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PS2 - PC - GAMECUBE - XBOX - DREAMCAST - N64 - PLAYSTATION

HYPER

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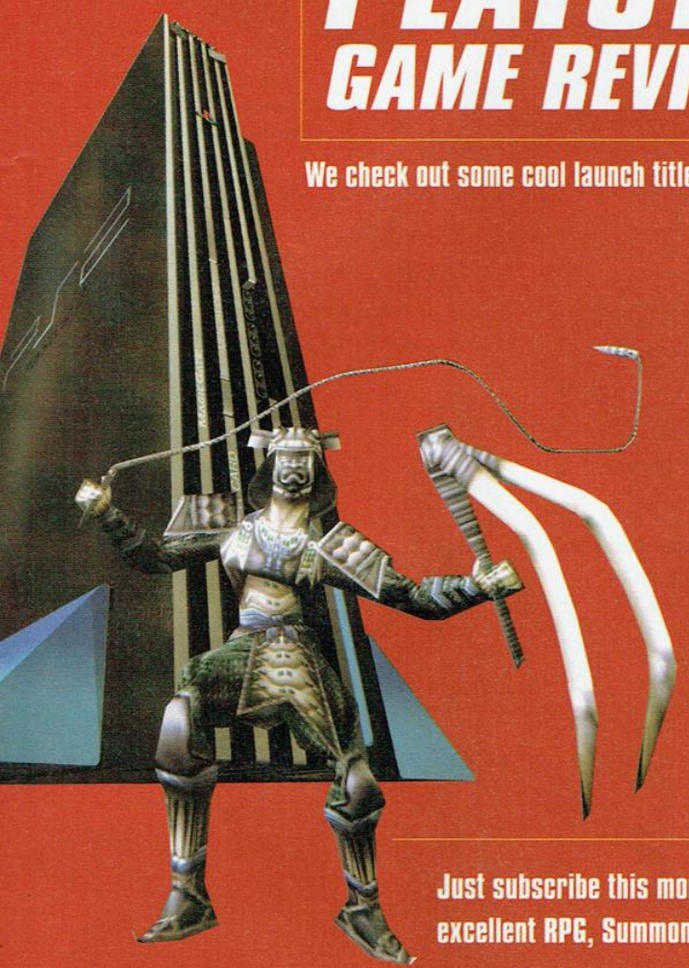
We check out some cool launch titles to help you make your Xmas games list.



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Just subscribe this month to go in the draw for a PS2 and the excellent RPG, Summoner, from THQ.

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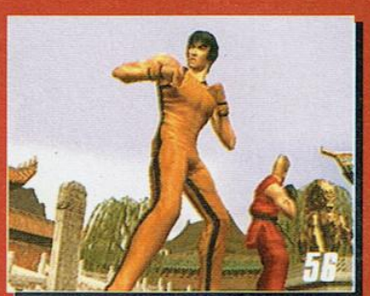

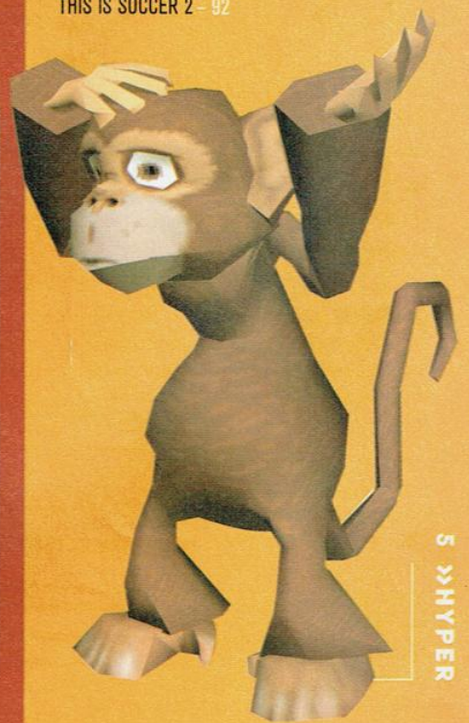

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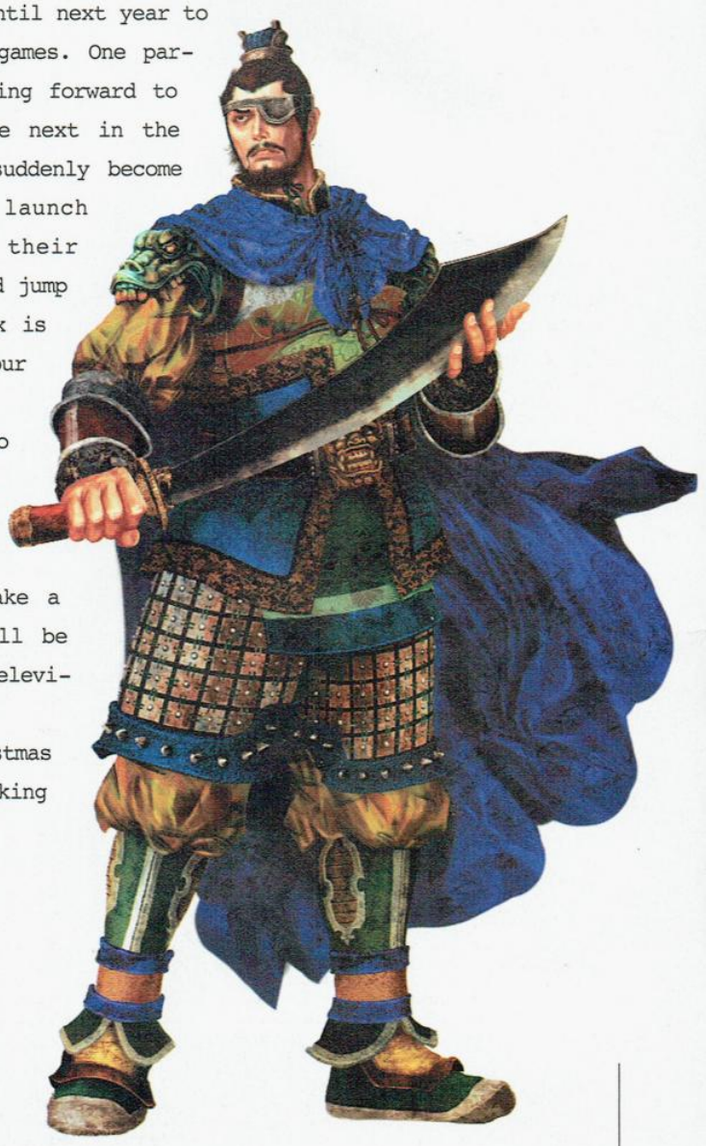
HYPE IT UP

Well, we finally got our hands on the PS2 and the first round of launch titles. What were our overall impressions? More mixed than a bag of lollies. There were moments of ecstasy, moments of light-hearted joy and moments of total confusion and disgust. Good games, amazing games and some truly awful games. We all agree that there's some phenomenal potential in the PS2, but it looks like we'll be waiting until next year to see some truly next generation games. One particular title that we were looking forward to on PS2 was Munch's Oddysee, the next in the Oddworld series, but that has suddenly become an exclusive Microsoft Xbox launch title. Did Microsoft throw their chequebook around or did Oddworld jump ship because they think the Xbox is a better gaming platform? See our news for the answer...

That dang Xbox is shaping up to be something big and scary. As for the Nintendo Gamecube, well, we all know that Nintendo can make great games – just take a look at the new Zelda... so we'll be clearing a small space by our televisions for that baby too.

You know what? We want our Christmas presents early... and we're talking Christmas 2001!



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HYPER THE TV SHOW!

Yes, it's here! Everyone get your subscription to FOXTEL now! Fox Kids and Hyper are very proud to announce the first HYPER TV SHOW on the Fox Kids channel, airing December 17 at 6:30pm. Featuring the latest game reviews, previews, competitions, interviews and special features, HYPER the TV show is loaded with incredible eye candy, honest opinions and truck loads of fun! Developed by Fox Kids in conjunction with the Hyper editorial crew, this is going to be the first TV videogames show that you can actually trust. This is the one. Tell all your friends to tune into Fox Kids on the Foxtel network, on December 17, for your first look at HYPER TV!

ODDWORLD TELLS US ABOUT THE XBOX!

Oddworld Inhabitants have taken their much-anticipated title, Munch's Oddysee (the next in the Oddworld quintology), and made it an Xbox exclusive launch title.

What was once being hyped as one of the best PS2 titles to look forward to next year, Munch's Oddysee and the rest of the series will now be for Xbox gamers only, much to the chagrin of Sony Computer Entertainment. Oddworld were keen to announce this move just before the PS2 launched in the USA, so that gamers who were looking forward to the game and were thinking of purchasing a PS2 to play it, could re-consider their choice of console.

Munch's Oddysee has been a stand out title at all the games shows this year, with Hyper even featuring Munch on the cover of the February 2000 issue. The game looked astoundingly good at E3, and we were surprised to hear Lorne Lanning of Oddworld openly complaining about the PS2 at the time and the difficulties they had faced to get the game looking as good as they wanted. The move isn't a surprising one to those who were aware of Oddworld's seeming disdain for the PS2 hardware.

Hyper dropped a line to Oddworld's producer Gerilyn Wilhelm to find out a little more on their decision to allow Microsoft to publish Munch's Oddysee as an Xbox-only title...

HYPER: What was the main reason for the move?

Oddworld: Microsoft is the publisher that stepped up to the plate and fully commited to supporting our vision for the future of our games. Second to this, the Xbox is the most powerful system that allows us to more fully manifest our vision of the games throughout the 128-bit era.

HYPER: Does you believe the Xbox is a superior platform to the PS2?

Oddworld: Of course.

HYPER: How will this affect Munch's Oddysee as a game? (Visually, gameplay-wise etc.)

Oddworld: The most obvious advantage is the boat-load more VRAM afforded to us on the Xbox. This makes a world of difference in image quality. We've been struggling to get our texture quality packed into the very little VRAM previously available to us. Next was simply the raw performance. The broader pipeline, faster CPU, and the Nvidia chip meant more characters and overall performance.

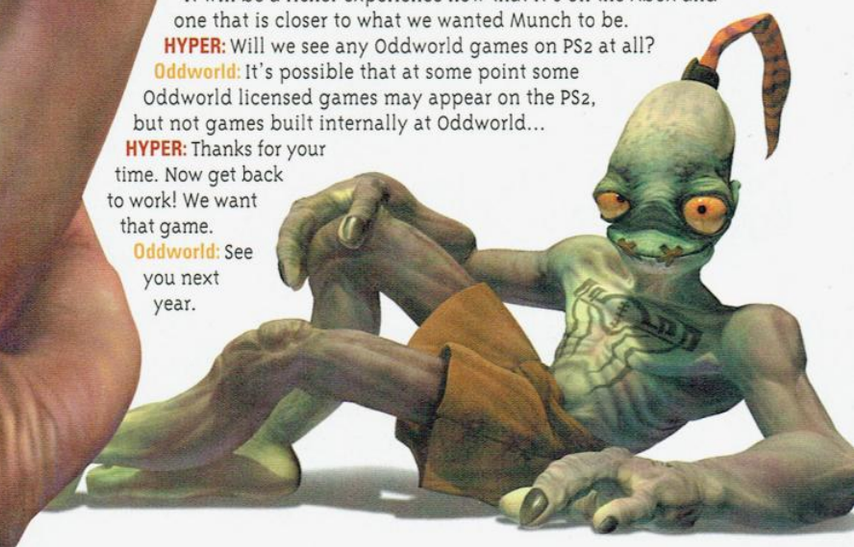
It will be a richer experience now that it's on the Xbox and one that is closer to what we wanted Munch to be.

HYPER: Will we see any Oddworld games on PS2 at all?

Oddworld: It's possible that at some point some Oddworld licensed games may appear on the PS2, but not games built internally at Oddworld...

HYPER: Thanks for your time. Now get back to work! We want that game.

Oddworld: See you next year.



PS2 LAUNCH SHORTAGE

As you read this, gamers everywhere are probably trying desperately to get their hands on PS2s. In the USA, the PS2 launch was restricted to an incredibly low 500,000 units. If you consider that Japan snapped up one million PS2s in three days, you can imagine how difficult it is to get a PS2 in the USA with comparatively so few consoles. What this means for Australia is even worse. Our PS2s have to come from the number allocated for the PAL territories which includes all of Europe. What could possibly offset the demand here in Australia is the high price on the PS2 at launch – $750 is going to have many gamers thinking twice this Christmas. However in the USA, where the unit is selling for $299, thousands of pre-orders have not been honoured simply because the stores cannot get the stock, leaving many consumers pretty hot under the collar about not getting something they've already paid for. It's going to be an interesting month leading up to Christmas, seeing just how many PS2s make themselves available here in Oz. Let's hope there's not a another riot.

CAPTION THIS! PART 14

Welcome back to what is rapidly becoming the most popular section in Hyper magazine – you freaks! Caption This is back for part 14, so sit back and try to think of something funny to go with this screenshot. You can e-mail your entries to captionthis@next.com.au – good luck!

READERS BE FUNNY HERE

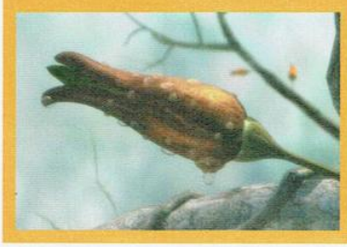
XBOX.COM TEASE GAMERS

Xbox.com, Microsoft's official Xbox site, recently sent out a newsletter plugging the upcoming "Official Xbox Magazine" which will launch around the world some time in 2001. Along with the newsletter came a mock-up cover featuring Mitsurugi from Namco's Soul Calibur, Lara Croft and surprisingly, Squall from Final Fantasy VIII! There were also tag lines for games such as Motocross Madness X and Tony Hawk 3! Obviously this was just a mock-up cover, but do Microsoft know something they're not telling anyone? Wouldn't it annoy Square a little bit to find a Final Fantasy character used in this fashion unless they were developing for the Xbox system? Is this a subtle hint?

NINTENDO GAMECUBE RUMOURS

Small droplets of information are starting to leak out on games that are in development for Nintendo's Gamecube system. We're currently starved for some official information, but we have heard a few small things. It seems the industry is complaining that there is a lack of software development kits being sent out to third-party developers. We know for sure that Nintendo and Rare already have dev kits, and are working on some killer launch titles, but unless Nintendo gets dev kits out quick smart there ain't going to be a huge lineup for their 2001 launch date in Japan. Nintendo admit that the launch will probably only have about "6 to 8 titles", which doesn't compare well to the PS2's 26 games available at launch here in Australia. But is that so bad? Nintendo are masters at game development, and if their in-house launch titles are anything like Super Mario 64, then those new games alone would probably be enough to keep us happy for the months we might have to wait for a decent third-party line up.

We do know that Konami have committed to Gamecube games based on some of their new licenses, such as Crash Bandicoot, Jurassic Park and The Thing – although they haven't officially announced specifics yet. Capcom have also confirmed that Resident Evil Zero has been bumped from the N64 to the Gamecube, which is sweet and sour news. There's a lot of rumour out there but not a lot of fact, so for now, check out these amazing stills from the Gamecube's tech demos. Powerful stuff!



OVERFLOW

Late in 2001, Eidos will be releasing a Tomb Raider title for the PlayStation 2. However, this will be no ordinary installment. Eidos plan to release new missions, introducing new characters and locations, in an episodic format. You'll be able to connect with your PS2 and download the next episode from the Eidos servers directly into your PS2. It's Tomb Raider again, but at least it's a little different.

Commandos 2 won't just be a big PC title. It's also going to be available for PlayStation 2 and Dreamcast! Commandos 1 was a fairly underrated gem, y'see...

Sega mentioned recently that they are in the preliminary stages of designing their next console. Will it be dubbed the Dreamcast 2, or will Sega go for a brand new name again? We guess it depends how well the Dreamcast survives the next slew of consoles...

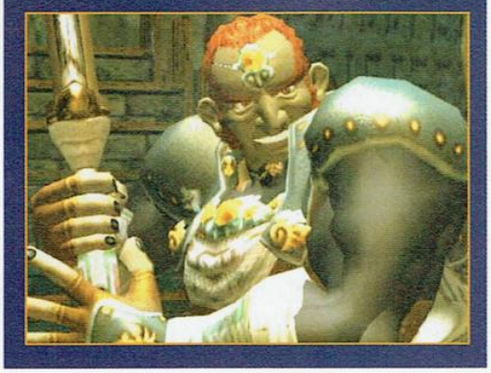
The website for the Tomb Raider movie has finally gone live. There will be story and cast updates, as well as one picture from the production posted every week. You can find it at the simple URL: www.tombraidermovie.com

Paul Gross, the senior Vice President of Microsoft's mobility group, has hinted at the possibility of a future handheld companion for the Xbox. He says, "I think over time, as we establish Xbox as a successful gaming device, the concept of a companion gaming device is a very interesting thing." Will we see one in the year 2002?

There are rumours circulating that ION Storm are developing a multiplayer expansion to their brilliant shooter, Deus Ex. It could come in the form of a patch, a set-of add-on missions or it could be a bogus rumour...

Square are trying to convince people that their upcoming Final Fantasy XI (the online only multiplayer title) will be so well designed that it'll run smoothly on even a low 28.8k modem! We find that a little hard to believe, but possibly a turn-based combat system would allow for a bit of loading time...

Oh... and here's another pic of Gannon from the Nintendo Gamecube tech demos. That looks gooood.



NO BAD GAMES SAY NINTENDO

The president of Nintendo in Japan, Mr. Hiroshi Yamauchi, was recently quoted on Nintendo's new approach to games development on the Gamecube. He stated, "We take in those who want to create games for us. After we take them in, we speak to them about not creating poor quality games."
It sounds like Nintendo are going to play a lot tougher this time around with their "quality control"...

XBOX CONTROLLER REVEALED

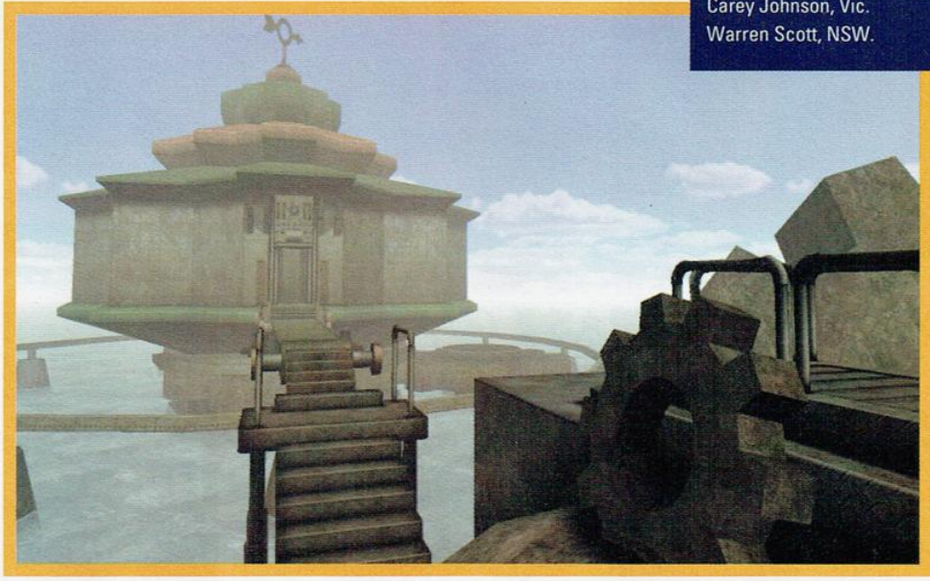
Microsoft recently unveiled a prototype for their Xbox controller to a select group of UK and US developers. Reportedly shaped a bit like the Dreamcast controller, the Xbox pad features two analogue sticks, two analogue shoulder buttons, six analogue buttons, two menu select buttons, a memory card slot, an expansion port for possible speech recognition peripherals (like a plug-in microphone or headset) and full force-feedback functions (two vibrator motors inside the controller).

This design was only a prototype, and could change according to the feedback they receive from the developers. More on the Xbox controller when it comes to hand... get it? Comes to hand! Hahaha. Ahh.

MYST GETS REAL

Remember Myst? The game that "stunned" the gaming industry all those years ago with its "immersive" 3D environment. It was all just pre-rendered static images with lush sound effects, but the puzzles were damn challenging. Well, how times have changed. Thanks to advancements in graphics technology and computing power, it's now possible to re-create the entire Myst world in real-time 3D. Coming soon to a store near you is Real Myst, the fully 3D interactive version of Myst that the Rand brothers probably intended the game to be in the first place.

If you don't want to play the same game all over again, then look out for Myst III: Exile which is coming early in the new year.



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GO TO THE TOKYO GAME SHOW

Well, not really. But here's the next best thing... you can buy a VCD of the entire show from Blade Electronics. Yep, some poor dude had to trudge around the show with a digital camera on his shoulder and film game footage of all the latest games just so us gamers who can't afford to go can sit back and enjoy a package of highlights. Some of the game footage is a little dark (hey, it was filmed from the floor of the show), but this is a pretty cool insight into the games of 2001. There is footage of games here that don't get posted online, Xbox tech demos, lots of PS2 stuff – and it's only $14.95. To watch a VCD, all you need is a DVD drive of some kind or VCD player. You can get this Tokyo Game Show VCD and lots of other cool stuff from Blade Electronics "The Gamers Edge" – visit them online at www.blade.cc!

WIN! But wait, there's more! Yep, thanks to Blade Electronics, we're giving away six copies of the Tokyo Game Show VCD to the first six readers who can answer this question:

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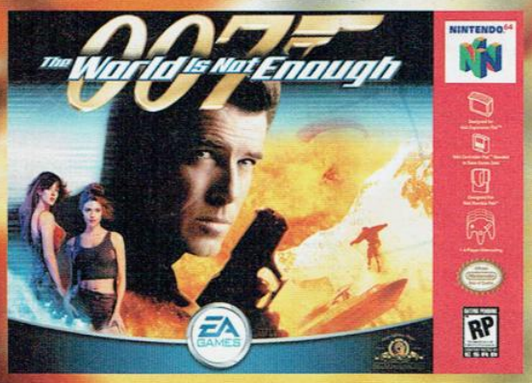

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GAMECUBE GADGETS

Nintendo have revealed more details on their array of peripherals that will be available for their Gamecube system when it launches (hopefully) next year. Although most of these extras are fairly obvious additions (you wouldn't expect them to not release memory cards for instance), there are definitely a few curve balls here that get you thinking about what the console will be capable of.

DIGICARD

The Gamecube digicard is a 4MB flash memory card. It may not be as large as the PS2 memory card (8MB) but then it doesn't have to hold DVD BIOS which is required by the PS2 to bootup DVD playback.

DIGICARD ADAPTER

If you're worried that 4MB isn't enough, then check this out... this adapter will allow you to use the SD Memory Card being manufactured by Matsushita (Panasonic). The SD is a whopping 64MB and is roughly the size of a large stamp. Crikey!

MODEM ADAPTER

The Gamecube Modem Adapter comfortable slots into the underside of the Gamecube in a special port designed for it. It's a 56k V.90 modem for the short term internet use.

BROADBAND ADAPTER

Whoo! The Broadband Adapter slots into the same bay as the Modem Adapter, but obviously it gives you access to a high speed cable-style connection for when broadband becomes more common in the long term. The possibilities that this opens up for the Gamecube is very exciting. Multiplayer gaming will really take off on the Gamecube when high speed connections are affordable and up and running.

DIGITAL VIDEO CABLE

This cable will allow you to hook the Gamecube up to a digital television set for a picture which will be akin to playing through a computer monitor. Full screen digital high resolution gaming. Mmmm... if you've seen the Dreamcast played through a PC monitor, you'll know the incredible difference it makes.

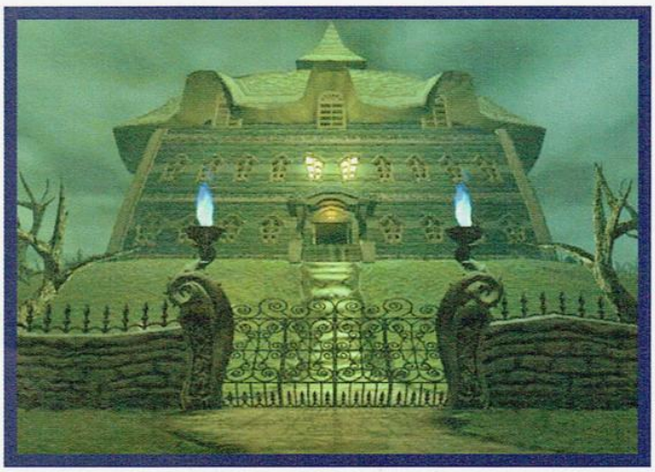
DIGITAL VIDEO CABLE ▲

GAMECUBE DVD PLAYBACK

Matsushita (Panasonic in the west) are still planning on releasing a DVD playback enabled version of Nintendo's Gamecube, shortly after the system launches in Japan. This will be a Gamecube that plays all the games yet allows for DVD movies to be viewed using the same system, a feature which Nintendo have decided not to include in their own Gamecube production. The Matsushita Gamecube will most probably be a more expensive machine, and more of a direct competitor to the PS2 in terms of offering a "home entertainment" feature. At least gamers will be able to buy the Nintendo "gaming-only" system at a cheaper price. It hasn't been decided yet whether the DVD compatible Gamecube will be released in Australia alongside the standard Gamecube.

WAP DUMPED FOR LUMP

WAP (Wireless Application Protocol) which was once the hot new technology, is now suffering plenty of criticism from all angles with consumers and electronics manufacturers deeming it slow and useless. It seems that a whole new protocol has been developed by a small unknown Japanese company, Yagashuka Technologies. Called Line Uniform Mobile Protocol or "LUMP", this is to WAP what cable is to the standard modem. It allows for full-screen video and other such high-bandwidth data to be pumped through to the next generation of mobile phones that will have full colour digital displays. We can't wait for LUMP!



LUMP is in fact a "lump" of crap. Although we expect it to happen one day, unfortunately we've led you astray on the reality of LUMP. Muahaha!

