car. Of course, many of the missions are multi-tiered, requiring you to accomplish a number of goals in a set period of time. One mission, which DMA felt was pretty indicative of the game in general, involves planting a bomb in the car of a corrupt businessman. You must first find his place of business and steal his car. You must then drive it to Eightball's shop, where it can be outfitted with a bomb. After the bomb is installed, you drive it back to his parking spot, wait for him to return, then detonate it as he gets in. All of these goals must be accomplished in less than five minutes, all without damaging the car in



Rain shows off the game's water and lighting effects



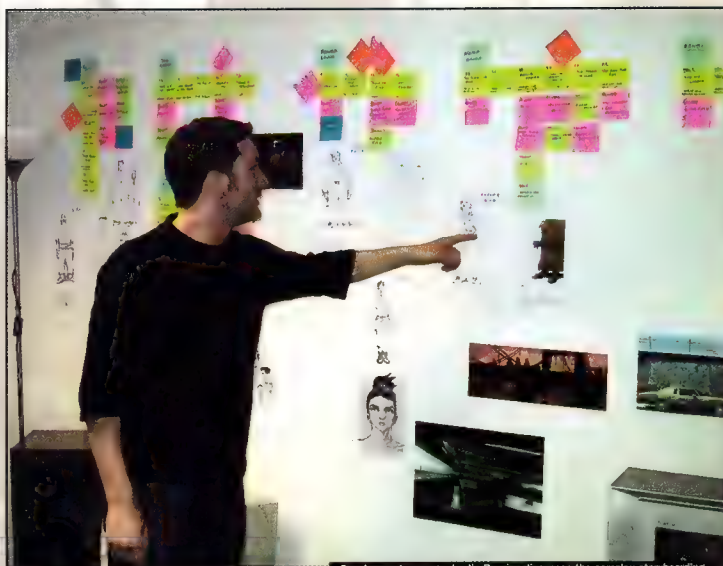
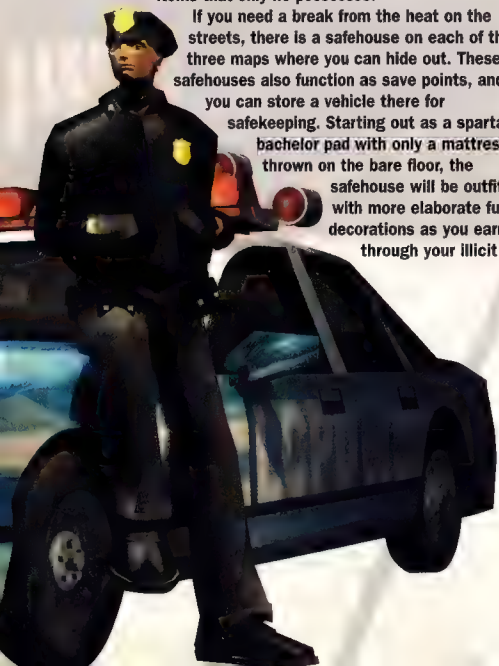


any way (lest he get suspicious). Sound difficult? It is.

Your missions will be made even more difficult by the game's revamped police AI. This time around, the coppers are much more organized in their pursuit. There are six wanted levels, each of which raises the police presence around the city. Unfortunately for you, the police are now equipped with helicopters that track your movements. As your wanted level increases, Liberty City's finest begin to put up roadblocks to stop your progress. As you reach the maximum wanted level, they will call in the SWAT team, or even the FBI and their ominous unmarked black sedans. No one said a life of crime would be easy.

The popular "Kill Frenzy" missions from the first two iterations of GTA are missing from part three. While this may be disappointing to some budding madmen in our audience, sociopaths fear not. Kill Frenzies have been replaced with a "stinky old tramp" by the name of Darkel. Darkel lurks in the dangerous reaches of Liberty City, and will give you missions along the lines of "kill twenty pedestrians in five minutes." For your dirty deeds, Darkel will reward you with a variety of special items that only he possesses.

If you need a break from the heat on the streets, there is a safehouse on each of the three maps where you can hide out. These safehouses also function as save points, and you can store a vehicle there for safekeeping. Starting out as a spartan bachelor pad with only a mattress thrown on the bare floor, the safehouse will be outfitted with more elaborate furniture and decorations as you earn money through your illicit activities.



Development manager Leslie Benzie discusses the complex storyboarding procedure that went into creating the missions in GTA 3



HOOPTIES, BATS, AND GATS

Weapons and vehicles. These items are as essential to the criminal as hammer and nail are to the carpenter. Sure, you could beat someone to death with a frozen swordfish then pedal away on your tricycle, but shooting someone and peeling off in a stolen Camaro is a heck of a lot easier. To this end, DMA has included a wide variety of armaments and autos for your pleasure.

Roaming free through the city, there is a cornucopia of cars ripe for the jacking. In fact, DMA promises that there will be well over 40 different vehicles included in the game by the time GTA 3 is released. These range from sports cars to vans to ice cream trucks. For one mission, you can even pilot a single-engine Cessna plane. A good portion of the plane's wings were lost in a crash, but it still has enough loft to allow you to jump to previously inaccessible areas. In another intriguing development, GTA 3 also marks the first appearance of boats in the series. We don't know how these boats come into play, but we were fortunate enough to get a chance to take one for a spin during our visit to DMA. It will be interesting to see how these unusual vehicles are implemented into the plot and mission structure.

A good deal of work has gone into the modeling of the cars. Each vehicle has 18 unique panels, each of which will react to impact. As you plow through police blockades and rush hour traffic, vehicle damage begins to accumulate. Damage is very noticeable, as parts of your car begin to wobble and will eventually fall off. With enough effort, it is possible to strip your car down to a bare chassis, an effect reminiscent of Rockstar's recent PS2 release, *Smuggler's Run*.

The selection of weapons stays true to the tradition of the GTA series, and many of the popular standbys from the first two games are present and accounted for. There will be nine weapons in total, including shotgun, rocket launcher, hand grenades, Molotov cocktails, the ever-popular flamethrower, a baseball bat, and a variety of handguns. Fairly standard fare, to be sure, but DMA has made one very exciting addition to the weapons list – the sniper rifle.

Sniping, otherwise known as coolly preying on hapless quarry from afar, is probably the best source of pure pleasure in the gaming universe. In GTA 3, it provides a whole new facet to the game. We had the opportunity to see one of the sniping missions and, needless to say, it left us brimming with excitement. The mission begins in the vehicle as you race toward the waterfront district. Upon your arrival, you must exit the car and run to the top of a large crane. From this perch, you focus your sights on the docked ship nearby. Eightball, your partner in crime, is slowly approaching the ship. To clear the way, you must shoot every guard off the ship's deck before he reaches the gangplank. Fail, and your friend is dead.

As has become the standard, with the sniper rifle (and the rocket launcher) your perspective switches to a stationary first-person view. This lack of mobility will make it necessary to exercise discretion when using this powerful weapon, but from a protected position, it should be the most effective weapon in your arsenal.



Each of the modeled vehicles in GTA 3 have 18 specific impact zones





THE MECHANICS OF MURDER

While any game that offers the variety and sheer scope of GTA 3 is sure to impress, all the features in the world can't make up for poor gameplay. Fortunately, DMA has remained focused on providing top-notch gameplay mechanics. In fact, the designers are so focused on getting the gameplay right that many of the graphical bells and whistles that will appear in the final version have not been added yet due to the effort being made on tweaking the gameplay. In general, the control stays pretty close to the tradition of the series, with some key additions.

One welcome change comes in the control of your character out of the car. The previous two GTAs featured a rather clunky control scheme by which you rotated your character left or right and then used the up and down D-pad buttons for forward and back, similar to the configuration found in the Resident Evil series. This has been replaced with a more intuitive analog control. There is also a sprint button that can be used for short distances, although your character does tend to tire rather quickly. The move to three dimensions has also necessitated the addition of a jump move to your character's repertoire. Especially cool is a little move that lets you slide across the hood of a parked car *Dukes of Hazzard* style.

Hand-to-hand combat for now is of the fairly basic "punch, kick" variety, but DMA is working hard to implement some more advanced combos for the final version. Still, we don't expect that the fighting will evolve very far past standard street brawling. As before, jacking drivers out of cars is vital to success, and is now displayed with some great animation sequences.

Pumping chumps full of lead (or burning them to a crisp, for that matter)

should be a breeze thanks to the new auto-targeting system. The AI-driven system actually targets enemies based on the level of danger that they pose. This makes it easy to pick a dangerous gangster out of a crowd of innocent pedestrians, and lets you quickly and efficiently neutralize the threat. However, if faced with a swarm of murderous thugs, the targeting can be switched off, allowing you to spray bullets freely.

The driving action, which has always been the weak point of the GTA games, has been much improved in this new setting. Control stays close to the norm – gas, brake, and a hard-brake for fishtailing around corners – but overall has a solid feel. It's fast, it's arcadey, and can be compared favorably to *Driver*. There is also a radar, but unlike *Driver*, it doesn't feature a street layout, only two floating points. This was intentional, as the team felt that *Driver*'s map system caused the player to focus too intently on the map in the corner instead of on the road, something they felt made the game "more like playing Pac-Man than a racing game."

As you can see, *Grand Theft Auto 3* has all the makings of a PS2 blockbuster title. It looks near-amazing already, but keep in mind the development team has several months to go before release. This should give them ample time to polish this game into a true gem. Look for more on this exciting project in future pages of *Game Informer* once we get our hands on a playable version.





Live From Spring Training: PlayStation 2 Baseball 2001

After taking a much-needed break this past winter, America's finest athletes are reporting to spring training to bulk up for the upcoming 162-game season. During this time, they will attempt to convince their teams they're deserving of a ten-year contract worth \$252 million, only to come to the realization that they are, in fact, measly baseball players who don't deserve a cent. As impressive as the baseball salaries are nowadays, the sport is becoming tainted, and World Series are being bought rather than played. Smaller ball clubs like the Minnesota Twins and Florida Marlins really don't have the big-league punch it takes to compete. With an astoundingly low payroll of \$15.8 million, the Twins would have a difficult time winning a AAA-ball game, let alone one in the Bigs. Without the implementation of a salary cap, baseball will continue to slide further into the porcelain bowl. Even Kevin Costner's touching big-screen performances won't have enough heart to save this dying sport.

Arguably so, most fans have turned their backs on America's favorite pastime, playing that their hometown teams relocate to Cuba. Wish away if you desire to do so, but keep in mind, you're loving friends at Game Informer have an interesting proposition for you. In our right hand we hold a red pill that will return you to the horrific reality of modern day baseball. In our left hand, we hold a blue pill. A pill that will magically whisk you away to a fantasy world where you'll experience this long-running sport in its purity. No egotistical player personalities. No worrisome owners. Just the game the way it was meant to be played.

Of course, we're saddened that you'd actually think about accepting drugs from a stranger, but hey, you really don't have a choice. We tricked you. Without the blue pill, you'll

have to sit through another nauseating season that comes to a close with the New York Yankees winning yet another World Series. So basically, if you reside in New York, screw you! If you're from any other state or province, follow us to the next paragraph.

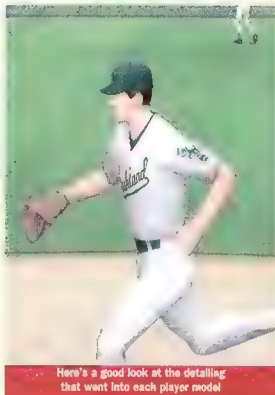
This mysterious make-believe world we speak of is purely digital, and can only be found within the video game realm. Believe it or not, baseball is actually thriving in gaming, and come this April, its popularity is expected to soar as it breaks new ground on the PlayStation 2. Four companies are corking their bats and scuffing their balls in an attempt to secure the fans' vote as the only PS2 baseball game worth playing. Over the last few seasons, Electronic Arts' long-running Triple Play series underwent a series of hardships on the PlayStation, yet early reports from spring training show that this veteran still has game. Trapped within the 64-bit web for the last few years, Acclaim has pumped up its All-Star Baseball franchise with a handful of innovative features and gameplay techniques. Always the one to gloat, 3DO is confidentially saying this year's High Heat Baseball is the most realistic baseball game ever made. Everything else is feeble! 989 also has a baseball game in the pipeline, but it won't be as timely of a release as the competitors, as MLB is only halfway through development.

All four of these companies speak boldly of their product, but which one offers the most, plays the best, and accurately captures the essence of the sport? Read on, young ones, we have the answers. As always, prepare to have your world shattered by our in-depth analysis and early look at this year's baseball crop.

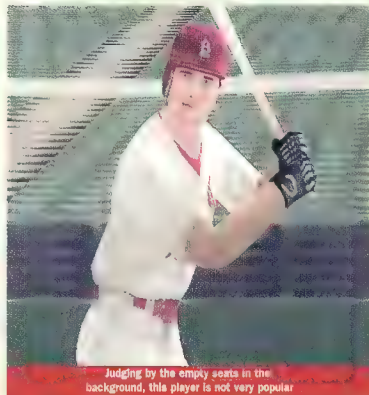
	TRIPLE PLAY 2002	All-Star Baseball 2002	High Heat Baseball 2002	MLB 2002
2001 Schedule	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Historical Stats	No	No	Yes (Career & Last Season)	Yes
Historical Players	No	25 Hall of Famers	No	No
Classic Teams/Uniforms	No	Yes (one for each team)	No	No
Stat Tracking Categories	60	48	200	TBD
Franchise Mode	No	No	No	Yes
Fantasy Draft	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Continuing Seasons	No	No	No	Yes
Free Agents	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Difficulty Levels	3	3	5	4
Home Run Derby	No	Yes	No	Yes
Big League Challenge	Yes	No	No	No
All-Star Selection	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Create-A-Team	Yes	No	No	Yes
Create-A-Player	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Animations	1,200	1,600	1,300	1,800
Signature Animations	180	180	250	Yes (Exact number TBD)
Star Player Face Mapping	150	300	100	14 31
Player Models	5,000 Polygons	5,000 Polygons	6,000 Polygons	5,000 Polygons
Ballparks	15,000 Polygons	30,000 Polygons	10,000 Polygons	15,000 Polygons
Wild Pitches/Passed Balls	No	No	Yes	Yes
Dropped Third Strikes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Injuries	No	No	Yes	Yes
Weather	No	Yes	No	Yes
On-Field Coaches & Managers	No	Yes (with working bullpen and dugouts)	Yes	Yes (With working bullpens)
Umpire Arguments	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Miller Park	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
PNC Park	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Commentary	Buck Martinez & Sean McDonough	Bob Brenly & Thom Brennaman	Dave O'Brien & Ray Fosse	Vin Scully & Dave Campbell
End of Season Awards	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cover Boy	TBD	Derek Jeter	Vladimir Guerrero	TBD
Release Date	March	March	March	Late Spring



Great hustle!



Here's a good look at the detailing that went into each player model.



Judging by the empty seats in the background, this player is not very popular.

HIGH HEAT BASEBALL 2002

While Sammy "It's So Real" Sosa won't grace the cover of this year's High Heat product, 3DO has found a suitable substitute to fill his shoes. An interesting story indeed, 3DO tracked down the Montreal Expos' right fielder, Vladimir Guerrero. Last year, Vladimir put up MVP statistics. His 44 homers, 123 runs batted in, and astounding .345 batting average were among the league's best. Throughout this career season, Vladimir actually turned to 3DO's High Heat Baseball 2001 to analyze pitchers he would be facing. Before each game, Vladimir and his teammate Wilton Guerrero, who just happens to be Vlad's brother, would play the upcoming game on High Heat before stepping on the field. Ticked to death by Vladimir's love for the game, 3DO quickly signed the superstar as this year's cover boy. Why not? He loves the game, and he's a damn good player to boot.

Instead of including every bell and whistle in the first edition of High Heat on PlayStation 2, 3DO focused heavily on fine-tuning the gameplay to be as accurate as possible. Certainly, it would have been nice to see continuing seasons, create-a-player, and a fantasy draft, but surely you agree, gameplay always comes first. If it doesn't play well, it's not worth spit. The same great "award winning" gameplay from last year's PC version has been transferred to the PS2 project. Accurate statistical tracking for each player ensures that they perform exactly the way they would in a real game. The realism is so fine that you'll even see wild pitches, passed balls, dropped third strikes, over 250 signature moves, and precise facial mapping for over 100 of the league's most noteworthy players.

Each player model is stuffed with over 6,000 polygons, and the stadiums are crammed to capacity, each consisting of roughly 10,000 polys. You'll even see on-field coaches and managers who, if the game gets out of control, won't hesitate to argue with the umpires. TV-style presentation and amazing animation bring all the action on and off the field to life like you've never seen it before. Going the extra mile, specular highlighting and realistic shadows have been implemented.

Even the crowds have an important role in this release. Depending on the situation, the crowds will react in one of 25 different ways. If the game is a regional rivalry, the fans will be more intense. If the game is a blowout in favor of the visiting team, a good portion of the crowd will actually leave the stadium.

3DO's determination to conquer digital baseball has been a long-running dream for the company, but thus far, only a small dent has been made. This year, it's a whole new ballgame. If 3DO can in fact accomplish its goal of achieving the most realistic gameplay to date, High Heat should be a shoe in as the PlayStation 2 MVP.



Crisp, high-resolution graphics make Coorsfield Park look too good to be true.



The umpire never like it when you imitate their moves.



Onfield coaches will lend guidance as you run the bases.



Part man...Part hy...Swamp Thing is a force to be reckoned with.

★ SCOUTING REPORT ★

High Heat may deliver the most realistic gameplay package out of the four games, yet without the little things like a Create-A-Player and Home Run Derby, 3DO's efforts may be overlooked.

ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2002

Acclaim's 64-bit sports line always showed promise, yet the product consistently seemed to ship with a handful of frustrating bugs. Moving on up, hopefully the transfer to PS2 will excite Acclaim's testers into ironing out the gameplay and statistical tracking before the product hits retail shelves. Looking for gold in uncharted places, All-Star Baseball 2002 not only delivers the MLB and MLBPA, but 25 of Cooperstown's most recognized players. If the names Reggie Jackson, Nolan Ryan, and Mike Schmidt don't pique your interest, then maybe the revival of the Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Giants will. Along with a Cooperstown team, which should prove to be unbeatable, players will dawn classic uniforms ranging from the obnoxious orange Astros getup to the glowing yellow Pirates gear.

Sticking with its guns, many of Acclaim's breakthrough gameplay techniques remain intact in this release. You can still pre-load throws for ultra-smooth fielding, and determine where you'll hit the ball with the 3D batting icon. If you find this batting formula to be too complex, Acclaim has inserted an Easy Batting option that is based solely on timing.

Allowing players to become general managers, All-Star Baseball is this year's king of team customization. This means you can create players, trade freely, and draft fantasy leagues. The statistical tracking is also larger than life. Acclaim noticed that an expansive Memory Card could save more data, and the developers took advantage of it.

Graphically, Acclaim is trying to capture the most realistic, broadcast-quality presentation possible through camera cuts, dugout activity, and graphical information displays. The actual gameplay will be affected by random weather effects including rain and snow, wind, dusk, and overcast 3D clouds. The player detailing has been pumped up drastically to such a degree, there are more polygons in a single player's head than there are in an entire stadium in the N64 versions. We predict Mike Piazza's mullet alone has at least 300 polys in it.

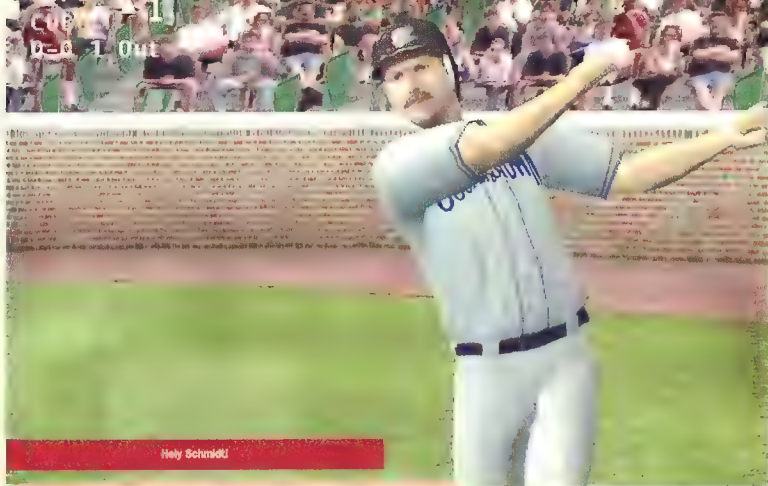
All-Star Baseball is a solid series, and the gameplay has always been decent, but to compete in the big leagues, it needs a drastic overhaul – something Acclaim is capable of doing. The question is, can this be done bug-free?



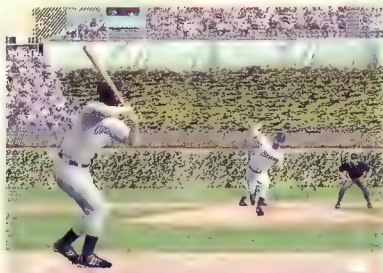
The new PNC Park has a wonderful skyline (which players call "homer targets")

★ SCOUTING REPORT ★

All-Star Baseball is hands-down the most original product of the year, but again, those who've been burned in the past by Acclaim's poor bug testing may write this one off before seeing it in action.



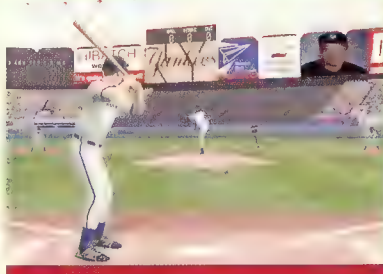
Mike Schmidt



Nolan Ryan is one of 25 legends on the Cooperstown team



Ernie! As ugly as many of them were, classic uniforms are included in All-Star Baseball 2002



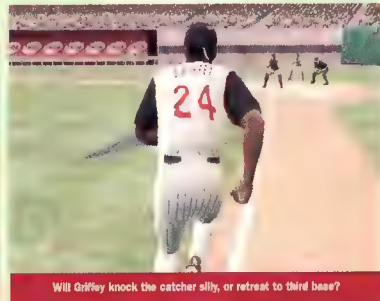
The complex batting interface is still intact



McGwire looks to make another "Mallman Delivery" to the crowd



The pre-game festivities are amazing



Will Griffey knock the catcher silly, or retreat to third base?

TRIPLE PLAY 2002

After a less than impressive showing on the PlayStation, one that was bogged down with loading and choppy frames, Electronic Arts is eyeing the PlayStation 2 as a turning point for the Triple Play series. The outstanding graphics that have graced EA's football and hockey titles has been incorporated into this release as well. Changing facial expressions, articulated fingers, and frighteningly realistic star-player facial mapping delivers a real-world essence that cannot be found in any of the other PlayStation 2 baseball titles.

On the gameplay end, Electronic Arts has reworked everything from the ground up. Particularly proud of its innovative pitching/batting interface, Electronic Arts truly believes the gameplay in Triple Play will be the most exciting yet. With a visible strike zone and a pitching cursor that has a controller-responsive pitch placement cursor, players will actually have the ability to work over batters and target their weak zones. On the batting end, swing placement is displayed through a cursor - which is in many ways similar to the system All-Star Baseball uses.

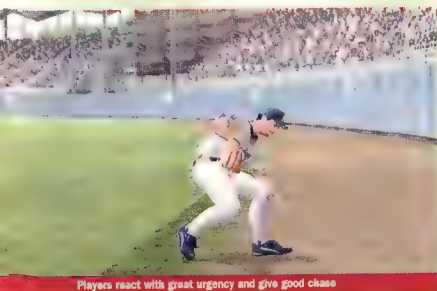
On the field, Electronic Arts has completely altered the way balls are fielded and handled. Along with one-button throws to the best base, players' arm strength will be tested within the new throwing-power sensitivity feature that makes good use of the PS2's analog capabilities. The player AI has also been tweaked to demonstrate urgency in throwing, catching, and fielding. If they're near a ball, they'll break for it.

On the PlayStation, Triple Play, if anything, was a statistical genius that offered more than enough fantasy options. As you've seen with all of EA's PS2 product, most of the fantasy options we've come to love have not been present in the high-end versions. This disappointing trend continues with Triple Play. The sensational stat tracking is still in place, but for this year at least, you won't have the pleasure of a Franchise mode.

Securing the exclusive rights to this year's Big League Challenge, 12 MLB contestants will compete in the wildly popular home run derby at Las Vegas' Cashman Field. Electronic Arts is on fire with its PS2 sports line, and Triple Play will surely find similar success. Triple Play is the best looking baseball title this year, and that may be all it takes to win the fans' support.

★ SCOUTING REPORT ★

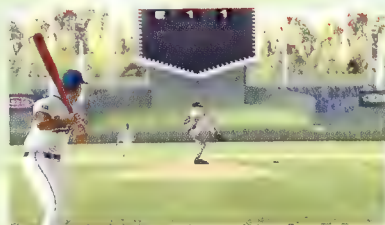
Whether Electronic Arts' gameplay refinements actually improve the product or not, Triple Play's drop dead gorgeous graphics are simply irresistible.



Players react with great urgency and give good chase



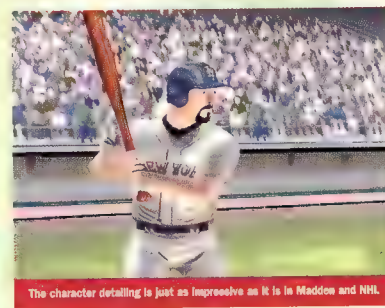
Always slide with your cleats in the upward position



Electronic Arts made good use of the distance blurring effects



Home run celebrations are now just as ridiculous as touchdowns dances



The character detailing is just as impressive as it is in Madden and NHL



We just gotta love the stadium shadow creeping across the field as the sun goes down



The TV-style presentation is outstanding

MLB 2002

Filling the shoes of the late bloomer, 989 Studios will be stepping up to the plate this year, just a little later than expected is all. Last month, 989 wrapped up its motion-capture with nine different pitchers, which includes The Rocket himself, Roger Clemens. No other details are known at this point; however, 989 did say the development of MLB 2002 should be completed in late spring. So basically, if you feel the featured baseball games come up a little short, you can always wait to see what 989 has on its plate.



John Rocker, angry as always

PREVIEWS



Here's a look at one of the two new tracks - Tokyo

Amazing detail allows you to see the reflection of the brake lights on the wet track



The powerslides in the Drift mode have been revamped



Car models take nearly a week to create



The dust kicks up when you take it a little too wide

PLAYSTATION 2

GRAN TURISMO 3 A-SPEC

KICKSTART MY HEART

As one of the first games announced for the PlayStation 2, Gran Turismo 3 is taking its sweet time in getting here. But as this franchise consists of the best-selling racing games ever, Polyphony Digital can be patient in creating a complete package. Selling over 15 million games gives Polyphony that privilege.

When the development of this title was set in motion, plans called for the game to be an update of GT 2's existing framework. However, things changed after the development team discovered that a lot more work was involved in bringing Gran Turismo to PS2. The prime example involves the modeling of the cars. In GT 2, it took an artist one day to create a car model for PlayStation. The same car took one week to create for the PS2. This fact alone pushed the timeline of the game's development back months. As time progressed, Polyphony also decided it would attempt to bring more to the table such as improved AI, new tracks, weather effects, and other changes. Game Informer had a chance to play a number of Gran Turismo 3 demos recently, and each offers a different look at some of the game's new features.

It is really hard to get a good grasp on the entire GT 3 package from the demos, since they only offer a look at parts of the game and are void of the menus, garages, and license tests. What we did see was a selection of tracks, cars, and some new graphical enhancements. We have been told the game will include more than 150 cars (some of which are listed on the opposite page) and, as we mentioned, the car models are painstakingly detailed. The cars will show real-time reflections, as well as a cool

addition that shows the brake rotors of the car heating up during heavy use.

Another of GT 3's notable additions is weather. As you may notice from some of the screenshots, certain tracks show signs of water on the driving surface. Not only does this add some great reflections, but the water drastically affects the handling of the car. Likewise, the differences in driving on asphalt versus the dirt tracks of Rally mode will be even more distinguishable. This should add additional challenge to racing in the dirt. There have also been overhauls to the dirt track design in Rally mode.

Gran Turismo 3 is still coming together, but we hope to see a finished (or nearly finished) version arriving at our offices in the coming weeks. That being said, what we've seen so far has been excellent.



■ STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ PUBLISHER SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA ■ DEVELOPER POLYPHONY DIGITAL
■ RELEASE APRIL



Laguna Seca's trademark turn



Racing in wet conditions is new to Gran Turismo

CAR LIST (PARTIAL)

Acura

CL 3.2 Type S
INTEGRA Type R
NSX 1993
NSX 1997

Alfa Romeo

156 Super Turismo
156 2.5 V6 24V

Aston Martin

DB7 Vantage Coupe
V8 Vantage

Audi

S4
TT 1.8T quattro

BMW

328ci

Chevrolet

Camaro Z28
Camaro SS
Corvette GRAND SPORT
Corvette C5R
Corvette Z06

Chrysler

PT Cruiser

Citroen

Xsara Rally

Daihatsu

MIRA TR-XX AVANZATO R
STORIA X4

Dodge

Viper GTS-R Team Oreca
Viper GTS

Fiat

Coupe Turbo Plus

Ford

Escort Rally
Focus Rally
GT40
GT40 Race
Mustang SVT Cobra R

Gillet

Vertigo

Honda

ACCORD Euro-R
CIVIC SiR-II(EG)
CIVIC Type R(EK)
CR-X Del-Sol SIR
INTEGRA Type R 98 spec
NSX Type R
NSX Type S Zero
ARTA NSX GT
Castrol MUGEN NSX GT
RAYBRIG NSX GT
S2000
S2000 Type V

Jaguar

XJ220
XKR Coupe

Lamborghini

DIABLO GT

Lister

Storm V12

Lotus

Elise 190
Esprit SPORT 350
Motor Sport Elise

Mazda

DEMIO GL-X
EUNOS ROADSTER 1989
EUNOS ROADSTER 1993
ROADSTER 1.8 RS
ROADSTER RS
RX-7 Type RS
RX-7 Type RZ
SAVANNA RX-7 INFINITI III(F)

Mercedes-Benz

CL600
CLK55
SLK 230 Kompressor

Mitsubishi

FTO GP Version R
GTO Twin Turbo
GTO Twin Turbo
LANGER Evolution IV GSR
LANGER Evolution V GSR
LANGER Evolution VI Rally
LANGER Evolution VI GSR
Tommi Makinen Edition

Nissan

180SX Type X
Fairlady Z Version S 2 seater
TWINTURBO
R390 GT1 LM Race
R390 GT1
SILVIA K's 1800cc(S13)
SILVIA K's cc(S13)
SILVIA K's AERO(S14)
SILVIA SPEC R(S15)
SILVIA Varetta
SKYLINE GTS-t Type M(R32)
SKYLINE GT-R Vspec II(R32)
SKYLINE GT-R Vspec(R33)
SKYLINE GT-R Vspec(R34)
SKYLINE GT-R Vspec II(R34)
PENNZOIL NISMO GT-R GT
CALSONIC SKYLINE GT
LOCTITE ZEXEL GT-R GT

Opel

Calibra Touring

Pagani

Zonda C12
Zonda C12S

Peugeot

206 Rally

Renault

Clio Sport V6 24V
Clio Sport Race

RUF

RUF 3400S
RUF CTR2
RUF R-GT

Shelby

Cobra

Subaru

IMPREZA COUPE 22B STI
Version
IMPREZA SEDAN WRX STI
Ver. V
IMPREZA WAGON WRX STI
Ver. V
IMPREZA WRX STI
IMPREZA Sports WAGON STI
IMPREZA Rally prototype
LEGACY TOURING WAGON GT-B
LEGACY B4 RSK
LEGACY B4 Blitzzen

Suzuki

ALTO WORKS SUZUKI SPORTS
LIMITED

Tommykaira

ZZ-S

Toyota

ALTEZZA RS200
ALTEZZA AS200
CELICAGT-FOUR (ST205)
CELICA SS-II
COROLLA Rally
GT-ONE (TS020) Race
GT-ONE (TS020) Road
MR2 GT-S
MR2 G Limited
MR-SS EDITION
SPRINTER TRUENO
GT-APEX(AE86 Type I)
SUPRA RZ
SUPRA SZ-R
VITZ Euro Edition
VITZ RS 1.5
SUPERAUTOBACS APEX
MR-S GT
Castrol Tom's SUPRA GT
DENSO SARD SUPRA GT

TVR

Griffith 500
Speed 12
Tuscan Speed 6

Volkswagen

Lupo Cup
New Beetle 2.0
New Beetle RSI
New Beetle Cup



The new AI is said to react to behavior and other tricks in the turns



There are just some times when you need to drive aggressively



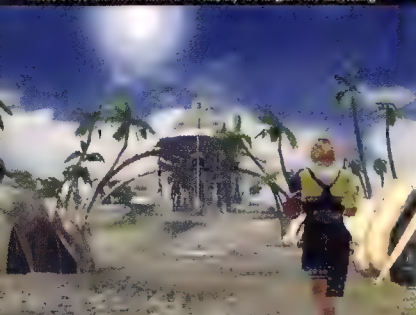
ユウナ: あのだ……
ガード お願いしちゃダメかな?



