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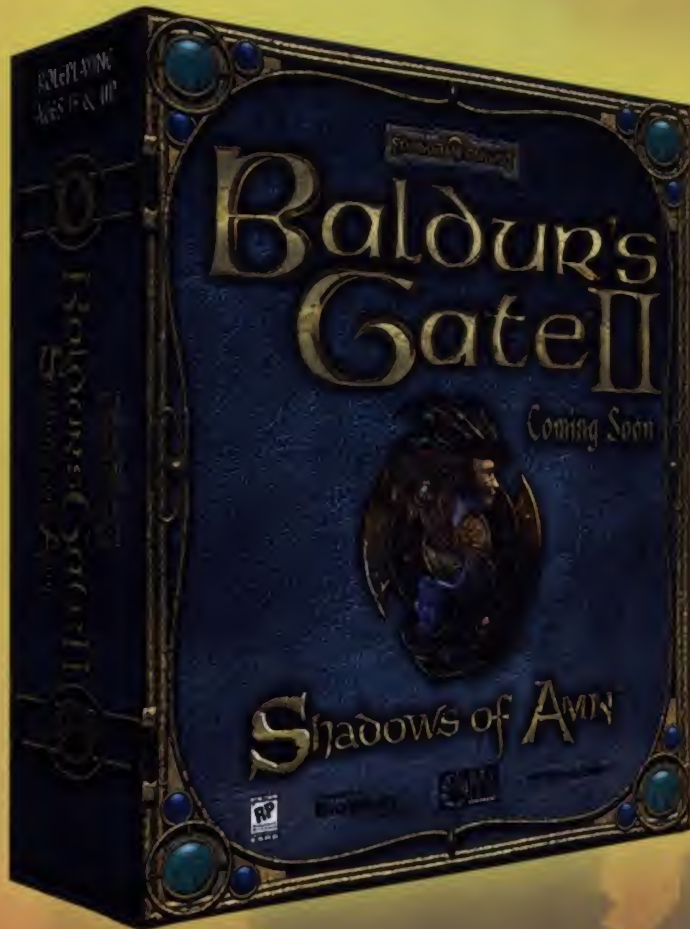
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HYPE IT UP

Welcome back to Hyper. Huh? Do you mean to say you've never picked up our magazine before? Then let me explain a few things...

Hyper magazine is Australia's first multi-format games magazine, which launched all the way back in 1993. Yep, we've been going strong for seven great years. Now, if you're thinking, "well, where can they go from here?" we just answered your question with that shiny silver disc that's stuck to the front of the magazine. Your eyes do not deceive you. Hyper magazine now offers a monthly PC cover disc packed with demos, patches and cool stuff (check out the Nintendo Gamecube movies this issue! Oh, and by the way, a little Pikachu just told me that you can expect Turok Evolution on the Nintendo Gamecube next year...). All for a \$6.95 cover price. If you don't have a PC and you're currently completely uninterested... er, y'know, that disc makes a nice frisbee for the dog... and, um, did you know those things make for a handy portable mirror. Ahem.

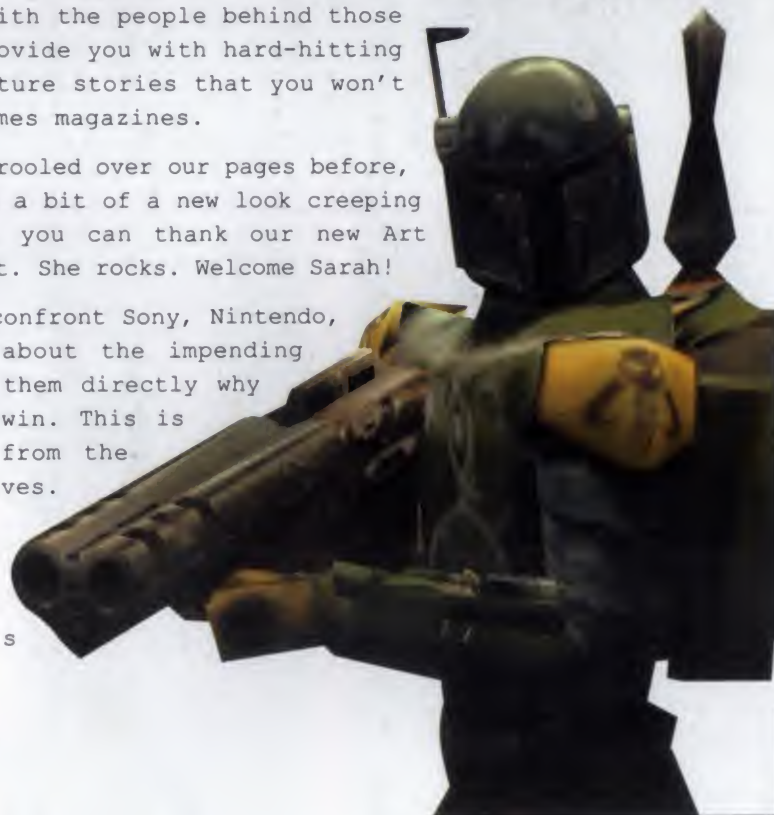
Seeing as we're multi-format, we'll also help you decide which games system you should buy, or even just cater for those of you lucky enough to own more than one platform. Every month we'll review all the latest games, preview some amazing upcoming titles and speak directly with the people behind those games, as well as provide you with hard-hitting and entertaining feature stories that you won't find in any other games magazines.

Those of you who've drooled over our pages before, may have also noticed a bit of a new look creeping into the mag. Well, you can thank our new Art Director, Sarah Bryant. She rocks. Welcome Sarah!

Now... this issue, we confront Sony, Nintendo, Sega and Microsoft about the impending console war and ask them directly why they think they can win. This is great stuff direct from the gaming giants themselves.

If you're serious about your gaming and love it to death, then Hyper is your Yoda.

ELIOT FISH >> EDITOR



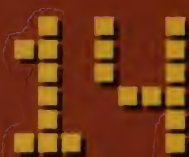
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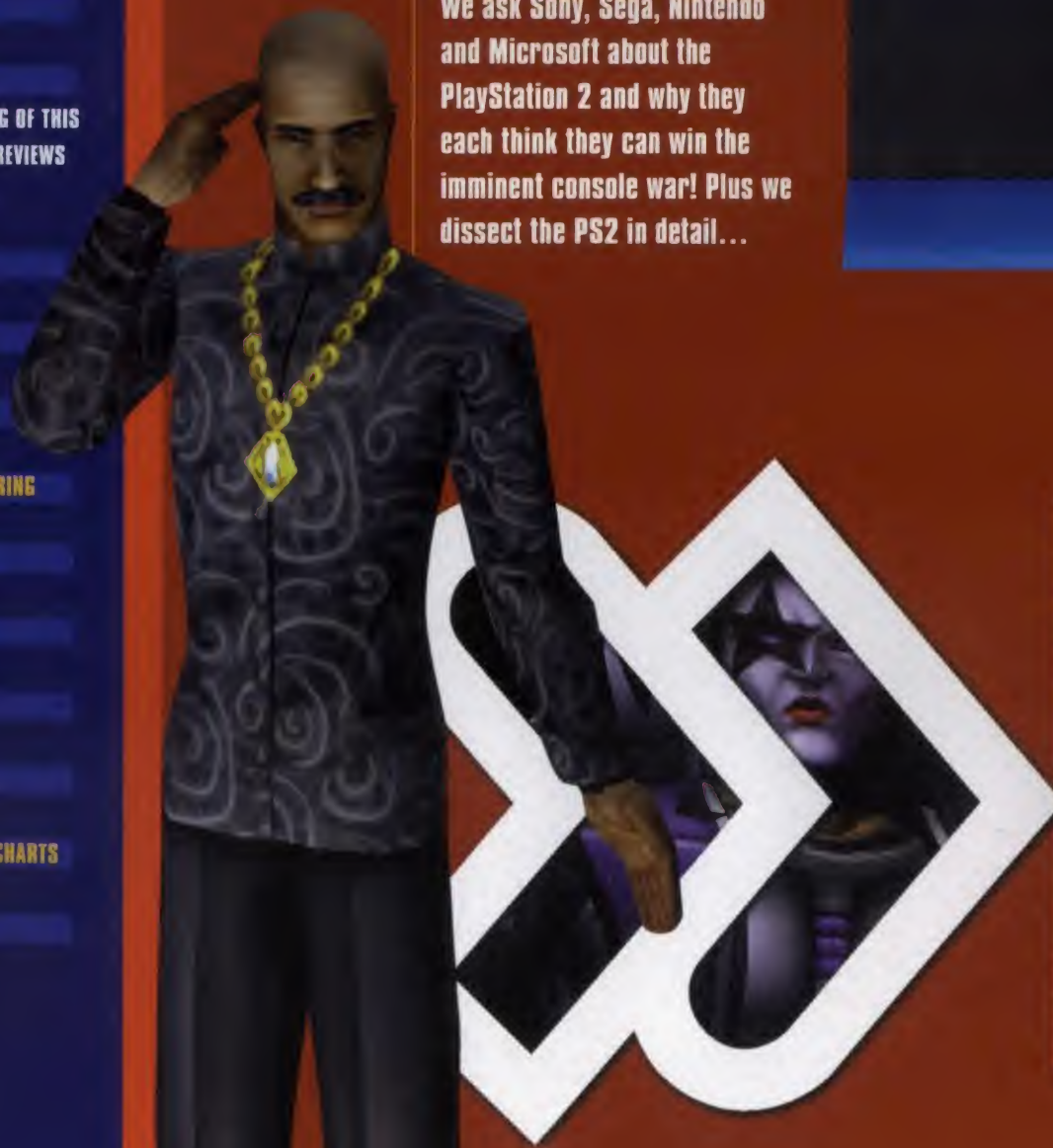
GAMECUBE ANNOUNCED!

Nintendo finally unveil their next console, the Gamecube. Turn over to news to find out all about the new contender in the upcoming console war.



CONSOLE WARS

We ask Sony, Sega, Nintendo and Microsoft about the PlayStation 2 and why they each think they can win the imminent console war! Plus we dissect the PS2 in detail...





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REVIEWS **40**

- MARIO TENNIS - NINTENDO 64
- X-MEN MUTANT ACADEMY - PLAYSTATION
- TENCHU 2 - PLAYSTATION
- PARASITE EVE 2 - PLAYSTATION
- RAYMAN 2 - PLAYSTATION
- KOUDELKA - PLAYSTATION
- BALDUR'S GATE II - PC
- RUGBY 2001 - PC
- HEAVY METAL FAKK 2 - PC
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- WWF ROYAL RUMBLE - DREAMCAST
- SYDNEY 2000 - DREAMCAST
- AND MORE...



NINTENDO GAMECUBE WOO-HOOO!



THE DOLPHIN IS SWIMMING WITH THE FISHIES...

Nintendo's 128-bit behemoth has finally been unveiled, and it won't be known as the Dolphin or the Star Cube. Instead, Nintendo have proudly unveiled the Nintendo Gamecube, to which the entire gaming world replied "say what?" Whatever happened to inventive names like the TurboGrafx-16 or Videopac G7000 (Odyssey 2), or classic names like Arcadia 2001? Okay, okay. The Gamecube will do...

It does seem odd that Nintendo have settled on such a literal name for their machine. I mean, imagine what it would be called if they'd designed a console that looked like one of those fake plastic turds? Looking on the bright side, I guess it's fortunate that Sony didn't go in for a literal naming system, because then the PS2 would be called the "ugly as all hell with only two controller ports". If it's truth in naming that Nintendo are after, shouldn't they call it the Coin Collector 2000, or the Miyamoto Machine? Let's not forget how silly it is going to sound having the N-Cube go head-to-head with the X-Box, not to mention GC Vs DC Vs PC!

THE DESIGN

Nintendo have kept with a distinctly kiddy look for the console, further emphasized by some bright colours that will be available at the Japanese launch, and the carry strap at the back. It seems as if, aesthetically at least, each console heavyweight is trying to appeal to a different market. Sony have gone for the deliberately drab and unassuming set top box that will blend in with the rest of your A/V equipment, Nintendo have designed theirs to look like a Jack-in-the-box, and the Dreamcast is sitting somewhere in between.

Even so, the Gamecube still has a sophisticated edge to the design. In fact, it bears more than a passing similarity to the Dreamcast — the four controller ports look very familiar, as do the two buttons on either side on the top, and both systems have that curved square effect going on. Obviously, the Nintendo Gamecube is much more of a cube than Sega's system, and thanks to the proprietary DVD format, is smaller in width and depth. The Cube doesn't approach the sexiness (no, we're not kidding) of the N64's design, but the more we ogle it, the cooler it gets. But... it would be nice if it took a little more inspiration from the new Mac Power Cube, and a little less from Barbie's Funhouse.

What is more of a mystery, however, is the carry strap at the back. According to Nintendo, people won't want to just let it sit in the one spot, but will move it around the house and take it to friend's cubbyhouses. Well... maybe, but it's not like you can just pick up the console and go. You'll still need to get the power supply, the AV leads, controllers and games... and hence a bag. This decision is very mysterious. As are the colours. Hot pink? Hello, Darling!

We can't honestly say we've warmed to the controller yet either. It also fits in with the kiddy look of the console, and is basically an all-in-one refinement from the last generation — built in force feedback, plenty of buttons, both analogue and digital support. What is really interesting is the decision to have one large central button surrounded by three lesser buttons. This is obviously designed with newbies in mind so that they know which button to press.

THE FORMAT

The machine uses a proprietary DVD format — the discs are much smaller (8cm in diameter) and can hold 1.5 Gig (less than one-third a standard DVD)





CAPTION THIS! PART 12

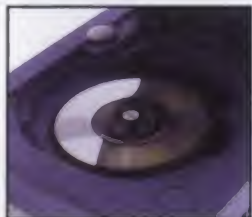
We're back again for more reader hilarity. What the Hell is wrong with us? Send your captions to Caption This Part 12 at captionthis@next.com.au. Good luck you freaks!



READERS BE FUNNY HERE

apiece. This has enabled the machine to be quite small indeed, as well as making the discs look "cute" for the kids. There are a number of factors driving the decision to use a proprietary disc standard. Chief among these would have to be the issue of copy protection. Nintendo are protecting against piracy by using a disc size that is entirely new, without losing too much of the speed and capacity of the DVD format. Games will also utilise extra protection in the form of Matsushita's copy protection technology. Another possible reason for this format that has been worrying us somewhat, concerns Nintendo's past as a "control freak" company. They have historically reaped huge profits out of cartridges by controlling their licensing and manufacture. We wonder whether this might happen again...

THE SYSTEM SPECS



Mr. Genyo Takeda told the audience at SpaceWorld that Nintendo's goal is to create the ultimate gaming hardware that is easy to develop for. To this end, they have designed the new system to try and eliminate bottlenecks and to provide increased functionality for developers.

The irony being, of course, that in the last generation, many developers left Nintendo to develop for Sony, whereas this generation it looks like PS2 is the system that will turn developers away and see them go to other systems. At this stage, however, Nintendo's claims that the Cube is easy to develop for have not been substantiated. It won't be until other developers give their reactions, and we see some actual games running that we'll be able to get a better idea. Also interesting is that Nintendo are claiming that their system is "better as a whole", rather than saying that it's more powerful than the competition.

THE LAUNCH DATE

Nintendo are claiming to have the Gamecube launch in Japan in July 2001, and in the US in October 2001 (with a European launch soon after we hope). Yes, that's right, they expect to launch the system in only nine months in Japan, yet were content to show only technical demos at SpaceWorld. Nintendo have even stated the games themselves won't be unveiled until May next year at E3!! But not only that, the hardware has only just been finalized, and only core Nintendo developers have development kits. As much as we'd like to believe Nintendo, it just doesn't look possible to launch in July 2001. Unless, of course, they do so with only a handful of in-house titles.

THE PERIPHERALS

Nintendo have some cool peripherals in the pipeline for the Cube. There's the standard memory card that holds 4Mbits (not MB) of flash memory. However, there's the much cooler possibility of being able to use a 64MB (not Mbits) SD memory card with the SD-Digicard Adapter as your save solution. In fact, this opens up 64DD-like possibilities. A card this size (with room to move up to 128MB) would function as a mini hard drive, allowing you to download things from the net, and create tracks/characters etc in game and save them.

Also in the peripheral arsenal is a wireless controller that Nintendo have code named "Wavebird". The good news

NINTENDO GAMECUBE SPECIFICATIONS

MPU ("Microprocessor Unit")	"IBM Power PC "Gekko"
Manufacturing Process	0.18 microns Copper Wire Technology
Clock Frequency	405 MHz
CPU Capacity	925 Dmips (Dhrystone 2.1)
Internal Data Precision	32bit Integer & 64bit Floating-point
External Bus Bandwidth	1.6GB/second (Peak) (32bit address, 64bit data bus 202.5MHz)
Internal Cache	L1: Instruction 32KB, Data 32KB (8 way) L2: 256KB (2 way)
System LSI	"Flipper"
Manufacturing Process	0.18 microns NEC Embedded DRAM Process
Clock Frequency	202.5MHz
Embedded Frame Buffer	Approx. 2MB Sustainable Latency: 5ns (1T-SRAM)
Embedded Texture Cache	Approx. 1MB Sustainable Latency: 5ns (1T-SRAM)
Texture Read Bandwidth	12.8GB/second (Peak)
Main Memory Bandwidth	3.2GB/second (Peak)
Color Z Buffer	Each is 24bits
Image Processing Function	Fog, Subpixel Anti-aliasing, HW Light x8, Alpha Blending, Virtual Texture Design, Multi-texture Mapping/Bump/Environment Mapping, MIPMAP, Bilinear Filtering, Real-time Texture Decompression (S3TC), etc.
Other	Real-time Decompression of Display List, HW Motion Compensation Capability

*The Gekko MPU integrates the Power PC CPU into a custom, game-centric chip.

(The following sound related functions are all incorporated into the System LSI)

Sound Processor	Special 16bit DSP
Instruction Memory	0KB RAM + 0KB ROM
Data Memory	0KB RAM + 4KB ROM
Clock Frequency	101.25 MHz
Maximum Number of Simultaneously Produced Sounds	ADPCM: 64ch
Sampling Frequency	48KHz
System Floating-point Arithmetic Capability	13.0GFLOPS (Peak) (MPU, Geometry Engine, HW Lighting Total)
Actual Display Capability	6 million to 12 million polygons/second (Display capability assuming actual game with complexity model, texture, etc.)
System Main Memory	24MB Sustainable Latency: 10ns or lower (1T-SRAM)
A-Memory	16MB (100MHz DRAM)
Disc Drive	CAV (Constant Angular Velocity) System Average Access Time Data Transfer Speed 16Mbps to 25Mbps 128ms
Media	8cm NINTENDO GAMECUBE Disc based on Matsushita's Optical Disc Technology
Media	8cm NINTENDO GAMECUBE Disc based on Matsushita's Optical Disc Technology
	Approx. 1.5GB Capacity
Input/Output	Controller Port x 4 Digicard Slot x 2 Analog AV Output x 1 Digital AV Output x 1 High-Speed Serial Port x 2 High-speed Parallel Port x 1
Power Supply	AC Adapter DC12V x 3.5A
Main Unit Dimensions	150mm(W) x 110mm(H) x 161mm(D)



SPECIAL NEWS FEATURE



is that it will work up to ten metres away — hell yeah!

The Gamecube also has full support for Digital Video Cable and HDTV. Taking a look under the Gamecube's case, you'll find that Nintendo have prepared for all circumstances. There's a serial port bay that can hold either a modem adapter or a broadband adapter, as well as another serial port and a high-speed port. Nintendo have kept their options open... good to see.

TECH DEMOS

The day before Space World began, the gaming press were treated to some awesome demos of the Gamecube's power. Perhaps the sequence that got the audience the most excited was a collection of clips — some real time, some pre-rendered — of familiar Nintendo gaming mascots and franchises. Nintendo have stated that these aren't an indication of games coming to the system, but merely demonstrations of what the console is capable. Let's take a look:

LUIGI'S HAUNTED CASTLE: Miyamoto has said in the past that Luigi is likely to play a more prominent role in the next Mario game, and lo and behold here he is! Sliding down a banister as boos chase him through a haunted castle, this demo was real time and hot.

JOANNA DARK: Our guess is that the Rare team threw this one together in about ten minutes. Nothing but a camera rotating around a standing Joanna... boring!

METROID: Pre-rendered footage here, and very nice indeed. Rumour has it that Retro Studios are developing this new Metroid title, but Nintendo have denied it. If for no other reason, this demo was cool because Samus' last appearance was on the SNES!

POKÉMON: Hooray — look at all the Pokémon rocking out! Not. A semi interactive demo that had a whole lot of Pokémon dancing away. Impressive... but perhaps only for Pokémon fans.

ZELDA: Yes yes yes! This demo featured a short fight sequence between Ganon and Link, and was nothing short of jaw dropping. The amount of detail in both the characters and the backgrounds was stunning.

WAVE RACE 64: It may seem weird, but this is the game we want most right here. Only a very short pre-rendered teaser, but our inside sources have it that the game is already in development by NST (Nintendo's American development house that looked after the excellent Ridge Racer 64 port) and looks better in game than what we saw in the demo. This could be the premiere racer on the system.

ROGUE SQUADRON: From Factor 5, this demo was a short teaser. Since then, we've seen more extended actual gameplay footage. Indeed, this is the only 100% confirmed actual "game" so far for the system. We've included some of this footage on our demo CD, and it looks cool — if a bit early in development. The best part is the amount of laser fire zooming around the screen.

MARIO 128 DEMO

The best demo of all, though, featured — who else — but Mario. Whilst utilising the Mario character purely to show off the hardware (and providing no clues at all about the next Mario game), this was an awesome real-time tech demo that had that infectious Mario personality as well as all the weirdness we've come to expect from Nintendo.

The demo starts off with an old school 2D Mario running across the screen. He freezes halfway across and the camera pans in close (accompanied by the classic mushroom powerup sound effect) to reveal Mario's original simplistic pixel construction. The camera then zooms in further to reveal that each of Mario's pixels is actually a 3D-coloured box sitting on a circular disc. The closest box to the camera pops up to reveal Mario underneath! He walks over to the edge of the disc and chucks the box off, then goes back and picks up another box, which sets free another Mario underneath. They then continue the process until there are 128 of them going nuts on screen pushing boxes, throwing boxes and even rolling each other off the edge! Of course, while all this is going on, the camera is zooming in and out, and spinning around the disc, with no slowdown to be seen. Being manipulated in real time by Mr. Miyamoto, the Mario 128 demo showed off a wide variety of technical trickery such as: real-time land deformation creating little mountains and ravines; making the disc concave sending all the Mario's into the center then bouncing them up into the air; real-time lighting changes; cel shading on each Mario; and Metal Gear Solid style environmental cloaking on each Mario. The Mario 128 demo stole the show — despite the amazing competition!

WINNERS

HYPER #83

Diablo II

- J. Round, NSW
- Philip Ward, WA
- Jonie Seed, Qld
- Ken Falcon, NSW
- Garry Goodman, WA

Vagrant Story

- Garry Watts, WA
- Daniel Pasche, SA
- James Hamilton, NSW
- Caerid Mouse, SA
- Marcus Tsui, Vic

VampireThe Masquerade

- Gus Carrozza, NSW
- Grant Hardy, NSW
- David Barnes, NSW

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LET'S NOT FORGET... GAME BOY ADVANCE!



THE SPECS

CPU:	32bit ARM7 Custom @16.7Mhz, with reduced Z80 core for Game Boy and Game Boy Color emulation. RAM: 32Kbit work
RAM (may not be final),	96Kbytes VRAM (may not be final), 16Kbytes sound RAM (may not be final)
GPU:	Nintendo Custom.
Supported functions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hardware sprite scaling, rotation, distortion. - XY scroll, rotation scroll. - Multi layers. - 4096 maximum (may not be final) hardware sprites, with maximum of 256 sprites on a single line. - No dedicated 3D acceleration.
SPU: Nintendo Custom:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 hardware sound channels. - Maximum sampling rate @44.1KHz.
Resolution:	244x160, half the resolution of the Super Nintendo Entertainment System, although in a reversed aspect ratio.
Colour depth:	Multi colour depth, maximum of 65,536 colours from a palette of 16 million. Supports alpha channel.
Screen:	Sharp reflect colour LCD screen.
Media:	Game Boy cartridge, Game boy Color cartridge, Game Boy Advance cartridge.
Max Cartridge size:	512Mbit.
Interface:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nintendo custom - Game Boy / Game Boy Color compatible cartridge interface. - Custom Dolphin communications interface. - 3.5mm earphone jack.
Input:	4-directional D-Pad, Select, Start, A, B, L, R
Speaker:	Thin Membrane speaker (the same speaker found in the Game Boy and Game Boy Color).
Power Rating:	3V.
Battery:	2x AA battery, 20 hours continuous play time.

It looks like it was worth the wait for Nintendo's true successor to Game Boy. Officially titled Game Boy Advance, Nintendo's new portable packs a 32bit processor, full backwards compatibility, a slim understated design and a widescreen LCD display.

There were only ten GBA games on display at SpaceWorld, and they weren't overly impressive. Not so much from a technical point of view mind you, more so that they were obviously incomplete, or just looked like dull games. Most of these titles won't make it to Australia though, so it's no biggie. What was evident though, is that Nintendo have done their homework for the machine in general.



A HANDY LITTLE THING

The new Game Boy Advance is quite the compact device — much more streamlined than the Game Boy, and very much in the Neo Geo Pocket mold. The design is a little more conservative than we were expecting, but slick nevertheless. Featuring two main buttons on the face, two small start and select buttons underneath the D pad, and two shoulder buttons, the GBA has the controls to suit the next generation of games. The best part of the design by far, however, is the awesome 2.9 inch LCD screen (roughly one and a half times the size of the Game Boy's). Its widescreen design is clearly the next step in portable gaming, and displays at 240x160 pixels with a very respectable maximum on-screen display of 32,000 colours. According to Nintendo, the reflective TFT LCD display is based on new high contrast white panel screen technology. We can attest that this produces a very crisp picture with excellent colour definition.

Nintendo have come up with a sensible compromise between graphics performance and cost with the GBA. Obviously, they'll be hoping that the GBA will have somewhere near the longevity of the Game Boy, so it has to stand the test of time. Rather than trying to give the system extensive 2D and 3D capabilities, Nintendo have instead opted to focus almost exclusively on 2D performance to create the ultimate 2D games machine, a decision which we applaud. Portables are about a different style of gaming than consoles, and require a different approach to hardware and software. After all, the Advance will still be able to do better 3D graphics than the FX chip (featured in SNES games like Stunt Race FX) allowed, and Mode 7

scrolling gives a very convincing illusion of 3D. Nintendo have got it right here, and we're anxiously awaiting the day that we can give the portable a proper road test.

Two of the best features of the Game Boy Advance are the ability to play four player link-up with one person acting as the server, and the connectivity between GBA and Gamecube — you'll even be able to use your Advance as a Gamecube controller. Bring on the four-player Mario Kart Advance!

MARIO KART ADVANCE

Mario Kart Advance was undoubtedly the game of the show. No matter how fond you are of Super Mario Kart, each time we go back to play it on SNES it gets a little more dated. The gameplay is still there certainly, but the graphics have lost their magic to a large extent. Well, the good news is that Mario Kart on the GBA will have that trademark gameplay, plus updated graphics. Nintendo are giving the impression that this machine isn't as powerful as the SNES but it seems above and beyond it



to us — perhaps due to optimized programming. The sneak peek of Mario Kart we've been lucky enough to see showed off a smooth frame rate, nicely stylised graphics and serious speed. Nintendo's announcement that the game will feature a much expanded battle mode has us all tingly, because it's going to be four-player link-up that will take this game into greatness.

BUT WHEN?

The Game Boy Advance is due to go on-sale in Japan on March 21st 2001, with ten games available at launch. We should see the system here around July next year if we're all very good little boys and girls.

Get to the **finish line** any **freakin'** way you can.

8 new screaming machines are hitting the streets of San Francisco and London. Not to mention the buildings, fountains and shopping malls. The only rule in this race is: There aren't any rules.



**MIDTOWN
MADNESS 2**

www.microsoft.com/games/midtown2

Microsoft



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COMMANDOS 2

PC

EIDOS

AVAILABLE: DECEMBER

The original *Commandos* was a thoroughly addictive piece of World War II escapism. Commanding your small band of skilled troops, you had to complete a number of entertaining and downright tense missions from a top down perspective. *Commandos 2* looks to be even more detailed than the original. Take a look at these screenshots for proof of the utterly jaw-dropping environments you'll get to play in... and please ignore mister beefcake here.



Combat Flight Simulator II

PC

MICROSOFT

AVAILABLE: NOVEMBER

"Those wonderful gamers in their flying machines..." it went something like that, right? Ahh well, it will do soon, because Combat Flight Sim II is shaping up to be a serious treat. Just take a look at how well they've modelled these planes. Holy Aileron Trim! We just can't wait to blow these gorgeous looking things out of the sky. Thanks again, Bill.



CONSOLE WARS

PLAYSTATION 2 VS THE WORLD



The release of the PlayStation 2 is imminent, bringing with it the hope that the driest period in the gaming industry's last five years will come to an end. For whatever reason, software and hardware sales have been in decline across the board. Not even Sega's formidable Dreamcast could buck this trend, which has given us cause to rethink the gaming industry.

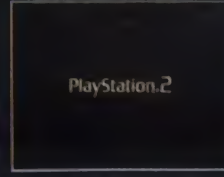
>> KEVIN CHEUNG

The PlayStation 2's 'set-top box' concept isn't the first to break the strict gaming mould. In the early 1990s, the 3Do was marketed as having the first true multimedia functions in a box — all interactive programs of some sort — which proved to be its downfall: it didn't offer enough entertainment options to the average consumer to justify its high price. Average consumers, or the "mainstream market" as the industry buzz-phrase goes, are the key to any new system's launch. Without them, we're back in the dark ages where Super Nintendos and Sega Megadrives were part of a poorly funded avant-garde world of electronic geekdom.

Whilst the Dreamcast continues to dabble with online connectivity, the PlayStation 2 will be the first to offer a medium for passive entertainment: DVD playback. Never mind all the debate as to which machine provides the best gaming experience. The passive entertainment market (that is, watching television, movies and so on) is a gigantic yet largely untapped sector of the mainstream audience, which is why every new console being announced is racing to offer you DVD playback. The PlayStation 2's advantage, though, is that it will be the first to arrive. It will be crucial for Sony to capture as much of that market as it can before the competition arrives.

This is essentially the reason Sony have been plugging the DVD features of the PlayStation 2 so hard. It's also for this reason Sony have been attracting some criticism for alienating its gaming audience. This would only be a concern, however, if developers were feeling alienated as well. Quite to the contrary, virtually every developer is scrambling to announce some kind of project for the PlayStation 2, ensuring that at the end-user level, there will be plenty of games to keep the gaming audiences happy.

With this framework in mind, let us delve into the strengths and weaknesses of the major players, and see just how much of a chance the PlayStation 2 has in winning this console war.



THE PS2 PACKAGE

DVD PLAYBACK: There's no denying it: DVD playback is a massive selling point for the PlayStation 2. The majority of consumers actually don't have a DVD player. In spite of the existence of cheaper PC DVD alternatives, the PlayStation 2's physical design makes it an affordable and more functional means of achieving that dreamy home theatre setup. DVD playback is facilitated through software that's saved on the new 8Mb memory card, which can be updated for improved picture and sound quality. This is actually a lot less complicated than what it is involved with PCs. Interestingly, some consumers believe that DVD playback justifies the high cost of a PlayStation 2.

DVD/CD COMPATIBILITY: A proprietary lens developed by Sony allows the PlayStation 2 to read both CDs and DVDs, which gives programmers wider flexibility in terms of the amount of information being used and how it is encoded. It's a feature that will be rightly overlooked by the majority of people since CDs and DVDs look virtually identical.

BACKWARDS COMPATIBILITY: This is a feature not offered by any other console. In that respect, people who already own PlayStations will not feel alienated by the introduction of the PlayStation 2; and it won't feel as though the investment they made in PlayStation games is being thrown away. They'll be able to continue playing all of their old favourites, with the option to improve the visual quality and load-times through the start-up menu screens. The improvement is only mild — and almost non-existent for games using software interpolation — but most people will no doubt spend hours testing all their old games just to see what happens.