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PlayStation 2

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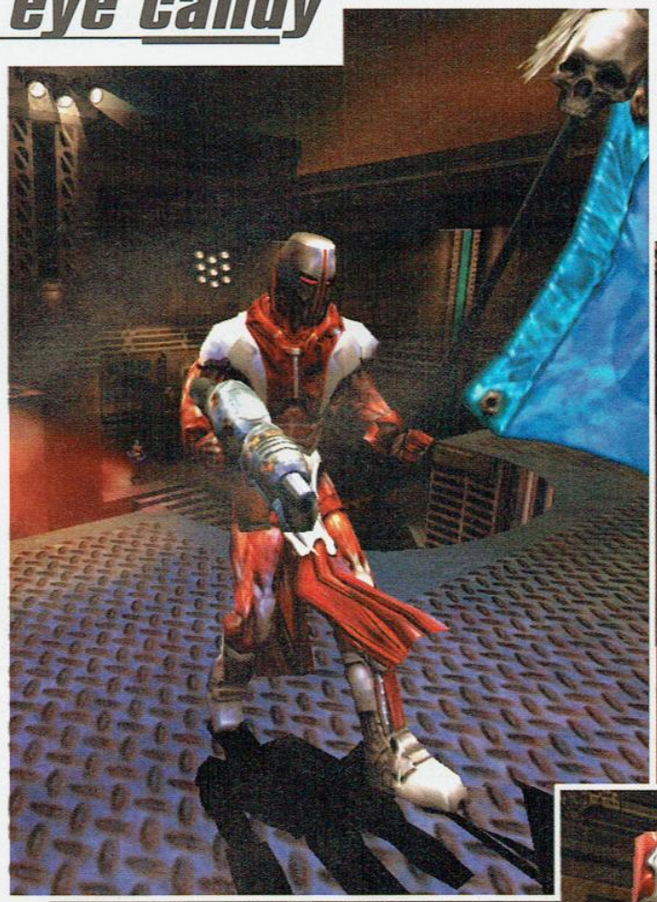
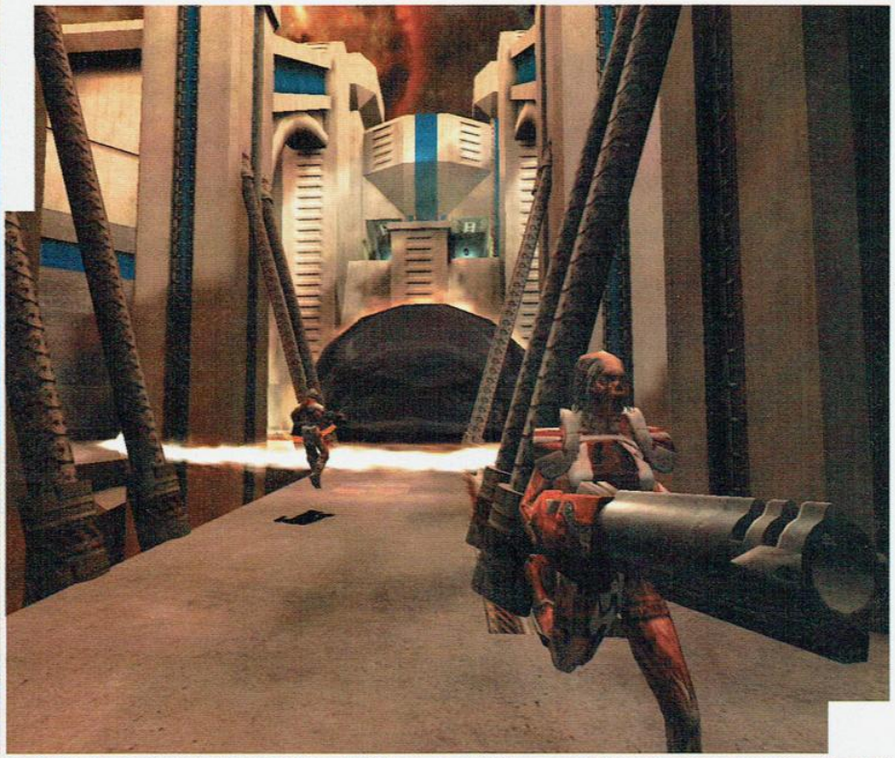


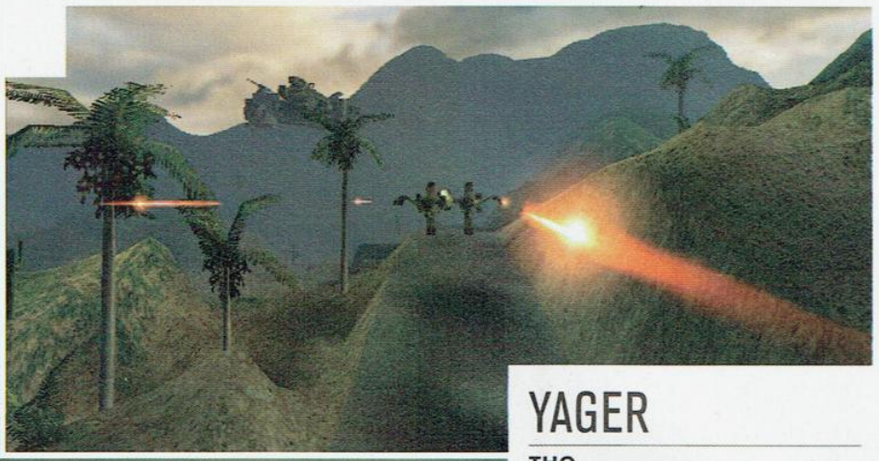


QUAKE 3 ARENA: TEAM ARENA

ID SOFTWARE

PC

The long awaited official mission pack keeps slipping from our release schedule – every time we think we're about to receive a shiny shrink-wrapped box! For now, just check out the latest screenshots and keep on salivating. Looking good...

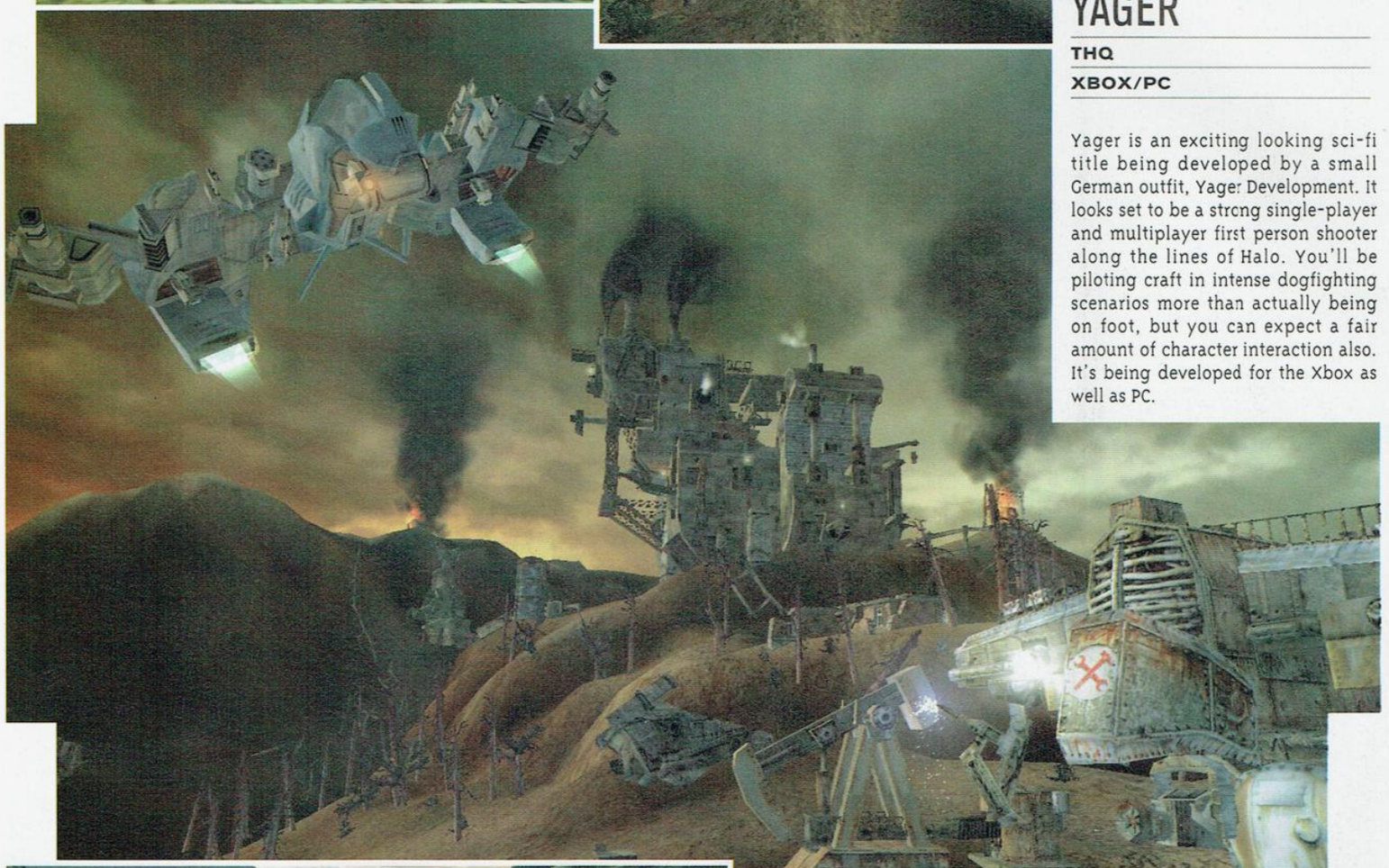


YAGER

THQ

XBOX/PC

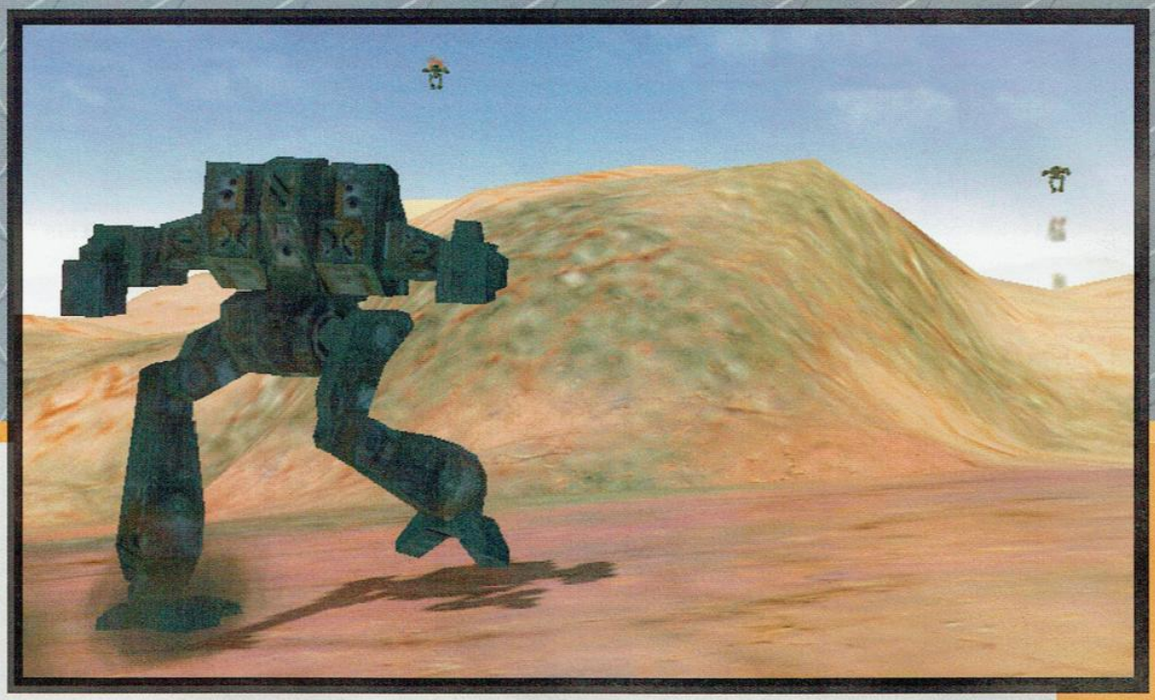
Yager is an exciting looking sci-fi title being developed by a small German outfit, Yager Development. It looks set to be a strong single-player and multiplayer first person shooter along the lines of Halo. You'll be piloting craft in intense dogfighting scenarios more than actually being on foot, but you can expect a fair amount of character interaction also. It's being developed for the Xbox as well as PC.



BY RYAN MCKAY AND CAM SHEA

A chat with MechWarrior 4's

JORDAN WEISM



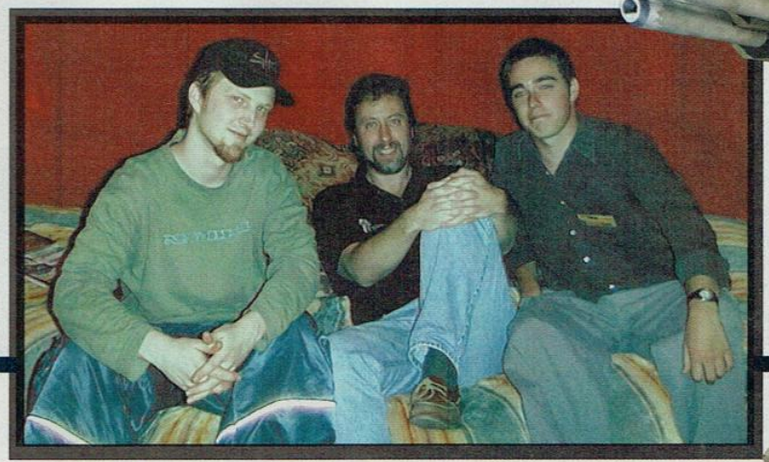
JUST LIKE SHOOTING WOMP RATS, RIGHT?

MECHING GAMERS HAPPY

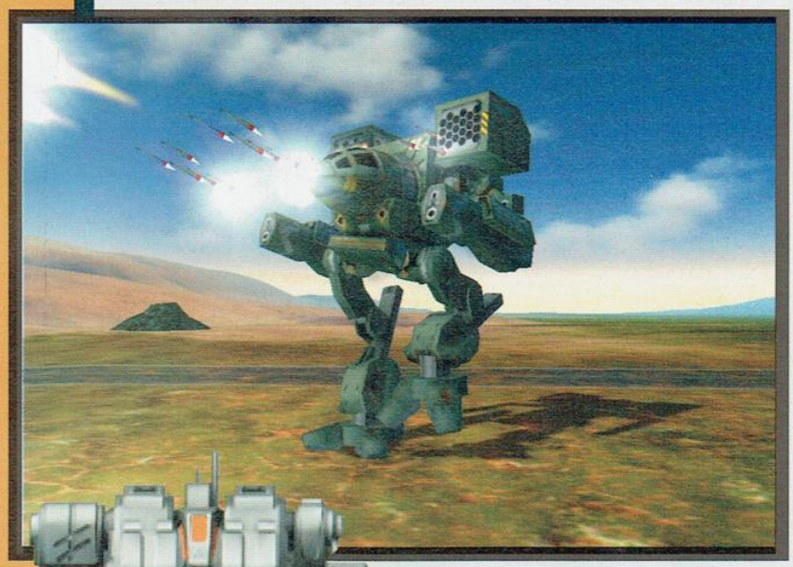
HYPER: ***Is the next step for the MechWarrior series massively multiplayer online gaming?***
Jordan: I've been thinking about that for 10 years! (laughs) We have notebooks of notes regarding this topic, containing ideas of projects we have started a couple of times and stopped. This certainly reflects an enormous amount of passion about the game and the multiplayer aspect. It is just a matter of when we get there and focusing our efforts. I mean that would be so cool.

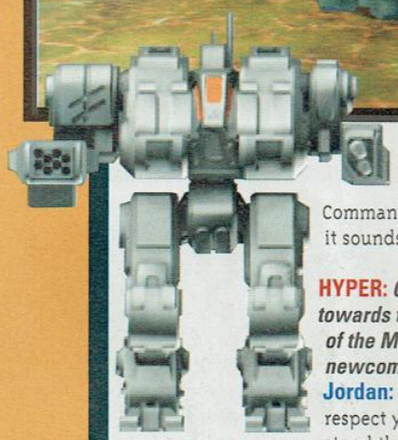
HYPER: ***Do you see room for MODs vis-à-vis Quake 3 et al?***
Jordan: More so than ever in the past. It won't be as open as say Quake or Half-Life, but infinitely more open than any of the MechWarriors have been. The same editing tool that we use to build all of the single player and multiplayer missions will be released on the net, once the team get some sleep. I think that will give Mech 4 an enormous amount of longevity to the multiplayer environments, 'cause people can create more and more environments as well as more single player missions, having the same AI scripting capabilities that we do. This alone will be extremely exciting.

HYPER: ***What are your thoughts on using the Microsoft Strategic Commander for control in Mech 4?***
Jordan: I had never thought of that actually and it sounds like a great solution. One of the people that worked on the title, Dave McCoy, and I have spoken about making this a game that you can virtually play from joystick alone. To try to replace some of the keyboard commands and replace the need to have that keyboard there and all those buttons, with more interactive, environmentally based solutions for tactics. I think we got a fair ways towards there. There is no question that the control system for the Mech is better than it was before. We have got a fair



(LEFT TO RIGHT) HYPER'S CAM SHEA, JORDAN "WISE MAN" WEISMAN AND HYPERACTIVE'S RYAN MCKAY





way toward being able to play the game from joystick alone, and I think that the Strategic Commander is a brilliant solution. I haven't tried it but it sounds perfect.

HYPER: ***On that note, do you see the movement towards the joystick as simplifying the complexities of the Mech series and gearing it more toward the newcomer?***

Jordan: I think you have to walk a fine line. In some respect you have to ask your existing players to understand the need for getting new players onboard. Because if we don't constantly attract new players, then eventually, the thing we all love dies, it goes away. You constantly have to refresh your audience and add to it with new people. You can't do that if the product gets more and more complex. I think flight sims suffer from this. I think the "mech genre" was moving in that direction and it was very concerning for us. Because there are only a few truly viable flight sims left. Microsoft's Combat Flight Sim is the top of the heap and after that it falls off pretty quick. Let's take Falcon 4.0 – it is so complex, so realistic that it is really inaccessible without 5 years of flight training. We can't fall into that. We have always straddled between a sim and an action game, riding that balance, and if the balance falls too far out of whack to the sim side then we lose that accessibility to the wider audience we need to stay with. Our buzzline was, "Less complication more sophistication." Ultimately it's the consumers who will tell us if we did a good job or not.

HYPER: ***Do you see that as a trend in gaming in general – less complication?***

Jordan: Great game design is not about throwing in the kitchen sink, it's not about more more more. It's about really trying to understand the essence of what you're trying to get across and nailing that f**ker to the wall.

HYPER: ***That's why Nintendo's Miyamoto is so respected by fellow developers. He just takes that core essence and manages to bring it to life in a magical way that so few other game designers can do.***

Jordan: Absolutely right. I think especially in the PC space, the design community - I think because they didn't really understand the essence of what it was they were creating - would tend to throw a million features at it, in the hope that somewhere in there was the combination that the audience would discover and would make it work. I think we keep falling prey to that.
Secondly we fall into what I call sequelism – where effectively you fall prey to your own previous version. It is easy to say, 'Well I'll just add more and that will make it better' and that is another distractive tendency.
The example I use, is that in many ways the PC game can be like a novel, you can have all this depth and variety and complexity, and then you get to a console game, and a console game is like a haiku – you have to choose each word extremely carefully because you only get so many words, you have to understand the essence of what you're doing precisely. And a lot of PC designers are like, "Well a console game is like a dumbed down PC game." My response is that you don't take a novel and find a haiku in a novel, you don't cut out a lot of words and end up with a good haiku. You have to start by designing exactly what you want to do. That's why we take our designers through this three step process which we call essence/core/overview – where if you can't tell me what your game is in one sentence than you don't really know what your game is yet.

HYPER: ***Would you say technology is a help or a hinderance? As far as looking at it from a game design point of view goes, do you say 'Wow we can do this' or do you worry that when the product is ready to go, you are going to be six months behind the curve?***

Jordan: I think that overall, technology is a great advantage in that it allows us to address these things and start to bring to life greater percentages of our dreams. The challenge is the enormous spread of technology in the market. If everyone went out and bought a machine every year, our lives would be golden, 'cause we could build one game knowing what platform we were shooting for. We have to develop a game that goes across a huge, wide spectrum of technology. The challenge is that we have to make the graphics engine and gameplay scale across a wide gulf and that's the pain in the ass. Luckily Xbox - and console developers - don't have to deal with that.

HYPER: ***Has there been any parallel development for PC and Xbox? What is the general outlook for the Mech series on Xbox?***

Jordan: We are not at a point where we are announcing any Xbox titles yet, specifically. So I'll just avoid that question (laughs). As creative director for all the first party titles, I've been working on Xbox pretty much exclusively for the last year. The only PC products that I have remained involved in are Crimson Skies, Mechwarrior 4 and Mech Commander. Everything else I'm doing is all Xbox based. From my perspective, as an iron-clad rule, we are not developing the same titles for Xbox as we are for PC. They are entirely different gaming platforms - even though the hardware running underneath them and the DirectX tools running underneath make it great to be able to develop for the Xbox. There is a rumour that I am trying to dispel, and that is, that games will work in both the study and the living room. I would rather err on the side of exploiting each for what they are worth rather than try to force a convergence.

HYPER: ***Jordan, it has been an honour. Thank you for your time.***

Jordan: Thanks guys!

CAPTION FOR THE PICTURE ABOVE

FOR THE FULL TRANSCRIPT OF THE INTERVIEW WITH JORDAN WEISMAN, VISIT WWW.HYPERACTIVE.COM.AU

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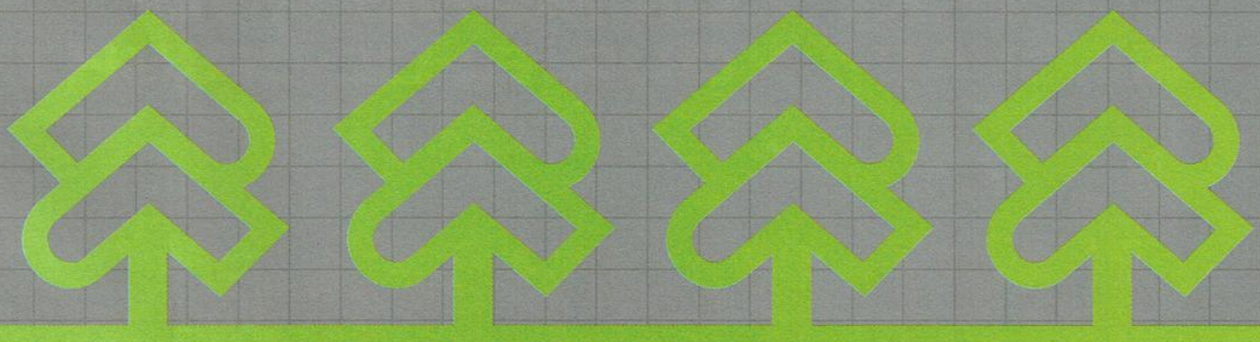
Rating unavailable at time of print.

>> CAM SHEA

HYPER XMAS BUYER'S GUIDE



Everything cool you could want for Christmas in one wishful guide.

CONSOLES

DREAMCAST

PRICE: $299

Sega's 128-bit console made a big splash in the US on release, but barely raised an eyebrow over here. The back-catalogue is there, with many great games to choose from, and quite a few big titles on the horizon. It's certainly no slouch when it comes to pushing polygons, but this (and the PSOne) are going to find it hard fighting the marketing wave of the PlayStation 2 this Christmas. Oh, and New Zealand gamers beware – there'll be no online play for you. Doh.

PSONE

PRICE: $179

The funky looking remodelled PlayStation. Well priced, but realistically, the only reason you'd buy one is if you're a collector or you can't afford a Dreamcast or PS2.

PLAYSTATION 2

PRICE: $749

Surprisingly expensive, but arguably still good value for money... if you can get your hands on one come launch day. We'd wait for the price to come down unless you absolutely must have a DVD player or a particular launch title.

HOT PSX / PS2 PERIPHERAL

THRUSTMASTER 360 MODENA RACING WHEEL

In the past, PlayStation wheels have never been in the same ballpark as their PC brethren in terms of quality. Fortunately, Thrustmaster have come up with the best PlayStation wheel so far. All the features you'd expect coupled with solid design make this an ideal companion for games like Gran Turismo 3.

PC HARDWARE & PERIPHERALS

CD BURNERS

CD burners are so affordable right now, you'd be crazy not to buy one. Sure, DVD RAM drives are available, but CD burners are a far better value for money solution - not to mention being compatible with so many more devices.

RICOH MP9120A

What makes this burner special, aside from the whoppingly fast 12x CD-R capability, is its ability to read DVDs. With a fast 8x DVD read, 32x CD-ROM read, and cutting edge 10x CD-RW and 12xCD-R write speeds, this Ricoh comes highly recommended. Why waste two IDE slots when you can have DVD and a burner in one?

PLEXTOR PLEXWRITE 12/10/32A

Similar stats to the Ricoh (ie the fastest available CD-RW and CD-R write speeds on the market), the Plextor is for PC users who want the ultimate in reliability. The Plexwrite features burn proof technology to prevent buffer underruns. This means that the drive actually stops recording when an underrun occurs and picks up again when the buffer is filled. Thus, you're able to run other programs at the same time as burning - in contrast to almost all other IDE based burners where you'll end up with a coaster if you try and do stuff in the background. And who doesn't want to be able to burn an entire 650MB CD-R in six minutes?

USB RADIO TUNERS

D-LINK DSB-R100 USB RADIO

Plug this antenna into your PC and you can listen to FM radio. Sounds pretty boring right? But think of the possibilities. The package comes with software for recording the signal to WAV, and tools to convert it to mp3. So... instead of being forced to record to tape (yuck) or grapple with running a lead out of your amp, into your soundcard and setting up the relevant audio capture program, you can get high quality recordings with ease. For $59.95 we think the convenience is worth it.

MONITORS

SONY MULTISCAN CPDG500 21 INCH

We love Trinitrons... especially big ones like this 21-inch mutha. With its ultra flat high resolution FD Trinitron CRT screen with a 0.24mm aperture grille pitch, and awesome image clarity, this is the monitor to view porn... errr, sorry, play games on. The GPDG500 also utilises enhanced elliptical correction system technology to ensure consistent colours and clarity from corner to corner of the display.

Even though 17-inch monitors are now standard issue (and if you're still suffering on a 15-inch - get with the times dude!), prices for anything larger are still exorbitant. From a 17-inch Trinitron it's roughly an additional $650 to get to 19, then close to another thousand to get to this 21-inch, leaving you close to $2400 poorer. If the rest of your kit is up to scratch though, it's money well spent.

SPEAKERS

ALTEC LANSING ADA880

We recently had the pleasure of testing out this very sweet set of PC speakers for about a month in the office. Damn! With a heavy duty amplified subwoofer, and the option for either two or four speaker surround, not to mention a remote, the ADA880 is truly impressive. We'd gone through several other sets of cheaper speakers before getting our hands on this setup, and quite frankly, we don't care how much they cost - the difference is immeasurable.

The top end definition from the satellites is crisp and the bass response from the subwoofer is phenomenal, ramping up to Earth rumbling volumes without distortion. If anything, the bass is too powerful - our boss complained that his office was rumbling! Heh heh.

The only fault I have with theADA880s are that the sound isn't quite rounded enough, with the mid range frequencies sometimes sitting too low in the mix - but this could well be an issue with settings on our PC. For around $600, these speakers don't come cheap, but you're paying for quality. If you don't have a dedicated audio setup at home, this is an excellent solution.

VIDEO CARDS

These are revolutionary times in the video card realm. It's hard to believe the pace at which mindblowing technology is being developed and refined. Indeed, graphics technology is outstripping Moore's law with a new, much more potent generation unveiled every six months.

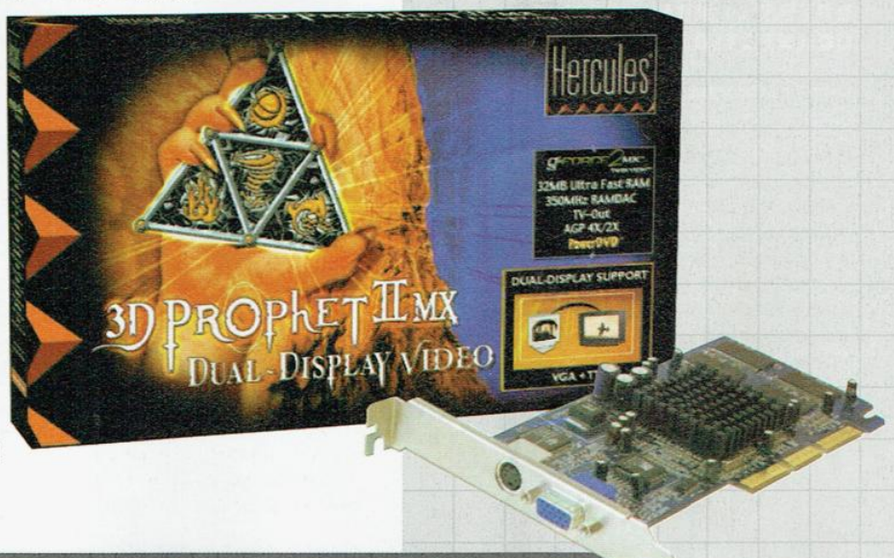
The fight for technological supremacy between nVidia and 3Dfx goes on, but in our minds nVidia clearly have the edge at this stage. The current top of the line nVidia card is the GeForce 2 Ultra. These are essentially the same as GeForce 2 cards, but with higher clock speeds. The base clock speed is 250MHz (up from 200MHz), with DDR RAM running at 460MHz (up from 333MHz). These speed increases really only make a big difference at the highest resolutions, with negligable performance gain at resolutions of 1024x768 and below.

To be honest, it doesn't make a whole lot of sense to buy an Ultra just yet. They only come in 64MB varieties, making for a very expensive graphics solution, and GeForce 2 cards are quite reasonably priced these days (being old school technology and all).

ASUS AGP-V7700 DELUXE

We like video cards with as many inputs/outputs as possible, which is exactly what you get with the V7700 Deluxe - composite and S-Video Y/C video out, monitor out, and combination Y/C composite video in. These features are what you're paying extra for, so if you don't need them, get the V7700 standard.

Powered by the GeForce 2 GTS graphics processing unit (GPU) running at 200MHz and Double Data Rate (DDR) RAM clocked at 333MHz, this is a damn fast card, with 5.3GBps of memory bandwidth. GeForce 2 technology allows the GPU to render four pixels (with up to two textures per pixel) per clock yielding an 800 million pixel per second (pps) fill rate, and a 1600 pps texel rate. It also supports the nVidia shading rasterizer for funky effects like per pixel bump mapping. The hardware transformation and lighting (T&L) engine is another excellent feature that is designed for rendering very complex scenes and takes a huge load off the CPU. Theoretically capable of rendering 25 million polygons per second, no games take full advantage of T&L just yet, so you won't reap the benefits for a while.