始まりは「シン」だ
だからもう一度「シン」に会えば……



声優: 召喚士とは…… 怪物の力で
我らに…… 村民を苦しめた悪魔か
Voice-overs and facial motion accompany the magnificent storytelling



With an active 3D map, the camera will follow the character and spin to reveal different perspectives



A scourge has spread across this peaceful land, bringing destruction to everything it touches. Those who've felt the wrath of this trespasser call it Sin

PLAYSTATION 2

FINAL FANTASY X

A NEW-WAVE ADVENTURE

“They say your head gets all funny when Sin is near.

Maybe what you saw was some kind of dream?” This is the first of what will hopefully be many excerpts from the first PlayStation 2 Final Fantasy. At this time, details are scarce and a release date still hasn't been solidified, yet always the giving type, Square Soft was more than willing to tease gamers with a glimpse of what the future may hold for the series. This forthcoming adventure showcases many graphical similarities to the previous installments, and early on, everyone is saying it looks to be in the same vein as Final Fantasy VIII. Rest assured, though, with the power of PlayStation 2 behind it, Final Fantasy X will indeed break new ground and stand on its own.

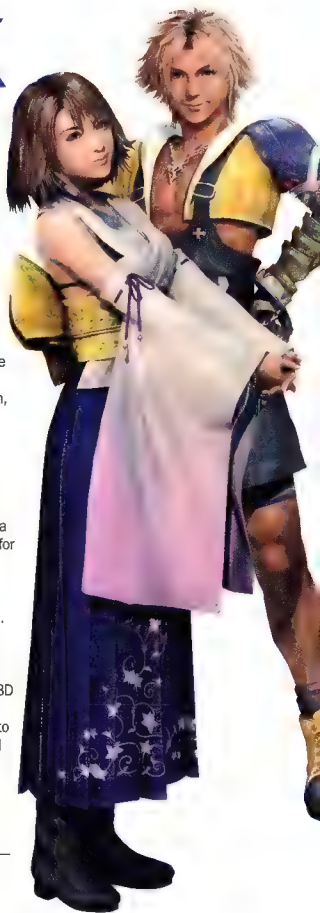
Hironobu Sakaguchi, the creator of the series, may have learned a thing or two about storytelling in his latest endeavor and first motion picture, Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within. Granted, Hironobu's work is brilliant to begin with, but now, the drama he delivers so brilliantly will be brought to life in an entirely new light. For the first time in Final Fantasy history, the characters will actually have voices, and to add to the realism, facial motions and lip-syncing.

Square Soft hasn't revealed any significant details as to what the plot may hold; however, we have been supplied with a few snippets of in-game dialogue and two character profiles. From what we could piece together, a powerful destructive force, known as Sin, is rapidly spreading across the land like a disease. Wherever it goes, chaos follows. Who or what is Sin? We'll have to wait and see.

The main character of this adventure is a spunky 17-year-old named Tidus. Sporting a Goo Goo Dolls haircut, Tidus is described as an unflinching sportsman with a passion for the underwater sport Blitzball. If you look closely at Tidus' sword, you can see it's composed entirely of water. Wonder if this dork has gills? His accomplice, Yuna, is also 17. Love is in the air! Obviously a fan of Marilyn Manson, Yuna has two different eye colors – blue and green. Within these gorgeous eyes shines a fierce determination. Like her father, the High Summoner Braska, Yuna has the ability to summon, which leads us to this quote: “Only the Summoners' Last Summoning can defeat Sin.” Does this quote relate to Yuna and her powers?

Another interesting alteration to the Final Fantasy mix is the transformation into the 3D realm. It appears as though the entire adventure will unfold within highly detailed 3D environments, as opposed to the pre-rendered backdrops we've become accustomed to in the PlayStation run. Natural camera work will follow the characters' movements, and for the first time, the impressive Final Fantasy worlds can be viewed from multiple angles.

As for the rest of the game, we can only sit back and dream of the possibilities until Square fires another information-packed missile our way. If all goes as planned, Final Fantasy X should release in Japan and the US later this year.



■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ PUBLISHER SQUARE SOFT
■ DEVELOPER SQUARE SOFT ■ RELEASE FALL

REVIEWS

FINAL FANTASY X

ファイナルファンタジーX



PREVIEWS



The F-16 is an agile performer despite its age



The delta wing configuration of the F-16



Fly low to avoid radar or buzz the control tower



The F-22's first-strike capability in action

PLAYSTATION 2

ACE COMBAT 4

RIDE INTO THE DANGER ZONE

Few console games have achieved true flight sim status on the 32 and 64-bit consoles, and some might argue that the Ace Combat series was just a smidgen too arcade-like to be considered such. Whatever your favorite flavor of simulation, however, it's undeniable that Ace Combat's blend of realistic flight with more action-oriented missions serves up a generous portion of gaming addiction.

Ace Combat 3: Electrosphere was one of the most impressive graphical feats of the PlayStation's career, and from all appearances, Namco didn't slack off for the series' premiere on the PS2. Set during a world war brought on by a series of disastrous meteor showers, the gorgeous terrain frequently reminds you of this with massive craters and rough terrain.

So far, all of the fighter planes shown have been

modern-era jets, and there is no word on whether the game will feature some of the futuristic planes of Ace Combat 3, or even how far into the future the game takes place. Of course, there is nothing low-tech about the F-22, a plane Namco seems quite fond of displaying.

The story is pretty standard video game/action movie fare. It seems the main character's family was slain in the early days of the war and he holds a vendetta against the enemy pilot responsible for his angst. If the plot surrounding this melodrama is anywhere near as interesting as the Ace Combat 3 story was before Namco ripped its bleeding heart out of the English version of the game, you can expect a surprisingly deep game loaded with characters and tough dilemmas. You may even have the option to make choices during gameplay that put you on a different series of missions

(a feature that was also removed from Ace Combat 3 for the English version).

Fortunately, Namco has committed to bringing the storyline to the states, although the game is far too incomplete for anyone to be certain of what will happen when the holiday deadline rears its ugly head. If they do a complete translation and it's half as intriguing as its Japanese precursor, this game could have the depth American Ace Combat fans have been waiting for, and the fantastic visuals and action they've come to expect. Even if Namco drops the plot, we have few doubts that Ace Combat 4 will be a stunning graphical experience with a wide variety of planes and interesting mission objectives.



PLAYSTATION 2

4X4 EVOLUTION

THE MISSING LINK

There comes a time in every man's life when he has to ask himself, "<insert name here>, what game do I want to play today? What will give me the most satisfaction for the longest amount of time for the money I want to spend? What will keep me up until 4:16 am on a work/school day?" The answer, friends, will be 4x4 Evolution for the PlayStation 2.

4x4 Evo, in its alpha stages mind you, looks to be one of the most gorgeous and polished releases yet for a system that has users chomping at the bit to get their hands on a hot new title. Fans of the Dreamcast version will have all the gadgets and details available to them on the PS2 that they had previously, but the tracks, environments, vehicles, and gameplay will be truly awe-inspiring. A target fan of 4x4 Evo is, essentially, a motorhead. Why is that important? Because, in a game that rests its laurels on its realism, to be embraced by the general public is a huge tribute to the title's development team. In any other racer, the player wouldn't care about what the best kind of exhaust manifold would be to increase torque. In 4x4, you'll have to care. If you don't, you're finishing last.

Researching upgrades for your ride is as important as how

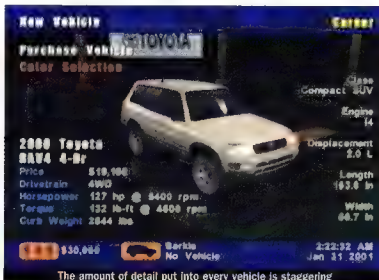
you drive in the races themselves. Painstaking detail went into each and every part available for purchase. Not only will you find yourself spending obscene amounts of money on items that will increase your horsepower by 2 or 3 percent, but you'll also catch yourself laying down change for accessories that will do nothing but make your truck look cool. We had spent close to \$8,000 on fog lights, lift kits, and fender flares before we even realized what was happening. We might have lost a lot of races, but damn, we looked good doing it.

One fact that may sway people's opinions between the Dreamcast and PlayStation 2 versions is the lack of online play capability for the PlayStation 2's release. This confronts the average PS2 gamer with the form vs. function question. Do I want a game that will look incredible, but I can only play with one other person? Or do want a game that will look good, and I can play countless times with countless people? Time will tell what your answer will be, but the fact remains that 4x4 Evolution is a racing fanatic's dream come true. If Terminal Reality is able to unleash even a portion of the PS2's processing power for this title, it will be hard to get your hot little hands on it come springtime. You'd better get to the store before we do.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** GATHERING OF DEVELOPERS ■ **DEVELOPER** TERMINAL REALITY
 ■ **RELEASE** EARLY MARCH



It was nice knowing you, little Toyota



The amount of detail put into every vehicle is staggering



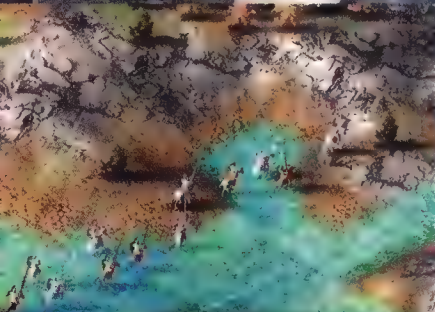
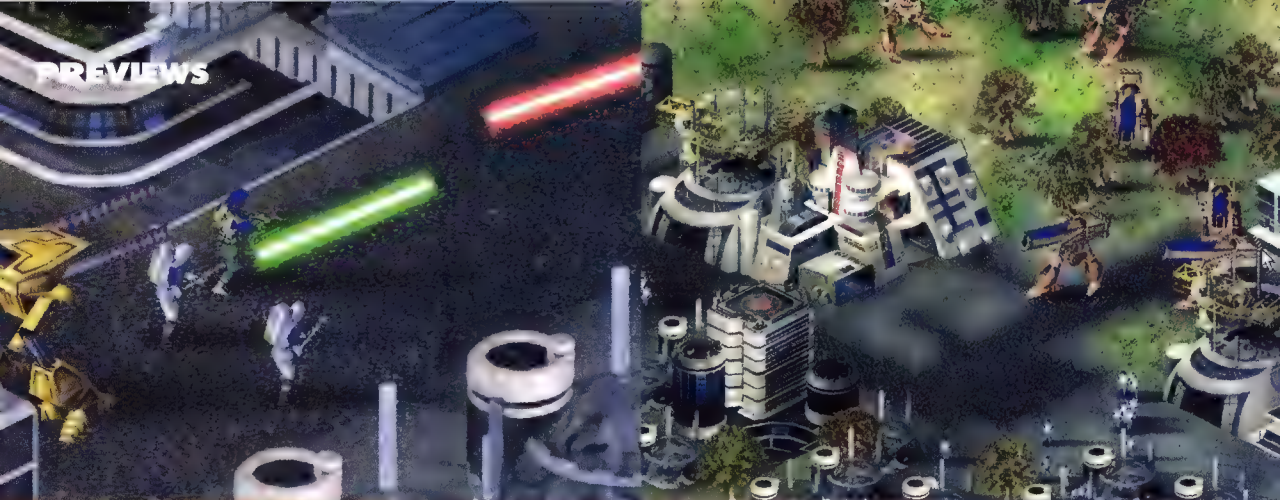
You'll see particle effects as well as hear them



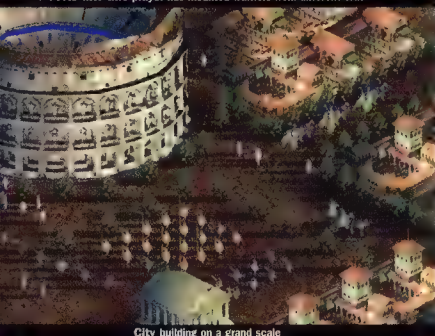
Our Silverado could use some suspension adjustments...



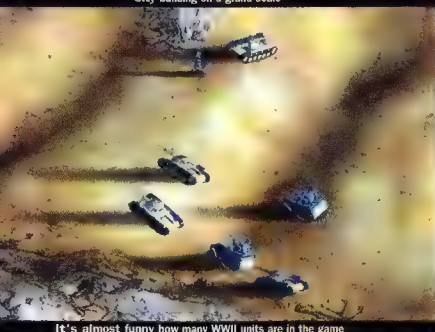
...But it's much more fun to spend money on accessories



It looks like this player has mounted warriors from different eras



City building on a grand scale



It's almost funny how many WWII units are in the game

PC

EMPIRE EARTH

FIRE, FISSION, AND NANOTECH

With former Age of Empires lead designer, John Goodman, at the helm of *Empire Earth*, expectations are high for this massive strategy game which is something of a cross between a traditional turn-based empire builder and a regular RTS. Featuring numerous historical scenarios as well as a random world-map generator for a Civilization-style game, players can begin play in the Paleolithic age with a few club-wielding warriors and rock throwers, then upgrade their way through 12 epochs. These range from Stone and Bronze all the way up to the Information and futuristic Nanotech ages.

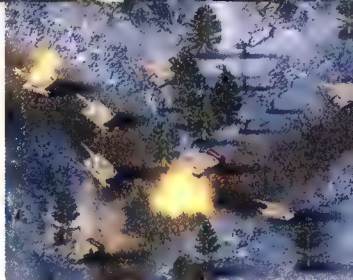
There are over 200 units in the game covering just about every weapon that was ever put to common use. Eventually, players gain access to exotic futuristic weapons that include laser infantry, hover tanks, and massive bipedal mecha. As an example of the immense variety, there are six different fighter planes (not bombers, mind you) from WWII alone.

As for the empire-building aspect, players are allowed to edit a preset civilization, or create their own by purchasing bonuses to over 100 attributes with points from a pool. As you advance through the game, you get additional points that

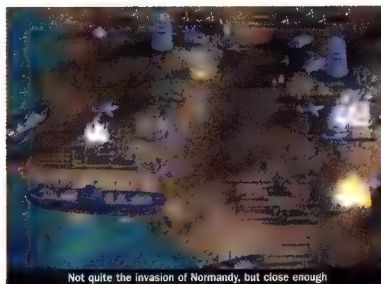
can be used to further customize your empire. Like *Civilization*, *Empire Earth* will feature Wonders of the World and Warlords-style heroes like Gilgamesh, Patton, and Elvis to enhance the effectiveness of their cities and armies.

While the cities appear complex, *Stainless Steel* promises that resource management will be as simple as building the proper structure and letting your labor force go to work. Constructing a granary, for instance, will cause any available peasants to immediately build fields around it and start farming. *AOE* fans will be pleased to learn they won't have to replant crops manually.

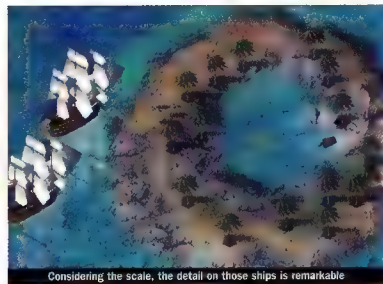
Multiplayer will be fully customizable, allowing players to choose which epochs they wish to make available, choose their own maps, and select different win conditions. For the inventive, the game will include a map and unit editor. Although there are no plans for allowing modified textures at this time, player-created mods will most likely remedy this. Whether you're a *Civilization* or *Age of Empires* fan, it's doubtless that *Empire Earth* is the next big step in empire building, and real-time strategy.



■ **STYLE** 1 TO 16-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** SIERRA STUDIOS ■ **DEVELOPER** STAINLESS STEEL STUDIOS
 ■ **RELEASE** SUMMER



Not quite the invasion of Normandy, but close enough



Considering the scale, the detail on those ships is remarkable



PLAYSTATION

THE SIMPSONS WRESTLING

CAN YOU SMELL WHAT HOMER SIMPSON IS COOKING?

When Fox Interactive pulled away the curtain to unveil this obscure game at last summer's Electronic Entertainment Expo, it wasn't a question of what the development team was smoking, but rather, how much. As avid viewers of the television series, we had the highest of expectations for this title. Within minutes, however, our smiles transformed into frowns, and our first impression could best be described as bowel-liquefying. Apparently, we weren't the only ones with damp drawers, as Fox Interactive delayed this project numerous times – hopefully, to perform exorcisms and rid this miserable software of its heinous gameplay.

After being under the scalpel for months on end, Fox is ready to lay its Simpson egg on retail shelves. Is the game fixed? We don't know, but for Fox's sake, it certainly better be, because we'll rip it to shreds with a fiery vengeance if a diarrific stench still permeates this title. Fox really hasn't shown us much as of late, but the new batch of screenshots clearly show signs of improvement.

The cast list features 19 characters from the television series. We've received confirmation from Fox that Apu, Flanders, Professor Frink, Lisa, and Grounds Keeper



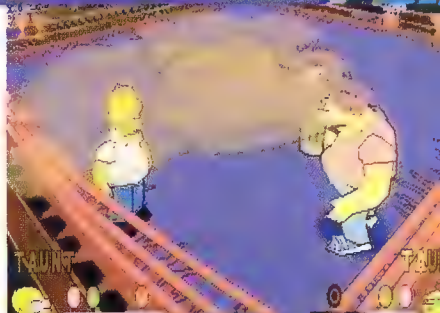
Willie are all part of the mix. We have also learned that the wrestling will take place in the town hall, Kwik-E-Mart, Mr. Burns' mansion, Moe's Tavern, Krusty Le Studios, the nuclear power plant, the Simpson household, and even on an alien spaceship. Could those devious aliens be the last battle? Perhaps.

Another interesting tidbit has to do with the special move meter, which Fox is calling the Taunt. When this meter is full, each of the 19 characters can perform a special move. Homer works over the jugular with his Strangulator. Bart goes to the extreme with the Skateboard Attack. Groundskeeper Willie cleans house with the Roundhouse Rake Kick.

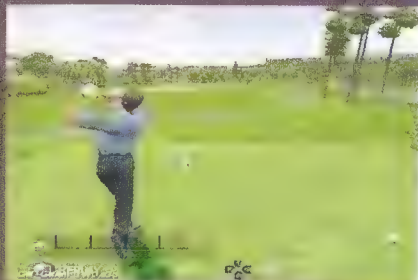
The game will feature authentic dialogue performed by the television show actors, which should add a little humor to the violent play. Three game modes are in place, allowing players to go head-to-head in Versus, study up in Practice, or battle to be crowned the Champion of Springfield in Tournament mode. If the gameplay does turn out to be something special, there are plenty of secret characters, bosses, and bonus venues to unlock.

I RECOMMEND
A SLOW, STEADY GORGING
PROCESS COMBINED WITH
ASSAL HORIZONTOLOGY.

■ STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ PUBLISHER FOX INTERACTIVE ■ DEVELOPER BIG APE PRODUCTIONS ■ RELEASE MARCH



PREVIEWS



The analog swing control is smooth as silk

PLAYSTATION 2

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2001

DO YOU WANT TO TRY MY
TIGER STYLE?

After a recent *break* in the woods, Tiger Woods has been spotted sporting a Sisco-style bleach blond 'do. Who the heck does he think he is, Dennis Rodman? If that little nerd gets a nipple ring, we're going to kick his butt!! This year's PGA Tour features such links luminaries as Justin Leonard, Brad Faxon, and Mark Calcavecchia. The move to PS2 means fully polygonal golfers, as opposed to the digitized characters in the last few PS-X games. To add to the realism, each golfer in the game stopped by EA Sports and had their swing motion-captured. This PS2 version only has three courses - Pebble Beach, Spyglass, and Poppy Hills. If this sounds a little disappointing, just remember that this is the only golf game this year to feature the legendary Pebble Beach. All three of the courses are immaculately reproduced in crisp high-resolution graphics. This attention to detail extends to the sound department as well, as the game captures the hushed rapture of the gallery, and even snide comments made by your yellow golfers.

The game features a responsive analog swing control, and even allows you to move the ball to the front or back of your stance to change the angle of trajectory. As with most of the EA Sports line on PlayStation 2, PGA Tour 2001 is, at its heart, a graphically superior continuation of the previous games in the series. Looks to be another solid addition to this best-selling series.



The 3D ball lie indicator is invaluable on the green

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** EA SPORTS
■ **DEVELOPER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **RELEASE** FALL



PLAYSTATION 2

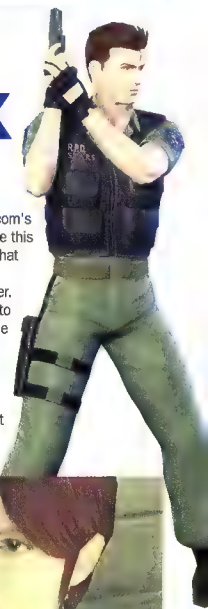
RESIDENT EVIL: CODE VERONICA X

THE X-FACTOR

Capcom's director of marketing, Todd Thorson, enthusiastically said, "The number one PlayStation franchise returns home as Resident Evil Code: Veronica X becomes Capcom's first foray into the survival horror genre on the PlayStation 2." Well...duh?! Capcom should change this insightful brain's title to rocket scientist. Without this clever quote we may have falsely reported that this was the 12th Resident Evil for the PS2. Thanks, Todd! We owe you one!

In all seriousness, this is an exciting release, even if it is a rehash of the Dreamcast blockbuster. The "X" actually stands for "additional booty" or "Director's Cut." For those of you who venture into this frightening survival horror world, you'll be treated to never-before-seen footage that reveals the darkest of secrets. A good portion of these lost scenes revolve around the mysterious character, Wesker. What is he up to? Why are his eyes strangely colored? And how the hell can he run on walls? Within the ten minutes of new material, you'll find the answers you seek.

As if this wasn't enough to justify a purchase, Capcom is including a playable demo of the highly anticipated title, Devil May Cry. Not only do you get the Veggie-Slicer for a low, low price, but you also get the Juice-O-Matic free of charge! This truly is a wonderful release and we can't wait to see how Wesker ties into this epic horror game.



"Hi, I'm Leonardo DiCaprio. If you don't buy Code: Veronica X, I'll make a sequel to The Beach!"



"Oh gawd...here comes Leonardo again. Kill me. Please! Do it before he gets here!"



"Argh! This is for The Man in the Iron Mask, What's Eating Gilbert Grape, Titanic..."



"...The Basketball Diaries, Marvin's Room, and Critters 3!!! Die, freak!!!! Die!!!"

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM ■ **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM ■ **RELEASE** SPRING 2001



PC

INDEPENDENCE WAR 2: EDGE OF CHAOS

THE FRUITS OF REVOLUTION GONE BAD

Independence War was an unusual space combat sim in that it focused on realistic space physics, and your only vessel was a much heavier craft than the typical one-man fighter. With the ability to zip around solar systems at breakneck speeds, dock with other ships and stations, and jump from system to system via jump gates, the game seemed to be the perfect model for a free-roaming adventure, in spite of its linear mission-based structure.

Heeding the call of Independence War fans, Particle Systems has taken the Privateer route, making the game a loose adventure with plenty of room for exploration, subquesting, and piracy. You start out with a base and one paper-armored interceptor vessel. Fortunately, you can upgrade your survivability with a host of shielding devices, weapons, and a variety of performance enhancers. As you progress through the game, you can pick up three other ships, including a tug and two new corvette variants which can mount heavier equipment.

The plot immerses players in a gritty, corporate-dominated universe that is fleshed out beautifully by the game's fantastic visuals. It seems that some corporate loan shark has murdered the main character's (12 year-old Cal Johnson) dad, and he takes it upon himself to punish this villain frontier-style. Unfortunately, the attempt lands him in jail for 15 years before he escapes with four buddies who serve as Cal's crew for the rest of the game. While play has been busted wide open, the level of storytelling has definitely taken a step up and the intro sequence is fantastic. We're looking forward to seeing how this one turns out.



The new one-man fighter



He's dead



There are many weapon types



This corporate cruiser is goin' down!



The detail on this corvette is stunning

PREVIEWS



Argh! We just lost 18 red-shirts captain!

PC

STAR TREK BRIDGE COMMANDER

SITTIN' IN THE CHAIR

Few **Star Trek** games have actually made the player feel as if they were taking on the role of captain. Instead, it seems you're always taking abstract control of a ship. With former X-Wing developer, Totally Games, at the helm of the Bridge Commander project, we could see a significant new development in bringing Trekkies closer to the ultimate gaming recreation of their beloved genre.

While an external view can be used, players actually have the option of commanding from the captain's seat on the bridge, issuing orders to various officers or taking direct control of different stations including engineering, tactical, science, and the helm. While combat certainly appears to be an important aspect of the game, there will be plenty of other objectives for reaching goals, such as rescuing colonists or investigating unusual phenomena.

The game also features prerequisite interaction with Captain Picard and Data, voiced by actors Patrick Stewart and Brent Spiner. Furthermore, the game will feature a multiplayer mode in which ships from other races like the Klingons, Romulans, and Cardassians can be commanded. This game could end a lot of Trekkie relationships.



Beautiful ship detail, but the phasers...

■ STYLE 1 TO 8-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER INFOGRAMS ■ DEVELOPER PARTICLE SYSTEMS ■ RELEASE SPRING

■ STYLE 1 TO 8-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER ACTIVISION
■ DEVELOPER TOTALLY GAMES ■ RELEASE SUMMER

PREVIEWS



"They" have landed, and they look dorky

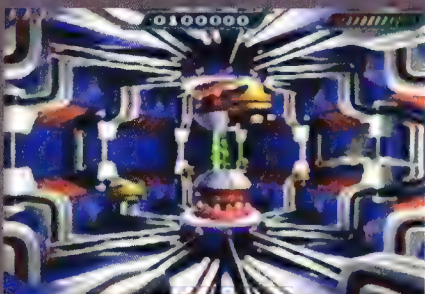
GAME BOY ADVANCE

IRIDION 3D

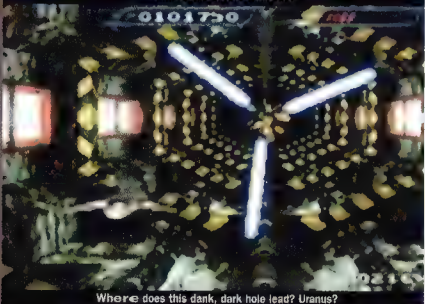
EARTH'S BAD-WILL AMBASSADOR

The Iridion Empire wants to conquer our beloved planet. That's harassment, and we don't have to take it. Wave after wave of kamikaze drones attack both in and above Earth's atmosphere in six horizontal and vertically-scrolling levels. They have the numbers, but you've got the home-field advantage. Colossal bosses create a David vs. Goliath situation with your little craft. Instead of a sling shot, though, you possess enough mad weaponry to turn these would-be conquerors into breadcrumbs.

Pipe Dream employs some tricky techniques to simulate trippy 3D visuals—animated at 60 frames per second. Iridion 3D will light up the skies on GBA's launch day.



Take a ride on the VumiTron!



Where does this dank, dark hole lead? Uranus?

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SHOOTER ■ **PUBLISHER** MAGESCO
 ■ **DEVELOPER** PIPE DREAM ■ **RELEASE** SPRING



NINTENDO 64

AIDYN CHRONICLES: THE FIRST MAGE

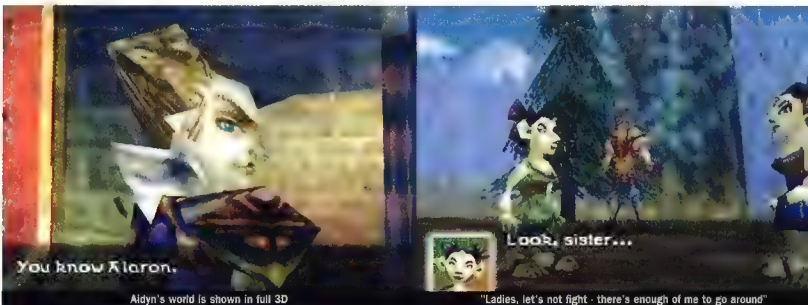
RUN TO THE HILLS, RUN FOR YOUR LIFE

THQ's Aidyn Chronicles started its RPG journey some time ago. In its quest to provide the first real role-player on the N64, THQ picked up New Tetris developer H2O. Unfortunately, the only thing this move ensures is that the system won't have an enjoyable RPG before it dies.

Sticking to RPG tradition, Aidyn tells the story of a squire, Alaron, who must first journey to Erromon to find himself. Along the way you'll see forest backgrounds that are as flat and stiff as set props, along with lots of pop-up and fogging. On the other hand, Aidyn does present real-time daylight changes and some nice textures for its characters (even if their hands are represented by hooves and the framerate makes them jerky).

THQ's own search continues with its battle system which isn't too different from Quest 64's. The action takes place in a mix of real-time and turn-based combat. Foes litter the 3D world, and can be avoided if you're not up for a scrap. Otherwise, the fight begins with players being able to move or strike within a certain area around them. Arrange those in your four-person party to take advantage of everyone's abilities (13 characters in all) as spellcasters, sneaky thieves, warriors, etc. The problem with Aidyn's attempts at merging real-time and turn-based combat is that, unlike PS-X's Vagrant Story, for example, it just isn't that fun.

In the menu you can fix experience to train skills, share stuff amongst the party, and develop your characters, but Aidyn just isn't the real RPG deal. Three years after Quest 64, and the N64 is still searching for its role-playing self. Perhaps with some more tweaks to the battle system Aidyn may be able to deliver a decent gameplay experience, but so far this isn't the RPG we were looking for.