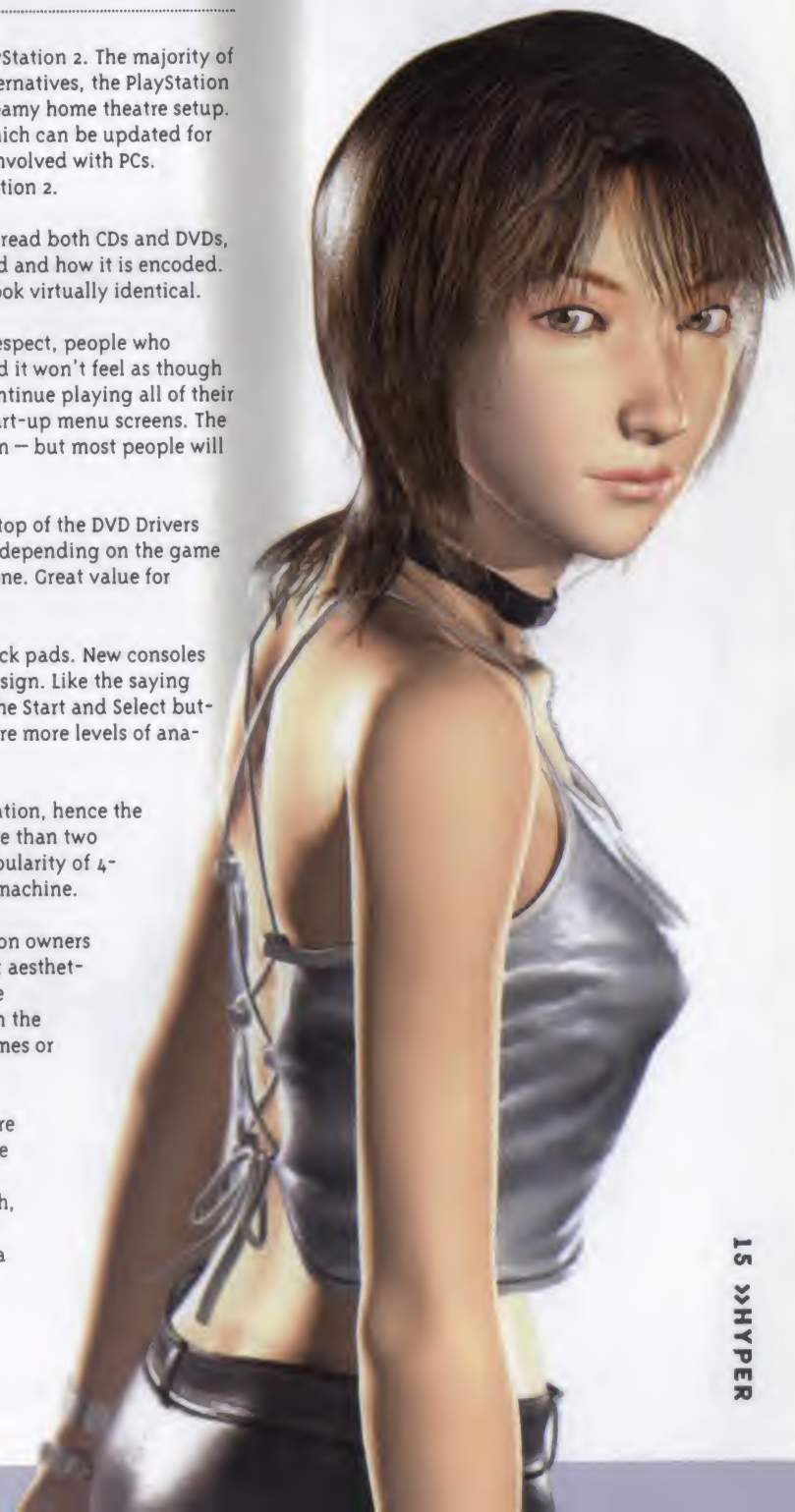
8MB MEMORY CARD: In a nutshell, it's eight times bigger than the old memory cards. On top of the DVD Drivers and System Files, the 8Mb Memory Card can store saved data files from around 20 games — depending on the game of course — which means it'll be a fair while before you'll need to head out and buy a new one. Great value for money.

DUAL SHOCK 2: It's black, it's a little lighter, and it looks the same as the original Dual Shock pads. New consoles have historically meant new control pads, but Sony has opted to stick with their original design. Like the saying goes, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. The major change, though, is that every button barring the Start and Select buttons have analogue properties. The analogue thumb sticks are also a little tighter and feature more levels of analogue.

TWO CONTROL PORTS: The PlayStation 2 uses the same I/O interface as the original PlayStation, hence the number of control ports stays the same. If you're looking for a gaming experience with more than two players, you're going to have to shell out for the PS2 Multitap. Considering the growing popularity of 4-player games, it seems a tad remiss of Sony not to simply implement the Multitap into the machine.

VERTICAL STAND: You'd be forgiven for laughing if you are one of the numerous PlayStation owners who has had to stand their old PSX on its side to solve loading problems. This is more about aesthetic design than a solution for weakened CD lens springs — the VCR-sized PlayStation 2 can be propped on its side to make your home theatre setup look a little funkier. You can even turn the PlayStation symbol on its side to follow suit. Bottom line, though, it doesn't change the games or DVDs one iota.

NETWORK CONNECTIVITY: The PlayStation 2 comes equipped with two USB ports, a FireWire plug, a hefty little hard drive, and a promise of broadband connectivity. USB ports open the door for game developers to implement 'plug and play' modems, keyboards, mice, and other peripherals not specifically designed for the PlayStation 2. One of the dangers, though, is that the average consumer is likely to be confused by all the different components and wires. The popular theory that 'plug and play' makes technology accessible to everyone is a fallacy, especially when there are lots of these components to keep track of. Most people don't even know how to set up their own PCs.





■ RIDGE RACER V



■ DARK CLOUD



■ EXTERMINATE

THE GAMES

The initial games that were released in Japan was actually the weakest aspect of the PlayStation 2's debut – the best that could be said of them being that they showed promise.

The main criticisms have been that none of them are 'system sellers' per se, and that they don't offer anything particularly new to the gaming world. The lineup? A Ridge Racer sequel, a Tekken sequel, a Kurushi sequel, a Dead or Alive sequel, an Armored Core sequel... Of course, many of them were quite fun to play, but the fact that there are so many sequels is reason enough to be concerned about originality. Here's a rundown on the games we've been able to test.

RIDGE RACER V – The game plays like a dream, especially if you're a fan of the series. It runs at a blistering pace (consistent 60fps) and features some incredible lighting effects, but it isn't anything we haven't played before. The addition of analogue acceleration and braking adds a lot of depth to the already nail-biting speed. It's unfortunate that there's such heavy aliasing in the visuals.

Closest Equivalent: Sega GT on Dreamcast was definitely less taxing on the eyes, but suffered even more than Ridge Racer V in terms of uninspiring game design. Gameplay was also too generic for any serious racing fan to enjoy. Sega GT is yet to be released in Australia.

KESSEN – Developed by Koei and being released by Electronic Arts, Kessen plays like a very traditional strategy game – the likes of which haven't appeared much in Australia, but are commonplace in Asian markets. This game most closely resembles Shogun Total War on PC, and definitely impressed for the number of characters being rendered in real-time during the battle scenes. Too bad they weren't interactive.

Closest Equivalent: Shogun Total War on PC is much more involving in terms of being a strategy game, but lacks the kind of glossy presentation only made possible by the PlayStation 2's processing power.



TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT – The 3D modelling in this game is jaw dropping. When the camera zooms in for a close-up, you'll realise that you're looking at a fully modelled 3D musculature of, say, a man's chest and arms. The rest of the package was just a bit of a letdown, though, as the gameplay is identical to Tekken 3 – save of course a very half-baked tagging option.

Closest Equivalent: Tekken 3 on PlayStation plays exactly the same, but with a few less characters and an obviously smaller polygon count. It's also worth noting Soul Calibur on Dreamcast, where the musculature is the product of high-res textures against a flat surface as distinct from 3D modelling.

FANTAVISION – A unique puzzle game that rewards quick thinking with a dazzling fireworks display. Obviously it can be done on any system – the weight of the game's credit is the ingenuity of the concept. By its nature, Fantavision isn't likely to excite the greater gaming public, but it's still great to play. It also shows off some of the PlayStation 2's lighting effects, which is great for just running in the background.

Closest Equivalent: Missile Command on the Atari 2600!



FIFA SOCCER WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP – Classic FIFA action. Tight controls, excellent controller response – typically great gameplay. However, the visual quality is inconsistent. Background textures are surprisingly low-res and the frame rate chokes up, especially in two-player mode. Strange that the game doesn't support 4-player mode. Strictly speaking, though, this game offered nothing new, and the graphical update was quite minimal.

Closest Equivalent: Virtua Striker 2000 on Dreamcast has a distinct graphical edge – not only in terms of general presentation, but also in terms of camera flexibility. Things definitely look great zoomed in. Too bad the game plays like a dog: controls are simplistic and unresponsive, and strategy is thrown right out the door.

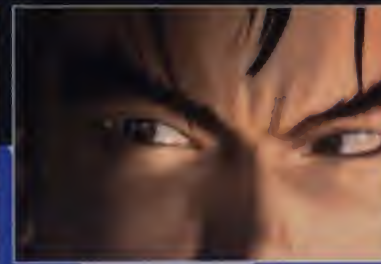
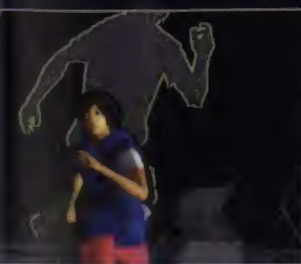


DYNASTY WARRIORS 2 – One of the first genuinely addictive and original games to show off the PlayStation 2's muscle. Koei's follow-up to Kessen takes the form of a real-time beat'em up featuring thousands of characters being processed in real-time. Of course, you only get to see 50 or 60 at a time on screen, but the sheer number of characters you fight against is a very new experience.

Closest Equivalent: Sword of Berserk on Dreamcast has similar movement and mechanics and is based on a very popular Japanese comic. Sadly, Berserk only features a fraction of the number of characters you see in Dynasty Warriors 2, so it misses out badly on the atmosphere.

ARMORED CORE 2 – The original was a cult favourite amongst mech fans who preferred the simulation aspects of mech set-ups and the arcade aspects of gameplay. Think Mechwarrior meets Virtual On. This PlayStation 2 version has the obvious graphical updates in terms of resolution and framerate, but gameplay remains identical to the PlayStation original – it doesn't even make use of analogue control.

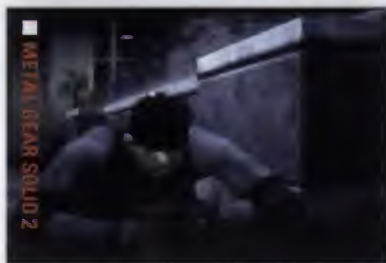
Closest Equivalent: Armored Core on PlayStation, barring of course the visual quality. The developer, From Software, also produced Frame Grider for Dreamcast, which is a comparable title. Too bad it'll never come out locally.



■ MAXIMO

■ DEAD OR ALIVE 2

■ TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT



ONIMUSHA
STREET FIGHTER EX 3 – It's basically Street Fighter EX from PlayStation running in high-res. The mechanics are classic Street Fighter. Throw in a couple of tag features and extra lighting effects, and you've basically got the game in a can. Overall a major disappointment for fans of the series, but word has it that Capcom intend to make some serious refinements for the Australian release. **Closest Equivalent:** Street Fighter EX 2 on PlayStation has a much less convoluted interface and is actually more enjoyable to play. On Dreamcast, games like Street Fighter 3 Third Strike still run in a horribly pixellated low-resolution mode; but the high-res backgrounds in Marvel Vs Capcom 2 may signal a change.

TV DJ – A bizarre combination of PaRappa the Rapper and Beatmania. The idea behind this game is to produce a television show by slotting different sized cel sequences into a film reel. The final product is something like a TV show done in rap. Presentation uses the newly popularised cel-shading technique to give polygons a cartoon finish. TV DJ is definitely niche, and something you'll either love or hate.

Closest Equivalent: Space Channel 5 on Dreamcast is way cooler and the music is better by light years. It's also worth looking at Jet Set Radio to see how cel-shading is done 'properly'.

DEAD OR ALIVE 2 – Tecmo's bouncy fighting game gets better and better with every version – the initial Japanese release being based on the Millennium Edition. Compared to other 3D fighters, this game is a very welcome breath of fresh air with its multi-level stages and countering system. The Hardcore Edition for Western release is going to be based on a completely different engine with extra moves and costumes to boot! **Closest Equivalent:** Dead or Alive 2 on Dreamcast has less atmospheric effects and less moves – which obviously means less depth in the long term. There's also Virtua Fighter 3tb on Dreamcast, which requires a strict and mechanical fighting discipline, but is sorely lacking in flair.

Clearly, the next obstacle for the PlayStation 2 to get around is in the games department. Even mainstream consumers, who've more or less experienced a great deal of what the PlayStation or Nintendo 64 had to offer, will eventually recognise that they're just getting more of the same. Breaking through the traditional boundaries of game design can't be done at the drop of a hat, though, so it's just a waiting game to see which company can start churning out the PlayStation 2's first A-list system-selling titles.

A handful of titles stand at this forefront, specifically Konami's Metal Gear Solid 2, Capcom's Onimusha, and EA Sports' Madden 2001. We'll let the screenshots speak for themselves.

THE CRITICISMS

JAGGED EDGES

A number of the PlayStation 2's first crop of games – namely Ridge Racer V and Dead or Alive 2 – have been strongly criticised for the presence of jagged edges, or what is properly termed aliasing. This has come as the result of several factors. Firstly, the PlayStation 2's first round of games did not make use of anti-aliasing, which effectively smooths out those jagged edges. PC graphics cards and even the Dreamcast, which uses a Power VR chip, facilitate anti-aliasing – though interestingly, many Dreamcast games still exhibit jaggy effects, such as Virtua Tennis and Dead or Alive 2. Sometimes, they are just inherent to the display resolution.

In any case, Sony maintains that the PlayStation 2 graphics hardware is capable of anti-aliasing, including full-scene anti-aliasing, which gamers would've most recently seen on the Dreamcast's Ready 2 Rumble Boxing. This claim has been backed up by Volition Studios, who are wrapping up production of their PlayStation 2 RPG, Summoner. Even skeptics have little choice but to wait for the final results.

Secondly, the appearance of jagged edges results in part from the way the PlayStation 2 displays its image. That is, by interlacing two separate fields of 640x240 images to create a whole 640x480 frame. This process isn't discernible to the naked eye, but not for our screenshot capturing process, which can sometimes capture the transition between two fields.

LOW-RES TEXTURES

The PlayStation 2 has a little over 4MB of texture RAM, which by PC programming standards is quite limiting. Usually, texture information for characters and entire levels will be stored in cache while the processors work their magic. The Dreamcast and presumably the Xbox excel through this methodology thanks to enhanced blending modes, multi-texturing, dot product mapping, texture compression, and per pixel shading – all of which fits neatly into a tight bus-bandwidth.

So of course, programmers working under the PC mindset are going to have a few problems with the PlayStation 2. 4MB just isn't enough to store all the texture information, so the cost would have to be a reduction in texture detail and effects.

However, the PlayStation 2 architecture works a little differently. Since the bus-bandwidth is so huge, the PlayStation 2 can rapidly stream obscene amounts of texture information directly off the disc on the fly. This basically minimises any constraints posed by the cache, so it's really a case of waiting for developers to adapt to this new structure and making the most of it.

Secondly, screenshot capturing technology wasn't designed with the PlayStation 2's video output in mind. Since a standard screen capture might have jagged edges or overlapped animations, the usual solution is to de-interlace the image. Unfortunately, this erases half the lines of resolution and averages the space that's between the remainder. For that reason, most screenshots you see of PlayStation 2 games will be lacking half of the detail.

PRICE

\$750 is a lot of money. The irony is that many mainstreamers – not gamers – think it's great value. They break it down as \$300 for a DVD player, \$200 to play old PlayStation games, \$200 to play PlayStation 2 games, and \$50 for the rest of the privileges. Affordability remains an issue, though, as these people will still have to save up the bucks to buy one. Until Sony start pricing their machine more competitively, there will always be a reason to consider its competition.

THE COMPETITORS



DREAMCAST

The Sega Dreamcast has several advantages over the PlayStation 2. Firstly, it's had a whole year's head start to establish its user base. Secondly, it has a strong line-up of software. Following the example of the Nintendo 64's launch, which came a year after the PlayStation's, such a difference in the timing of release suggests that Sony and Sega could conceivably carve out mutually exclusive portions of the market for themselves. This is unlikely, however, as the Sega Dreamcast has not enjoyed the benefit of the same smooth roll-out and support as the Nintendo 64. Where consumers should have been able to purchase the latest in videogame technology from every major retailer, they were met with shipment delays and software shortages. A



distinct lack of peripherals such as arcade sticks and visual memory units did not help either. The release dates for highly anticipated A-list titles were also dragged back indefinitely.

After almost a year since its launch in Australia, the Dreamcast has floundered its opportunity to capitalise on the so-called 'mainstream' phenomenon engendered by the PlayStation. Sales have not been encouraging and the picture isn't much brighter elsewhere in the world. That's in spite of numerous marketing campaigns to give away free internet access and free consoles. What's worse is that Sega is still struggling to get its online gaming networks up and running.

The latest news in terms of game development is also a concern.

Codemasters and Argonaut have halted development on Dreamcast, Ubi Soft have cancelled development of certain games due to poor market support, and other high profile games like Baldur's Gate II have been struck off the release schedules. It could just be a huge coincidence that all of these cancellations were announced in rapid succession, but it's definitely a sign that the console is losing industry support.

But the Dreamcast still has a chance. OziSoft are banking on consumers to snap up Dreamcasts once they see how comparable and more affordable a gaming alternative it is compared to the PS2. After all, who's going to fork out \$750 for a PS2 with Dead or Alive 2 when you can get a Dreamcast and the same game for almost half the price? If anything, the Dreamcast's most powerful weapon is its standing as a games machine. Compared to the current crop of PS2 games, the Dreamcast offers more variety and more originality. Games like Powerstone 2, Crazy Taxi, and Jet Set Radio have certainly rekindled the interest and imagination of even the most jaded in the core gaming population; and it's on the strength of the fun, character, and originality of these games that the Dreamcast should be marketed. The recent price drop to \$299 is an extremely good move. It's far more affordable, and as a pure gaming unit it's better value for money – especially for people who already own a DVD player.

BUT WHAT ABOUT ONLINE GAMING?

Truth be known, online access and gaming through a Dreamcast was always going to be limited. There wouldn't have been a single PC-owning soul who didn't snicker at the idea of laying the smack down on a Dreamcast owner playing Quake 3 Arena with an interlaced 640x480 TV screen at 30 frames per second. There's just no competition – even with a DC mouse. And even if there's a low latency, high ping network set up, it's still only running through a 33.6k modem. Promises of DC gamers being integrated with the broader PC community is simply not likely to happen. Online gaming may nevertheless kick off, at the very least with Dreamcast owners forming exclusive gaming cloisters of their own.

What's more interesting, however, is the question of net access with the DC. Is it pointless? There is no dedicated hard drive, hence nothing of value can be downloaded. Plus, not everyone necessarily wants to subscribe to Telstra Bigpond. Web browsing is limited even further by the fact that javascript is not supported, and that the interlaced 640x480 display setting makes it very difficult to navigate certain sites. Sure, one could use a VGA Box to connect the Dreamcast to a PC monitor – eliminating the interlacing – but if you've got a PC monitor, wouldn't you be using your PC to get online? At this stage, with Sony having yet to announce specifics on their online plans, it's difficult to predict how the PS2 would fare in this department. One thing they have got right, though, is the inclusion of a 30Gb hard disk.

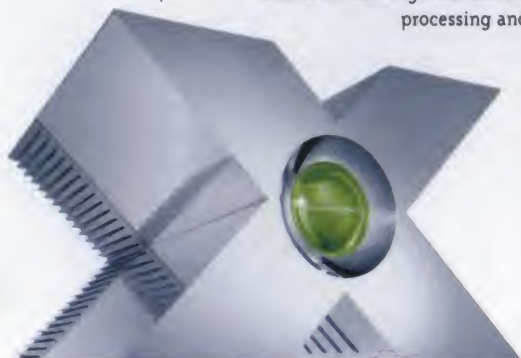
XBOX

Microsoft's Xbox (yes, they write it Xbox not X-Box) introduces an unknown element to the fray, for the simple reason that the realm of PC games – with which Microsoft has long been associated – has long been regarded as a separate entity from console games. PCs, as everyone knows, offer the very latest in processing and graphics technology, but at an extraordinarily high cost. They're also high-maintenance, especially with the numerous types of graphics and sound cards that are available.

The Xbox offers numerous advantages. It has the newest PC technology under its hood, and it's a standardised, stable unit that can sit comfortably next to your television. No tweaking, no over-clocking, no messing around with texture quality and framerates – just stick the damned game/DVD/CD in the slot and have yourself some fun.

As a newcomer to the console industry, Microsoft is obviously facing a similar uphill battle to what Sony did when the PlayStation was released. Neither had the reputation of Nintendo or Sega for making game consoles – and it is the PlayStation's success that makes this a reason to watch out for Microsoft. They are, after all, spending \$US500 million to market the thing at its American release, making it the biggest console launch in the industry's history.

The Xbox's use of a more PC-based hardware architecture is also a big plus. PC game developers will no doubt feel more comfortable with the familiar programming ins and outs, so producing or porting a game to the Xbox will be a snap. The Xbox's comparatively superior set of processing and graphics features, together with DVD and online functionality, will almost certainly leave a game-focussed console like the Dreamcast in the proverbial dust. Whether it will



THE GAMING GIANTS HAVE THEIR SAY

Hyper posed twelve questions to each of the big console players – Sony, Nintendo, Sega and Microsoft. Here's what they had to say about their own chances in the console war... and their opinions of the PS2. We thank them all for giving up their time to contribute.

Everyone should understand, though, that our participants would naturally use this opportunity to promote their own respective systems – which by all means they should. We'll be adding some editorial commentary of our own at the end of each answer to give readers the "real-world" interpretations as we play devil's advocate...

SONY

QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY STEVE WHERRETT – DIRECTOR, PR & PROMOTIONS FOR SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT

1. The PlayStation 2 is about to launch in Australia - how is Sony Australia feeling at the moment?

"Everyone at Sony Computer Entertainment is extremely excited about the pending launch of PlayStation 2. From the day of the original announcement in Japan in March of 1999, everyone has been totally focussed on the launch. The anticipation from the public and our retailers has also helped in building the excitement levels. Everyone you speak to is pumped about the new system and cannot wait to get their hands on it."

HYPER SAYS: *It's their own system and they stand to make heaps of money. No duh they're excited.*

2. What do you think are the PS2's weaknesses/strengths?

"The strengths are definitely the DVD capabilities, the amazing graphics and sound, the backward compatibility (which was the one feature that received a rousing reception in Japan at the launch announcement) and the fact that further functionality is planned to be added in the future. The other important factor on backward compatibility is that this is the first time in the industry this has happened. It not only allows the current owners to continue to play their favourite games but also allows developers to continue to develop games for the current PlayStation.

"The only weakness is actually a positive. The development tools are so complex that developers have had to re-learn a lot of the skills of the trade. They are extremely excited about what the machine will allow them to do and we will see some amazing leaps in the quality of games in the near future."

HYPER SAYS: *Programming difficulty is only a positive if there's no competition. However, if alternatives like the Xbox or Nintendo's fourth generation console offer a cheaper or more resource-efficient means of development, it can turn into a very big minus. Also note that strengths-wise, Mr. Wherrett is assuming the PS2 games will be great.*

3. What are the benefits of a multi-media set-top box, rather than a dedicated games console?

"The key benefit is that we finally have that one box that will handle all of your entertainment needs with plug and play capability. We also cannot lose sight of the fact also that it is one amazing games machine. Also, by having all the technology in one box, the system is "Future Proof." If you buy a music CD player or a DVD player, that is all it will ever be. Purchasing a PS2 will allow you to add features and benefits in the future. As technology advances, so does your entertainment system."

HYPER SAYS: *A console's design can have a lot of forethought, but it can never be "Future Proof". The PlayStation's Link-up mode, for instance, never took off, in spite of its similarities to LAN. If all the connections become too complicated, it's conceivable for many of the PS2's I/O connections (USB, Firewire, etc) to fall into disuse.*

4. Is DVD playback a necessity?

"Very much so. There is little doubt that DVD is the new standard in home video replacing the old black box (VHS). DVD is a format that consumers are comfortable with which can be seen in the rental and sales numbers being achieved by the major video companies. Also, DVD gives the game-play amazing quality, the sound is very dramatic and also allows game developers a huge amount of storage capacity."

HYPER SAYS: *Marketing-wise it's a necessity. DVD playback makes the PS2 much more sellable. Gaming-wise, it's not. DVD is just another medium of storage that breaks out of the limitations of CD. Using DVD saves Sony the cost of developing a proprietary storage medium for the system.*

5. How will the PS2 take advantage of broadband/online functionality? Will it offer anything more robust than what is available now with the PC?

"Details on the on-line functionality of PS2 will be made at a later date."

HYPER SAYS: *Australia doesn't have a fully established broadband infrastructure, and the anticipated PS2 user-base is too indeterminate to make a call on.*

6. How will the PS2 differentiate itself from the other consoles?

"PS2 is not a computer games machine but a true Computer Entertainment System. At this stage, there are no other consoles on the market that can offer what PS2 is offering. Fantastic game-play, the ability to play DVD movies, play your favourite music CDs and the planned introduction of Internet hook-up. All this and plug and play right in your lounge room."

HYPER SAYS: *Interesting that they avoid saying it's a dedicated games machine, but instead an "entertainment system". It won't cook for you or give you a sponge bath, but it'll do everything else it can to entertain you.*

7. Do you foresee any pitfalls or weaknesses for your own console?

"I cannot foresee any problems or pitfalls at this time."

HYPER SAYS: *"I don't want to comment on the competition".*

8. How different is the marketplace now from when the first PlayStation was released?

"PlayStation has managed to broaden dramatically not only the number of people interested in playing games, but also the demographic profiles of the players. We have a large number of PlayStation gamers who are over 35. A large percentage of the Australian population is now playing games and enjoying it immensely. This gives us a huge audience for PS2. Also, the DVD capabilities will allow us to convert even more people to games - those who buy it as a DVD player and discover the enjoyment of games. It also is true that the current PlayStation demographic of 18 years and over are very technologically minded. They embrace new



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technology and are very critical of anything that does not meet their expectations. We need to continue to excite them with our offerings."

HYPER SAYS: *There are enough people who already know about PlayStation and who are loyal to the brand, which is probably true. That it's more worth Sony's while to target a brand new sector of the market. No point in trying to market the system to hardcore gamers who have something against Sony.*

9. So who's playing games these days, and what do they want from a console?

"See above."

HYPER SAYS: *What he said.*

10. What can you tell us about the games we can expect on the PS2?

"Initially we will see some classic games including Tekken Tag Tournament, Ridge Racer 5 and Dead or Alive 2. I can tell you that there is a mountain of developers now working frantically on new PS2 titles. We can expect some amazing new games early next year. You may remember what the initial PlayStation games were like compared to those being released today. Imagine now what the power of PS2 gives developers and what the games will look like in the months to come. There will also be new styles of games."

HYPER SAYS: *Marketing guff, especially the last two sentences. In truth, there are no guarantees with the games and anything can happen. Sega sang much the same tune about the Dreamcast's developer support, which it is now in dire need of.*

11. Is there still a future in hand-helds?

"Sony Computer Entertainment has never entered the handheld market so I am not really in a position to comment. I can say that SCE has recognised the need for a more portable unit - hence the PSONE. This new unit is much smaller than the current PlayStation and will also have some fantastic additional features launched in 2001/2002."

HYPER SAYS: *That's a little much. The PSONe doesn't fit in your pocket and it has ONE fantastic add-on feature: a detachable LCD screen. The I-network-style connectivity offered in Japan is not likely to happen here unless WAP proves viable.*

12. Why will the PS2 win the Console War?

"The major advantages are as per the reasons above and the fact that there will be unprecedented 3rd party support for PS2, more so than for any format in the history of gaming. There will be approximately 20 titles on launch, which is the highest for any console in history with a total of about 40 titles by Christmas. Also the fact that such advanced technology will be available this year in the PS2 prior to any other next generation machine is also a major advantage. Also, we have a proven track record with the success of PlayStation. The marketplace feels very comfortable in the fact that Sony will continue to deliver."

HYPER SAYS: *As alluded to before, anything can happen in terms of third party support. For all anyone knows, in a worst case scenario, the PS2 may not take off or pay off fast enough and developers will drop it in favour of Nintendo or Microsoft. Mr. Wherrett is absolutely right, though, in mentioning that the PS2 will be here before its competition. This is an advantage it must play to full effect.*

QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY J ALLARD, GM OF THE XBOX PLATFORM & 3RD PARTY

1. The PlayStation 2 is about to launch in Australia - what are your general impressions of it?

"Australia? I've never been there, but I hear it's beautiful. As much as I'd like to visit, I certainly won't be making a trip just to buy a PlayStation 2 if that's what you're asking. Nope, right now it's Seattle for me where we are all hard at work on Xbox."

HYPER SAYS: *"No sir, we don't like it".*

2. What do you think are its weaknesses/strengths?

"I see the biggest strength of any console system is the games you are able to play on it. With the PlayStation 2, we've only seen the titles released in Japan (and I've played them all) and the general consensus seems to be that they haven't lived up to the hype or the expectations of gamers. Developing for the PlayStation 2 was such a radical change from the original PlayStation, which made it difficult for game developers who ended up spending a lot more time struggling to learn and get the most out of the system, rather than focusing on creating compelling content. The hardware itself is better than anything else out there right now and I have no doubt that the content selection for the PlayStation 2 will start looking better as developers figure out how to make the most of the technology, but it's a complicated proprietary architecture that takes a lot of time and effort to master. We are super sensitive to the developer plight and have made it our goal with Xbox to build an incredibly powerful, balanced and approachable system based on familiar architecture so that developers won't have to wrestle with the technology and can focus on creating the best games."

HYPER SAYS: *This is definitely a reflection of the Field of Dreams philosophy that "if you build it, they will come". Xbox's approach puts power back into the hands of game developers. In the short term this is great, but in the longer term it may promote complacency in game design.*

3. What are the benefits of a multi-media set-top box, rather than a dedicated games console?

"Marketing hype."

HYPER SAYS: *Very perceptive. But is that a premature generalisation of the concept?*

4. Is DVD playback a necessity?

"I get really confused by all the talk about game consoles morphing into convergence devices or set-top-boxes. Why would anyone want their DVD player, Web browser, check-book balancing appliance and telephone answering machine all in one machine - which, by the way, plays games too. Just because, technically, you can use the device for different functions, it doesn't mean that's what the user wants. We have done plenty of research to support that what gamers want is a dedicated gaming system. For the past 25 years, the PC has demonstrated its ability to be an incredible multi-purpose device. Everything about its architecture is designed to do a lot of things at once and do them well. Personally, I'd rather leave the money management to my PC and play kick-ass games on my Xbox."

HYPER SAYS: *Mr. Allard raises a good point. Integrated systems are usually not the engineer's choice, which is why component hi-fi systems are always better than integrated boom-boxes, and why TVs with built-in VCRs never took off. Set-top boxes in that sense would be much tougher to sell, at least to people in the know. On the other hand, this is all moot considering it's a 'console' we are talking about and not a PC.*

5. How will the Xbox take advantage of broadband/online functionality? Will it offer anything more robust than what is available now with the PC?

"Our online strategy is all about enhancing the game experience. While we haven't yet announced the specifics of our online strategy, we plan to offer multiplayer gaming, episodic content and a great gaming community. We're placing a heavy focus on online as we think it is going to add a whole new dimension to the console gaming experience."

HYPER SAYS: *Awesome news. Nobody uses a console to browse the web anyway. Let's just hope the online gaming network kicks off faster than the Dreamcast's.*

6. How will the Xbox differentiate itself from the other consoles?

"We have an awesome hardware platform - the graphics, sound, memory and storage are all going to be much more capable than the alternatives. We have augmented the base hardware with 8Gb of local storage with the hard drive and high-speed networking with the Ethernet port. These two components alone will have as great an impact on future generation gaming as 3D graphics and CD-ROMs have had on the last generation. By putting it all in one box, developers can take advantage of them and will count on them in the games. We're also doing a lot of sensible things for the consumer like including four controller ports on the box to emphasise our commitment and focus to the overall gaming experience. Most importantly though, will be awesome games. The best developers in the world are going to do amazing stuff on this platform."

HYPER SAYS: *In all honesty, that's not very different from what the PlayStation 2 or Nintendo Game Cube are offering. In other words, the Xbox will be relying heavily on the quality and integrity of its games to make it special in the eyes of consumers.*

7. Do you foresee any pitfalls or weaknesses for your own console?

"We aren't shipping yet. Ask me next year."

HYPER SAYS: *At such an early stage, there is realistically nothing BUT pitfalls to avoid. Developers may drop out, commercial deals may fall through - there's no telling what can happen save that it pays to stay optimistic.*

8. How different is the marketplace now from when the first PlayStation was released?

"Very different. PlayStation and Nintendo both did a lot for pushing videogames into the mainstream. I believe Xbox will push it even further and make gaming a hobby that is on par with traditional forms of entertainment such as movies and music. It's a very exciting time to be in the games industry as technology becomes better and better and the games reflect that. Also, game publishers are going to





“

We have done plenty of research to support that what gamers want is a dedicated gaming system.

”

- J Allard, Microsoft Xbox



start pumping out dollars to not only make the game experience better through more immersive and intense experiences, but also in marketing to let the whole world know about it.”