3D PROPHET II MX DUAL DISPLAY

So you want a fast card that will push your games along at a gallop, but you also use your computer for multimedia playback and graphics applications. Well, the 3D Prophet II MX Dual Display is the answer. At just over $300, it's a whole lot cheaper than a GeForce 2 GTS, but still offers excellent performance. Plus, using this card you can have simultaneous displays on both your monitor and TV. This way you can watch a DVD on one while web surfing on the other. Or you could be playing a flight sim and have separate viewpoints on each display. Basically, if you use TV out a lot, this card simplifies the whole process. Windows 2000 users should beware though (and this goes for all nVidia dual out cards), because under Win2K you must have both displays set to the same resolution - 800x600 max. Doh!

GET SPECIFIC

There are so many cards on the market these days that we found it next to impossible to decide which ones to recommend. In fact, you should make your own choice after weighing up a number of factors:

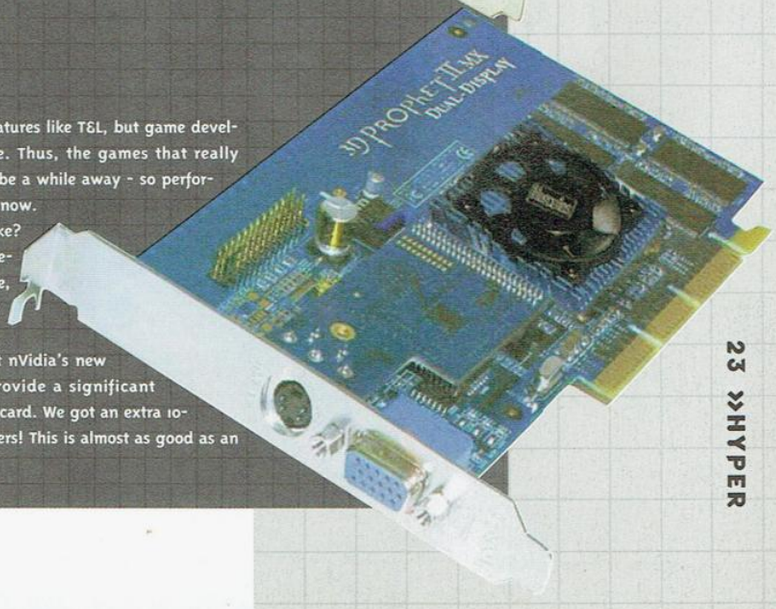
What inputs/outputs do you need? Do you want to be able to run the video signal out to your TV (for watching DVDs for example)? Are you planning on capturing video from an external source (such as a VCR) to your hard disc?

The top of the range cards are very expensive, so you have to weigh up how much extra performance you'll get for your money. For instance, unless you have at least a 21-inch monitor, there's no point running games at 1600x1200 because smaller monitors can't produce a clear display at this resolution.

Do the games you want to play really utilise all the features of the card? This is an issue because next generation video cards appear every six months, sporting new features like T&L, but game development has a much longer cycle. Thus, the games that really exploit those snazzy features may be a while away - so performance gains may be minimal right now.

What is the rest of your system like? Would money be better spent elsewhere? Like on an extra hard drive, a CD burner, a new CPU or a cable connection?

You should also bear in mind that nVidia's new Detonator 3 reference drivers provide a significant speed boost for ANY nVidia based card. We got an extra 10-18 fps after installing the new drivers! This is almost as good as an upgrade.



INTERNET CONNECTION

There's a lot going on in the broadband internet market at the moment, but things are really only in their infancy. The next few years will see broadband become mainstream, with plenty of competition in the marketplace to force prices down to around current dial-up connection rates (we hope).

On the technical side, ultra fat pipes like the Southern Cross Cable network (running in a three ringed loop between the east coast of Australia, the west coast of America and Hawaii) will bring huge leaps in available bandwidth. On the political side, today's telecommunication monopoly will hopefully give way to an open market, particularly if the recent (August) official liberalisation of Australia's copper-loop access goes ahead (this is the reason that ADSL ISP plans are popping up now).

These should lead to a huge increase in satellite, cable and ADSL services, with prices to match. Indeed, American DSL technology provider Copper Mountain Networks has already announced its intentions to expand its operations to Australia.

OPTUS @ HOME CABLE CONNECTION

If you must have broadband now though, Optus @ Home still offers the best deal. It's not capped (like Telstra's cable service) and offers you a constant 24 hours a day connection. The downside is that it's still pretty pricey, and the "sensible use policy" will get up the nose of hardcore downloaders. Unlimited downloads this service is not. Even so, after you've maxed out the connection and watched data fly through at 350KB/s or played an ultra smooth game of Quake on American servers, your old 56K modem will be on the scrapheap for good. If you can afford it, cable should be near the top of your Christmas list.

PC WHEELS

LOGITECH WINGMAN FORMULA GP

If you're a racing game freak, this wheel is for you. As part of Logitech's next generation of wheels, the Formula GP offers the same design as previously, but for a cheaper price - $139. The Formula GP clamps to your desk, has two wheel mounted paddles for gear shifting, a full size 25cm wheel with rubber handgrips, as well as four programmable buttons. At the other end, realistic accelerator and break pedals add yet another level of realism. Best of all, the problem of the pedals sliding around has been solved thanks to the weighted pedal base designed to grip any surface. If you're after the added level of realism that force feedback brings, then the WingMan Formula Force GP is also available at $229.

JOYSTICKS

MICROSOFT SIDEWINDER PRECISION 2

The third generation of Sidewinder products are here, and the Precision 2 joystick is one of the best joysticks we've ever tried. With precise response and an egonomic feel, the Precision 2 is one of the best joysticks we've ever tried, and perfect for those long Mechwarrior 4 sessions. It comes with all the features you'd expect – a rotating handle, eight way switch hat, throttle and sturdy construction. The button layout is also better than the last model. If you need a joystick, for $89, this is excellent value for money. Also worth a look is the Logitech Wingman Extreme Digital at $99.

STRATEGIC COMMANDER

The Strategic Commander (SC) is one of those peripherals that is totally unique, yet incredibly useful. Designed primarily for use in real time strategy games, the SC works in conjunction with the mouse, replacing the keyboard. The idea is to make every in-game action easily accessible and intuitive, so you no longer have to remember a variety of hotkeys or struggle to complete simple tasks. Take scrolling around a map in AOE2 for instance. Rather than moving the mouse to the edge of the screen or using the directional keys, you simply move the SC in the direction you wish to scroll. The top portion slides smoothly across the base, so you can move as slow or fast as you wish. Better yet, if the game is in 3D, you can twist the SC left and right, panning the viewpoint. There are enough buttons to map every conceivable hotkey, and even a record function that you can use and assign to a button on the fly in-game. Microsoft has obviously put a lot of thought into this device, and we've found it handy in a wide variety of gaming genres. The Strategic Commander gets Hyper's "Best Peripheral We Didn't Know We Wanted" award.

TELEVISIONS

The great display revolution hasn't happened yet. Plasma screens, HDTV and projectors are still just out of the general buyer's reach. Until these technologies are more affordable, CFT based screens (ie TVs as we know them) are still the way to go. We thought we'd look at a couple of 68cm models (Hyper's recommended minimum size for proper console gaming and the maximum size if you're renting and have to cart it around) that represent affordability as well as features.

SONY 68CM XS SERIES WEGA FD TRINITRON KVXS29M33

This Sony Wega model is not at the top of Sony's 68cm Wega range, but represents a good tradeoff between features and price. This would make an ideal foundation for a home cinema setup, with component input, front and rear S-Video inputs, monitor out and stacks of AV ins. Utilising intelligent picture technology, the picture quality and colour definition is awesome. The sound is quite good too, with an aero dynamic 2 way 4 speaker system built in. If $1949 sounds a little pricey, then you could get the Sony 68cm Super Trinitron Plus for $1099, which doesn't have the inputs, but still features a nice flat screen and excellent picture quality.

DVD RECORDERS

PANASONIC DMR-E10

VCRs are dead. The technology is prehistoric, the picture and sound quality on VHS tapes is rank, and worse yet — the tapes degrade with age and wear, as anyone who taped The Young Ones when it first screened can surely attest. In keeping with the first commandment of the 21st century (thou shalt be digital), the time to move beyond the VCR is nigh.

DVD players are now standard kit in any self respecting technophile's setup, but why play when you can record too? Yep, the first wave of component DVD recorders (as opposed to a DVD RAM PC drive) are here, spearheaded by the Panasonic DMR-E10.

Now before you get too excited, it will be a while until the technology is affordable. The DMR-E10 retails for around US $4000, with discs costing US $35. Each disc can store from one to four hours of video depending on the bit rate.

Bear in mind also, that you'll only be able to play back recordable discs on the DMR-E10 or another DVD RAM drive, as DVD ROM drives aren't DVD RAM compatible yet. Also, the inputs are analogue, so you can't record from a digital signal. It even prevents recording any signal with macrovision protection (most DVDs, new videos and some cable TV).

MP3 PORTABLES

The mp3 phenomenon has been in full swing for several years now, but the hardware to take it on the road with you is only just coming of age. This Christmas there's a glut of portables available, but their value for money is highly questionable.

The vast majority of portable mp3 players utilise flash rom data storage, meaning that you're carrying your music around on 32 or 64MB cards, which can fit sweet f-all music on them unless you want to listen to radio quality sound or below. With this in mind, there's only one portable that we'd recommend this Christmas.

CREATIVE NOMAD JUKEBOX

Thank goodness Creative have their head screwed on straight. Their latest model, the Nomad Jukebox, may be pricey, but it's the only model that allows you to take a decent collection of mp3s on the road with you. Packing a 6gig Hard Drive, this is the portable to beat all other contenders at the moment. Yes, you read that right — A 6 GIG HD! Have at you 64MB flash cards! This is enough space to fit around 80 hours of CD quality music, or a whole lot more if you're not too concerned about sound quality.

The software that comes with the Jukebox is functional. Organising your collection is relatively easy as you can use the mp3 format's internal ID3 tags to define things like genre and tempo. The firmware supports all current digital audio formats, and can be upgraded to support the next generation of audio compression standards.

The N-box is about the size of a portable CD player and unfortunately the case design is a little clunky, but aesthetics are not what this device is about. The Jukebox is about living in a digital age — instant access to large volumes of data, and immersion in information overload.

Despite the Jukebox's spiffyness, $1000 is a steep ask unless you're travelling a lot. I have mp3 collections on both work and home PCs, so not having music in between is not such a great loss. If you're busting for a portable — get this one, but patience may be prudent, as the next generation of portables are bound to be funkier in every way.

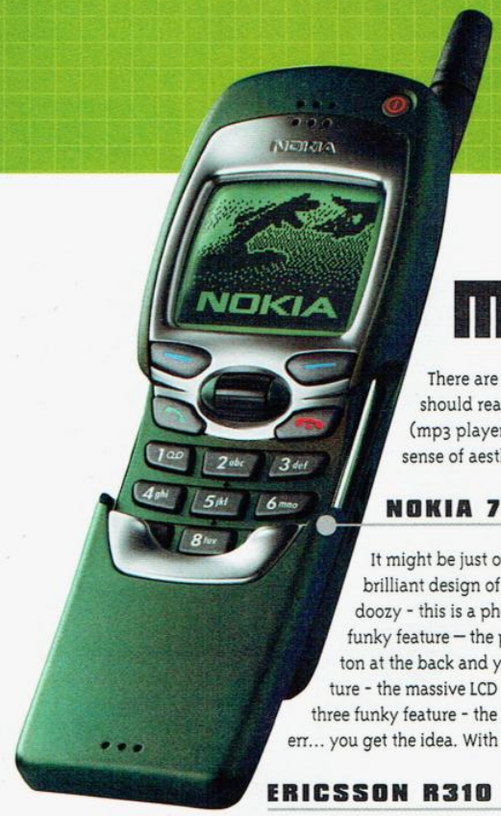
DIGITAL CAMERAS

SONY MVC-CD1000

At $3000 the CD1000 is several exaggerated hand gestures above most people's price range, but as an object of desire, few other digicams come close. It's a 2.1 megapixel still camera with a very impressive 10X optical zoom lens and 20X digital zoom.

What makes this camera so special though is that rather than saving to a flash rom card, the images are burnt and stored on CD! Yes, those crafty devils at Sony have managed to pack a CD burner into a digital camera! Using 3.5 inch CDs with a capacity of 156MB, this is far and away the best storage solution for a digital camera yet. And the blank discs are cheap — especially compared to flash rom cards. Obviously the camera is relatively large to accommodate the discs, but since they're considerably smaller than standard CDs, the trade-off isn't too great. The CDs themselves aren't proprietary, and can be read by basically any PC CD-ROM drive (that's what the inner ring on the CD tray is for).

The camera burns each image to the disc as you take it. Fortunately it's very stable and can handle being moved around while burning. The burn is fast too, so the delay between taking photos is quite minimal. In short, we want one!



MOBILE PHONES

There are stacks of funky mobiles on the market, and your purchase should really come down to what features you require, what add-ons (mp3 players, keyboards, modems etc) you'd like to use and your own sense of aesthetics. For our tastes, these are the pick of the litter!

NOKIA 7110

It might be just over a year old, but there's still no other phone that can touch the brilliant design of the 7110. Don't even think about using headphones with this doozy - this is a phone to show off to friends and the world in general. Number one funky feature – the pop down panel that reveals the pad. Touch the small metal button at the back and you can answer your phone Matrix-style. Number two funky feature - the massive LCD screen. Games of snake2 will never be the same again. Number three funky feature - the scrollbar, making menu navigation a breeze. Number four... err... you get the idea. With WAP capabilities and predictive text input, this is a dope phone.

ERICSSON R310

We don't recommend going outdoors, what with all the "real-life interactions" that inevitably ensue, but if you absolutely positively have to, then this is the phone to take with you. This baby is water, dust and shock resistant, and has been tested under extreme conditions. The design is rubbery yet stylish. It also comes with the features you'd expect from Ericsson such as voice dialing and data/fax capabilities.

PDAS

Despite Microsoft and Psion's entries into the handheld category, Palm still reign supreme. Prices for Palms have been coming down steadily, and extra features are constantly being added. There are also a wealth of add-on devices for your Palm. Everything from fold-up keyboards to modems and MIDI sequencing programs.

New contenders in the PDA arena are emerging all the time mind you, so we've taken a quick look at Ericsson and Nokia's efforts to combine the PDA and mobile phone into one. These devices are just the beginning too!

PALM M100

The m100 is awesome value for money ($329) considering the features. If you seriously think you'll get a lot of use out of a Palm, then consider one of the pricier models (such as Palm V), since the m100 has a relatively small display, and lacks upgradeability. Even so, for your cash you'll get almost all the apps you could need for scheduling, planning and note taking. In fact, the digital ink pad is one of its coolest features, providing you with space to just sketch or scrawl notes. The removeable faceplates are funky too.

PDA MEETS MOBILE

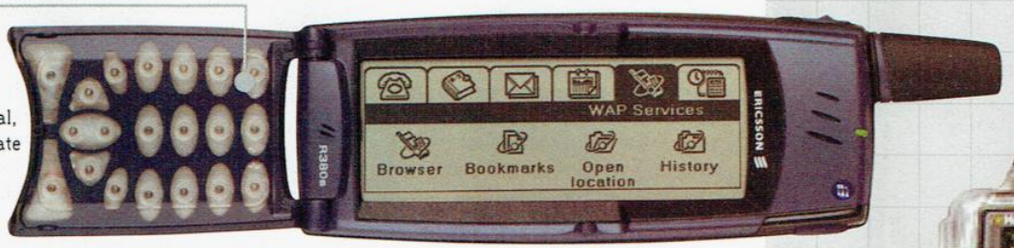
Both Nokia and Ericsson know that people don't want to be carrying around four or five devices at once, so they've both designed all-in-one solutions.

NOKIA 9110 COMMUNICATOR

A slick wireless communications device, the Nokia 9110 looks very much like a normal phone until you split it in half to reveal a huge backlit LCD screen and mini keyboard. The Nokia 9110 rolls phone, fax, e-mail and web browsing into one device, plus applications to store contact details, notes and reminders. Very stylish.

ERICSSON R380

Tri-band GSM phone. Flip the keypad open to reveal the huge LCD screen. When you do so, the orientation of the display shifts from horizontal to vertical, and you can now use a stylus to navigate and write notes with ease - the touch-screen even reads your handwriting! Plus, you can still dial by voice.



ONHANDPC

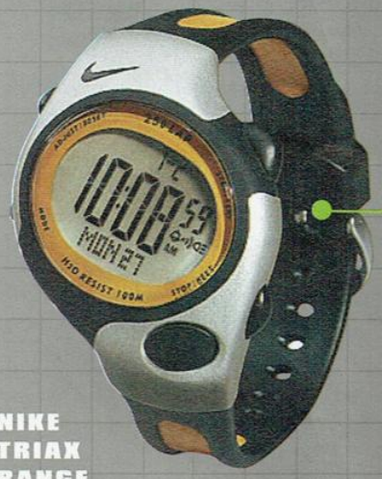
The wristwatch meets the PDA to form the OnhandPC. It comes with over 30 pre-installed applications including common Palm-style features such as to-do-lists, a calendar, an address book and games. It's also designed to easily sync with applications on your PC

Quite where the OnHandPC fits into a technophiles life is a bit of a mystery. If you don't already have a PDA then this could be a sensible way to avoid carrying around another piece of equipment. On the other hand, despite its many functions, this is a very expensive novelty item – and you'll probably prefer the standard Palm interface. In all, we don't recommend picking one up unless you have large wads of cash to burn or want to play Dick Tracy. It is, however, an impressive indication of what is to come.

STUFF TO WEAR

CASIO WQV-1 DIGITAL CAMERA WATCH

The world's first wristwatch and digital camera in one, the WQV-1 brings hope to the Maxwell Smart trapped in us all. With 1 MB of built in memory capable of storing up to 100 images, you can use the 120x120 dot greyscale LCD display as a viewfinder, as well as to view and delete images. With the infrared add-on, you can then upload and download images with your PC.



NIKE TRIAX RANGE

There are plenty of funky watches out there, but for our money, Nike's Triax range are among the best. Futuristic and sleek, the wristband is asymmetric, leaving the face tilted for easy viewing when you're jogging (ha ha ha!). The displays are huge too.

MUSIC MAKING

KINGSTON DUBPLATE CUTTER

Think vinyl's dead? Think again. For all you vinyl loving dance-freaks out there, this machine is a revelation. Developed by a pair of Swiss engineers, the Kingston Dubplate Cutter lets you cut your own records at home almost as easily as burning a CD. Of course, it costs almost US $5000, but for serious DJ/producers that's a small price to pay. Imagine being able to press up your latest track onto a 12inch and play it in front of a crowd only hours later! In the UK, the dubplate scene has been huge for years, and DJs can get small acetate runs pressed easily, but here in Australia where we have (as far as I know) only one vinyl pressing plant, the Dubplate cutter is an even more invaluable tool.

The Dubplate Cutter allows you to record from any source, whether it be CD, minidisc, mp3 or DAT, and utilises funky high precision microcontrollers for greater dynamic range in sound reproduction. So if your source is good enough you'll end up with a better sounding record than through conventional pressing techniques. Blanks cost around US $7 per record, and regular acetates can be cut as well. Check it out at www.vinylium.ch

ROLAND MC-303 GROOVEBOX

The MC-303 is a phenomenal machine for anyone wanting a complete dance music creation solution, and real-time performance tool. This is not, however, the machine that gave acid squelch sounds the name "303". That comes from Roland's TB-303 analogue bass synth from the early 80s (that was actually designed to emulate a bass guitar, and was rediscovered by techno artists several years after its release). To an extent, Roland are cashing in on the name of this classic machine, as they have little in common. The MC-303 is much more limited in the knob tweaking acid making department, but still has four real time effects knobs (filter, LFO, envelope, resonance). It has 120 preset patterns, 448 tones and 12 drum kits, and comes packing vintage analogue sounds from classic machines like the TB-303, SH-101, Juno and Jupiter synths, TR-808 and TR-909. However, this means that many of the sounds on hand are fairly generic, and it's difficult to produce truly revolutionary/creative dance music. Still highly recommended.

TECHNICS SL-1200MK3 X 2 AND VESTAX MIXER

For all you aspiring DJs, this is the first stop. Forget other brands of turntables, Technics SL-1200s are number one for a reason. First launched in 1974, they pack powerful direct drives for instantaneous pickup, and are incredibly hardy. While not as feature rich as, say, Vestax turntables, they can still be modified from +/- 8 to +/- 15, plus you can modify it for reverse as well. Technics – the choice of every generation.

LEVI'S ICD+

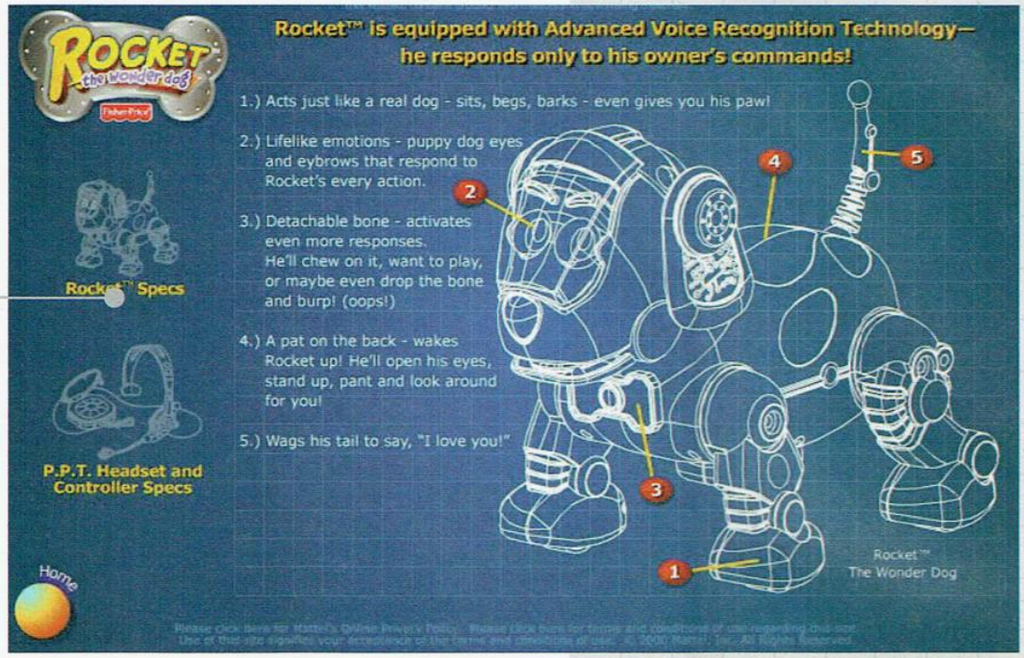
Standing for Industrial Clothing Design, this new range from Philips and Levi's is the first of a new generation of wired clothing. Each of the four different styles of jacket in the range run a simple body area network through wires integrated into the design. This allows the synchronous control of the new Philips Xenium GSM mobile and the Philips Rush MP3 player through a unified remote control and microphone integrated into the collar. Better yet, when you're not using the headphones there's a rubber housing in the collar to house them.

Cool idea huh? Pity that the technophiles who could afford almost US $1000 for one of the 600 jackets made would already have both a mobile phone and mp3 portable. And what happens when summer rolls around?

www.research.philips.com

CYBER DOGS

Following the success of Sony's AIBO dog in Japan, Furby is out the window and robot dogs are officially in. We've had a look at two of the more competent offerings and come to the conclusion that we'll have to wait until next Christmas for the super-high-tech cyber-intelligent killer-mutt companions we dream of. Ah well, it's a start...



ROCKET THE WONDERDOG

Bearing more of a resemblance to Chucky than Charlie, you and your pal Rocket are sure to be the centre of attention at the next box social. Guests will look on in amazement as you instruct Rocket through a wireless headset. You say "Rocket - Let's go" and suddenly your robot chum for life springs into action, moving forward with the speed of twenty snails. And talk about personality, as he "walks", Rocket's eyes roll about and his eyebrows contort in a hilarious impression of Charles Manson. If that side-splitting, rib-tickling display of odd couple antics doesn't get the party started right, then it's time to pull out the big guns. "Rocket – Trick" you cry, and as always, your forever loyal wonder-buddy is only too eager to oblige, this time manouvering himself into a hand-stand and back down again. Cries of "Bravo", "Good show old boy", and "They do it all with mirrors don't know you" will eventually rise up from the stunned silence, followed by pats on the back all round. And maybe a pat or two for Rocket if he's lucky! Chortle!

POO-CHI

Take a look at the picture of Poo-Chi. Looks pretty tame doesn't it? One might even go so far as to say it looks a bit on the girly side. Shows what a waste of time coming to your own conclusions can be. Thank goodness I had the shining light of the American Poo-Chi TV commercial to lay down the 411, or I might never have found out just how hip, hop and happening this far out dude of a dog is. That's right, Poo-Chi is a totally outrageous paradigm and all the coolest kids have one. You've heard the expression let's get busy? Well this is a dog that gets BIZ-AY, consistently and thoroughly.

Okay, so the ad isn't quite that extreme... but it has an amazing irony factor. Remember another dog named Poochie? On The Simpsons? Yep that's right, Poochie was the totally in-your-face, rastafied extreme sports surfer dog introduced into the Itchy and Scratchy world in a piss poor attempt to boost flagging ratings.

That episode was a parody of the mindset behind a lot of youth marketing - anything can be made cool if you throw enough hip youth clichés and in your face attitude at it. Or as Lisa put it, Poochie was just "A soulless by-product of committee thinking".

Well amazingly enough, the advertisement for Poo-Chi is un-nervingly similar to that episode of The Simpsons... but for real! First of all, it takes what is essentially a boring toy and tries to make it cool by packing an ad full of crazy kids with attitude. Second of all, the product is also a dog named Poo-Chi. Third... and this is the killer... one of the "doods" in the ad actually proclaims "HE'S ROCKIN'!". You may recall that in the Simpsons episode, Poochie was referred to as "Poochie The Rockin' Dog!".

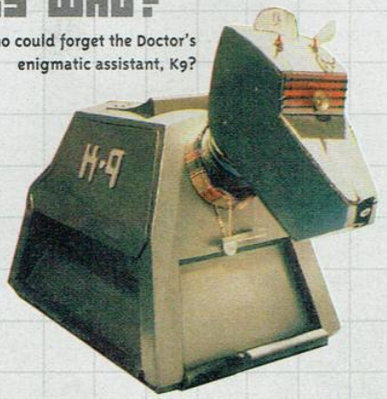
So what can this thoroughly outrageous pup do? Uh, you can choose a personality and train it. It will respond to light and sound, as well as any nearby Poo-Chi's. It let's you know how it's feeling and can sing and dance. If all that sounds irritating, you'll be pleased to hear that there's no off switch – to turn it off you can either remove the batteries or simply bludgeon it to pieces with a hammer.

TAKING THE MICKEY

Hyper takes a moment to reflect on the splendour that was Metal Mickey.

K9 WHO?

Who could forget the Doctor's enigmatic assistant, K9?



VESTED INTEREST CATEGORY

Eliot: THE ENTIRE BIG HEAVY STUFF BACK-CATALOGUE. WWW.BIGHEAVYSTUFF.NET

Cam: A FOXTEL SUBSCRIPTION... READ NEWS!

PREPARE FOR THE RIDE

Don't miss out on the absolutely awesome Gateway™ experience!

It's show time. Gateway™, a global leader in complete technology solutions, is the first in Australia to deliver gaming enthusiasts dream machines for the most realistic gaming challenge.

Sit back, strap in and hold on tight; its now time to accelerate and beat the best, finest and fastest with a Gateway™ Select 1200 Desktop powered by the groundbreaking AMD 1.2GHz Athlon® processor.

To get the maximum out of extreme gaming and those heart-stopping encounters, you need a high-performance machine to keep up with high-calibre games. Experience what computing, content and communications is all about.

Victory is a sure thing with a Gateway™ PC with a selection of processors, configured to meet your own needs. Build to order a 800Mhz, 900Mhz, 1Ghz, 1.1GHz or even the latest Select 1200 which offers the most graphic intensive applications such as web-design, multi-media development, desktop publishing, digital managing and gaming. Utilising the high-end graphics video card 64MB Ge-Force2 GTS allows 3D games and multimedia rendering run at lightning speed.