■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ ■ **DEVELOPER** H2O ENTERTAINMENT
 ■ **RELEASE** MID-MARCH



PLAYSTATION

METAL SLUG X

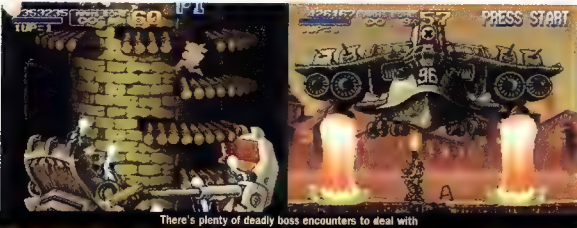
NEO-REVOLUTIONARY FIGHTS ON

After the American demise of the much-loved but consistently under-ordered Neo Geo Pocket Color, there has been little to look forward to for fans of little handheld that couldn't. Although the void left in the souls of many can never be filled, at least now there's a glimmer of the glory days to look forward to in Metal Slug X for PlayStation.

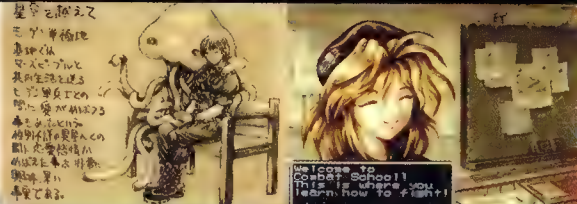
An action game through and through, Metal Slug X asks one or two players to select from four characters and go against an army of thousands in order to save prisoners of war. Set up in the classic side-scrolling style that isn't seen too often nowadays, players will find a wide assortment of power-ups to help them cut through the enemy forces. Weapons to pick up range from the simple machine gun, to a launcher that apparently propels pit bulls along the ground. Vehicles include the ever-popular tank and airplane, as well as the cannon-toting camel.

Being that Metal Slug X is but six stages long and has unlimited continues, it is the type of game that can be completed in one sitting. However, once the game is finished, the Combat School opens for business. Here players earn better rankings by seeing how far they can make it in a level without dying, and how fast they can complete a level with only three lives. If all this violence is getting you down, you can relax by checking out the over 100 concept sketches in the Artwork section.

Metal Slug X doesn't break any ground that wasn't cracked years ago, but a high-octane blast from the past like this is always a welcome sight. Those who feel a tingle in their trigger finger should look forward to this title hitting shelves in early March.



There's plenty of deadly boss encounters to deal with



Aside from the main game, you can look at some strange artwork...

...or work on your rank in Combat School



PREVIEWS



PLAYSTATION

POINT BLANK 3

PISTOL PACKIN' POWER

Breaking free from its arcade roots, Namco's Point Blank series has become a surefire hit on PlayStation. Before abandoning the console, Namco is giving gamers one last powder-filled taste. Point Blank 3 reunites Dr. Don and Dr. Dan, two ambiguous lads who always happen to end up sleeping in the same bed. With Guncon compatibility, unlimited rounds can be fired in 80 new events spread across five game modes. Up to eight players can compete for the coveted marksmanship award, or if you just don't click socially, a slew of single-player games will keep you playing for hours on end. With a tentative release date of May, this will more than likely be one of the last Namco titles gracing the PS-X.



Holy Moses! They're in bed again!



Several of the gun games have a classic Namco feel to them

■ **STYLE 1** OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** AGETEC ■ **DEVELOPER** SNK
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH

■ **STYLE 1** TO 8-PLAYER SHOOTER ■ **PUBLISHER** NAMCO
 ■ **DEVELOPER** NAMCO ■ **RELEASE** MAY 15

REVIEWS

Our crack (or crackhead, we can never decide which) review team rates games in a number of categories to help you sort out the great from the stuff you hate. Each game is reviewed by at least two staff members, and you will find both their opinions on each review. To make things a little easier we have put together some definitions of what the numbers mean, what the reviewers are like (so you can find the reviewer most like yourself), what we look for in a game, and also a cheat sheet so the newbies can understand our advanced video game jargon. Read on and soon you will be talking FPS and FMV with the best of them.

THE SCORING SYSTEM

Game Informer's rating system ranges from 0 to 10, and is similar to school grading. 7 is average, 9 and above is exemplary work, 5 and below is a failure. Aside from concept, entertainment, graphics, playability, sound, and replay value (all explained to the right), other factors that influence a game's final score are how much game you get for your money and how all the game's elements come together.

10 - Perfection. One of the best games of all time, if not THE best game of all time. This game has no flaws, and thus this rating is rarely given out.

9 - Worth owning. Fans of the genre should definitely enjoy this game, but even those who don't normally like this type of game may find themselves getting hooked.

8 - Worth playing. Still a great game, but arguably so. It may not be the best ever, but there's enough to keep your fingers wrapped around the controller for some time.

7 - Worth renting. Unless you're a fledgling gamer, you've probably seen everything this game has to offer before. Still, just checking it out won't ruin your weekend.

6 - Limited appeal. There are always a few people that will fall in love with a game of this caliber, but for the most part, those playing it will be yearning for something more.

5 & BELOW - Garbage. From this point down, it's just a matter of how much of a failure the game is. The lower the score, the more you're hating life for playing it.

CONCEPT

What new ideas the game brings to the table and how well old ideas are presented.

GRAPHICS

How good a game looks, taking into account any flaws such as bad collision or pop-up.

SOUND

Does the game's music and sound effects get you involved or do they make you resolve to always play with the volume down?

PLAYABILITY

Basically, the controller to human interface. The less you think about the hunk of plastic in your hands, the better the playability.

ENTERTAINMENT

Flat out, just how fun the game is to play. The most important factor in rating a game.

REPLAY VALUE

The longevity of the title.

- **High** - You'll still be popping this game in five years from now.
- **Moderately High** - Good for a long while, but the thrills won't last forever.
- **Moderate** - Good for a few months or a few times through.
- **Moderately Low** - After finishing it, there's not much reason to give it a second go.
- **Low** - You'll quit playing before you complete the game.

THE CONSOLE TEAM



ANDY

Handle: The Game Hombre
Expertise: RPGs, Action/Platform, Driving, Strategy
Interests: The Sopranos, At The Drive In, Pizza Rolls, Sushi
Dislikes: Server Spliffs, Short Metal Gear Solid 2 Demos
Current Favorite Games: EverQuest, Tony Hawk 2, Phantasy Star Online, Hoyle Card Games

When Andy's not yelling at a game for "rippin' him off," he plays drums in Minneapolis indie rock band, Unbelievable Jolly Machine. A longtime fan of Metroid, Andy has been reviewing video games professionally since the days of the 8-bit NES. While a big sports fan in real life, Andy isn't the first to line up for sports titles, but is always willing to put in the extra hours to play a good RPG or strategy game.

PAUL

Handle: The Game Professor
Expertise: Sports, Action/Adventure, Racing
Interests: Newborns, B-3 Jazz, Jesper Parnevik
Dislikes: Convenience Store Coffee, Using A Cell Phone While Driving
Current Favorite Games: Counterstrike 1.0, Onimusha, ATV Offroad Fury

Since the days of the Mattel Intellivision, Paul has consumed every type of sports video game imaginable. Not only is he the staff's resident sports gaming expert, he also has authored detailed strategy guides on all of Capcom's survival horror games. A GI Staff member since 1992, Paul has reviewed well over 500 games during his tenure.



REINER

Handle: The Raging Gamer
Expertise: RPGs, Fighting, Action/Platform, Sports
Interests: Comic Books, Skinny Dipping With Paul's Wife, Star Wars, Nerds
Dislikes: John Travolta, Frozen Ice Turds, Wannabe Wrestlers
Current Favorite Games: Star Wars: Starfighter, Phantasy Star Online, Onimusha

Reiner considers himself the biggest Star Wars fan in the world. Along with his impressive collection of Star Wars action figures, he has seen the trilogy 502 times. A fan of all game types, role-playing games are his strong suit. In his six years as a professional gamer, Reiner has achieved the impossible. Penetrating the pixel boundary, he not only plays games, he's in one, and can be shot daily in the epic N64 release, Perfect Dark.



MATT

Handle: The Original Gamer
Expertise: Racing, Puzzle, Action/Adventure
Interests: Ribs, My New Chair, Silver Medallions
Dislikes: Scorpio, Deep Fried Mars Bars, Ally McBeal
Current Favorite Games: Tony Hawk 2, Knockout Kings 2001, Hoyle Card Games

While record collecting, watching reality television, and playing video games might sound like a state of retarded adolescence, Matt manages to scrap together an almost meaningful existence out of these activities. His encyclopedic knowledge of pop culture is either amazing or annoying, depending on how close your desk is to his. Less esoteric than his colleagues, Matt prefers traditional action and platform games.



JAY

Handle: The Gonzo Gamer
Expertise: Strategy, Puzzle, RPGs
Interests: Dungeons & Dragons, Comic Books, Wrestling, The XFL
Dislikes: Kristian's Ugly Face, People, Inflation
Current Favorite Games: The Adventures of Cookie & Cream

Jay lives in his mom's basement just like you. Adding further fuel to his archetypal nerd fire is his love for comic books, metal miniature painting, and twice weekly pencil-and-paper RPG sessions. In fact, he's such a D&D fanatic, he hates professional football simply because it interrupts his Sunday gaming schedule. Par for the course, his favorite games are often obscure ones. He is also one damn handsome man.



THE PC TEAM



ERIK

Handle: The PC Jedi
Expertise: Strategy, RPGs, Anything That Allows Upgrades
Interests: Sloth, Lust, Gluttony, and Four Other Things
Dislikes: Websites With Hyphens in Their Names, Porno
Current Favorite Games: Sea Dogs, Star Wars: Starfighter

Erik is a self-proclaimed closet nerd, otherwise known as a NUCI (Nerd Upon Closer Inspection). Although he couldn't care less for people who love everything and anything about anime, he has developed a fixation with mecha. Erik is completely clueless about sports, and will attempt to change a conversation on the topic to one about X-Com or 3rd Edition Dungeons & Dragons so he doesn't look foolish in front of the ladies.



KRISTIAN

Handle: The Game Dawg
Expertise: RPGs, Strategy, Sports
Interests: The Coen Brothers, Roseville, Wendy's
Dislikes: His Roommate's Hair Curling Jell, Dell Computers, Germans
Current Favorite Games: Counterstrike 1.0, 4x4 Evolution

Kristian enjoys opening a can of whoop-ass on his buddies at the ping pong table, then running off to the driving range for a lesson in humility and anger management. The original text-driven Zork started Kristian on the gaming road; Ultima 6, NES Baseball, and Zelda made sure he stayed. Still an avid RPG fan, he can always find time to pound out a good sports game.

NEW RELEASES ARCHIVE

More releases available at
www.gameinform.com

MARCH 2001

TITLE	BL	DATE	TITLE	BL	DATE	TITLE	BL	DATE	TITLE	BL	DATE	TITLE	BL	DATE
PLAYSTATION 2														
Armored Core 2	9	Nov/00	Evil Dead: Hail to the King	4.5	Feb/01	Strider 2	6.5	Jun/00	Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX	8	Feb/01	Virtual Striker 2	5.25	Mar/00
Bouncer: The	8.5	Feb/01	Expandable	3.5	Jul/00	Superbike 2000	4	Jun/00	Dead or Alive 2	9	Apr/00	Virtual Tenors	9.25	Sep/00
Championship Surfer	7	Jan/01	Fatal Fury: Wild Ambition	3.75	Mar/00	Supercross 2000	4	Oct/00	Deep Fighter	6.75	Jul/00	Virtual On: Dracolor Tengram	7.25	Aug/00
Contra 4: Hell Core	9	Nov/00	Final Effect	8.25	Mar/00	Suzuki Road	6.75	Oct/00	Demonstrator Racer: No Exit	6	Nov/00	Warlock	6	Mar/00
Driving Emotion Type-S	8	Feb/01	Final Fantasy IX	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Dino Crisis	6.5	Jan/01	Wet+2	5	Mar/00
Dynasty Warriors	8	Nov/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Dracoon: Cut of the Wym	7.75	Jul/00	Wild Metal	3	May/00
ESPN International Track & Field	6.75	Dec/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Eco: The Dolphin	7	Jul/00	World Series Baseball 2K1	5.75	Sep/00
ESPN Winter X Games Snowboarding	8.25	Jan/01	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Defender of the Future	8.75	Sep/00	Xzone Sports	7	Jan/01
Essential Ring	7.5	Nov/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	EDW: Hardcore Revolution	7.75	May/00	Xtreme Revenge	6.75	Feb/00
Evergrace	7	Feb/01	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Elemental Gimmick Gear	7	Mar/00			
F1 Championship Season 2000	7.75	Feb/01	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Evolution 2: Far Off Promise	6	Jul/00			
Fantazion	6.75	Dec/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	F1 World Grand Prix	7.75	Feb/00			
FFIX 2001	8	Dec/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	F355 Challenge: Passionate Rossa	7.5	Dec/00			
GameSpy 2001	9	Dec/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Fighting Force 2	5.25	Mar/00			
Gradius III & IV	6	Dec/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Frogger 2: Swampy's Revenge	7	Dec/00			
Gun Orion Blaze	7	Nov/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Fur Fighters	7.75	Aug/00			
Nessen	8	Nov/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Garrett Legends	7.75	Jun/00			
Madden NFL 2001	9.75	Nov/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Grades II	7.5	Mar/00			
Midnight Club	7.5	Dec/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Gunbird 2	5.5	Oct/00			
Midnight Club 2	7.5	Dec/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Grand Theft Auto 2	7.5	Jul/00			
NASCAR 2001	8.5	Dec/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Hidden & Dangerous	7	Oct/00			
NBA Live 2001	8.25	Feb/01	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Incoming	5.5	Mar/00			
NCAA Final Four 2001	3	Feb/01	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Incoming	5.5	Mar/00			
NCAA Gamebreaker 2001	3.25	Feb/01	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Jed Grid Radio's Supercross 2000	8.25	Dec/00			
NHL 2001	8.5	Nov/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Jed Grid Radio's Supercross 2000	8.25	Dec/00			
Orphen	4.25	Dec/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Joe's Bizarre Adventure	8	Mar/00			
Q-Ball: Billiards Master	4.5	Jan/01	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Knockout Kings 2001	7.5	Dec/00			
Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2	7.25	Dec/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Koutaikei	4.5	Sep/00			
Rear Pool	5.25	Dec/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Kurt Warner's	2.5	Jun/00			
Ringside Pro	5.5	Feb/01	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Legend of Dragoon	9	Jun/00			
Silphhead	6	Nov/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Legend of Mana	6	Oct/00			
Sly Odyssey	7.75	Dec/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Lego Rock Raiders	1.5	Jul/00			
Smuggler's Run	8.5	Nov/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Lonny Tunes Racing	6.25	Oct/00			
Street Fighter EX3	9.25	Nov/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Lunar 2: Eternal Blue Complete	7.5	Jan/01			
Summer	8	Dec/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Madden NFL 2001	8.75	Sep/00			
Super Bust-A-Move	7	Dec/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	March Madness 2001	8.25	Feb/01			
Surfing H3O	3	Jan/01	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Medic III	7.75	May/01			
Swing Away Golf	7.75	Nov/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Mega Man Legends 2	8	Nov/00			
Tekken Tag Tournament	8.5	Nov/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Mega Man X5	7	Feb/01			
T.I. Masters III	9.5	Dec/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Mega Man X5	7	Feb/01			
Theme Park Roller Coaster	7.5	Jan/01	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Mega Man X5	7	Feb/01			
Top Gear Drive Dev	2	Dec/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Mega Man X5	7	Feb/01			
Unreal Tournament	9	Dec/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Mega Man X5	7	Feb/01			
Wild Wild Racing	7.5	Nov/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Mega Man X5	7	Feb/01			
X-Squad	7.5	Nov/00	Final Fantasy Tactics	9.75	Dec/00	Synkov 2000	2.75	Oct/00	Mega Man X5	7	Feb/01			
PLAYSTATION														
007 Racing	7	Jan/01	102 Destinations	6.5	Feb/01	Puppies to the Rescue	6.5	Feb/01	Ace Combat 3: Electrosphere	7.75	May/00	Action Bass	7	Sep/00
102 Destinations	6.5	Feb/01	Puppies to the Rescue	6.5	Feb/01	Ace Combat 3: Electrosphere	7.75	May/00	Alien Resurrection	6	Nov/00	Alien Resurrection	6	Nov/00
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NEWBIE CHEAT SHEET

For our newer readers, here is a glossary of terms and acronyms that commonly appear in the magazine. Video game veterans should move along (these aren't the droids you are looking for).

- Action** – A term we use for games like *Rising Zan*
- Adventure** – A term we use for games like *Myst*
- AI** – Artificial Intelligence. Usually used to refer to how well the computer reacts to a human opponent
- Board** – A term we use for games like *Jeopardy*
- CG** – Computer Graphics
- cutscene** – A portion of the game where players simply watch as the story unfolds
- DC** – Sega Dreamcast
- E3** – A place where pathetic people jump for hours on end to get free shirts
- Fighting** – A term we use for games like *Street Fighter*
- FMV** – Full Motion Video. Usually refers to an animated CG cutscene
- FPS** – Frames Per Second. How many animation frames happen in one second. Also used to denote First Person Shooters like *Doom*, *GoldenEye*, & *Unreal Tournament*
- frame-rate** – The frames of animation used to create the illusion of movement
- frontend** – A game's menus and options
- GB** – Game Boy
- GBC** – Game Boy Color
- ISP** – Internet Service Provider. The company that provides you with access to the Internet
- LAN** – Local Area Network. Connecting computers or consoles together within a small space to allow communication between them. Provides fast, simultaneous gameplay
- minigame** – A small, simple game within a larger one
- motion-capture** – Using human models and infrared cameras to record movement for game animation. Also mo-cap
- N64** – Nintendo 64
- NES** – Nintendo Entertainment System
- part-time sucka** – Anyone who's not a full time player
- Platform** – A term we use for games like *Super Mario*, and *Crash Bandicoot*
- pop-up** – When onscreen objects, usually distant, suddenly appear
- PS2** – Sony PlayStation 2
- PS-X** – Sony PlayStation
- Puzzle** – A term we use for games like *Tetris*
- Racing** – A term we use for games like *Ridge Racer*
- RPG** – Role-Playing Game. A game that involves character improvement through collecting and spending points. A term we use for games like *Final Fantasy*
- SG** – Sega Genesis
- Shooter** – A term we use for games like *R-Type*
- SNES** – Super Nintendo Entertainment System
- Sports** – A term we use for games like, well duh, *Madden Football*
- SS** – Sega Saturn
- Strategy** – A term we use for games like *Command & Conquer*
- third-party** – Something made for a console by a company other than the console manufacturer

REVIEWS



GAME OF THE MONTH PHANTASY STAR ONLINE

Deciding this month's prestigious game-of-the-month award winner could have been more troublesome. Through a series of debates, we finally came to the conclusion that *Phantasy Star Online* was the most deserving, even though it didn't receive the highest score. Sega's online network got off to a slow start, but this title promotes it, and shows how powerful internet gaming can be. Role-playing and action fans alike will fall head-over-heels for this addictive and revolutionary masterpiece. Pg. 74.

"Onimusha has the overall game structure of Capcom's survival horror series, but it has been graphically boosted on the PlayStation 2"



You will have to unload magic attacks to defeat the larger demons.



A thrusting stab to the ground will make quick work of this beast.

The Keep is Onimusha's equivalent to the Raccoon City Police Dept.

PLAYSTATION 2

ONIMUSHA: WARLORDS

CAPCOM'S SAMURAI SLAUGHTERHOUSE

I have held the assumption that Onimusha is Resident Evil with swords. It is really more like Dino Crisis 2 with swords in that you are rewarded for taking down enemies, but that is beside the point. Onimusha has the same trickery, puzzle elements, and overall game structure of Capcom's survival horror series, but it has been graphically boosted on the PlayStation 2.

The cast of characters are superbly modeled and animated. I am especially impressed with the variety and detail of enemies. Likewise, the environments are filled with great eye candy. There is no denying that the visuals in Onimusha are fantastic. It's one of those games that you put in your system to dazzle the non-gameplayers.

The larger storage capacity of Onimusha's DVD format allows Capcom to include the choice of either Japanese or English text and voice-overs. A great feature in and of itself, but like some films, the dub to English is really cheesy. A game of this caliber and budget should have the animation lip synched for both languages. It's good to have the choice, and I far prefer Japanese voice with subtitles.

Unfortunately, the DVD format does not allow for more game to play. By Resident Evil standards, Onimusha is pretty short. My initial run through this adventure took little more than seven

hours. You'll have to play again (and maybe even a couple more times) to get the best secrets. This is nothing new to seasoned Resident Evil players – playing through these games as fast as you can has always been a trademark. Once you have a couple of games under your belt, you can easily beat this game in less than three hours – and that's with close to 30 minutes being real time cutscenes you can't skip over. I would have liked to see some variety of item placement (or something else to spice things up).

That's not to say that Onimusha isn't fun to play or missing a challenge. There are many instances where I was stuck or had my butt kicked by a boss, and playing through the game a number of times yields some great extras. Like I said, Onimusha rewards you for annihilating foes. Slice up a demon and absorb its evil soul to get things such as increased health, magic, or weapon powers. I think this is a great concept as it promotes the action and the use of various playcontrol tactics. After I learned to use the block and side-step maneuvers, I was just whooping every enemy to a pulp. It is almost too easy, but that is after at least 15 hours of playing Onimusha.

I am a Resident Evil nut and, even though Onimusha has some shortcomings, I had a great time playing it. This is easily the best action/adventure for the PS2. – PAUL

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ PUBLISHER CAPCOM ■ DEVELOPER CAPCOM ■ RELEASE MARCH 21



A rooftop battle will test your skills.



Along with three swords, there is also a matchlock gun and a bow.

THE BOTTOM LINE



8.75

■ Concept:

Sword combat and flashy graphics mask the basic ideas of Resident Evil

■ Graphics:

The characters and enemies are superb. However, some of the CG movies are pretty rough

■ Sound:

Brilliant soundtrack and Japanese voice acting, but the English version of Samanosuke sounds like a wimp

■ Playability:

Plenty of action means plenty of button pushing

■ Entertainment:

Attempts to make this like a film have made the game too short

■ Replay Value:

Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

I wouldn't necessarily say Onimusha is "zombieified"; however, comparisons can be made to its survival horror brethren. The camera work, puzzle elements, and story dynamics all fall into the traditional mold. Steering away from a copycat classification, drastic changes have been made to the combat system. The clunky control and slow spin-rate found within Resident Evil wouldn't suffice in a game like this. Wielding a firearm is one thing, but if you're going to be successful with a sword, you'll need to be as agile as possible. Naturally, Capcom has reworked the player movement, granting players the ability to move swiftly and attack with exactness. I was skeptical at first, but the combat truly is something to behold, and the overall gameplay presentation is superb. Onimusha may not be as suspenseful or horrific as RE, but it's easily the best playing and most addictive entry yet.

REINER - 9



PLAYSTATION 2

THE BOTTOM LINE
 MATURE
7.25

"...after defeating the game once, you begin to ask yourself why you bothered."

KENGO: MASTER OF BUSHIDO

TRAINING ON BUSHIDO BLADE'S PARADE

A few years back, a game called *Bushido Blade* hit the streets. It was one of the first of very few to attempt to break away from the traditional fighting game by crippling or instantly killing characters with one hit rather than representing the damage done with a lifebar. *Kengo* is vaguely similar to *Bushido Blade*, in that death or defeat is never too far away and fighting requires a lot of concentration. However, *Kengo* retains the generic health bar, as well as a ki meter that represents your ability to block and use special sword-specific attacks.

Kengo is unusual in that you spend the majority of the game fighting nonlethal battles with a wooden sword, and playing special button-tapping-style minigames. These minigames represent training and enhance your character's stats. Players must endure a waterfall for enhanced Spirit (stamina) or increase their attack power by nailing a stick. Success will enhance your maximum stats for health, speed, and attacking power.

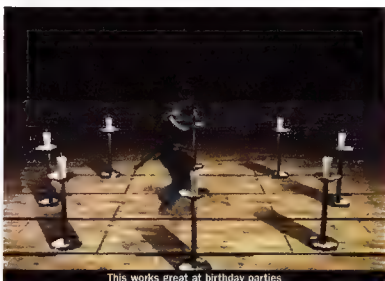
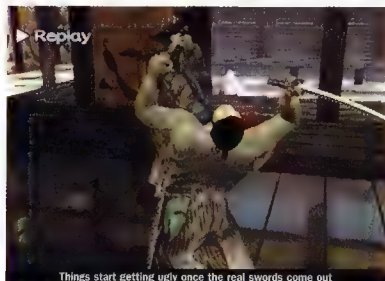
To actually increase your ability, you must fight real opponents with a wooden blade. You'll progress through the basics of fighting, then once you have become a fully capable swordsman, it's time to cross wood with other

dojos. As enemy dojos are defeated, new moves and swords with special attacks that drain ki are gained. New moves can be inserted into a player's three-hit combo system. As you learn more and more from other schools, the range of moves allows for a great deal of experimentation. Players can have up to four three-hit combos which can be accessed at the press of a shoulder button.

The culmination of all your training is something of a disappointment. You get to compete in a deadly tournament in which real blades are used. The only big difference is that the blades will sometimes inflict mortal wounds that slowly drain your lifebar. Unfortunately, this tournament only covers a handful of fights, a surprise battle, and then the credits start rolling. The primary enjoyment comes from collecting new moves and experimenting with combos, but after defeating the game once, you begin to ask yourself why you bothered.

Furthermore, the control, while simplistic in attitude, is horribly awkward at times. The camera frequently switches around, forcing players to adapt to a new view. This can be frustrating when you intended to move straight ahead and you start circling your opponent instead. *Kengo* has some strong points, but it could have been a lot more interesting. —ERIK

■ STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ PUBLISHER CRAVE ■ DEVELOPER LIGHTWEIGHT/GENKI ■ RELEASE JANUARY 2



- **Concept:**
Train and fight with wooden sticks for one real tournament
- **Graphics:**
The environments shine with hi-res and lighting effects
- **Sound:**
Sound is adequate, but the characters could have been more vocal
- **Playability:**
Movement is extremely difficult to control at times
- **Entertainment:**
Surprisingly addictive for a brief period of time, but the shortcomings cut down on what could have been higher replay value
- **Replay Value:**
Moderate

SECOND OPINION

The concept behind *Kengo* is interesting, yet the overall execution just isn't there. Picture, if you will, a follow-up to *Bushido Blade* that focuses so heavily on character development that there really is no room for anything else. Indeed, devising a warrior and unlicking new moves are exciting propositions, but let's get real. The true fascination with this title lies in your ability to jab your long trusty weapon into the heart of the opponent. *Kengo* delivers this; however, to fulfill this desire, you'll have to train for countless hours with a wooden sword. The only opportunity where you actually get a chance to wield a sharp metal object and make people bleed is found within the tournament, which happens to be the final act in the game. What a rip! Just like *Bushido Blade*, the combat has a complex makeover, offering multiple stances and parries; but really, if you can't maim people, what's the point?

REINER — 6



"...the execution of Offroad Fury's control scheme is what makes this a must-play game."

PLAYSTATION 2

ATV OFFROAD FURY

RAGE AGAINST THE (FOUR-WHEELED) MACHINE

If you have kept up with the PC gaming scene, you've probably heard about, or played, Motocross Madness from Microsoft. What you might not know is that ATV Offroad Fury is a heck of a lot like that PC dirt bike game. Developer Rainbow Studios took many of the concepts from its past two motocross racers and crafted an extremely intense and entertaining PS2 game.

What I remember most from Motocross Madness is its expansive environments and completely insane jumps. Offroad Fury's Freestyle and Enduro modes have this too, but with an entirely new level of detail. Here, you have access to five gigantic areas loaded with jumps of all sizes — I'm talking huge air with tricks. Additionally, these spaces are littered with a ton of interactive objects that dot the landscape. Trees, buildings, power lines, a moving train, military helicopters, a gas station with a giant fat man on top of it — just some of what you'll find if you take the time between tricks and racing to explore the acreage. However, Enduro and Freestyle are just a sideline to the other modes.

The Maxxis Nationals and Stadium Supercross tracks are where Offroad Fury's intensity and excellent play mechanics come to the surface. To get access to all the courses, you

must enter the Pro-Career and compete in a grueling series of races. Placing in the top two or three will move you on to the next race, but getting there is all about timing the jumps and mastering what is called the "pre-load."

Pulling the control back at the beginning of the jump, then pushing forward at the top, is the basic concept behind pre-load. This will dramatically increase your jump height and distance, and help you skip over sections of the track that would otherwise slow you down. Taking a page out of the classic Excitebike, moving the directional control when the machine is airborne will shift its orientation to properly adjust for landings. Thus, controlling the machine in the air is just as important as setting up the jump itself. However, if you simply lay on the gas and use the pre-load over every bump, hill, or jump, you'll be shooting into the woods or losing it over a hay bale. Each course requires a fine balance of speed, timing, and control.

Setting aside the graphics, soundtrack, and course design (all of which are excellent), the execution of Offroad Fury's control scheme is what makes this a must-play game. The control is flawless, and it's the reason I find it so enjoyable.

— PAUL

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA ■ **DEVELOPER** RAINBOW STUDIOS
 ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 9



THE BOTTOM LINE



9.25

- **Concept:**
This is a modified version of the PC game, Motocross Madness
- **Graphics:**
Gorgeous and detailed environments are complimented by a huge variety of play views
- **Sound:**
Bands including Primus and Aice In Chains will cover over the authentic engine sounds
- **Playability:**
The playcontrol is superb, and tests your skills with the controller
- **Entertainment:**
There is a lot to explore in the Freestyle mode, but the racing action is where it's at
- **Replay Value:**
Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

I'm torn. Part of me thrives on everything this extreme racer has to offer, yet at the same time, I can't help but scowl at how shallow this package truly is. Rainbow Studios' gameplay design is superb. You actually have to shift the driver's weight (pre-load the suspension) to soar on jumps and land properly. To say the very least, this gameplay aspect is a beautiful thing. The track designs and computer AI bask in brilliance as well. Technically speaking, the gameplay is perfect. However, as a complete package, ATV comes up a little short. The trick mode is basically a free ride with no set goals, and the single-player modes don't go anywhere or reward you with anything substantial. I love playing it, but I wish there would have been more to it.

REINER — 8.5



THE BOTTOM LINE



9.25

PLAYSTATION 2

STAR WARS: STARFIGHTER

VEIL OF THE SITH

Always an open-minded company, LucasFilm has given LucasArts the green light to broaden the Episode I universe through the creation of new vehicles, characters, and plot twists. I applaud LucasArts' efforts to develop an original story, but I found myself in a state of confusion and/or disgust with each morsel I digested. I have no qualms with the new ships or characters. Many of the vessels tie into the Episode I license, but if you look closely, you can see similarities to vehicles from the original trilogy like the T-16 and the B-Wing. Although the character designs are cool, their voices and dialogue just don't fit into the SW universe.

Realistically though, the story is irrelevant, and is more or less there to give gamers a much needed break between each chaotic level. Believe me, you need a moment to rest. The situations you'll encounter are just as havoc-filled as the final space battle in Return of the Jedi.