HYPER SAYS: ...which is why Microsoft can afford to move in on this sector of the market.

9. So who's playing games these days, and what do they want from a console?

“Everyone! Video games worked their way into the mainstream to the point where even my mum plays. I believe this generation of games will compete directly with traditional forms of entertainment like movies, music, television and web surfing. Gamers are all looking for the same thing, regardless of what platform it is provided on - games that are fun to play, great to look at and kick a lot of arse.”

HYPER SAYS: It'll be interesting to see how Microsoft breaks itself into the market for Mr. and Mrs. Average. These are the people who control the confines of these 'traditional' forms of entertainment. Many people see "Microsoft" and they think "computers" and switch to something more interesting.

10. What can you tell us about the games we can expect on the Xbox?

“In a word... Wow!”

HYPER SAYS: Oh c'mon. We just got knocked off our feet by Nintendo's incredible new Gamecube, gamers around the world are rejoicing the return of Samus Aran and Wave Race,

PlayStation 2 is about to be launched, and we're expected to hang on to the thread of hope offered by "Wow"?

11. Is there still a future in hand-helds?

“Hand-held what? Don't tell my wife there isn't a future in hand-helds. If you mean handheld game systems, I think there is a bright future. As games continue to become more popular, handheld gaming will grow very quickly. Who doesn't want to play a round of Mario Golf while sitting in a cramped space on an airplane?”

HYPER SAYS: The Game Boy wasn't exactly blessed with the best selection of games to play. Maybe the Game Boy Advance will change all that. Microsoft obviously like the concept, so maybe an Xbox compatible PDA device will eventuate.

12. Why will the Xbox win the Console War?

“Ah, the answer is simple - Xbox is the most exciting new platform for three key reasons - we will deliver the best games, we have superior hardware, and we are heads-down focused and committed to delivering a mind-blowing gaming experience.”

HYPER SAYS: Well, like he said, it's the games that make the console great. The hardware specs look great, but with no games for us to look at, it's really a case of wait-and-see. Certainly, Microsoft seem to getting it right so far...

NINTENDO

QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY GAVIN BUST, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING, NINTENDO AUSTRALIA.

1. The PlayStation 2 is about to launch in Australia - what are your general impressions of it?

“I saw PlayStation 2 previewed at E3 and unfortunately did not have the opportunity to play the machine, however there seemed to be a fair amount of interest in it.”

HYPER SAYS: Baloney. Nintendo, Sony, Microsoft and Sega are headed on a collision course in the next generation war, and it's ludicrous to pretend they aren't keeping tabs on each other. This is a textbook "we want to steam-roll the competition, but don't want to offend them" response.

2. What do you think are its weaknesses/strengths?

“From the information we've received from Australian retailers, with a retail price of approximately \$749 it certainly places it beyond the reach of many young enthusiastic gamers.”

HYPER SAYS: Whilst true, the implicit suggestion is that the bulk of the Australian videogames market is made up of children. This is quite simply a grossly out-dated generalisation of the Australian videogames market, whose average age is 22 years.

3. What are the benefits of a multi-media set-top box, rather than a dedicated games console?

Nintendo declined to answer.

HYPER SAYS: The Gamecube is not a set-top box. It's a videogames machine that connects to your Game Boy Advance. See the next question for more of our thoughts on the matter.

4. Is DVD playback a necessity?

“No I don't think a DVD function is a necessity unless it delivers a better gaming experience.”

HYPER SAYS: We shouldn't expect anything less from Nintendo here. The Gamecube doesn't play DVDs. The PlayStation 2 and Xbox do. The Gamecube's lack of even an option to play DVDs is pretty shortsighted. It already has a

DVD-capable drive, which is the expensive component. Adding the software is the easy part. Nintendo are abandoning a market they could've been part of for a very low cost. Piracy concerns are the only reason we can think of for the custom DVD format.

5. How will the Gamecube take advantage of broadband/online functionality? Will it offer anything more robust than what is available now with the PC?

“GameCube introduces a number of features not just broadband online internet capabilities. The compatibility between Game Boy Advance and GameCube will introduce a new dimension to interactive entertainment. These features will transform how players think about interactivity.”

HYPER SAYS: We've already seen the Game Boy Color link up with the Nintendo 64, and to be perfectly honest, it's relatively pointless. Anyone with Pokemon Stadium could've gotten on just fine without hooking it up to the Game Boy cartridge. GBA-to-Gamecube connectivity will be just the same, but with better graphics. On the other hand, Nintendo might just use it as another shameless commercial vehicle just as they did with Mario Golf 64, which had to be interfaced with Mario Gold on GBC to unlock certain sections of the game.

6. How will the Gamecube differentiate itself from the other consoles?

“GameCube will be differentiated by a number of exclusive technical features starting with its compact transportable housing but probably what's more important is what's inside, featuring IBM's 405 Mhz copperwire central processor, an embedded graphics co-processor, huge memory capacity and a new generation disk drive.”

HYPER SAYS: Pure marketing guff. There is no exclusive value in technology that has been or will be superseded in the foreseeable future. Any educated person will also see that it's a very basic architectural description of any game system or PC, which isn't anything special.

7. Do you foresee any pitfalls or weaknesses for your own console?

"The only pitfall we see is potential huge demand! (tongue in cheek)"

HYPER SAYS: *Try lack of DVD playback, limited frame buffer, no original game titles, questionable aesthetic design, competition from Sony, Sega and Microsoft... hardly the time for cheek, no?*

8. How different is the marketplace now from when the first PlayStation was released?

"Gamers' expectations are higher and technology has accelerated. The popularity of the game console market in the last five years has grown substantially with more than one third of homes in Australia having a games console. Gaming is no longer a niche activity but is a mainstream leisure activity. Nintendo is confident that GameCube will surpass the market's expectations and deliver the leading edge gaming console."

HYPER SAYS: *You know, there's really nothing wrong going headstrong with the core gaming approach. It's just that you're not going to win any new friends. The approach being adopted by Sony, Sega and Microsoft, on the other hand will ultimately nurture the continued growth of the videogames market by appealing to different areas of leisure-related interests.*

9. So who's playing games these days, and what do they want from a console?

"Nearly everybody from five year old kids to grandparents. The bottom line is that anyone who plays games wants to have a fun and enjoyable experience. Nintendo has consistently delivered a repertoire of games that caters for such a broad consumer base from Super Mario to Pokémon, Donkey Kong and Perfect Dark."

HYPER SAYS: *So what does Nintendo intend to deliver in the future? Sequels to Super Mario, Pokémon, Donkey Kong and Perfect Dark? Sure looks that way...*

10. What can you tell us about the games we can expect on the Gamecube?

"The exact games will be announced closer to launch but will certainly include some of the household names that have propelled Nintendo to sales of over a billion video games worldwide in only a decade and a half."

HYPER SAYS: *Yup. Sequels.*

11. Is there still a future in hand-helds?

"Absolutely. In fact, having sold 100 million Game Boys world-wide, Game Boy is still going strong and we believe Game Boy Advance will propel the handheld market to new levels."

HYPER SAYS: *That's 100 million after nearly 12 years, which is triple the life expectancy of most consoles; and undoubtedly includes sales of Game Boy Color. That's not to mention the new lease of life granted by the Pokémon fad. Maybe we're just nitpicking here (and the GBA does look great), but the future of hand-helds isn't that absolute.*

12. Why will the Gamecube win the Console War?

According to Mr Minoru Arakawa, President of Nintendo of America, "For several years virtually every advance in our industry has focused solely on improving the 'look' of games. While our new Nintendo GameCube and Game Boy Advance not only will create the best looking games, more importantly, they will transform how players think about interactivity."

HYPER SAYS: *Nintendo has a track record for redefining many aspects of videogaming - the release of Mario 64 being the most recent. However, this is something that can only be achieved through the games, and not through the hardware itself. It's probably best to take assertions like this with a grain of salt.*

SEGA

QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY STEPHEN O'LEARY, DREAMCAST COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

1. The PlayStation 2 is about to launch in Australia - what are your general impressions of it?

"Sony came into the market amongst veterans, Sega and Nintendo, with an excellent first attempt in the form of the PlayStation in 1994. The PSX was designed with the future in mind, and it's here in the console's design that Sony gained the support of 3rd party development that SEGA and Nintendo didn't appear to gain with their respective systems the Saturn and N64."

Now with the launch of the PS2 in Japan, roles appear to be reversed between SEGA and Sony, as SEGA with their incredibly well designed Dreamcast console, appear to have the upper hand in terms of performance over the newly released PS2. Initial impressions of the PS2 are less than what I expected, as the console does appear to have some serious hardware issues that don't see it stand above the Dreamcast like most consumers would expect it to."

HYPER SAYS: *In a nutshell, it means that the PlayStation 2's initial line-up doesn't live up to the hype. Which is true. However, performance isn't really quite so much an issue with the PlayStation 2 as it's really the architecture's break away from the standard that has programmers struggling.*

2. What do you think are its weaknesses/strengths?

"The overwhelming consensus between developers across the world is that the PS2 lacks the necessary Video RAM to perform operations that the PC and Dreamcast perform as standard. While you can fill 3D worlds with a huge amount of polygons, applying textures to them to make them look photographic in detail requires RAM and this is where the PS2 appears to have its Achilles heel."

"Additionally, PS2 lacks the raw bandwidth it requires to render the visuals its Emotion Engine can generate. These shortfalls in hardware have seen the PS2 fall behind the Dreamcast in terms of visual quality, as seen in its launch titles from Japan. Simply comparing Dead or Alive 2 on PS2 to Dreamcast will easily show you that the Dreamcast contains revolutionary hardware that the PS2 does not."

HYPER SAYS: *Mr. O'Leary's fallen for the common mistake of evaluating the PS2's performance potential with a PC development mindset. It's really just a smokescreen. We're not entirely sure what he means by the bandwidth (3.2GB is more than enough, also read our comments in the Criticisms section regarding RAM). DOA2 will be interesting, though. There will have to be an addendum to our original Head-to-Head between the two versions (Hyper#81) since Tecmo will be using a brand new engine for DOA2: Hardcore.*

3. What are the benefits of a multi-media set-top box, rather than a dedicated games console?

"That would really depend on what you wanted to do. SEGA have always presented the Dreamcast as a games console, and the inclusion of the modem in the Dreamcast as standard allows the Dreamcast to expand its gaming experience through the resources and possibilities that the Internet presents."

"Dreamcast is the first console to be released that successfully positions itself as the ultimate entertainment set top box for consumers. At \$299 you can have access to the best library of software available today, as well as the resources, services and information available on the Internet through any standard TV."

HYPER SAYS: *That's a fairly loose application of the term "set-top box", isn't it? In this context, games + internet hardly amounts to an "ultimate entertainment set top box".*

4. Is DVD playback a necessity?

"In terms of enhancing the game experience - absolutely not. Today the Dreamcast boasts the most revolutionary game software ever seen in the form of titles like Shenmue, Sonic Adventure, Power Stone 1 & 2, and soon to be released online titles like Quake 3, Phantasy Star Online, Outtrigger and more."

"DVDs are great for movies, but the Dreamcast is about great games - pure and simple, and it uses its in-built modem to take gameplay to the next level by allowing users to play other people on all sides of the planet through the Dreamcast network and the Internet - as standard with every console."

HYPER SAYS: *English translation - "With so many great games, Dreamcast doesn't need DVD".*

5. How will the Dreamcast take advantage of broadband/online functionality? Will it offer anything more robust than what is available now with the PC?

"Dreamcast is the first console to come equipped with a modem as standard, and broadband access through devices like Cable modem and ADSL is just another step forward in its progression as the ultimate games console."

"What Dreamcast provides that the PC currently doesn't is a 'plug and play' interface that allows the most computer illiterate person to get online and enjoy the internet and its content without having to learn or understand any of the complexities involved. Online gaming will be exactly the same as Internet access is with the Dreamkey - place the disc in the console, select 'network play' and the Dreamcast does the rest. It's really that simple, and it's simplicity like this, which will see Dreamcast become the hardware to own for games and Internet enthusiast alike."

HYPER SAYS: *'Plug 'n Play' is indeed much simpler for the Dreamcast as there are less plugs to worry about, but it still needs a user-friendly web browser. Broadband is looking more and more an essential part of the future of gaming, so it's good that Sega are exploring these avenues.*

6. How will the Dreamcast differentiate itself from the other consoles?

"As standard, Dreamcast is the only console to come with a modem to allow instant access to the Internet for Email, web browsing, chat and online gaming. No upgrades are needed, no extra expenses, and Dreamcast comes with 150 hours free Internet access with Telstra Big Pond. Using the Internet, Dreamcast will allow users access to vast information and resources including the Official Dreamcast website and email newsletters, downloadable Visual Memory files that unlock extra levels, characters and more, video conferencing through the Dreameye digital camera, downloadable MP3 files through the MP3 player and on-line gaming with titles like Quake 3, Phantasy Star online, NFK2K1, NBA2K1 and more!"

HYPER SAYS: *"Narrowband online browsing and online gaming, only through Telstra".*

7. Do you foresee any pitfalls or





weaknesses for your own console?

"At this stage, no. Dreamcast has the hardware and the potential to ride out the competition and establish itself as the ultimate games console for the coming years. Consumers will see the competition and then recognise the power and potential of the Dreamcast. It's the system with the best games, the best developer support and the best hardware.

"Dreamcast hasn't even begun to tap into the potential that its hardware has. It contains more 3D features and abilities than its competition, PlayStation 2, and this shows through the games themselves. After all, games are what it's all about and with over 60 titles available now, and another 60 due before Christmas, Dreamcast at \$299 is the console to own."

HYPER SAYS: *The Dreamcast does stand in a very strong position. You can get a PSX or N64 with around \$200. Most people are likely to be blown away by the level of improvement for only \$100 extra. Gaming-wise it may be able to put up a fight against the PS2, but what of the Gamecube and Xbox?*

8. How different is the marketplace now from when the first PlayStation was released?

"Thankfully, Sony have done a lot of work to expand the potential market for videogames since the release of the PlayStation in 1994. Now, videogames are more a mainstream form of enjoyment, entertainment and relaxation than the hard-core, dedicated enthusiast hobby that it was back in the early 90's. With the introduction of the Internet, videogame consoles, and especially Dreamcast, will become essential parts of people's lives for communication and entertainment."

HYPER SAYS: *"Essential" sounds just a bit strong, unless anyone is actually relying on their Dreamcasts for email.*

9. So who's playing games these days, and what do they want from a console?

"Pretty much everyone. With the advance in visuals that the Dreamcast has brought, videogames are now seen as mainstream entertainment. Dreamcast boasts a huge range of titles, from fishing games to racing, fighting, puzzles and much more, so the whole family can enjoy them. Furthermore, you can now use this console to get on the Internet and communicate with others without the fuss, complexity or expense involved with a PC."

HYPER SAYS: *Much as we'd like to entertain the idea,*

videogames aren't played by everyone. Just as some people think television rots your brain, some people think that videogames are the work of the Devil. Still, you can't go wrong offering them a bit of variety.

10. What can you tell us about the games we can expect on the Dreamcast?

"Dreamcast will continue to push the boundaries of creativity with its games in the future, through both standalone games on the console and online titles where you can play against people from the same country or the other side of the world. SEGA's arcade divisions and exclusive Dreamcast developers will continue to make the best software available for any console, and the third party support from developers like Capcom, Konami, Namco and others, will ensure that it is always the system to own for games and entertainment enthusiasts."

HYPER SAYS: *Online console gaming certainly presents potential for growth in game design, owing to inherent differences between consoles and PCs. Phantasy Star Online will be one to watch. The Dreamcast also currently has some of the most original and 'fun' games available, and probably will do until sometime in 2001...*

11. Is there still a future in hand-helds?

"Sure, hand-held systems are great fun. People will always want portable gaming!"

HYPER SAYS: *So... does this mean Sega will be releasing a follow-up to the Nomad? Hang on... what's a Nomad? And why was development of Streets of Rage DC cancelled?*

12. Why will the Dreamcast win the Console War?

"I don't think there will be a winner in the console war, much like there wasn't a winner in the previous generation of game consoles. The market has now become large enough to accommodate numerous hardware and software developers. I think it's a very exciting time in the industry for both consumers and industry workers alike!"

HYPER SAYS: *In terms of sales for the previous generation, the global scoreboard reads "PlayStation: Surprise winner", "Nintendo 64: Close second", and "Saturn: Pasted". However, a larger market does mean that there's more money to go around, and the weaker selling consoles will have a user base that won't be abandoned as quickly as they were last generation.*

THE BIG PICTURE, IN SUMMARY

From the sound of things, Sony, Sega, Nintendo and Microsoft are all very confident of the future for their respective consoles, and for good reason. Every single one of them is pushing cutting-edge technology, paving the way for gaming experiences that are leaps and bounds ahead of the present standard. Only the Sega Dreamcast stands at a disadvantage on the technological front, but this may be offset through competitive pricing and a continued stream of quality software.

The Sony PlayStation 2, on the other hand, will be the first to offer DVD playback (amongst other non-gaming functions), which will also be subsequently offered on the Xbox. Being "first" is realistically Sony's only advantage against the Xbox at the consumer level, whose hardware will be far more advanced. This is also assuming that the Xbox will have a competitive lineup of software. The greatest danger being faced by the PlayStation 2, however, is the real possibility that developers will desert it in favour of more programmer-friendly platforms.

Between the PlayStation 2 and Xbox is Nintendo's Gamecube, which looks to be the weakest contender. The technical capabilities of the Gamecube are barely comparable to the PlayStation 2, offering advantages in some areas but falling short in others. The design and marketing strategy for the Gamecube also seems a tad short-sighted, catering only to the gaming population with its popular gaming franchises as though it were some sort of exclusive club. Considering the expanding areas of multimedia that every other console is embracing, this is almost certainly poor judgement.

Given the responses from our participants, two things are certainly obvious for the coming years. Firstly, technology is at a point where it almost doesn't matter how many polygons are being thrown around by each system — they're all bound to look just as spectacular to the average person. Marketing and quality of game design will therefore play more important roles. Secondly, the consumer appreciation of added value will be a major factor in determining which consoles will be bought. Will consumers go for the straight gaming machines? Do they want online gaming? Do they want to watch DVDs? The answers to these questions will only be revealed once all these machines have been released. See you in 2002.

beyond sport



FEATURING ANDY MACDONALD



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timesplitters

"You can cut, paste and make your own 3D levels, with a massive array of rooms, locations, textures and settings."

MOVIE ON THIS MONTH'S CD



PLATFORM:
PlayStation 2

AVAILABLE:
December

CATEGORY:
First Person Shooter

PLAYERS:
1-4

PUBLISHER:
Eidos

When a new machine comes on to the scene there are always one or two titles that will give it that little extra nudge. Sega had Sonic, Nintendo had Mario and it could well be that TimeSplitters is one of those benchmark PS2 games that many developers will wish they had thought of first. There are gonna be loads of gamers who are going to buy a PS2 purely to play this game — we guarantee you that. Free Radical Design (FRD) was founded only last year but has two of the most impressive games under their belt — former members of the team worked at Rare on Perfect Dark and GoldenEye. FRD is as secretive as Rare and

have come up with a 3D first person perspective shooter for the PlayStation 2 that's going to have you on the edge of your seat.

PERFECTLY FORMED

The first question is how the hell can you create a game that is merely a shooter with added bells, whistles and the fancy cosmetic touches you would expect on the PS2? Simple really, give the game a stunning learning curve, ensure the graphics are so eye catching you will just want to move on to the next location to see what is on offer and make the action so gratifying that when you kill the baddies you

actually feel good! All that is included, plus a whole lot more.

The Story line goes like this... In the hundred years spanning the millennium 1935 to 2035, a desperate bunch of heroes and villains battle against their own challenges. They all share an ageless common spirit of adventure but unknown to them their daring actions have attracted the attention of The TimeSplitters. They are an evil race dwelling outside of time and space. Ok, cut the waffle... It is good (you) Vs bad (them), as simple as that with a few side-stories threaded into the game to add interest.





THE MULTIPLAYER SHOULD HAVE THE SAME KICK AS GOLDENEYE

THE MAN FROM EIDOS

The producer of Timesplitters was on hand to add some insight into the team and game, and it appears that this will be the first of many games for Eidos. It will only appear on the PS2 and as was explained by Richard Carter, "The reason it's PS2 is that it is the only viable platform for the game. Free Radical Design is far ahead of other developers in understanding the machine, which gives them a head start. The PS2 is going to be around for a long time. The team and I do not regard the PS2 as a mid-range PC. Firstly, it can do some really fancy tricks, plus it is the first true home entertainment system. It is unlike the PC because you have a parallel processor which you cannot do on the PC, two vector processors in the machine gives it power as you will see from the action, effects and fluid movements with TimeSplitters."

The setting for the game is but one of the really appealing ingredients. All the levels have a theme and these are bunched into years and you assume a role within those locations. For instance, if you pick 1935 you will find yourself in the settings of a Tomb and the weapons you will use and all the objects in that setting will be pertinent to that period. 1970 you could be a young kid entering the scenario of a haunted house, the subtle influences if you are not a movie buff are films like The Mansion and The Mummy. In effect the

game is split into two. One is story led with 3 themes - horror, crime and sci-fi. At the start of the game a number of levels are on hand to play and the rest will open up as you play. Now if you feel that fancy looks and hardcore themes do not make a game then think again. Once you soak up the ambience of the picturesque and almost lifelike settings, you will find it puts you in the right frame of mind to wanna "go get some". If you liked GoldenEye for its lifelike animations then you will find this even more amazing. Hit the enemy and they will drop like a stone to the floor with a little bounce off the ground. Zap one with a big Uzi and watch him jerk back, hit a wall and roll to the ground. Lifelike... YES indeed!

AI AI OH

A lot of die-hard shooting games have merely hordes of cannon fodder to munch through. With TimeSplitters these guys are smart, OK there are lots you will waste easily but they have some neat AI so you must be on the ball at all times. This is one area where the game wins out hands down against allcomers. It does not have the sneak up and surprise action of GoldenEye - it's more in your face - but tactics and eagle eye sharp shooting are the order of the day. Although the levels are fairly structured and the elements are not random there is so much going on that things appear random and knowing what to do,

where to go, finding extra ammo or collecting better weapons or replenishing your health becomes almost second nature!

If you tire of the levels and their structured story line you can go into a kind of mix and match mode where you can pick any weapon and go into a level and see what happens. Using sci-fi laser weapons in the 1939 setting is a novel idea to add to the gameplay!

MAPPING IT OUT

Now if you, like me, find map editors a right bore then wait until you see how the team has presented theirs. You can cut, paste and make your own 3D levels, with a massive array of rooms, locations, textures and settings. This is quite mind blowing as you place TimeStalkers anywhere, add pickups where you wish, etc. The design kit and map constructor produces levels of such quality that it is a real surprise they have been gracious enough to add this. We'd expect it in a sequel, but already? It is bloody fantastic!

Deathmatch, last man standing, and capture the flag are extra gameplay modes. With over 30 weapons, the 4-player mode is awesome!

They say that sometimes the simple ideas work the best and this is the case with TimeSplitters. It's a shooter action game that doesn't mind being simply fast and furious. Your objective? Just get through the whole damn game in one piece!

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

More realistic player movement would be nice. At the moment it feels like DOOM. Which isn't bad exactly.

hitman:codename 47

"Hitman might disguise himself, but if he acts suspiciously enough, the enemies may realise what his intentions are."



Hitman: Codename 47 is causing ripples within the gaming scene as being something quite different to the standard shooter. Derek dela Fuente spoke with the team's designer, known only as JP, to get a 'fix' on what the team is trying to create.

Since Deus Ex, the Hyper crew have been hard to impress, but the team behind Hitman seem to have something here that could get us excited all over again. The mysterious game designer, JP, explains, "It's hard to place Hitman in relation to other games, because people will play

Hitman in many ways. Some gamers shoot their way in and out, some sneak in and out and some think before they dive in. Most will mix it up and combine, and that's where Hitman stands apart from games like Quake and Half-Life. It's really up to the player to find their own style in the game. Sometimes you're the hunted, sometimes you're not. Personally, I think the game is more like Thief and Half-Life, but in third person and combined.

"The dialogue is also quite cinematic, but we're really trying to get a cinematic feel instead of a cinematic look. It's much more important. This is done in different ways in Hitman. First of all, the third person perspective

is used. This gives us the opportunity to frame a scene the way we want it. We can make establishing shots when Hitman enters a room. We can see Hitman from the eyes of his enemies. And the transition into cut scenes feels much more subtle than if you started in first person, got thrown out in third person and back. The cut scenes run in-game, so the world around you stays the same in the cut scene, and if you need to leave the cut scene if somebody enters the room with a big gun and a grin, you just escape it. The game world doesn't stop because you enter a cinematic sequence, and neither should the player."

GETTING HEAVY, GETTING HARD...WARE
'Dynamic' is one key word which describes the Glacier engine well. The engine allows for completely dynamic environments where everything can be changed and moved around on the fly. The philosophy behind the



THIRD PERSON SHOOTERS MAY NOT GET ANY BETTER THAN HITMAN

JUST LIKE PUBERTY?

JP: "The early missions are kind of puberty for Hitman. He has a lot of muscles but he doesn't really know how to use them yet. And he doesn't have a clue about why he's using them. Things aren't always what they seem, and as the story gets more severe through the game, Hitman should be mature enough to understand and handle it."



PLATFORM:
PC

AVAILABLE:
2001

CATEGORY:
Third Person Shooter

PLAYERS:
1-Multi

PUBLISHER:
Eidos





design has been to move away completely from the static level designs often found in computer games. In Glacier, there are no fixed objects - actually whole buildings can be removed when playing if need be. Advanced run-time culling techniques then take into account even the subtlest changes in the geometry and make sure that rendering is optimised to the fullest possible extent. The end result is a higher degree of expressiveness for the game designer who can concentrate on game play rather than on technological issues - there are simply less limitations to the design than ever before.

In addition, the skeletal animation system makes use of inverse kinematics (IK) which results in some very nice character animations. For example, when walking a staircase, Hitman's feet will actually place themselves in contact with each step, no more slipping. This takes place no matter what size the steps are, if it's a spiral staircase, or just a bump in the road. Similarly, when he reaches for something, IK ensures that his hand will actually reach its destination in a convincing fashion even if Hitman is not placed directly in front of the object in question. Even the physics of dead bodies is simulated. Dying people do not follow fixed animations. Instead, the impact response of a bullet hitting them or a bomb blowing up is calculated. Their body is then thrown around colliding with the environment (or even into the water), all according to the physical equations governing their motion.

AI - MAKING IT A KILLER

Each enemy works as an autonomous, intelligent agent equipped with different senses. Through hearing and seeing, the enemies then respond through an advanced script system in an intelligent manner. The scripting and AI system uses classes of characters, which can inherit behav-

our from each other. Therefore, basic AI for a standard person can be dealt with first. This behaviour can then be fine-tuned by adjusting parameters like morale, strength, and speed. On top of this, class-specific behaviour can then be introduced for guards, innocent bystanders, targets, dogs, etc. As a final layer, character-specific behaviour is dealt with and interactions between different levels of AI can then be controlled through the script system. The result is varied, believable, and non-linear behaviour. As a part of the AI system there is an automatic local and global pathfinder system which quickly lets enemies find their way to every part of the 3D world, tracking down Hitman if he is spotted.

Enemies respond to Hitman's actions in a variety of ways. For instance, Hitman might disguise himself, but if he acts suspiciously enough, the enemies may realise what his intentions are. This certainly happens if they find him near a dead body, but it can also happen if he is caught lurking around too much. The enemies talk together and exchange information. Consequently, if one enemy realises that Hitman is dressed up, in little time most of the other enemies will know that fact.

MAKE MY DAY

You are a Hitman. Killing is not a pleasure - it is a living! Weapons are expensive, since they need to be non-traceable. Your salary can also be used on other things such as paying someone to film your target before you go in and so on. Making the right preparations for a hit is crucial if you want to stay in the business.

There are explosives, bombs, assault rifles, machineguns, guns, knives, meat cleavers, sniper rifles, piano wire and many more. Everything a happy and healthy Hitman needs to move up in this world. Some of them you will have to buy, others you'll steal and some

THE HEARTLESS BUTTERFLY KILLER

JP: "What's cool is the fact that you can evolve your own style as a Hitman. Some people are just sick (How many dead bodies can they get to float in the pool?), and some are smart (can I sneak in, do the kill disguised as an officer and have the security salute me when I walk out of the complex?). Hitman has something to offer both types of players. I'm also very pleased with the diversity of the world. Dense Colombian rainforests with natives, panthers and a well-defended drug lord, seedy Rotterdam with gangs and strippers, Hong Kong, huge ships, stylish hotels, and a very secret place in the end. All populated with something like 100 different characters, a few panthers, Doberman-dogs and a cute little pig, butterflies and fish. You can't kill the butterflies though. That would be mean."

you will borrow from men who won't miss them again. We personally love the piano wire and the sniper rifle. The sniping is simply the best you can get, and the piano wire doesn't leave too much blood on the floor for guards or civilians to spot.

You have to time your actions in Hitman. Killing a guy with the piano wire when the guards walk past is not a good idea. So maybe you should close the door. Sometimes you even have to hide in the back of a truck to avoid confrontation. Hiding the bodies is also a major gameplay element as is planning your escape route carefully.

Trying to get information about the chapters that make up the game was difficult, as they quite rightly did not want to give much away, but put under pressure JP added. "I can say that each chapter is based around one main 'Hit'. But to be able to get close to the targets, certain objectives have to be met beforehand. The first chapter takes place in Hong Kong and consists of four levels with the fourth one being the level where the main 'Hit' takes place. But before that is possible you have to start a triad war and lift the police protection of your target. Further chapters take place in Rotterdam, Columbia, Budapest and Rumania." Cool stuff.

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

Bald action heroes become the next big thing. Captain Picard eat your heart out!

conker's bad fur day

"Conker is a seedy sort of fellow who's out to make a buck - as long as it doesn't require too much effort..."



You probably wouldn't have guessed it, but some of the levels in Perfect Dark are actually modelled on Nintendo's top-secret headquarters. During one of our regular visits to Nintendo HQ, we found a secret entrance guarded by a single Pikachu. Cam dispatched the creature with ease and we found ourselves in the heart of the centre. Wow, and what we did find...

CONKER'S MONSTER HANGOVER

Well actually, we didn't find anything that interesting. A few pens, some Mario toys - oh, and a little game called Conker's Bad Fur Day!

We first met this fuzzy little creature on the N64 in Diddy Kong Racing. The little chappy also made an appearance on the GBC in Conker's Pocket Tales. Although neither of these titles really capture the Conker character that we're about to meet. Do not let this

fuzzy wuzzy creature's looks deceive you. Conker's Bad Fur Day is probably the first game for the N64 that is truly intended for an adult audience.

The very premise of the game is Conker's monster hangover. You'll be contending with abusive paintpots, irritating insects and well, there's a character in there called Bugga the Cnut. Need we say more? This is a 3D platform/exploration game. Sort of a mix between Zelda and Donkey Kong 64, only on a much larger scale. Conker is a seedy sort of fellow who's out to make a buck - as long as it doesn't require too much effort - and so you'll be faced with many a get-rich-quick scheme throughout the adventure which will no doubt result in many interesting if not mildly distracting mini-games. You'll be travelling to all sorts of lands as is per usual in games of this type.

What is not so typical of this genre is the theme of the lands you will visit. I don't think I need to go into great detail when I say that Poland is one of the many places you will find yourself in.

Not only is this game intended for an adult audience, it will come with the recommendation to keep well out of reach of small children who might be harmed by the copious amounts of swearing and violence. Fear not however, as the offending bits all fit in well with the nature of the game and are all done in such good humour that we seriously doubt the OFLC will have any real problems with it.

JOHN WILLIAMS MIDI LOOP?

Being the socialising type, Conker wants you to play with your friends. He doesn't want you to become a loser like all of those people



PLATFORM:
Nintendo 64

AVAILABLE:
December

CATEGORY:
Platformer/
Adventure

PLAYERS:
1-4

PUBLISHER:
Nintendo / Rare





HOW DO YOU LIKE YOUR GAMES? RARE OR WELL DONE? HOW ABOUT BOTH!



playing with that other Link bloke. No, Conker wants you to invite your friends over to your house so that they may bring along their crudeness and vulgarity and enjoy a deathmatch. What? A deathmatch platform game? Well, we saw it in other Rare games such as Donkey Kong 64 and Jet Force Gemini and quite frankly it just didn't work. Hopefully the format has been changed somewhat and it won't be quite as painful to play. The visuals are coming up a treat, with some amazing facial expressions that give so much more life to each character. It's easy to kill expressionless drones in Perfect Dark but will you find it just as easy to kill that adorable little rabbit with those big sad eyes — no matter how big the machine gun it is holding? Maybe.

The music is easily the best we've heard in a N64 game to date. It appears to be fully orchestrated and it changes to fit the action on screen. It sounds better than any John Williams midi loop that's for sure.