Without a doubt, it's time to power up with Gateway™ technology, to improve the way that we live, work, learn and most importantly, play.

With prices starting at RRP$2449 Gateway™ delivers the ultimate combination of value and performance. You can build your Gateway™ PC to meet your performance demands, continuing in the Gateway™ tradition of delivering the latest technology at the best value to customers.

Attention beginners and hardcore winners; escape and experience Gateways' technology theme parks by dropping in to your local Gateway™ store. Gateway™ has already revolutionised PC shopping with technology concepts that make PC shopping entertaining and lots of fun. You can go in and test-drive a vast range of PCs from the entry level Essential to the latest power user configurations. You can surf the net, play the latest games and get honest answers to all those mega questions - all in a non-pressured environment, assisted by highly trained consultants.

Gateway™ offers global gaming domination with tomorrow's computing performance today, with a wide range of computers.

STORE LISTING

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Shop DG17 Canberra Centre Civic
Ainslie Avenue
Civic Centre ACT
02 6247 0062

NEW SOUTH WALES

Shop 20/21 Castle Towers
Old Northern Rd
Castle Hill NSW
02 9659 6711

380 Victoria Avenue
Chatswood NSW
02 9419 2955

Shop 3B, Level 1
Homemaker Supa Centa
Moore Park NSW
02 9697 0799

Shop M77-M78 Greenwood Plaza
Pacific Highway
North Sydney NSW
02 9964 0370

225-233 Clarence Street
Sydney NSW 2000
02 9262 2898

QUEENSLAND

Shop 3, 47-79 Elizabeth Street
Brisbane QLD 4000
07 3211 2000

Shop 2092, Garden City
Upper Mt Gravatt QLD 4122
07 3343 8633

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Allens Building, 58B Gawler Place
Adelaide SA
08 8223 3288

VICTORIA

Shop C18 Northland Cente
50 Murray Rd
East Preston VIC 3072
03 9471 2533

388 Bourke Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
03 9670 3144

Shop 404
Chadstone Shopping Centre
1341 Dandenong Road
Chadstone VIC
03 9563 4996

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

938 Hay St
Perth WA
08 9321 0777

Garden City Shopping Centre
125 Riseley St
Booragoon WA
08 9315 2700

OF YOUR LIFE!

fear effect 2:

retro helix

"Someone sure to turn heads is the team's newest arrival, the equally fearsome female assassin and extremely close friend of Hana's, Rain..."

PLATFORM: PlayStation

AVAILABLE: Early 2001

CATEGORY: Action/Adventure

PLAYERS: 1

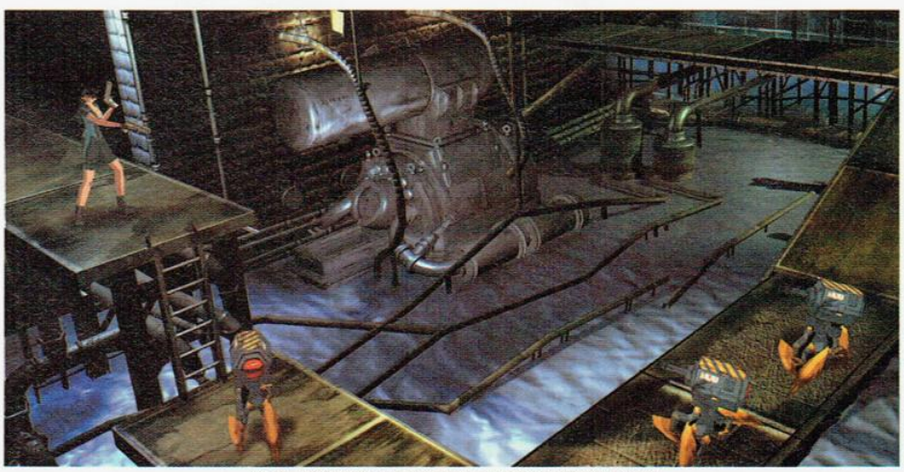
PUBLISHER: Eidos

Following in virtually the same footsteps as a certain classic sci-fi movie in production at Fox Studios in Sydney (apparently some guy called George Lucas is involved), the second instalment from the creators of Fear Effect doesn't pick up where it left off, but instead takes a trip back in time, into the individual backgrounds and personalities of the game's three main characters in this prequel called Retro Helix.

HERE COMES THE RAIN

Those that enjoyed this trio of mercenaries' first dangerous encounter, will no doubt be pleased to know that both Deke, the Aussie explosive guru, and intelligence expert, Glas, are back, as is the drippingly delicious but deadly assassin Hana. Someone sure to turn heads though is the team's newest arrival, the equally fearsome female assassin and extremely close friend of Hana's, Rain. While exact 'relationship' details are not fully known as yet, we can expect a very 'special' bond to develop between the two as the story unfolds (perhaps the names Xena and Gabrielle might give you a better clue).

Retro Helix starts out exposing the period of time that brought the original team together. All three are separately contracted to acquire a special item for reasons yet unknown. Then through a series of unexpected and unexplained events, they're brought together, and made to work as a team in order to save the earth from total destruction. It's here the story will also give players a chance to delve into the team's



THAT'S WHEN HANA SAID SHE COULD HEAR HER MOTHER CALLING

YOU DIRTY RAT

WOW-O-METER

LET ME GUESS. THE ZIPPER BROKE BY "ACCIDENT"?

individual pasts. Truths are learnt about Hana's childhood and her experiences with her parents, Glas's past will reveal the events that have made him who he is, and Deke's past uncovers the reasons why he prefers to shoot first and ask questions later. Then of course there's the all-important introduction to Rain, and just how she fits into the picture.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Once again the game features a mix of richly textured pre-rendered and animated environments that help bring the game to life, including such subtleties as water ripples, rising steam, and fans spinning away in the background. Chinese mythology and religion will again play its part too, as the cities the game is set in will include Hong Kong, the city of Xi'an, the lost tomb of the First Emperor of China, the legendary mountain-island of the immortals - Penglai Shan, and Hell's Kitchen in New York City. There are eight new locations in total, double that of the first game.

Up to now, it's pretty much as you'd expect from a sequel, more of what everyone liked and less of the bad bits. So what's new? For starters the developer, Kronos Studios, is now using a technology called Motion FX3D, which enhances the playing environment by adding 3D object support. Both lighting and objects now behave according to their position within the environment. The effect it has on lighting is evident when a character walks into the darkened area of a room, as they will literally disappear from view. This is used effectively when characters need to hide. Alternatively, this is also the perfect hiding place for enemies. 3D objects are now also part of the interactive environment. For example, boxes, walls and gates can be used to hide behind as well as protection, however they can also provide the same benefits for enemies.

GAMES FOR GROWN-UPS

The gunplay has also seen some enhancements, with a larger variety of weapons to choose from. A selection of different ammunition will now be available as well, including amour-piercing and explosive rounds. Some of the new weapons include a grenade launcher, flamethrower, and area effect weapons like EMP and sonic blasters.

Perhaps the strongest element of gameplay which is set to return, is the inclusion of a dynamically changing storyline based on the player's decisions, which ultimately results in a series of multiple endings. This not only adds replay value, but also offers an underlying sense of control over each character's destiny. Hey, any excuse to stare at Hana and Rain again for hours on end, eh? Well, that's our excuse.

The overall content of Fear Effect 2: Retro Helix is bound to trigger flashing red lights with censorship bodies, and rightly so, as its dark, twisted tale of the intrigue of virtual voyeurism is set to push the moral boundaries of current video game ethics. And that's a good thing, right? Besides, isn't it about time we saw more console games for grown-ups? The PlayStation isn't dead quite yet...

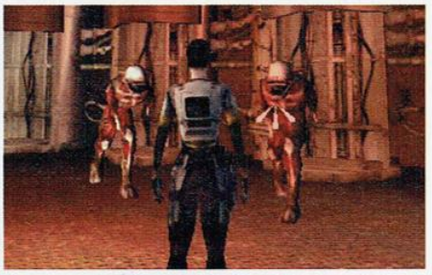
WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

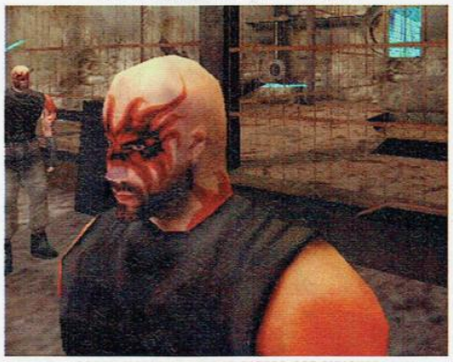
Fear Effect would make a pretty cool TV show – all done digitally.

project eden

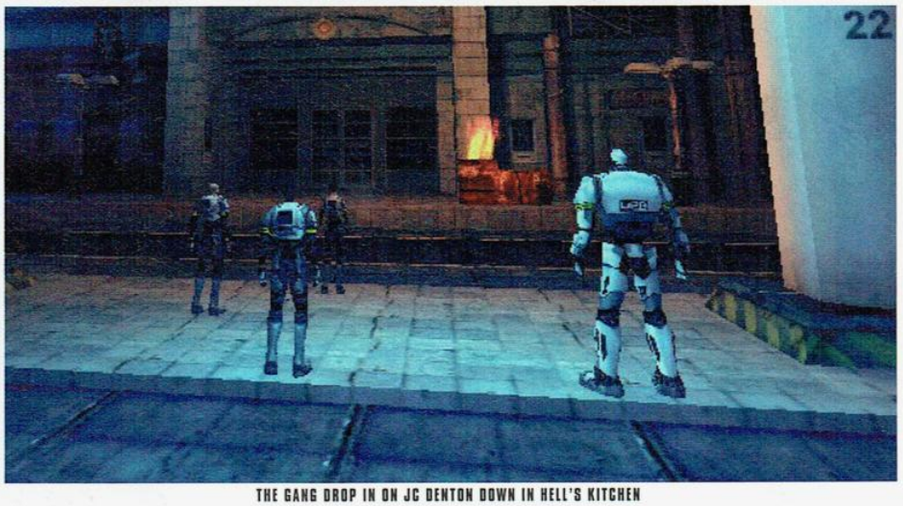
"The techs sent to repair the machinery go missing without explanation, which is where you and your team come in."

YEP. ANOTHER CORRIDOR TO "EXPLORE".





DARTH MAUL BEFORE HIS TATTOO GOT FINISHED



THE GANG DROP IN ON JC DENTON DOWN IN HELL'S KITCHEN

PLATFORM: PC/PS2

AVAILABLE: 2001

CATEGORY: Action/Adventure

PLAYERS: 1-4

PUBLISHER: Eidos

While the legend that is Lara Croft lives on (hope that's not giving too much away), the team responsible for introducing the Tomb Raider series to the world must have finally lost the computer code for silicone implants, as they've been bedded down now for the past couple of years working on a completely new title. The Core Design team has ditched the single character action/adventure model (sorry Lara), to make way for a squad-based tactical/action game called Project Eden.

MMMM LASHINGS...

While still not entirely original, the game is set in a densely overpopulated metropolis in the future, where cities have been built on top of cities to try and combat the serious lack of real estate. The chic and well to do, reside at the top of these mega-cities, where the air is fresh and the light of day can be enjoyed, while deep beneath are societies not so fortunate. The further the descent, the worse the conditions become, the more crime there is, and the less human everyone starts to look. It's here at the very bottom, where the adventure begins.

Players control a squad of 4 members from the Urban Protection Agency, sent to locate a team of technicians, which had initially been investigating suspicious equipment problems at the 'Real Meat' factory. The techs sent to repair the machinery go missing without explanation, which is where you and your team come in.

As you'd expect, each of the team members have different abilities. Carter is the team's leader, Minoko, a computer systems expert, Andre, an engineer, and Amber, a robot. After learning the suitable applications for each of their skills, players can then take control of anyone of the squad members at any time, depending on the task required. One of the game's appealing features is to be able to switch from 3rd person to 1st person view in real time. This switching can be done between all 4 characters, even members you're not actually controlling. Other items you can control include a remote hover camera, miniature retrieval vehicle, and sentry guns.

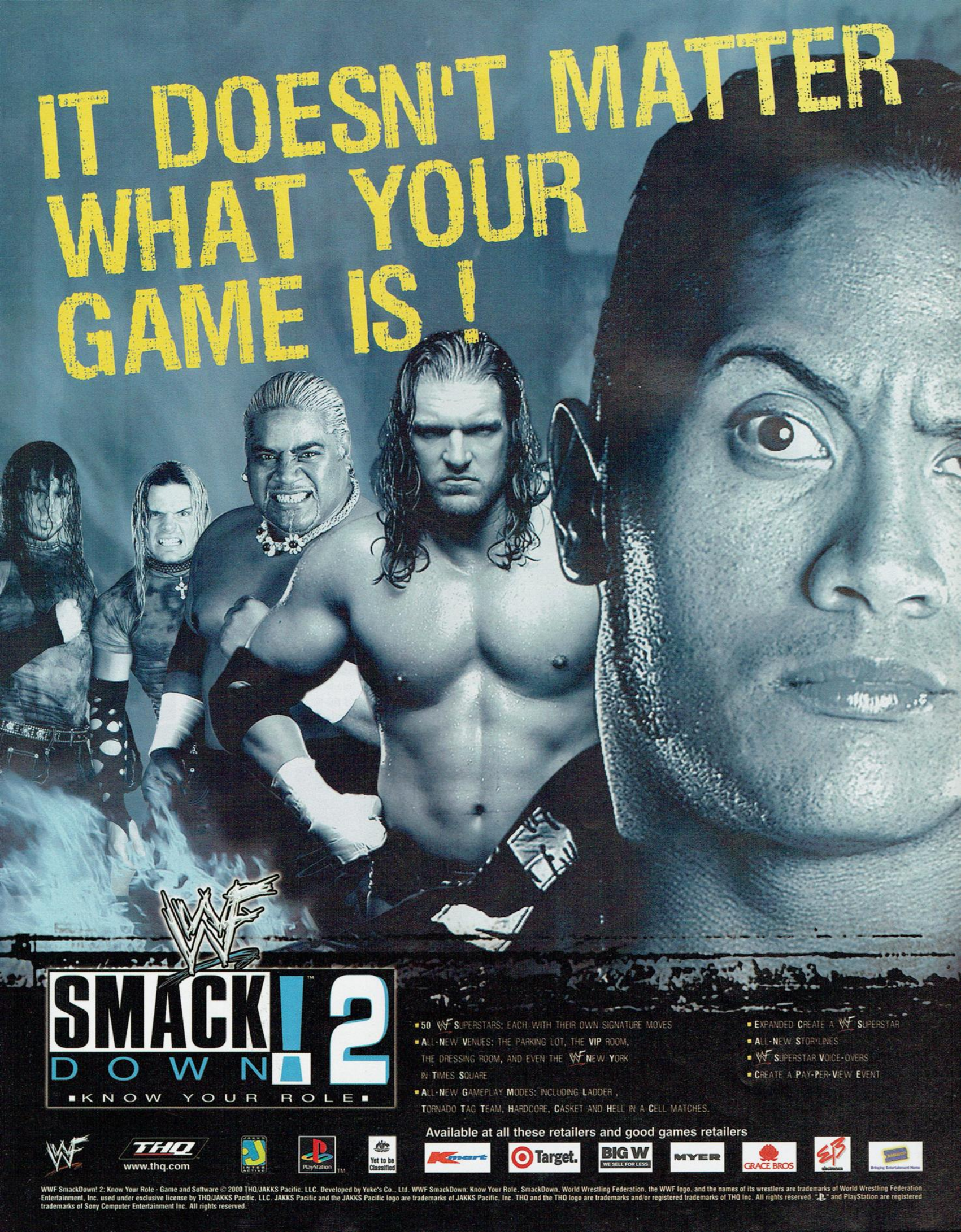
Each member will be kitted out with all manner of special offensive and defensive equipment, including mind-probes, time-shock weapons, explosive charges, and mines. The game also makes use of a regeneration system, where if any squad members are destroyed or objects are damaged, a central team energy source can be used to repair them.

The storyline plays out over 11 levels, and will ultimately link the original rescue mission of the technicians, to the hidden evil source behind the mutant run underworld of the cities below. The heavy emphasis on team based gameplay, mixed with first person action is set to prove that developers don't need to design games that only come in a 34D cup size. Project Eden is due on both PC and PS2 early next year.

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

Core Design to continue to ignore Lara Croft.

WOW-O-METER



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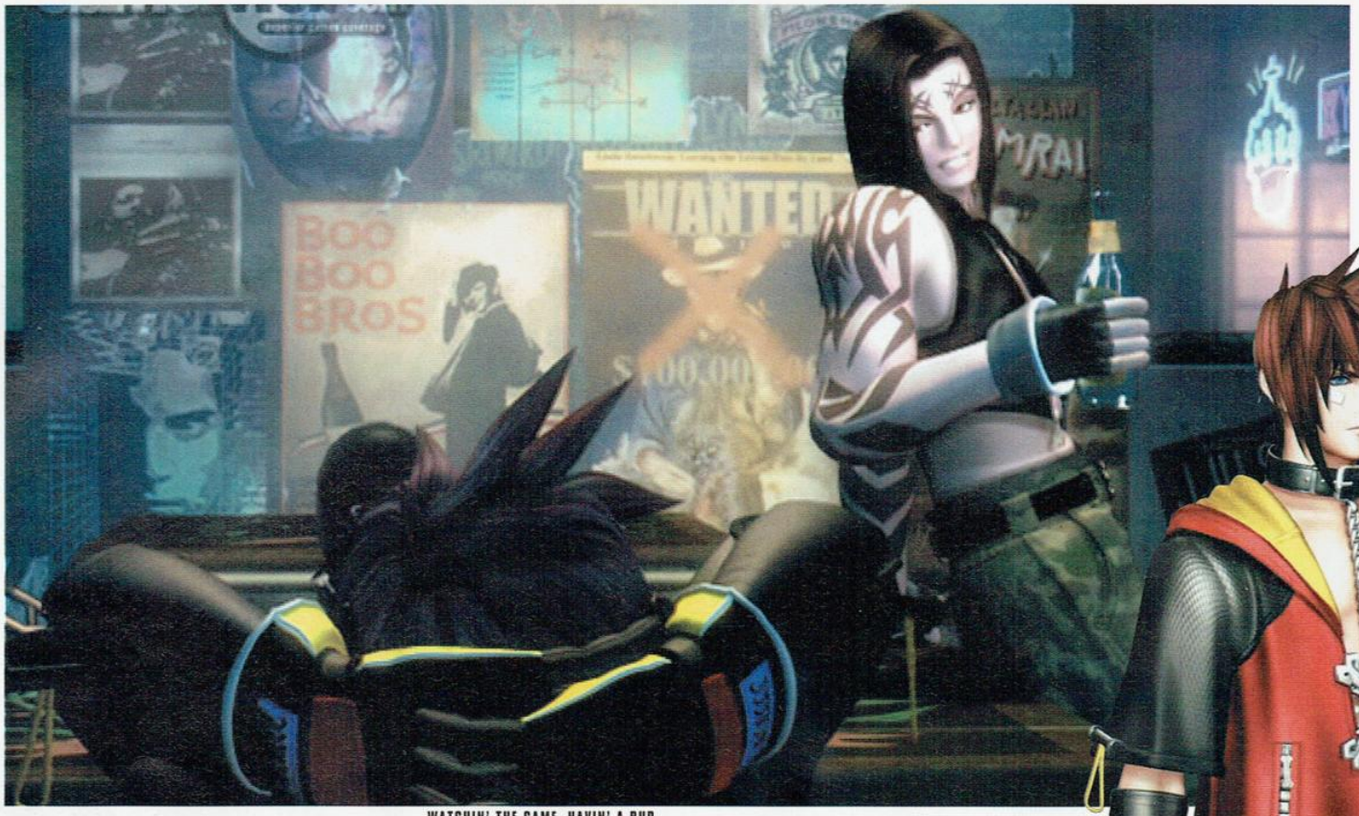
the bouncer

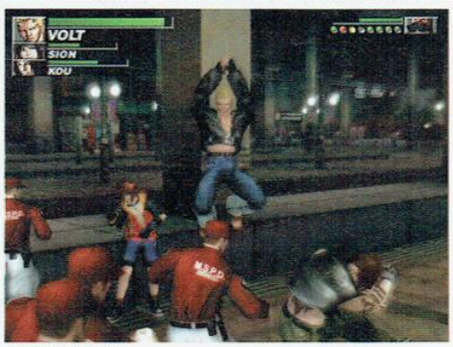
"Whilst primarily a 3D beat 'em up style game, The Bouncer still has all the story and character depth of a classic Square RPG."



WATCHIN' THE GAME, HAVIN' A BUD

PLATFORM: PS2
AVAILABLE: Mid-2001
CATEGORY: Action/Fighting
PLAYERS: 1–2
PUBLISHER: SquareSoft

If anything is going to get you jazzed about the future of the PS2, it's looking at a demo of The Bouncer, an upcoming beat 'em up from the insanely talented Japanese developer, SquareSoft. Your jaw hangs open and the drool starts to trickle out the side of your mouth, just like it did when you saw the Metal Gear Solid 2 trailer from Konami for the first time. The character design and art is simply gorgeous, with the usual cyberpunk-flavoured quirkiness which is somehow so identifiable Square. Whilst the first wave of PS2 titles have been somewhat underwhelming, one look at The Bouncer will erase any doubts you may have about the true power of the PS2.



YEP, BEAT UP CLUB GOING PARASITES!

IT'S HIP TO BE SQUARE

Welcome to the world of Sion, Volt, Kou, Kaldea, Dauragon... yep, as usual, the names of the characters in The Bouncer are suitably Square. And we thought they couldn't get any stranger than Final Fantasy IX's

WOW-O-METER

OOOH. BACK-HAND. TRICKY.

Zidane! The three main characters (Sion, Volt and Kou) are bouncers who work at a bar called "Fate" which is located just behind the looming headquarters of the Mikado corporation on Dog Street. A young teenage girl named Dominique (what, a believable name?), who is a friend of the bouncers, is mysteriously kidnapped and so it's up to her friends to set out and discover what's happened to her. However, in the process, her secretive past unfolds before them...

The similarity of the characters in The Bouncer to something you'd find in a Final Fantasy title is of no coincidence. The Bouncer's characters have been designed by Tetsuya Nomura, the same bloke who has indeed worked on the character design in the Final Fantasy series. But the similarities don't end there. There are actually quite a few RPG elements in this title in the shape of character development. Whilst primarily a 3D beat 'em up style game, The Bouncer still has all the story and character depth of a classic Square RPG. Developer Dream Factory, who are programming this title for Square, are the same bunch who brought us Tobal 1, Tobal 2 and Ehrgeiz on the PlayStation. Impressive credentials indeed. In fact, the gameplay in The Bouncer is not far removed from Ehrgeiz – even with a dash of Capcom's fun four-player Power Stone thrown in. But these are only vague comparisons. Read on...

IT'S A BRAWL FEST

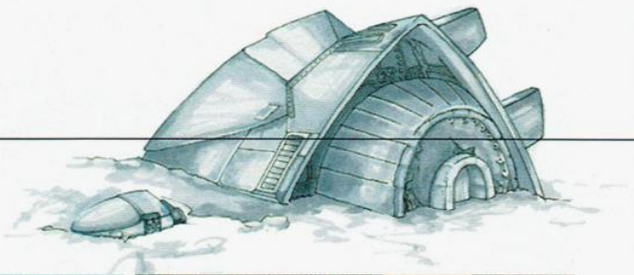
The game is strung together with impressive FMVs detailing the complex story, but when the characters face danger, it switches to a battle mode. Before the fight begins, you can choose from one of the three bouncers to do your business. The character you select will thus be the only one to receive experience from the fight, but the AI will operate the two other characters during the fight anyhow. Also, depending on the character you select, the next cutscene in the story could change, obviously encouraging you to replay the game using different characters again and again. The 3D fighting seems to be quite impressive, with full analogue control and some incredibly interactive environments. You'll be able to grab chairs, jump tables and generally do cool movie-like stunts during the fight sequences. Scripted events may also happen mid-fight, like huge explosions or other sudden environmental changes which force you to move to a new area to continue the raging fight. What's even cooler, is that the analogue buttons will reportedly allow you to change the dynamic of your attack, i.e. soft button taps will result in light, fast punches and hard button pushes will result in slower, heavy blows. Wow.

The Bouncer is by all means a fighting game, but you've never played a single-player adventure mode quite like this. In addition, there will be a brawl mode (multiplayer, with 15 selectable characters), survival mode and team battle. Now, enough blabbing – more room for screenshots!!

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

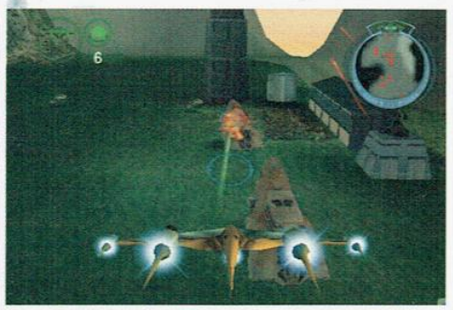
Square are being very secretive, but we hope there's a co-operative mode.

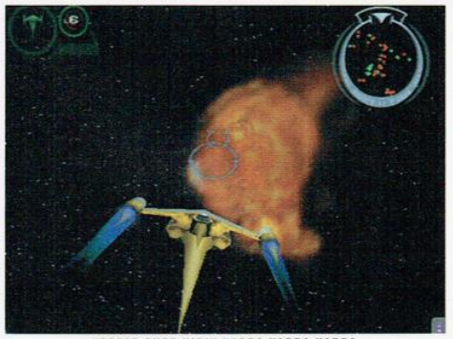
star wars
battle for naboo



"Jar Jar will be filling his pants with poodu."

CAPTAIN PANAKA MAKES A HASTY RETREAT BEFORE THEY ASK HIM TO DO EPISODE 2





"GREAT SHOT KID!" YADDA YADDA YADDA

PLATFORM: Nintendo 64

AVAILABLE: Early 2001

CATEGORY: Space Combat

PLAYERS: 1

PUBLISHER: LucasArts

Now that everyone has stopped having nightmares about Jar Jar Binks, LucasArts have bravely decided to issue forth a new Episode One game, and this one's for the Nintendo 64. Following on from Rogue Squadron, which was a bit of alright, Battle For Naboo will put you in the space boots of a Naboo pilot who is desperately trying to help his people ward off the surging Battledroid army which threatens to wipe them out... all of them.

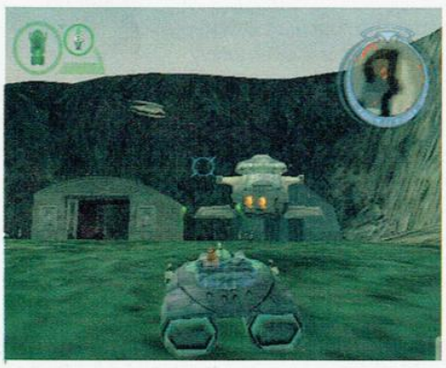
GUNNING DOWN GUNGANS

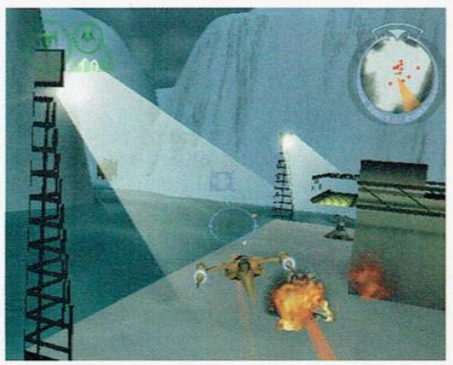
Over the course of sixteen full missions, your Naboo pilot will get to be a hotshot behind the controls of a variety of craft – some from The Phantom Menace, some designed exclusively for the game. As you would expect, a lot of the action takes place in the cockpit of an N-1 Starfighter, but you'll see some ground action in a Gian Speeder, and a stint on STAP and Federation gunboat. There are also other vehicles, like the Naboo Bomber, Naboo Police Cruiser and some bonus craft that are hidden in the game, making for a total of around 10 different craft. Unlike Rogue Squadron, the air-to-air combat will see you up in orbit over the planet where the deadly Trade Federation droid control ships are deploying the landers full of droids and other machines of mass-Gungan destruction. Jar Jar will be filling his pants with poodu.