Honestly, I've never seen so many vehicles onscreen, and additional waves just keep coming. This is a visual accomplishment that will blow your mind. With the inspirational Episode I soundtrack blazing, ships swarming from every direction, and countless laser blasts flying by at breakneck speeds, I sat back and stared in awe. The visual material LucasArts has pieced together almost seems preposterous, yet

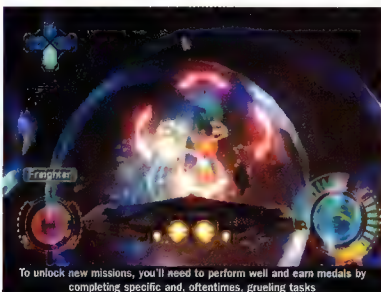
there it is right before your eyes. The high level of detailing can also be seen in the terrain mapping and vehicular designs.

When you pick up the controller, the gameplay just seems to fit like a glove. This isn't an unnatural phenomenon, LucasArts has sculpted this title to run stride for stride with Factor 5's N64 series. The mission breakdown, medal reward system, control schematics, and targeting are all eerily reminiscent. However, with the expanded capabilities of the PS2, a handful of additions and improvements were made. The control has been split up between the two analog sticks, which gives you the ability to perform insane rolls and evasive maneuvers. Each craft is now equipped with zoom technology, allowing you to snipe adversaries before they become a serious threat. The missions are also much more complex, unleashing several goals per level, bonus goals, and a difficulty unlike anything you've encountered before.

Story aside, Starfighter is a technological breakthrough, and the most impressive Star Wars console game to date. My love for Star Wars plays second fiddle here. If this title were Star Trek, Babylon 5, or anything else, I'd still fall head over heels for it. It's a nonstop thrill ride that not only receives accolades for its visual dynamics, but also for the scope of its gameplay. A must-have for everyone. —REINER

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SHOOTER ■ **PUBLISHER** LUCASARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** LUCASARTS ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 20

"...Starfighter is a technological breakthrough, and the most impressive Star Wars console game to date."



SECOND OPINION

As a pretty huge fan of space combat sims in general and the planet-bound Rogue Squadron, Starfighter is up there on my top picks for the PS2. After the introductory cutscenes get the Star Wars juices flowing, the action kicks in and the rest of the world simply ceases to exist. Through excellent use of overlapping mission objectives and unexpected events, Starfighter forces the player to think as well as they fly and shoot. At times, the number of enemies you have to eliminate and the target time you have to do it in seems almost absurdly overwhelming, adding to that atmosphere of desperation that the movies were so good at conveying. The mission designs are fantastic and loaded with beautiful environments, great music, and sound. I haven't been this excited about a Star Wars game since the original X-Wing and Dark Forces hit the PC.

ERIK — 9.5

REVIEWS



Death to humankind, one big lug at a time...

PLAYSTATION 2

KNOCKOUT KINGS 2001

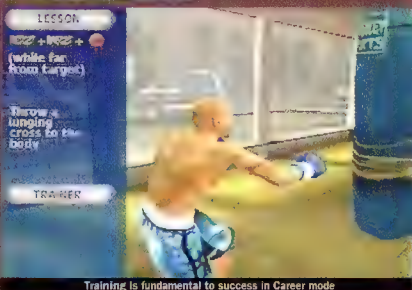
BEATING UP HALF-NAKED, SWEATY MEN IS FUN

Two giant ideas combine themselves into submission? Finally, a sport that I can endorse. We disdain for humans is such that the sight of them injure their brains makes me desire like a schoolboy. Now, let us witness the finest boxing game I've played in a good while, Knockout Kings 2001. This is the complete package for boxing fans. It has it all—deep Career mode, online play, and a great selection of cream matches featuring the all-time greats. My only small gripe is with the long loading times between rounds. Verdict: Illustrates what a piece of crap Ready 2 Rumble really is. **—JAY**

SECOND OPINION

I'm not a huge fan of the PS-X game, but EA smoothed out the gameplay and framerate for the PS2. This version is much easier to play and far superior to its predecessors.

PAUL — 8.5



Training is fundamental to success in Career mode

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** EA GAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** BLACK OPS ■ **RELEASE** FEBRUARY 13



PLAYSTATION 2

THE ADVENTURES OF COOKIE & CREAM

A HAREBRAINED GAME

Now that video games have been around for over 25 years, it isn't often that something original comes along. The Adventures of Cookie & Cream isn't entirely unique, but it's the closest thing there's been to an all-new idea since Ape Escape.

With the goal of finding a runaway moon, our two eponymous protagonists stroll down parallel, obstacle-filled paths that will presumably lead them to their prey. The kink in the gameplay formula, however, is that the two caricaturized rabbits must assist one another in overcoming roadblocks. Example: For Cream to get past a chained alligator intent on eating him, Cookie has to tug on its leash to keep it at bay.

The kicker to all this is that the game expects one player to handle both bunnies at once. The analog sticks are used to move the characters; the shoulder buttons to jump and manipulate objects. The left side of the Dual Shock controls Cookie, the right handles Cream. Even in two-player mode the game requires some intense thinking, and I believe a person would suffer an aneurysm before completing this title solo.

Thankfully, the game is just as fun for two players. Even the three- and four-player minge game is fun. The Adventures of Cookie & Cream will make you froth at the mouth in frustration, but it will keep you playing. A great title that will appeal to everyone who tries it. — JAY



Players are given a rank upon completing a level

Every boss encounter is as unique as it is strange

Cookie and Cream have to make music to open the gate

Occasionally, the two hares get to cross the split-screen boundary

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** ACETEC ■ **DEVELOPER** FROM SOFTWARE ■ **RELEASE** APRIL 15

THE BOTTOM LINE



8.75

- **Concept:** Two rabbits team up to find the moon, and hilarity ensues
- **Graphics:** Not the most magnificent thing you've ever seen, but as beautiful and detailed as it could be
- **Sound:** As cute as the look and as chaotic as the gameplay
- **Playability:** This game will make your brain hurt, but the controls become second nature almost instantly
- **Entertainment:** The most original game for PlayStation 2, and the most addicting
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

The Adventures of Cookie & Cream is a diamond in the rough. This gem of a game certainly doesn't feature outstanding graphics or amazing CG, but it has it where it counts — the gameplay — as this addicting puzzler is a blast. It can be played one-player, but it will have your brain going in so many directions, you won't know your up from your down. So C&C's true joy is found in its two-player adventure where both players have to work as a team, coordinating jumps, working out puzzles, and just having a good time. Plus, since the game can be played with one hand, it's the perfect game to sip your favorite beverage as you play. If you love games, you'll love Cookies & Cream. It's just too addictive to not enjoy.

ANDY — 9



PLAYSTATION 2

ONI

ANOTHER WANNABE ROCKSTAR

Thanks in part to a vigorous marketing blitz centered around Oni's anime diva, Konoko, Rockstar Games successfully planted a bug into the head of every teenage male across the continent. Sporting big guns and an incredibly tight-fitting latex outfit, Konoko was destined to join Lara Croft as a dream weaving fantasy queen.

For a game that appeared to focus heavily on this female star, storytelling is surprisingly absent, and Konoko's personality is as static as a random soldier. Oni's lifelessness can also be found in the overall design and execution of gameplay. Supposedly, this title is set in the distant future. However, judging by the in-game environments, which all look like modern-day warehouses, you'd never come to this conclusion.

The overall premise is, to say the very least, the biggest load of garbage I've ever seen. Which really is a crying shame, as both the combat and user movement are quite satisfactory. Konoko is surprisingly swift and her fighting prowess is off the scale, devastating opponents with lightning quick, fighting game-like combos and throws. Unfortunately, the intense battles are few and far between, and to get to another one, you'll have to complete a series of aggravating door and switch puzzles. Every stage unfolds this way, oftentimes repeating the same sequence of actions.

Why Bungie went ahead and completed this project without first stepping back and looking at the suckhood it created is beyond me. Also, did Rockstar do any focus testing? If so, were humans ever a part of the equation? The overall sensation garnered is truly a foul one. One that you never need get a whiff of. — REINER



The combat is the only noteworthy aspect

With sloppy targeting, wielding weapons proves to be very frustrating

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ROCKSTAR GAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** BUNGIE
■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 29

THE BOTTOM LINE
TEEN
6.5

- **Concept:** An anime version of Fighting Force
- **Graphics:** Barren environments, mediocre texturing, goofy character movements, repetitive level designs...the list goes on
- **Sound:** Did Rockstar really intend for the spoken dialogue to be so cheesy?
- **Playability:** The hand-to-hand combat is great and the user movement is incredibly smooth
- **Entertainment:** Door puzzles have gone the way of the dinosaurs, yet Oni uses them more than any game before it
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

My sweet Konoko, the meandering heroine of Oni, is the type of female that creates strange rumblings in my trousers. Mmmmm...aahhh. Alas, the game in which she stars is not the equal of her beauty. First off, I applaud the extraordinary effort that went into creating the controls. Making use of nearly every button on the Dual Shock, Oni's complex interface transcends the shallow standards of most beat 'em ups. Konoko proves to be a highly skilled warrior, pummeling foes with an array of throws. If only she was as adept with weapons. The targeting is completely undermined by the game's stiff kickback, which forces you to constantly adjust your aim. This becomes frustrating in heated combat. Throw in extremely repetitive level goals, and this promising game is rendered merely mediocre.

MAIT — 6.75

REVIEWS



I am Homunculus -
not that there's much in a name.

PLAYSTATION 2

SHADOWS OF DESTINY

HIT ME BABY ONE MORE TIME

Shadows of Destiny tells the tale of Eike Kusuda, a man whose destiny is to get murdered. Altering the future is not easy, and it's the player's job to stop each attempt at his demise. To accomplish this, players must travel back in time and solve puzzles that will change the future and save Eike's hide.

The game spans nine chapters with over three hours of computer-generated cinematics. While the plot is interesting, the execution is questionable. The acting is just plain bad, as are the voice-overs. Since most of the game is spent watching the movies, there just isn't a whole lot here to get excited about. I advise you look elsewhere. — ANDY

SECOND OPINION

This game is like a cross between Shennue and Majora's Mask, but isn't as intricate as either. SoD is oddly compelling, however, so I recommend rental as the best way to explore it.

JAY — 6



■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI ■ **DEVELOPER** KCEJ ■ **RELEASE** MARCH

REVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

AQUA AQUA

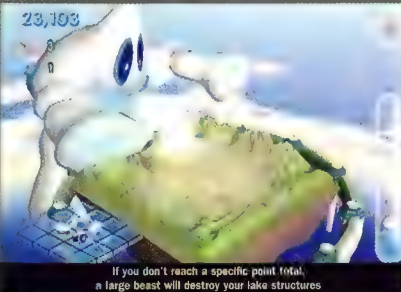
DAM IT

Never before has one of my reviews been interrupted by so many bathroom breaks. The sound of trickling water, liquifying splashes, and occasional drips sent my bladder into overdrive. Sharing the same fate as its predecessor, Wetrix, the thrills in Aqua Aqua are limited, and the overall experience is disappointing. Building lakes and managing a terrain prove to be both stressful and addictive, yet with only four stages, you don't feel you're getting the bang for your buck. Aqua Aqua is a unique puzzler, it just needs to offer a little more to garner any form of respect. — **REINER**

SECOND OPINION

I think this was supposed to be some type of Tetris-esque idea with water and land, but sloppy controls and vague goals are going to hold Aqua (2X) back from any meaningful sales figures.

KRISTIAN - 5.5



If you don't reach a specific point total, a large beast will destroy your lake structures.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER PUZZLE ■ **PUBLISHER** 3DO ■ **DEVELOPER** ZED TWO/MAGNET ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 2002



PLAYSTATION 2

DONALD DUCK: GOIN' QUACKERS

IM-DUCKING-PRESSIVE

Much to my surprise, Goin' Quackers on PS2 is not the same game presented on Nintendo 64 and PlayStation. The level design, level goals, and even the moves Donald has are different, yet at the same time, the game hasn't lost that Bandicoot-esque feel (or, to put it bluntly, steal) that makes it fun. Other than the inexcusably low animation framerate, there's really nothing to complain about in Goin' Quackers. The levels are varied, the challenge rises exponentially, and there are secrets aplenty to discover. There will certainly be better and more clever platformers released on PS2, but considering the software dry spell that most owners are going through right now, picking up this release might not be a bad plan. — **JAY**

SECOND OPINION

This slobbering aquatic bird is quite annoying, but this game is marvelous. Recycles many familiar elements from past platformers, but somehow manages to seem fresh and exciting.

MATT - 7.75

THE BOTTOM LINE



7.5

- **Concept:** The Crash Bandicoot flavor placed in a Duckburg shell
- **Graphics:** Considering the simplistic graphics, the animation is unforgivably choppy
- **Sound:** A very vibrant and varied soundtrack coupled with the unintelligible witticisms of Donald
- **Playability:** About as good as it comes for games of this type
- **Entertainment:** A good diversion, especially considering the dearth of software available for the PS2 right now
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** UBI SOFT ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 9



Multiplayer mode is this game's strength

PLAYSTATION 2

WORLD DESTRUCTION LEAGUE: THUNDER TANKS

GET TANKED

Well, 3DO, you can breathe a sigh of relief — I'm not going to pan your game. I know you're sensitive to that after the phalanx of Army Men release debacles. Testy, testy! See, here's evidence that you can develop a decent game if you put your mind to it. Granted, WDL isn't a giant leap forward in gaming history. However, it is fun, and that's what counts, right? Hello?

Thunder Tanks is a great game to play on an evening with three buddies. The controls are smooth and accurate, the graphics are, well, they're okay, and the power-ups keep things interesting. Most structures in your environment can and will be destroyed, which will add depth to your games of capture-the-flag or deathmatch. Part of the fun of this title is trying to figure out which tank lends its advantages the best to your playing technique. This one's a rent/buy toss-up. If you really love to blow stuff away, I'd say go for it. If not, try a rental first. — **KRISTIAN**

SECOND OPINION

The announcer in this game is annoying beyond belief, but otherwise there isn't anything too horrible about this game. However, there isn't really anything truly outstanding about this game either: if you want to blow up stuff with tanks, here ya go!

ANDY - 6.5

THE BOTTOM LINE

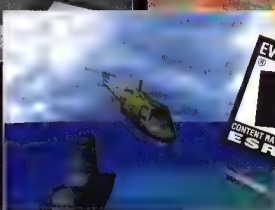
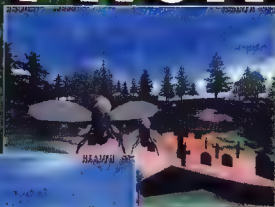


7

- **Concept:** It's Combat, it's BattleTanx, it's nothing new
- **Graphics:** Playing WDL on a PS2 is a little like getting groceries in a Ferrari
- **Sound:** Witty commentary and Blamo! sounds are enough to keep you interested
- **Playability:** The only thing you'll need the manual for is an emergency coaster
- **Entertainment:** Multiplayer is fun, single-player not so much
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** 3DO ■ **DEVELOPER** 3DO ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 15

ACTION PACKED PC GAMES!



FORBIDDEN FOREST

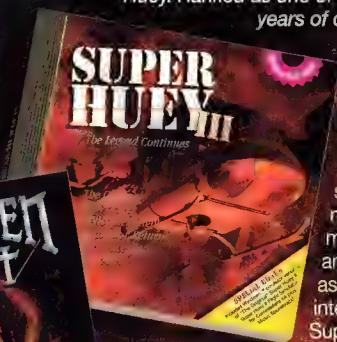
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SUPER HUEY III

This Classic Game, Originally Made for Commodore 64, Makes its Long Awaited Return with Awesome 3D Graphics and Super Sound Effects!

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Contains Animated Blood and Violence.



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Now, Super Huey returns, and the legend continues!

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Super Huey, the legendary flight

simulator program from 1985, returns more awesome than ever!

Contains Animated Violence.

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PC, CD ROM Drive Windows 95 or Higher

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"If any game will force retailers and parents to take the ESRB rating system seriously, it will most likely be this one."

PLAYSTATION

FEAR EFFECT 2: RETRO HELIX

THE RACIEST GAME IN CONSOLE HISTORY

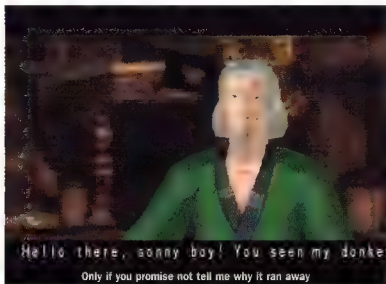
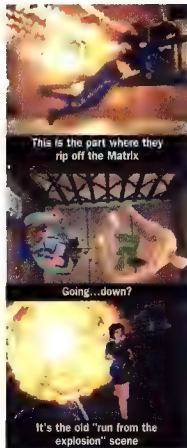
With the release of *Fear Effect 2*, there is little doubt that Eidos has pushed the Mature rating as far as it can go. Excess gore, skin, and abundant cussing make one brief shower scene seem almost silly in comparison. If any game will force retailers and parents to take the ESRB rating system seriously, it will most likely be this one.

As a prequel, *Fear Effect 2* stars all of the main characters from the original game, along with Hana's old partner in crime and passion, Rain. While not quite the action hero that Hana is, Rain is perfectly capable of protecting herself. However, her true skill is her ability as a master hacker and techie extraordinaire. Not taking the usually ambiguous approach to sexual relationships that video games so frequently do, the conversations between the two are frequently loaded with sexual themes, and they seem to spend about a third of the game changing into new outfits. As for rumors concerning the infamous love scene, we hate to disappoint, but it leans more in the direction of PG-13 than NC-17.

The action scenes are about as brutal and delightfully absurd as they come. With enough gore and explosions to make *Apocalypse Now* look like a neat lighter trick, Hollywood's influence on the cutscenes is readily apparent. A totally random *Matrix*-style *Flo-mo* shot of Hana dodging (you guessed it) an explosion is one of the more over-the-top scenes in the game.

While the actual gameplay hasn't been changed, *Fear Effect 2* is a much more solid game with interesting puzzles that fit well into the paradigm of hacking computers and juryrigging equipment. It also offers a much lengthier and better designed quest. Unfortunately, nothing was done to fix the original game's horrid inventory system. This makes it impossible to select an item quickly when you suddenly find yourself surrounded after a sudden perspective change, or when a cutscene forces a weapon on you that you don't have any ammo for. Despite this, *Fear Effect 2* the game is every bit as strong as the mature content surrounding it. — ERIK

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ PUBLISHER EIDOS ■ DEVELOPER KRONOS ■ RELEASE JANUARY 30



THE BOTTOM LINE



8.5

- **Concept:** A solid adventure garnished with two women undressing frequently
- **Graphics:** Excellent action cutscenes and that fresh *Fear Effect* look
- **Sound:** Surprisingly good voice acting and cool music
- **Playability:** An awkward inventory system that should have been addressed after the original *FE* makes this category the game's only weakness
- **Entertainment:** Not quite up to *Resident Evil* quality, but the adventure is much improved after the last game and the cutscenes make the rough spots worthwhile
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

Have you seen the ads for this game? Namely the ad which reads "these two ladies put the ass in assassin"? If you like the ads, the game will not disappoint. Yes, fellas, there is a little of the old switch-hitting action, but try not to get too excited because they don't last long. Oh yeah! The game. I nearly forgot. There are some interesting parts to the gameplay. A heart-rate meter supplants the traditional health gauge, and the bombshells do get to truck around in some interesting vehicles. The scene in which they commandeer a mecha comes to mind. Okay, back to the T&A. Give the public what they want, right? This game will bank on the fact that the main characters are hot chicks who get naughty. It's a bit of a shame since the animation style, graphics, and polished play quality will be overshadowed by a gimmick.

KRISTIAN — 7.75

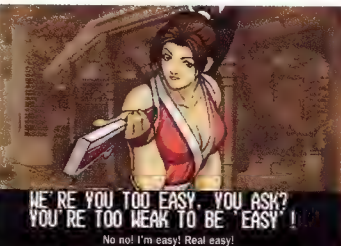


PLAYSTATION

KING OF FIGHTERS '99

ABDICATING THE THRONE

There is a certain charm to the old-school fighters. Maybe it's just that once you become intimately familiar with a fighting game, you never really lose your mastery when the next sequel comes around the bend, no matter how many new moves and characters it has. Unfortunately, I can't recommend King of Fighters '99 to anyone but the most dedicated KoF fan.



As much as we poke fun at Capcom for releasing sequel after sequel with only slight tweaks, at least most of their long-running series update the graphics and play to a degree. KoF '99 feels like the same exact game I played five years ago, only the graphics are pixelated on the PlayStation and it has a couple of changes that don't really alter play all that much.

The only really big new thing is that you can bring a fourth

character along, whose only purpose is to be activated for Striker moves that heal the player or spring a nasty attack on your enemies. Unfortunately, you can usually see the moves coming from a mile away, making them more of a novelty than a deadly new maneuver. I'm sure thousands of loyal fans will go out and buy this game the second it hits the stores, but I don't really see the point. — **ERIK**



Alter ego: Stylin' badass Andy



A truly bizarre intro

■ STYLE 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ PUBLISHER AGETEC ■ DEVELOPER SNK

■ RELEASE MARCH



- **Concept:** An old fighting game with an extra bell and maybe a whistle
- **Graphics:** The SNES could do these graphics adequately
- **Sound:** Sound is slightly muffled, much like the original KoF
- **Playability:** If you've ever played a 2D fighter, you can jump right in
- **Entertainment:** It was fun five years ago, but it's time for a serious update
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

King of Fighters is viewed by many as the poor man's Street Fighter, but if you were to say that to a fan, they would surely have more than a word or two to say about that. For anime fans, the nice thing about the series is that it has always stuck to its cell-based animation, but over the years, KoF hasn't really benefited from large budgets like the Street Fighters series, and its animations show some age. The fighting, on the other hand, has always been master, with plenty of moves to flesh and combos to unleash. When you put the whole package together, however, KoF comes up short. The new Striker combos are a nice touch, and all the art to unlock is interesting to look at, but this game certainly isn't heading in a new direction or doing anything impressive. Fans of the series will be happy to get a new version, but SNK really needs to expand this game if they want to make a groundbreaking fighter. As it is, this game is just KoF status quo.

ANDY - 7

REVIEWS

Which of the following pranks would a Merry Prankster probably pull?

- A STEAL YOUR BERRY TO GIVE TO THE POOR
- B CONSTANTLY SING CHRISTMAS CAROLS TO NEI
- C PRANK CALL YOUR HOUSE ALL NIGHT

1

The game earns its T rating with questions like these

PLAYSTATION

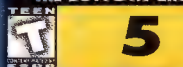
YOU DON'T KNOW JACK: MOCK 2

I KNOW HIM, I JUST DON'T LIKE HIM THAT MUCH

You Don't Know Jack has overstayed its welcome. I loved last year's version: it was a great multiplayer experience and had just the right touch of venomous humor. This time around, Mock 2 shows itself to be a flaccid boor.

First off, the announcer is so self-satisfied and smug that I literally wanted to puke on my PlayStation. He has some amusing quips now and again, but he feels it necessary to inject a snide comment into every single facet of the gameplay. Also, there is no way of skipping over his commentary. Ever been stuck talking to some obnoxious ham at a party who thinks he's an amateur Craig Kilborne? Overall, the trivia contest portion of the game falls as flat as its attempts at humor. The questions are phrased in such a convoluted manner that frequently you cannot even glean what is being asked. This results in you choosing the wrong answer, then being mercilessly mocked by an arrogant simp. Hmm... reminds me of my high school physics class. Fun — **MATT**

THE BOTTOM LINE



- **Concept:** More of the same from television's long-running "edgy" trivia series
- **Graphics:** Mostly animated text, next as flashy as most GoGoGo fan websites
- **Sound:** Either that snarky announcer has grown more annoying or I'm just a lot more irritable than I was last year
- **Playability:** There ought to be more games you can play with one hand
- **Entertainment:** Still probably the best multiplayer trivia game out there, but the formula is starting to wear thin
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

Playing this game with friends is an okay idea. Playing this game alone is a very, very bad idea. There are only so many sarcastic James Garfield remarks one can hear without going insane.

KRISTIAN — 5

Which album by the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion™ most likely elaborates the theories of 19th century economist Jon Spencer?

"ORANGE"

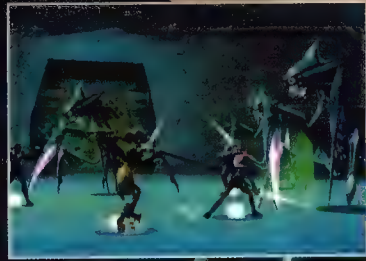
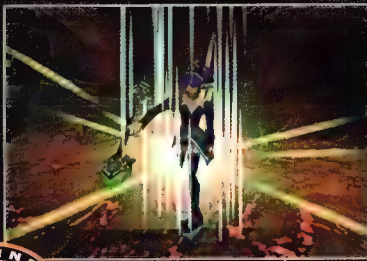
■ STYLE 1 TO 3-PLAYER BOARD ■ PUBLISHER SIERRA ■ DEVELOPER STARSHERE ■ RELEASE NOVEMBER 7

GAME INFORMER

71

NOW YOU CAN
SCREAM "HELP" LIKE A LITTLE GIRL
IN FIVE DIFFERENT LANGUAGES.

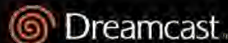
PHANTASY STAR
ONLINE
ファンタジーオンライン

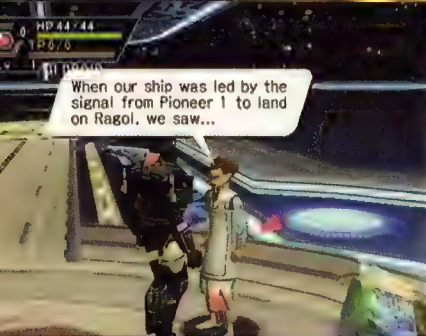




With the Phantasy Star Online instant translator, you can choose from hundreds of words and phrases to communicate with online gamers around the world. For example, "Help me! I don't want to die!" Your teammate in Japan sees: "助けくねえ。死にたかねえよ。" It's just one of the advanced features on the next generation of the legendary Phantasy Star series. Phantasy Star Online will immerse you in the most complete role-playing experience possible—not to mention the most complete for your vocabulary.

sega.com/phantasysonline





DREAMCAST

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE

GLOBAL UNIFICATION

This revolutionary release will forever change the way you perceive console role-playing games. When you hear PC gamers talking about how enthralling EverQuest and Ultima Online are, you'll now understand where they are coming from. Words cannot describe how exhilarating an experience it is to interact with other living players in a massive adventure. It may just be me, but this is the kind of game I've always dreamed of: the world uniting to tackle the forces of evil.

Sharing the same fate as many of the online PC titles, Phantasy Star Online is best described as a glorified chat room set within a fantasy world. A good majority of gamers will get hooked on the quest, trying feverishly to level up, unlock new spells, and assemble the perfect guild. On the flip side of the coin, others will find the chatting functions to be the heart and soul of the game. Either way, Phantasy Star gets the job done. Once you get a taste of what this game has to offer, I think you'll find it to be inescapable, and more addictive than any other RPG on the market.

If you go by PC standards, online RPGs can support thousands of players in one world. Phantasy Star hits the bare minimum by allowing only four players to interact with one another. I personally don't have three friends, so it's not a problem on my end, but some of you may be a little disappointed by this limitation. My biggest gripe with the game is found within the gameplay. Sonic Team created a wonderful world and an interesting stable of customizable characters, but the quest is much too linear, holding your hand from point A to B.

Phantasy Star's most noteworthy trouble zone sticks out like a sore thumb. Never before have I seen a more docile group of enemies. Seriously, it's almost like they were tranquilized before being inserted into the zones. Heck, Jabba the Hutt moves faster

than these creatures. Suffering from this monstrous AI, a good majority of the quest ends up being a cakewalk, and the only challenges are found within the boss battles. If you overlook this aspect, you'll have the time of your life interacting with others and breathing in the gorgeous visuals that Phantasy Star delivers.

As the name so prominently shows, this title was designed for online play, but if you don't have access to the Internet, a single-player game has been included. Be warned, though, the one-man missions are drab, the story is uneventful, and the quest blows big fat juicy chunks.

If you've never experienced online gaming, prepare to have your world rocked and your social life stripped away. Phantasy Star Online is dangerous, addictive, and the most engrossing RPG the Dreamcast has to offer. —REINER



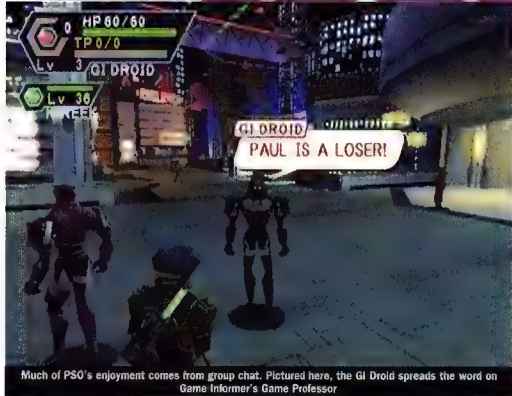
■ STYLE 1 TO 4-PLAYER ONLINE ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ PUBLISHER SEGA ■ DEVELOPER SONIC TEAM ■ RELEASE JANUARY 23



GAME OF THE MONTH PHANTASY STAR ONLINE



"Words cannot describe how exhilarating an experience it is to interact with other living players in a massive adventure."



THE BOTTOM LINE

- TEEN** 9
- **Concept:** The first online role-playing game for the Dreamcast
 - **Graphics:** A visual masterpiece with highly detailed environments, killer lighting effects, and silky smooth character animations
 - **Sound:** More ambience and monster noises are needed, yet the music is soothing
 - **Playability:** Not as complex as it could have been. Targeting is frustrating; however, the combo system is very impressive
 - **Entertainment:** You'll lose your life playing this game
 - **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

I'm a known online RPG junkie, so I was excited to see what Sega would do with the first online RPG for the console. In many ways, the format limits the concept. For example, the zones are small, the ability for future expansion limited, and you can only party with up to three other peeps. But this format does have its advantages, like the beautiful graphics, ease of connection and use, and the game just plain and simple plays like a console game with more arcade-like controls. I did find it frustrating, however, having to switch back and forth between the keyboard and controller all the time — so one of the nice things about online RPGs, the chatting, is somewhat cumbersome to use. But overall, the game delivers on the true excitement of exploring worlds, gaining experience, and building a character and friends online. It's no EverQuest, but it's fun and highly addictive. If you have a keyboard and can get online, I highly advise this game.