Still I hear you asking "what's so adult about this game?". Well here are some

examples: The opening depicts Conker waking up in the middle of a boat, surrounded by animals who are decked out in very similar gear to that found in Saving Private Ryan. The door to the craft drops, and Conker's entire platoon gets wasted. The game is full of movie send-ups just like this one and will have you literally rolling around the floor in stitches. It's been a long time since a game has been able to do that. At other times Conker will be smoking a cigarette. Doors will tell you to "f**k off" and there's a whole lot



of sexual humour. This is all a big departure from the normal Nintendo that we've grown accustomed to. There have been many complaints from gamers that Nintendo have neglected its mature gamers and that the N64 is not so much a dedicated gaming platform as it is a toy for kids.

Hopefully, Conker's Bad Fur Day will go towards dispelling this image and we will see an entourage of games for older gamers on the N64 and indeed the Gamecube.

This is a Rare game and as such, it will be quality. Everyone will buy it and those who don't will be laughed at and prodded until they develop a complex.

Revel in the gaming goodness that will be Conker's Bad Fur Day.

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

A Conker nude code to top it all off.

outtrigger

"Once you have an enemy in your crosshair and you press the button, there ain't much more to do except watch their burning carcass."



PLATFORM:
Dreamcast

AVAILABLE:
November

CATEGORY:
Action

PLAYERS:
1-4

PUBLISHER:
Sega

Some of you may remember Outtrigger from the dark seedy corners of your local arcade. It was Sega's attempt at providing a Deathmatch experience in the arcade, at a time when the genre was at an all time peak online. Well, Outtrigger has made it home to the Dreamcast and it's a fun romp for those of us waiting for the likes of Quake 3 Arena to arrive with its full-blown network play. Supporting up to four players with the good old split-screen mode, this is no-nonsense party action. There's something to be said for Sega's arcade game quality... Outtrigger comes to us from the AM2 team who are also behind the amazing F355 Ferrari Challenge and the long awaited Shenmue. It looks like they have yet another winner on their hands...

PUNISHING PLAY

Outtrigger provides some pretty fast and furious four player bouts to the death. As it was originally designed for arcade play, there are big shiny powerups, time limits, smallish arenas and some seriously bulky weaponry, which makes playing deathmatch with friends a blast. Zooming around the screen at a solid 60 frames per second, Outtrigger looks lush. Great use of textures and lovely player models help to make this one of the prettiest games on the system, despite its very arcade-oriented gameplay. Whether you're facing the challenges of the single-player mode or tonking with friends, the visuals never fail to greatly impress. Movement is buttery smooth, regardless of

the carnage on the screen. The level designs are quite interesting — they're on the small side, but they've been tailored for a quicker, deadlier match. You won't be doing too much sneaking around in Outtrigger... this is all about the quick draw.

Shooters on consoles have always suffered from the awkwardly limiting control-pad, but Outtrigger on the Dreamcast works remarkably well, basically because you can opt to play with the Dreamcast mouse. With mouse in one hand and control pad in the other, you can actually have a pretty darn powerful and intuitive control set-up to ensure your shot never misses its mark... look and shoot with one, move with the other. Looking around your environment isn't as free as in a first-person





"ARGH MY NECK IS STUCK - I CAN'T SHOOT UP!"

WHAM, BAM, THANK YOU CAM

The weapons you get to play with include the (default) machine gun, a flame-thrower, rocket-launcher, grenades and even a rail-gun style weapon. The effects are on the "wham, bam, thank you maam" side of things, with all the weapons creating all sorts of gruesome havoc and over-the-top pyrotechnics. Once you have an enemy in your crosshair and you press the button, there ain't much more to do except watch their burning carcass. Unless you're just peppering them with the fairly whimpy machine gun. There are four characters to select from, and each has their own unique weapon. You can actually choose

your character based upon your weapon preference for once, rather than on the cut of their jib or the colour of their pants.

As far as a single-player experience goes, Outtrigger seems fairly shallow, with round after round of time-limited deathmatches — your enemies being the same hard-to-discern "terrorist" each time. Still, we can't wait to see how the final game turns out, as there is some potential here for Outtrigger to be a better multiplayer game than the Dreamcast ports of both Unreal Tournament and Quake 3 Arena, if only for the speedy gameplay and powerful graphics. There's no word yet on whether the local version of Outtrigger will support network play, so we'll have to wait and see how the PAL version turns out. Here's hoping...

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
More freedom of movement to mouse control and more variety with the AI-controlled foes.

shooter though, as the game plays in third-person. As an enemy passes by high up on a walkway, it's virtually impossible to flick your view up in that direction and fire off a rocket, which is a serious flaw. It's like your character's still recovering from a past deathmatch and has their neck in a brace... or something. This can be pretty frustrating. When you could normally get an easy kill in other similarly designed games, in Outtrigger, you have to chase after them and get onto the same level. There's a bit of angle if you're shooting from a distance, but ultimately, the vertical axis needs a lot more movement than it currently gives you. On the other side of the coin, the emphasis here is on arcade action, so you'll probably be busy enough duking it out toe-to-toe rather than getting off sniper like shots across the levels or worrying about ambushing your enemies from above... or below.



alone in the dark 4

the new nightmare

"For those in the know, Alone in the Dark is considered to be the great grandfather of the survival horror genre that spawned so many classics."



MOVIE ON THIS MONTH'S CD



THE MORE FRENCH GIRLS IN THE GAME THE BETTER. DOWNL.



For those in the know, Alone in the Dark is considered to be the great grandfather of the survival horror genre that spawned so many classics. Back in the early 90s, before anybody had even thought about Resident Evil and when Capcom were busy dreaming up titles for the next Street Fighter game, Infogrames were giving us all the chills our little 386s could possibly deliver.

So great was the original game that it spawned two sequels, giving us a huge variety of environments and a game world that dwarfs the single buildings of the RE series.

Our hero Edward Carnby, is not the man we once knew. Gone is the neat and tidy look. Carnby is now one bad dude. Sporting a trench coat and a menacing glare, he's no longer a character to feel embarrassed playing with. This new attitude comes courtesy of a dead best friend and thus begins the tale of anger and vengeance.

PERFECT DARK

Whilst full of action, Alone in the Dark is still an adventure game, so you'll be needing to find some tablets (of the stone variety) in order to unlock an extremely dangerous power of some description. Being the good guy you won't be given the option of unleashing said power against parliament members or Logie award winners, you'll just have to be content with the knowledge that the bad guys don't have the power to do equally naughty things with them.

You'll start the game armed with only a flashlight and what might as well be a spud gun for all the good it does. It won't be long however before you find yourself behind some very tasty weaponry. There's even a disc launcher which fires a magnesium covered disc that spins around the room at high speeds whilst giving off a blinding glow, shredding all in its path.

The location of the



PLATFORM:
PC/Dreamcast/
PlayStation

AVAILABLE:
November

CATEGORY:
Survival Horror

PLAYERS:
1

PUBLISHER:
Infogrames





KNOCK, KNOCK. WHO'S THERE? COIPES!



game is called Shadow Island and with good reason too. It may not seem like much but all characters will cast an accurate shadow at all times. This is just a small example of the dynamic lighting effects. If Carnby is walking towards a bright light at the end of a dark tunnel then he will cast a tall, thin shadow behind him. It is simply amazing how much depth to the overall immersion such a simple effect as this can add. Such lighting effects have never before been seen in any RE games.

Light will also play a huge factor in both your exploration and your offensive weaponry. Carnby carries a flashlight, which you'll actually need to cast around the room to uncover hidden objects and items of interest. The creatures of the dark on the other hand, are quite vulnerable to intense light, and you'll even find yourself sporting light weapons — that is, weapons that use light as their primary source of attack. Take



HIG UGLY MOTOCH OF A MONSTER AT SEVEN O'CLOCK

that, evil creatures of the night!

This is quite possibly the best ever looking survival horror game. That's right, even better than Resident Evil: Code Veronica. Code Veronica, like Dino Crisis before it, rendered its environments in 3D and even though Infogrames have decided to stick to pre-rendered backgrounds with the polygonal characters superimposed over them, this is the best



YOU MAY HAVE TO PLAY THIS GAME WITH THE LIGHTS ON

ALONE ON THE GAME BOY!

This screenshot has been confirmed by Infogrames as being from the Game Boy Color port of Alone In The Dark 4. How they've done this we simply do not know...



looking version by far.

A release is planned for Dreamcast, PC and PSX. There'll even be a watered down version on the Game Boy Color for all you gamers on the move (see screenshot above).

It's only a few short months away from release so it will be interesting to see if Infogrames can retain the great gameplay of last decade's Alone In The Dark games whilst making it appealing enough to gamers weaned on the Capcom survival horror games.

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

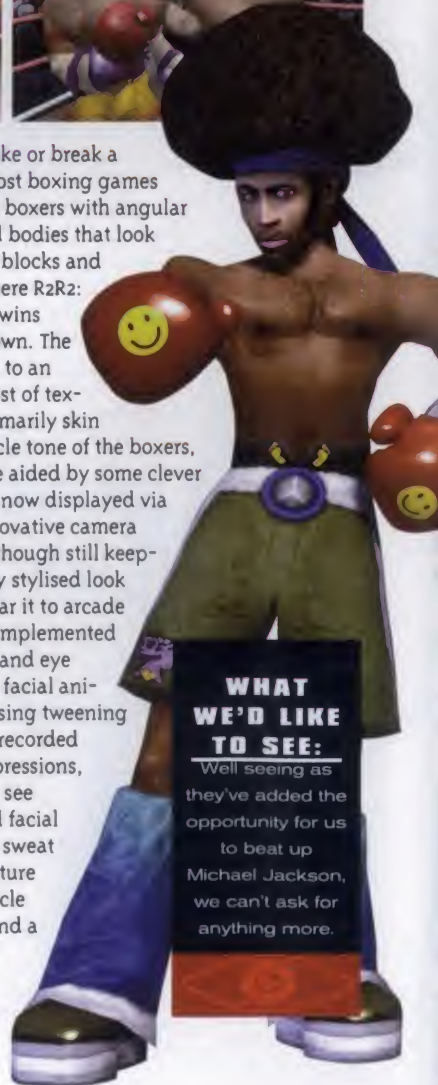
No one slag off Alone In The Dark for being a Resident Evil clone.



ready 2 rumble 2

round 2

"You can parry an opponent's jab, opening them up for a damaging combo."



WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

Well seeing as they've added the opportunity for us to beat up Michael Jackson, we can't ask for anything more.



PLATFORM:
Dreamcast / PlayStation 2

AVAILABLE:
November

CATEGORY:
Boxing

PLAYERS:
1-2

PUBLISHER:
Midway

Ready 2 Rumble was hailed by many as one of the most fun boxing games ever to grace a console. Midway have had the tough job of coughing up a sequel that explores some new territory without bastardising the great gameplay from the original. Hyper's UK correspondent, Derek dela Feunte, dropped in on Midway to find out how the game was shaping up...

SHUT YER FACE - LISTEN!

Midway are admittedly excited about Ready 2 Rumble: Round 2. We'd virtually stepped in the front door and they were yammering. "In 'Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2', we added a ton of new features that we were unable to implement for the first game. We have concentrated on making a more competitive AI system with more diverse punching styles, new special moves, more interactive training games, and brand new special effects. The boxers have a new 'parry' move as an advanced defensive technique. You can parry an opponent's jab, opening them up for a damaging combo. This new series of animations is created to increase gameplay depth and add new gameplay features. You can feint, grapple, and the rope interaction animations will add tremendous realism and an unprecedented interaction with the boxer and the ring."

"There are also three different Rumble Flurries, depending on how far you build up your Rumble meter. Just backtracking, you must ask yourself what makes a boxing game work? It

should be fast and furious and very responsive. There should be a full set of punches, a variety of boxing styles, and quick movement. These are just a few of the parameters we have fulfilled as the starting point. There are over twenty boxers, all have four very unique taunts that are very funny, adding another dimension to the game, with each boxer having over 200 different animations. Also, add to the mix Michael Jackson and Shaquille O'Neal, the two celebrity boxers, who will have a full array of combos and will be extremely competitive. The hardest thing to do is to make every boxer balanced with the large number of animations that are associated with each boxer. There are a lot more boxers in 'Ready 2 Rumble Boxing: Round 2' so making this the best boxing game out there is a whole lot harder to produce."

AND THERE IS MORE - FACE IT!

You may feel that Midway has the verbal runs talking about the many superlative additions, but, hey, don't knock them! A new set of extreme reactions and knockdowns has been motion-captured, as have most of the in-game moves, including time spent with Michael. Victory animations were also captured to further enhance character development and create 'personalities' but they would not tell us what Michael's footage entailed! The improved collision detection system, allowing the ability to hit while being hit, sounds cool. In the case of boxing, it is the physical look of the boxers that

really make or break a game. Most boxing games have had boxers with angular faces and bodies that look like Lego blocks and this is where R2R2: R2 really wins hands down. The attention to an endless list of textures, primarily skin and muscle tone of the boxers, which are aided by some clever lighting, now displayed via some innovative camera views, although still keeping a very stylised look will endear it to arcade gamers. Implemented are head and eye tracking, facial animation using tweening between recorded facial expressions, and we'll see improved facial swelling, sweat using texture and particle sprites, and a whole lot more!



THE BIG HYPER LIST OF GAMES TO BE RELEASED WITHIN THE NEXT MONTH!

RELEASE DATES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE.

PLAYSTATION



3-2-1 Smurfs
 Alone In The Dark 4
 Army Men Operation Meltdown
 Army Men Sarge's Heroes
 Batman Of The Future
 Blade Prequel
 Buzz Lightyear Of Star Command
 Championship Motocross 2
 Dance Dance Revolution Euro Mix
 Danger Girl
 Dinosaur

Donald Duck Quack Attack
 Hello Kitty's Cube Frenzy
 Inspector Gadget
 The Mummy
 Power Rangers
 Rat Pack Games
 Star Wars: Demolition
 Tom And Jerry House Trap
 Thunder Tanks
 The World Is Not Enough
 WWF Smackdown 2

PC



Alone In The Dark 4
 Army Men Air Attack 2
 Banana Republic
 Blair Witch Volume 3
 Call To Power 2
 Combat Flight Simulator II
 EA Sports NBA 2001
 Earth 3
 Empires Of Napoleon
 F1 Racing Championship
 Heroes Chronicles 1, 2, 3 & 4
 Iron Dignity
 Legends Of Might And Magic

Links LS 2001
 Mafia The Lost Heaven
 Oni
 Pacman
 Rat Pack Games
 Sports Classic Compilation
 Sports Extreme Compilation
 Stupid Invaders
 Two Worlds
 UEFA Manager 2001
 West Front: Special Forces
 World War III
 X-Com Alliance

DREAMCAST



Arcatera
 Buzz Lightyear Of Star Command
 Grand Prix 3 '99 Season
 Heroes III

Max Payne
 POD 2
 Speed Devils
 Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2

NINTENDO 64



Batman Of The Future
 Donald Duck Quack Attack
 Eternal Darkness
 Legend Of Zelda: Majora's Mask
 Power Rangers

Scooby Doo
 The World Is Not Enough
 WCW Wrestling II
 WWF No Mercy

GAME BOY

Action Man
 Aliens
 Animorphs
 Batman Of The Future
 Blade Prequel
 Buffy The Vampire Slayer
 Buzz Lightyear Of Star Command
 Championship Motocross 2
 Donald Duck Quack Attack
 Donkey Kong Country

Doug's Big Game
 FIFA 2001
 Hello Kitty's Cube Frenzy
 Inspector Gadget
 Power Rangers
 Scooby Doo
 The Jungle Book
 Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2
 VIP with Pamela Anderson
 X-Men Mutant Wars



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ZELDA: MAJORA'S MASK



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RED ALERT 2



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The Soviets are back - this time on American soil. And their mysterious mind-control technology is turning Americans into mindless automatons. Take up arms for the Red, White and Blue-or just the Red. Red Alert 2's vast arsenal of land, sea and air units offer new levels of brain-busting strategy. Infiltrate with Terror Drones. Crush 'em with Apocalypse Atomic Tanks. Light 'em up with Prism Cannons. Whatever your allegiance, Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2 pushes the frontier of RTS gaming.



Rocket Arena 3

QUAKE 3 ARENA

Rocket Arena was certainly one of the most successful mods for Quake, and especially Quake 2. Now the latest incarnation for Quake 3 has reared its head, and it's looking damn impres-

sive. With the emphasis to be the sole survivor in either one-on-one face-offs or with teams, the thrill that comes with being the last man standing is something that very few games can

come close to. Rocket Arena differs from normal duels and team DM games in that every player starts with all the guns (except the BFG). Additionally, there's no health or ammo to collect whatsoever, forcing players to be extra careful in battle. When killed you're out of the game and are relegated to just watch the match 'til its conclusion. Veterans of Rocket Arena will remember that what helped make the mod so special in the past was the huge variety of spiffy maps to fight on. Rest assured RA3 doesn't disappoint in this area. Some of the mapping community's big names have contributed to the list of arenas.

Everything is there to make this mod a worthy successor, however designer CRT has gone the extra mile and thrown in a couple of other fea-

Telstra ADSL is here!

Ok boys and girls, Telstra's high-speed/high-bandwidth ADSL service has finally arrived! At the end of August just about anyone within a few kilometers of an ADSL compliant phone exchange will have had the opportunity to access the net at blistering speeds. This may well be a godsend for gamers who couldn't get access to cable, or the many who are unsatisfied with their cable service.

Two pricing plans are available, \$78 per month for an unlimited service and a usage-based plan for \$73. Not exactly cheap, especially compared to the prices Americans pay for their ADSL, but then when do Aussie gamers ever get anything cheap? At least you won't have to buy an ADSL modem. It comes with the installation, which costs close to \$200 dollars for an 18-month contract. The good thing here, for those unfamiliar with the technology, is that users won't need a second phone-line. The modem runs from your main phone-line and is unaffected by incoming calls. And, no, you won't have to dial-up every time you want to connect to the net. Like Cable, as soon as you turn the PC on you're online.

Only one question remains - 'Is ADSL all it's cracked up to be?'. For the answer to that question, well, we'll have to wait and see.

For more info and to see whether you're eligible to get ADSL yet, check out Telstra's site.

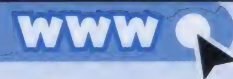
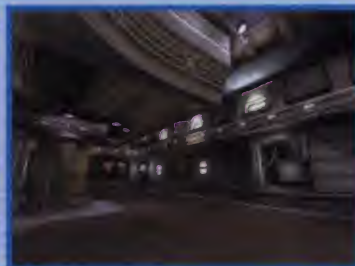
<http://www.telstra.com.au/adsl/>



ASUS cheat drivers

Big name motherboard and video card makers ASUS recently proposed a few new 'secret weapons' in their latest Nvidia card drivers. With the press of a key, gamers would be able to remove the wall textures in the latest FPS games, allowing the player to see their enemies anywhere on the map. The company's vice president of marketing backed the technology saying "ASUS always provides the best value for our customers. The ASUS 3D see-through technologies are developed for users to be a constant winner in the adventure or action 3D games. Never compete in the 3D games with anyone who has an ASUS VGA card. Because the only result is to lose". Naturally a barrage of negative feedback from concerned gamers followed and inevitably the company rethought its decision to unleash the cheat drivers to the gaming world. Soon after, another announcement came describing the ASUS' intention to ditch the see-through tech and to only incorporate an 'Extra light' feature. This pretty much self-explanatory feature basically intensifies the light around the player, making things a little easier to see. Not really something to get too fussed about.

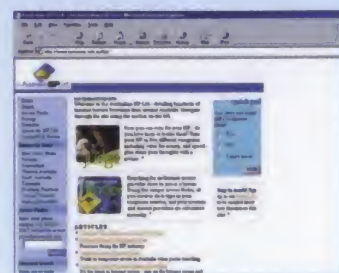
So it seems this story has a happy ending. Who knows how much damage a cheat like that could have done to online gaming. Let us just hope no one else decides to release something similar in the future.



Australian ISP list

This helpful site lists every ISP in Australia. All you have to do is tell it where you live and it throws up a host of local ISPs to choose from. Sure to come in handy at one time or another...

<http://www.cynosure.com.au/isp/>



tures to make RA3 even more special. Firstly a new teamplay mode has been added called Red Rover. What sets it apart is the fact that dying results in you respawning on the other teams side, to win you need to get everyone on your team. For players new to RA, the removal of the 'waiting after death' routine in Red Rover will be welcomed with open arms.

To polish things off there's a top-notch soundtrack available for optional download. Bands such as Sonic

Mayhem - known for creating tunes for Quake 2 and 3 - have contributed to the track selection. The Q3A multiplayer connection interface has also undergone a major facelift. It's more powerful like Gamespy now... The way it should have been all along.

For people without cable or ADSL, Rocket Arena is a fairly hefty download, but by crikey it's worth it!

Grab it at www.planetquake.com/arena



MODS UNREAL TOURNAMENT

Holy Wars

Holy Wars is a great variation of tag type play, with one 'Saint' playing the fugitive role and everyone else as the 'sinners'. Matches start with people running around in search for a halo, which spawns randomly throughout the map. Upon touching the Halo and becoming the saint, you are gifted with greater armour to help you fend off the horde of sinners chasing you. The Saint gets double points for a frag, whereas sinners must focus on only killing the saint and will lose a point for taking out one of their own. With a number of well-made bonus



clusterball online

Clusterball is a dandy little game released for the online community by Daydream Software. Basically, it's a simple arcade flight/racing game. The goal is to fly around and collect the most balls strewn all throughout the area then fly back to a hoop at the start of the map to convert the balls into points. Careful piloting is needed to skim the balls from the ground, and to make things more difficult you'll have to worry about being shot down by competitors eager to reap the balls you drop. Strategy is the key to winning in Clusterball however, as the player who works out the most ball-rich paths to take is usually the one who wins. Gameplay was designed to be rather tolerant of laggy connections; for instance, since missile targeting is automatic a freakish aim isn't necessary. Unlike information hungry games like Quake, the concept of competing against people from overseas is totally feasible with Clusterball.

42 » HYPER

Some good simple frolics to be had with this online game.

You can grab the 13MB file from <http://www.clusterball.com/>



net trawlin'

maps to play on you'll be in for some thrilling 'one man against the rest' antics with Holy Wars.

www.planetunreal.com

Horizons follow-up

Last month we mentioned how one of the brightest stars in the future of online gaming, Horizons, was in jeopardy of being cancelled due to lack of funding. Fortunately the latest news is that Artifact have come across enough funding to keep the ball rolling for a few more months... Artifact isn't out of trouble yet however, it's likely to be another two years before the game is expected to be finished. Hopefully the developers can continue long enough to find a steadier subsidy. Fingers crossed.



www

Bart's Game Music

Nothing to do with the Simpsons, this site stores an impressive collection of musical works by a guy named Bart Klepka in mp3 format. Who cares? Well you might care when we tell you that his songs are remixes of some of the most popular gaming tunes. Remember that groovy track in The Last Ninja 2? Surely you all know the main tune from Doom? In fact there's a pretty large list of mp3's to choose from, all of which do justice to the great games of the past. Check it out at

<http://heechee.simplenet.com/bart/music.html>



PATCHES

Deus Ex
- a .DLL file to improve the D3D performance
www.deusex.com

Diablo II - latest patch
www.blizzard.com

Vampire The Masquerade
www.nihilistic.com

Unreal Tournament
www.planetunreal.com

www



Java Arcade Emulator

Another good place to visit for those who like to reminisce about our gaming past, The Java Arcade emulator is host to a whole heap of classic arcade games from the 70's and early 80's. With the click of your mouse you'll be transported back in time, playing the likes of Space Invaders and Frogger. After a few minutes you'll probably be thankful that we're living in the present, heheh. Great for a laugh anyway.

<http://web.utahnet.at/nkehrer/jae.html>



www

Multiple Gaming Monitors

You wouldn't happen to have three or four spare monitors lying around the house would you? Well, just in case, this site might come in handy. It explains how to run UT and Quake using multiple monitors. Why would you want to? We have no idea, but it's cool to see nonetheless.

<http://www.planetquake.com/mhq>



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SIDEWINDER GAME VOICE

TYPE: PC COMMUNICATION UNIT
PRICE: \$99
DISTRIBUTOR: MICROSOFT

The SideWinder Game Voice is an ambitious product that aims to provide gamers with a communications device for internet and LAN play. Aimed at gamers who play multiplayer team-based games primarily, the Game Voice headset pops onto your noggin and you can start barking orders at your teammates, or trash talk your opponents until they leave the server. The control unit allows you to control exactly who it is you're talking to — from yelling obscenities in an open channel, to cajoling specific teammates. The control works brilliantly, as the selector pad allows you to preset teammates to four separate channels (plus you can double up on one channel with a "shift" function), as well as having the open channel for general chatting. The catch, is that obviously everyone else you're playing with

should ideally be on a Game Voice as well, otherwise you'll have no one to talk to. The serious gamer, though, will surely invest in a Game Voice for at least LAN play. Team-based games like Capture the Flag in Unreal Tournament work brilliantly, and in fact, we got to see the Game Voice in action at this year's E3 and it was a blast. You can also bind the command button to respond to your voice to trigger keyboard shortcuts... for instance, pressing the command button and saying "rail" will equip you with the rail gun. You may not think it's as convenient as simply having the Railgun bound to

a key, but in the heat of it, certainly for less-experienced players, it's much easier to reach for that big fat button and get anything you need in a hurry with a simple voice command, than try to remember which number key has the weapon or item that you specifically need. The bandwidth required to send the signals down your connection is surprisingly small, so the Game Voice shouldn't have an adverse affect on your "ping".

If you're not playing online, you can still use the Game Voice to trigger keyboard shortcuts you may use in a game — like cockpit functions in a flight sim. Just pretend you're ordering your copilot! You can also use the headset for a variety of non-Game Voice related functions too — it's still a good quality headset mic and headphones that simply plugs into your soundcard. In fact, the set-up is braindead easy — just make sure you have a Win 98 CD on hand in case your PC needs to grab some USB drivers. If you have some friends who are similarly interested in the Game Voice, or know people online who are getting one, then you can't go past this sort of in-game communication.
www.gamevoice.com

SIDEWINDER PRECISION 2

TYPE: PC JOYSTICK
 PRICE: \$89.95
 DISTRIBUTOR: MICROSOFT

The SideWinder Precision 2 is the third generation of SideWinder joysticks to come from Microsoft that provides non-force-feedback control in any game that gives you the option to wrestle with a "stick". Cheaper than most joysticks, the Precision 2 is damn good quality for its price — Microsoft never fail to use good quality components. Fully USB (you can use an adapter if you don't have a USB port), the Precision 2 has an eight-way hat switch, a rotating handle, a redesigned 146-degree throttle, and eight configurable buttons for just about any set-up you can

imagine. The second buttons sits nicely under your thumb as your hand grips the stick, so you have access to four buttons and the hat with only one hand. Your other hand is then free to use the four buttons on the base and the throttle control.

WAGGLING YOUR STICK

We took the Precision 2 for a spin with Microsoft Combat Flight Simulator 2: WWII Pacific Theatre (featured in eye-candy this issue). The responsiveness is of course excellent, so we threw in a spanner and tried out the Precision 2 with an older game — Star Wars: X-Wing Alliance from LucasArts. The Precision 2 happily worked like a dream with both games and in fact, it felt so nice, we put our trusty Thrusty back up onto the shelf for the first time. In a game that supports the

rotating handle however, like Starlancer, it's quite easy with the Precision 2 to twist it by accident and roll your craft when you're banking left and right. This can get pretty disorientating, so you may have to muck around with the configuration a bit to get features such as this to work the way you want them to. We also found some of the buttons — most noticeably the 8-way hat — felt a little loose, to the point where it was actually rattling around in it's slot, which doesn't give us high hopes for the Precision 2's durability and accuracy over the long term. However, if you do have technical problems with it, Microsoft have a two-year warranty on the thing which is comforting. All up, this is certainly a worthy purchase for anyone seeking a multi-functional joystick under the \$100 mark. Fantastic value.



ELIOT'S TOP 5 JOYSTICK WAGGLING EXPERIENCES

1. X-WING - LUCASARTS
2. FREESPACE 2 - INTERPLAY
3. STABLANCER - MICROSOFT
4. CRIMSON SKIES (IN BETA) - MICROSOFT
5. MECHWARRIOR 2 - MICROSOFT

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WINWINWIN

F.A.K.K.2

FOR PC



Entries close September 22nd

Certainly one of the prettiest PC games we've seen for a while, Heavy Metal F.A.K.K. 2 puts you in the high-heeled boots of Julie Strain, a woman against the odds - if only for the fact that it's damn hard to strafe in high-heels. Dig on the demo we've included on our cover disc thanks to Gathering Of Developers, and then enter this comp to win your very own copy thanks to Jack Of All Games! We have five copies up for grabs, but to enter, you'll have to answer the following question...

➤➤ What does F.A.K.K. stand for?

Put your answer on the back of an envelope, along with your name and address, and send it off to
FAKK OFF, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern. NSW 2016.
Good luck!

THE SIMS: LIVIN' LARGE

FOR PC



Get addicted all over again! The Sims expansion pack, Livin' Large, very successfully sucks us in for another month's worth of obsessive behaviour. Spend hours devising new freaky scenarios of torture for your sim (like a room with no doors or windows, no toilet and a coffee machine) or just send them off to one of their new day jobs as a computer hacker... or slacker! Yep, it's good all over again. Thanks to EA Australia, we have SIX copies to giveaway to those of you who have behaved well this year - oh, and you have to answer this question...

➤➤ Explain in 25 words or less your most diabolical sims torture.

Put your mini-essay in an envelope with your name and address and send it to
SIM-TASTIC, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016. Have fun.



WINWINWIN

OMEGA CHEATS

SONY PLAYSTATION

- 016 Asteroids
- 017 Auto destruct
- 018 Azure Bravura
- 019 A Movie
- 020 Battle Arena Tosh 3
- 021 Battle Arena Tosh 2
- 022 Beast Wars
- 023 Bio Wars
- 024 Blast Bomber
- 025 Blast Badies
- 026 Blast
- 027 Blood Onyx
- 028 Bloody Bear
- 029 Bomberman World
- 030 Brain Dead 13
- 031 Brivandine
- 032 Bubby 3D
- 033 Bushido Blade 2
- 034 Bust-a-move
- 035 Bust-a-move 2
- 036 C. Contra Adventure
- 037 Capcom Ann 2
- 038 Capcom Ann 3
- 039 Cardinal Sin
- 040 Cast World Series
- 041 Circuit Breakers
- 042 Come Home Tenka
- 043 Colin McRae Rally
- 044 Colonization
- 045 Colony Wars
- 046 Colony Wars: Vengeance
- 047 Command and Conquer
- 048 Con 3D Start
- 049 Contra: Legacy of War
- 050 Cool Boarders 2
- 051 Cool Boarders 3
- 052 Counter Crisis
- 053 Crash Bandicoot
- 054 Crash Bandicoot 2
- 055 Crash Bandicoot 3
- 056 Crash Legend
- 057 Crusader No Remorse
- 058 Cyberzoid
- 059 Dark Forces
- 060 Dead or Alive
- 061 Death Trap Dungeon
- 062 Deceit
- 063 Defcon 5
- 064 Destruction Derby 2
- 065 Diablo
- 066 Dragon Balls
- 067 Duke Nukem: Time to Kill
- 068 Duke Nukem: Hellfire
- 069 Dynamic Duxon
- 070 Elemental Gearbox
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- 072 Everybody's Golf
- 073 FIFA 98
- 074 FIFA 99
- 075 Fighting Force
- 076 Fighting Illusion: ST-Res
- 077 Final Boom
- 078 Final Fantasy 7
- 079 Formula 1 97
- 080 Formula 1 98
- 081 Formula Kart
- 082 Forsake
- 083 Fronty
- 084 Future Cop LAPD
- 085 G. Batic
- 086 G. Police
- 087 Gen. Enter the Duck
- 088 Ghost in the Shell
- 089 Gran Turismo
- 090 Grand Tour Racing
- 091 Gully Bear
- 092 Heart of Darkness
- 093 Hot Shots Cold
- 094 I. E. Soccer Pro 98
- 095 Independence Day
- 096 Indy 500
- 097 J. McGrath Super X 98
- 098 Judge Dredd
- 099 K-1 Area Fighters
- 100 Kaito Koubou
- 101 Kona
- 102 Knockout Kings

- 103 Krazy Ivan
- 104 Kula World
- 105 Libero Grande
- 106 M.S. J
- 107 M. & Mythologies
- 108 M. & Trilogies
- 109 Madden NFL 99
- 110 Madden NFL 98
- 111 Maxis Destruction
- 112 Max Force
- 113 MDK
- 114 Medievil
- 115 Nemesis (Quake)
- 116 Marvel Vs Street Fighter
- 117 Metal Gear Solid
- 118 Metal Slug
- 119 Micro Machines V3
- 120 Monster Trucks
- 121 Moto Racer
- 122 Moto Racer 2
- 123 Motorhead
- 124 NBA - NBA Live
- 125 NBA Live 98
- 126 NBA Live 99
- 127 NBA Shoot Out 98
- 128 NBA Jam 2
- 129 NBA Jam 3
- 130 NFL Blitz
- 131 NFL Blitz
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- 135 NHL Face Off 98
- 136 NHL Face Off 99
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- 138 NHL 2001
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- 140 NHL 2003
- 141 NHL Face Off 99
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- 144 Ninja: Storm
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- 150 Pandemonium 2
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- 155 Porche Challenge
- 156 Pay Day
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NINTENDO 64

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- 409 Perfect Dark
- 410 International Track and Field 2000
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- 412 Bomberman 64: The Second Attack
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- 322 Sonic Adventure
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- 327 Daytona USA 2
- 328 Evolution
- 329 Got Gate
- 330 Hoken of the Dead 2
- 331 Marvel V's Custom
- 332 Physic Force 2012
- 333 Power Stone
- 334 Psycho Physic
- 335 Sega Rally 2
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- 337 Air Force Delta
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- 340 Ring of Fighters Dream Match 99

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- 522 Incoming
- 523 James White's 2: Conell
- 524 Mental Toughness
- 525 NBA 2000
- 526 Nascar 2: The Best Escape
- 527 Ready 2 Rumble Boxing
- 528 Realms Racer
- 529 Soul Calibur
- 530 Speed Buggy
- 531 Crazy Taxi
- 532 WWF: Attitude
- 533 Trick Style

NEW PLAYSTATION

- 462 Rainbow 6
- 463 Thunder, Shade & Heat
- 464 Gran Turismo 2
- 465 Duke or Muzzard
- 466 Jitz 2000
- 467 WWF Smackdown
- 468 Marvel VsCapcom: Clash
- 469 Killer Loop
- 470 RND: Kronfire
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- 473 Bio Hard Triforce 2 Las Vegas
- 474 Fear Effect
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- 476 Army Men: Sarge's Heroes
- 477 Psycho Filter 2
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- 479 Street Skater 2
- 480 Ace Combat 3: Electrosphere
- 481 Unreal Legends

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- 535 Team Fair World
- 536 Coverd One: Nuclear Dawn
- 537 Colin McRae Rally 2.0
- 538 Colony Wars 3: Red Sun
- 539 Crusaders of Might and Magic
- 540 Populous: The Beginning
- 541 Eagle One: Warrior Attack
- 542 Nightmare Creatures 2
- 543 Ninja Teaming
- 544 Jackie Chan: Stuntmaster
- 545 Test Drive: Unlimited
- 546 Road Rash: Jailbreak
- 547 Toy Story 2

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- 014 Jeremy McGrath Supercross 2000
- 015 International Track and Field 2000
- 016 Ridge Racer 64
- 017 Bomberman 64: The Second Attack
- 018 Top Gear Rally 2
- 019 SuperCross 2000
- 020 BattleTech: Global Assault
- 021 Exotek 64

MARIO TENNIS



Nintendo ace all the other games in this issue with one title – Mario Tennis! How do they make such a cute little game play so well?