Your character's name is actually Gavyn Sykes, created by the team at Factor 5 (yep, the Rogue Squadron folk are back on board, busy between coding Rogue Squadron for Gamecube and a new hush-hush PC title). So you won't get to be anyone from the movie, but you will interact with a few familiar characters. Gameplay will also be very similar to Rogue Squadron, with missions having multiple objectives and bonus objectives if you're skilled enough. However, the environments in Battle For Naboo will be much larger than Rogue Squadron thanks to a brand new 3D engine that allows for a greater draw distance, ground battle, more ground-based objects and better texturing. Yep, the game uses the expansion pak, and even better, will run without it for those of you who have somehow avoided the little performancing-enhancing chunk o' plastic.

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
A bombing run over Otoh Gunga.

It looks like Battle For Naboo is going to be guaranteed fun, if Rogue Squadron was anything to go by.

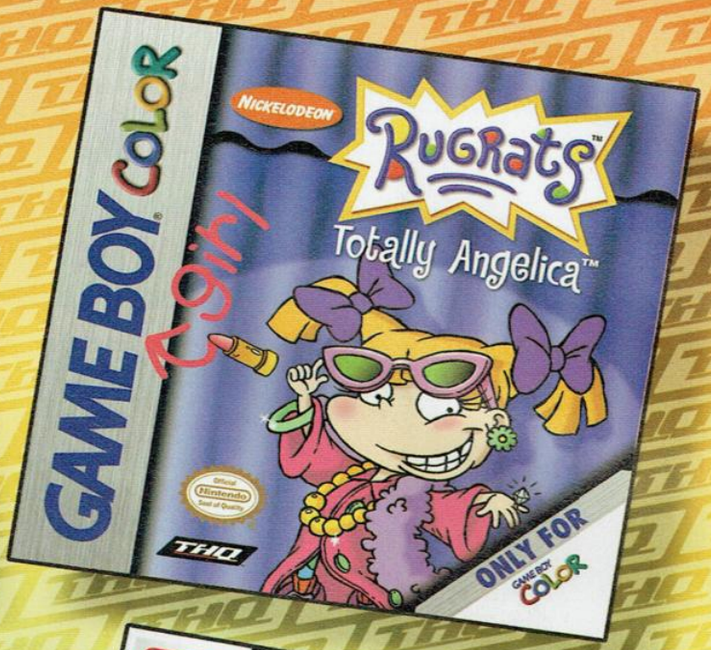




YEAH BUT WHERE ARE THE PILES UPON PILES OF DEAD GUNGANS?

WOW-O-METER

Attention All Game Boys and Game Girls



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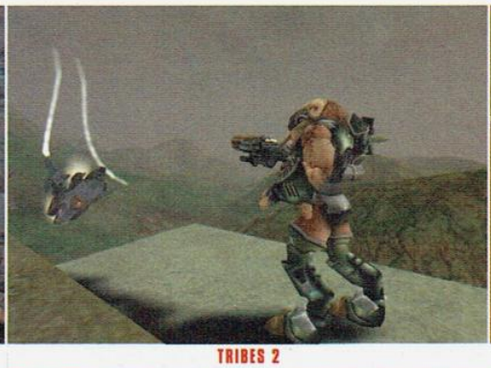
2001 IS SHAPING UP TO BE A GREAT YEAR IN GAMING. WHAT CAN WE LOOK FORWARD TO? HERE'S JUST A TASTE...

PC

ULTIMA ONLINE 2



TRIBES 2

EMPEROR: BATTLE FOR DUNE

PS2

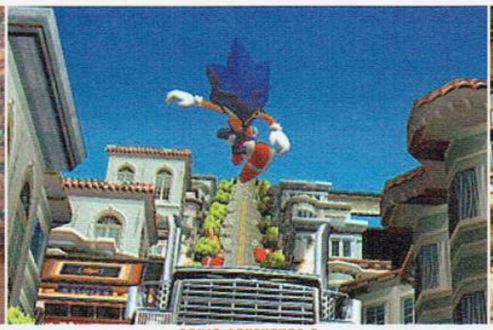
WIPEOUT FUSION

METAL GEAR SOLID 2

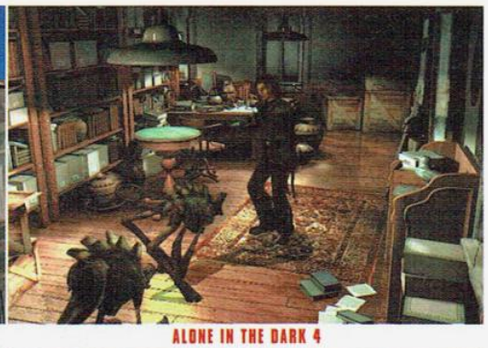
Z.O.E.

DREAMCAST

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE



SONIC ADVENTURE 2



ALONE IN THE DARK 4

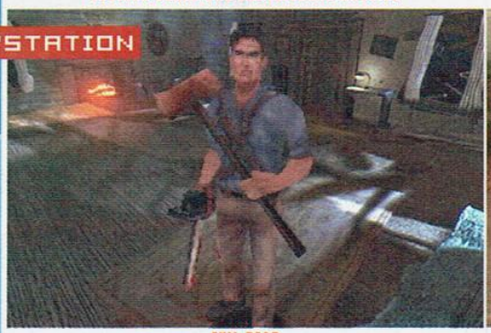
NINTENDO 64

INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE

BANJO TOOIE

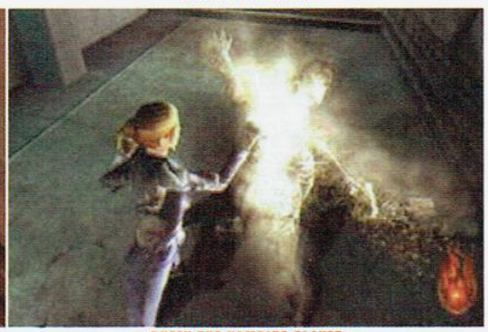
DINOSAUR PLANET

PLAYSTATION



EVIL DEAD

C-12



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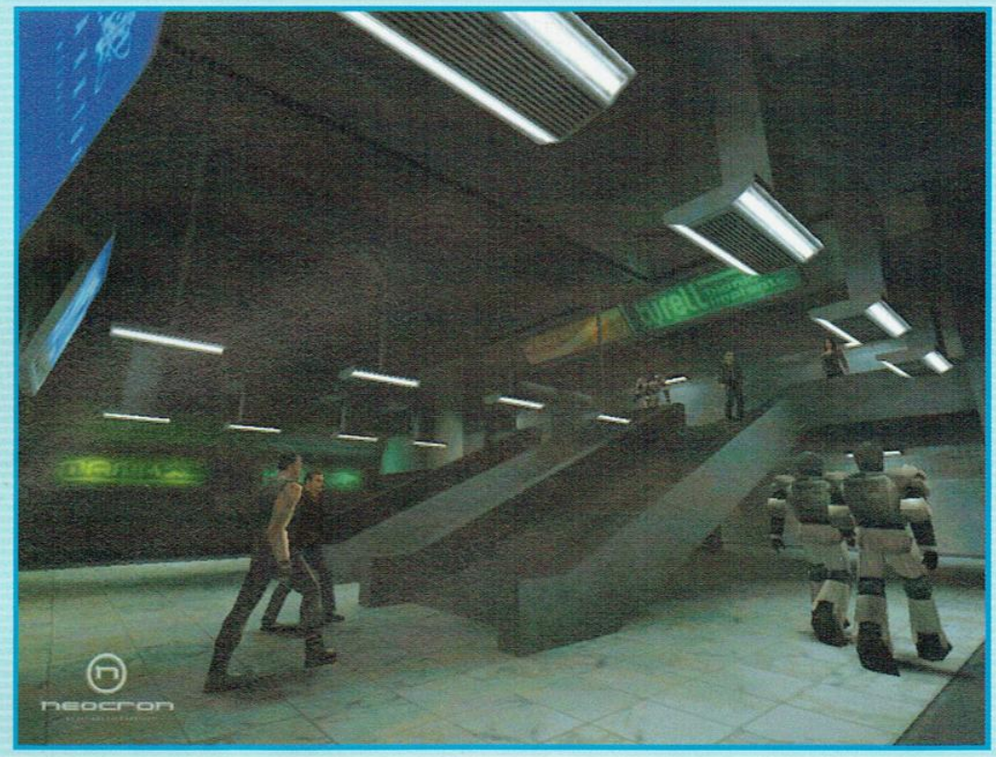
»ADAM DUNCAN



Neocron

For years the massively multiplayer gaming market has been dominated by the medieval fantasy genre. That trend is definitely set to change soon with the influx of futuristic MMORPG's on the horizon. Bigworld will likely be the first title to grace us, then there's Anarchy Online, even Verant Interactive's Star Wars Online, (a game that Verant have certainly been quiet about)... To top this off we have Reakktor Media's Neocron joining the list.

MUTAGENIC NASTIES

In Neocron's future, Earth is a ruined world. Humankind is forced to live in enclosed Mega-Cities, safe from the toxic atmosphere outside. People unlucky enough to have been forced to live outside, eventually evolved into all manner of mutagenic nasties. Our planet certainly wasn't the most hospitable of places. None of this mattered though, as the human race had found a new habitable world in deep space, and had been busily relocating in the last few decades. Just when things were looking bright however, the new colonies make first contact with an alien species and, as a result, mysteriously lose any contact with Earth.

Hopefully the story will evolve from here, as it leaves many questions unanswered. Who are these aliens? Is Earth sending a rescue force? What's certain is that for now it seems the remaining people on Earth are stuck to make do where they are.

Players can choose to live on Earth as one of four classes of human: Psi Monk, Tank, Private Eye and Spy. The Psi Monk appears to be the Neocrons answer to

net.news

QUAKE 3 ARENA

Battletop Tournament

Late September in Sydney, the I-StarZone Internet café held the battle for supremacy between Australia's top gamers. A few different titles were set up for competition like FIFA2000, Age of Empires 2 and Starcraft, but the main attraction was the Quake 3 tournament. Like the 'Big Day In' LAN earlier this year, Quakers from around the country, (and a couple from New Zealand), gathered to compete. This time, instead of qualifying for CPL, (Cyberathlete Professional League), the top 4 players would win tickets to the Battletop World Cyber Games Challenge in Korea, to play against the top players around the world. After some hectic preliminary free-for-all games the one-on-one matches ensued. Eventually in what seems like a major case of déjà vu, the winners at Battletop turned out to be the very same players as those who won at BDI last time. The mighty Python from clan [FxR] took out the tourney over Scoob, (also of [FxR]), in the final. Third place went to [d2d]Mirage, one of the New Zealanders. Unfortunately for him the tournament rules only allowed tickets to go to Australian competitors. Bummer! So he missed

PIC COURTESY OF: WWW.CHALLENGE-AU.COM

out and Lobsta of (shock horror) clan [FxR] took his stead. Finally Soul, the 5th placed Quaker (4th Aussie) grabbed the last ticket to Korea. Well done boys!

Challenge TV

If watching demos of kick-arse Quake players doing their stuff is your thing, then surely this is the site for you. Challenge TV hosts thousands of demos from Quake 1, 2 and 3 for your viewing pleasure.
http://www.challenge-tv.com/

Fatality's Tips and Tricks

If recent tournament results are anything to go by Fatality is probably the best Quake 3 player out there right now. To share some of his tactical insight he's come up with his own webpage. All the configuration and gameplay basics are covered for anyone relatively new to Quake 3. Veteran Quakers probably won't find out anything new here though.
http://q3a.stomped.com/fatality/

the Wizard. Being the most intelligent class they boast a range of various 'psi-spells'. The 'Tank' is the classic heavily armoured commando-type character. The last two classes possess a moderate amount of both brawn and brains and make good use of any intrigue-related skills (i.e. hacking). The Spy is a little more psi-based and less physical than the Private Eye. Basically if you've played System Shock you'll know what all these classes are about.

RIDING YOUR OWN HOVERBIKE

Visually Neocron looks on par with any other online game coming out. Yet the screenshots definitely exude more of a First-Person Shooter feel than that of an ordinary online RPG, (although it is possible to play in a 3rd person view). This is because the action promises to be fast-paced almost to the degree seen in an everyday FPS. Neocron's skill system however is planned to be as broad as any of the upcoming tech-based MMORPG's. So it will be quite interesting so see how the FPS and RPG aspects intertwine. Also of interest will be finding out how such an action-intensive system of play will be maintained on the lowly modem connections many of us still have.

The game's other features all have some semblance to either Bigworld or Anarchy Online. Transport will be via a subway system or by riding your own Hoverbike, the latter sounding extremely cool. Quests or jobs are obtained from a City Terminal and can be randomly generated for solo players or a group. Player Killing in Neocron however seems to be embraced somewhat more than normal. Thankfully the main cities are safe zones, but there are plenty of areas where PK'ing is allowed to run rampant. Reakktor have even gone so far as to call one-on-one fights 'Deathmatches'. Read that however you want, but one thing's for sure, we're damn keen to see the combat system in action!

Beta testing for Neocron is set to happen before the end of the year. So anyone interested in testing should head to the link below to apply.

WWW

Phone4free

Phone4free allows you to use the net to ring other people's phones from your PC. All you need is a headphone set with a built-in microphone and you're right to go. The quality isn't perfect... It seems as though only one person can talk at a time (like a CB). It's still a better option than having to pay for a long-distance or international phone call!
http://www.phone4free.com

Elite Force

Raven has already released an official map pack for their recent Trek game, Elite Force. It comes with three spiffy maps, two CTF and one built for Team Holomatch. In addition to this, anyone feeling a little creative can now grab the Elite Force Development Kit. It contains an EF specific version of Q3Radiant and various other editing tools to help you make your own Holomatch maps, singleplayer missions or even whole mods.

Both files can be grabbed here:
http://www.voyagereliteforce.com/

PATCHES

DAIKATANA
http://www.daikatana.com/patches.htm

QUAKE III ARENA 1.25 POINT RELEASE
ftp://ftp.idsoftware.com/idstuff/quake3/win32/Q3PointRelease_125.exe

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 432 PATCH
www.planetunreal.com

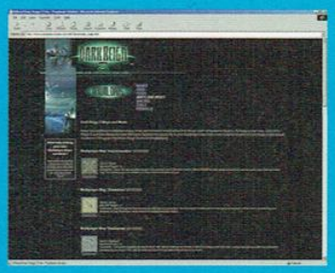
SOLDIER OF FORTUNE GOLD PATCH
http://www.ravensoft.com/

SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR
http://www.ea.com/

WWW

Dark Reign 2

Ever since the release of Dark Reign 2, Pandemic have been nice enough to release a new official multiplayer map each week. As you can imagine, quite a collection of maps has accumulated. A real treasure trove for fans of the game.
http://www.pandemicstudios.com/dr2/downloads_maps.htm

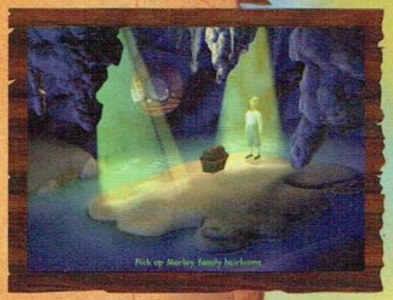


Gameserve

One of the better Aussie gaming sites out there. The fellas at Gameserve sift though all the nonsense on the net to bring you the more relevant game news, mods, patches, server links etc.
Check it out at:
http://www.gameserve.com.au/

Optimizing.net

This great site covers in-depth the optimum way to setup your net connection, showing you just how to squeeze every little ounce of speed from your modem. Very informative.
http://www.optimizing.net/



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SHIVER ME TIMBERS AND POKE ME OTHER EYE OUT IF IT AIN'T THE FOURTH IN THE CELEBRATED SERIES OF ADVENTURES!

AVAILABLE IN STORES NOVEMBER

Windows 95/98 3D Hardware Accelerator Required Graphic Adventure Single-Play

ESRB TEEN T — Comic Mischief, Suggestive Themes, Use of Tobacco and Alcohol

iMUSE

PC CD

LUCASArts

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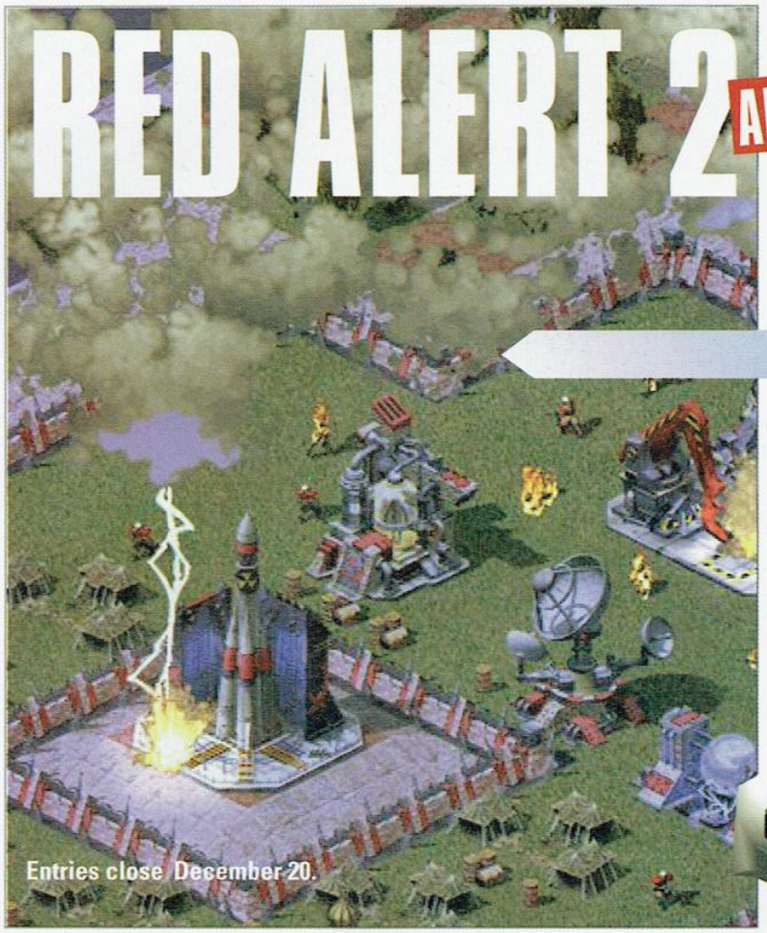
RED ALERT 2 AND ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND



FOR PC

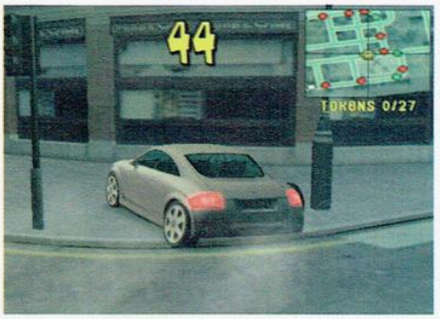
Three lucky winners will each receive a copy of both games this Christmas thanks to the wonderful Electronic Arts. You can laugh yourself silly with Escape From Monkey Island and then get into some serious strategy gaming with Red Alert 2. Two of the hottest Christmas games could be yours! To be in with a chance to win, just answer this question...

>> What was the name of the talking skull in Monkey Island 3?

Put your answer on the back of an envelope and send it to ***EA EA OH!, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016.***

Entries close December 20.

TOP GEAR DAREDEVIL

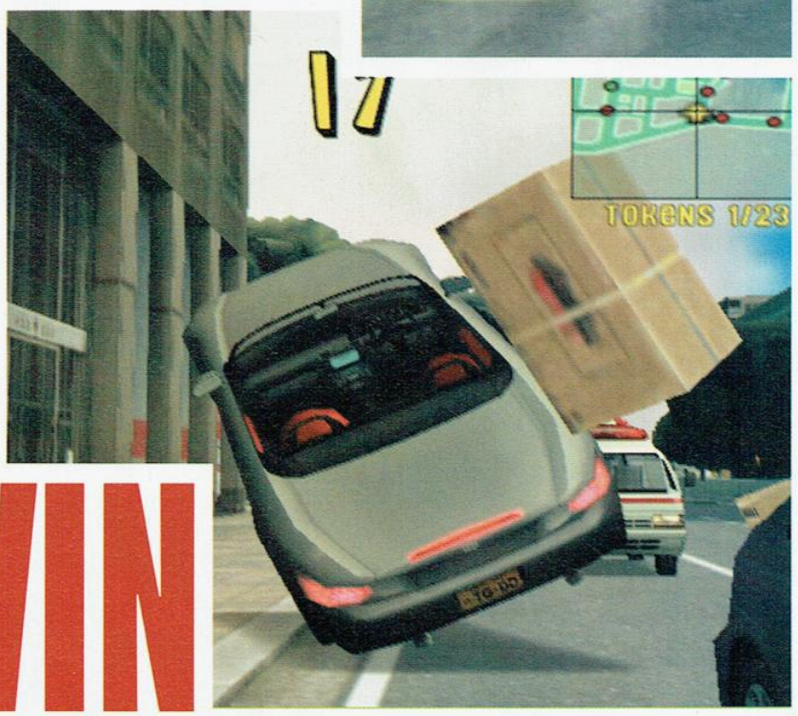


FOR PS2

This Acclaim racer for the PS2 will have you on the edge of your seat. Top Gear Daredevil has a cool array of cars to hoon around in, and it has those slick next-gen PS2 visuals to slobber over. It's a free-roaming city racer with all sorts of objectives, along the lines of Driver and Midtown Madness. Acclaim have offered up five copies for Christmas, so if you'd like to snaffle one for your new PS2, answer this...

>> Daredevil was also a comic character for which comic publisher? Marvel or DC?

Stick your answer on the back of an envelope and post it away to ***Devilish Prizes, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016.***



WINWINWIN

WINWINWIN!

THRUSTMASTER FREESTYLE BOARDS

Thrustmaster, the makers of fine PC and console peripherals, have just released the funky Freestyle board! This ride-on board is compatible with the PlayStation and the PlayStation 2, and it also has Dual Shock support. Imagine using this baby with Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 or SSX snowboarding! Cripes! This is a full-size board with a tilt base, a hand controller for navigating menus, front and rear foot buttons, and you can use the board in both analogue and digital modes. We have three brand new Freestyle boards to give away to three lucky readers, plus each winner will receive a special Thrustmaster t-shirt. Now who doesn't want to walk around with "thrustmaster" printed across their chest?

To win one of these, answer the following question...

>> Name one of the skaters other than Tony Hawk in Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2.

Put your answer on the back of an envelope and send it to ***I'm feeling Board, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016.***

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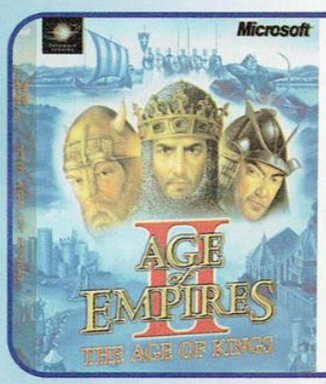
Fly, Co

Microsoft

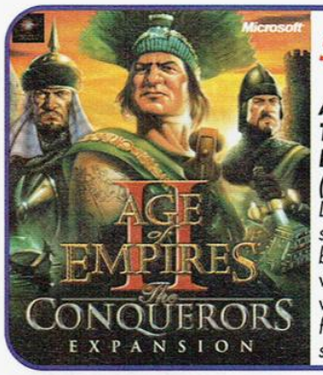


SAVE $15

$84.95

Age of Empires II: The Age of Kings PC (G8+).

Return to the age of kings and queens with this action packed real time strategy package. MSC2784

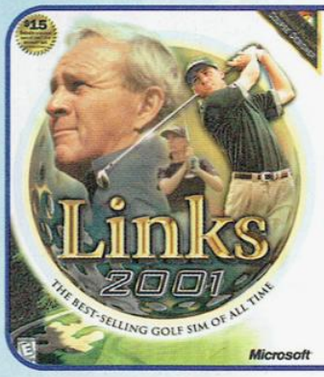


SAVE $10

$44.95

Age Of Empires II: The Conquerors. Expansion Pack. PC (G8+).

Learn and have fun at the same time! Be transported back to ancient times and witness first hand the rise of what is without a doubt the foundation of modern civilisation. MSC2801

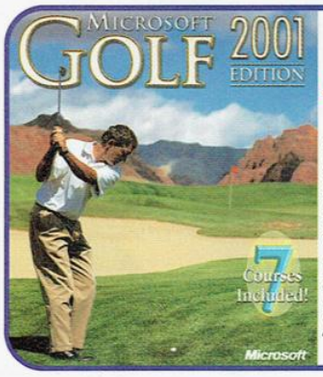


SAVE $13

$76.95

Microsoft® Links 2001 PC (G).

The most realistic golf experience possible on the PC. MSC2819



SAVE $4

$44.95

Golf 2001 PC (G).

Combines easy-to-use features with added realism for great golf anytime you want it. Learn the basics with in-game lessons and a one-click swing, then shoot for birdie on every hole!

MSC2804

SAVE $16

$94.95

Flight Sim 2000 PC (G).

Experience what it's like to be a pilot in this real-to-life flight simulation game. Features include actual airstrip scenarios including Heathrow and LAX. Brilliant graphics make your flight experience come to life. MSC2785

SAVE $15

$84.95

Combat Flight Simulator 2: WWII Pacific Theatre (G8+).

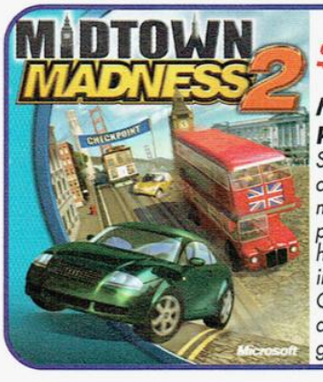
Combat Flight Simulator 2 takes you back in time with exquisitely detailed aircraft, cockpits and scenery. The flight dynamics capture the true experience of flying these magnificent machines. MSC2818

SAVE $13

$76.95

Crimson Skies PC (G8+).

White knuckle, brow-sweating, edge of your seat action and adventure where only the most daring will survive! MSC2803



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Midtown Madness 2 PC (G8+).

Strap yourself back in the driver's seat for more driving madness through two action-packed cities. Features 20 hip urban roadsters, six racing types, over 60 races, Crash Course Career Mode and incredible multi-player gaming. MSC2807

Harvey Norman

THE MICROSOFT® SPECIALISTS

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$199.95

SideWinder Force Feedback 2.

The ultimate joystick for players who demand the best. Features an optimised feedback system which lets you feel every subtle force effect. MST8212

$89.95

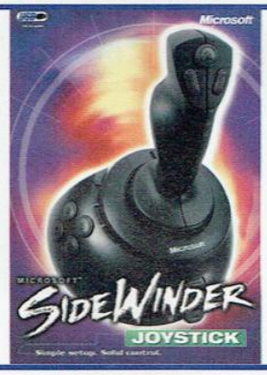
SideWinder Precision 2.

Features eight programmable buttons plus a programmable 8-direction hat switch for up to 16 total programmable functions, plus rotating handle for precise rudder control. MST9210

$99.95

SideWinder Game Voice.

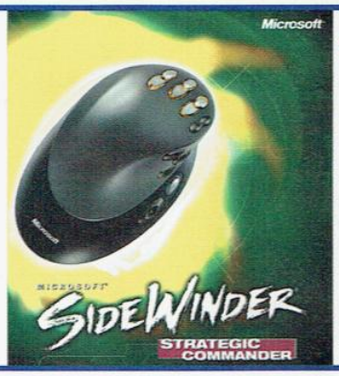
Brings teamwork to a new level. Find your friends on-line, talk strategy with your team mates and taunt your opponents by programming the channel and team buttons on your control pad. Then, press the command button to switch to command mode, and control game actions with your voice! MST8214



$59.95

SideWinder Joystick.

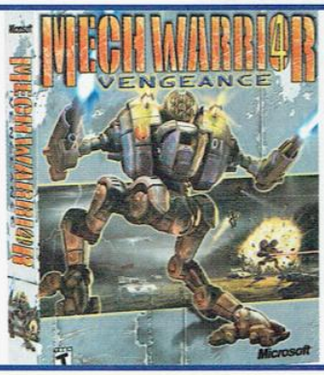
Features eight action buttons, a precision throttle with 60° of throw, advanced design for comfort and control and USB connectivity. MST8211



$99.95

SideWinder Strategic Commander.

A revolution in strategy gaming. Allows you to move, deploy and command your forces faster and more efficiently. Its innovative map movement control lets you scroll and spin the map quickly and intuitively while its brilliant design puts customisable commands at your fingertips. MST8213



SAVE $15

$84.95

MechWarrior 4: Vengeance PC.