ANDY - 9

Much of PSO's enjoyment comes from group chat. Pictured here, the GI Droid spreads the word on Game Informer's Game Professor

The poor enemy AI is no match for long-range projectile attacks



THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
E
ESRB

7.5

- **Concept:**
Adequate racing action supplemented by a wide variety of cars and a fantastic Stunt mode
- **Graphics:**
As good as any DC racer; the car models are intricate and the lush backgrounds recall Ridge Racer V
- **Sound:**
I think this techno thing is really going to catch on!
- **Playability:**
The control is maddeningly bouncy at first, but placing first will unlock more user-friendly rides
- **Entertainment:**
Racing is so-so, but the Stunt mode is hot like fire
- **Replay Value:**
Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

About five months ago Vanishing Point came into the office, and I really enjoyed it. It was early, and had typical alpha game problems like driving through other cars, and the menus stunk, but the controls were loose and the Stunt mode was a blast. So overall, I was psyched about this product. Finally, the review copy arrives and I couldn't be more disappointed. The first thing I noticed was that the fun, relaxed controls that I enjoyed in the early version had been loosened to the point of making the cars squirrely and frustrating. I am all for arcade driving, but Vanishing Point's controls are just ridiculous. About the only place the physics work well is the Stunt mode when you have to pull Rockfords, but in every other instance driving in a straight line is a task. I'm especially disappointed since the graphics are decent and the courses and challenges are cool, but somebody dropped the ball on the control. Do us all a favor, Acclaim, and put whoever it was back in test.

ANDY - 4

"...despite a number of cool features and crisp graphics, [Vanishing Point] ends up coming off as a rather mixed bag."

DREAMCAST

VANISHING POINT

THE POINT OF NO RETURN

Like so many recent releases, Vanishing Point is a game that, despite a number of cool features and crisp graphics, ends up coming off as a rather mixed bag.

Graphically, Vanishing Point pushes the DC to its limit, and is the equal of almost any console racer to date. The car models are detailed, and buffed to a polished sheen that accurately reflects changes in lighting and shadows. The tracks are excellent, although a bit reminiscent of Ridge Racer. Also, there is little or no pop-up in this game, something that could also be attributed to the clever track designs. In any case, Vanishing Point runs smooth as silk at 60 frames per second, and without the use of background fog. Simply put, this game looks phenomenal.

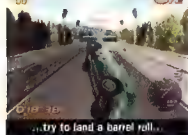
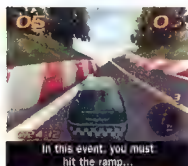
Unfortunately, the actual gameplay is a bit of a letdown. At the outset, you only have two vehicles to choose from, a Ford Explorer and a Mustang. Although these are two of Detroit's premier models, piloting them is not a pleasant experience. To say that the control is slightly bouncy and erratic is like saying Robert Downey Jr. occasionally drinks too much. It takes total concentration and a perfect touch to get these two jumping beans to negotiate turns at any speed. As a result, the game comes off as feeling more frustrating than challenging. Eventually, if you manage the

difficult task of placing first in enough heats, you are rewarded with new, more manageable cars and tuning options. Until then, be prepared for numerous spinouts and crashes. It's unfortunate that the developers didn't at least include tuning options from the start, as I fear this game will turn off many gamers before they have a chance to fully experience it.

Unimpressed by Vanishing Point's testy control, I actually found myself getting quite addicted by the Stunt mode. Now this is more like it! These challenges, which range from long jumping to slalom events to breaking giant balloons, could easily kill your whole weekend. Points are awarded based on performance and time, and then added to a cumulative score. You must hit certain milestones to open events, which forces you to shave every last second off your times. Obsession was imminent, and I soon found myself backtracking to previous stages, looking to increase my old scores and unlock new events. I guarantee you'll become hooked if you give these ingenious little minigames a try.

All in all, Vanishing Point is a great looking game hampered by suspect control and an off-putting learning curve. Still, I recommend at least renting this game for a weekend to check out the awesome Stunt mode. — **MATT**

■ **STYLE 1 TO 8-PLAYER RACING** ■ **PUBLISHER ACCLAIM** ■ **DEVELOPER CLOCKWORK GAMES** ■ **RELEASE JANUARY 3**



DREAMCAST

EVIL DEAD: HAIL TO THE KING

KILLING CULT CLASSICS



For those who missed my wonderfully insightful review of Hail to the King for PlayStation, allow me to recap but a few of the points made in last month's issue. The game lacks the pacing of the movies, and instead comes off as a weak Resident Evil emulation with Bruce Campbell voice-overs. To top it all off, Evil Dead is impossibly hard thanks to regenerating enemies and needless annoyances such as a hedge maze. The Dreamcast version has better graphics, but looser controls. Remember, shop smart; shop around for a better game than this at S-Mart. — **JAY**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ ■ **DEVELOPER** HEAVY IRON STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 20

THE BOTTOM LINE



4.5

- **Concept:** Two great tastes (Resident Evil and Evil Dead) that taste like crap together
- **Graphics:** Better than the PlayStation version, which is akin to saying better than a kick in the head
- **Sound:** Even the witticisms of Bruce Campbell don't make this worth listening to
- **Playability:** Very loose, which leads to frustration
- **Entertainment:** If repetitiveness is your idea of fun...
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

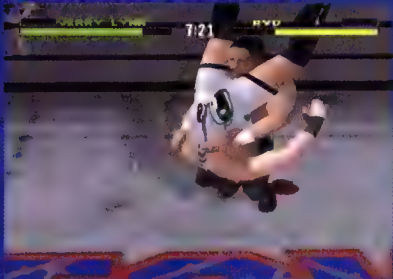
True story: I had a dream a couple of nights ago that Andy asked me to write a page on this game. I woke up completely horrified. Later that day I asked him if that had actually happened. "No Kristian," he said. "It was only a bad dream." Thank God. Need I say more?

KRISTIAN — 3.75

DREAMCAST

ECW ANARCHY RULZ

THE KING OF OLD-SCHOOL



There's a variety of reasons one could come up with for ECW's financial troubles. Let me be the first to blame the low quality of video games Acclaim has produced for the league. Anarchy Rulz is just abysmal — even worse than the PlayStation version, if you can believe that. The collision is horrible, the action is slow, the announcers are useless, and it shipped with plenty of audio and menu screen bugs. After playing this game, I'm left asking the same question that Joel Gertner does during Backlot Brawls: "Why would anyone allow this?" — **JAY**

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM ■ **DEVELOPER** ACCLAIM STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 5

THE BOTTOM LINE



3

- **Concept:** Keep selling the same game with different names despite cries of woe from fans.
- **Graphics:** Not too bad, but not too great either.
- **Sound:** Repetitive and often incorrect
- **Playability:** Simplified from previous versions, but still too complicated
- **Entertainment:** This game has trouble holding your interest through a single match
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

Note to self: Eat dinner, call my parents, then assassinate the development team responsible for this wrestling disaster. Buggy and nearly unplayable, this version is even worse than the PS-X offering.

REINER — 3.25



REVIEWS

GRAB RAIL TOP TURN : Style (75%)

SANDY BEACH

Score: 4.57

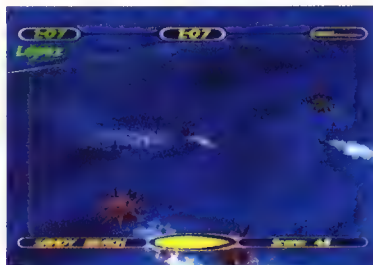
DREAMCAST

CHAMPIONSHIP SURFER

A VIDEO GAME BASED ON A POPULAR WATERSPORT

I find surfing to be a silly human pursuit, although no more ridiculous than other such activities (like eating food or knitting) that you humans entertain yourselves with. As I avoid the deadly radiation of the sun like the plague, I have little use for what you humans call "the beach." So, I frown on this software, and not only because I loathe those golden-skinned beach bums with their tawny blond locks, chiseled physiques, and cannabis-addled minds. Rather, I hate it for the same reason that so many other games have met their end in my Woodchipper of The Ancients — it is not fun to play.

At first, I was quite enthralled with Championship Surfer. The delight of cutting swiftly through the waves like a graceful manta ray was intoxicating. Then, to my dismay, some distempered video game designer placed irritating obstacles all over the water. I realized that performing high-scoring trick combos was difficult, if not impossible. I noticed that there was no way of seeing your surfer when you entered into the pipeline. Finally, I decided that this game must not be allowed to live. In an insane frenzy, I poured A-1 sauce on the game disc and ate it. I burped. This delicious meal was probably the only true enjoyment I got out of Championship Surfer. — **MATT**



■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** MATTEL INTERACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** KROME STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 15

THE BOTTOM LINE



5

- **Concept:** Attempt to use a piece of wood to ride a series of undulations on the surface of a large body of water
- **Graphics:** Not impressive by DC standards. The wave models appear very primitive
- **Sound:** Soundtrack gave me a nice break from listening to good, interesting music all day
- **Playability:** Relatively easy to pick up and play, pulling tricks is frustrating
- **Entertainment:** This product did not entertain me
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

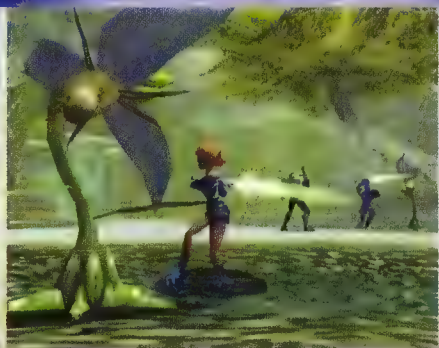
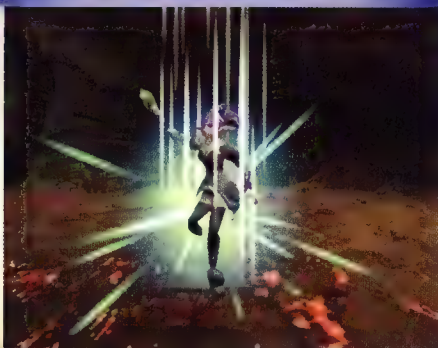
Championship Surfer came perilously close to becoming a 2 (as in, that's what I was about to give it). The reasons: How often do you see a beach choked with mines, boxes, and about 5 billion buoys? Okay, you caught me. There weren't actually 5 billion buoys. I lost count at 10. The fact that you're playing completely blind while your character is in the pipe is another big turnoff. When I started hitting some big-air tricks is when I became moderately interested in what was going on. The problem is, you can't score those types of tricks in the regular mode. You have to be in Arcade mode, which also means you have to be content with a virtual floating junkie. How irritating. If this title had crazier moves and better camera movement, it would have had legs to stand on.

KRISTIAN — 5.25

Pioneer 2 finally completed its long voyage to the new home world. But as the ship entered orbit, an enormous explosion shook the entire planet, and all contact with the thousands of people already there was lost. Now, in the first worldwide online console RPG, players from around the globe must unite to discover what has happened. *Phantasy Star Online* continues the tradition of the definitive *Phantasy Star* series, and becomes a revolutionary and truly global gaming experience.



ONLINE ONLINE ONLINE ON



PHANTASY STAR™ ONLINE

ファンタシースターオンライン

GAME FEATURES:

- Play on servers that can each support up to one thousand players simultaneously. Enter the Virtual Lobby and choose up to 3 other team members for your adventure!
- Play completely online, completely offline, or a combination of both
- Real-time combat featuring many of the original weapons and enemies from previous Phantasy Star games
- Revolutionary communication and translation system virtually eliminates language barriers
- Create your own character by modifying race, profession, body proportions, outfit, and more

LINE ONLINE ONLINE ONLINE ONLINE



Dreamcast



"The real
addictive
quality of the
game comes
from picking
up bigger,
badder
ships..."



PC

SEA DOGS

THE SEA IS A HARSH MISTRESS

Defying standard genres, Sea Dogs mixes elements of action, simulation, adventure, and role-playing to create an intriguing experience in which players can take on quests, raid trade routes for fun and profit, or pick sides at their leisure. While you start off as a mortal enemy of the Spanish, letters of marque can eventually be accepted from any of the other governments (assuming they're not hostile to you); or the player can simply attack all colonial shipping, limiting them to the neutral pirate ports of call.

To complete missions and subquests, players must guide the good (or bad if you choose) Captain Nicolas through numerous conversations in the colonies, retrieve items, and attempt to find new locations at sea. The sea battles themselves involve maneuvering around your opponents in gorgeous real-time environments. Here, you must attempt to gain the best advantage from wind and waves, then sink or board enemy vessels for booty and better ships, which come in an incredible variety. Everything from humble 30-man sloops to the floating fortress man o' wars with three decks of cannons can be purchased or plundered.

In combat, ships can be sunk with regular cannonballs or powerful (but expensive) bombs. Knippel, or chain shot, can be fired to tear and tangle an opponent's sails to slow

them down, while grape shot can reduce a crew complement to a bare handful with a few well placed deck sweeps.

With victory over enemies and the completion of quests, players gain experience that can be used to enhance the abilities of captain and crew. These skills cross the gamut of sailing, trading, and combat, and each can be enhanced by hiring officers found in the colonies of the archipelago.

The colonies themselves are tiny affairs, most with only a handful of shops and taverns and no more than 20 people walking about. Careful exploration of each will often yield numerous subquests and potential officers, but for the most part they are nothing more than restocking stations, offering little color to keep your interest.

The real addictive quality of the game comes from picking up bigger, badder ships and enhancing your skills to the point where you can start kicking even more butt and completing the more difficult quests. There are some who may not be able to get past some of the weaker aspects of the game such as boarding or the town environments, but this is currently my favorite game.

— ERIK

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** BETHESDA SOFTWORKS ■ **DEVELOPER** ATELLA
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 27



THE BOTTOM LINE
8.5

- **Concept:**
A combined ship simulation and adventure game
- **Graphics:**
The detail of the ships and sea battles are remarkable
- **Sound:**
Cannons and explosions could have been more exciting
- **Playability:**
Control is intuitive after about five hours
- **Entertainment:**
An exhilarating (if slightly flawed) experience
- **Replay Value:**
High

SECOND OPINION

I bet you thought you'd be reading a review full of 'AARGH, MATEY!' and 'SHIVER ME TIMBERS, I'VE KEELHAULED ME MUM!' Didn't you? Well, you can forget it, bucko. For me to say something like 'AWAY, YE SCURVY SCALLIWAGS! WE BE BOUND FOR THE HIGH SEAS' would not only be totally predictable, but lame and boring. Once you're done giggling at the fact that you're actually playing a pirate game, you'll find a well designed, well implemented, and highly stylized release. The game has some technical flaws, however. Bad fogging, horrible polygon integrity, frame bleeding, and awkward controls will be things you'll notice. However, after playing for ten minutes you will have forgotten all about them. This is an addictive title with loads of gameplay. If you're looking for something a little out of the ordinary to fill your gaming hours, I would suggest picking up Sea Dogs.

KRISTIAN — 8.5



THE BOTTOM LINE

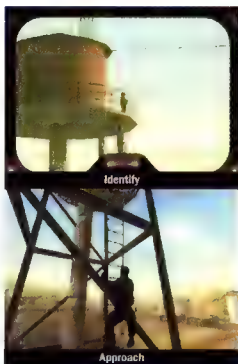
PC

PROJECT IGI: I'M GOING IN

PLEASE, MAKE IT STOP

If I were to tell you that I was about to release a game called "Lario Bros." that features two crazy brothers trying to find a Princess that the evil Dowser took, what would you think? Wait, before you say anything, let me tell you more about it: The main character will be Lario, and Lario has all sorts of crazy abilities. He can jump! He can duck! He can throw little balls of a fire-like substance which will help you kill the evil minions of Dowser, who are trying to thwart your progress. Okay, now what do you think? Too familiar sounding, you say? Sounds like a lame game for a played-out genre, you say? Well my friends, welcome to the world of IGI.

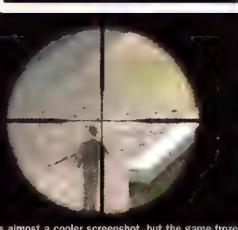
Playing Project IGI: I'm Going In is a painful experience before you even get the disc in the drive. What an embarrassingly bad name for a game. See, the IGI in the beginning of the title stands for "I'm Going In." Then they explain it in the rest of the title. Isn't that clever? In any event, everything that IGI is trying to do has been done before, and done better. Again, I have to invoke the name of Counter-Strike, and I will continue to do so until I see an FPS that holds a candle to it. In a market that loves a game that gives and keeps on giving, IGI is as stingy as a Republican's education budget. — **KRISTIAN**



Identify



Approach



Destroy



Some tasks, like computer hacking, take time



This was almost a cooler screenshot, but the game froze

- Concept:**
 Eureka! Play the role of a British Spec Ops guy... Shoot people!
- Graphics:**
 Nothing new or wonderful here
- Sound:**
 I don't think an MP-5 (sub-machine gun) would sound that quiet if you fired it next to your head
- Playability:**
 The default controls are ridiculously stupid. Any FPS vet will set them to the WA,S,D configuration immediately
- Entertainment:**
 There are so many FPSs out there that are so much better, IGI just doesn't merit wasting your cash
- Replay Value:**
 Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

At first I was pretty excited to play IGI. Something of a cross between GoldenEye and Tenchu, it seemed as if a console-style action game had been reproduced perfectly on the PC. Unfortunately, the game's AI is mind-numbingly stupid. At times, you can literally snipe someone's companion and they won't even notice. Nor will enemies call for help, preferring to charge idiotically into that darkened passageway you're hiding in. To the game's credit, the environments are attractive and well-detailed. I also particularly enjoyed the puzzle-oriented nature of the levels, even if you could simply say "I@#\$ this" and start hosing down anyone who gets in your way. While the game is still interesting, the tomfoolery of the enemies reduces it from a killer stealth/action experience to a somewhat entertaining sheep hunting game.

ERIK — 7

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION **■ PUBLISHER** EIDOS INTERACTIVE **■ DEVELOPER** INNERLOOP
■ RELEASE DECEMBER 20

REVIEWS



PC

KINGDOM UNDER FIRE

G.O.D. RELEASES AN S.O.B.

When I sat down to write this article, I was trying to decide what kind of slant to give it. The old "Hey, I've got a great idea for a game that's already been done 38,000 times," or the "I liked this game better when it was called Warcraft" rants seem passé. I think I will circumvent both in favor of an intelligent, well thought out, and eloquent review: Phibbt. Blech. Yuck. Patooie. Gag. Fair enough?

Kingdom Under Fire would probably be a really exciting game to own if the year was 1996. Granted, Phantagram tried to shove in some RPG elements to make things interesting, and it worked, but only to a point. It's the age-old problem with an RTS/RPG hybrid: It always just ends up as a brawler in the end. To KUF's credit, it came closer than some, but it's still a long way off. What's a brother to do? Stick with Warcraft, or if you're really hungry for a new RTS experience, try Sacrifice. Leave this one alone. — **KRISTIAN**

- Concept:**
 Wait a second, wasn't Warcraft already released?
- Graphics:**
 Nothing terribly noteworthy here, but nothing extraordinarily bad either
- Sound:**
 A slay of voice acting gives this title a small, but notable, lift
- Playability:**
 There are a few commands that will take a bit of time to figure out — like maybe 30 seconds, then it's RTS gawd
- Entertainment:**
 There's not much here
- Replay Value:**
 Low

SECOND OPINION

KUF is a solidly put together, but extraordinarily generic, RTS. If you're looking for a hoedover until Warcraft III releases, I would recommend Warriors: Battcry first.

ERIK — 6.75



Slay those nasty Orcs!

■ STYLE 1 TO 8 PLAYER STRATEGY **■ PUBLISHER** GATHERING OF DEVELOPERS **■ DEVELOPER** PHANTAGRAM **■ RELEASE** JANUARY 15

REVIEWS



PC

STAR TREK: STARFLEET COMMAND VOL. 2 THE ULTIMATE TREK NERD GAME

In this real-time conversion of the turn-based board game, *Starfleet Battles*, players control fleets of up to three ships that can do just about anything the ships did in the shows and movies. Transporters, shields, shuttles, weapon systems and engineering are all available in a heavily icon-laden system. Volume 2 offers a higher level of replayability with a campaign mode in which players are free to roam about the galaxy, taking random missions as well as the occasional scripted scenario as they attempt to earn prestige for better ships. Fans of the original will not be disappointed. — **ERIK**

SECOND OPINION

If there was ever a game made exclusively for hardcore Star Trek fans, this is it. If a Star Wars game was released that came close to the amount of realism involved in this title I'd be on it like white on rice.

KRISTIAN - 7.5



Command up to three ships from this screen

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 6-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** INVICITUS ■ **DEVELOPER** TALDREN ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 12



PC

INSANE

DON'T GET YOUR TAILPIPE PLUGGED

Picture yourself at the wheel of a 4x4 Wrangler on the Utah salt flats catching air as you speed through numbered checkpoints. Then picture your ride flipping, you flying out of it, and sustaining life-threatening injuries you'll probably never recover from. As a safer and less expensive alternative, I would suggest picking up a copy of *Insane*. It's actually "1nsane" denoting that this game should be #1. See how clever that is? In any event, Codemasters has put together a fun little off-roader here. The controls are efficient and intuitive, the physics are fun without being lame, and the vehicles get better the more you play. The environments themselves are quite large and have very little fogging.

On the other side of the plate, I expect a little more out of a PC racer. The developer has so much liberty to incorporate minutia into every section of the game, there's no reason corners should be cut on little things like trees, brush, and particle effects. It's a sad state of affairs when a Dreamcast release like — oh, I don't know — *4x4 Evolution* outperforms a PC game. *Insane* is a solid title to pick up if you're looking for a PC off-road racer to whittle away the hours with. If you have a Dreamcast or PS2 at your disposal, get *4x4 Evo*. — **KRISTIAN**



High speeds can make for spectacular crashes

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** CODEMASTERS ■ **DEVELOPER** INVICTUS ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER 21

THE BOTTOM LINE



7.25

- **Concept:**
Race around in the dirt, go through checkpoints in a variety of ways
- **Graphics:**
Smooth graphics for such expansive environments
- **Sound:**
Vroom! Pow! Whamml! Your garden variety off-road racing sounds
- **Playability:**
A very easy interface to learn. If it takes you more than ten seconds, you're an idiot
- **Entertainment:**
It's a well done off-road game. The online capability will only add to its addictive qualities
- **Replay Value:**
High

SECOND OPINION

It's always struck me as odd that there are so few decent racing games available for the PC. With so many simulation freaks out there flying 18-hour flights on their 747 simulators, one would think that there is just as much of a market for quality driving simulations as well. *Insane* is a surprisingly smooth game, and the interaction between vehicles and the terrain is impressive. The two things I didn't really like about the game were being forced to go through the same levels and competitions over and over again and being restricted to such a tiny selection of cars in each class. *Insane* is another one of those surprisingly good racers on the PC that is almost but not quite as cool as a lot of the more recent off-roading games for the consoles. If all you have is a PC, however, chances are you won't feel gipped by this game if you dig the genre.

ERIK - 7.75

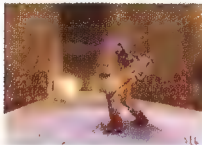


PC

QUAKE III: TEAM ARENA

DANG, THIS MAKES COUNTER-STRIKE LOOK GOOD

What's the point of releasing an expansion title to a game that's two years old without offering anything new or interesting? I'm not sure, but maybe it's some type of radical new marketing strategy. Here's one I've come up with: We'll take an N64, right? But instead of altering the hardware in any meaningful way, we'll just change the color of the casing to crazy-whack-funky greens, blues, and purples! We'll make millions!



Quake III: Team Arena is so lackluster it really begins to boggle the mind. This game flounders behind its peers to such a degree, you have to wonder if it has been sitting on it for a while prior to release. Capture the flag is a good idea, but why plunk down \$30 for something you've been playing for months and months anyway?

This game doesn't even deserve to be in the same genre with the likes of Counter-Strike or even Team Fortress. Where's the creativity? Where's the draw? Definitely not with TA. Getting fragged every 45 seconds might be some people's idea of a good time—but it shouldn't be. You want an FPS you can sink your teeth into? I think you know where this is headed. Counter-Strike, me droogs. Play that for five minutes and you'll never want to partake in crap like this again.

— KRISTIAN



Invincibility is one of the new features

THE BOTTOM LINE



3.5

- **Concept:** It's Quake! It's capture the flag, it's...it's...oh wait, that's all it is
- **Graphics:** Obnoxious weapons and silly levels have all been done before
- **Sound:** There are actually some moderately entertaining sounds. Yipee
- **Playability:** If you're playing this game, you're an FPS vet. There won't be any surprises
- **Entertainment:** Even if you're a diehard Quake fan, there's not much here
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

I had a little fun playing Team Arena, but I don't think it was because of the three new weapons, new toys, or four new playmodes. I think it was simply because I haven't bothered to play Quake III in a long time and had forgotten the simple, gritty appeal that it has. While I still assert Quake III is inferior to Unreal and Team Fortress, it remains fun for its own style of play. Team Arena is probably something the diehards will want to get just for the three new guns alone, but I don't think this expansion pack will serve to renew interest for people who have already turned their backs on Quake III in favor of a more sophisticated game. Let's face it, Team Fortress makes it look silly now and TF2 is right around the corner. Unless you're a regular in a Quake clan, I wouldn't bother with this one.

ERIK - 7

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 64-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** ID SOFTWARE ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 19



PC

FREEDOM: FIRST RESISTANCE

NO, NO, NO

Here's a release that looks good, it seems like it could be a good game. It gives you the feeling that you're about to have fun. Then it takes a dump on your lap. That's no good. It's not the fact that the graphics are bad, because they're not. It's not the fact that it's terribly buggy, because it's not. It's not the fact that its controls are unmanageable or the camera sucks...it's none of these things. It's the fact that the game is boring. It's a boring game, and no amount of graphical prowess or nice voice acting is going to be able to cover up the foul stench the gameplay emits when activated. — KRISTIAN

THE BOTTOM LINE



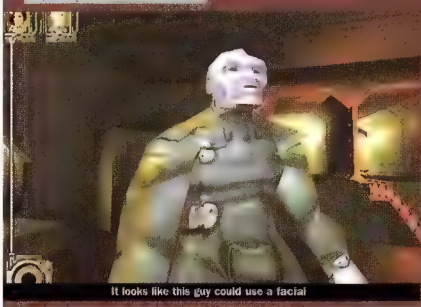
5.75

- **Concept:** Something about saving humanity from an alien race...I don't know, it sounded too complicated to me.
- **Graphics:** The Rogue Spear engine allows for some nice scenery
- **Sound:** A lot of voice dialogue and not much else
- **Playability:** The third-person perspective doesn't lend itself to the FPS's controls very well
- **Entertainment:** If you were locked in a room with this game and a Rubik's Cube for eight hours, the cube might see more playtime.
- **Replay Value:** Low

SECOND OPINION

It's based on an Anne McCaffrey book, it's choppy as all hell, and it froze on me while I was saving a game. Even if these problems were fixed, I still doubt the game would have been very cool.

ERIK - 3.25



It looks like this guy could use a facial

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** RED STORM ENTERTAINMENT ■ **DEVELOPER** RED STORM ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 13

REVIEWS



GAME BOY COLOR

THE LION KING: SIMBA'S MIGHTY ADVENTURE

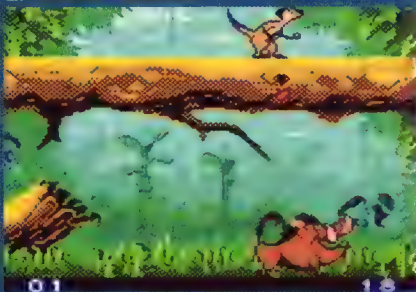
AFRIKA SIMBAATAA

This being both a Game Boy Color title and a Disney game based on a movie that's over six years old, I guess my expectations for Simba's Mighty Adventure could best be described as low. Much to my surprise, this is actually a fun game. The graphics are stellar when compared to the normal fare we're treated to on this handheld, and the gameplay equals the visual presentation. The only problem with Lion King is that it's too short and too easy. Those with just moderate platforming skills will be able to complete it on their first sitting. It's fun while it lasts, though. — **JAY**

SECOND OPINION

This game is dull. The animations are attractive, but the levels leave much to be desired, and the challenge factor is hideously low. I could only see very young children digging this one.

ERIK - 5



■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** TORUS GAMES ■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 27



GAME BOY COLOR

MEGA MAN XTREME

TIN BOY RUSTIN'

As much as I encourage Capcom to continue supporting Mega Man's two-dimensional affairs, I feel as though his time in the 2D spotlight has passed. He's beginning to rust at the seams, and there may be a way to bring him back to his glory days, but Capcom hasn't found the solution yet. On the PlayStation, Mega Man X5 left much to be desired, mainly because the harrowing difficulty that made the series so special was stripped away. In his return to the handheld realm, not only has the challenge been neutered, the quest is incredibly short. The stage sizes are ridiculously short and the game can basically be conquered in the blink of an eye. I love the new additions, mainly the second quest and the new ally characters; however, a Mega Man game that doesn't make your palms sweat really isn't a Mega Man game. Enjoyable, but way too easy. — **REINER**

SECOND OPINION

Mega Man Xtreme delivers fun and challenge that is by today's Game Boy standards a rarity. You have seen these bosses on SNES before, but now you can conquer them on-the-go. Nothing revolutionary (duh, it's Mega Man), but fun nonetheless.

ANDY - 7.75

THE BOTTOM LINE



7

■ Concept:

A straightforward platformer with bonus games mixed in to spice things up.

■ Graphics:

It actually looks like some work was put into the character animation.

■ Sound:

Other than Simba's roar, all the audio makes you look forward to Game Boy Advance.

■ Playability:

Confusingly, Start is used to roar, and Select to pause, rather than the other way around.

■ Entertainment:

A surprisingly fun game...while it lasts.

■ Replay Value:

Moderate.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM ■ **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM
■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 12



GAME BOY COLOR

STAR WARS: EPISODE I OBI-WAN'S ADVENTURES

PINT-SIZED PADAWAN PERILS

Master Yoda may frown upon Qui-Gon Jinn's training of his adolescent student, Obi-Wan Kenobi, but from what I've seen thus far, that shriveled green wart is undeserving of the seat he holds. Leader of the Jedi Council? Please! "Mmmm...Train you must. Ready are you not." Why don't you sit on your lightsaber, wave goodbye, and ignite the sucker!

Despite Yoda's concerns, THQ has deemed Obi-Wan worthy of Jedi Knighthood, and as inexperienced as he may be, his first GBC adventure is an impressive one filled with fast-paced action, outstanding visuals, and a challenging difficulty. In many ways, this title is the little brother to Jedi Power Battles. Deflecting lasers is delivered identically, and the level breakdown is also right on par. My praise for this game is high, and no, Star Wars has nothing to do with it. Well...maybe a little. Straight up, this is a pocket-sized thrill ride that you won't want to miss. — **REINER**

SECOND OPINION

I was pretty impressed with this title. For a game to pack this much graphical power into a handheld system is impressive. Most impressive. Never mind the lame story.

KRISTIAN - 7.25

THE BOTTOM LINE



7

■ Concept:

A new story arc featuring cyberspace battles and two new ally characters.

■ Graphics:

Sharp and colorful, yet graphical flickers do occur.

■ Sound:

A very nice array of blips and beeps.

■ Playability:

Scripted like the long running X series, the play is easy to pick up and moderately challenging.

■ Entertainment:

After completing the game, new stages appear in the second quest.

■ Replay Value:

Moderately High

THE BOTTOM LINE



8

■ Concept:

A rebel without a cause, Obi-Wan nacks and slashes his way through nine explosive stages to pierce Darth Maul's belly button with his lightsaber.

■ Graphics:

The characters are a tad small, but the environments are highly detailed.

■ Sound:

Monorific tinny goodness!!!

■ Playability:

Great. You really couldn't ask for better control.

■ Entertainment:

One man. Countless droids. The skill to oestroy them all. It doesn't get much better than this.