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Green for Dreamcast
 Yellow for PC
 Red for Nintendo 64
 Blue for PlayStation



THE HYPER CREW'S TOP 5

WHAT WE'RE PLAYING THIS MONTH

Eliot Fish – Editor

1. Baldur's Gate II – PC
 "My thief, Andrushka, is currently busy in both the Black Isle adventures."
2. Icewind Dale – PC
3. Dead Or Alive 2 – Dreamcast
4. Crimson Skies – PC
5. Quake 3 Arena – PC

Cam Shea – Deputy Editor

1. Mario Tennis – Nintendo 64
 "It's got that Nintendo magic. I've always wanted Peach playing with my balls."
2. Jet Set Radio – Dreamcast
3. Powerstone 2 – Dreamcast
4. The Sims: Living Large – PC
5. Pepsi Man – PlayStation

Kevin Cheung – Reviewer

1. Shin Sangokumusou 2 – PlayStation 2
 "Hundreds upon thousands of people to fight – the scale of battle is beyond anything I've seen before."
2. Spawn: In The Demon's Hand – Dreamcast
3. Gun Griffon Blaze – PlayStation 2
4. Mario Tennis 64 – Nintendo 64
5. Diablo II – PC

HYPERR

All in-house PC previews and reviews are done on Gateway computers.

www.au.gateway.com





ONLY SECONDS LATER THE PHOTOGRAPHER GOT SMACKED IN THE FACE



MARIO TENNIS

Hyper's big time racketeer, **Cam Shea** gets out of court so he can get onto the court...

AVAILABLE:	November
CATEGORY:	Sports
PLAYERS:	1-4
PUBLISHER:	Nintendo
PRICE:	\$99.95
RATING:	G
SUPPORTS:	4MB RAM Pak

there's the whole mysterious issue of how a plumber who never turns up to work manages to afford golf lessons, go kart racing and now take tennis lessons for g's sake. It's a good thing that Mario Tennis is so fine. So goddamn fine in fact that we'll forgive Mario and his secret life of monacles, caviar and smoking jackets. For now...

IT'S THA BOB-OMB!

From Camelot Software, the same developer behind the excellent Mario Golf, Mario Tennis is yet another Nintendo masterpiece, and a must have for anyone owning the system. I'm sure you already know what to expect - cutesy graphics, familiar mascots and more depth than quantum mechanics - and that's exactly what you'll get.

Mario Tennis is incredibly easy to pick up. At first the controls seem quite sim-

ple, but it's not long before you discover that this title has greater versatility than any other tennis game. There are only two buttons, but once you learn how to combine them and charge up your shots, Virtua Tennis (Dreamcast) starts to look decidedly primitive. You can hit top spins, slices, flat power shots, lobs and drop shots. If you get into position early enough, every one of these can be charged up for extra accuracy and power. No matter what skill level you're at, the controls are intuitive and absolutely spot on.

Mario Tennis comes packing 16 Nintendo characters, including the all new Waluigi - Luigi's arch nemesis. Each player has their own skills, varying in the areas of power, speed, control and spin. These differences actually matter too. Bowser, for instance, sits on the baseline unleashing powerful

shots cross-court and down the line, while Baby Mario uses his speed to out maneuver you. Playing against the computer, these differences are not only noticeable, but they greatly influence the style of tennis that is played.

WHO WANTS "THE POO" WHEN YOU COULD PLAY AS PRINCESS PEACH?

The visuals are solid, with Nintendo's trademark vibrancy and polish. Lighting effects are used well, and to be honest, this is about as good as tennis is ever going to look on an N64. It's fast too. The backgrounds are generally dull, but there are some nice touches like the court with Bob-omb linesmen who explode when you hit the ball over the line. Not to mention the replays - we just love the close up reaction shots,

>> I'm beginning to think that Mario is nothing but a bourgeois rich-kid snob, and the whole plumber thing is a cunning ruse to make us like the portly little bugger. When you think about it, it all makes sense - he's always swanning off on overseas adventures when he should be at work. Then



Don't even try and sucker us into a Virtua Tennis Vs Mario Tennis argument. They both rock!



PLAYING WITH MARIO'S BALLS... AND RING...

In addition to the standard exhibition and tournament options, there's also ring-shot, piranha challenge and a Bowser's Castle exhibition game.

RING-SHOT is a mode where gold rings appear randomly across the court. Every time the ball passes through a ring during a rally, you get a point and more random rings pop up. Of course, only rallies that you win count towards the points total. The aim is to challenge successive characters and beat the ring (hey, watch your mouth - Ed) total that's set for you... as well as winning the game. This mode is basically aiming practice, but things get a whole lot more hectic as soon as you play multiplayer. In royal rumble doubles mode, each individual player has their own ring total, so not only are you trying to win the rally for your team, but also to beat your partner to returning the ball.

The **PIRANHA CHALLENGE** urges you to sharpen up your timing and passing techniques. Three piranha plants at the back of the court spew balls over the net and you must hit them back, passing your opponent at the net. The more times you can pass your opponent the better. This bonus isn't all that exciting, nor is the final bonus, the **BOWSER'S CASTLE** stage. In this, you play a game on a court in Bowser's castle. It's suspended over lava and as the players shift their weight around, the court wobbles back and forth. There are even translucent powerup boxes that unlock a special ability if you hit them

(banana peels, red shells etc). It's a short-lived novelty, but a welcome addition all the same.



GAME BOY TRANSFER PAK

Like Mario Golf before it, Mario Tennis is compatible with the GB Transfer Pak. You'll be able to unlock extra characters in the Game Boy version, then use them in the N64 game.

MARIO SERVES UP SOMETHING OTHER THAN PASTA



and the quick fire smash replays.

The animations are also first class. The players have just the right feeling of inertia around the court, and some of the win/lose animations are classic. When Luigi wins a point he runs an excited circle, when he loses he bashes his racket

against the ground. Personality, personality and more personality.

This is a tennis game for the ages. Mario Tennis has incredible depth and replayability, and is arguably the best four-player sports game ever to grace the Nintendo 64. ■



PLUS

Mama mia! It's-a great-a game-a!

MINUS

Mama mia! My-a voice-a is-a irritating-a!

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
86	82	92

OVERALL

91

Nintendo unleash another A-grade title on an unsuspecting public. Bastards!

51 >>>HYPER



CYCLOPS HAS A LITTLE TROUBLE AIMING

X-MEN MUTANT ACADEMY



AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	2D Fighter
PLAYERS:	1-2
PUBLISHER:	Activision
PRICE:	\$69.95
RATING:	M15+
SUPPORTS:	Dual Shock

▶▶ Bampf! **Bom**, the office mutie, gets his claws out...

>> It may not be quite as big a smack-my-forehead-and-call-me-Nancy surprise as the unexpectedly high quality feature that was the X-Men movie, seeing as we've actually

seen good games with the X-Men in them before (hello MvC2, I love you sweetie), but Paradox have turned out a pretty bloody good X-Men fighting game. Unexpected, that is, and GOOD.

BUT WHERE'S NIGHTCRAWLER?

The game is basically a 2 1/4D Street Fighter EX style venture, with 3D characters exploring their 2D one-on-one fighting feelings with one another, and as popular as you must all now know

the X-Men to be, the licensing blues have been pretty much avoided on this title. The only real evidence of the movie's influence on the game is the choice of the bad guys (yeh, sure, I was dying to play Toad, man - he's like, green or yellow or something), and the inclusion of the alternate, movie-style character outfits. It actually gives the feel of a game that was well-and-truly made for its own sake, with the movie-related bucks being a last-minute concern, which sees a trace of unfamiliar warmth enter my cold, black, cynical game-reviewer's heart. A tear graced my eye, is what I'm sayin'.

The fighting engine in the game allows for a fair amount of fighting scope, has a nice combo system and some crazy specials that chain quite nicely, thankyou Major. Each character



SABRETOOTH CONVINCES GAMBIT TO LANCE ONE OF HIS SANGERDUSLY LARGE NIBLS



WOLVERINE ALWAYS WINS THE FRISDAY NIGHT LIMBS COMPETITION

In the tradition of Soul Calibur, progression through X-Men awards you with unlockable artwork and stuff. The whole movie trailer is on the disc too...



PHOENIX REGRETS GIVING HIM THOSE CHEAP HAYBARS FOR HIS BIRTHDAY



GAMBIT ALWAYS PLAYS HIS CARDS RIGHT



has the usual light, medium and strong punches and kicks, and have handy throw and counter buttons added. Combos are fairly well handled too, with series of mediums throwing a nice combo of kicks before you launch a special and so on. A bit like World Heroes, if you will, except much nicer. Juggle launches for everyone is a fabbo addition, and allows you to spank other hairy folk skyward and keep 'em airborne for pretty much the entire length of their energy bar – how hard-core are YOU Mr Juggle?

OR ICEMAN?

It's a little flawed when it comes to Versus Mode, as you can imagine the controller smashing and headbutting that will ensue from a round of never actually being allowed to hit the ground (more or less), but against the computer it's nice to take a cocky bastard like Scott Summers and beat him like an unarmed child. If anything, having a counter button and a

single throw button is a tad too easy to rely on, and if you're even a little experienced with fighting games, you'll feel that this is a little cheap. At least you can adjust the game settings in the options.

The Thrill Kill engine has once again reared it's lubricant-smooth head in X-Men Mutant Academy, and the graphics are solid, and allow for some very funky animations and camera angles on your super moves. Each character has a taunt, although the voice acting is a little sus in places. The dark, low-contrast nature of the engine isn't totally suited to the bright, funky characters of the comic, but still does the job very, very nicely. There are small touches that fans will appreciate too...

A reasonably inventive, solid fighting engine (hell, you can manage and juggle your Super meter in-game), likeable graphics and acceptable presentation is pretty much beyond the hopes of most gamers these days, and so Paradox have pulled quite a coup with X-Men: MA. Ahoy there bigfella – go get yourself X-Men and play it somewhat, me hearty. Arg. ■



STORM PERFORMS A LITTLE FAITH HEALING



PLUS

Interesting fighting engine, solid graphics, X-MEN.

MINUS

Character balance seems a little whack. A bit easy.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
84	80	78

OVERALL
79

If you're an X-fan, give it a big go. You most likely won't be disappointed.



TENCHU 2: BIRTH OF THE ASSASSINS

>>> **Hillous Lesslie** snuck into the office and nicked this game with Ninja-like skill...

AVAILABLE: Now
CATEGORY: Stealth Action
PLAYERS: 1
PUBLISHER: Activision
PRICE: \$79.95
RATING: MA15+
SUPPORTS: Dual Shock



the first remain to inhibit the second...

TREACHERY AND TREASON

Tenchu 2 has been in development ever since the first was such a hit, but unfortunately it would appear that much of the time and effort has gone into the production of high quality video sequences. The intro alone is a three minute eyeful of shadowy figures and dancing blades. However, once you're in the game and slaying, it still has that certain Tenchu appeal that will keep you perched, clutching a sweaty controller in a vice-like grip, creeping ever closer to the telly and jumping when you hear the fridge turning itself on.

Control has been tweaked to aid the execution of certain moves, with an extra button being thrown in for blocking and sheathing your weapon. For those who are familiar with the original, this simply means relearning some moves. But once the new system is under your belt, you will be thankful for the changes.

One major improvement concerns the plot. Being a prequel, the events

>>> Everyone with enough brains and bloodlust will have no doubt heard of, if not purchased and completed, the very fresh Tenchu: Stealth Assassins. It soared to the position of fourth best-selling PlayStation game in its first month of release in 1998, something only a rare few truly original titles achieve. Well, the wait is finally over. Boasting the same heart-thumping gameplay steeped in the tangible tension many have grown to love, Tenchu 2 delivers a kind of gaming experience that could be only be possible by such a prequel. However, it seems that some minor irritating quirks that inhibited



"MORNING HONEY. WANT SOME PANCAKES?"



THOSE NINJAS... ALWAYS HANGING AROUND

that take place in Tenchu 2 cover the fate of Lord Ghoda's wife, Lady Kei, and poor Princess Kiku gets kidnapped more than once as well. Most of the storyline is disclosed in polygonal scenes in between missions that take about ten seconds to load up, but occasionally you will be treated to a highly polished full motion action sequence. The only thing that is likely to bother players as far as the acting goes is the insistence on American actors whose slow and vulgar accents prohibit any sense of immersion in the times of this otherwise well researched period piece. Ayame is a particularly unconvincing ninja, displaying all the petty self-concern of a typical teenage girl.

The many formidable bosses are by far the most colourful characters in the game. Each one is just scary enough to ensure a frantic, panicked battle. There's also a new female arch villain whose ample bust stars prominently in the opening FMV.

YOU TAKE THE HIGH ROAD

Depending on who you choose to control, your missions will differ. For example, the first mission involves the disposal of a gang of thieves and bandits who are terrorising Ghoda's village. As Ayame you must infiltrate the bandits' camp at night, eventually doing battle with the bandits' boss. As

Rikimaru you attack the thieves den by day and end up duelling with their leader, a different fellow to the bandit boss. Finish the game as both ninjas and you will unlock Tatsumaru, the oldest, wisest and strongest ninja of the Azuma clan. His missions are harder again. With so many possible missions and scenes to accompany every outcome, it is not surprising that the game has been so long in development.

Visually it remains all but identical to its prequel, but new enemies and environmental furnishings give everything a fresh flavour. Some of the levels are up to four times the size of those in Tenchu and it is clear throughout that much consideration has gone into the design of each.

Squeezing the most out of one of the few innovations new to the game (if you can call swimming underwater an innovation) many of the levels have moats, rivers, pools and lakes in which you can sneak up on your foe. Although Tenchu 2 is every bit as enthralling as the original, it remains evident that the most of the production money has been spent on presentation instead of playability.

Some may find the game lacking improvement overall. Some existing bugs of the first game have made it through to the sequel and there isn't a lot in the way of new moves or tactical

THE MISSION EDITOR

The best addition to the game is this. In the Mission Editor you are given limited options to set the objective and a password lock (if you so desire) then you get to design the entire level from scratch. Walls of varying height, stairs, odd objects, spear traps and pitfalls are all at your disposal to place wherever you wish in amplitudes only limited by your own distaste for slowdown. The enemy placement in the Mission Editor is superb. You choose what type of guard goes where and then determine their walking path with up to 150 steps of movement that they will follow when activated. This comprehensive editor hints at friendly participation as you can create unpredictable challenges for your friends and vice versa.



options. Sure, there are plenty of new items, but nothing so brilliant as the simple grappling hook (which you still will find useless unless you are perfectly perpendicular to your intended destination).

That said, Tenchu 2 is still in a class all its own, unmatched on any other platform to this day. A very slim handful of games get the stealth thing right and wind up either too boring or too hard. Tenchu 2 offers a palatable compromise with the added long term value of a good editing program. ■



PLUS
Mission editor. Slightly improved controls.

MINUS
Not enough of an improvement over the original.

VISUALS **77** SOUND **90** GAMEPLAY **88**

OVERALL

85

Despite its niggling flaws, Tenchu 2 is sure to creep up on you.



TRAINING AGAINST YOURSELF NEVER QUITE WORKS



PARASITE EVE 2

Kevin Cheung shows us how to deal with Parasites named Eve, or something...

AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Action/RPG
PLAYERS:	1
PUBLISHED:	Squaresoft
PRICE:	\$59.95
RATING:	MA15+
SUPPORTS:	Dual Shock, Memory Card

THROWN IN THE DEEP END

Parasite Eve 2 picks up not long after the mitochondria menace of the first game, with New York special ops officer Aya Brea at the helm. The effects of her paranormal battle with Melissa Pearce have left her several years younger, adding an innocent dimension to her appearance. That doesn't change the fact that she still looks like the secret sister of Cloud Strife, but her personality also retains the tenacity and spunk that made her such a likeable heroine. According to the story, the mitochondrion phenomenon is now an ongoing concern. Aya's specialist group was actually formed to investi-

gate the biological phenomenon since it wasn't entirely wiped out and continues to exist in negligible diasporas. However, the situation flares up alarmingly as a mid-city skyscraper becomes infested with Neo-Mitochondrion creatures, which begins a new investigation into who or what is triggering the problems.

Feeling a little thrown in the deep end? Don't worry — most Australian gamers are in the same boat since the first game was never released in PAL territories. Mitochondria are, according to medical textbooks, a form of organelle residing within the nuclei of all living things, barring single-celled organisms. For the most part they live harmlessly within us, playing an inter-

gral part in the aerobic respiration of our cells. What's particularly intriguing is the fact that they possess DNA and ribosome sequences of their own, separate from those of their hosts. The current theory is that mitochondria were once a form of bacteria that was endocytosed by a larger cell billions of years ago. Now we know where George Lucas got the idea for "Midichlorians".

In Parasite Eve, Squaresoft (with the aid of a Japanese novelist) added some science-fiction conjecture to the equation. Supposedly, the DNA sequences of all mitochondria could be traced back to a singular woman in Africa, who was code-named "Eve" since she's thought to be the first specimen of homo-sapien on Earth.

>> If Square were ever put behind the wheel of the Resident Evil series, the result would certainly be Parasite Eve. The difference being, of course, that Square cares a lot more about having a coherent plot that doesn't necessarily require 6 sequels to tell (*cough*Streetfighter*cough*).



THAT'S ONE WAY TO GET RID OF WEEDS





PLAQUE REMOVAL THE HARD WAY



NUCLEAR WEAPONS TESTING CONTINUES UNABATED



WHERE'S SANTA THE FAT BASTARD?

In Christmas 1997, a young opera singer named Melissa Pearce, who was somehow linked to Eve, revealed her ability to 'reawaken' the mitochondria by spontaneously combusting her theatre audience. What was happening, in fact, was that the mitochondria were taking control of their host cells and using them to do Melissa's bidding. In that sense, setting people on fire wasn't the only thing that could happen. Anything human or animal that came within Melissa's reach could liquefy into raw primordial soup and become part of an even bigger collective of lost souls; or they could just mutate on the spot into horrific creatures with extra heads, claws, and razor sharp teeth.

Aya Brea, a cop with the NYPD, managed to defeat Melissa and survive the whole ordeal because of her hidden relationship with the phenomenon. So with Melissa Pearce out of the picture, Parasite Eve 2 presents a new mystery, a new adventure, and a brand new cast of mutant beasties to fight.

BLOODSTAINS AND BODIES

With its combination of contemporary settings and excellent artistic designs in the game environments, Parasite Eve 2 has an atmosphere that carries the added edge of familiarity. As opposed to the usual fantasy settings where everything's new to you, you will be wandering around looking for elevators, security desks, phones and stairwells because you know they exist in the skyscrapers you're exploring. Seeing bloodstains and bodies strewn about the place adds to the suspense and anticipation for the next shock moment.

Combat is most similar to Vagrant Story in terms of being a hybrid of real-time and turn-based fighting. Even the attack-sphere is identical. However, in spite of all the spell-casting and firearm customisation (you blast the baddies with your big guns), these action sequences are quite slow. This has more to do with the slightly dodgy controls, though, as Aya runs



AYA SUCCESSFULLY SNIPES THE STOLEN KETCHUP BOTTLE

around quite slowly.

Parasite Eve 2 lives up to the genre that its predecessor created: the 'cinematic RPG'. That is, it blends as many FMVs into the game as possible, using them as cut-scenes and implementing them into gameplay. Obviously it's not quite as advanced as Final Fantasy IX, but it's tasteful enough not to have the

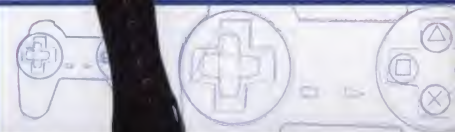
kind of overkill that was present in Fear Effect. Overall, Parasite Eve 2 should please a wide audience for its modern-day appeal and seemingly X-Files-inspired plot. Square fans will also appreciate the break from the usual fantasy settings. ■



"THAT'S THE LAST TIME YOU TRY TO STEAL MY KETCHUP!"

IF YOU THOUGHT TOBAL 2 WAS BAD...

It's sad but true: the original Parasite Eve was never released in PAL territories — Australia included. Usually, it would be Sony Computer Entertainment who'd pick up the tab for releasing Squaresoft games. However, at the time Parasite Eve should've come out, Electronic Arts was busy telling everyone that it now carried the Square torch by virtue of the Square/EA reciprocal distribution deal in Japan and the US. Funnily enough, that deal didn't apply to us at all: Square was in the process of setting up its own European offices to handle PAL releases. That explains the recent influx of RPGs from Squaresoft in our local market. At any rate, when the dust from all the bungling and miscommunication settled, Australian consumers ended up being the biggest losers. The only way you'll see an English version of Parasite Eve is by importing it from the US.



PLUS

Great sci-fi plot.
Excellent use of FMVs.

MINUS

Dodgy Resident Evil-style controls
and slow combat.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
90	88	85

OVERALL

86

A great RPG, especially for the story.
A pity we missed the original, which is worth importing.



RAYMAN, IT'S FRENCH FOR YOGHURT... OR SOMETHING

RAYMAN 2: THE GREAT ESCAPE

He may lack limbs, but Rayman is cool. **Eliot Fish** prods the little french blighter...

AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Platformer
PLAYERS:	1
PUBLISHER:	Ubi Soft
PRICE:	\$79.95
RATING:	G
SUPPORTS:	Dual Shock

>>> Rayman. You may remember him from such games as... Rayman 2 on the Nintendo 64 and... Rayman 2 on the PC or even... Rayman 2 on the Dreamcast. Well, he's back in... er, Rayman 2 on the PlayStation. Phew, they're flogging that poor little guy — he's coming to the PS2 also! Well, thankfully, each port of Rayman 2 has had enough differences to make it worthy and this PlayStation incarnation is by no means the weakest of the bunch. Let's see what makes Rayman 2 one of the better platformers this year...

GOING OUT ON A LIMB

2D platformers used to swamp the console market, but those days are gone, and something innocent and fun went with it. The move to 3D seemed to destroy a lot of the charm that emanated from the early 2D games. Rayman 2 might be 3D, but it captures that good

old gaming feel. It's a certain feeling of creative innocence, where the emphasis is on good gameplay and likeable characters, as opposed to screaming 3D graphics. But that's not to say that Rayman 2 sacrifices any of the gorgeous visual effects that 3D games allow. Maybe it has something to do with the developers truly caring about their character... whatever it is, we like it lots.

The learning curve in Rayman 2 is exceptional... maybe a little on the slow side, but the way the game eases you into its intricacies is lovely. When you start out, you could be forgiven for thinking that the gameplay is going to be too simple, but the deeper you go, the more you are challenged and as a result the more fun you have. The controls are excellent with the Dual Shock, and you'll have Rayman side-stepping, somersaulting, swimming and generally having a ball with the full analogue control (and some nice rumble effects). Rayman auto-aims at anything important that you have to shoot at too, so you can concentrate on more important things like staying out of the line of fire, or dangerous substances. Actually, we think a few dangerous substances were consumed by the programmers when they were designing this game. Freaks.

LUSHER THAN LUSH

With each incarnation of Rayman 2, Ubi Soft have re-designed the game to suit the system which is a lot more effort than most developers put into their titles that get ported to other systems. On PlayStation, the levels are quite different in a lot of areas, and we get the feeling that some of these changes were even made after receiving feedback from Rayman 2 on the Nintendo 64 and PC, rather than it just being a case of catering for the PlayStation's now-limited hardware. If you're looking for a good-old plat-

former with heaps of character, fun puzzles and solid controls — then look no further than Rayman 2 on PlayStation. We really can't wait to see the PlayStation 2 version! ■

2D IN YER FACE

Check out how Rayman used to look back in the days when 2D platforming was still the rage. Gee, the game was even gorgeous back then! Those were the days, eh?



PLUS
Great design throughout and smooth play.

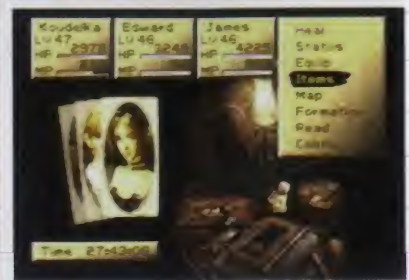
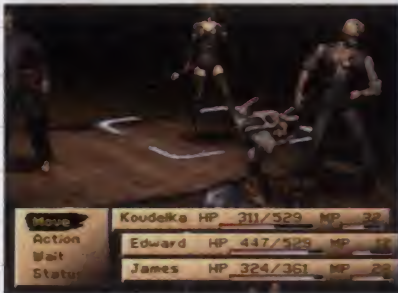
MINUS
The voice acting was unnecessary — we prefer the gibberish on the N64!

VISUALS **85** SOUND **86** GAMEPLAY **88**

OVERALL

87

Lovely stuff from Ubi Soft. Rayman rules.

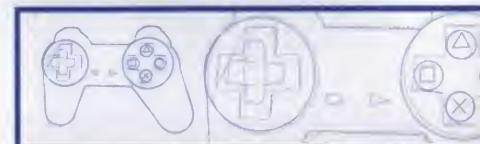


EXCUSE ME MISS, MAYBE YOU COULD HELP ME SCROB THESE JAPANESE CHARACTERS OFF MY KITCHEN FLOOR?

KOUDELKA

Kevin Cheung brightens up our life with another of his rampant RPG reviews.

Gee, there seem to be enough RPGs around to fill a very large empty object. If you're feeling a little confused by choice, just go buy Vagrant Story and then wait for Final Fantasy IX. Simple, really.



PLUS
Excellent artistic direction.

MINUS
Inappropriate musical score.
Battles are very lackluster.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
77	65	72

OVERALL

71

A bit of a tragedy. The ideas had promise, but the final product squanders much of it away.

AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	RPG
PLAYERS:	1
PUBLISHER:	Infogrames
PRICE:	\$79.95
RATING:	MA15+
SUPPORTS:	Dual Shock, Memory Card

>> Koudelka kept ardent RPG watchers waiting for a good two years. Its development team Sacnoth, comprising several defected members from Square's Final Fantasy fold, gave good reason to keep an eye on this title from SNK, who are better known for King of Fighters and Metal Slug.

Unfortunately, not even the experience or good intentions of the development team could save Koudelka from being cannibalised by massive in-house unrest at SNK. The end result is a game with excellent story-telling, artistic design and gameplay concepts, but without any follow-through in production to the end product.

FEAR AND LOATHING

The story begins in 1898 as players are introduced to the main character, Koudelka lasant. As a medium to the spirit world, she possesses some magical talents and is understandably

feared and loathed in 19th Century England. Her quest begins as she breaks into a gigantic uninhabited manor, rumoured to have been built around a monastery containing untold treasures.

Koudelka is soon joined by two other characters with elaborate histories of their own. There is Edward Plunkett, a wealthy Mummy's boy, and James O'Flaherty, a God-fearing conservative. They soon discover that the manor is infested with vile monsters and demons, and their adventure soon becomes a fight to stay alive as they find a way to escape.

Gameplay is best described as a cross between Resident Evil and Final Fantasy. Players navigate through a series of pre-rendered backgrounds, picking up objects, flicking switches, and solving puzzles to gain access to the next area. Chance encounters with nasties are characterised by being whisked away to a battle screen, much like Final Fantasy, except players can move around the area just as in Vandal Hearts 2. Character abilities are all dependent on meticulous inventory management, right down to the number of bullets in each gun. Character development is made by distributing EXP points after levelling.

From a purely artistic level, Koudelka is very pleasing. The gothic exteriors and interior architecture is forboding, using a very tasteful and appropriate mix of dark colours to establish the mood. Beyond that, Koudelka is terribly disappointing. Character movement is wooden, attack animations are bland and uninspired, none of which helps the 15-20 fps pace these games usually run at. It's worst during the battle scenes, where there is simply a floor and no background.

ALL-AMERICAN

What really hurts, though, is that the atmosphere of suspense and intrigue is completely killed by several design factors. The music, firstly, is composed of awful midi samples that just grate at the ear and ruin the mood. Secondly, monsters aren't visible while navigating through the game screens (typical of RPGs), which takes away the thrill of encountering them and fighting in real-time. Finally, the voice acting is entirely American, which defies all logic considering where the game takes place. It's also incredibly lame that whilst Koudelka's being female is a matter of incidence, Infogrames should market her as some kind of new-age Lara wannabe. Sad. ■



BALDUR'S GATE II: SHADOWS OF AMN



➤➤ This game is currently ruining **Dan Toose's** social life.



AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	RPG
PLAYERS:	1-6
PUBLISHER:	Interplay
PRICE:	\$89.95
RATING:	MA15+
REQUIRE:	P166, 16 MB RAM, 320MB HD space
DESIRE:	P11-350+, 64 MB RAM, 3D accelerator

>>> PC RPGs were stagnating a couple of years ago. Very little was being done to suggest that this once powerful genre was ever going to be returned to its former glory. However, a Canadian development team called Bioware changed all that when they released Baldur's Gate, an official Advanced Dungeons & Dragons RPG. Baldur's Gate combined the real time point and click style of gaming from

Diablo, with all the strategy and depth of a turn based game. After seeing other RPGs such as Planescape: Torment and Icewind Dale use the same engine, we now see the true sequel, Baldur's Gate II – Shadows of Amn, and it looks like this series is just getting better and better.

JOB DESCRIPTION: GOD OF MURDER

The story continues on where Baldur's Gate left off. You are the child of Bhaal, God of Murder, and you awaken to find yourself in a prison, being subjected to horrible experiments from an evil mage who is extremely interested in your "untapped potential". It turns out you're now in Amn, a country much further down the Sword Coast from Baldur's Gate. Upon escaping the dungeons, your childhood friend Imoen is taken into custody for illegal use of magic, and you go about finding a means to free her, and exact vengeance upon the mage responsible.

Bioware have made improvements across the board, and both fans of the original title, and newcomers alike

will have much to be impressed by. About the only real downer with the way that BG looked was the lowly 640 x 480 resolution that you had no means to change. Baldur's Gate II allows you to up the res to 800 x 600, which not only makes things look better, but also allows you to see a greater area at once.

On top of the higher resolution, it looks as if the Bioware art department have truly outdone themselves with the absolutely stunning backdrops and environments. Effects such as rippling water in a shallow underground pool, or animated magical devices and structures really help to bring the locations to life.