Struggle to reclaim your birthright as you command an awesomely armed, 40' tall, 80-ton, 90mph war machine across the remote battlefields of a hostile world. MSC2821

$199.95

SideWinder Force Feedback Wheel.

Designed with input from professional race car drivers, the SideWinder Force Feedback Wheel offers the realistic look, performance and ruggedness that racing fanatics demand.

MSC8006

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NINTENDO 64

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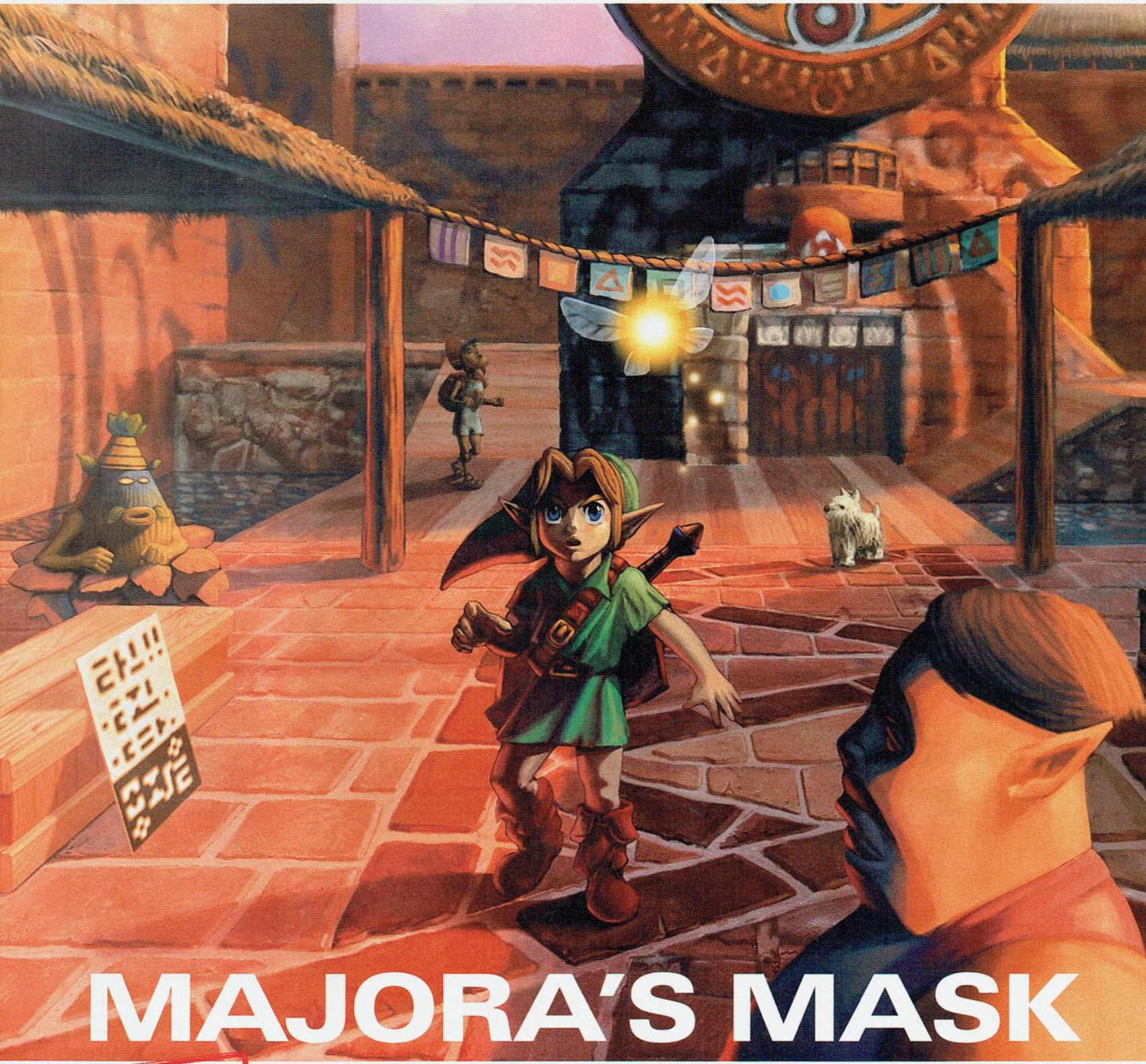
LEGEND OF ZELDA:



MAJORA'S MASK

HYPER GAME OF THE MONTH

Nintendo refresh our lethargic gaming brains with some true originality in the excellent Majora's Mask. Link is back!

REVIEWS

Green for Dreamcast
Yellow for PC
Red for Nintendo 64
Dark Blue for PlayStation
Light Blue for PlayStation 2

NINTENDO 64

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PS2

56 .... TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT
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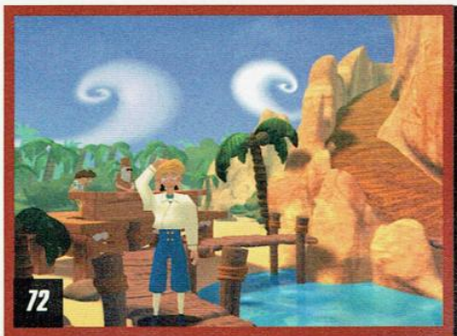
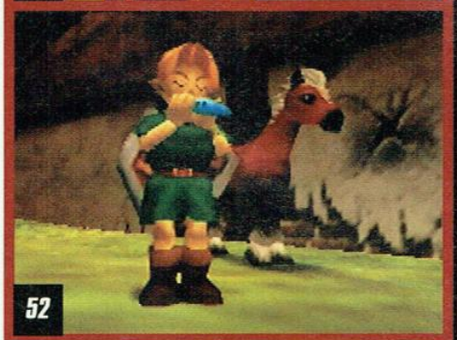
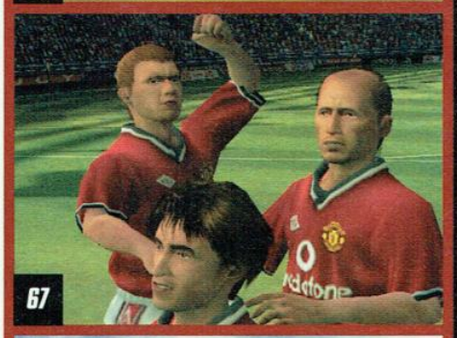
92 .... SAN FRANCISCO RUSH 2049

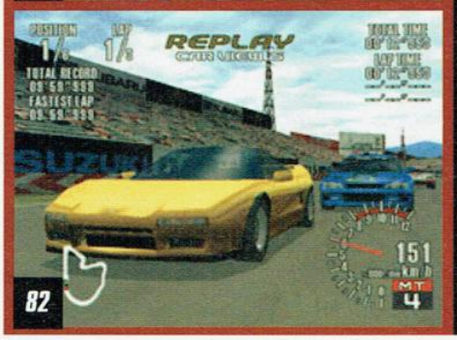
PLAYSTATION

88 .... DRIVER 2
90 .... SMACKDOWN 2
91 .... CRASH BASH
76 .... STAR TREK: INVASION
92 .... THIS IS SOCCER 2









THE HYPER CREW'S TOP 5

WHAT WE'RE PLAYING THIS MONTH

Eliot Fish – Editor

1. Escape From Monkey Island – PC
   "That's the second biggest monkey head I've ever seen!"
2. Dead Or Alive 2: Hardcore – PS2
3. Thief: Gold – PC
4. Zelda: Majora's Mask – Nintendo 64

Cam Shea – Deputy Editor

1. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 – PC
   "Mmmm. Ultra-smooth darkslides at 1024X768."
2. FIFA 2001 – PS2
3. SNK Vs Capcom – Dreamcast
4. Quake 3 Arena – Dreamcast
5. Unreal Tournament – PS2

Roland Flanagan – Reviewer

1. Baldur's Gate 2 – PC
   "If you get one PC RPG this year, make it Baldur's Gate 2."
2. Sega GT – Dreamcast
3. Marvel vs Capcom 2 – Dreamcast
4. Le Mans 24 Hours – Dreamcast
5. Jet Set Radio - Dreamcast

HYPER»

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

www.au.gateway.com

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: MAJORA'S MASK

Use the TriForce. **Kevin Cheung** is swept away all over again...

AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Action/RPG
PLAYERS:	1
PUBLISHER:	Nintendo
PRICE:	$99.95
RATING:	TBA
SUPPORTS:	RAM Pak, Rumble Pak

>> Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask is the first title in Nintendo's grander scheme for the expansion of the Zelda series. Despite suspicions that the churning out of more Zelda sequels would cheapen its reputation, Majora's Mask has done quite the opposite by paving new and innovative directions in game design.

SAVING FACE

Majora's Mask picks up shortly after the conclusion of The Ocarina of Time. While Link rides home through a forest covered in dense fog, he is ambushed by a scrawny goblin in tribal gear. The goblin, who we later come to know as Skull Kid, rifles through Link's belongings and makes off with the Ocarina and Epona, and puts a curse on Link that transforms him into a Deku Tree. All is not lost, though, for in his haste to escape, Skull Kid abandons one of his fairies, who agrees to team up with Link and help him get back Epona and his Ocarina.

For more Zelda goodness, we can look forward to the upcoming Game Boy Color titles...

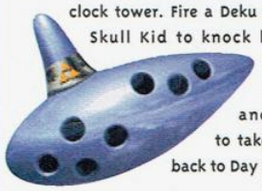
GETTING PAST THE FIRST THREE DAYS

The game can only be saved by using the Ocarina of Time, but recovering the Ocarina in itself is one of the more difficult tasks in the game. Unless you're a glutton for punishment and don't mind being thrown into the deep end, here is a quick guide for how to get back your Ocarina.

First, get yourself 5 rupees. You'll find two by smashing the wooden crates next to the two jugglers. You'll find more at the northern end of town by cutting through the bushes. In the town's north, you'll find a wood sprite in green clothing. Buy a town map from him. Now go to the south-western most part of town. Go up the ramp and catch the fairy flying around in there. Take the fairy back up to the north end of town and go up the ramp and into the cave on the left. The heart fairy inside will grant you the Deku Bubble attack.

Go back outside and use a Deku Bubble to burst the balloon. Then go talk to the kid in blue. You'll have to look for all five of the kids before morning. Two are in the north area, one on the West, and two East. Use the pass code to get through the kid at the northeastern end of town. Make your way to the telescope. Look through the lens at the top of the clock tower to focus on Skull Kid, and then go out the door to get the Moon's Tear.

Take the Moon's Tear to the flower launch pad next to the clock tower and trade it with the Deku man for the title deed to the flower. Wait till midnight on Day Three for the fireworks to start. Use the flower pad to go through the door in the clock tower. Fire a Deku Bubble at Skull Kid to knock loose the Ocarina. Pick it up and play it to take yourself back to Day One.



LINK'S LESSER KNOWN BROTHER, BINK

LINK IN SEARCH OF HOOK-UPS, OR IS THAT LINK-UPS?

The fairy takes Link through a magical doorway that leads to a land not too unlike the Hyrule depicted in The Ocarina of Time. Things look strangely different, though. There are darker contrasting shadows, people look and talk differently. It's like a dark alternate reality to the land Link just saved. And casting its ominous shadow over the land is a moon with a harlequin's grin, gazing intently at the world below.

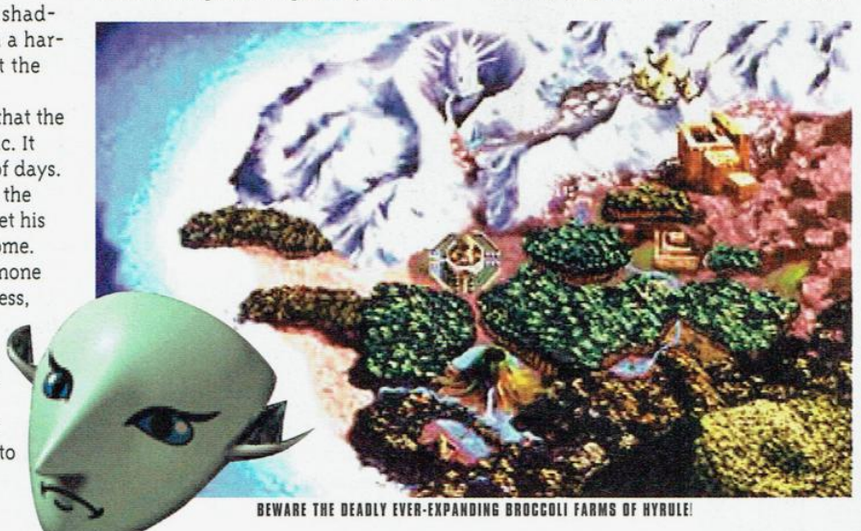
Further exploration will reveal that the moon is causing widespread panic. It will destroy the land in a matter of days. Three days, in fact, and that is all the time Link has to stop the moon, get his face back, find Epona, and get home.

The villain behind this terror is none other than Skull Kid. As you progress, you'll learn that Skull Kid's acts of mischief are cause by the mask he is wearing: the Mask of Majora. It's fabled to have caused some measure of mass destruction eons ago, but too long ago for anyone to remember how best to stop it.

NO TIME FOR GOOFING OFF

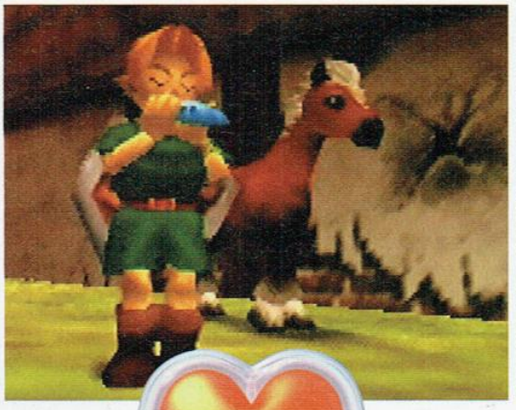
Time runs out quickly in this game. You have 72 hours of game time, where one hour is equivalent to around 40 seconds of real time. That means you've got less than an hour to save the world. Or does it? The key to success in this game hinges on your ability to recover the Ocarina of Time. Once you have that little gem back in your possession, you can stop time, go back to the first day, and buy yourself more precious time to save the world.

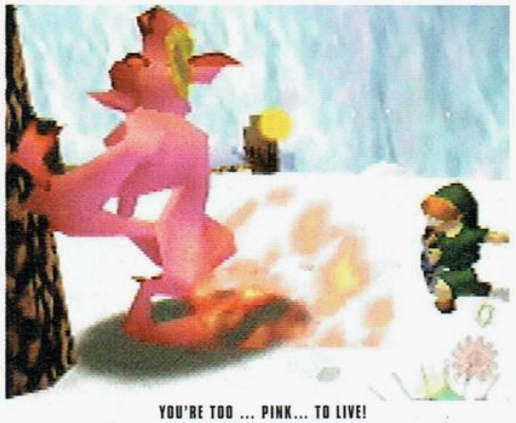
Majora's Mask does not play like a conventional role-playing game. Usually players will have an unlimited



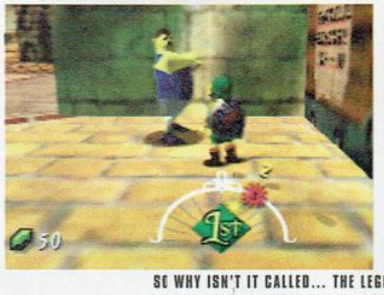
BEWARE THE DEADLY EVER-EXPANDING BROCCOLI FARMS OF HYRULE!

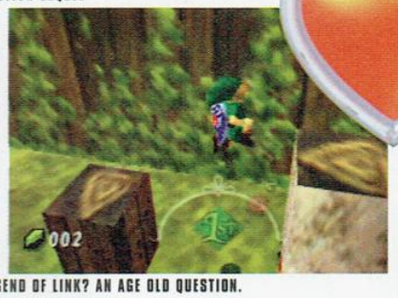
LINK CHECKS OUT THE LATEST DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION SEQUEL





YOU'RE TOO ... PINK... TO LIVE!





SO WHY ISN'T IT CALLED... THE LEGEND OF LINK? AN AGE OLD QUESTION.

BINK HAS TO BUSK FOR A LIVING DESPITE HIS FAMOUS HALF-BROTHER

amount of time to search towns, converse with the locals, and absorb the atmosphere. The ever-present time limit puts an immediate pressure on you. Travel has to be done efficiently, puzzles have to be solved with all due expedience.

Expect to see the Game Over screen frequently during your first attempts at the game. Don't let that discourage you, though. Your initial search for the Ocarina presents the game's steepest learning curve. After that, you can bend time to your will and it's smooth sailing from there on.

With Ocarina in hand, Link must travel beyond the walls of the city in search of other masks that can be used to defeat Majora's Mask. Link can wear these masks during the game, which grant him special powers like running faster, jumping higher, and controlling animals. Even the Deku Mask (after Link lifts the Deku curse) can be worn.

You'll end up needing the whole three days to finish each mission. Once completed, it's back to Day One and onward to the next mission. It's here that the ingenuity of the game design really comes through. What Nintendo have created is an entire world where the activities of its inhabitants are scripted throughout the three-day period. On the second day it rains. On the third day the workers run away from town. On the first and second days, locals will be digging through a boulder blocking the road, which you can only cross on the third day. That leaves you with 24 hours to complete everything behind that rock.

None of it gels together quite so obviously, though. To inexperienced eyes, every event in the land feels random and it takes some serious trial and error to figure out which events are related to each other. Let's say, for instance, you get some magic beans. You plant them, nothing happens. You run out of time, use the Ocarina to start from Day One again, and have another shot. This time you might try pouring water on the magic beans. Or plant in time for the rains in Day Two. You just have to try again, and again, and again; and maybe even sit on the one spot for the whole three days just to see what happens at that location. Zelda meets Groundhog Day.

LINK'S NUT

BUT IT'S NOT FLAWLESS

That pretty much sums up everything there is about Majora's Mask. The visuals, audio, and control remain identical to Link's previous adventure in The Ocarina of Time. Having been somewhat spoilt by PC, Dreamcast, and PlayStation 2 graphics, it might be difficult not to squint at the sight of the blurry visuals inherent to most N64 games. Although, if you've been playing Nintendo 64 games exclusively the last year, you won't be disappointed.

However, it's true that the game has some serious camera issues. The screen will often pan around to an inconvenient angle where it's difficult to see what's in your immediate surroundings. Sometimes it can be a chore just to find a door. The result is a heavy reliance on the Z-trigger to bring the screen front and centre. What's truly frustrating, though, is that when you use the Z-trigger to lock on to a target, the camera often takes up a more cinematic angle to make the action look sweeter. However, the angle messes with your depth perception and defeats the purpose of the lock-on function entirely.

These camera problems are a sticking point in Majora's Mask. While they don't detract from the overall experience much, Nintendo should have used this opportunity to correct the problems rather than taking the cheap and easy option of banking on the same game engine. Still, what counts most here is game design. Nintendo's latest installment of Zelda is slightly unconventional (thank god for originality – Ed.), but ultimately a tighter, compact, puzzle-heavy role-playing game. A must-have for anyone who loved Ocarina Of Time. ■

PLUS

Excellent scripting and very original game design.
Genuinely good puzzles – non-generic and satisfying once solved.

MINUS

Dodgy cameras provide regular inconvenience throughout.
RAM Pak is required, but there doesn't seem to be any great improvement.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
89	86	93

OVERALL

92

A highly original product. Zelda fans all round will be proud, though anyone who missed Ocarina of Time won't understand much of it.

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TEKKEN TAG TOURNAMENT

Here it is. **Eliot Fish** puts on the gloves and warms up for the first round...

AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Fighting
PLAYERS:	1–2
PUBLISHER:	Namco
PRICE:	$89.95
RATING:	M

>> You've probably read about Tekken Tag Tournament countless times already, but strangely enough, it's taken until now to finally see the PAL version in action on the newly released PlayStation 2. For those who haven't even thought about Tekken since Tekken 3 on the PlayStation, there are a few things you need to know. Tekken Tag Tournament was released to arcades over a year ago now, and it is regarded as Tekken 3 1/2, the "Special Edition", as opposed to being Tekken 4. Tekken 4 won't be seen for a while yet, so immediately you have to lower your expectations for "new stuff" in Tekken Tag Tournament if you never played it at the arcades. You're not going to get a whole bunch of new characters or vastly different moves, but what you do get from Tekken Tag Tournament is new gameplay modes, a huge starting roster of your favourite characters, and the guarantee that this is the slickest Tekken release so far.

SMACK MY ALIASING UP

So, first appearances mean everything, right? Well, Tekken Tag isn't going to disappoint here... this is the PS2 we're talking about. But we must say this; despite some improvements to the graphics over the NTSC release, Tekken Tag Tournament is not the kind of graphical feast that you might expect.

JIN MANAGES TO COP A FEEL

ONLY GANRYU SPOTTED THE FALLING PIANO

Certainly, we wouldn't be surprised to see this running on the Dreamcast. If you want to be visually impressed, go take a look at Dead Or Alive 2: Hardcore... that's pretty. But maybe we're dwelling on aesthetics. Many will still be impressed by Tekken Tag's presentation. For starters, the characters have a very high polygon count, meaning that there's better definition in the character's bodies and faces than is possible on any other gaming system. Just check out the rippling upper-body of Jin to see what we're talking about. Other details like clothes have an amazing amount of detail in them, but the animation however, well, it's not that far removed from Tekken 3... and when you start digging deeper, you'll find that the gameplay is not that much different either. In terms of elements like the backgrounds, it's a mixed bag. There's a huge amount of detail, fantastic lighting effects, amazing reflections, lots of background characters... but there's still that double plane shimmer. The ground you're fighting on seems strangely detached from the 3D backgrounds. This was very noticeable in the NTSC release, however it's not as readily apparent in our local version. But it is still there. When you play Dead Or Alive 2, there seems to be so much depth to the 3D backgrounds, and you can actually progress deeper into the environment, but with Tekken Tag, you're still stuck in an arena that's surrounded by a mixture of 3D and 2D. But not everyone cares about the backgrounds... the characters, at least, look very good. Now, as for the gameplay...

BEATING THINGS TO A PULP

The Tekken fighting style is a love or hate affair. If you've played other titles like Soul Calibur, or Dead Or Alive 2, you probably wouldn't enjoy Tekken's comparatively clunky fighting. However, there are Tekken fans literally coming out of the woodwork, and if you loved the Tekken games on the PSX, then there's more good old Tekken gameplay waiting right here for you in Tekken Tag.

The most important addition to the series is the tag function, allowing you to play tag matches in which you can perform double-team attacks on your opponent. This not only adds more entertainment to the mix, but it can change your fighting tactics. It's pretty cool to see your two favourite characters put the smack down on your opponent, or to be able to switch to your second character mid-bout for a change in fighting style. Nice.

There are certainly lots of gameplay options, from the single-player arcade mode, to the survival mode, time attack, team mode, the (thank God) 1-on-1 versus mode and even the cool bonus mode. We'll leave you to discover that. So in terms of variety, you should be pretty darn happy with this set up.

In terms of the fighting, there's a lot to get a handle on with all the characters, so you'll literally be facing a mountain of moves and combos to learn, giving Tekken Tag a huge amount of depth. You won't survive on button-mashing alone, so you'll need to learn how to best "juggle" your opponent in the air for maximum combo-crushing. When you get to "Unknown" the new boss, you should be prepared with a few neat button combos under your belt. You're gonna need 'em.

If anyone remembers the previous Tekken titles on PlayStation, you may remember the disappointment in the PAL conversions, as they ran notably slower than the NTSC versions. Well, although our PAL Tekken Tag has some graphical improvements over the NTSC version, it again seems to play at a slightly slower pace which is disappointing. It probably only matters to the fighting game freaks who care about these small details, but hell, we are out there, and we DO care about these things.

It looks like we'll have to accept Tekken Tag Tournament until Namco hurries up and delivers Tekken 4... now that's one game we'd like to see. ■

PLUS
Huge roster of characters to play with, and great FMV endings!

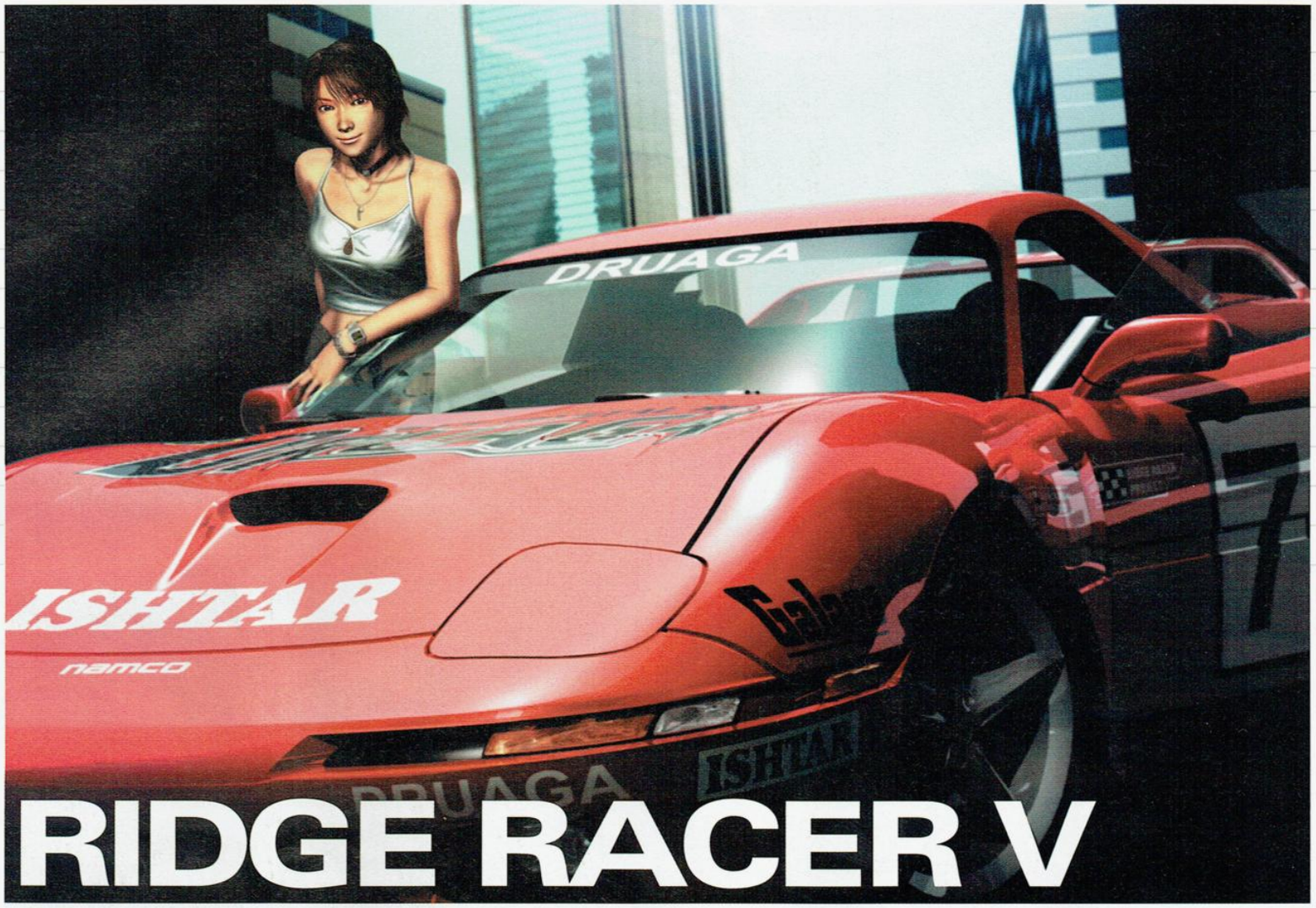
MINUS
Not as classy as other fighting games on the market. But it's close!

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
91	79	86

OVERALL

88

If you're a Tekken addict it should keep you happy, but we'd rather see a true sequel that offers something new.