■ Replay Value:

Moderately Low

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ ■ **DEVELOPER** HOTGEN STUDIOS/LUCASARTS
■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 21

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GAME BOY COLOR

LOONEY TUNES RACING

GLOOMY TIMES PLAYING

Check out this crazy-wack-funky track design: The road goes left, the road goes right. The road goes left, the road goes right (times 20), end of track. Not only does Looney Tunes Racing do precisely this in every single track (all ten of them), but your track progress is measured by a dot traveling around a circle in the upper right of the screen. Perhaps every course is actually a circle. Wouldn't that be mind-boggling?

To be (kind of) fair, racing does not transfer well to handheld systems. Looney Tunes Racing is no exception. Infogrames is just trying to put too much game into not enough platform. The different power-ups and characters are kind of interesting, but everything just ends up looking like colored blobs. The sounds are severely limited, and the controls...well, left/right/left/right is taxing on anyone's patience. If you really feel the need to play LTR, get the PS-X version. Steer clear of this one. — **KRISTIAN**

SECOND OPINION

I feel sorry for any developer forced to do a racing game for the Game Boy. The power-ups in this game show signs of good intentions, but the racing sucks like every other GBC racer.

ERIK - 3.25

THE BOTTOM LINE
EVERYONE **E** 4.25

- **Concept:** Well, I'm pretty sure it's some type of racing game
- **Graphics:** Some things just weren't meant to go to handheld systems. LTR is one of them
- **Sound:** That one song you hear over and over again during races is really catchy!
- **Playability:** Even Liz Taylor could figure this one out
- **Entertainment:** You might enjoy what you're playing for about 30 seconds
- **Replay Value:** Low

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** INFOGRAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** INFOGRAMES
■ **RELEASE** DECEMBER 15



GAME BOY COLOR

HOYLE CARD GAMES

KNOW WHEN TO HOLD, WHEN TO FOLD

I have always thought Game Boy was at its best when it did puzzle games. Sure, there are some fun action games and great RPGs, but if you want a game that will go with you anywhere and everywhere your Game Boy goes, nothing beats a puzzler. Now I think I need to add this card game to my must-have travel library.

Packed with tons of games (Crazy 8s, Cribbage, Gin, Go Fish, Hearts, Old Maid, six versions of Solitaire, Spades, and War), Hoyle Card Games can keep you entertained for hours and hours on end. I personally couldn't stop playing Cribbage, and I couldn't wait to get to play the game linked up so I could get in some good smack talk during gameplay. Sure, there's nothing revolutionary about this game, but it is just good old-fashioned fun. — **ANDY**

SECOND OPINION

It's amazing. Your pathetic species CAN get something right once in a while. Great interface, a whopping 14 games, and the full Hoyle rules available for each. Scorpio like.

SCORPIO - 8

THE BOTTOM LINE
EVERYONE **E** 9

- **Concept:** Good old fashioned card games that can be played solitaire
- **Graphics:** There are some animations
- **Sound:** Some funky lounge music that neither annoys nor entertains
- **Playability:** The classic point and click interface we have all used for years
- **Entertainment:** Nothing beats playing cards when you want to pass some time
- **Replay Value:** High

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER BOARD ■ **PUBLISHER** SIERRA ATTRACTIONS ■ **DEVELOPER** SANDBOX STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** JANUARY 9



GAME BOY COLOR

BATMAN: CHAOS IN GOTHAM

WHO IS THIS BATMAN?

Because I never watch movies or read comic books, I am unfamiliar with the Batman. In this software product the Batman leaps and jumps around a fictional setting called Gotham City. The Batman is quite agile, possessed of a catlike quickness. Unfortunately he can be quite hard to control. Such insolence! While this game is quite handsome, it did not captivate me. I applaud the creators' imagination, as there is a fine selection of weapons and vehicles, but I would much rather spend his time watching Benson re-runs and smoking banana peels. Thus, I flung this game into the pits of hell.

— **MATT**

THE BOTTOM LINE
EVERYONE **E** 6

- **Concept:** A strange man in party nose and a mask battles the criminal element of Gotham City
- **Graphics:** Oddly attractive; the character animations are among the best I've seen on the GBC
- **Sound:** The repetitive minor key keyboard arpeggios induce madness
- **Playability:** The detailed animations come at the expense of the gameplay.
- **Entertainment:** Could be a passing fancy for some, but nothing special
- **Replay Value:** Low

SECOND OPINION

This is a really awesome game. No, no, I'm kidding, of course. There hasn't been a good Batman game on Game Boy since...well, let's just say that Chaos in Gotham follows tradition.

JAY - 5



■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT
■ **DEVELOPER** DIGITAL ECLIPSE ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 27

CHARTS

In association with the NPD TRSTS Video Games Service, Charts presents an in-depth listing of the best selling software on a month to month basis. Are the games you spend your hard-earned dollars on top sellers? Take a look below to find out. We've also compiled a listing of the top selling Japanese software, and, of course, we included a Top 10 list of the games the GI staff is currently enjoying.



NPD TOP 20

Listings Based Upon NPD Data For March 2001. Based On Units Sold

RANK	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
1	1	Pokémon Gold	GBC	Oct-00	\$28

If only we could travel back in time and erase these pathetic little beasts. Don't get us wrong, we love the games, but for three straight months now, the Poké-crew has polluted our Charts data, and to be dead honest, we're running out of things to say about them.

2	2	Pokémon Silver	GBC	Oct-00	\$28
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AKK!!! Why won't these adorable little vermin just disappear?! Hmm... Maybe if we targeted their leader, that little yellow fart with the lightning-bolt shaped tail, we'd send disarray through the Pokémon ranks, forcing them to disband and seek other work. Pokémon 3 - Game Informer 0.

3	14	WWF SmackDown 2	PS-X	Nov-00	\$40
---	----	------------------------	------	--------	------

There's no denying it, gamers love it when muscular men roll around and grab each other. For some reason or another, we find it mysteriously intriguing as well. Oh yes, darling. We absolutely die whenever The Rock wraps his beautiful hands around Stone Cold's panties.

4	6	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	PS-X	Sep-00	\$39
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The master of disaster, Tony Hawk, may only have one entry in this month's Top 5 list, but he has four, count them four, different games within the Top 20. When's the last time this happened? Never...uh...correction. Pokémon has achieved this mark numerous times. Argh!!! Still...Tony's a helluva lot cooler.

5	9	Driver 2	PS-X	Nov-00	\$40
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Huh? Who would've thunk it. Crime does pay. Sharing the same success as its predecessor, Driver 2 has garnered a vast following and with each passing month it continues to climb the Charts. Could it be next month's top seller? Let's hope so. If we have to write about Nintendo's pets again we may just scrap this page and insert a beautiful picture of George Lucas...naked!!!

RANK	MO	GAME	SYSTEM	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
6	4	Final Fantasy IX	PS-X	Nov-00	\$40
7	5	WWF No Mercy	N64	Nov-00	\$60
8	3	The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask	N64	Oct-00	\$60
9	N/A	Donkey Kong Country	GBC	Nov-00	\$27
10	N/A	Banjo-Toole	N64	Nov-00	\$50
11	7	The World Is Not Enough	N64	Oct-00	\$50
12	13	Madden NFL 2001	PS-X	Aug-00	\$40
13	12	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater	PS-X	Sep-99	\$20
14	N/A	Rugrats In Paris	GBC	Nov-00	\$28
15	N/A	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	GBC	Nov-00	\$28
16	N/A	Crash Bash	PS-X	Nov-00	\$40
17	10	Super Mario Brothers DX	GBC	May-99	\$27
18	16	Madden NFL 2001	PS2	Oct-00	\$49
19	20	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater	N64	Mar-00	\$50
20	15	Spyro: Year of the Dragon	PS-X	Oct-00	\$40

Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Service • Kristin Barnett VanKorff (516) 625-2481

JAPAN TOP 10

Source: Game Japan Based On Monthly Units Sold

POS.	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	The Bouncer	PS2
2	N/A	Mobile Suit Gundam	PS2
3	N/A	Yugio Duel Monsters 4	GBC
4	N/A	Pokémon Crystal	GBC
5	N/A	Mario Party 3	N64
6	N/A	Dragon Quest III	GBC
7	N/A	Victorious Boxers	PS2
8	N/A	Crash Bash	PS-X
9	N/A	Bomberman Land	PS-X
10	N/A	Final Fantasy	WSC



GAME INFORMER TOP 10

The Staff's Favorite Picks

POS.	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	1	Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty	PS2
2	N/A	Phantasy Star Online	DC
3	2	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	PS-X, DC
4	4	Final Fantasy IX	PS-X
5	N/A	Devil May Cry	PS2
6	N/A	The Adventures of Cookie & Cream	PS2
7	7	NHL 2001	PS2
8	N/A	Star Wars: Starfighter	PS2
9	N/A	Onimusha: Warlords	PS2
10	9	WWF SmackDown 2	PS-X



PC TOP 10

Based On Monthly Units Sold. Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Service Kristin Barnett VanKorff (516) 625-2481

POS.	L. MO	GAME	MONTH	PRICE
1	3	The Sims	Feb-00	\$38
2	4	Roller Coaster Tycoon	Mar-99	\$25
3	6	The Sims: Livin' Large	Sep-00	\$27
4	10	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire 2	May-00	\$17
5	5	Roller Coaster Tycoon: Loopy Landscapes	Sep-00	\$26
6	N/A	Everquest: Scars of Velious	Dec-00	\$19
7	2	Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2	Oct-00	\$40
8	7	Barbie Pet Rescue	Aug-00	\$27
9	1	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire	Nov-99	\$10
10	8	Sim Theme Park World	Nov-99	\$19





PlayStation 2

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PLAY TO PERFECTION

Onimusha: Warlords

鬼武者

BASIC TRAINING

Soul Power



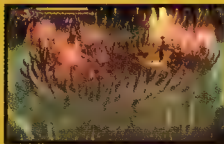
The demons Samanosuke conquers in Onimusha will only add to his power. Through the use of his gauntlet's soul-sucking ability, Samanosuke can possess the demonic souls. In many areas, the enemies will quickly regenerate. The ensuing action is intense, but the rewards of extra health, magic power, and weapon powers cannot be ignored.

In the early stages of the game, learning the battle system and absorbing a ton of souls will greatly assist you later.

Enhancing The Orbs & Weapons

When enhancing items at the Magic Mirror, the priority should be the Orbs. The Fire Orb should be the first to get an enhancement, followed by the Thunder Orb.

The Dark Realm



There are two entrances to the Dark Realm. One is in The Keep's save room. The other is in a well located in the West Area. In the latter parts of the game, Samanosuke will be invited to the Dark Realm. This area is a series of levels populated by increasingly difficult enemies.

These levels offer plenty of souls to absorb, and will help you to level-up your weapons more quickly.

The Dark Realm is also home to a number of items including Fluorite pieces and The Bishamon Ocarina.

The Fluorite

There are 20 pieces of Fluorite hidden in the game. We have made attempts to steer you to many of them, but we don't have them all. Late in the game, you can acquire the Vision Staff that will make all the Fluorite visible. A note of advice: Using the Evil Plate will seal off almost all of the area in The Keep. Do not use the Evil Plate until you have explored all of its rooms for Fluorite.

Trick Treasure Box

This guide doesn't provide the solutions to the Trick Treasure Boxes. If you have the skills to get to them, you will likely have the same skills to solve these easy puzzles.

Easy Mode, Normal Mode

Initially, there is only one difficulty setting to choose - Normal. If you are having a difficult time, and find yourself dying frequently, the game will tell you that the Easy Mode has become available.

This guide was compiled in the Normal Mode.



SECRETS & EXTRAS

Rankings

Like any of Capcom's survival horror titles, the game ranks you after you have completed the adventure. The time it takes you to beat the game is an important piece of the ranking. You will also be ranked on the number of points you acquired to enhance your items, the number of enemies you destroyed, and how many pieces of Fluorite you collected. The number of rooms you conquered in the Dark Realm is also factored in.

The Bishamon Ocarina & Bishamon Sword

The Bishamon Ocarina is found at the end of the Dark Realm rooms. This Ocarina will open a door in the save room prior to the last boss. Inside this door you will find the Bishamon Sword.

Code Boxes & Books

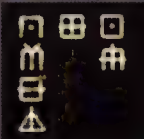
The work versus the reward is asked when attempting to unlock the four Code Boxes in the game. These cryptic code puzzles can be deciphered using the volumes of colored Code Books. Regrettably, these Code Boxes offer only a Magic or Power Jewel. Pay attention to the scene in the beginning where Samanosuke is given the Gauntlet for clues on the Clan of Ogres. Better yet, look at the solution to each box puzzle below.

The Extra Footage

A teaser trailer for Onimusha 2 will appear after completing the game.

The Panda Suit

A hilarious new costume for Samanosuke will be selectable after the adventure is done. Use the L2 button to put on the head.



Box #1 - The South Area Entrance



Box #2 - The Magic Mirror in The South Area Cave



Box #3 - The West Area Magic Mirror (Kaede only)



Box #4 - East Area Magic Mirror (Past The Waterfall)



1 Learn The Way of the Blade

The first section of Onimusha is a primer. Make your way through the area, and you will be introduced to Samanosuke's Gauntlet and given instructions. Hack your way to the north and make your way to the tunnel that leads to the Keep. Go down the hole.

4 Unlock The Rope Ladder

Past the Thunder Orb, at the other end of the hall, is a Trick Treasure Box. This rather simple puzzle will reveal the Rope Ladder.

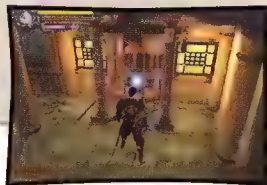


5 Get The South Area Map (Code Box with Power Jewel)

After exiting the Underground Temple, there is a Treasure Box that is partially hidden. It contains a Magic Jewel. Follow the path to the large door sealed with the Thunder Crystal. Next to it is a Magic Mirror and the first Code Box. Your gauntlet will unseal the door for you. Just beyond the door you will find a box containing the South Area Map.

6 Use the Rope Ladder

There is only one path to take – forward. Get through the South Area Courtyard and move west. Find the downed soldier, and you'll get some Herb. At the point where the wall is broken use the Rope Ladder to go down.



THE SOUTH AREA



7 Prepare For Battle (Code Box)

After descending the Rope Ladder, follow the path to the large wooden doors. Here you will find a Magic Mirror and a Code Box. It might be a good idea to save your progress before facing the next Boss.

8 Fight For The Fire Orb

Boss Battle

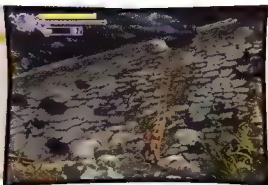
Through the double doors you'll come face-to-face with a slow and lumbering beast. To defeat him quickly, unleash a couple of Special Thunder Attacks and retreat to absorb all the souls. Move around the center of the area and use it as a barrier to keep the beast at bay. Use the sidestep to circle around your foe. His attacks are rather slow, so when he strikes, act quickly. Move around to his side or behind him and unload a series of slashes (three or four). Then back off and repeat this tactic. If you're lucky, you may absorb some more magic to quickly finish him off with a Special Attack.

Mini Boss

After the beast is laid to rest, go into the alcove behind the carcass to find a Journal (#2) and through to the next door. Inside you will find Fluorite under some vases. Follow the halls to a room where you'll interrupt a demon doing his dirty work. He will unleash Ronaldo on you.

Hack and slash the mutating monster. If you slice him in two, Ronaldo will morph into two separate beasts. Keep slashing. When you're done you will find the Fire Orb.

Return to the room where you fought the boss and unseal the door using the Fire Orb.



9 Unseal The Keep, Map It

Return to the South Area Courtyard and unseal the door using the Fire Orb. Once inside, the small door under the balcony contains a Magic Mirror and a Magic Well. Here you will find the Keep Map. Enhance your Fire Orb to Level 2 if you haven't yet.



10 Meet Tokichiro, Yumemaru

First, move to the north. Inside the double doors, you will meet the crafty Tokichiro and find some Arrows in a chest. The room to the side contains a Journal (#3).

Continue through the door sealed with a Fire Crystal and you will eventually come to a door sealed with a large blue plate (it looks evil). Just past this you will meet the boy, Yumemaru. Follow him through the next door.



11 Get The Tricky Bow

After tailing Yumemaru, you'll find a door next to some stairs. Inside, you will find a Trick Treasure Box. Complete the puzzle in five moves to acquire the Bow. In the back of the room there is a Suzaku Vol. 2 (Red). At the base of the stairs there is a chest containing some Herb. Fluorite is hidden next to it. Leave and take the stairs to the second floor.

12 Up & Up

On the second level of The Keep, next to the stairs, is a bucket that contains a Power Jewel. Continue south, move across the catwalk and into the Fire Crystal sealed door. The next area is loaded with demons, but fight through to the next room. Hack the box to reveal a chest containing Normal Arrows. Continue up the stairs to the Magic Mirror, Normal Arrows, and Byakkō Vol. 2 (White). There is a door sealed with two Fire Crystals. Again, you can't get through this door if your Fire Orb isn't at Level 2. We highly suggest you save here before venturing onward.

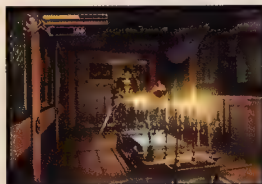
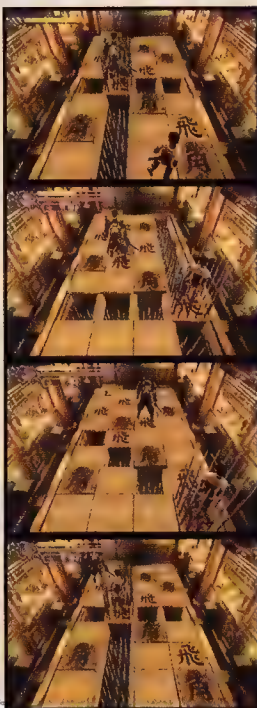


13 Samurai Puzzle Solver

In the next series of puzzles you will control both Samanosuke and Kaede.

The Floor Puzzle

There are four possible layouts of the floor for this task. We won't explain every variation, and we can't actually say we used any strategy on this puzzle. We just attempted to walk on the same symbol that Kaede was standing on. Our success rate was about 90%.



Light The Fire

The next room contains a Magic Well. Power up and light the candles using your Special Fire Attack. The light created will reveal a door.



The Lever Puzzle

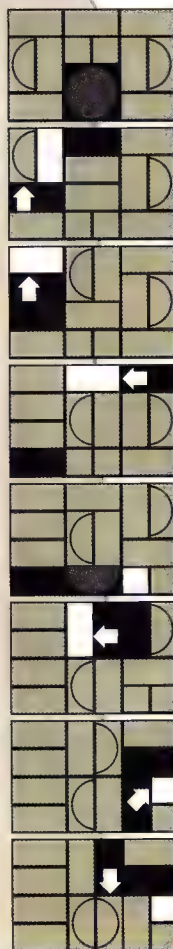
- Pull the first lever with Samanosuke
- Controlling Kaede, pull the lever on the right
- Pull the next lever with Samanosuke
- As Kaede, pull the far-left lever
- As Samanosuke, open the chest and acquire the Holy Armor. Next, pull the lever that is two away from Kaede
- Go to the last lever and pull it



The Tile Shift Puzzle

This tile puzzle will test your patience, but it can be done easily in the time allowed.

Take a look at some of the key moves to the right.



14 The Crest Pieces

Once Samanosuke is free, continue on and you'll find a locked door that needs pieces of a crest to be opened. Move to the end of the hall and go down the ladder. This ladder will allow you to go down two levels. At the bottom you'll find a box containing the L. Crest Piece.

Return up one level on the ladder and go to the other end of the hall to find another ladder down. Once there, you can locate a box containing a Power Jewel. At the other end a door leads to a latched door. This door reveals a secret panel. Inside the room is a chest that contains the R. Crest Piece. There is also a Red Book.

Move back up the ladders to the Crest Door and place both Crest Pieces to unlock it.



15 Quest For the Wind Orb

Past the Crest Door you will again see an annoying acquaintance. In the smaller side room is Fluorite and Seiryu Vol. 1 (Blue). Moving on, you should locate Suzuki Vol. 1 (Red), Seiryu Vol. 3 & 4 (Blue), Arrows, and Medicine.

Hack both the blinds to reveal soul points and a passage with a Magic Mirror.

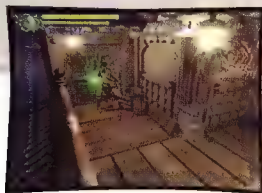
Boss Battle

Like the first demon you faced, this one is relatively slow. Use the space on the roof to circle around him and avoid his devastating attacks. Don't stay in front of him as he will block any standard attack and his magic can do some serious damage. Unleash as many special attacks on him as you can and slice him from the sides and back. Just time your attacks well and this warrior won't be any problem. When the demon is defeated, he will leave you the Wind Orb.



16 Rescue Yumemaru

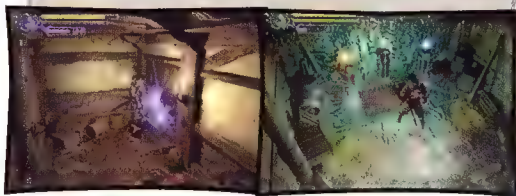
After the battle, descend to the door sealed with a Wind Crystal. Use the Wind Orb to access the door from which you heard the cries of Yumemaru. You will then be transported to a new scene and wind up on the first floor.



17 Locate The Underground Entrance

Move to the first room of The Keep and assist the soldier with his foes. He will drop Herb if you assist him. The Magic Mirror is nearby; you must have your Thunder Orb powered to Level 2 before venturing forward.

There is a door sealed by two Thunder Crystals to the east. Open it and continue to a pedestal with three colored crystals. Activate the panel with each of the three swords equipped to open the passage.



THE KEEP UNDERGROUND

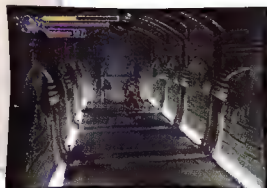
18 Map, Purifier Bell, and More

Move around the scummy pool to the opposite door. Inside are a Magic Mirror and a box containing Herb. Hack your way through the tendons to a back room containing Orange Book, Green Book, and a Byakko Vol. 3 (White). Continue on to a box that contains the Keep Underground Map.

Just past the Map is a rope connected to a weight. Cut the rope with your weapon to release the weight. This will reveal the Rosary of Communication. Moving out and to the far end of the hall will bring you to a room containing the Purifier Bell. Once you have the little ringer, be careful when you exit. Make sure your Wind Orb is powered to Level 2.

19 Use the Purifier Bell

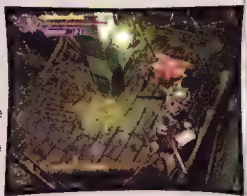
Ghosts guard the door in the first room of the Keep Underground. Use the Purifier Bell to bless the door and make the ghosts unlock their hold.



20 Find The Blue Key

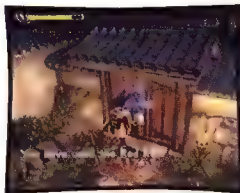
There is only one path that leads deeper into the Underground. Locate the door sealed by two Wind Crystals, and find some Herb and the White Book before unsealing the door.

Past the Wind Crystal door you will find a Knight guarding some items. After you take care of the demon, grab the Byakko Vol. 4 (White), Apocalypse Book #1, and a Trick Treasure Box. You'll have three moves to solve the puzzle. When you do, you'll be rewarded with the Blue Key. You will also find Fluorite in this area.



21 Use the Blue Key

Backtrack from where you found the key to find the Blue Key Door. Right next to this door is Fluorite. Entering is very dangerous for Samanosuke, and he is sucked into an unknown place. You will now control Kaede.



23 The Red Key: Use It

The Red Key opens the door in the area where you used the Rope Ladder. Use it and enter the West Area.

CONTROL KAEDE

22 Locate The Red Key

After getting back to your feet, leave the room and you'll see a soldier. This guy will hand you the Red Key. Take it and head outside to the Courtyard in the South Area.

WEST AREA



24 Get The Gear [Code Box with Magic Jewel]

Move forward a few rooms and you'll arrive in a room with archers and two exits. Go through the double doors and into the garden.

Hidden in the bushes are more Kunai Blades. Use the Shinobi Kit to continue into a room with a Magic Mirror and a Code Box. In the next room, locate the Gear on the dead soldier. Return to the room with the archers.



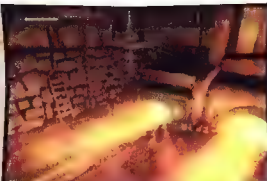
25 Find The West Map

Under the archers' perch, take the ladder up and enter the room with a Magic Mirror and Magic Well. Here you will find a box with the West Area Map. (Note the door sealed by three Thunder Crystals.) Use the Shinobi Kit to get through the next door and make your way deeper into the West Area.

26 Get the Gold Plate

Past the Save Room, the first door contains a blast furnace. Locate the pull handle and use it. The door on the other side will open and you must move quickly past the flame before it closes.

Once inside, hack the boxes to uncover some Herb. Next, go to the wall and grab the Gold Plate. Pull the lever to deactivate the furnace and the door.



27 Use The Gear, Get The Silver Plate

Near the furnace room is the records room. Examine the empty bookcase and a panel will open. Place the Gear into the mechanism and pull the string. This will open a secret door. Inside, there is a box that contains the Silver Plate.

In this general area, there is also a Journal (#5), a Suzaku Vol. 4 (Red) book, and Byakko Vol. 1 (White). You'll also find Fluorite hidden near the area of the Silver Plate.



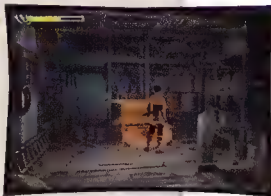
28 Use The Silver and Gold Plates

Return to the area where the Gear was located and place the Gold and Silver Plates in the area next to the gate.



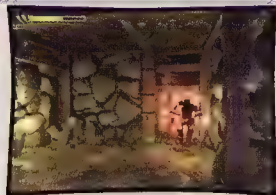
29 Get the Sacred Knife

Avoid the fire and move to a small room on the opposite side. You will find a box containing Kunai Blades and a Genbu Vol. 2 (Green). In the door on the opposite end, there is a small room containing a hidden Fluorite piece. Up the stairs is a Trick Treasure Box. You'll have five moves to complete this puzzle. The solution will unveil the Sacred Knife.



30 Find Princess Yuki

Retreat back down and make your way to the dark stairwell. In this stone tunnel, hack your way through to another door. Continue on to a cell where you will find Princess Yuki.



Mini Boss

This guy is a piece of cake if you remember to block. Let him make the first move and then counter with some slashes of your own.

CONTROL SAMANOSUKE

31 Escape The Underground

Past the Magic Mirror is another Boss Battle

Boss

Talk about playing with yourself! This is a battle against Evil Samanosuke and it is all about blocking. The evil one will use a standard sword attack, as well as some nasty projectile magic attacks. The good thing about the magic he spews is that it can be blocked back into him, or absorbed for additional power.

Since this guy is essentially you, he is very quick and hard to attack. The best time to try to get some shots in on him is when he is about to shoot a magic ball. The evil one will back off slightly and then you should rush and strike. Keep some health handy for this battle.



32 Find the Evil Plate

After the battle, continue up the passage where you will find a box containing the Evil Plate. Next to it is a larger box with a Wood Ladder. Get the Ladder and use it at the end of the path. Up you go.

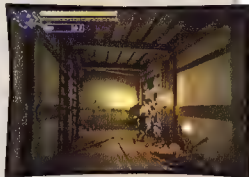


ARRIVE IN THE KEEP

33 Use the Evil Plate

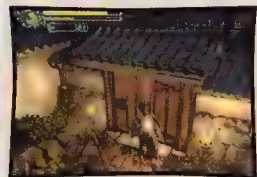
Before doing this step make sure you have found all the pieces of Fluorite in The Keep. Using the Evil Plate will cause a large section of The Keep to become inaccessible. If you are unsure, skip this step for now and come back after completing steps 34 - 38. You will then be able to search The Keep before using the Evil Plate.

Consult the map to get your bearings. Now go down the hall and use the Evil Plate on the door. That is one nasty bug!



34 Cruise To the West Area

Make your way out of the Keep and into the West Area. Remember all the crystal-sealed doors? Also, if you have yet to level-up all of your orbs to max, this is the time you must do it. Concentrate on the Fire and Thunder Orbs first.



35 Return To The West Area Magic Mirror

Venture into the West Area and to the room with the Magic Mirror and Magic Well. Along the way a soldier will drop Burst Bullets, and you can also find a Soul Absorber.

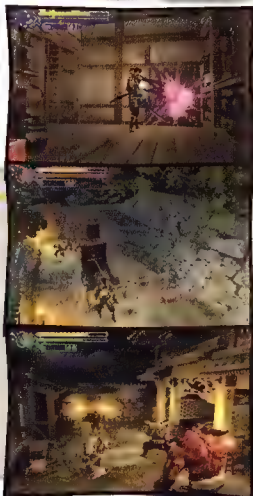


36 Enter The Area Sealed By Three Fire Crystals

In the area of the Magic Mirror and Magic Well is a door sealed by three Fire Crystals. Inside this door you will see a group of demons at the bottom of a hill. Cut the rope hiding the cart and it will wipe out most of your foes. Hidden in this room is Fluorite. Also, find a box containing Medicine. Continue forward.

Mini Boss

There are five hulking beasts that are truly easy if you use this strategy and have all of your magic at full. First, let the smaller three advance. As they group together, unload a Special Fire attack. Repeat the process one more time. For the big guy, use the remaining Special Attacks on the other swords. The big guy should cough up some more magic, but if he doesn't, just evade his slow attacks.



37 Get the Statue Head & The Decorated Sword

After the mini-battle, take a look at the boxes in the area. One contains the Statue Head. In the back corner, you will locate the Decorated Sword. Return to the first room of the West Area.



38 Use the Statue Head, Get the Matchlock

Unseal the door locked by three Thunder Orbs. Inside, place the Statue Head on the statue to unlock the gate in the back of the room. In the back of the room, there is a box containing the Matchlock.

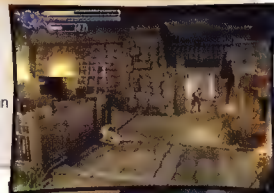


Boom! Be sure not to forget the Vision Staff next to the statue. Also, soul suck the area for some free booty. There are two Fluorite pieces in the surrounding area that are now visible.