The game is still just 2D with some 3D properties thrown in, particularly in relation to the spell effects. Character animation is also improved, although it's fair to say that the characters aren't quite as impressive as the backgrounds, or the various monsters you come up against, although there is some attention to detail with areas such as the equipment your characters wear and hold, which all



ONE INSTANCE WITH THE FARTING SKILL COMES IN HANDY



DAN'S PARTY SUCCESSFULLY SURVIVE THE "CHINESE NOODLE" ATTACK



TRAVEL THE WORLD... VISIT STRANGE TOWNS... KILL THE LOCALS

looks as it should.

Little has changed in the way things sound, except that there is far more speech. This results in a greater sense of character and personality, since it gives far more of a feel for the tone of conversation than a simple string of text does. All spell and weapon effects sound very similar to the first title, which is not a bad thing, as there's plenty of diversity, and a great sense of impact with the various combat sounds.

I WANNA CAST "MAGIC MISSILE"!

The real step forward for the series however is in the advancements in gameplay, and Bioware have gone a couple steps closer to creating the perfect AD&D computer RPG. The main area that has been improved is character creation and development. Now you are no longer limited to the standard classes available in 2nd Edition Advanced Dungeons & Dragons rules, but also a few extra classes, plus a

variety of character "kits". The new classes are the monk, the barbarian, and the sorcerer, but the list of classes is huge thanks to all the kits. A kit is essentially a variation of a class, for example, an assassin is a thief kit, and a cavalier is a paladin kit. Each kit has its own bonuses and penalties, and thus becomes a class in its own right.

On top of the kits, there are new skills that affect combat, which are taken from 2nd Edition expansion manuals, such as the "Complete Fighters Handbook". This won't mean much to those who haven't played the pen and paper AD&D role playing game, but having special skills that give you bonuses when fighting with a weapon in each hand. Things like this help you play the game the way you'd like it to be played.

If you thought Baldur's Gate was a

bit easy, you'll find Baldur's Gate II offers far more challenging battles. Monsters fight far more intelligently, especially those that can cast spells. Enemies use contingency spells, and activate spell-like effects in batches. Fortunately, your party members have also become a bit smarter, and will tend to take the shortest route possible. There are also more "big" monsters, which actually look like they're a lot bigger than you, which was something that was a bit suspect in the original game. Those that have Baldur's Gate characters may bring them across to BG2, and apparently you'll be able to take your Baldur's

Gate II characters into the upcoming Neverwinter Nights.

With tons of sub-plots and extra quests, Baldur's Gate II offers gamers hundreds of hours of RPG goodness, that clearly improves on all the other games using the Infinity engine. Anyone who likes computer RPGs will appreciate the outstanding effort Bioware have put into this awesome game. ■

IT'S GOOD TO BE THE KING

Baldur's Gate 2 also allows you to do things that have previously been restricted to the pen and paper game, such as take control of your own stronghold and acquire followers! Different classes get different types of stronghold, and as a result there's a lot of replay value here, since you'll be able to take different quests for a different "reward". Mages may end up with a tower with golems, etc. While fighters will find themselves as lord of a keep, with men-at-arms, and surrounding lands.



WE THINK THERE'S A 5TH CHOICE MISSING FROM THIS LIST.



PLUS

Tons of sub-quests. Excellent character development system.

MINUS

Still in a relatively low resolution.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
90	90	95

OVERALL

93

If you play only one RPG this year, make sure it's Baldur's Gate II.



RUGBY 2001

➤➤ Jona Lomu's Rugby has long been awaiting a successor, and **Roland Flanagan** thinks he's found it...



AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Sport
PLAYERS:	1-4
PUBLISHER:	EA Sports
PRICE:	\$89.95
RATING:	G
REQUIREMENTS:	P200 MMX, 32MB RAM
REQUIREMENTS:	PII-300+, 64MB RAM

➤➤ On first inspection, Rugby 2001 seems just as stylish as all other available EA Sports titles. Flashy intro, realistic physics and awesomely detailed character models. Never have a human body's

physics been so well replicated in a game. The bone crunching tackles, the fierce palm offs, the dummy... its ALL HERE! Could Rugby 2001 be the pinnacle of 3D sporting games as we know them?

BLOKES WITH BALLS

The in-game models are beautifully animated, allowing for smooth, flowing movement, combined with realistic faces and the bodily proportion of the players the models represent. A major letdown, however, lies in the player collisions. On countless occasions, support players for a ruck or maul decide, instead of picking up the ball like a good polygon, that waltzing through the players trying to play a game of rugby is easier... hmmm.

This problem is just an introduction to the flaws of Rugby 2001. EA obviously haven't spent enough time testing the gameplay. The AI is abysmal, offering nothing more than huge lumbering loons who have about as much interest in making the move forward as a dog in a pool of monkey spanking walrus (err... say what? - Ed). Anyone who follows Rugby will know that when a player

is tackled, the forward pack tries like hell to be the first ones there, to push over the oppositions pack. Pity, cause in Rugby 2001, you could be mere meters away from the ball, but pre-designated start points for the pack drag the players back, before finally allowing them to run into the maul or ruck. You may be thinking I'm being harsh about this one AI flaw, but it is so antagonisingly frustrating to wait for your team of thugs to get their breath, eat a meat pie, and then finally start doing what they're payed for! The problems only grow from here, as rucks and mauls become increasingly difficult to win against decent teams due to the countless controls needed to push a ruck, rake the ball, move the ruck and so on. Now although these are great options to have, they just don't work due to the many buttons you'll need to press at once. A gamepad with plenty of buttons is probably the best way to go here.

GLITCHY BALLS

Glitching — a problem for many games, and overly evident here. I had to reboot my system three times because



THAT'S NOT THE FIRST BALL HE'S KICKED TODAY



C'MON, GROUP HUG! AWWWWW...



of a glitch surrounding the ball and the player's desire to pick it up. One of these involved good ol' George Gregan. He went to pick up the ball from the back of a ruck, and lo behold it seemed he was caught on another player's foot... he wouldn't pick the ball up, nor would the pack move back to allow the opponents a chance to take the ball. Another involved the ball getting stuck behind one of the sideline billboards, and the ref going after it. I could do nothing but watch as he stood there, looking like he'd seen his own mum and dad making babies.

Tactics play an important part in any rugby game, and Rugby 2001 isn't any different. Each time the game stops for a scrum, lineout or penalty, you have the option of 4 tactical moves, varying from running wingers to kick defences. You'll have to read the documentation that is installed with the game to find out exactly what all these different tactical manoeuvres do.

The variety of moves available to you is impressive considering the limitations a keyboard poses for both comfort and easy access to keys. You have the obvious pass buttons, with both left and right passing options, but the tap of either key will throw a dummy. Then there is sprinting, the grubber, drop kick/field goal and punt down field. All these keyboard combinations are easily accessible to the left hand and the closed area allows for easy transition from key to key.

The commentary, as with all EA sport

titles, sounds great, but lacks variety. All the voices are crisp and clear, and the crowd sounds fantastic. Want chants? Screams of support? Rugby Union fan? Look no further!

All AI flaws aside, Rugby 2001 is a serious contender for Sports Game of the Year. The many different competitions you can play in include the Tri-Nations series between New Zealand, South Africa and our own Wallabies, to the VI nations cup in Europe featuring England, Scotland, France, Ireland and Wales. The usual friendlies are available featuring my personal favourites the Tongans! This game comes oh so close to shining. All aspects look and feel

right, although the balance is a bit off.

EA, we suggest releasing a patch fast, rather than waiting for next year's instalment — you're onto a winner, it just needs that extra polish. ■



C'MON GUYS, LEAVE IT FOR THE AFTER GAME SHOWERS



PLUS

Awesome graphics and physics.

MINUS

Dodgy AI that you could slap with a wet fish.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
90	82	84

OVERALL
82

Get rid of the glitches and you have a first class Rugby sim.



DUMED ON THIS MONTH'S CD

HEAVY METAL F.A.K.K. 2



AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Action/Adventure
PLAYERS:	1
PUBLISHER:	Gathering Of Developers
PRICE:	\$89.95
RATING:	MA15+
REQUIREMENTS:	PIII 300, 64MB RAM, 8MB video card
REQUIREMENTS:	PIII 450, 128MB RAM, 32MB video card



Cam Shea gets faking busy with this bitch...

>> FAKK 2 is based on the recent movie Heavy Metal 2000, the sequel to 1981's cult classic Heavy Metal. Set on the planet Eden, you play Julie Strain, yet another gaming heroine with impressive "statistics". She's a warrior from the Holy Land Wars, and legendary

for defeating the evil Lord Tyler... whoever that is, and leading her people to this planet of everlasting youth.

FEDORAS? JUST G STRINGS...

First impressions of FAKK 2 are good. The opening setting will really take your breath away, plonking you in a village overlooking a huge panoramic valley. Right from the word go, you'll feel like this is a living breathing world. There are plenty of NPCs going about their business - all of whom have something to say. Then there are the smaller touches, like the little kangaroo creatures hopping about that you can sneak up behind and catch. Just don't throw them into water - or it's Gremlins all over again.

If you've played any of the Tomb Raider games, then you'll have no trouble hopping into Julie's boots. Yep, it's another running, jumping, crawling, switch flipping, commando rolling, rope swinging, monkey bar climbing kinda game. It's a fun monkey bar climbing kinda game though, and packs many of the moves and style that we've always wished Lara possessed. FAKK 2 really

shouldn't be compared to Eidos' monster (franchise) though, because their agendas are quite different - there are no Fedoras to be found here. And who wants a whip when you could be toting some of this title's hardcore weaponry anyway. Yes, the emphasis in FAKK 2 is firmly on action over puzzle solving, and by the end of the game your armoury is very impressive, ranging from twin uzis and rocket launchers to a chainsaw sword.

The firepower is complemented by a great weapon equip system that allows both hands to get busy gat-wise. Each hand can be equipped with a weapon or shield, opening up a whole host of deadly combinations and giving Julie the skills to take on a wide variety of combat scenarios. For instance, you could equip an uzi and a sword to cover both melee and ranged attacks, or you could equip a sword and a shield to cover offence and defence at once. The only disappointment in this department is the tasteful looking, but relatively clunky onscreen display used to swap and assign weapons.

Gameplay-wise, FAKK 2 is a mixed bag. Busting caps is good fun, but



JULIE LOVES A GOOD BANG

Killcreek has competition... It seems that the real life inspiration for Julie Strain is an ex-Penthouse pet (thanks for letting me know btw Kevvie!) named... Julie Strain. In fact, on the official Heavy Metal website you can check out a gallery of pictures that are sure to scar you for life. She's a whole lot nicer to look at in game!



dealing with swarm after swarm of pissant insects seems to occupy far too much of your time early on in the game. The play balance is good overall, with the relatively simple puzzles rarely impeding your progress.

Dialogue with NPCs is entertaining, with all the bad puns you'd expect and some good voice acting for a change, but again, there's little point talking to the other characters. Objectives and storyline progression are almost exclusively revealed in predetermined FMVs, leaving other character interaction largely pointless. Your initiative is unlikely to be rewarded.

BUT JULIE'S NO STRAIN ON THE EYES

Graphically, FAKK 2 won't disappoint, as there are some awesome weapon effects and breathtaking environs. Even so, for a game running on the Quake 3 engine, FAKK 2 doesn't really push the envelope, and at times feels more like you're roaming through a heavily modified Q2 engine based world. The visual design in the game is a high point though, sporting some nice architecture and freaky enemies. The third person perspective also works remarkably well.



There's just the right mix of action and adventure to require it, and the camera mechanics have been implemented tremendously — perhaps helped along by the large environments allowing the camera room to breathe. Environments are large with plenty of areas to explore, but first impressions are a little deceiving. After being wowed by the size and interactivity of the environments and characters, it won't be long until you discover that what you see is pretty much what you get. There are doors set in most of the buildings, but they're mostly for show - you can actually only enter a small percentage.

FAKK 2 is an entertaining romp, but ultimately it doesn't add anything new to the gaming melting pot. ■

BUYER BEWARE

You know that a game is rushed to retail when a patch appears a matter of days after its release. That was the case with FAKK 2, and the retail code we received left us in no doubt that the game should have been held back. Save problems and crashes were common and frustrating. Perhaps more guiling, however, is FAKK 2's unexplored promise. Simply put, it's too short for a game of this style, and could have offered so much more.



THERE'S SOMETHING VERY WRONG ABOUT THIS PICTURE



PLUS

Props to the excellent weapons. Freaky enemies!

MINUS

Doesn't really fulfill its potential. No Multiplayer.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
88	86	77

OVERALL

78

FAKK 2 is unlikely to make a splash in the gaming world, but we recommend the virtual Julie Strain over the real life one anyway.

© 2000 DIMED ON THIS MONTH'S CD

KISS PSYCHO CIRCUS

THE NIGHTMARE CHILD

God gave rock 'n' roll to you. Did you know that? **Eliot Fish** rubs his eyes...

AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	First Person Shooter
PLAYERS:	1-Multi
PUBLISHER:	Gathering Of Developers/Take 2
PRICE:	\$89.95
RATING:	M15+
REQUIREMENTS:	P266, 64MB RAM, 3D Card
RECOMMENDATIONS:	P11 300+, 128MB RAM, 32MB 3D card

>>> Let's get something straight... KISS Psycho Circus has nothing to do with the rock band KISS. Well, very little. They certainly aren't in the game, and if you were expecting four polygonal rock musicians jumping about in old leather, then you're going to be sadly disappointed — or happily relieved. One or the other. This game is based upon the Todd McFarlane comic book, which frankly, makes much more sense. Each member of KISS is represented by an "elder" (damn egotistical musicians) — the Star Bearer (Paul Stanley), the Beast King (Peter Criss — but which Peter Criss?), the Celestial (Ace Frehley) and the Demon (Gene

Simmons, natch). As a group they're known as The Four Who Are One — not KISS, the 70s rock band who wear big shoes. Anyhow, to defeat the big bad guy known as the Destroyer, you'll have to take control of each avatar who represents the respective KISS member and lay waste to a whole army, no not the KISS army unfortunately, but one of hellish creatures. So grab your axe — look, stop thinking of rock 'n' roll, damnit — and let's cleave some ugly beasts.

I WANNA ROCK AND ROLL ALL NIIIIIGHT...

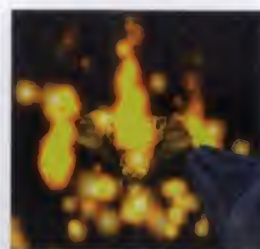
Starting out as the Star Bearer (you can play the chapters in any order, the game just won't make that much sense), you start running about a series of dark and dirty corridors. Unfortunately, you pretty much do this for the whole game. Make sure you pump up that gamma and buy some visene. When you meet your first foes — the headless (weird crab things) — you'll only be equipped with a melee weapon, your sword. But don't fret yet, you'll soon

have a machine gun style weapon, a shotgun and so on. All the weapons have weird designs, but they function just like any old shooter, so don't be deceived by the fact that the rail gun looks like a whip for instance. They all have unusual models and a variety of differing pyrotechnics (where would a KISS game be without pyrotechnics?) but there's nothing new here. In fact, a lot of the creatures you face also have very close similarities to monsters from Doom, Quake and Half Life... the Stump launch fireballs like the Doom Imps and the Gasbag is like the Scrag from Quake. It's almost as if the developer decided that





STOP THAT OR I'LL BING "I WAS MADE FOR LOVIN' YOU"



THE TONGUE JUST ISN'T RIGHT - THE GAME GETS MINUS 10%

basing the game on the KISS Psycho Circus comics was enough to obscure the fact that the gameplay ideas are all lifted from other titles.

The level design unfortunately doesn't do much to help boost the game out of these other weakly implemented ideas. On the whole, the gothic environments are more dull than creepy, and you can't help but feel as if you're progressing through a series of "maps" as opposed to a collection of believable environments — on the Cathedral level you can even see where the sky texture has been applied to the inside of the box the level is in. Generally, just plain dull. KISS Psycho Circus uses the Littech engine, which to be honest, is like the Unreal engine without any of the nice special effects. Most of the levels are a dull, dusty colour, the low polygon count is more than noticeable and the texturing is terrible. To be honest, the game looks pretty dated.

...AND DEATHMATCH EVERY DAY

Whereas games such as Deus Ex are pushing boundaries with genre-crossing gameplay, KISS Psycho Circus is stuck in the old shooter tradition of simply mowing down waves of enemies, picking up powerups and getting to the exit. It's admirable that they tried to pack in as many enemies on screen as possible, to give you that Doom-style panic, but it becomes more annoying than fun after long periods of play. Monsters spawning behind

you is a pretty cheap tactic, and it certainly emphasises the fact that Psycho Circus is never meant to feel at all realistic. Instead, this is all about surviving mountains of monsters, which probably looked good on paper, but the execution is poor and it gets boring very quickly. The incentive to become more and more beefy by recovering the armour pieces is not quite enough considering the dull action that you have to wade through. The characters are awfully generic, even if they are vaguely based on the members of KISS.

Psycho Circus also has some multi-player options, and the deathmatch is about as much fun as any bog stan-

dard deathmatch, but the weapons and level design really let the game down. Unless you're a massive fan of the comic book series, there's very little here to recommend. ■



HEY, STOP GLUWHING ANNNNN WILL YA? MEN.

! Gathering Of Developers have another first person shooter in the works that looks very impressive — Max Payne. We'll be keeping an eye on that one...



PLUS
There are some old KISS songs hidden in the game.

MINUS
There are some new KISS songs hidden in the game.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
70	70	65

OVERALL
69

A fairly unintelligent first person shooter that only rabid KISS fans could appreciate.



WHAT, IS HE DRIVING WITH HIS KNEES AGAIN?

GRAND PRIX 3

He's always calling us a bunch of prix, so welcome **Ryan McKay**.



AVAILABILITY: Now
CATEGORY: Racing Sim
PLAYERS: 1
PUBLISHER: Microprose
PRICE: \$99.95
RATING: G
REQUIREMENTS: P266, 32MB RAM, 8MB video card
RECOMMENDATIONS: PIII 300+, 128MB RAM, 32MB 3D Card
SUPPORTS: Force Feedback Steering Wheel

>> Nearly a decade ago, Geoff Crammond created his first Formula 1 masterpiece with World Circuit: The Grand Prix Race Simulation. In 1996, Grand Prix 2 arrived to the applause of a world of racing fans — and has since been the definitive Formula 1 simulation. Now, in the world of high-powered computers and 3D graphics, a new king has been crowned — the grandchild of the original, Grand Prix 3. Claiming to be the definitive Formula One driving experience, Grand Prix 3 is set to continue a tradition started before 'Pentium' was even a thought.

GEOFF CRAMMOND AKA 'THE MAN'

What the GP series has always done is not just deliver a racing game, but the nuts and bolts of the sport. There's plenty more to F1 than simply driving around a track overtaking other cars. You want statistics? This game is a math teacher's wet dream. You want the freedom to cal-

ibrate and tweak your vehicle down to the last spark plug? I got grease under my fingernails from playing this game.

With a range of driving aids and five skill levels to choose from, players can have as much or as little involvement as they want. With auto gears, steering help, auto-brakes, indestructibility, self-righting spins and ideal racing line turned on it pretty much drives itself. As you become more proficient you can start turning the aids off one by one, and it's worth it. Most people shy away from manual gears, but it doesn't take too long to get the hang of it, and the gameplay is improved immeasurably. It genuinely feels like you're driving a car. The feeling of taking a corner perfectly, brushing the curb on the far side then shifting up through the gears as you accelerate into the straight is a rush.

Every track is different and every corner unique. You can't just dump it past cars. Much like Arthur's method for picking up girls, you have to follow, keep up tight in their slipstream and pick the right time to make your move. A gripe here is that it's far too easy to shunt opponents off as they break for certain corners. The front wing is capable of withstanding far greater impacts than it would in real life. Making it a little more brittle would negate this most underhand of tactics since a trip to the pits for a new nose would far outweigh any advantage gained. The new physics engine allows cars to take

off and roll over, enabling some pretty spectacular crashes, but this is just the garnish. OK so GP3 isn't perfect. But it very nearly is.

The big surprise with Grand Prix 3 is that there are no big surprises. If you've bought and loved Grand Prix 2 then there's no doubt that you will love Grand Prix 3. But maybe, just maybe, gamers are looking for something more these days when it comes to computer entertainment. Conceivably, Grand Prix 3 isn't really a 'game' at all and presents to us a kind of pit stop paradox. It is, at the end of the day, an amazingly precise simulation of Formula One racing, made possible thanks to some superbly well-designed driving assistance (where the game optionally but deliberately simplifies the process of driving). If you want a game that simulates real life as accurately as possible with a home computer, then Grand Prix 3 is it. ■

WHERE THERE'S SMOKE, THERE'S DOLLARS

Already an avid F1 fan has coded a patch enabling you to drive using the full 2000 season liveries complete with politically incorrect tobacco sponsorship and all! You can download the modest 740Kb zip file via the web at: ftp://ftp.wireplay.net/pub/downloads/GP3/GP3_2000.zip and bring the 98 season up to date.



PLUS
You want Formula One racing? Well here it is.

MINUS
May well need a high-end machine to do it justice.

VISUALS **87** SOUND **92** GAMEPLAY **90**

OVERALL
90

A genre in itself, Grand Prix 3 is the benchmark for all future F1 titles.



WE PARTICULARLY LIKE THE BOOMERANG CARPET. HGH.



THE SIMS: LIVIN' LARGE

Fresh from Sims rehab, **Cam Shea** can't help having one last hit...



AVAILABLE	Now
CATEGORY	Life Simulation
PLAYED	1
PUBLISHER	EA
PRICE	TBC
GRADE	G
REQUIRE	P 233, 32MB RAM
REQUIRE	PII 400, 64MB RAM

>> After receiving rave reviews from just about everyone - ourselves included - the phenomenon that is The Sims is a curious one. After a few weeks of complete non-stop addiction, we put the game down and didn't go back to it. The Sims simply didn't have the long-term appeal that we hoped it would. Once you've played with a few different houses and families, taken a Sim or two to the end of their career paths, created a gaudily over the top house and experimented with a variety of torture chambers, there really isn't much to hold your attention. The daily grind of monitoring each sim's bowel movements and hygiene levels soon lost its appeal. The more we played, the more noticeable some problems became.

BE A GAMES REVIEWER

Enter the "Livin' Large" expansion pack. Will this be the vehicle to inject long term satisfaction into the game? No. Will this be the vehicle to keep die-hard fans happy with a whole CD packed

with new objects and wallpapers? Yes. That's what Livin' Large is all about. It's not about fixing the shortcomings of the main game, but about giving the dedicated fans more to play with.

With this in mind, there have been some gross oversights in the release of Livin' Large. Chief among these is that there has been no attempt to fix up the appalling AI path-finding in the game. There's nothing more annoying in a time critical game such as this than to have two people standing in a doorway and neither being able to move, or to have sims routinely take the longest possible route from A to B.

There are five new career paths - paranormal, hacker, slacker, musician and journalist. We especially like it that Maxis have placed games reviewer as the second lowest position in the journalist career path - just above typesetter, with quotes like "the lowliest writing job you can get", and "deciding on a whim whether you'll give them good press or not". That's a nice way to say thanks for all those rave reviews, Maxis! Hmmm... I feel a 50% whim coming on!

AND A HACKER

There are now five distinct neighbourhoods, so you can have up to fifty families on the go at any one time. There's heaps of new furniture and wallpaper, including three excellent new themes - a gaudy Vegas set, a medieval set and a retro sci-fi set. It's undeniably

good fun creating your own soap operas around one of these themes.

The expansion pack also takes the Sims in a wackier direction, with quirky objects like the voodoo doll, genie, sad clown and chemistry set - and these are only a few of the 125 new objects. The telescope can even trigger an alien abduction... Many of the new objects are different from anything in the original, but there's already so much in the way of objects and wallpaper to download from the official site, it seems a little pointless to bother with this. The new career paths also, barely make any difference - a few new outfits and working hours, but still no actual interaction with the sim's workplace.

Also annoying is that the character models and skins are still quite lame. Where's the creativity? In the programs available for download from the Sims website (which incidentally, aren't included), you can create completely crazy skins. This expansion pack's purpose is to provide a massive selection of graphical additions to the formula, and yet cycling through the character skins, you could be mistaken for thinking that nothing has changed. If you're still playing The Sims, then this expansion pack is for you. The rest of us though, are unlikely to get anything new out of this. Bring on the Sims online! ■



PLUS
More stuff to play with.

MINUS
It's all very simmy... er, samey.

VISUALS **82** SOUND **80** GAMEPLAY **79**

OVERALL
79

Plenty of superficial stuff to tinker with but the core changes we were looking for haven't been made.



SUMMER DAY WAS NEVER THE SAME AFTER THE VIKINGS ARRIVED



THE YEARLY VISIGHTH MARRI GHAS WAS A BIG HIT... THIS YEAR, PINK WAS THE THEME



AGE OF EMPIRES 2:

THE CONQUERERS

Rolland Flanagan waxes lyrical on the art of war...

AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	RTS/Expansion Pack
PLAYERS:	1-Multi
PUBLISHER:	Microsoft
PRICE:	\$55
RAITING:	G
REQUIRED:	P166, 32MB RAM
RECOMMENDED:	P111, 400, 128MB RAM

>>> Age of Empires 2: The Age of Kings was undoubtedly the best strategy game released last year. The races were distinct, the units had charm and the campaigns were demanding. It tweaked all the elements from the original to craft a superior game, complete with new graphics and civilisations. Now, one year later, Ensemble Studios has released the expansion pack – the Conquerors, and it's a perfect example of what an expansion pack should be.

LET'S EXPAND UPON THAT

Strategy game expansion packs often fail to offer anything new to the game, spare a few hastily designed levels that can be completed in 10 minutes and some units that give one race or side a huge military advantage. As such, it's easy to dismiss them as nothing more than a cash cow for the developer. Well, put Mr

Sceptismo back in his box, because Conquerors is one of the best strategy expansion packs ever, and has gone a long way towards restoring our waning interest in this lost artform of PC gaming.

Conquerors comes with five new civilisations and a host of new campaigns. There are quite a few improvements to the game balance as well. Most of the civilisations and buildings have been tweaked in a new way, often resulting in cheaper goods for you. The new civilisations are well balanced, and cater to a particular style of play, whether it be cavalry charging, infantry rushing or archer mobbing. The new campaigns are very challenging, to the point where those in the full game seem mediocre by comparison - both in depth and style. The new campaigns include Attila the Hun, Montezuma, and El Cid the Spanish lord. They really take the game to a new level, with the mission goals and storylines being both complex and compelling to accomplish.

DEFENDING GOONS

Each civilisation now has its own 'special' technology, often affecting their special unit in some way. For the Aztecs, their special tech gives their

infantry +4 to attack, whereas the Byzantines tech is

Logistica, which gives the Cataphracts trample damage! The new units available to all races are awesome, including the halberdier, a pikeman upgrade, and the petard, your everyday demolitions man who excels in taking down the walls of defending goons.

The problem with farms has also been resolved. Farm repairs can now be queued at the mill in the same manner you would queue units. Although not entirely ruling out farm repairing, it does make life a whole lot easier. There's also a new mission start screen which includes a scout report alongside mission goals and hints. The scouts report details on dangerous places on the map and places on the map needed for victory.

The improvements made in this game are amazing, and Ensemble should congratulate themselves on creating such a rewarding game and expansion pack. It combines everything expansion packs were ever meant to do, and takes that next step as well. Conquerors is an essential purchase for anyone who enjoyed Age Of Empires or Age of Kings. ■



PLUS

All the game tweaks, new civilisations and campaigns you could ask for.

MINUS

It's only an expansion, you'll have to buy AOE 2: Age of Kings to play.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
86	81	90

OVERALL

89

Finally, an expansion pack to test our nerves, not just our wallets.

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SEE THEY MAKE OLYMPIANS WEAR EMBARRASSING STUFF THESE DAYS



POWERSTONE 2

He loves Powerstone so much people refer to **Cam Shea** as a "stoner"...



AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Party beat 'em up
PLAYERS:	1-4
PUBLISHER:	Capcom
PRICE:	\$89.95
RATING:	G
SUPPORTS:	VMU, Vibration Pack

>> One of the brightest sparks in the Australian Dreamcast launch lineup was Powerstone, a title that appealed

to almost everyone, with easy to grasp and innovative gameplay mechanics, frenetic action, unprecedented freedom of movement, and cool anime design. So what's left for the sequel to achieve?

Plenty thank you very much! For starters, how about four player action? How about a huge number of new weapons and items? How about new characters and tweaked fighting mechanics? How about cool new are-

nas packed with interactivity? Well, the sequel's got you covered.

GETTING STONED

Powerstone 2 has expanded on all the features that made the original so unique, without staying too samey. In fact, Powerstone 2 feels quite different from its predecessor. The balance of fights has been improved considerably. The jump kick strategy is basically gone now. In the original, fights

often degraded into flying kick after flying kick, as this was the best way to cover ground and get the jump on opponents. For Powerstone 2 this move has been eliminated, so you'll have to be more inventive.

The role that the powerstones play has also changed. Getting to the stones is no longer the be all and end all. You can play with peripheral weapons and interactive elements almost to the exclusion of the stones if you wish. And



DOUBLE-BARRLED MAYHEM

Just a warning, we recommend using AT LEAST a 60cm TV for Powerstone 2. Otherwise you're gonna be squinting a whole lot in four-player mode.



THE LEVELS ARE BIG, INTERACTIVE AND TOUGH



PRINCESS PEACH DROPS IN TO GET STONED



LAME SEQUEL CHARACTERS

Why is it that lame-ass characters are almost always standard in game sequels? What is it about creating a few new dudes to fight alongside the old dudes that is so hard? We don't know, but Capcom have introduced some real dud characters for Powerstone 2. The only other game in recent memory that has made a bigger boo boo would have to be *Bust A Move 2* (the sequel to what was released as *Bust A Groove* out here). Those characters were sooo lame... and boy are we glad that it's not getting released over here.



once you're powered up, you're far more vulnerable than in the original. Attacks do less damage and can be interrupted very easily.

So the balance of the fights has improved, but what's it like duking it out in a four-player battle royale? Gaming bliss... yet utterly bewildering at the same time. Four player fighting takes Powerstone 2 even further from its fighting game roots and more into the death sports category. Fights are incredibly hectic with projectiles flying everywhere, players trying to outsmart each other, and regular scripted sequences. We've had friends watch us play, and it takes about three games before they work out what the hell's going on! With four players on screen and so much stuff flying back and forth, it's pure chaos. A frequent problem is losing your fighter's position amongst all the action, further compounded by how small the characters become when the viewpoint is all the way back.

What really makes Powerstone 2 the wonderfully confusing game it is though are the environments themselves. Play is no longer confined to the one static area. Instead, fights are dynamic, moving through a series of locations. One of our favourites is the level where you're fighting on top of two submarines. They take turns submerging and rising, leaving you to swim your way out of trouble and avoid the frequent icebergs they plow through. Add hovercrafts that you can

use to fly around dropping bombs, a missile launch control panel, gun turrets to sit at and the powerstones, and you've got yourself one frantic battle.

Aside from all this pre-scripted stuff, there's a huge number of new weapons to pick up. Everything from telescopic staffs and freezing staffs to ray guns and shields, through to megaphones. Playing through the game in adventure mode earns you money that can be spent in the item shop on well over 100 new items to inject into the game. Coolest of all though, is the ability in the item shop to combine two items to make a new one.

A BOUNTY OF EYE CANDY... AARGH!

The graphical style is very much the same as the original, as is the game engine. There's some slowdown here and there, but it doesn't detract from the game. What does detract from the game a little are the three weak new characters, and the utterly uninspired bosses. Why didn't Capcom work their art department a little harder dammit?

Perhaps Powerstone 2's greatest weakness, however, is the low level count. Sure, the levels are multi-sectioned and there are a couple of hidden ones, but you'll quickly churn through them all. If you have regular multiplayer nights then this may not be an issue, but it seems a little strange given the extensive item customisability that Capcom didn't take the next logical step and give you some kind of simplistic level designing tool as well.

We've had heaps of fun with Powerstone 2, but the lack of levels leaves us wondering whether it's worth shelling out your hard earned dosh. Also keep in mind the sheer lunacy of the gameplay — this is a party game, not a hardcore beat em up. Regardless, Powerstone 2 is an energetic and addictive title, and there's nothing else out there quite like it. ■



CAM AND ELIOT GANG UP ON THE LONESOME KEVIN



PLUS
Unique, crazy four-player action.

MINUS
Barely enough stages, can be difficult to follow the action.

VISUALS **87** SOUND **75** GAMEPLAY **88**

OVERALL
86

One of the best party games there is hands down.



LEATHER UNDERPANTS, MUSTACHES, BIG BOOTS... HMMMM

WWF ROYAL RUMBLE

Get your free big, sweaty men in underpants screensaver at <http://www.wfroyalrumble.com/>

The Hyper crew staged their own royal rumble to see who didn't have to review this game. **Eliot Fish** lost out...



AVAILABLE:	TBA
CATEGORY:	Wrestling
PLAYERS:	1-4
PUBLISHER:	THQ
PRICE:	\$89.95
RATING:	M
SUPPORTS:	VMU

>>> Does the mental picture of eight men in an enclosed space wearing nothing but lycra and make-up squeezing each other's thighs sound appealing to you? Then you must love superstar wrestling. Yes, those big sweaty men are back, sticking their heads in places not even the other wrestler's wives would dare venture. WWF Royal Rumble on the Dreamcast is another in a long line of wrestling games that date back to the Neolithic era (or thereabouts), and will no doubt be devoured by hordes of beefcake lovers out there. Why?