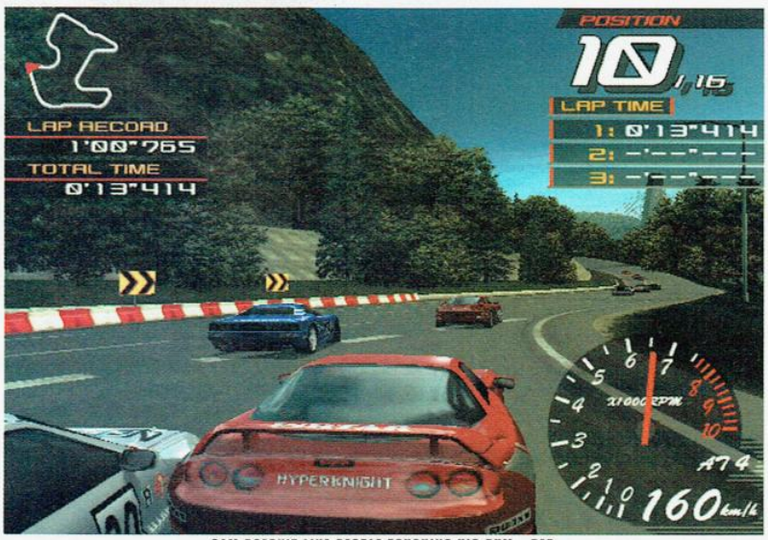


RIDGE RACER V

The Real Racing Roots '99 champion, **Cam Shea**, returns to check out what the new Ridge Racer girl is up to...

AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Racing
PLAYERS:	1–2
PUBLISHER:	Namco
PRICE:	$89.95
RATING:	G

>> Subtitled "A New Beginning", Ridge Racer V is anything but. A better title would have been "Ridge Racer V: More Of The Same", which is not necessarily a criticism because if there's one thing that Ridge Racer fans crave, it's more insane arcadey racing action.



CAM DOESN'T LIKE PEOPLE TOUCHING HIS BUM...PER

Essentially, Ridge Racer V is a booty shaking good time, but also something of an anti-climax. This was always likely to be the case, what with the insane hype surrounding the power of the machine coupled with its high learning curve for developers. Even so, Namco have had such an exemplary track record in creating mindblowing launch titles that expectations were high. Soul Calibur, for instance, really put the Dreamcast on the map graphically, convincing many a sceptic of the machine's worth. That feat has not quite been replicated here.

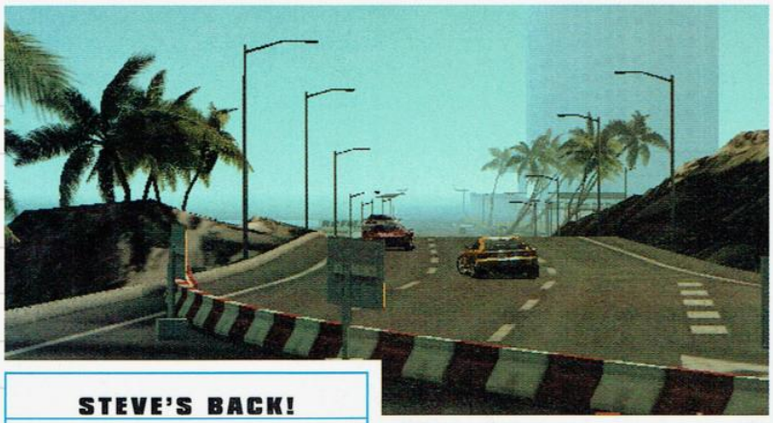
DOING THE HOKEY POKEY...

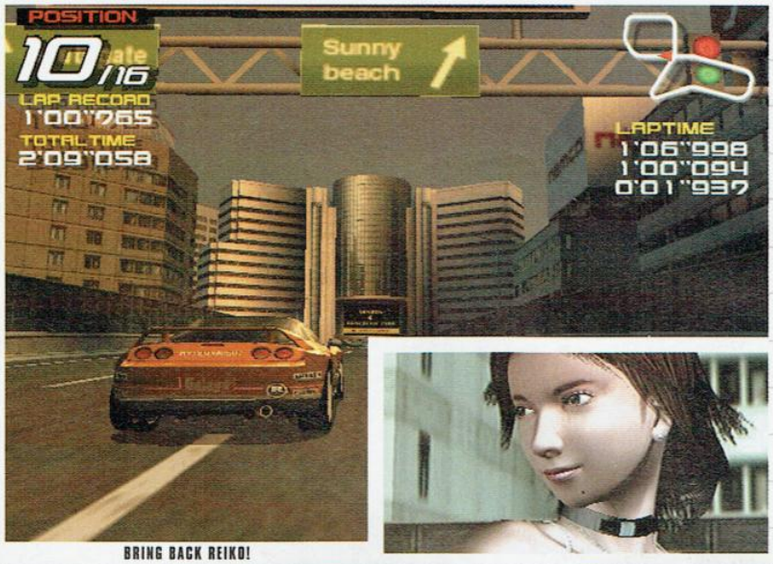
In many ways, Namco have taken several steps forward, but also a couple back with this addition to the series. Obviously the graphics have improved, as has the sense of speed. The driving mechanics too are probably the strongest yet in the series. Namco have even managed to make a GP mode with long term gameplay (in stark contrast to R4's pathetically designed GP mode that forced you to start with the slowest car every single time and earn the faster ones as you progressed).

The track design, on the other hand, is reminiscent of the first title – in a literal as well as figurative sense. All the courses are based around the one city layout, so there are plenty of shared sections of track. In fact, it seems like Namco decided to take the original's course and model this title's city around it. One of the variations is actually a full remake of the original Ridge Racer course. Great fun, but isn't that sort of thing meant to be a hidden bonus?

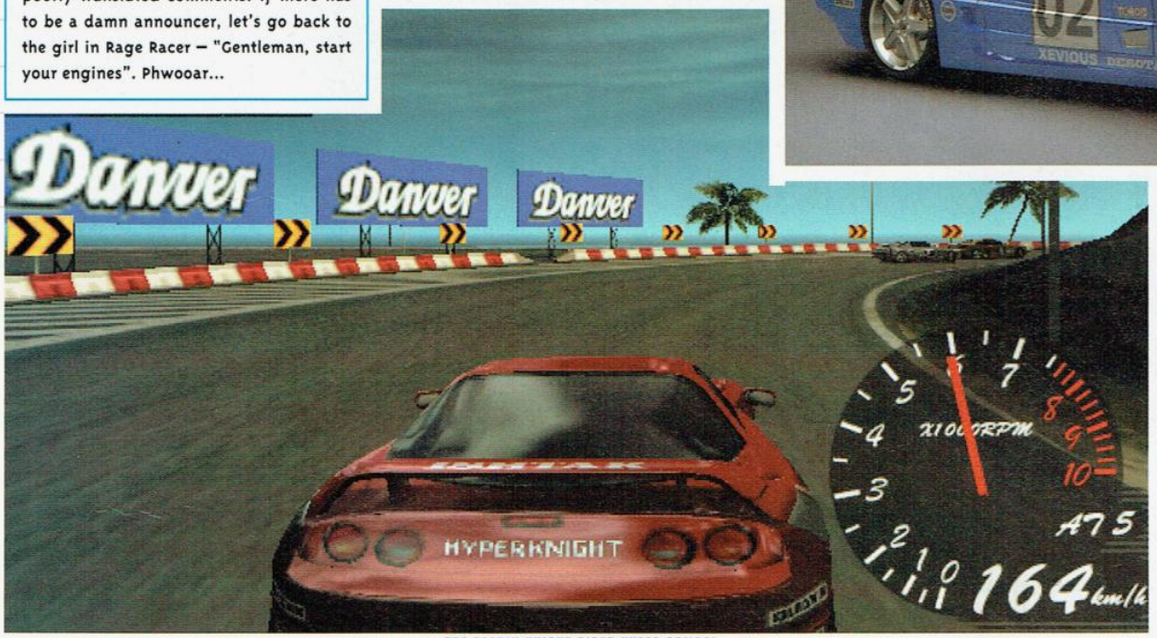
The influence of the original Ridge Racer can also be felt through the rest of the track design. Namco have shied away from the steep hills and mountainous runs of Rage Racer and R4 in favour of much more traditional city based driving. In other words, the courses are mostly flat. This is disappointing given some of the thrilling downhill sections in R4, but to be fair,

! As was the case in Ridge Racer Type 4, the Pac-Car is unlockable in Ridge Racer V. Yep, that's right, a Pac mobile. A big yellow, ball-shaped car...





BRING BACK REIKO!



THE DEADLY KNIGHT RIDER HYPER COMBO!

LAPPING IT UP

STEVE'S BACK!

Namco's taste in music and voice over talent has always been a little inconsistent, and RR-V is no exception. The soundtrack is an eclectic selection of tracks that lack the style of the R4 soundtrack and aren't well suited to the racing action either. The voice over guy is a disaster who sounds eerily like Steve from Code Veronica. Turn it off before he has a chance to spout one of his self-evident, poorly translated comments. If there has to be a damn announcer, let's go back to the girl in Rage Racer – "Gentleman, start your engines". Phwooar...

the courses are expertly crafted, maximising every powerslide.

The Grand Prix mode is the focus of the game, comprising a series of increasingly difficult events, each made up of four races. As you progress through the events, you'll be awarded trophies, faster cars and beefed up engines. The Grand Prix mode is quite compelling, but as in R4, the final track is nothing more than a huge oval. It's great for that ultimate speed hit, but really, this is an unacceptably dull and thoughtless way to cap off a demanding, powerslide filled championship. Sigh.

BLOW IT OUT YOUR ALIAS...

Ridge Racer V is one of the prettier racers to date, although one gets the feeling that Namco rushed the game's development somewhat. Some visual elements are fantastic, such as the view distance, the car and tree models, and effects such as the sparks shooting out from under other cars. The interconnected nature of the city is also cool, as you'll frequently zoom under overpasses used in another of the track variants, or catch a glimpse of just how complex the city is as you rocket around a corner.

Other visual elements are less impressive. The texture work and detail levels are a little patchy, with many of the larger buildings looking very much like scale models. The two-player split-screen game is disappointing, suffering from a bad case of fog-itis.

Perhaps our biggest gripe with Ridge Racer V is the lack of effort on Namco's behalf in preparing it for Western release. The Japanese release felt rushed, yet nine thumb twiddling months later we've been presented with exactly the same game – there are no extra tracks or features. Namco haven't even fixed the aliasing, even though Tekken Tag Tournament has been given a full makeover.

Worst of all though, PAL gamers have been burned badly by the no frills NTSC-PAL conversion. We thought those days were behind us, but letterboxes are back, and they're big, black and proud. Unless Sony sent us the widescreen special edition by mistake of course...

Ridge Racer V is not the paradigm shift in graphics and gameplay that hype built it up to be. Namco haven't attempted anything at all radical with this release, instead crafting a down the line Ridge Racer title with superb driving mechanics, great track design and insane speed. You have been warned. ■

PLUS
Retina poppingly fast arcadey action.

MINUS
Pathetic PAL conversion, aliasing, no Reiko.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
86	70	89

OVERALL

85

A great Ridge Racer title that unfortunately doesn't stray from the formula.

SUMMONER

Eliot Fish summons up the will to brave yet another RPG...

AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	RPG
PLAYERS:	1
PUBLISHER:	THQ
PRICE:	$89.95
RATING:	M

>> There's great anticipation out there for the first big PlayStation 2 RPG, and it seems that third-party publisher THQ are the lucky ones to get to us first. The much talked-about Summoner is going to beat Evergrace, Eternal Ring and Dark Cloud to the disc tray in our PS2s for our first ever adventure on the new console. What should have anyone excited, is the news that Summoner has been developed by Volition, the company behind the big PC hits, Freespace 1 & 2. So there's plenty of experience and talent behind this epic game. Does Summoner manage to deliver the sort of role-playing experience we would expect from Sony's new powerhouse console?

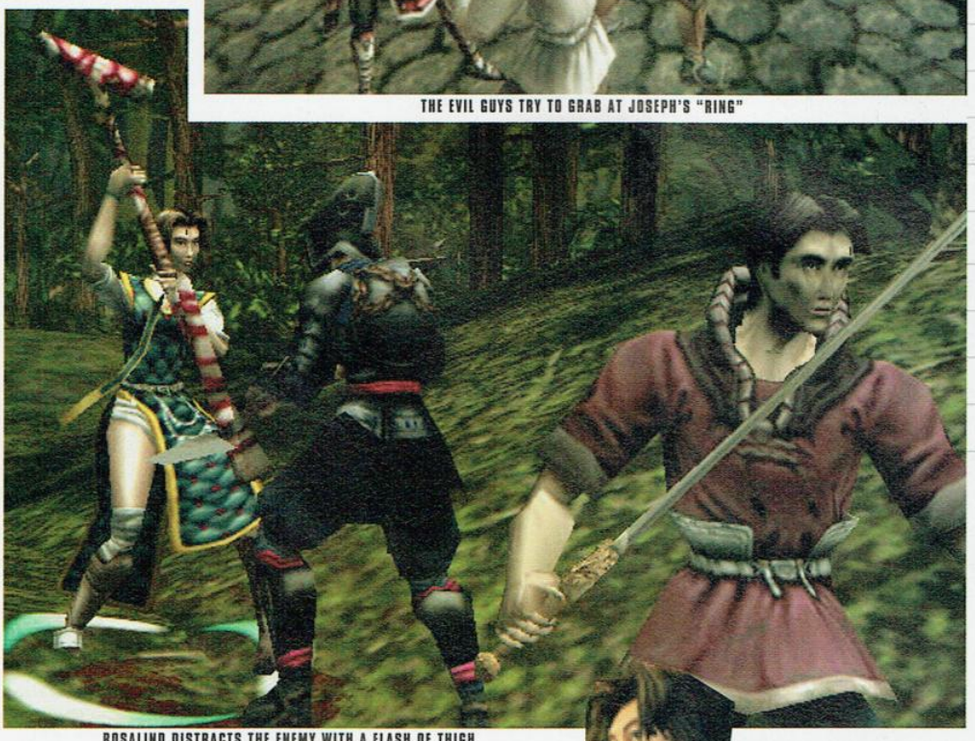
THE NEW HYPER OFFICE. NOT BAD.

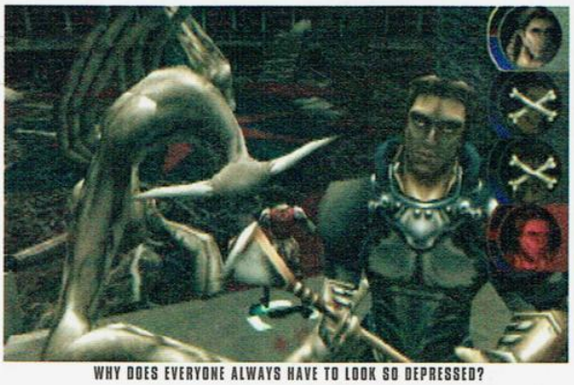
NO DREADED JAGGIES?

Okay, so you're probably all wanting to know, "What about the aliasing? The dreaded jaggies! What's the story?" Well, Summoner was probably the first game to have the anti-aliasing implemented, meaning a "cleaning-up" of all the jaggies which have dogged the first wave of PS2 titles. Whilst not exactly a life-altering, opinion-swaying change to the game, you can certainly appreciate this feature in all of the environments and the big hulking creatures. Definitely, it gives the whole game a crispness and removes any of that distracting flickering. But anti-aliasing aside...

Visually, Summoner is a bit of a mixed bag. One minute you'll be in awe of the epic environments that you're presented with to explore (like the very first city you come across) and the next you'll be scratching your head at how characterless some of the creatures and NPCs look. There are also some low-detail, low-res textures that spoil the realism of the NPCs and some environments, plus unfortunately there's quite a bit of slow-down in the large open areas. However, a lot of the time is spent in areas where the game is pumping out a smooth 40+ frames per second and at times like this the game looks good. The game camera can be adjusted by clicking in the left analogue stick, allowing you to choose a low perspective that looks ahead, almost as if you were travelling in the party amongst

THE EVIL GUYS TRY TO GRAB AT JOSEPH'S "RING"





WHY DOES EVERYONE ALWAYS HAVE TO LOOK SO DEPRESSED?

ROSALIND DISTRACTS THE ENEMY WITH A FLASH OF THIGH

the other characters. This is too cool for words, and makes exploring the environments really exciting. You'll notice some pop-up in this mode, but the immersion factor is worth it. It can also be disorientating using the top-down camera mode as you can't see where your characters are headed.

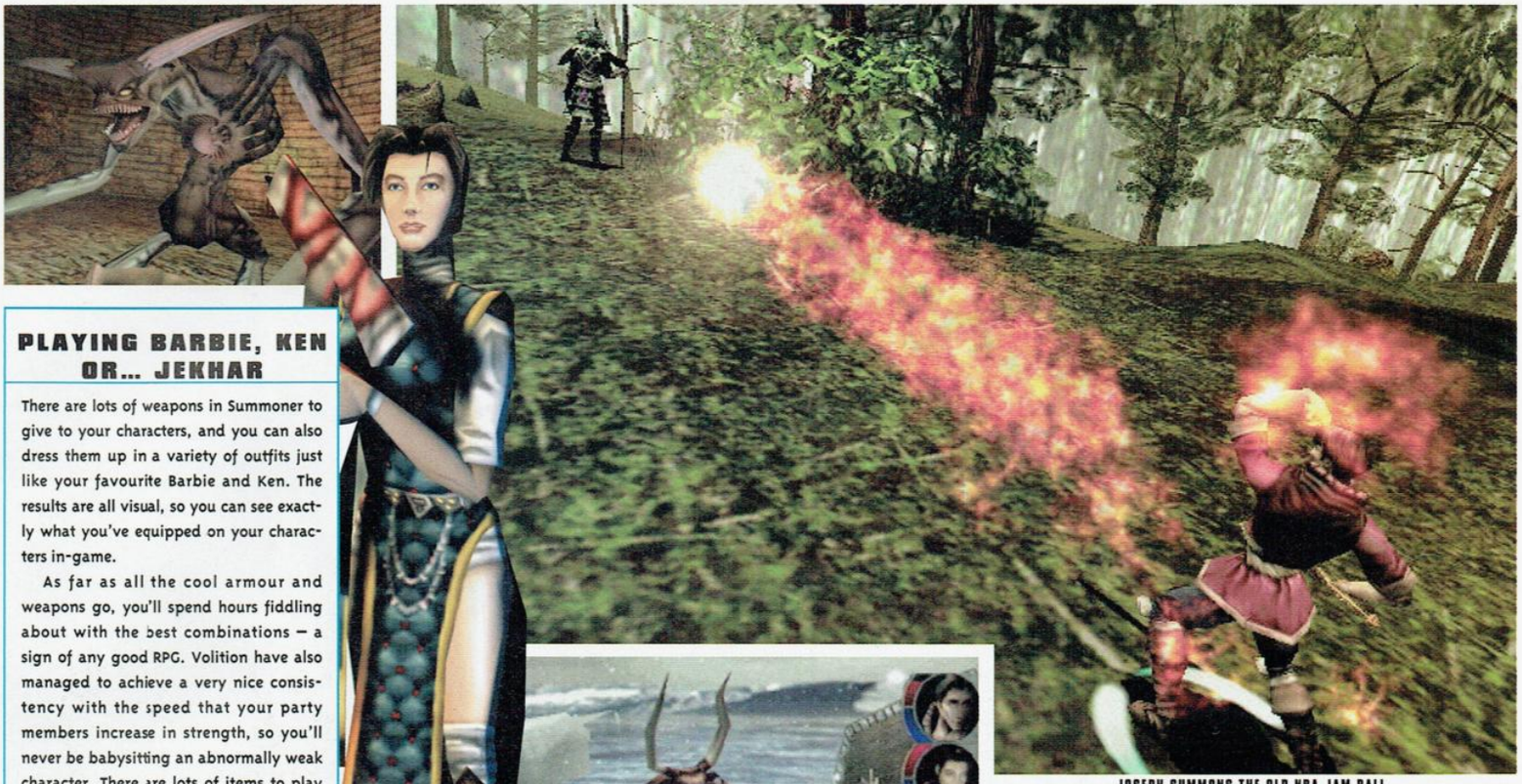
Even though there are some flaws in the visuals – the goodness in Summoner lies in the gameplay and the way the role-playing system has been constructed. There's plenty to get your adventure-hungry jaws around here, and that's very good indeed.

SUMMONING UP THE COURAGE

Your character, Joseph, is a Summoner (although he doesn't have the ability at the beginning of the game). He can learn how to summon big hulking creatures to do his bidding in combat using four magical rings – each one giving him access to different creatures. Using magic in RPGs can sometimes be a clumsy menu searching mess, but what's cool is the way Volition have set up the control system for all of this. It's awkward at first, because it's different to what you're used to, but when you get into it, you'll love the way it works – in fact, if you've played Vagrant Story on the PSX, then you'll be familiar with the combat system. Movement is controlled by the left analogue stick, and you can operate the position of the camera with the right stick, allowing you to zoom in, out and around your character. The buttons on the face of the pad are used for accessing your menus, like your magic spells, inventory, skills, stats, map and other essentials.

So how do you attack things? Well, the combat in Summoner is actually played with a combination of a turn-based and real-time system. Once you initiate combat (usually by being in the vicinity of a creature and pressing the "action" button) the attacks play out depending on a character's speed, skill and weapon type. As you attack your opponents, you can add "chains" to your attacks, by pushing the d-pad when an icon appears above your character's head.

The direction you push determines the style of attack you want your character to perform. For instance, pushing up on the d-pad as Joseph is about to swing his sword will allow him to chain a second blow to his first attack – but if you don't time it right, he'll miss it. You can also chain in special attacks which can blind, confuse, and stun your opponent, with each character having access to different types of special moves. This adds a really nice random element to the combat,



JOSEPH SUMMONS THE OLD NBA JAM BALL

PARTY OF FIVE ONLY WITH LEATHER

PLAYING BARBIE, KEN OR... JEKHAR

There are lots of weapons in Summoner to give to your characters, and you can also dress them up in a variety of outfits just like your favourite Barbie and Ken. The results are all visual, so you can see exactly what you've equipped on your characters in-game.

As far as all the cool armour and weapons go, you'll spend hours fiddling about with the best combinations – a sign of any good RPG. Volition have also managed to achieve a very nice consistency with the speed that your party members increase in strength, so you'll never be babysitting an abnormally weak character. There are lots of items to play with in Summoner, and we love that.

which puts the pressure on the player to select the right styles of attack, as well as time and combo them together properly. You can also learn new chains as your character improves. At any time, you can also press one of the menu buttons to bring up your magic menus and select a magical attack or to summon a monster. It's a very powerful system, and a pleasure to use. What's best is that it gives you access to so much variety in the combat, that you'll never get bored.

IT'S PARTY TIME!

Joseph eventually picks up party members on his travels, and you can switch between them at any time, depending on what it is you want to do. For each character, there are a set of AI settings in the stats screen that allow you to set each character to behave a certain way during combat. Set them to only use ranged weapons, to be a spell caster, a healer, or to attack melee style – this is an excellent system for getting your party members to do what you want whilst you control the character of your choice. Never did I lose a party member to a fault in the AI which is very nice – they all play their roles to perfection. You can also utilise their special skills, like getting Flece to pick-locks or even backstab an enemy. What's interesting to note, is that despite the complex environments and the fact that you could have up to five characters tailing you as you run around, I never had the AI controlled characters get stuck trying to follow me! Their pathing skills are excellent.

The adventuring to be had in Summoner is pretty good. You'll certainly be racking up the sub-quests like no tomorrow. In the main city, there are so many NPCs to talk to, you'll spend hours making sure you didn't miss anyone. Thankfully, anyone with something important to say has an exclamation icon flashing above their head, so you won't miss anything crucial if you don't want to approach everyone. There's a cool diversion from fairly linear storyline when you meet the thief, Flece, for the first time. You get to leave Joseph behind and sneak up into the palace to steal an amulet, using your powers of stealth over initiating combat. She has to be the coolest RPG character we've seen in a while – there's a level in the game where you again get to employ your sneak skill (Flece pulls her hood over her head and goes transparent), creep up behind guards and use your backstab skill on them! Finally, we get to actually play like a true D&D thief.

The story behind Summoner has you destined to destroy an evil emperor, and it's all wrapped up in religious sects, politics and history that never really feels that interesting to delve into. There was something elusive here that failed to really get our emotions going – maybe it was a lack of back stories for the main characters, whilst there was plenty of other meaningless religious waffle. Still, you'll enjoy the way the plot twists and turns...

Because the combat and character development is good fun, Summoner's only real weakness is the convoluted story, patchy graphics and some small design errors. What we do know for sure, is that Summoner is pretty addictive, sometimes lovely to look at, full of cool magic and is enough of a great romp that we can highly recommend that you grab it if you want a Role Playing Game this Christmas for your PS2. Oh... and watch the credits. ■

PLUS
Lots of gameplay depth to the characters. Cool bloopers after the credits.

MINUS
Progression is fairly linear, despite the sub-quests.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
89	90	88

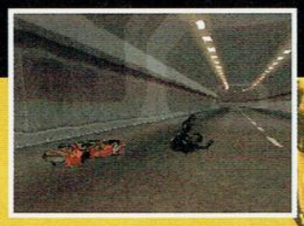
OVERALL

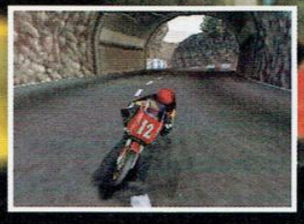
90

The first PS2 RPG is good. Huge potential for Summoner 2 to be even better.

DUCATI WORLD

bend the rules...
rule the bends





COMING JANUARY 2001

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PC CD-ROM | PlayStation | Dreamcast | ATD

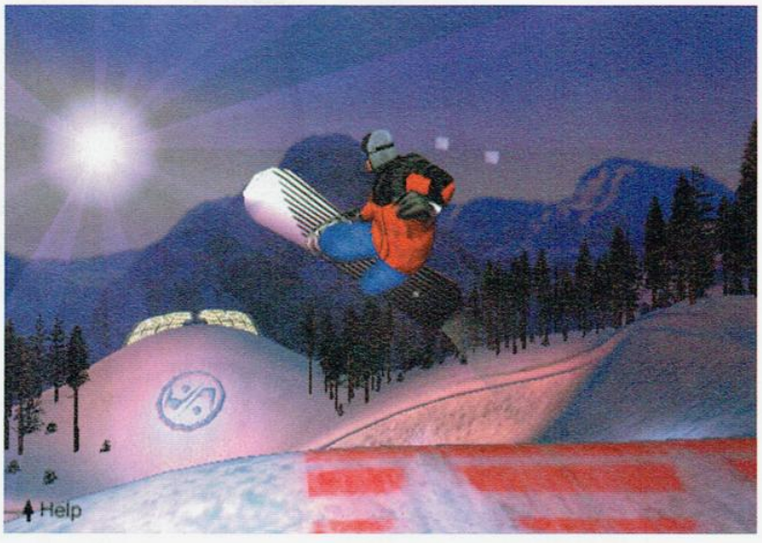
Acclaim®

SSX

Cam Shea bumrushed EA's Melbourne HQ to get his hands on SSX code...

AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Snowboarding
PLAYERS:	1–2
PUBLISHER:	EA
PRICE:	$89.95
RATING:	G
SUPPORTS:	Thermal underwear

>> Number one rule when evaluating games on a new console – nice graphics are all well and good, but are no substitute for solid game design. Number two rule – don't believe the hype. In light of these two simple rules, I'd like to clear up a few misconceptions surrounding SSX. It is not, as some have claimed, the best PS2 launch title, nor is it the best snowboarding game ever. In actual fact, it's a fun, but deeply flawed title, with basic design errors that detract from the overall experience.

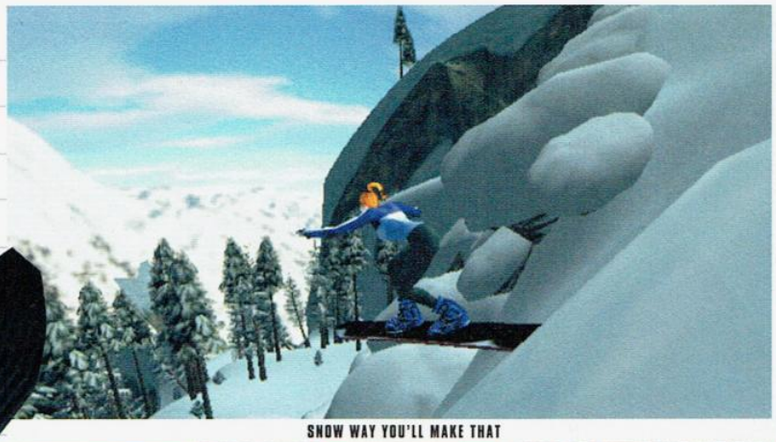


THERE'S NO BUSINESS LIKE SNOW BUSINESS

Starting with the fun stuff, you've never seen snowboarding courses as treacherous and freeform as these. Nor have they looked this good. The view distance in SSX is outstanding, allowing you to see all the way down a mountainside, yet at the same time capturing the most intimate of details on the character models and surrounds. The characters are animated well too, even punching their fists in the air mid-race if you pull off a particularly dope trick. So the graphics are a strong point. So too is the feel – EA have done an excellent job creating an arcadey snowboarding game that still feels like snowboarding. Carving lines through the snow feels great, especially at the speeds often reached in this game. The further in you get, the faster the characters and the boards available become, culminating in some unbelievable speed – especially from the tightest camera position. This speed, however, comes with a price – an inconsistent frame rate. The game generally plays around the 60fps mark, but at regular intervals Sir Chugworthy makes an appearance, wrenching the sense of speed from your grasp. Oddly enough, the excellent two player mode isn't affected. The slowdown isn't such a big problem, but it does leave the game feeling a little under-cooked.