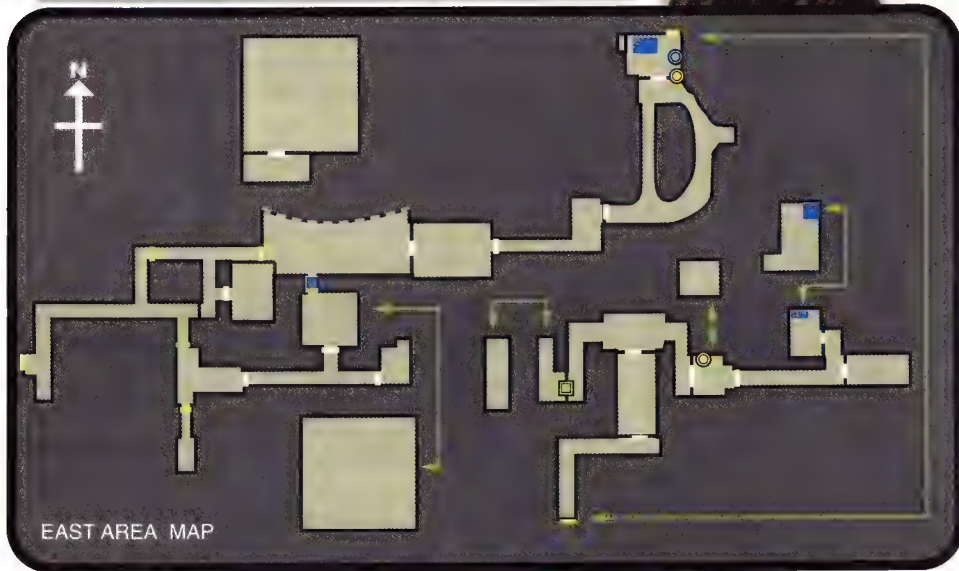


39 Use The Decorated Sword

Make your way to the South Area Courtyard and look for the lone soldier. Assisting him will give you access to an alcove where you can place the Decorated Sword.



THE EAST AREA



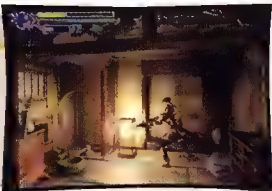
40 Get the Talisman

Proceed through the door sealed by two Wind Crystals. Once inside, walk to the other end of the room and you will come to a moat. Use your Matchlock to aim at the rope on the other side. If done correctly, it will lower the bridge. On the other side you will find a Talisman hidden behind some parchment.



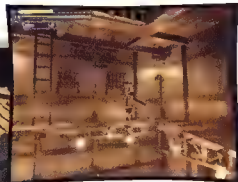
41 Find the East Area Map

Move down the bridge to the second door. Cut the parchment in the back of the room to find the East Area Map. There is also a box with Bullets and a Genbu Vol. 3 (Green).



42 Up The Bell Tower

Inside the base of the Bell Tower, locate a box containing Bullets. Move up the ramps, and at the top you'll find a box with a Magic Jewel. At the top of the ladder you will find the bell, as well as a Power Jewel, Soul Absorber, and Fluorite.



43 Equip The Great Armor

Inside the base of the Bell Tower is a door sealed by three Wind Crystals. Journey inside and make your way to a Waterfall. Beware of the demons and move to a hidden area directly behind the falls. Here is a Trick Treasure Box. You'll have five moves to get the Great Armor.

44 Find The Great Bow (Code Box)

Past the Waterfall is a room with a Save Alter and Magic Well. There is also a Code Box. At the bottom of the stairs you will find some Fluorite and a boat. Take the boat to the Turret on the other side. Inside you will find the Great Bow.



CONTROL KAEDE

45 Find Samanosuke

In the next section you basically retrace some of the steps that were just made by Samanosuke. Using the Shinobi Kit, make your way through the locked door and into the next room. Inside you'll find Fluorite and Herb. Behind the vases in the back of the room is an Apocalypse Book.

Moving on, you will use the Shinobi Kit again and then make your way to the Save Room. It's a good idea to avoid the enemy and use Kaede's speed to survive.

47 Use the Decorated Arrow, Get The Green Key

There is a locked box, and behind it you will find the Great Arrow. Taking it will lock the room's door, so

replace it with the Decorated Arrow to open the door and also the box. Inside the box you will find the Green Key. Go use it on the door a few rooms back.



46 Get the Decorated Arrow

From the Magic Mirror, use the Shinobi Kit to go through the door to the north. Make your way east and, along the way, you'll find such things as Arrows, Kunai Blades, Fluorite, and a Genbu Vol. 4 (Green). Move past the Magic Mirror room and through to the last room. Inside will be a box of Herb, a Suzaku Vol. 3 (Red), and Fluorite. Go up the ladder to locate a Trick Treasure Box. You'll have seven moves to get the Decorated Arrow.



48 Behind the Green Door... is A Boat

Retrace your steps and locate the door marked with Green Ink. Use the Green Key to unlock the door. Once inside, go down the ladder to another boat. Take the boat to the Turret and attempt to help Samanosuke.

RETURN TO THE KEEP

50 Use the Great Bow (And Great Arrow)

Retrace your steps and locate the door marked with Green Ink. Use the Green Key to unlock the door. Once inside, go down the ladder to another boat. Take the boat to the Turret and attempt to help Samanosuke.



Boss Marcellus

Don't let his sissy name fool you, Marcellus packs a wallop. First off, locate the Medicine in a box. The thing to remember about this battle is that most of the attacks can be blocked. Try to stick fairly close to Marcellus at first and unleash a couple Special Wind attacks on him. After that, gain a little space and use any arrows or bullets that you might have left over. Keep giving him everything you've got and he will soon lose his shield and start a rushing attack. Block or dodge the rush and try to get him into a corner. Here you can lay into him with normal attacks. Just don't forget to block every once in a while.

After you've finished off Marcellus, rejuvenate, save, and find the Dark Realm Map.



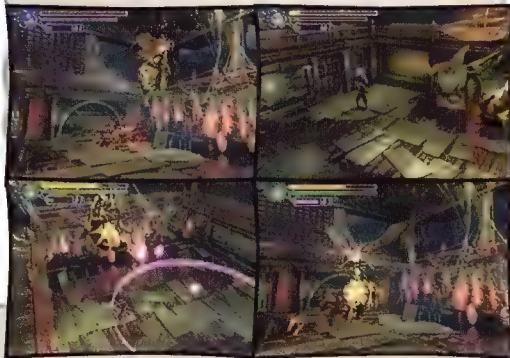
CONTROL SAMANOSUKE

49 Battle The Bug

Boss Battle

This confrontation is extremely difficult, as you will have to deal with the little minions as well as the main boss. Taking out the initial three minions may give you a boost of health quickly, but it is better to use your weapons to keep them at bay while trying to concentrate on the main boss. The big, bug boss will swoop in for attacks and she will say something before she does. It's best to attempt to block these attacks and then follow with a Special Attack to weaken her. These Special Attacks may also stun her. This is a good time to use another, or strike with standard attacks.

Intersperse the Special Attacks with the bow and the matchlock, as well as running to keep the minions off you. The long-range weapons can help keep the boss off your back, but the Special Attacks are the key. Attempt to land as many as you can on the boss. Try to keep moving and avoid getting cornered. Also, the Soul Absorber item comes in very handy in this battle.



Boss - The Final Confrontation

Make your way down the spiraling ramp. At the bottom you will find Medicine. Enter the door and you'll meet your final test.

This giant dragon has a number of attacks including fire breath, laser beams, energy spheres, and a nasty claw strike. The basic strategy is to get in close and use standard attacks to weaken the beast. After enough blows, the dragon's head will lower. This is the time to unleash a Special Attack. However, you may just want to reverse the process and unload on him whenever you get close.

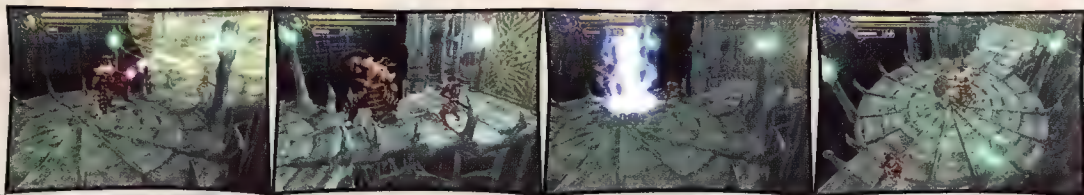
Of course, staying in range to attack the dragon will be a chore. You must retreat and dodge countless times. Use the following tactics against the dragon's variety of attacks:

Against Fire Breath - Back up to the corners; there is a spot where the fire won't hit you.

Against Laser Beams - Move laterally to sidestep the series of beams.

Against Energy Spheres - Quickly evade the dropping energy balls by using the dodge button. Don't get cornered on either the back wall or next to the dragon.

Against the Claw - The first strike from the dragon's claw is usually a sweeping attack that will knock you off your feet. It's followed by a quick, piercing strike. It's hard to avoid the initial swipe, but quickly get up to avoid the more devastating attack that will follow. It is also possible to move under the piercing claw by moving toward the dragon.



SECRET ACCESS

PS2 PLAYSTATION 2

PLAYSTATION

SSX

Mallora Board – Access the Options screen, then hold L1, L2, R1, and R2. With this combo held, press X (x4), Δ (x4)

Jennifer Gonzalez
Austin, TX

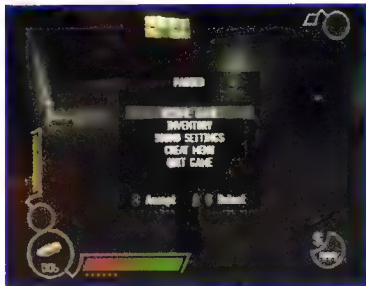
THEME PARK ROLLER COASTER

All of these codes can be entered at anytime during gameplay.

All Items Researched – Enter the series: Up, Down, Up, Down, left, Up, Down, Up eight times.

Free Purchases – Enter the series: Left, Down, X, O eight times.

Gena Maria Thompson
Park Isle, ID



BLADE

Enter all of these codes at the Main Menu, then begin a game and press Start to activate the cheat function.

All Items – Right, Left, Up, Down, L2 (x2), R2 (x2)
Cheat Mode – Hold L1, then press X (x5), O, R1, R2 (x2), R1.

Infinite Ammo – Down, Right, Up, Left, L2, L1, R2, R1
Infinite Lives – Left (x3), Right, L2, L1, R2, R1

"Daddy Fat Sax"
Memphis, TN

MIKE TYSON BOXING

Access World mode, then select a New Career. Select any character, then input the desired code below as your boxer name. Finally, press Δ to get the festivities underway. Unfortunately, none of these codes allow you to bite opponent's ears, or beat the tar out of hapless bar patrons.

Big Hands – STUPID

Big Heads – BONGY

Disable Cheats – NORMAL

Disco Stadium & Jimmy Flex – CLUBFUD

Docks Stadium & John L. Sullivan – OLD MAN

Growing Heads – OUCH

Invisible Boxer – GONE

Small Heads – BINGY

Spinning Heads – HURTS

Stretching Necks – NECK

Kenny Tucker
Santa Cruz, CA

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

Jet Pack Mode – At the Main Menu hold L1 and press Up (x4), X, O, Up (x4), X, O, Up (x4) to activate this awesome code. You will know you've been successful when the wheel spins. During play, hit X to activate the thruster, Δ to hover, and the shoulder buttons for movement. We always knew Tony Hawk was Superman! Fly, bad@\$! Fly!

Tyrone Biggs
Pointy Rock, AK

STAR WARS DEMOLITION

Enter the Options menu, then select Preferences. In this list, hold L1 and R1 to activate the Password function. Now, enter any of the codes from the list below. Press X to confirm your entry.

Alternate Controls – EXTRABUTTS

Losing FMV – SAD MOVIES

No Enemies (Battle Mode) – NO BADDIES

Random Vehicles – NO PEEKING

Rapid Fire Weapons – FIRERATEUP

Same Vehicles (Multiplayer) – MULTI CARS

Speed Decease – LOW MO ON

Speed Increase – THROTTLEUP

Winning FMV – MOVIE SHOW

Lorne Yazloff
Moise, SD



SILENT SCOPE

Enter all of these codes at the Mode Selection screen. We highly recommend you take a look at the Hidden and Pink modes, as they offer some interesting alterations to the traditional Silent Scope mix.

1 Int. Mode – Down, Δ, Up, O, Δ, Down, Right, Down, Right, O, Δ

5 Seconds for Half Life – O, X, Right, Left, Right, Left, Down (x2), Up (x2)

First-Person Perspective – Up (x4), Down (x4)

Half Life for 5 Seconds – Up (x2), Down (x2), Left, Right, Left, Right, X, O

Hidden Mode – Right, Down, Right, Square, Up, O, O, Δ, Down, Right, Down, Right, O, Δ

No Crosshairs – Right (x3), O

No Enemy Cursors – Right (x4), Left, Down, Up, Right

No Scope – Right, Down, Right, O, Right, Down, Right, O

Pink Mode – Left, Right (x2), O, Δ

Stanley Farcus
Wenton Lakes, TN



DUKE NUKEM: LAND OF THE BABES

Enter all of these codes at the Cheat screen. We think you'll agree that the FMV Ending is one of the best finishes to a game, ever! Now, if only real-life dating was this easy. Duke is one lucky guy.

All Weapons – R2, X, L1, O, R1, O, L2

Big Head Duke – O (x2), X, O (x2), X, O

Big Head Enemies – X (x2), R1, X, L1, X

2x Damage – O (x3), O (x3), X

FMV Ending – O, R2, L1, O, L2, X, R2

First-Person Perspective – L2, R1, L1, R2, O, X, O

Full Armor – L1 (x2), R1 (x2), X (x2), O (x2)

Full Ego – R1 (x2), O (x2), L1 (x2), R2

Infinite Ammo – L2, O, R2, O, L2, R1

Invincibility – L1, O (x2), O, L1, L2

Invisibility – O, X, O, X, O, O

Level Select – X, O (x2), X, O, O

Outtakes – L1, L2, R1, R2, O (x2), O (x2)

Small Head Enemies – X, L1, X, R1, X (x2)

Temporary Shielding – L1 (x6), R2

Weird Cutscenes – L1, L2, R1, R2, O (x2), O (x2)

Jeffrey Peterson
Washington, DC

DREAMCAST

SILENT SCOPE

Enter all of these codes at the Mode Selection screen. The sound of a gun firing will confirm your entries.

5 Seconds for Half Life – B, A, Right, Left, Right, Left, Down (x2), Up (x2)

First-Person Perspective – Up (x4), Down (x4)

Half Life for 5 Seconds – Up (x2), Down (x2), Left, Right, Left, Right, A, B

Hidden Mode – Right, Down, Right, X, Up, X (x2), Y, Down, Right, Down, Right, X, Y

Mirrored Levels – Left (x2), Right, X, Down (x2), Up, Y, Up, Right, Down, Up, Left, Down, X

Love Mode – Left, Right (x2), X, Y

Night Mode – Up, Right, Down, Left, Up, X, Y

No Crosshairs – Right (x3), X

No Enemy Cursor – Right (x4), Left, Down, Up, Right

No Scope – Right, Down, Right, X, Right, Down, Right, X

Turbo Mode – Down, Y, Up, X, Y, Down, Right, Down, Right, X, Y

*Harlan Schlinglot
Brown Bear Lake, MI*



STAR WARS DEMOLITION

Enter the Options menu, then select Preferences. In this list, hold the L and R Buttons to activate the Password function. Now, enter any of the codes from the list below. Press A to confirm your entry. Man! Jabba gets the girls too! What gives? You'd think gamers could score a date well before a galactic space slug!

Alternate Controls – EXTRABUTTS

Losing FMV – SAD MOVIES

No Enemies (Battle Mode) – NO BADDIES

Random Vehicles – NO PEEKING

Rapid Fire Weapons – FIRERATEUP

Same Vehicles (Multiplayer) – MULTI CARS

Speed Decease – LOW MO ON

Speed Increase – THROTTLEUP

Winning FMV – MOVIE SHOW

*Lorne Yazloff
Moise, SD*

JET GRIND RADIO

Unlock DJ K – Select Piranha as your character of choice, then when she's dancing, press A, Y, X (x2), B, Y

*Stewart Little
Dumbouse, NJ*



TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

Enter all of these codes from the in-game Pause menu.

100,000 Competition Points – Hold the L Button, then press X, B, Right, X, B, Right, X, B, Right.

Game Completion – Hold the L Button, then press B, Left, Up, Right, B, Left, Up, Right, A, B, Left, Up, Right, B, Left, Up, Right.

Disco Mode – Hold the L Button, then press Down, Up, X, B, up, Left, Up, A.

Super Moon Physics – Hold the L Button, then press Left, Up, Left, Up, Down, Up, X, Y, Left, Up, Left, Up, Down, Up, X, Y.

Perfect Balance – Hold the L Button, then press Right, Up, Left, X, Right, Up, X, Y.

\$5,000 Smackers – Hold the L Button, then press A, Down, Left, Right, Down, Left, Right.

Jet Pack Mode – Hold the L Button, then press Up (x4), A, X, Up (x4), A, X, Up (x4). Press A to activate the thruster, Y to hover, and the shoulder buttons for movement.

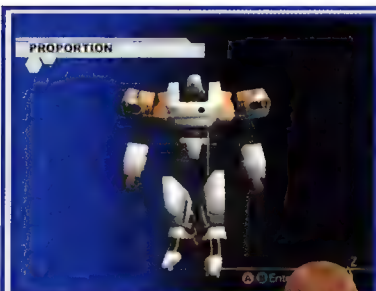
*Ewan Andring
Sacawana, IA*



RESIDENT EVIL 2

Infinite Ammo – At the Item Selection press, quickly tap Up (x2), Down (x2), Left, Right, Left, Right, R Button

*Da Bomb
Webville, COM*



PHANTASY STAR ONLINE

Hidden Artwork – Simply insert your Phantasy Star Online GD-ROM into a PC and open the folder labeled Extra. Inside this mystical folder, you'll find a handful of amazing images that can be used for wallpaper.

Alternate Costumes – Begin a new game and choose a character. Instead of entering your lame fantasy name, input the code below for the class you chose. The name may be obscure, but you'll unlock two additional colors. Woo hoo!

Fomarl – DNEAOHUHEK

Fonewm – ASUEBHEBUI

Fonewearl – XSYGSSHEOH

Humar – KSKAUDONSU

Hunewearl – MOUEOSRHUN

Hucast – RUUHANGBRT

Racaseal – NUDNAFJOOH

Racat – MEIAUGHSYN

Ramar – SOUDEGMKSG

*Josh "Game Informer's #1 Fan" Hilton
Coon Rapids, MN*

TOMB RAIDER CHRONICLES

Black Isle – At the Main Menu, highlight New Game, then press and hold the L and R Buttons. With this combo held, press Left and Start. Hold all four of these buttons until the game begins.

Tower Block – At the Main Menu, highlight New Game, then press and hold the L and R Buttons. With this combo held, press Right and Start. Hold all four of these buttons until the game begins.

*Vanessa Rheinhardt
Los Angeles, CA*



CODE OF THE MONTH



STAR WARS: EPISODE I BATTLE FOR NABOO

Enter all of these codes at the Password screen.

- All Levels – LEC&FIVE
- All Upgrades – OVERLOAD
- Art Gallery (Showroom) – KOOLSTUF
- Destroyer – DESTRUCT
- Developer Notes – TALKTOME
- Development Team – LOVEHUTT
- Expert Mode – NASTYMDE
- Girlie Vessels – RUAGIRL?
- Infinite Lives – PATHETIC
- One-Hit Kills – EWERDEAD
- Power Shielding – DROIDEKA

Joe Dannelle
Salt Lake City, UT

BANJO-KAZOOIE

At long last, Rareware has released a handful of codes that unlock Banjo-Kazooie's most sought after secrets...including that dastardly Ice Key! At long last this game can be completed at 100%. Simply go to Treasure Trove Cove and input the cheat on the desert floor.

Ice Key Accessible – CHEATNOWYOU CANSEEANICE-ICEKEYWHICHYOU CANHAVEFORFREE

Blue Egg Accessible – CHEATADESERTDOOROPENS WIDEANCIENTSECRETS WAITINSIDE

Green Egg Accessible – CHEATAMIDSTTHEHAUNTED GLOOMASECRETINTHEBATHROOM

Light Blue Egg Accessible – CHEATDONTYOU GOAND TELLHERABOUTTHESECRETINHERCELLAR

Purple Egg Accessible – CHEATOUTOFTHESEAITRISES TOREVEALMORESECRETPRIZES

Red Egg Accessible – CHEATTHISSECRETYOULLBEGRAB BININTHECAPTAINSCABIN

Yellow Egg Accessible – CHEATNOWBANJOWILLBEABLE TOSEEITONNABNUTSTABLE

"GI Droid"
(location unknown – last seen
throwing garlic at both girls)

AMERICAN MCGEE'S ALICE

Enter the Game Options menu and enable the Console Window from the Settings folder. During gameplay, press ~, then input any of the codes below.

- All Weapons – wuss
- Disable AI – notarget
- First-Person Perspective – cg_cameradist -45
- Framerate – fps (0 or 1)
- Full Ammo – give all
- God Mode – god
- Health Level – (1-100)
- No Clipping – noclip
- Spawn Item – give (item name)
(item names)
w_knife.tik
w_cards.tik
w_mallet.tik
w_jackbomb.tik
w_eyestaff.tik
w_icewand.tik
w_jacks.tik
w_blunderbuss.tik
w_demondice.tik
w_ragebox.tik
w_watch.tik
- Level Select – map (map name)
(map names)
centipede1
centipede2
facade
fortress1
fortress2
funhouse
garden1
garden2
garden3
garden4
grounds1
grounds2
gvilleage
hedge1
hedge2
hedge3
jlair1
jlair2
keep
pandemonium
potears1
potears2
potears3
qlair
rchess
skool1
skool2
tower1
tower2
tower3
utemple
wchess1
wchess2
wforest

"The Sundance Kid"
Atlantic City, NJ

PROJECT IGI: I'M GOING IN

At the Main Menu, input "nada" to enable the Debug mode. Now, input any of the cheats during gameplay.

- Easy Mode – easy
- God Mode – allgod
- Infinite Ammo – allammo
- Kill enemies – ewww

"The Kramer Gamer"
White Fish, MT

GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO

During gameplay, press T or Y to activate the console window. Now, input any of the codes below.

- All Levels – Allmissionsaregoodto go
- Frame Rate – Fr
- Full Health – Pleasehealme
- Instant Gift Shop – Gimmiegifts
- Instant Party House – Itsmyparty
- Instant Smarty Force – Basepopulate
- Max Base Energy – Basefillerup
- Quick Base Construction – Basegoverlyfast
- Reveal Map – Mapshowitall
- Unlimited Mana – Ineedspells

Julian Wallaby
Sydney, Australia

FREEDOM: FIRST RESISTANCE

Level Select – First, create a backup copy of the "freedom.cfg" file before attempting this code. Using a text editor, change this file so that it reads "showmissions true". Next, boot up the game and select Load Game to access the Level Select.

"Scarecrow"
Burnt Hills, NY

TIMELINE

During gameplay, press ~ to activate the console window, then input the code below.

- God Mode – god

Tim Michaels
Green Haven, WA

DOWNLOAD OF THE MONTH



Game: The Sims

Download: Hordes of comic and sci-fi/fantasy skins

Site: www.darkjared.addr.com

Every fanboy Sims player needs to drop everything check out the Skindex. This impressive site is home to over 700 sim skin mods of popular and obscure characters from comics, sci-fi/fantasy, cartoons, and wrestling. The immense wealth of heroes and villains from the Marvel and DC universes is incredible. While the quality of the skins varies from character to character, quite a few of them are impressive feats of 3D modeling and texture design. If you ever wanted to watch C-3PO, Superman, Captain Kirk, Gary of the Ambiguously Gay Duo, and the British Bulldog throw a pool party at Wayne Manor, this is the site to go to for your skinning needs.


GAME SHARK

PLAYSTATION 2
**NHL 2001**

Master Code –
ecc0d1481456e0a (Must Be On)

99 Goals (Home) –
4ca11d861456e788

0 Goals (Away) –
4ca11d2a1456e7a5

SSX

Master Code –
ec8f2a641456e0a (Must Be On)

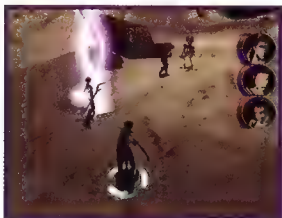
Monster Score –
1c2cd61817e9c70c

DYNASTY WARRIORS 2

Master Code –
ecb798801456e79b

Stage Select –
1cadfbf81456e7a6

Character Select –
1cadfbeC341c2fd1
1cadfbf4341c2fd9

**SUMMONER**

Master Code –
ecB8c7e81456e0a (Must Be On)

Infinite Gold –
1dbfb00144f25cc

Max Dark –
3cad7fed1456e781

Max Holy –
3cad7feb1456e781

Max Magic Resist –
3cad7fef1456e781

Max Fire –
3cad7ff01456e781


PLAYSTATION
**LUNAR 2: ETERNAL BLUE**

Max Hit Points (Hiro) –
8008423e 03e7
8008423e 03e7

Max Magic Points (Hiro) –
80084240 03e7
80084242 03e7

Ultimate Code (Hiro) –
8008422c 03e7
8008422e 000f
80084230 63e7
80084232 03e7
80084234 03e7
80084236 03e7
80084238 03e7
8008423a 03e7

BUGS BUNNY & TAZ: TIME BUSTERS

Max Carrots –
80010058 0064

Infinite Continues –
800100a0 0063

All Gears –
d00970ba bfff

80010086
000a (Hit L1)

PERSONA 2: ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

All Tarot Cards –
50001602 0000
800835e6 03e7

All Persona Arcanums –
50000b02 0000
8008392c ffff


DREAMCAST
TYPING OF THE DEAD

Infinite Health –
eb1f159400000003

Infinite Health (Player 2) –
4dd212d600000003

Infinite Credits –
6f8b665e00000009

Golden Hands (Original Mode) –
614b665e00000012

M. Cocktail (Original Mode) –
a3135c8e00000013

Pain Killer (Original Mode) –
3c31295800000015

Sulfuric Acid (Original Mode) –
F3d99b9900000014

Infinite Golden Hands –
7c45de0f000000371

Silencer Mode –
c49baaf500000020

Zombie Mode –
c49baaf500000040

Big Heads –
c49baaf5000000F2

Invisible Mode –
4b3e52c4000000ff

RESIDENT EVIL 2

All Weapons In Crate –
4aca2ea70000fe02
9ad83b990000fe03
c55b6960000fe04
2477522b0000fe05
66bb5a2f0000fe06
b4160be30000fe07
e48729fa0000fe08
4aba2ea70000fe09
538746390000fe0a
a54380ff0000e0b
db68b2b10000fe0c
3a6115290000fe0d
7cc5e26c0000fe0e
c44bd6960000fe0f
f5e9a7e80000fe10
53f746390000fe11

Infinite Health –
3ca9151a000000c8 (Start code with-
out a VMU inserted)

Infinite Ammo –
f73de7ec00000063 (Start code with-
out a VMU inserted)


NINTENDO 64
STAR WARS: EPISODE I BATTLE FOR NABOO

Master Code –
f000093a 0000 (Must be on)
ee000000 0000

All Cheats –
8104c628 ffff
8004c62a 00ff

Infinite Lives –
80067533 0003

All Gold Medals –
50001301 0000
8004c63d 0003

All Levels –
8004c650 0013

DONALD DUCK GOIN' QUACKERS

Restore Health –
d00cb2a0 0020
8019ad16 0002 (Press Z)

More Time –
d00cb2a0 0020
801a39a7 00ff (Press Z)


GAME BOY COLOR
LITTLE NICKY

Disable Basketball Timer –
9119e6c0

Infinite Health –
9104b9c0

MARVIN STRIKES BACK

Max Gold –
91997dc8
91097ec8

Infinite Health –
910659c8

BLADE

Infinite Cash –
01ff7dc4
01ff7ec4

Infinite Health –
018040c4

ENTER TO WIN

Send in your codes and passwords, and if we choose your entry as Code of the Month you'll win a wonderful prize from the Game Informer Vault! All other entries printed within these hallowed pages will receive a Secret Access T-shirt.

Send To:
Secret Access
Game Informer Magazine
1.0120 W. 76th Street
Eden Prairie, MN 55344
secretaccess@gameinformer.com

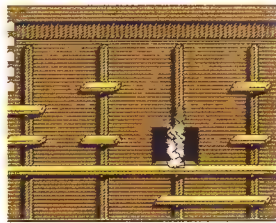
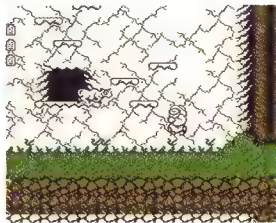
CLASSIC GI

GOD 1, NINTENDO 0

HOW WISDOM TREE DEFIED NINTENDO AND LIVED TO TELL ABOUT IT

In an attempt to avoid the deluge of substandard titles that helped to sink the game industry in the last days of the Atari 2600, Nintendo implemented very strict licensing agreements with third-

BIBLE ADVENTURES



party developers who wanted to publish games for the NES. For example, each publisher could only release five games per year, and once they were released on the NES, they could not be published on another platform for two years. Nintendo approval was required, as the NES console had a special security system that detected non-licensed games and would render them unplayable.

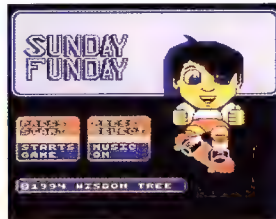
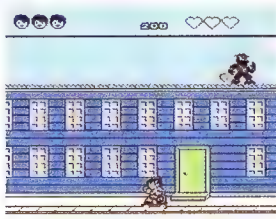
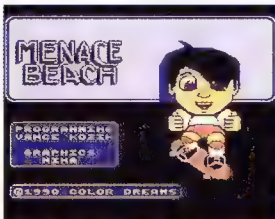
Despite these precautions, several companies quickly discovered ways of getting around this security technology and began publishing unlicensed cartridges that were compatible with the NES. The most famous of these was Tengen's (an offshoot of Atari) Tetris. Not a company to take defeat sitting down, Nintendo engaged any and all would-be unlicensed publishers in lengthy lawsuits. While pursuing a legal tack in the battle against unlicensed games, Nintendo also used its commercial might to discourage retailers from carrying unlicensed products.

To this day, there is only one company to ever produce unapproved Nintendo games and get away scot-free – Wisdom Tree. Despite publishing 15 unlicensed games for NES, Game Boy, and SNES, not one lawsuit was ever leveled at this small California company. So, how did this digital David escape the wrath of the

Goliath-like Nintendo empire? As so many underdogs before, they had a little help from the man upstairs.

Wisdom Tree was actually an offshoot of Color Dreams, a small-time video game

MENACE BEACH/SUNDAY FUNDAY



Sunday Funday was the Christian version of the controversial Color Dreams title, Menace Beach

ly became renowned throughout the industry for producing some of the worst games ever made. Most of their titles were cheap knockoffs of familiar NES games, like Super Mario Bros. Like Wisdom Tree, all of Color Dreams' games were unlicensed. The most memorable of Color Dreams' games was Menace Beach, a

lackluster side-scroller about a skateboarder on a quest to rescue his girlfriend. The game received some attention due to the fact that the damsel in distress was seen tied up and shackled between levels, and throughout the game her clothing began to disintegrate, eventually revealing her in a bikini. Atarihq.com accurately commented that, "no other game combines bad graphics and embarrassing gameplay, not to mention questionable morality, quite as well as this game does."

When consumers failed to flock to their admittedly low-grade products (Color Dreams' lead programmer Vance Kozick has been quoted as saying "95% of [Color Dreams' games] were way below average"), the company reinvented itself as Wisdom Tree and decided to concentrate on the as-yet-untapped market for Christian-oriented video games. In retrospect, this religious affiliation was probably the reason the company never faced any significant legal challenge from Nintendo. The Japanese powerhouse seemed to

company started in 1989 by Eddy Lin and Dan Lawton. After Lawton had successfully reverse-engineered the NES console, and come up with a way to circumvent the lock-out chip, Color Dreams quick-

cower at the prospect of the bad press attendant with taking the good Lord himself into court, and thus, Wisdom Tree successfully escaped any litigation. In fact, the company kept pro-

ducing NES games well into the mid-90s, when the rest of the industry had long since abandoned the platform. Sunday Funday (1995) holds the honor of being the last NES game ever released in the US.