SHOWING CRACK


There are games, and then there are games that pretend to be games but are actually mindless pieces of dumb entertainment. WWF Royal Rumble, as

you might have guessed, falls into the latter category. If you know who the following wrestlers are, then no doubt you'll be running to your local games shop before you even finish reading this review... the Rock, The Undertaker, Tazz, Kurt Angle and so on. Yes, all the big rock n' roll wrestlers are here, well some of them. You see, that's probably one of WWF Royal Rumble's biggest flaws — there aren't a huge array of wrestlers here to sustain the game in the long term. True, there are over 20, but when you face off against them in the Royal Rumble (which can allow a hilarious eight wrestlers on screen at one time), it can get a bit repetitive when the same wrestlers come out to jump in the ring.

Actually, in terms of gameplay options, WWF Royal Rumble is strangely lean. There is no create-a-wrestler mode, and no other gameplay modes other than Exhibition Match, Versus Mode and Royal Rumble. If you choose to play on your lonesome, this gets mighty dull mighty quickly. Get another three friends around, though, and you will have a pretty good laugh at the four-

player matches. It certainly makes for a more entertaining experience, although you'll all still be questioning the distinct lack of player moves and the clumsy animation. If you don't succumb to the tempting button mashing, you'll find that tag-team combos can be executed by timing a double button press, and that you can build up a special meter for a particularly nasty attack. The player movement feels spastic though, and you'll be hammering the d-pad (yes there was no analogue stick control) to get your wrestler to face in the right direction. We don't want to have to spend half the game staring at wrestler crack.

WWF Royal Rumble is quite pretty visually, but it looks nowhere near realistic, despite the digitised player faces. Mixed with the suspiciously dumbed-down controls and lack of options, it's pretty hard to recommend this title for anyone other than the ultimate wrestling freak who doesn't give a damn about gameplay. It's depressing, but this game is going to sell thousands no matter what we say. Well, I guess if it makes you laugh, you can call it entertainment. ■



PLUS
Some pretty funny tag-team animations.

MINUS
No big, glitzy player intros!

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
75	78	52

OVERALL
68

This could have been much better than the mildly amusing waste of time that it is. The lack of options is just unforgivable.



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SYDNEY 2000

Eliot Fish remembers the old Hyper dream of a Quake Olympics where he could strive for gold...



AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Button Masher
PLAYERS:	1-4
PUBLISHER:	Eidos Interactive
PRICE:	\$89.95
RATING:	G
SUPPORTS:	VNU, Bumble Pack

>> Some of you may remember the warm and fuzzy days of a computer game called Summer Games. It was the sole reason keyboard manufacturers made millions of dollars in the 1980s. Well, it looks like Sega are probably putting Dreamcast controller manufacturing into overdrive to meet the predicted demand that's going to come from consumers post Sydney 2000. What are we talking about? A genre of gameplay commonly known as "Button Mashing". Usually reserved for sports titles, and especially Olympics licensed titles, Button Mashing is the developers easiest way of simulating the mental and physical strain of a competitive sport. Or at least that's their excuse. By pummeling your controller/keyboard to smithereens, you can successfully replicate an athlete's physical exertion. Then you can go back to playing a real game.

So seeing as Sydney 2000 is available on all the other platforms also (PC, PlayStation, Nintendo 64, and Game

Boy), you're probably wondering how the Dreamcast manages to deliver us this official Olympic gameplay and how it compares.

OLYMPICS SHMOLYMPICS

Choose between Arcade mode, Olympic mode and training – Olympic mode being the obligatory "championship" style mode where you have to live with your horrid performance. Next, select the event you'd like to take part in. Events range from the 100m sprint to the diving and weight lifting, with the emphasis on the track and field. Take the Javelin for instance... you mash the "power" buttons to build up a little energy meter and then press the "action" button to select your angle and throw. All the events are this simple, with a few twists on the concept thrown in there for the more complicated events like diving. There's a big problem here with the Dreamcast controller, namely being the actual design of it. With button bashing games, ideally, you want to put the controller down on a flat surface and bash the button with both hands to get a fast and steady rhythm going. Unfortunately, the lumpy Dreamcast controller doesn't sit flat and steady, so you have to grip it in one hand, making button mashing awfully difficult. It's possible, but it's difficult to

sustain the speed of mashing which is required, whilst trying to also keep the controller steady. On a PC for instance, it's quite easy to go nuts on your keyboard and only damage your sensitive fingers. But with a controller in hand, you're also going to suffer from cramps and other injuries which can result in frustration and in some cases, anger. Events like the aforementioned diving for instance, are a welcome relief, as it's more about timing button presses rather than maintaining a flurry of finger presses. If you somehow manage to get comfortable with the DC controller, then there's some humorous fun to be had here, in the good old style of games of yesteryear.

Graphically, Sydney 2000 is quite impressive. It's certainly authentic, and player animations are really quite lovely in most cases. There's the odd bit of slowdown and some low frames of animation, but all up, the game looks quite pretty. There are replays, commentary from the official Olympic presenters themselves (including Bruce McAvaney) and some funny training exercises thrown in to help beef up your athlete. However, as a single player experience, Sydney 2000 is simply awful. Bash your buttons with friends for the maximum enjoyment out of this "game". ■



PLUS
The thrill of being an Olympian with minimum injury.

MINUS
Pathetic excuse for a game.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
80	82	62

OVERALL
70

If you have the finger power (and the friends), then Sydney 2000 could entertain on a rainy day.

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EVO'S SPACE ADVENTURES

PLAYSTATION

A few words are guaranteed to go drifting through your mind as you play *Evo's Space Adventures* (ESA) for the first time. 'Bizarre' crops up at first and is closely followed by 'odd,' 'strange' and 'switch off right now'. For originality, ESA deserves high praise indeed. For subduing most players into a heap of salivating boredom, it probably won't do too well at all. However, an undeniable appeal lurks within a

game which departs wholeheartedly from a successful formula – guns and violence – in favour of one virtually guaranteed to fail – puppy dogs and randy sheep.

The introductory FMV sets up the story in the same way crushing cans into somebody's forehead prepares you for the HSC. Basically, you're in command of an energetic computer chip, capable of hijacking the brains of various robotic amusement park animals for the sake of extreme inanity. For some perverse reason, your first mission requires that you fetch your master, a nervous turkey neck, one sheep and a bunch of glowing energy balls. With the right element of imagination, this is conceptually amusing. But with-

out a freakishly high level of patience, it has the tendency to become downright dull, to the point where the weird factor simply cannot rescue it.

Later missions have you taking control of dogs for the purpose of biting mice, defying gravity as sheep and generally wallowing in the designers' insanity. I'm left feeling EVA could work quite well on a specific mindset.

So to conclude, if you're unemployed, "whacked" and have nothing better to do, you'll be falling over yourself to play EVA... maybe.

MARTIN ENGLISH

i	AVAILABLE: Now
	CATEGORY: Action/Adventure
	PLAYERS: 1
	PUBLISHER: Take 2
	PRICE: \$69.95
	RATING: G



VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
51	58	45	54

MOHO

PLAYSTATION

Before you've had the chance to begin harvesting your first thumb blister in *Moho*, your character has their bottom half sawn clean off. And since that part of the body contains the bits even robots are known to be fond of, it's not surprising you spend the rest of the game waving your fists about in a ferocious spate of rage and destruction. Luckily you've been wired up to an

electronic bowling ball, allowing for you to zoom about like a lunatic and perform pirouettes on the faces of your fallen combatants and smack your bolt-ridden face into the occasional steel wall. But once you grow accustomed to the physics – remarkably similar to those experienced while rolling drunk – you'll literally be having a ball. And though senseless destruction is always sufficient on its own, *Moho* packs in the value with a variety of racing environments, obstacle courses and a couple of other sporting events reminiscent of the ill-fated *Gladiators* – minus the gaiety of *Vulcan*.

But when it comes to combat, you've got less moves than a geriatric burns

victim on a surfboard – possessing only a couple of punches, a charge and a special spin attack. Just as well you can pick up a handy nail-filled board every now and then, as you wouldn't want your victims getting bored with you beating them in the head the same way over and over again. Then, when you're sick to the gills with killing artificial opponents, jam in another control pad and hurt your friends plenty.

Ultimately, *Moho* is a thoroughly valid waste of time, cheaper than a windshield and far more entertaining.

MARTIN ENGLISH

i	AVAILABLE: Now
	CATEGORY: Fighting
	PLAYERS: 1-2
	PUBLISHER: Take 2
	PRICE: \$69.95
	RATING: M



VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
83	78	75	80

MR DRILLER

PLAYSTATION

Your average self-respecting block-related puzzle game doesn't even bother trying to come up with a storyline. Nor should it, as reconciling a bunch of blocks falling in a surreal 2D landscape with what is commonly known as "the real world" can be difficult at the best of times. *Mr Driller* breaks this trend with a storyline that is as ludicrous as it is Japanese. As the

brief intro sequence explains, in oh so great detail, "The town is being overrun by coloured blocks". Well that answered all my questions. But what are we going to do about it?

"Everyone is in a panic. Quick call Mr Driller". That's almost as Jap-cool as "Who is driving? Oh no, bear is driving!" from *Clerks* (the animated series, and the only funny sequence of the entire series before it got axed). And so begins *Mr Driller's* great odyssey to save the world as we know it from those dastardly inanimate coloured blocks.

The goal is simply to dig through to a certain depth... then do it again with a different background and set

of blocks. There's plenty of chaining potential, and the speed can ramp up nicely when you're in a virtual freefall with blocks disappearing all around. Of course, being underground, you'll have to avoid getting crushed by blocks and make sure to keep your oxygen levels up by collecting the oxygen capsules. The strategy of the game gradually becomes apparent, but for my money, there just isn't enough strategy to get really hooked.

CAM SHEA

i	AVAILABLE: Now
	CATEGORY: Puzzle/Action
	PLAYERS: 1
	PUBLISHER: Namco
	PRICE: \$49.95
	RATING: G



VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
73	76	70	71

PLASMA SWORD

DREAMCAST

Capcom are a weird bunch. They pump out excellent Street Fighter titles, and then they're happy to release a 3D fighter like Plasma Sword that is literally stumbling around with gaping wounds. If the screenshot looks familiar, that's because Plasma Sword is actually Star Gladiator 2 — the

original Star Gladiator originally appearing on the PlayStation. The original was quite entertaining, and by all means so is this sequel, it's just that it isn't a patch on the other fighting games now available. Wearing its Star Wars influences on its sleeve (Plasma Sword is a nice way to say "Lightsaber" without getting sued), there's heaps of characters here with a lot of personality. There are reference points for all the characters here with other fighting game line-ups, but at least they've tried to do something a little different with the control scheme.

The game kind of plays like a cross between Tekken and Street Fighter EX, a nice addition being in that you're able to actually see how combos link together on the training screen so you can learn all the moves in a jiffy by following the "tree" of button presses. In a way, it kind of puts Plasma Sword in the realm of the mainstream fighting game where you get big pyrotechnics, weird characters and easy controls. Of course, why bother buying it when you can buy Soul Calibur?



VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
83	75	76	77

ELIOT FISH

i	AVAILABLE: Now
	CATEGORY: 3D Fighting
	PLAYERS: 1-2
	PUBLISHER: Capcom
	PRICE: \$79.95
	RATING: M

TEAM BUDDIES

PLAYSTATION

Do the guys and girls at Psygnosis have illicit substances on their minds? The publisher that brought us the trippy, youth culture inspired WipEout series has now come up with a game where all the characters look like little pills. Now granted, this might have been the result of a severe panadol binge, but we think not. This is, after all, from the UK — the land where around 500,000 ecstasy tablets get boshed every weekend.

The plot thickens during the intro,

where all the chemmies are partying like crazy in this little tent with a Team Buddy on the wheels of steel. Granted, I didn't see any glow sticks, white gloves or hear any of them shout "I'm 'avin it. I'm off me 'ead. Aceeeeed!" (apologies for the dodgy British party scene stereotypes), but the message was clear. Perhaps Psygnosis simply thought it would be an amusing juxtaposition to have "love drug" pills fighting to the death.

Regardless of where the inspiration came from, Team Buddies is one hell of a nice game. The simple graphical style works a treat and is engagingly unique. The gameplay is well thought out, allowing for great single player campaigns as well as a thoroughly addictive multiplayer component.

In essence, Team Buddies is a strategic war game. Crates drop from the sky and you must move them to the designated stacking pad. Depending on the way the crates are stacked, you can break them open to reveal different goodies. Everything from machine guns and rocket launchers, to extra team mates and tanks can be created this way. The game is a frantic race to build your team, arm them and then destroy the enemy. In addition to the deathmatch mode, there are also a few other variants like capture the flag and a soccer style game. An especially good purchase if you own a multitap.



VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
79	80	86	85

CAM SHEA

i	AVAILABLE: Now
	CATEGORY: Strategic warfare
	PLAYERS: 1-4
	PUBLISHER: Sony
	PRICE: \$59.95
	RATING: TBA

PHARAOH: CLEOPATRA

PC

The original Pharaoh was an exceptionally enjoyable strategy sim, allowing you to create, manage and expand your own Egyptian empire. Cleopatra: Queen Of The Nile is the expansion pack to bring you the goodness of Pharaoh gameplay with a whole stack of new features and of course the enjoyment of playing in the era of Cleopatra VII.

Hittites, Romans and Persians, oh my! Ahem... there's also the Macedonians

and those dastardly Grave Robbers. If facing off against those new foes isn't enough to have you trembling, then how about facing plagues of locusts or frogs! There's a lot in Cleopatra to get you chewing your fingernails down to the cuticles (ouch) as the complexity of Pharaoh is there but with the added dimension of new monuments and industries. If you never played Pharaoh, you'd be crazy to start with these missions. It's just too much to handle.

Cleopatra assumes that you've already mastered Pharaoh, as the only guide to the new features and how to play the game comes in the form of the weedy CD case slick, which is hardly thorough. If Cleopatra wasn't so much fun to fiddle with (so to speak) I would imagine you could get darn frustrated

darn quickly, as there will be times that you'll be utterly confused as to why something isn't working the way you thought it would. A little experimentation goes a long way in this expansion pack. With four new campaigns and some small tweaks to the original Pharaoh gameplay, Cleopatra can really only be recommended to Pharaoh fans who simply couldn't get enough of the original, or for those who wanted more of a challenge. Still, with faster pyramid construction, the ability to play any of the original Pharaoh missions in any order and the funky inclusion of the Zoo — Cleopatra gets our money.



VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
75	79	85	83

FRANK DRY

i	AVAILABLE: Now
	CATEGORY: Sim/Strategy
	PLAYERS: 1
	PUBLISHER: TBA
	PRICE: \$49.95
	RATING: G
	REQUIRED: The original Pharaoh game

X-MEN MUTANT WARS

AVAILABLE: Now
CATEGORY: Fighting
PRICE: \$49.95
PUBLISHER: Activision
FORMAT: Game Boy Color only

❧ If there's one thing worse than racing games on the Game Boy, it's fighting games! Limited controls, limited animation... so much of the subtlety and skill that is normally required in a fighting game goes straight out the window on the Game Boy. If you flurry enough punches, your opponent is going to go down, leaving the gameplay in the realm of the "button masher".

After the huge success of the movie, we were quite pleased to hear that there were some games on the way that had actually been in development before the film was. The result is a couple of games from Activision that don't actually totally rely on the movie's hype and success to sell themselves. However, X-Men on Game Boy falls as flat as something very darn flat.

For the fan, there's some limited appeal. Ever wanted to see Wolverine rendered in about 20 pixels? Actually, the visuals are pretty good for the Game Boy. They're certainly not in the league of Tomb Raider on Game Boy, but they'll satisfy fans of the X-Men. Each character has some special moves (you can build up a 'rage' meter as you fight and then unleash some mutant mayhem on your opponent), so there is something to get the hang of. There are also a fair few gameplay modes, but you'll essentially be doing the same thing in each, regardless of whether it's "story mode" or "versus mode". Overall, X-Men: Mutant Wars on Game Boy is just way too easy to keep anyone entertained for more than five minutes.

FRANK DRY



HEROES OF MIGHT & MAGIC

AVAILABLE: Now
CATEGORY: Strategy
PRICE: \$49.95
PUBLISHER: 3DO
FORMAT: Game Boy Color only

❧ Why aren't there more games like this on the Game Boy? This is the perfect travel companion. Heroes Of Might & Magic on the PC was one of those strategy games that you literally couldn't stop playing... you know, it's 3am and you know you really should get some sleep, but the addiction of playing "one more turn" means that the birds are tweeting before you realise your eyes are about to fall out of their sockets. Well, the transition to Game Boy is a remarkably good one and most of the depth of gameplay is still present in this pint-size version.



Frolicking about the land with a horde of magical monsters is basically what you'll be doing. A lot of your time is spent staring at a top-down map, claiming resources, looking for special items and wiping out your enemy. Once combat is engaged, play switches to a side-on view of the battlefield and you move your troops forward in a strategic manner, casting spells from a distance to hinder your opponent or boost your troops. Experience points are awarded and your hero grows in power. Each castle you capture has the ability to generate units, so you can eventually amass a handful of crack armies to then go around marauding the landscape... all in the name of "good" of course. Ahem.

Sure the Game Boy doesn't display the visuals very well, and the pixellation results in a grainy, messy looking map at times, but the magical lure of "one more go" is present in this Game Boy version and you can't do better than that.

ELIOT FISH

SPACE STATION SILICON VALLEY

AVAILABLE: Now
CATEGORY: Puzzle
PRICE: \$49.95
PUBLISHER: Take 2
FORMAT: Game Boy Color only

❧ Yes, if you look hard enough, you'll find that you can play virtually the same game on the PlayStation this issue in "Evo's Space Adventures". Why they changed the name for the PlayStation version is a mystery. Unless, of course they wanted to distance themselves from the bad reviews of the N64 and PC versions of the game. The Game Boy version is a different kettle of Cod. The puzzle concept works so much better on the hand-held, basically because the gameplay is somewhat simplistic and we don't expect much more on this format. We're much more forgiving on a piece of hardware such as this, because sometimes you do just want to pick up a game for five minutes and then put it down again. We don't demand such a flawless piece of entertainment from our handheld, though it would be nice.

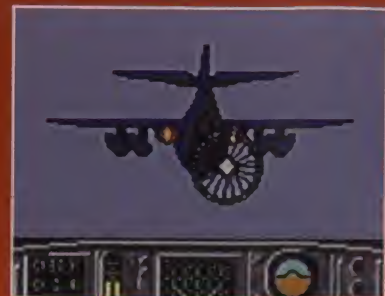
Anyway, Space Station Silicon Valley is a mixed bag. Controlling Evo, you can possess other animals that are running amok on this abandoned space station by running up next to them and pressing Select. You can then use that animal's abilities to help solve the puzzles you're faced with. In a minor way, you could draw comparisons to Majora's Mask on the N64, although we suspect that Nintendo will execute this puzzle concept far more successfully on the N64. SSSV is good for a bit of time wasting and doesn't rely totally on boring platforming which is a plus. But after seeing the Game Boy Advance in action, it can be a bit hard playing a title as simplistic as this and feeling good about it.

FRANK DRY



F-18 THUNDER STRIKE

AVAILABLE: Now
CATEGORY: Action
PRICE: \$49.95
PUBLISHER: Take 2
FORMAT: Game Boy/Game Boy Color



❧ This was not a good idea. A dogfighting sim on the Game Boy? Uh-uh. I'm sure their intentions were good, but this just doesn't work. Basically, F-18 puts you in a cockpit view and you scroll with the d-pad to rotate your view around and shoot enemy fighters when they're under your crosshair. Of course, with such a small screen and stiff digital controls, you can sit there looking for enemy planes for a long time before you see any action. When you finally do get confronted with a plane to take down, the process is pretty dull. Pressing Select brings up your "radar" but really, if Take 2 are really deluded enough to think that F-18 Thunder Strike provides any kind of jet fighter gameplay then they're seriously off with the mushrooms. What's even worse, is that when you're struggling to get the teeny enemy sprite that somehow passes for an enemy plane under your crosshair, you can unfortunately run out of fuel and dump in the ocean. Greeaaaat. Ok, move along.

FRANK DRY



5/10

8/10

6/10

4/10

PINBALL



America in the early 1930s was a turbulent place. Prohibition (of alcohol), gangsterism and the Great Economic Depression put the locals on a bit of a downer. But from this period of poeeyness came the world's first commercial coin-op pinball indus-

try which enabled America's troubled population to escape to the arcades to engage in a bit of gravity controlling, challenge inducing escapism.

Since the 30s, the pinball industry has come a long way. If you compare the picture of the 'Discotech' pinball machine from the pre-microchip mid 1960s to the machines of today, you can see that there is a distinct lack of loops, ramps and digital display. But most of all, games prior to the 70s lacked MULTI-BALL, which is more than just 2 or more balls rolling down a bit of board, but a place where pinball fans peak right out.

Other post 60's inclusions include multiple flippers, multiple playing fields (Haunted House had 3), skill shots with the 'plunger', moving magnets under the board, button activated the-ball-is-about-to-go-down-the-guts deflector, and digital screen mini games that are controlled with extra side buttons.

There have been some excellent pinballs released in the last 15 years, with Pinbot, "Fire", Terminator 2, Lethal Weapon, Haunted House, The Addams Family and Judge Dredd (with 7 ball multi ball) just to name a few. As you can read, many of the games have a movie theme to them, which has mainly been a trend of the last decade.

The most recent movie

themed pinball machine is Star Wars Episode I by Williams. It uses the state of the art technology in which a TV screen is projected 'into' the game through the use of mirrors. The screen is used to not only relay 'special bonus' cut scenes from the movie, but also to act as a moving target display system.

But the latest pinball machine to be released in the arcades is the soccer themed Striker Extreme by Stern Pinballs. The main aim is to defeat the rest of the world's soccer teams by knocking down pins which are obscuring a goal and a moving goalie. There is also a fine bit of ramp / loop combinations, an extra flipper which accesses a special ramp and sound effects which are enough to turn the meekest, mildest man into a fully blown football hooligan.

So what makes a great pinball machine? Take one part theme park ride, one part putt-putt golf course and add a system of scoring that makes a replay score seem just a little daunting yet still attainable. Because to a pinball fan, there is still nothing like the sound you hear when you 'pop' a replay.



TIM'S TOP 5 ARCADE GAMES

- 1) STRIKER EXTREME (PINBALL)
- 2) TENKEN TAG
- 3) MR DRILLER
- 4) VIRTUA STRIKER 2000
- 5) MARS MATRIX

LUCASARTS

The Art of Adventure



MADNESS AHOY

When it comes to adventure games, LucasArts have always had a knack for hiring writers based on their ability to conceive ideas like a pack of drunken lunatics. These days you can't hold a gamer's interest long enough to say the words 'attention span', let alone expect them to demonstrate one, but there was a time when puzzles were popular. This drool-covered tribute is gratefully dedicated to all of the great LucasArts adventures we've loved and lost...

Applicant:

"...yesterday I shaved a Mohawk on my cat and squashed him into the letterbox so the postman couldn't give me any more bills."

LucasArts:

"You're hired. Can you use a computer or would you prefer to scrawl your ideas on the ceiling with purple crayon?"

TWO-HEADED CHIPMUNKS

Back in the days when you could gleefully fondle an LCD Game & Watch without having your sexuality questioned, LucasArts (then still called Lucasfilm) were busy devising their first madcap masterpiece. An odd little invention, the principle aim in **MANIAC MANSION** (1987) was to manipulate three teenagers in an effort to save Sandy the Cheerleader from skull-frigged Dr. Fred, whose mind was being controlled by an evil purple meteor from deep in outer Space. Drug abuse anyone? The game got a swift port to the NES, but not before it could be heavily sanitised. Apparently Nintendo had some bad bowel-leaking problems with a few minor details in the game: Subtle background items such as a video game called 'Kill Frenzy', were deemed inappropriate —

even though practically all NES games revolve around the wholesome premise of meeting a creature, killing it, and stealing its money. Since the word 'kill' was such a problem, programmers scratched their bald patches and suggested 'Muff Diver' instead, which was then converted to 'Tuna Diver' for obvious reasons. A rather seductive poster of a mummy and various lines of suspect dialogue were also removed in the interests of good taste and minimal legal liability.

But LA were unfazed, and went on to solidify themselves in the serious realm of software design once and for all. **ZAK MCKRACKEN AND THE ALIEN MINDBENDERS** (1988) bore a name with as much longevity as the game it was so eloquently wrapped around. Players were pitched into an insane world of tabloid journalism, two-headed chip-

munks and over 60 locations where, thank Santa, the humour was sharper than the graphics. As Zak, you thwarted a group of Elvis-loving aliens intent on shrinking the intelligence of your average earth-dweller and taking over the world. At the time, some crack-cocaine-smoking schmuck in PR revered the control interface as 'revolutionary', when in truth it was worse than Michael Jackson.

To have Zak walk from one end of the room to the other meant hammering the arrow keys until you were blue in the wrist and soft in the head — slowly drawing the cursor over to the 'walk' command and painstakingly guiding it back to the opposite side of the screen. Overall though, Mr. McKracken offered so many hours of bizarre and inexplicable joy that no-one noticed the strange creaking noise their joints

RTS re



began making whenever they needed to move a whole lot.

Playing a more straight-laced angle, **INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE** (1989) absorbed players in the fantasy of being Indy - delivering all the fun you can have with a whip, while sitting in front of the children. The success of this charming adventure lay in its ability to integrate the dusty feel of the movies with the rapidly growing new LA style.

Of course, the temporary sanity soon lapsed and we were graced with **LOOM** (1990) a top little number about 17-year-old Bobbin Threadbare. Like any conscientious youngster, Bobbin was a member of a guild of weavers on the mysterious island of Loom who one day he discovers his destiny - commonly confused with puberty

amongst many of his age. It took just one finger to play this strange title, as its interface was remarkably simplistic. LA also grafted in some funky Tchaikovsky number, realised in the glorious PC speaker!

FRENCH FOR "THE VOMIT"

And while many of us have bellowed "Arrrrrr matey!!" at the drop of an IQ level, few could do it with the same authenticity of Guybrush Threepwood - were he a real person, that is. The series spurned from the original **SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND** (1990) is

largely considered to represent the pinnacle of LA adventure gaming, and for a damn good reason. No other company has allowed gamers to drift about solving pirate-type puzzles in the same way LA has, because they'd be sued if they did. Numero uno in the set slapped players into the life and plight of Guybrush Threepwood, a wooden-legged wannabe with three logic shafting trials to overcome in due course. Before long, hormones get the better of the randy Mr. Threepwood though, and his throbbing heart draws him into the

arms of lusty wench, Elaine Marley. Thanks to a speedy wit, and the fact the protagonist can never actually die in a LA adventure, the lucky Guybrush is able to rescue the dame and make LeChuck (French for 'The Vomit?') rather grumpy for the rest of the week. **MONKEY ISLAND II: LECHUCK'S REVENGE** (1991) was gobbled by a vivacious pack of fans, again with good reason. Unlike most sequels, it retained all the elements that made the first so fantastic - the jokes, the absurdities, the men of low moral fibre - and coated them in crisper graphics and enhanced sound. It really was the on-screen orgasm you have when you're not viewing pornography. MI: 2 opened with the hapless Guybrush attempting to impress the reprobates of Scabb Island with tales of his first adventure. When they respond with snores and groans, he instead focuses on obtaining Big Whoop, a grand treasure which everybody knows of, yet knows nothing about. Despite being dead, LeChuck puts in an admirable second effort at villainy, at one stage placing Guybrush in a predicament which can only be solved with a sopping wet spit ball. Pure LA gold.





LOOM, WHAT A LADDER A MINUTE HINT, JUST LOOK AT IT, HAHAHAHAHA... ER...

CRACK THAT WHIP

Thundering out a sequel and defying the 'last crusade' part of their first hack at an Indy game, **INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS** came back to scoop up any merchandising dollars missed out on the first time. Just as

well

stream of steaming sewage one morning, as hideous products of science are occasionally given to do. Dissatisfied at merely eyeing off the contents of Dr. Fred's bowel as they floated merrily past, Purple nicked in for a little sip of stench to sink his curiosity and arm himself with the prerequisite bad guy breath. Then, in a mixed flurry of Sound Blaster wrenching noise and 256 epilepsy-inducing colours, he sprouted arms and abandoned originality to declare his desire to, you guessed it, take over the world. Wacky stuff indeed, with just the right amount of time travel for a rollicking good adventure.

The three main misfits decide to conquer Purple by using the mad old professor's time machine, but plans go horribly askew because the old pro used a cheap mail-order diamond for the experiment, instead of purchasing one from Goldmark like any sensible madman should. Hoagie is sent to America's colonial past where he tangles with talking horses and ex-presidents alike. Laverne lands in a tree in the future where humans are nothing but pets on a tentacle dominated planet, and Bernard ends up right back in the equally twisted present. They communicate and flush objects through

the game was worth every crusty cent coughed up for it. Better graphics, sound and an overall superior waste of time to the first incarnation. A true adventure.

DAY OF THE TENTACLE (1993) - Now here was something truly special which rightfully inspired eight-inches of joy from many a fanboy. Once again calling into play the warped-yet-lovable characters of Maniac Mansion, DOTT bolstered the level of detail and animation and successfully sedated any and all evidence of sanity that had previously dared to restrain anyone's imagination. You got to play as three characters, Hoagie, a fat drummer boy, Laverne, a tiny minded flaxwench and Bernard, a socially challenged Erkle derivative, as they rushed to thwart the evil Purple Tentacle. Purple was as innocent as church lice until he and his Green doppelganger (NB: NOT a sick sexual reference) went out to stare at a

time to each other by use of toilet and eventually Purple is defeated with a bowling ball in a totally silly scenario, gut bustingly suitable to the game's warped sense of humour.

DISNEY ON ACID

I recently learned, or was at least fooled into believing, that the word 'weird' originally referred to a Scottish story, as in "tell us a weird matey, or I'll yank yer kilt down for the neighbours to see." It took eight bottles of red to convince me of this, and by that stage of drunkenness I'd have gleefully argued the word was dedicated to LA's next adventure game, **SAM AND MAX HIT THE ROAD** (1993) - except the bloke I was talking to was too busy screaming Parisian obscenities for me to squish a word in. Sam and Max is a work of comic genius, based on Steve Purcell's creations, a cartoon dog and rabbit - two characters who behaved like Disney on acid after seven days without sleep.

The rabbit, Max, spends an enormous portion of the game acting like a psychopath - with the Cheshire grin to prove it. All the while Sam, a fully dressed dog, questions both his partner's nudity and lobotomy - each full frontal in nature.

In the past, no other game had allowed the player to terrify storemen, roar around the countryside in a souped-up DeSoto, and wantonly harass pigeons in quite the same charming manner as Sam and Max did. And for the uninitiated, S & M (NB: sick sex pun now intended) employed its witty dialogue scribes to state the obvious wherever necessary, ie everywhere. For example, as freelance police, your first point of business is to contact your courier, a small but roughly spoken cat who's swallowed your special orders for safekeeping. The trouble is, he can't seem to regurgitate them. After



HEY DUNDY, CAN YOU SPARE A DIMLY



INDIANA JONES IV: RAIDERS OF THE LOST PIXELS



A FIREPLACE WITH SUNGLASSES? NO NO, TRUST THOSE WAGGY FOLK AT LUCASARTS



GRIM FANDANGO (1998) shook up the trademark LA style with some spectacularly rendered graphics and skeletally concerned activities. It was

asking if he can make a tennis racquet out of the "cute little guy", Max tooters about practically begging Sam to make use of him to his full potential. When, eventually, it dawns on the gamer to get Sam to "use" Max, the demented little hyper-nut seizes the cat by the throat, stuffs his arm down its throat and reefs the plans from their stomach-lined confines. With barely a second's hesitation, he flicks the orders to Sam and tosses the cat over his shoulder into a stinking pile of garbage. Hilarious. This all takes place in front of a shop with a sign announcing that "Guns, liquor and baby needs" are readily available within. That lovely level of borderline-psychoic humour is maintained throughout the entire game as you hunt down a runaway sasquatch to attain fame, notoriety and the cash to buy and eat as many hotdogs as it takes for one to "yuke" all over themselves.

SOMEBODY JUST SHOT THE WIGGLES

What next for LA but to roll up all that cartoon mayhem and mould it into an adventure game about futuristic bikers? Voiced to gravelly perfection by Roy Conrad, Ben, leader of spine-breaking biker gang, The Polecats, wakes up in a garbage bin with a bad attitude and a headache to match. Luckily, this game's interface had an icon to be used specifically for kicking things, like doors, pianos, human beings, etc.

Even with the slightly dark tinge to it, **FULL THROTTLE** (1995) kept you giggling like somebody just shot the Wiggles. A lot of finely tuned animated sequences were tightly strung together with puzzles – some requiring you use your head, others demanding you punch someone else's head – and the only complaint people had was that it was all over faster than a dog's orgasm.

The difference between quality and quantity is quintessential, and could account for the blinding nosedive taken by LA's space-aged flop, **THE DIG** (1995). Apparently, The Dig's plot failed to qualify for the movies, so instead it was twisted into an adventure game by creator Steven Spielberg, who probably crafted it while on the bog and in a lot of pain.

MORE MONKEY BUSINESS

Following some cosmetic cartoon surgery, the jovial lackeys from Monkey Isle returned for a third outing in **THE CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND** (1997). Guybrush looked to have starved himself during the elongated break between games, but with side-attractions like Murray the Demon Skull and those ever popular monkeys, the transition wasn't too harsh. Humour of the floating chicken variety managed to keep this one in line with the insurmountable expectations its predecessors had generated. Well, plenty to encourage the upcoming fourth MI game, *Escape from Monkey Island*.

an epic tale of crime and corruption in the land of the dead, according to... well, the box it came in. Apparently the Mexicans celebrate life with an intoxicated salute to death – kind of like skulling a tinny in Granny's honour. Tim Schafer, the cortex behind DOTT and FT, was inspired by this quirky cultural behaviour and the game he subsequently produced easily reflects as much. You played Manuel Calavera, for whom a lifetime of naughty business meant performing the duties of a travel agent for the dead in the after-life. Working for the Department of the Dead – a possible Centrelink affiliate – Manny, along with his sidekick, a gigantic, orange, maniacal, monstrous, purple-tongued mechanic, spends much of the game chasing after the heart of his love interest, even though she plainly no longer has one...

UPCOMING CRAZINESS

And with their straightjackets tightened daily, it's a good thing the LucasArts staff know how to type with their toes. Look forward to more semi-senile creations from them soon. The first being a brand new Monkey Island adventure, **ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND... ATTTTTTTTTT.**



GUYBRUSH, MONKEYING AROUND

Hypervision

>> KEVIN CHEUNG

Welcome to Hypervision, Hyper's new DVD section. We'll be reviewing the best – and worst – DVD movies every month, as well as reporting the latest news on DVD hardware and the best anime DVDs available. We'll also keep you up-to-date with any breaking news in the realm of digital movie entertainment. It's time to switch on...



MOM, I TOLD YOU NOT TO VISIT ME HERE AT THE OFFICE...

Being John Malkovich

UNIVERSAL
MA15+

'It's like, he has a vagina' is one of the lasting hilarious impressions everyone will have of this awesome film. Struggling puppeteer John Cusack discovers a doorway into the head of John Malkovich. You only get to stay in there for a few minutes, so he starts charging people money for the experience. Things get really interesting when wife Cameron Diaz uses the experience to realise her lesbian fantasies with Cusack's co-worker.

The movie is an absolute cack – not just for the comedy value, but for the fact that John Malkovich's willingness to be part of the film automatically lends it artistic credibility. It's also satisfying that artistically, writer Charlie Kaufman and director Spike Jonze (from *Three Kings*, of all things!) take it as far as it can go. It's re-watchable on many different levels and the extra features perfectly supplement the film – this DVD has taste written all over it.

EXTRAS: **9**/10 | MOVIE: **9**/10



TROY GORMAN FINDS A PORTAL LEADING INTO ELIOT'S HEAD



"WE MUST FIND THAT HAIRDRESSER AND SEEK OUR REVENGE!"

Joan of Arc

COLUMBIA TRISTAR
MA15+

Like *Braveheart* and *The Patriot*, the Poms absolutely hated this film because of its negative portrayal of British Imperialism at its worst. In its own perverse little way, this is a reason for watching the popular tale of a young French girl told by God to drive the English out of France.

Luc Besson's *Joan of Arc* takes a few artistic liberties with the real-life historical events. It's gorier, bloodier, and more down-to-earth; though Milla Jovovich's over-acting makes all her screaming and yelling a tad much to bear by the second hour.

It's a pity Luc Besson wasn't more considerate of his viewers. If you're going to screw around with the original story, you might as well abridge and edit it into a tighter package that would've serviced its intended alternative audience better. Instead, it's a two and a half hour drama that'll come off as either an offensive historical account or an art house flick that'll put you to sleep.

EXTRAS: **6**/10 | MOVIE: **7**/10



Stuart Little

■ COLUMBIA TRISTAR ■ G

Hammy kids flick with great CG effects. Cornball New York humour — loads of features on disc.

EXTRAS: 9/10 MOVIE: 6/10

American History X

■ VILLAGE ROADSHOW ■ MA15+

A compelling yarn about race hate; stunning performance by Edward Norton. Forget one-hit-wonder Eddie Furlong, though.

EXTRAS: 7/10 MOVIE: 8/10

The Cider House Rules

■ MIRAMAX ■ M

An enchanting drama from the director of *My Life as a Dog*, plus you get to see Charlize Theron in the buff. You'll leave this film feeling unashamedly warm and fuzzy.

EXTRAS: 4/10 MOVIE: 8/10

The Talented Mr. Ripley

■ MIRAMAX ■ M

B-grade schlock where Matt Damon gets away with killing a bunch of people while everyone else thinks Gyneth Paltrow has gone crazy.

EXTRAS: 6/10 MOVIE: 5/10



HAVE AT YOU!

The Duel

CHINA STAR ENTERTAINMENT
PG

Anyone who can read a little Chinese script will immediately recognise that *The Duel* shares the same name as Koei's PlayStation 2 title, *Kessen* — but the two actually have nothing to do with each other. Instead, this movie offers a non-stop barrage of slapstick humour intermingled with a life-and-death duel between two of China's greatest warriors, the God of Sword and Saint Sword, played by Andy Lau and Ekin Cheng.

The duel plays second fiddle to the exploits of an Imperial Agent played by Cheung Ka-Fai, who takes the living piss out of all the tradition and seriousness of Feudal China to a point that the duel almost doesn't even matter. But once certain conspiracies are revealed the final outcome is of vital importance. The special effects of the swordplay and martial arts are fantastic to watch — especially if you loved *Stormriders* — and Ekin Cheng looks as cool as ever in spite of his limited screen time. Also watch for Taiwanese bombshell Tien Hsin. Schwing!

EXTRAS: 7/10 MOVIE: 7/10



THE HYPER HQ BITS PEACEFULLY IN THE MIDDLE OF BEIFEN

Ghost in the Shell

CATEGORY: SCI-FI, ACTION
PRODUCTION COMPANY: KODANSHA/BANDAI VISUAL
DISTRIBUTOR: SIREN ENTERTAINMENT

Smart, intelligent, brilliantly scripted, and seemingly inches away from redefining the boundaries of science fiction. In a matter of minutes, the futuristic settings of *Bladerunner* are literally rendered out-of-date as bio-technically augmented special agents interact with each other over an electronic plain of existence. Crime takes the form of people hacking into other people's brains.

CONTINUED>>



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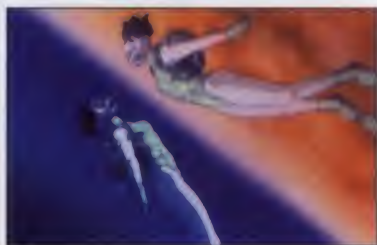


"NOW WE INSERT THE VIEWER INTO OUR SUBJECT'S NOSTRIL..."

As a purist who enjoyed Masamune Shirow's original artistic designs, I'm still somewhat horrified by Mamoru Oshii's new interpretation of Motoko Kusanagi. Aside from that, the movie does great justice to the original manga — albeit finishing a little abruptly.

Even though it's five years old, Ghost in the Shell's local DVD release is worth buying for any anime fan, even if you already own it on VHS. The disc comes with a 30 minute 'making of' featurette as well as language and subtitle options (essentials for anime) and the sound is encoded in Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround, which is fantastic for anyone with a basic home theatre setup.

ANIMATION: 9 PLOT: 9 JAPAN-NESS: LOW OVERALL: 9.5



Neon Genesis Evangelion

CATEGORY: SCI-FI, ACTION, DRAMA
PRODUCTION COMPANY: GAINAX
DISTRIBUTOR: SIREN ENTERTAINMENT

Unbelievable. It's been over two years since the Japanese were able to watch Death and Rebirth and End of Evangelion, and there's still no sign of an English release. At all. Sure, various distributors have promised a late 2000 release, but given the numerous other fruitless promises, we'll believe it when we see it thankyouverymuch.

Still, that doesn't stop you from getting the TV series on DVD, now made locally available by Siren Entertainment. The picture quality is not surprisingly amazing; and the ability to switch between subbed and dubbed is a Godsend — viewers still clinging to the dubbed medium should try the original Japanese article to experience some 'real' voice acting for a change.

Unfortunately, it's incredibly difficult to rationalise why anyone who already has the tapes should get the entire DVD collection as well. It's already a bit much to ask someone to repurchase a standalone movie, but asking them to toss aside a 13 volume VHS set valued at almost \$400? Frankly I think the very suggestion is insulting. But if you've never owned Evangelion before, this DVD is definitely worth having.

ANIMATION: 9 PLOT: 9 JAPAN-NESS: MEDIUM OVERALL: 9.5

GETTING THE HARDWARE



So you're looking to buy a DVD player, but aren't exactly sure where to start? Here's a breakdown of the kinds of DVD experience you can have.

Standalone DVD Player

Standalone DVD players are stable and reliable, which are two of the most important things you want out of a DVD player in your home theatre. As long as you know what features to look for, you will not be disappointed. Price also makes a huge difference in the in-built features. For good picture quality, a DVD player would have a 96kHz D/A (Digital/Analogue) Converter. For sound, it depends on what your amplifier is capable of supporting. DVD players can support anything from plain stereo and Dolby Digital 5.1 Surround to DTS. Make sure you check for sound compatibility before buying.

There are very few disadvantages to running a standalone player — not when you've got one with all the features you want. Certain brands have questionable picture quality and drive functions, but they're quite easy to spot with a quick test. The only question lingering now is recordable DVD, which the average DVD enthusiast really shouldn't care about until it hits a more affordable price.



THE PS2 DVD PLAYBACK IS AVERAGE

Obviously, as has been proven by the PlayStation 2, such a feature is a major selling point for many people. Many consumers see the DVD format as an expensive hobby — that the in-built DVD features of a game console is a cheap and convenient entry point to the market. Unfortunately, this mindset is destined to lead to disappointment.

At this stage, only the PlayStation 2 has been able to be tested, and the best that can be said is that it is an unproven product. Like PC and Mac-based DVD movies, the PlayStation 2's DVD video playback is reliant on software stored in its memory cards. It follows that the quality and functionality of its video and sound playback are dependent on that software. So far, version 1.00 and 1.01 are nothing to write home about. Picture quality ranges from grainy to barely acceptable, and depending on the kind of TV you're watching on, the picture can appear warped or bent out of shape. Of course, there is always the promise of new software being released. Controlling playback through the control pad is also downright stupid. Bring on the remote.

The PlayStation 2 also only supports 5.1 channel surround for its sound output, which is pointless for anyone with an amp that supports something better. Then again, someone with that kind of amp wouldn't be using the PS2 to play DVDs.

Since the internal hardware of these next-generation consoles are not as customisable as PCs, nor is the software as flexible or freely available, console-based DVD players should not yet be considered as a serious option for home theatre entertainment. At least not until they can show a little more functionality and quality.

PC DVD

Watching DVDs through your PC or Mac is a much cheaper alternative to purchasing a standalone player. However, you'll still have to put up with the performance niggles inherent to the hardware and operation of your computer. Videocards are an obvious concern, as getting the best picture quality will also depend on the kind of software you use to play your movies. Sound cards can also prove to be a bother — the best a personal computer can do is use software to simulate the surround effect.

On the upside, you'll be watching a progressive scan image, which is undeniably sweet if you have a large monitor. That is, perfect flat image, no interlacing. Even so, it's still strictly an experience for the single person. You're not exactly going to rearrange your couch around your PC. Ideally, you might hook your PC up to a projector with a VGA input, but you'd still be lacking in the sound department. Plus, not everyone can afford a projector.

The consoles...

The PlayStation 2, Xbox, Starcube, and Indrema will all be able to play DVD movies.



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Hyperactive 3.1 Launched

Hyperactive 3.1 has officially launched! Hyperactive Games Online has always been the number one gaming site in Australia, and is now looking sexier than ever after receiving a stylistic makeover. The online home of Hyper magazine is taking Australian gaming to the next level, giving you daily news, the latest previews and reviews, special features, a massive hints and cheats database and more.



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The Hyperactive National Clan Site Project

The Hyperactive National Clan Site Project was started in August, and has been growing at a rapid rate. After loud cries from the online community for a site that provides up to date information on gaming clans, LAN events and online gaming competitions, all on a national level, the Hyperactive National Clan Site Project was started. First and foremost, the National Clan Site is run by serious gamers, for the serious gamer. The site covers popular games such as Counter-Strike, Quake 3 Arena, Diablo 2, Half-Life and Unreal Tournament. We provide the latest news regarding LAN events across Australia, online gaming competitions, and LAN gaming shops. So if you want to know of any upcoming LAN parties in your local area, are seeking to join a clan, or want to challenge another clan to war, then make this your first stop. The Hyperactive National Clan Site Project is the first site of its kind to be attempted in Australia, and we have received an incredible amount of support so far.

New to Hyperactive 3.1

Other important additions to the site include the 'Caption This' competition featured in the magazine and an updated list of cheats and hints for all your favorite console and PC games. As always, reluctant globetrotter Sanchez Lopez will be keeping us up to date with news from across the world, as he probes the gaming universe making all the right moves to get all the right answers. With a gifted knack for asking the tough questions, Sanchez is our ubiquitous foreign correspondent who will do anything to get out of his math's class.

Ryan McKay - Hyperactive Producer



hyperactive.com.au

what's on the CD

Our first Hyper cover CD has some great PC demos, patches and awesome movies of the coolest upcoming games on PLAYSTATION 2, NINTENDO GAME CUBE, NINTENDO 64, DREAMCAST and PC!

PC DEMOS



■ Heavy Metal FAKK 2 GATHERING OF DEVELOPERS

REQUIRED: PII 233, 32MB, WIN95/98, DIRECTX, 3D ACCELERATOR

Get Julie Strain to do your bidding (so to speak) in this third-person shooter. You'll love the lush environments and cool weaponry, but you'll need a pretty meaty PC to achieve that sweet spot between performance and visual detail.

Reviewed on page 66.



■ KISS Psycho Circus GATHERING OF DEVELOPERS

REQUIRED: P266, 64MB, WIN95/98, DIRECTX, 3D ACCELERATOR

Shandee, baybee... no we wasn't singing about beer and lemonade, or maybe he was? Whatever, just grab your big boots and head out for some gruesome action in this first-person frag fest.

Reviewed on page 68.



■ Rugby 2001 EA SPORTS

REQUIRED: P200MMX, 32MB, WIN95/98, DIRECTX

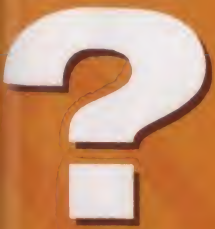
A Rugby game! Gee, it's been a while hasn't it? EA come to the rescue with this down and dirty sim of the sport.

Reviewed on page 64.

PROBLEMS WITH YOUR CD?



Every Hyper cover disc is fully tested and scanned for viruses. However, due to the incredible array of PC hardware out there, we can't guarantee every demo will run on your PC without problems. Please check the readme files with each demo if you are having problems with a demo. If you suspect the CD is faulty, you can e-mail hypercd@next.com.au with your problems. If your CD is faulty, a new CD can be posted to you free of charge.



THE HYPER COVER DISC

Every month we'll strive to bring you something unique and cool that you won't find on other PC demo disks. This issue, we've included exclusive preview clips from some very special games. We'll be packing that 650MB disc to the brim every issue... so what are you waiting for? Whack it in your PC!

■ Age of Empires II: The Conquerors

MICROSOFT

REQUIRED: P166, 32MB, WIN95/98, DIRECTX

One of the best real-time strategy games ever, just got even better with this great expansion pack from Ensemble Studios themselves. The Conquerors will expand your game... and your mind.

Reviewed on page 72.



■ Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 (Tony Hawk's Skateboarding 2)

ACTIVISION

REQUIRED: P200, 32MB, WIN95/98, DIRECTX, 3D ACCELERATOR

Tony Hawk 2 is one of our favourite demos. This game plays like a treat, and looks absolutely groovy on the PC. We guarantee that you'll spend hour after hour on just this demo alone.



PC GAME PATCHES

If you explore the CD you'll find a folder called PATCHES where you'll find the latest patches for your PC games. This month we have...

Deus Ex Direct3D patch

Diablo II 1.03

Heavy Metal FAKK 2 V1.01

Quake 3 Arena

Soldier Of Fortune V1.05

Unreal Tournament 4.28

Vampire The Masquerade: Redemption

PREVIEW MOVIES

We've gathered together some of the spooziest video clips previewing some of the most anticipated games on all the systems. You'll peak when you see some of these games in action. We hope to bring you something cool every issue, so enjoy!

Some of the highlights on our first CD include...



NINTENDO GAME CUBE gameplay footage!

Check out these amazing clips of Star Wars Rogue Squadron for the Game Cube – it's almost as if ILM made it for the Star Wars Special Edition!

PLUS...

Munch's Oddysee – PS2

WipeOut Fusion – PS2

TimeSplitters – PS2

Project: IGI – PC

I-War 2 – PC

Turok 3 – Nintendo 64

Alone In The Dark 4 – PC/Dreamcast

F355 Ferrari Challenge – Dreamcast

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HYPER » PC » PlayStation » Game Boy
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Best games of 2000

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WINNERS Hyper 83

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Heavy Metal FAKK 2 and PC Joystick Extreme

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PRIZE ▼
Heavy Metal FAKK 2 for Dreamcast

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HYPER FORUM

Welcome to the new Hyper Readers Forum. Every month, we'll put forth a topic for discussion and then you'll have that month to e-mail us or post us your opinions and thoughts, no matter how verbose or how brief. The best letters/e-mails will be printed in the following issue for everyone to savour. To put forward your opinions, just e-mail us at freakscene@next.com.au with Hyper Forum in the subject line, or snail mail us at Hyper Forum, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016. If you are e-mailing or sending a letter, please remember to include the Hyper Forum question along with your rant. Let's kick things off with the following...



IS THE PLAYSTATION 2 WORTH \$750?



The first forum responses will be printed in Hyper issue 87 — days before the PS2 hits stores everywhere! Don't forget folks that you can spew forth your opinions on the Hyperactive gaming discussion boards every second of every day if you desire. You'll find them at WWW.HYPERACTIVE.COM.AU.

CAPTION THIS!

PART 10 WINNER

The winning caption this month comes from Jeremy O'Wheel in Tasmania.



THE NEW KINDER SURPRISE!

BREIGN'S DREAM

Last night in my dream I astral-travelled to an outerspace (rather than underground) cyber techno rave, on the planet Pluto. This is the prior Spaceworld 2000 show and the party is called Non-Linear Cyberave.

Gene Roddenberry was overseeing the diplomatic hospitalities. Timothy Leary was giving out free LSD tabs to guest entrants, while God was giving out free apples to guest entrants and was in a forgiving mood. Isaac Asimov and Arthur C. Clarke where discussing future realms. Ray Bradbury, Terry Pratchet, Ridley Scott and George Lucas where chatting book-to-movies. Ron Hubbard versus Martin Galway were the initial lineup of djs. William Gibson was providing the free virtual reality simulations, while William Latham was providing the digital cad art projector slideshows. H.R. Giger and Rob Williams were providing stands for free body tattoos. John Hurt, Rutger Hauer, Harrison Ford and Mark Hamill where chatting thrilling future scripts. Shigeru Miyamoto-san was gathering ideas for new game characters, while Sony and Microsoft representatives had thick cheque books and where scouting (soul-less) prospects. Steve Jobs appeared interested in what Linus had to offer. Ancient Tibet Monks had a fountain of youth water-well for refreshments. Spock had numerous logical theories on why no females where present and Sigmund Freud was not disputing them nor the Dreamcast's capabilities also. Cybernetics where distancing themselves from the evil gene cloners. E.T. was distraught that his latest mobile phone had limited communication coverage, thus useless for his plight to phone home. Go figure.

Among other guests I spotted where William Shakespeare, Einstein, Leonardo Da Vinci, Bell, Stan Lee, Yu Suzuki, Michael Jackson, Sega teams, Konami, Square and Rare etc.

BREIGN 1
hotshrapnel@hotmail.com

Dear Breign,
Are you blaming Hyper for this?

MICROSOFT MADNESS

Hello Hyper,
I think that computers and gaming consoles are both great, I have one of each, but the more I think about it the more I disagree with Microsoft making a gaming console of their own. Why, you ask? For one simple fact. I think that if Microsoft make their own console they will simply dominate the whole gaming industry,

slowly forcing those that are not as powerful out of the market. In the long run, this is bad, bad for the poor unsuspecting companies who are forced to pack up and leave and bad for us gamers. When the "Xbox" emerges I think we will be seeing an awful lot of games that we have already seen on our PCs simply re-inventing themselves with better graphics. Don't you think that Microsoft are already powerful enough without having to take over the console market as well? I'm stressing out here, must stop typing... argghhhhhh... PHHHHH... that was the sound of my brain imploding, that is also the sound of the gaming industry slowly shrinking all because of MICROSOFT!

FROM A FISH WITH A MIGRAINE
blinkingfish@hotmail.com

Dear FWAM,
You're not the only fish with a headache around here.

EVA REVOLUTION

To whom it may concern,
I'm the director of a popular web site, and I'm a big fan of Hyper. Therefore, I was wondering if you could include my web project in your "NET TRAWLIN'" guide in Hyper. It can be found at the following address:

<http://www.eva-revelation.com>
I hope you can include it!
yours sincerely,
PATRICK BUDMAR

Hi Patrick,
Even better, we've put you here in letters for your own special plug.
Nice site!

THE GREAT PS2 RIP OFF

Dear Hyper,
The PlayStation is, without a doubt, one of the most popular game consoles of the modern era, and despite its "troubles", the PlayStation 2 is sure to follow in its glorious path. The thing that really troubles me though, is the bloated price that the PAL territories have to pay just to get one of these things.

SCEE just announced that Australia would receive the PS2 on November 30 at a RRP of \$749. I'm no expert, but even I can see that this is just a little rich. Consider this. The Dreamcast, a very underrated system, is currently selling at just \$299, and with the DVD device/add-on forthcoming, the PS2 won't exactly be raking in the customers over it's first few months. Honestly I'd say 50,000 tops - and that's from the niche "yuppie" mar-

ket. No-one else will be able to afford it.

In short Sony should have a long hard look at their pricing because by the time everyone's saved up, we'll all have Dreamcasts, the Gamecube will be out, AND we'll have enough left over for a Game Boy Advance!

Do you think \$750 is too much? Will Sony get away with it? Can Sega start a marketing blitz in November showing off their hot low price? I guess only time will tell...

Gaming for life,

SHANNON O'BRIEN

shannon64@hotmail.com

*Hi Shannon,
Well, when some good PS2 games come out next year, maybe it'll be more affordable. Certainly, we haven't spoken to anyone who is planning on buying a PS2 yet.*

GETTING THE SCORE

Dear dudes@hyper,
Firstly, thanx for the great mag (it's the only one worth reading). Now, I have a few questions for ya.

1. Will Metal Gear Solid 2 come out on PlayStation?
2. What score did Final Fantasy 7 get?
3. Will Pokémon Silver be any good?
4. How do you get Pokémon games from the internet to work?

STEVE ON THE E-MAIL

Dear Steve on the e-mail,

1. Nope, it's for PlayStation 2 only... maybe the PC one day. The original MGS is about to be released on PC by Microsoft.
2. FFVII scored a big 95% in Hyper November 1997.
3. If you love Pokémon, yeah.
4. Now, now. You wouldn't be talking about pirated ROMs would you? Tsk.

DOGS EATING YOUR FACE

Dear Hyper,
Why is Resident Evil classed as a "Horror game"?

Don't get me wrong, I love RE, but having a zombie story line and a few loud noises at obvious times is not a check under-

the-bed-before-you-go-to-sleep experience.

Now Oddworld, that is the scariest game ever. Being chased by meat-eating dogs down a corridor, miss timing a jump, and smacking into a wall only to have a bunch of tiny dogs join their mum in eating your face, is simply terrifying. Or running carelessly onto the next screen and finding a Scrab galloping towards you at full throttle, and having to turn tail and run for your life. Or the tension of sneaking from one batch of shadows to the next and hoping against hope that a guard doesn't pick you off from the horizon. I could go on, but my point is, that Oddworld is one of the only games that could ever make me sleep with the lights on for fear of a Dog/Scrab/Paramite chewing on my face.

Cheerfully yours,

ADAM VAN DER VEEN

redneck6000@hotmail.com

Dear Adam,

I'd only be worried if your face actually looks like a pizza for instance. Try Clearasil.

UNATCO IS WATCHING...

Stupid damn Mr Manderley. Thinks he's so good because he has a private toilet. He thinks he's so big and tough... well I'll show him!

Oh... hello... where am I? Oh that's right, reality.

I'm not JC Denton after all.

MATTHEW MEAGHER

captainub@hotmail.com

Dear JC, er I mean Matthew, Check your datavault. Your mission objectives have been updated.

GAMING RUINS YOUR EYESIGHT

Dear Hyper,
Don't you think that if game developers making games for the PSX just blurred the in game graphics just a bit, the overall game graphics would look much better? Look at Rollcage Stage 2. If you enable motion blur, the graphics look better. Sure there are a few flaws, and it runs slightly slower, but I think >>



>>

WOW. CHECK OUT HALO - COMING TO THE XBOX, PC, MAC AND PS2 SOMETIME IN 2001. DROOLI

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it looks better.
rade200@telstra.easymail.com.au
P.S. It also works well if you squint
your eyes while looking at the screen.

Next.

THE SECRET TO LIFE

You see Eliot,
a women, is like a video game. They are
persuasive, beautiful, and very demand-
ing on your time. Like a video game, you
can't just jump in and expect to survive
or triumph. You must learn it first, see
what pushing which button does what,
have a sharp eye as to pick up on the
clues on what they want you to do next.
Like a video game, they are down right
confusing at times and just plain as sight
at other times. You must respect them,
and know it well enough to, and also be
able to use your own intellect to solve the
puzzles that they set out. Like a video
game, you can have your disappointments,
and your highs. And just like
every video game, there is always an end
or a point where you just can't continue
participating any more. But for every
gamer, there is always that one video
game that they can play, forever.

CHUM
chumbodia@hotmail.com

Chum,
So chumpy you can carve it.

HYPER THE COMMUNIST MONTHLY

Dear "Hyper",
I love your magazine, but gradually
I've noticed your recent subtle attempts
to sneakily excrete pseudo-communist

propaganda into your articles. Yet you
seem to expect no repercussions. Well,
you're wrong. You guys should just re-
name your "magazine" to something
like "Socialist Monthly" or "Hyper-
Commie." And then there's the issue of
Eliot and his deranged hair donut.
Sorry Eliot, but there's no way you can
look like Fidel Castro... not in those
pants! Listen guys, communism in the-
ory is a good idea, but it never works
out in real life. Hyper would just go
downhill. The Final Fantasy IX review
would be replaced with a long and
acutely boring explanation of how
Lenin's policy on worker wages could
have been improved if he followed
Marx's original plan. Or why movies
about Vietnam are naive and biased.
In closing, give it up Hyper! I'd hate to
see you guys destroyed by one of
Eliot's strange monthly phases.

Yours thankfully,
SAINT NIC
el_monzo@hotmail.com

Dear Saint Nic,
You ain't seen nothing yet. Just
wait until next issue when I
expound upon the rationalisation
of technology in the new age and
its social impact on the lower
working class. Fun!



>> MEET AKI, ONE OF THE LEAD CHARACTERS IN THE UPCOMING FINAL FANTASY MOVIE. YEP, THAT'S CGI!

CHEATERS SUCK!

Dear Hyper,
Have you noticed that in game competitions on the
internet, there have been a lot of people cheating? It's a
big problem with games. To explain, I was happily
playing Sonic Adventure and had just beaten my
record on Emerald Coast. My new record was one
minute and thirty three seconds. When I got my
DreamKey browser, signed up for the internet, and
went online with Sonic Adventure, I was disappointed to
see that I ranked 336! But most of the other people used
GameShark and had records of 0 minutes and 0 seconds!
I never used GameShark or any other non official cheats
when I made my record, so why should other people do it? If you're
a slacker, then don't cheat. Instead, download saves off the net or get off
your ass and start practicing! Oh, by the way I have a few questions:

1. What do you think gaming will be like in the year 2010?
2. When is the PlayStation 2 coming out in Australia?
3. Will people ever stop cheating in games?
4. When will PlayStation One (the portable one) be released in Australia?

Thanks!
FROM MATT IN W.A.

Dear Matt,
Sorry to hear about your Sonic Adventure grief. We all went
through a similar feeling when playing Diablo a while back when
it was flooded by players who had hacked their characters to be
more powerful than they should be, effectively ruining the expe-
rience for everyone.

1. Plug your brain in and... GO.
2. November 26th.
3. We really hope so, in terms of multiplayer at least. Bastards.
4. In time for your Christmas dollars.



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promotional activities.

HH1

letter of the month



The Official Australian Games Chart

Compiled by Inform in association with AVSDA

July 2000

Top 10 Best Selling Full Price PC Games (-\$29.95 inc. GST)

Position	Game Title	Game Type
1	↻ Diablo 2	RPG
2	↻ Icewind Dale	RPG
3	↓ The Sims	Strategy
4	↑ Sim Mania Pack	Bundle
5	↓ Comm. & Conq. Tiberian Sun	Strategy
6	↓ Age of Empires 2	Strategy
7	↻ Vampire: The Masquerade	Adventure
8	↓ Shogun: Total War	Strategy
9	↻ Dark Reign 2	Strategy
10	↻ Grand Prix 3	Racing

Top 10 Best Selling Full Price PlayStation Games (-\$39.95 inc. GST)

Position	Game Title	Game Type
1	↔ Colin McRea Rally 2	Racing
2	↔ Gran Turismo 2	Racing
3	↑ Driver	Racing
4	↑ Muppet Race Mania	Racing
5	↻ Need For Speed 4: Hi Stakes	Racing
6	↓ WWF Smackdown!	Sports
7	↓ Tony Hawk's Skateboarding	Sports
8	↓ Medevil 2	Adventure
9	↻ In Cold Blood	Adventure
10	↓ Tomorrow Never Dies	Adventure

Top 10 Best Selling Full Price N64 Games (-\$39.95 inc. GST)

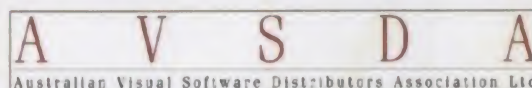
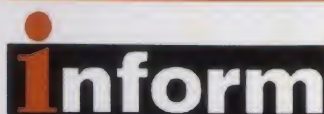
Position	Game Title	Game Type
1	↔ Perfect Dark	Action
2	↔ Pokemon Stadium	Action
3	↑ Mario Party	Family
4	↑ Mario Kart	Racing
5	↓ Goldeneye 007	Action
6	↑ Donkey Kong 64	Platform
7	↑ Super Smash Brothers	Action
8	↓ Super Mario 64	Platform
9	↑ Diddy Kong Racing	Racing
10	↻ Pokemon Snap	Family

Top 10 Best Selling Full Price Dreamcast Games (-\$49.95 inc. GST)

Position	Game Title	Game Type
1	↔ Resident Evil - Code: Veronica	Adventure
2	↑ Ecco The Dolphin	Adventure
3	↓ V-Rally 2 Millenium Edition	Racing
4	↔ Crazy Taxi	Racing
5	↑ House Of The Dead 2	Action
6	↑ Sonic Adventures	Platform
7	↻ Fur Fighters	Adventure
8	↻ The Nomad Soul	Adventure
9	↻ Sword Of The Berserk	Adventure
10	↻ Soul Calibur	Action

Top 20 Best Selling Full Price Games - All Formats

Position	Game Title	Format	Position	Game Title	Format
1	↻ Diablo 2	PC	11	↓ The Sims	PC
2	↓ Perfect Dark	N64	12	↻ Sim Mania Pack	PC
3	↔ Pokemon Yellow	Gameboy	13	↑ Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun	PC
4	↑ Colin McRae Rally 2	PlayStation	14	↻ Driver	PlayStation
5	↓ Pokemon Stadium	N64	15	↓ Age of Empires 2	PC
6	↔ Pokemon Red	Gameboy	16	↻ Muppet Race Mania	PlayStation
7	↑ Mario Party 2	N64	17	↻ Super Mario Brothers Deluxe	Gameboy
8	↓ Pokemon Trading Card Game	N64	18	↻ Vampire: The Masquerade	PC
9	↔ Gran Turismo 2	PlayStation	19	↔ Mario Kart 64	N64
10	↻ Icewind Dale	PC	20	↻ Need For Speed 4: Hi Stakes	PlayStation



- ↻ - New entry
- ↔ - Non mover
- ↑ - Up from last month
- ↓ - Down from last month

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ON SALE OCTOBER 25TH



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