The first game released under the Wisdom Tree banner was Bible Adventures (1990), which bore many similarities to Nintendo's Super Mario Bros. 2. The game features pretty standard side-scrolling platforming supplemented by the odd Bible quote and a religious storyline. There were three scenarios, the most entertaining of which cast the player as Noah sent on a mission to collect male and female pairs of animals for the Ark. Throughout the game, players were given Bible quizzes, which rewarded them with health points. Surprisingly, given the game's low level of quality, the game sold extremely well, as it was distributed mainly through Christian bookstores, where Wisdom Tree games had no competition from secular publishers. Kozik comments, "The original idea [of making Christian-oriented games] came up as a joke made by one of the programmers, and a few months later it was reality. A good thing, too...the secular NES market was over-competitive and starting to die out. The Christian market was a whole new market and Bible Adventures may have been the best-selling [Christian] game. It sold over 250,000 units."

Another of Wisdom Tree's more successful games, in terms of both economics and gameplay, was Spiritual Warfare. Our version of the Bible clearly states "Thou shall not steal" (Exodus 20, 1-17), but apparently no one clued Wisdom Tree's programmers in on this important Commandment, as Spiritual Warfare is a very obvious rip-off of Nintendo's popular Zelda series. As such, it probably suffers the least from the lack of violence and objectionable material. The top-

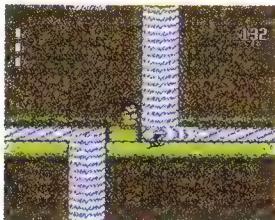
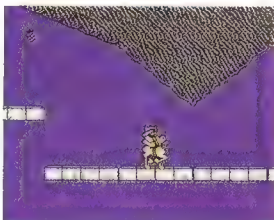
down perspective and free-roaming world look strikingly like the first in the Zelda series except, in place of a sword, you knock some sense into your enemies with different "Fruits of the Spirit." Once hit with the godly produce, the baddies give up their wicked ways and kneel down and pray, then change into a dove and fly up into heaven. These unintentionally funny sequences, coupled with the well-designed levels,

make Spiritual Warfare the rare Wisdom Tree game that agnostics might actually enjoy as much as their righteous counterparts.

Most Wisdom Tree titles were little more than slightly modified Color Dreams games. Exodus and Joshua were reworked versions of Crystal Mines, and Spiritual Warfare and Bible Buffet ran on the Crystal Mines engine. Ironically, a sanitized "Christian" version of the offensive Menace Beach was released under the name Sunday Funday. Wisdom Tree's only SNES release (one of the few uncensored games ever made for the system) was Super 3D Noah's Ark, which actually used the game engine, levels, and mazes from id's seminal FPS, Wolfenstein 3D. However, instead of killing bloodthirsty Nazis, you slung food at hungry goats that had escaped from their pens.

Wisdom Tree remains an odd footnote in video game history, even if most of its games are more valued as curios than for their actual gameplay. The company split from Color Dreams in the late '90s, and remains in business producing family-friendly PC software. Remarkably, the company still sells its NES cartridges on its website. Those looking for a wholesome gaming experience, or merely an odd artifact from the NES era, can go to www.christianlink.com/media/wisdom and buy themselves a little piece of the scrappy company that stared down a giant and won.

KING OF KINGS



THIS MONTH IN GAMING HISTORY

publicized Congressional hearings on game violence, EA Vice President Jack Helstand Sr. met with Senators Joe Lieberman and Herb Kohl to present the Interactive Digital Software Association's new 13-point plan to implement game ratings. The ISDA later created the Electronic Software Ratings Board and the rest, as they say, is history.

Caused in part by the furor surrounding Midway's extremely violent Mortal Kombat series, video game ratings were a hot topic of discussion on Capital Hill and throughout the industry in 1994. This month in history a small, but significant, event took place, one that would pave the way for the ESRB game rating system that we have today. Following some highly

GREATEST GAME OF ALL TIME

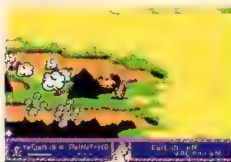
By Henry Quinn



Every month one of Game Informer's readers picks his personal choice for Greatest Game Of All Time.

TOEJAM & EARL

■ FORMAT GENESIS ■ PUBLISHER SEGA



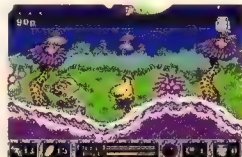
It is my quest to have ToeJam & Earl recognized as the most powerfully effective application of science to the field of enjoyment in human history.

My inclination was to pick something older, but at the end of the day, TJ&E are it, and everyone knows it.

They're aliens, they're funky, and it all makes sense up until you realize that you're being chased by a group of chickens with a cannon that shoots tomatoes. Or the first time that you see Santa Claus put on aviator goggles and fly away via jetpack. Or when the mailbox tries to eat you. By the time the woman with the baby in the shopping cart sneaks up behind you and rams you off the edge of the world, you're having so much fun that it doesn't really matter.

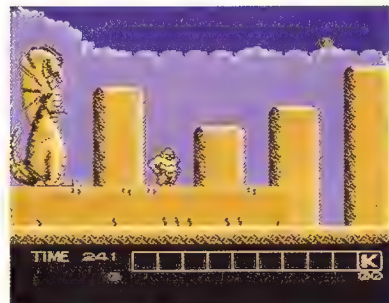
In your quest (solo or two-player split-screen, not bad for 1991) to reassemble your spaceship for the return trip to your home planet of Funkatron, anything can happen, and it usually does. Fortunately, there's plenty of help: wings (for flying), rocket skates (for shooting out of control), root beer (for burping), and even an unfall (for when you need to unfall).

TJ&E is like nothing that came before it, and very little since has been as original or addictive. If you've played it, you already know, and if you haven't, you should. Be sure to keep an eye out for the Carrotman.



NES

KARNOV



A request from reader Benny Rickert made us dust off a relic from the late '80s. Like a lot of early games on the NES, Karnov originated in the arcades and was brought to the system less than a year later. Starring a pot-bellied, fire-breathin' Russian strongman, Karnov, the game is mainly a platformer. It requires players to traverse the landscape, avoid enemies, and make some perilous jumps. But Karnov is also a pseudo-shooter with a bunch of different power-ups. There are some standard weapon power-ups that can aid in blasting the enemy, as well as other items which simply aid in getting you to different areas. For example, Karnov can acquire a ladder, or jumping boots that vault him into the air. These items make the action a little easier. The NES version was also made considerably easier by adding a feature allowing the character to be hit once before he dies. Still, Karnov requires plenty of skill if you are going to get through its nine stages in one piece.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** DATA EAST ■ **DEVELOPER** DATA EAST ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1988

GENESIS

DYNAMITE DUKE



While the significance of Dynamite Duke's place in video game history isn't exactly memorable, we find it hard to glance at the cartridge without triggering fond memories of the early days of the Genesis. Duke's origin lies in the arcades, and was brought to the US by a company called Fabtek. Sega latched onto Duke with this Genesis release, as well as a subsequent version for its Master System. The basic gameplay of Duke requires you to move a gun cursor (and Duke) to blast everything that moves. It also has a hand-to-hand combat element where you can punch and kick enemies that get close. With a bunch of guns and health to collect, Duke finds some help along the way. Truthfully, there is little to like about this game. The controls are incredibly touchy and it is extremely difficult to maneuver and shoot. Plus, Duke only moves on a single plane – to the left or right. Back in the day, Duke was hot because it was one of the first games for the Genesis. Today, it really shows its age.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA ■ **DEVELOPER** SEIBU KAHATSU/SEGA ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1990

GENESIS

CHUCK ROCK

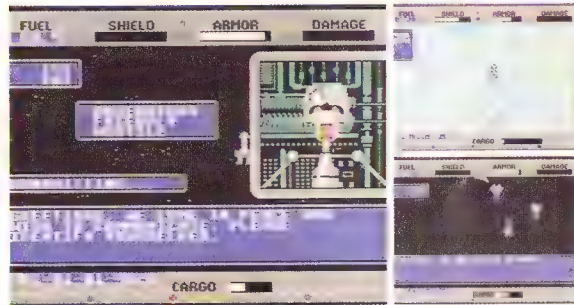
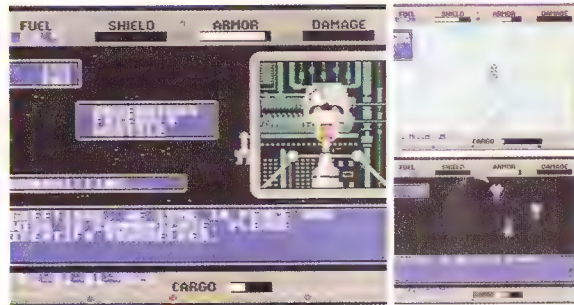


If you spent the early '90s stuck in a certain video game retail store located in Eden Prairie, Minnesota for eight hours a day, you probably remember Chuck Rock's catchy intro song. The opening featured a prehistoric four-piece that, as you might have guessed, featured a dude named Chuck Rock. He not only kicks it as a musician, he's one funky caveman with a powerful belly. Chuck throws his weight around, hucks some stones, and jumps around his cave land with sloth-like moves. The strength of Chuck Rock is definitely the graphics, as it wowed the early Genesis players with the cartoonlike animation. In terms of playcontrol and fun, Chuck really doesn't have much going for it. The slow play and rather frustrating maneuvering makes the Rock kind of a dud. We joked around the office that many of us haven't seen the second level – and we don't really want to. Heck, we can barely remember the equally dull sequel. Yet, just fire up the opening song and we'll recall the days of our youth when we schlepped video games for peanuts.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/PLATFORM ■ **PUBLISHER** VIRGIN INTERACTIVE ■ **DEVELOPER** CORE DESIGN ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1991

GENESIS

STARFLIGHT



From time to time, Classic GI fulfills the requests of the faithful reader and retro gamer. This month, we answer Eric Andre's call for a review of the prime Genesis space adventure, Starflight. Originally appearing on the PC in 1986, Starflight puts you in command of a starship and crew, which you create in hopes of saving the universe from destruction. In something out of an episode of Star Trek, you travel the enormous galaxy, interact with alien races, and search for clues that might help you solve this massive galactic problem. Starflight is massive indeed, as is clearly apparent from the game's novel-like instruction book and detailed starmap – a definite necessity for playing the game (and for collectibility). This title requires the player to invest countless hours to even begin to grasp all that it has to offer. If you do so, you will be rewarded with a highly entertaining and humorous space epic that ranks as one of the best on any console.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** BINARY SYSTEMS/BLUE SKY SOFTWARE ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1991

GAME GEAR

THE LION KING

Hidden Options – In order to get this hidden cheat mode to work, your key commands have to be very precise, so read carefully. Turn on the game and quickly press this combination: **Up, Down, Left, Right**. Keep doing this combination until the Disney Interactive Screen appears. If this is done correctly you will hear Simba munching on an insect. Start a new game and the hidden options are at your disposal.

PRINCE OF PERSIA

- Level Passwords**
- Level 2 - EILGDQ
 - Level 3 - HKLJFA
 - Level 4 - KMLLHJ
 - Level 5 - KLIKGD
 - Level 6 - NNIMIM
 - Level 7 - NLQLHQ
 - Level 8 - NKNKGK
 - Level 9 - JFFFBJ
 - Level 10 - MHEHDR
 - Level 11 - PINJFI
 - Level 12 - MEIGBP
 - Level 13 - RIKKFI
 - Level 14 - RHUJED



GENESIS

STREETS OF RAGE 3

Play as Roo – At Title screen, press and hold **Up** and **B**, then press **Start**.

Play as Boss Shiva – You'll first have to reach the end of stage one, beat Boss Shiva, then quickly hold down the **B** button until the next stage begins. After you lose all your lives, continuing will allow you to choose Shiva as your character.

DYNAMITE DUKE

Super Options – Highlight Options and press **C** (x10). Press **Start** and you'll have access to Super Options with such things as more life, mission select, and extra continues.

STARFLIGHT

Unlimited Money Loop – Capture any lifeforms that inhabit a planet and return to the spaceport to sell your captives. Leave the spaceport and immediately return. The life forms should re-appear and you can just sell the lifeforms again. Simply repeat this loop to accumulate a ton of dough.

OUT OF THIS WORLD

- Level Passwords** – Enter these at the Password Screen
- Level 2 – HTDC
 - Level 3 – CLLD
 - Level 4 – LBKG
 - Level 5 – XDDJ
 - Level 6 – FXLC
 - Level 7 – KRFK
 - Level 8 – KLFB
 - Level 9 – DDRX
 - Level 10 – HRTB
 - Level 11 – BRTD
 - Level 12 – FBB
 - Level 13 – TFBB
 - Level 14 – CKJL
 - Level 15 – LFCK

NES

KARNOV

Level Select – At the Title screen simultaneously hold **Right, A, B**, and **Select** on Controller 1. While holding the buttons, press **A** on Controller 2 to pick your Level. Press **A** once for Level 2, two times for Level 3, and so on. Then hit **Start** on Controller 1 while still holding down the buttons.

BATLETOADS AND DOUBLE DRAGON

More Lives – To start the game with five (instead of three) lives, enter this code on Controller 1 at the Player Select Screen: Hold **Up + A + B** and then press **Start**.



3DO

QUARANTINE

- Level Passwords**
- Level 2 (Kemco Park) - 98645782
 - Level 3 (Old Kemco) - 89962254
 - Level 4 (Projects) - 54185654
 - Level 5 (Wharf) - 92146125
 - Exit From Kemco - 33289642

FOES OF ALI

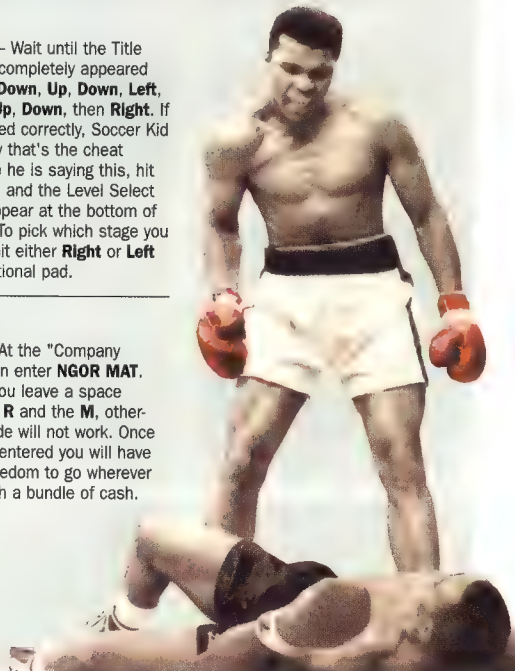
Cheat Menu – To activate a cheat mode, wait until the fight begins then press the **P** button to pause. From here (the Pause Menu) hold the **L** and **R** Buttons and press **C**. If this is done correctly a secret cheat menu will appear.

SOCCER KID

Stage Select – Wait until the Title Screen has completely appeared and hit **Up, Down, Up, Down, Left, Up, Down, Up, Down**, then **Right**. If this is entered correctly, Soccer Kid will say "Hey that's the cheat code." While he is saying this, hit the **B** button and the Level Select menu will appear at the bottom of the screen. To pick which stage you would like, hit either **Right** or **Left** on the directional pad.

SYNDICATE

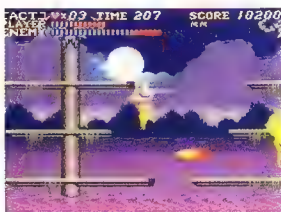
Easy Cheat – At the "Company Name" option enter **NGOR MAT**. Make sure you leave a space between the **R** and the **M**, otherwise this code will not work. Once this code is entered you will have complete freedom to go wherever you want with a bundle of cash.





SNES

ACTRAISER



FILLMORE

The journey begins as a confrontation with the smallest angel in the world. He'll ask what your name is, then send you on your merry way. Jerk! Use the menu on your left to select "Fight Monsters." Your character may not have the best run animation in the world, looking like he has to drop a load, but he's a talented swordsman who can really lay the smacketh down. In the first zone, penetrate the hides of any baddies that cross your path, then search the trees for valuable items in the orbs, including a 1-Up. At the end of your run you'll bump into a Centaur boss. Just stay away from him, then hack him when he backs up or momentarily pauses.



When you return to the shrine, the people will cry out to you. Give them direction by building toward the monster generators. The townsfolk will destroy these unholy sanctuaries and will find a Bomb which you can obtain by accepting the offering. If you destroy the large rock to the south, the people will grant you the Magical Fire attack. Just keep building and the people will hand over the Source of

Magic, as well the Strength of Angel and Bridge Building technique. When all the monster generators are sealed, return to the Sky Palace and head to the next monster zone.

This stage is another walk in the park. Just don't step on the spikes, or go headfirst into battle. Patience is key here. The Minotaur boss that has been infiltrating the villagers' dreams is incredibly agile, and he has a jump that makes Michael Jordan's look like a little hop. When he lands or prepares to jump, wait on him and he'll explode. He really doesn't hit too hard, so you may just want to stand in place and knock him silly. Take the last offering, the Source of Magic, from the good people below, then leave them to rot. If they don't want your help anymore, then melt them in the sun's light! Die, mortals! Die!!!

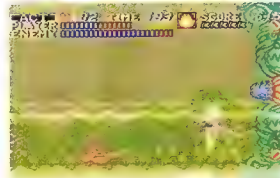


BLOODPOOL

Access your floating palace and maneuver to the left just a few inches to locate the frightening place known only as Bloodpool. Next, destroy all the monsters in the zone, grab all the orb items along the way, then get ready to face a difficult boss, Chimera. To tackle this fire-breathing lion, stand on the lower left platform, and jump all of the fire blasts. When the lion launches a fireball in the central platform, jump up one platform and stand on the right ledge. The lion will jump to the top platform on your side. This will give you two to three free shots at his belly. Just repeat the process to tackle this foe.



You'll now have to save the pathetic human lifeforms again through the building of another city. Use the Sunlight command to dry up the marshlands, then tap into your wealth of knowledge from the previous civilization to eliminate the vile beasts that feast upon the fleshy souls. After teaching the villagers how to build bridges, a stupid child will run away. He's located at the cave. Instead of blowing his brains out with a lightning blast, use the Bread his mother baked to lure him back to the civilization. When the adolescent brat returns home, the town will offer a new skill entitled Magic Skull. First, blow out the brush below the blood lake, then use the Skull on the monster generator that appears. Seal up the remaining monster holes to complete the growth of the town. Always build in every empty spot to raise your character's level. When the last generator is sealed, that reject child will be chosen to be sacrificed. Always the nice god, it's up to you to prevent this. Return to the sky castle and throw yourself in harm's way again by fighting the evil horde.



This dungeon is a tad more challenging than the previous one, simply because it demands more accurate timing. The disappearing platforms can be frustrating, but through perseverance and an undying hatred for your foes, you should make it to the Sorcerer boss. To truly torment this demon, simply dodge his spread attack, then slash him after he fires his third lightning bolt. When half of his energy is depleted, a great transformation will take place. The Dr. Strange looking dude morphs into a werewolf. The only strategy we can lend for this form is to hack away.

The people of Bloodpool are thankful for your bravery, yet trouble still brews. There's nothing you can do now, so leave this dive and head west to the desert town of Kasandora.



KASANDORA

This zone is the first to feature hostile critters that are unfairly agile. For some reason or another, randomly placed cacti also pose a threat. You'd think a god would have enough common sense to walk around them, but hey, gods are far from perfect. The boss in this zone is easy to beat. You can land at least five hits on him every time he pops up. Dodge the rocks, then stand at the bottom of the hills when his claws descend. Return to the previous position and beat the tar out of the freak. Done and done.

Now, it's time to build a civilization for those worthless humans. Use rain to wash away the desert, then build a path leading to the people who lost

their way to obtain the Harmonious Music and Source of Magic scrolls. If you vanquish the bat lair, you'll receive a temporary arrow upgrade. Let it rain to the north to uncover a sacred pyramid. Use the Earthquake command on this temple to uncover a Source of Life power-up. When all the monsters are taken out, you'll need to enter the pyramid to rid this place of evil. Before this, however, return to Bloodpool and teach the reject villagers how to sing. As a reward, they will hand over the Compass. Now, return to Kasandora and slay some beasts. If you can't get past this perilous temple, then you might as well quit now. The Egyptian boss is a total wussy.

When the demons call timeout and flee, you'll need to talk to the villagers. After hearing their heartwarming tale, continue building. Eventually, a plague will rock the town. Muhahaha!! Death to all!!! At this point, there's nothing else you can do to help the people. Just let them die and move on. The bird-shaped crop circle to the north of town gives you a hint where to go next. Return to the overworld and head southeast to the isle of Marahna.



MARAHNA

The natives here will do anything to keep you from killing their sacred plant god. They'll even toss small brown balls at you. Hmmm? Just work your way through the foggy surroundings and the you'll eventually run into the large plant dude. Hop onto the platform near the plant head, then jump and slash his little mouth. Avoid the root by running to the left, then return to deal some additional damage. Just learn the pattern and you shouldn't have a problem.

With Mr. Photosynthesis down for the count, you'll need to build a new civilization. Use the same techniques you did before, then use the Earthquake command to form a land bridge to the monster generator to the

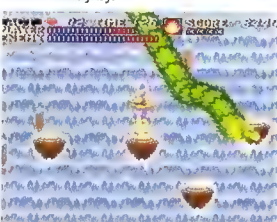
north. After a while, the villagers will give you the Herbs you need to heal the people of Kasandora. They will hand you a Tablet to use on the Marahna. Why didn't they give it to you before you left? Stupid fleshies! Finish your work here, then enter the next dungeon. Once again, this infested shrine is easy to maneuver through, but the boss is quite difficult. Instead of jumping on the platforms she lowers, just wait until she lunges at you. At this point, four or five slashes can be applied. This technique may take a while, but it's the safest way. As always, the villagers appreciate your help. Bah! Leave these losers and head north to Aitos.



AITOS & NORTHWALL

To tackle this stage, ride the dove vehicle all the way across to the left. When the vehicle docks, jump off. After passing through the next zone, a truly challenging boss awaits. Truly challenging if you don't know the trick. Simply hop to the central platform (pictured), and learn the pattern the boss uses. When he flies by, slash at his head. Repeat, and the reaper will come.

After building a few homes, the town will fall victim to a great terror. You won't be able to do anything about it now, so veer to the north again to the aptly named Northwall. This ice zone features a handful of tricky jumps, but thankfully, the same difficulty doesn't pass over into the boss. Granted, the water does limit your mobility, but this guy's pattern is easy to figure out. Just jump and slash, then avoid him when he does a fly by.



If you can tackle this zone, the residents of the area want you to build another city. Ugh! Uncover all the snow with sunlight and a lake will appear to the east allowing the villagers to fish. You won't be able to lick the chill factor unless you return to Aitos and use your Wind command to spin the blades on the windmills. With this kind act, the villagers will give you Sheep's Fleece. If you use Lightning on the temple, the people will hand over the Source of Life. When the last generator is removed, you'll need to fight off the demons.

To quote the great Keanu Reeves, "Whoa!" This level starts out scrolling to the left, as opposed to the right. Innovation! Work your way up the bubble maze and you'll reach the boss in no time. This guy is easy, especially if you're equipped with the Fire magic. Take advantage of his rear when he hovers, then duck out of the way when he regains mobility. Piece o' freakin' cake.

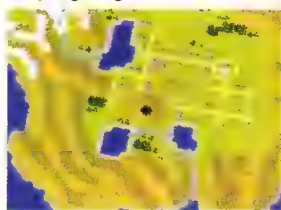
Return to Aitos and seal the final monster lair. Of course, this feat will bring on another fight. Plummet into the volcano and traverse the lava platforms to the rolling ball boss. Steer clear from his path of destruction, then launch a ferocious attack when he takes a break. Fire helps, but swift controller movement is the best strategy. After vanquishing this hellion back to his original realm, a new island will appear. Go there.



DEATH HEIM

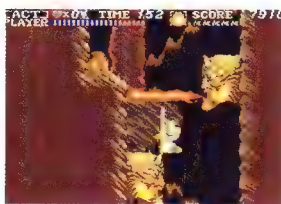
This is the final lap, kiddies. Before you can face the master of all evil, all the bosses must be tackled Mega Man style. Save your magic and use the same techniques you did before to topple these chumps. The boss has two forms, yet for some reason, our hero enters this battle with a powered-up sword that fires energy projectiles. Just dodge his energy balls and attack. At the end of this battle, peace will be restored and the human race will con-

tinue to struggle as the most pathetic lifeform on the planet's surface. If you cannot topple this menace, return to your cities and raise the population levels to power-up a little more. You'll also see, that with improved technology, the cities will have more items to offer. Check them all out if you want to see everything this game has to offer.

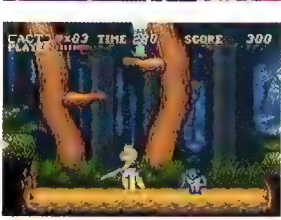
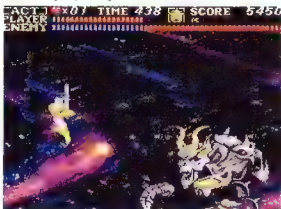


PROFESSIONAL MODE

Head to the Title Screen and press Down twice to activate the incredibly difficult Professional mode.



Factoid: When Kristian was just a young pup running from girl germs, he and eight of his friends retreated to his basement to play his latest purchase, ActRaiser. Kristian was so impressed by the game's soundtrack that he called his parents downstairs to hear it. He said, and we quote, "It sounds like a symphony!" What a dork.





PLAYWORKS PS2000 DIGITAL

Manufacturer: Creative Labs
Website: www.creative.com
List Price: \$199

Now here's an interesting take on acoustics. Rather than having to spend a couple grand on a super surround sound setup, the PS2000 provides the same effect for only a couple hundred – and there's only two pieces to arrange.

The subwoofer goes below your television and the one-piece speaker system that looks like the rear end of a hovercraft goes on top. What you get is a powerful cone of sound. A person too far to the side hears a very diffused

version of the booming power happening directly in front of the PS2000. It works great in conjunction with any game system or DVD player. Plus it looks weird, and people like that.

PLAYCAST ADAPTER

Manufacturer: Pelican Accessories
Website: www.pelicanacc.com
List Price: \$29.99 (bundled with Retro Shock 2 controller)

For all of you who can't find just the right Dreamcast controller, this little number allows you to use any PS-X or PS2 gamepad instead. The big drawback of the Playcast Adapter is that, unless the controller you're using has programmable buttons, you have no control over how the controller will be set up. The arrangement used is a good one, however, so this is a minor annoyance. Another problem is that it's only sold bundled with other Pelican accessories, so you may end up with something you didn't want or need.



DRIVER-ZED

Manufacturer: Global Learning Systems
Website: www.globallearningsystems.com
List Price: \$29.95

Every day, almost the entire staff of GI risks their lives by doing what we call "going to lunch." Everybody in our neck of the woods drives like an addle-brained SUV owner, because they are! Since this problem gets worse when school lets out for summer, we're going to recommend that all you potential drivers out there (and Matt and Erik – every trip with them is so filled with harrowing turns and near collisions they should charge admission for their thrill rides) get driver-ZED. This award-winning computer training course is hosted by four really "cool" kids, and uses video clips to teach you the ways of the road. Plus, it's really fun to play after a few drinks. No, no, just kidding, it's not that fun after some shots. It's still just educational.

DC-X

Manufacturer: Blaze
Accessories:
Website: www.blaze-gear.com
List Price: \$19.99

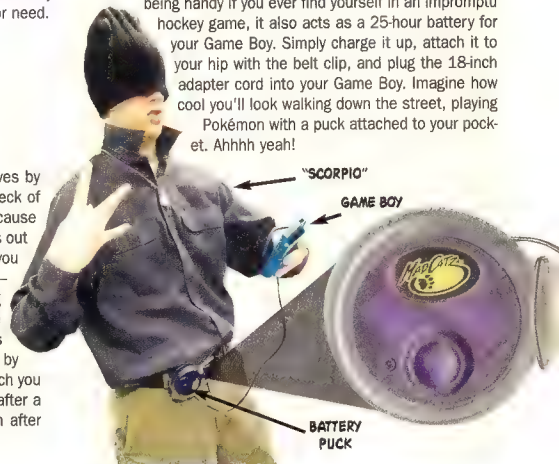
Due to the limitations of the printed word, you can't hear what's happening right now, so you'll have to take our word for it that everyone here is applauding Blaze Accessories for releasing DC-X. This ingenious item allows you to play Dreamcast games from any country on a Dreamcast from any country with but a simple disc swap. That means if there's a game you've always wanted to play, but it was only released in Japan, dropping 20 bones on DC-X will make it work on your Dreamcast. We tested this by trying out one European and five Japanese games on an American Dreamcast, and by booting up one European and five American games on a Japanese Dreamcast. We didn't have any problems. Word has it that peripheral-based games, such as Samba De Amigo and Seaman, freeze up, but otherwise DC-X is a great option for import fans.



BATTERY PUCK

Manufacturer: Mad Catz
Website: www.madcatz.com
List Price: \$19.99

You've all heard of a battery pack, right? Well this is the Battery Puck. Get it? It's a battery pack, but it's round and puck-like. A Battery Puck! Okay, okay, take a deep breath and wipe the tears of laughter from your eyes. Aside from being handy if you ever find yourself in an impromptu hockey game, it also acts as a 25-hour battery for your Game Boy. Simply charge it up, attach it to your hip with the belt clip, and plug the 18-inch adapter cord into your Game Boy. Imagine how cool you'll look walking down the street, playing Pokémon with a puck attached to your pocket. Ahhhh yeah!



This is your game.



This is your game on the blink.



ANY QUESTIONS?

Dust and dirt can damage your game system. The result? Poor picture quality, fuzzy sound and slow or "buggy" game play. Cleaning your system and games regularly will maintain high quality gaming and ensure a longer product life. Player's Edge cleaning kits will keep you and your system in the game.



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• GAME BOY® • GAME GEAR™ • MULTIMEDIA & GAME CDS

Available at **FuncoLand**

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**PLAYER'S
EDGE**



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Explore eight environments including Hong Kong and New York City in breathtaking detail with new Motion FX 3D technology.



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BREATH OF FIRE IV



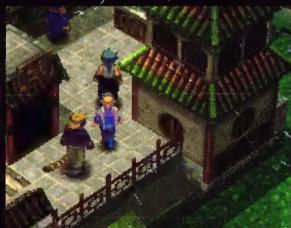
After centuries of war, the two lands bordering an impenetrable swampland have finally reached an armistice. Mysteriously, the noble princess Elena disappears somewhere near the war-ravaged front lines. Distraught, her sister Nina goes in search of the Princess alone and on her journey, meets a mysterious, young warrior named Ryu. Their destinies soon entwine. The next chapter in the epic tale of magic and mystery now unfolds. The fate of what lies ahead rests in your control.

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Animated Violence



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