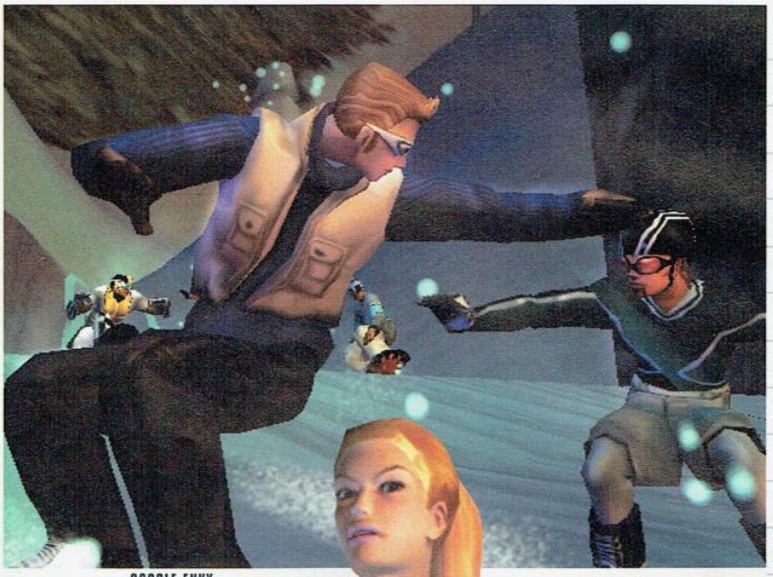
GIVING THE POWDERFINGER

SSX is the most expansive snowboarding game thus far. There are multiple paths, plenty of shortcuts and a large amount of freedom to simply find your own way down the mountain. The final course, for instance, sees you jump out of a helicopter, and is basically an untouched mountainside to bust tricks on. There aren't that many courses, but most of them are quite long, taking up to three minutes to traverse. There are some fan-

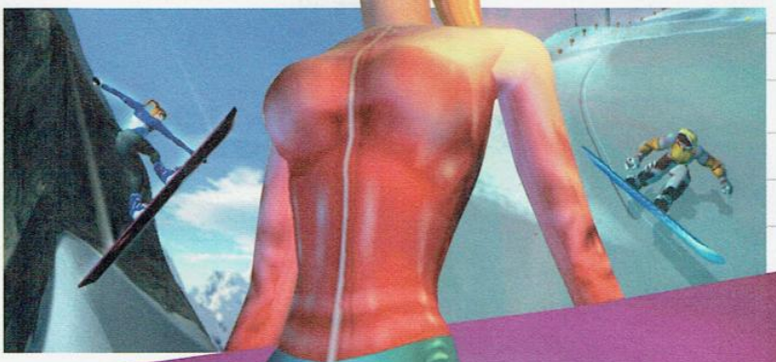


SNOW WAY YOU'LL MAKE THAT

...AND INTO THE ROOF OF THE PUB



GOGGLE ENVY



tastic sequences during the game encompassing massive vertical drops, devilish snake runs and hooning through a city covered in dirty brown snow. Every course is also jam packed with lips to trick off. Tricks are an integral part of the game, earning you boost to use to bust even bigger tricks. We like that logic!

The course design is not without its weaknesses. The Tokyo Megaplex, for instance, is a complete shambles from start to finish. Well actually, the start is pretty cool — you ride down a short slope and into the base of a circular tunnel that lifts you up and out over a host of rails — but it's all downhill from there... and not in a good snowboardy kind of way. It has been designed to feel somewhat like you're inside a giant pinball table — bright trippy colours, objects moving back and forth across the track, and giant flippers that knock you over. In short, you're constantly running into and being knocked over by random objects. This is not fun. In fact, all the courses suffer in one way or another from bad design. There are way too many signs and objects in the air to slam into mid-jump, and the number of randomly placed objects on the track to get in your way is incredibly frustrating.

SSSUX?

The feel of carving your way down the slope is a strength, but the actual control mechanics and layout on the dual shock is definitely a weakness. First of all, rail sliding is handled very poorly — there's no button to attack a rail, you must simply ride up perfectly in line to one and hope you don't get knocked over. Once you're on, it's way too easy to lose momentum and fall off. Another peeve is the way that the right analogue stick is completely wasted with punch controls. Pu-leeease. Attacking your opponents has already been tried unsuccessfully in snowboarding games past. Bringing in the ability to punch simply means that your opponents will deck you all the time — often from behind, and getting a hit in yourself seems completely arbitrary.

SSX is also particularly frustrating using the analogue stick to steer. You hold down X when approaching a jump, forsaking the ability to steer when in this position. Like Cool Boarders 2, you also hold in a direction to do spins and flips, and the longer you hold, the faster you'll spin. This in itself is ok, but the problem comes if you're holding left/right to do a spin, but also inadvertently holding slightly up or down - very easy to do with the analogue stick. You'll end up spinning but also doing a slow flip — resulting in stacking on your head. Cancelling this preparation is done by clicking in the analogue stick. Again, not a bad thing in itself. The problem comes, when you accidentally press the stick in and find yourself wildly turning in one direction or another.

SSX also has a disappointing championship structure, where instead of playing through a sequence of tracks, you instead play the same track three times against progressively harder opponents. If you don't rank in any of these races you start over again. In other words, you may need to race the same course ten or twenty times in a row to advance (and do the same thing with the next course). This is not fun.

If the ghosts of snowboarding games past and future got together over a few drinks, the result may be something like SSX — a game that strives to take the genre to a new level, but ends up repeating too many of the mistakes of the past to be truly recommendable. ■

AUSTRALIA'S FUNNIEST SNOW VIDEOS

Surely sound effects like "boooiiing" and "thwaang" are best reserved for footage of blokes getting cranked in the nads, and not snowboarding games. Unfortunately, SSX is plagued by the wacky sound effect phenomenon. Truly irritating.

PLUS
Good music, fast racing, nice graphics.

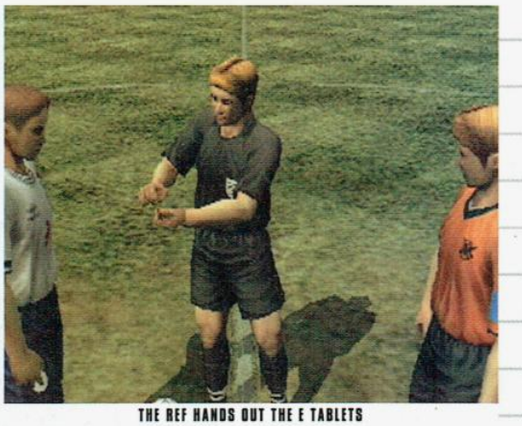
MINUS
Inconsistent frame rate, championship and control structure ill conceived.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
89	85	79

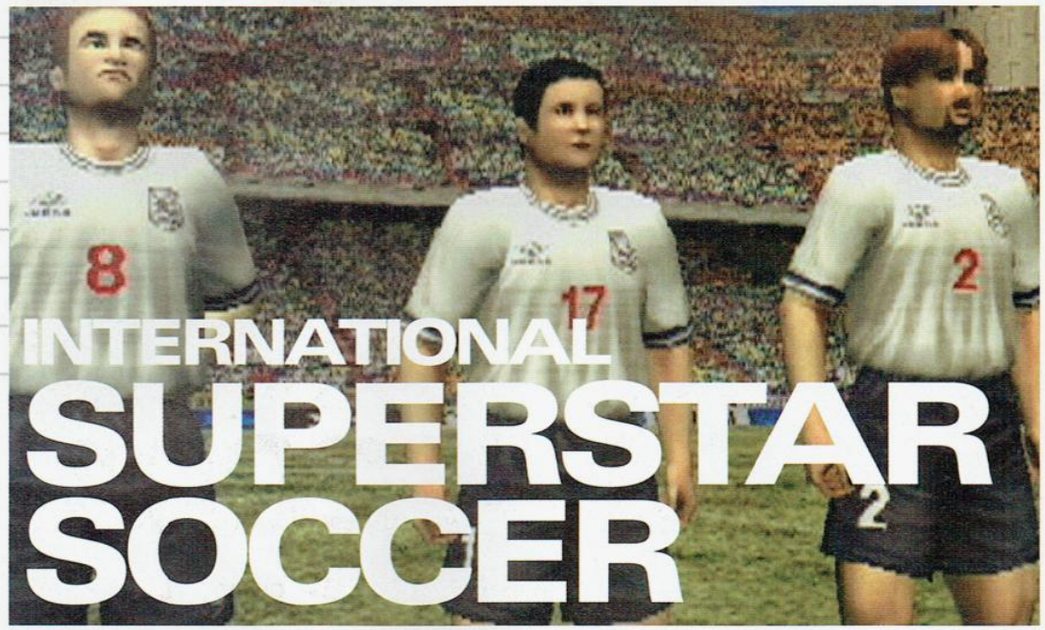
OVERALL

83

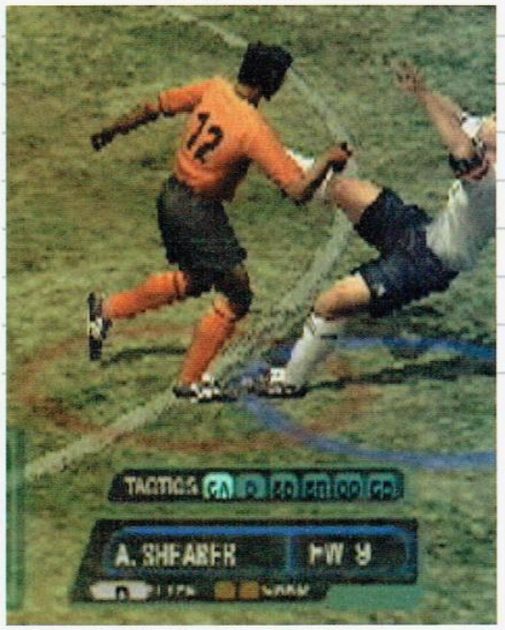
Fun, but leaves us frosty in the longterm.



THE REF HANDS OUT THE E TABLETS



INTERNATIONAL SUPERSTAR SOCCER



Cutting the oranges today is **CAM SHEA** from the little known upcoming team Real Hyper.

AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Soccer sim
PLAYERS:	1–4
PUBLISHER:	Ozisoft
PRICE:	$89.95
RATING:	G
SUPPORTS:	MultiTap

>> The International Superstar Soccer (ISS) series has long been the thorn in FIFA's side. Most of the truly rabid soccer fans we've known over the years have proclaimed the ISS games as the most playable soccer titles available. ISS has appeared on both the N64 and the PlayStation, with the PlayStation title, ISS Pro Evolution, being regarded as the best version yet. We were initially a little worried then when we heard that this latest game in the series would be developed by the N64 team, KCEO, after Evolution's success on PSX.

NO MORE MONALD MUCK OR RICKEY ROUSE...

Although this is a very playable game, our misgivings have proved at least partly valid. ISS for PS2 is very much an upgrade from the last N64 version, albeit a massive one, bringing with it both strengths and weaknesses. A huge change, however, is the acquisition of the FIFPro (the global legal representative for professional footballers) license, meaning that for the first time the series will contain real player names. Ironic that the soccer series widely considered to be the most accurate representation of soccer has for so long been forced to rely on fictional names.

ISS looks very much like a next generation title. It relies on detailed textures more than FIFA's more flat shaded approach. The player models are super-detailed, lighting and shadow effects are used well, and even the grass looks amazing. On the other hand, from a playable viewpoint, this style actually seems a little more congested than the streamlined elegance of FIFA 2001. The player animations are also not quite up to the standards set by FIFA. Even so, the game runs smoothly and from a close camera angle looks excellent.

LOVE THAT BALL HANDLING

The gameplay is radically different to FIFA, with a much steeper learning curve. The ball seems heavier and the players have greater inertia. Once you've managed to get through all the weird options (like motivation and attitude settings) laid out in a seemingly illogical way, and onto the pitch, it will take some time to find your feet... and even longer to score a goal. Even simple ball control can be difficult. Unlike FIFA where the ball feels magnetically connected to your feet when you have possession, in ISS you'll often leave the ball behind if you turn too sharply. Passing too requires precise weighting and orientation, and the through ball mechanics are tough but incredibly rewarding. In other words, ISS doesn't hold your hand. Unfortunately, the analogue control is a little on the sloppy side, so performing some moves are made more difficult than they should be.

ISS is still the most realistic game of soccer around, catering to the hardcore fans. Gameplay has always been what this series is about. By that logic though, fans are probably still better off playing the slick ISS Pro Evolution on their humble PlayStation. ■

PLUS
That sweet to the taste, smooth to the touch ISS gameplay.

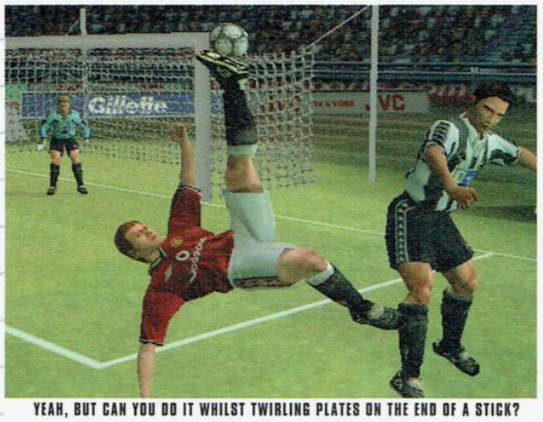
MINUS
KCEO development has left ISS slightly behind the PSX efforts.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
88	85	87

OVERALL

86

ISS offers a very different – and almost equally compelling – game of soccer to FIFA 2001.



YEAH, BUT CAN YOU DO IT WHILST TWIRLING PLATES ON THE END OF A STICK?

FIFA 2001

Back today is **CAM SHEA**, orange sack in hand.

AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Soccer sim
PLAYERS:	1–4
PUBLISHER:	EA
PRICE:	$89.95
RATING:	G
SUPPORTS:	MultiTap

>> The yearly sports game upgrade cycle rarely holds any surprises. It's usually just a few tweaks here and there, new player rosters and possibly a new interface. For the hardcore sports junkie, these seemingly small features are well worth the price of admission. For the rest of us, it's often best to simply stick with the previous year's game. The arrival of a new console, however, holds the promise of a reinvention for the series in question. All the extra power afforded to the developers gives them ample room to take the game to a new level of fluidity and immersion. This was certainly the case with FIFA 95 on 3DO, and it's also the case with FIFA 2001 on PlayStation 2. It's still fundamentally an incremental gameplay upgrade from 2000, building on an already solid foundation, but running on the PlayStation 2, it's easy to get excited about the series all over again.

FEASTING ON PAL

Indeed, after playing the supremely average Japanese PS2 FIFA release many months ago, FIFA 2001 is even more of a pleasant surprise. There have been so many fixes to the Japanese version, that the PAL FIFA 2001 is essentially an all new game.

The look of the game is very slick indeed. The players are beautifully rendered, and look quite amazing close up. The animations are unbelievably slick, capturing the most intricate defensive and offensive animations, not to mention a range of gestures and emotions. This realism is taken further with a palette of around 200 head models giving stacks of variety for each team. Apparently the game also uses facial deformation, so that the closer in to the player the camera becomes, the more detailed the facial model becomes. Even the look of the crowd has been tweaked, adding yet more atmosphere. The variable frame rate of the Japanese version has largely been fixed, but some slowdown still occurs.

FIFA is very much a pick up and play game with a steady learning curve. All the basic moves are readily accessible, but there's a whole lot more depth to get stuck into as well. The gameplay is nowhere near as serious an attempt to replicate soccer as in ISS, but proves just as fun to play. The game is fast and frenetic, filled with turnovers and shots on goal — even though this year's pitch is larger than before. Players control easily, and the auto-player-switch function is intuitive enough. The ball physics seem quite light and fluffy but work well in the context of the game. The passing game initially seems weak, but once you start using through balls a little more, the strengths of the passing game become increasingly apparent.

DOES IT HAVE THE BALLS?

One element that is necessary for this style of soccer game, but could potentially turn people off, is the constant back and forth of control. Stealing the ball from an opposing player is very easy — sometimes too easy. Fortunately, if players are evenly matched this isn't such a problem, and there are plenty of moves to evade losing the ball. The AI is also very good — your teammates keep their formations and anticipate the movement of the ball very well. Of course, the AI isn't without its problems, but the game is customisable enough to suit most peoples' playing styles.

FIFA 2001 is still by no means the definitive console soccer game — there are still problems to be ironed out, but its strengths are many. Which game you should buy between FIFA and ISS depends mostly on your commitment to the game. FIFA is a great choice if you want to be able to hop straight in and play, particularly with friends. Destined to be a Hyper four player classic. ■

PLUS
Polished animations, sweet pick up and play gameplay, excellent commentary.

MINUS
You'll definitely want a multitap and four controllers!

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
91	86	90

OVERALL

90

FIFA 2001 is just what we were hoping for from EA – polished, playable and gorgeous.

MECHWARRIOR 4 VENGEANCE

From the cockpit of his mech, **Justy Tylor** surveys the damage...

AVAILABLE:	December
CATEGORY:	First Person Shooter
PLAYERS:	1–16
PUBLISHER:	Microsoft
PRICE:	$99.95
RATING:	M
REQUIRED:	P266, 32MB RAM
DESIRED:	PII 500+, 128MB RAM, 3D Card

>> There are few series that have had as long lasting an appeal as MechWarrior. With a history pre-dating modern videogames and a complex set of board game rules forming the basis of its real-time mechanics, it all still comes down to whether or not the notion of driving 80 tonnes of steel at 120kpm with enough firepower to level a city at your fingertips appeals to you. Yes it's fanciful. It's also in an unforeseeably distant future where anything is possible.

MechWarrior: Vengeance is the fourth instalment to Jordan Weisman's hugely popular MechWarrior series, which gained much of its fame through MechWarrior 2 and the now defunct Battletech Centres at Intencity. The release of this game comes amidst some consternation amongst gaming idealists, not so much at the move from Microprose (MechWarrior 3 is something we'd rather forget), but that the development team went to Microsoft. In this regard, said idealists should realise that the move has paid off splendidly, with the added potential of a port to the Xbox.

PICK A MECH, ANY MECH

The mechanics remain largely the same as all previous MechWarrior games. Each mech sports a battery of energy, particle and propulsion-based weapons. The number and variety of these weapons are dependent on the mech's other basic features, such as top speeds, rate of acceleration, armour, engines, heat sinks and so on. This will also determine the availability of extra features like jump jets and degree of torso twisting.

THEY CALL IT THE STEEL COFFIN

There are over 20 types of mechs in MechWarrior: Vengeance. Seven of them are new, specifically the Argus, Chimera, Hellspawn, Madcat Mk II, Osiris, Thanatos and Uziel. Each of

IT ALL STARTED WITH THE AT-ST, I TELLS YA!

them differ greatly in size, shape, speed, manoeuvrability and armament, and it really does pay to study up on the stats just so you know which ones are best suited to your playing style. After all, there'd be no point in trigger-happy newbies picking heat-hungry mechs like an Atlas, save the amusement of picking them off when they shut down.

During the missions, the one thing you really need to keep your eye on is heat. Fire those medium pulse lasers willy nilly, and it might be enough to cause a system shut-down for around 30 seconds, which is enough time for anyone to blow you to pieces. It helps to flush out the heat every once in a while, or even jump in a lake if there's one around, but the best policy is to be a better shot.

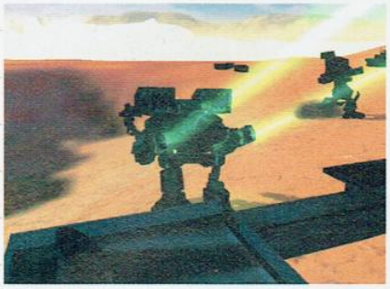
WOUND THE ENEMY. TAKE HIS GOOD BITS.

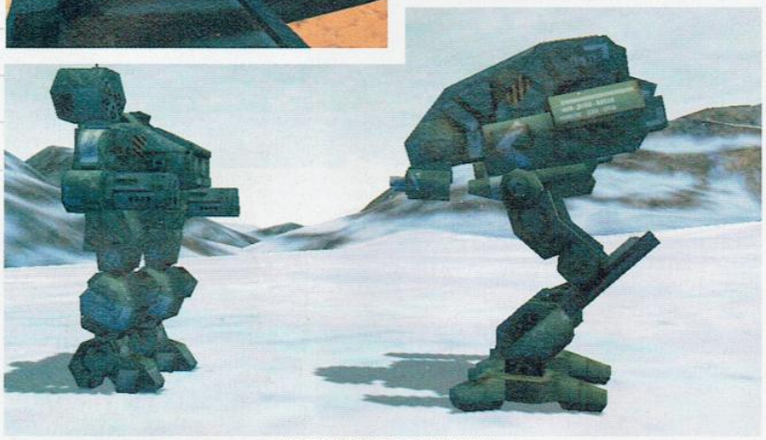
MechWarrior: Vengeance puts players in the shoes of Ian Dresari, a warrior prince in the House of Davion who brings with him the wrath of a murdered family and a kingdom usurped. With civil war ravaging the face of his homeworld, Dresari leads a legion of mechs deep into the heart of what is now enemy territory in a campaign to reclaim his birthright.

If you're one of the few who actually care for the story, the single player campaign will take you through a hefty 30 missions that culminate in the defeat of the House of Steiner. These missions comprise all kinds of objectives, such as recon, destroying bases, embarking on night attacks, having skirmishes in city and urban areas, and so on. Many missions are team-based, so it pays to stick to a coherent strategy in order to minimise risk. The story comes through during the cut scenes and intermittent comms chatter. The cut scenes are, unsurprisingly, great to look at, but still don't have the same kind of impact as MechWarrior 2.

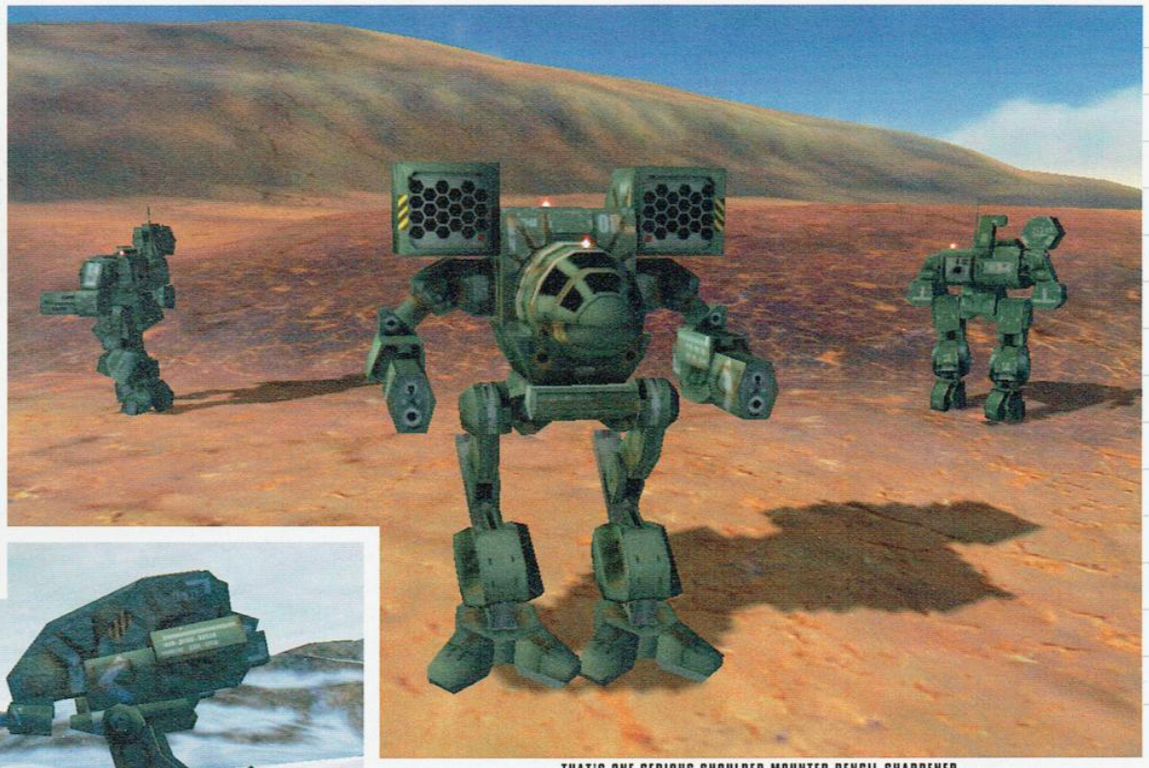
What's most surprising is that the single-player missions feel a lot like multiplayer games. CPU-controlled mechs have vastly improved AI. They'll run around to take key positions on the terrain, duck for cover and play cat-and-mouse with you if they're clearly outgunned. You can even see them targeting specific sections of your body, especially the legs. In other instances, if there's a lake in the area, you'll often see the heavier mechs running in a pattern that keeps them close to the water.

The best part about these skirmishes





"HONEY, DO I LOOK FAT IN THIS?"



THAT'S ONE SERIOUS SHOULDER-MOUNTED PENCIL SHARPENER

is that it's not all about wanton destruction. Tactical proficiency and battle prowess does not go unrewarded. For instance, instead of completely obliterating an enemy mech, you can disable it by taking out its legs or destroying the cockpit, leaving the rest of it largely undamaged. You can come back and salvage the parts later on.

TIME TO UPGRADE

Rules and mechanics aside, MechWarrior: Vengeance looks and plays like a dream. It's feasible to play this at 800x600 resolution, but it's very much worth upgrading one's videocard to enjoy it in all of its 1600x1200 glory. Textures and lighting effects on the mechs and their surroundings are absolutely jaw dropping, brought to life by the constant laser blasts and smoke trails from missile clusters.

There are several types of terrain to fight on, such as lunar, arctic, urban, and desert. Only the skyscrapers in the city levels look a little on the bland side, but that takes little from the remaining beauty in the periphery. Every terrain has a diverse landscape to it, with rolling hills, open plains, and trees that crackle and fall to your feet as your rumble through them.

The special effects are also quite spectacular. The neon sensation of lasers and other beam weapons are to be expected. They actually take a back seat to the minute portions of eye-candy added to the weapon effects — missiles spiral realistically through the air to find their mark, sparks fly from incendiary impact, and in a stroke of genius someone added a corkscrew light trail to the PPC, which is ultimately meaningless but still thrilling to watch. The point is that the extra effort that's been put into these special effects lends a cinematic choreography to the action, whether viewed from within the cockpit or from one of the external views. Shoot a mech out of the sky and you'll know what we mean.

GIVE 'EM THE STICK

Finally, it's worth mentioning that even though it remains a luxury, MechWarrior: Vengeance is a game that absolutely must be experienced on a force feedback joystick. The recoil action can be felt with every weapon discharge, and the impact from a PPC will not only knock you around visibly on the monitor, but you'll be able to feel it on the stick. The force feedback also accounts for foot placement, which adds an element of difficulty and realism to your targeting.

The control configuration is so user friendly that it's conceivable to play MechWarrior: Vengeance with only a force feedback joystick. At least with Microsoft's Force Feedback stick, all weapons can be configured to three main buttons, actions to the four buttons on the base, camera controls to the hat switch, and (this is the coolest part) the zoom angle to the thumb switch for long distance targeting.

The game supports up to 16 player multiplayer games through LAN or modem. There are six game modes in all, including standard death matches, instant action campaigns, Capture the Flag, and King Mech — where each team has a leader to protect.

MechWarrior: Vengeance is everything we could've wanted in a Mechwarrior game. The tweaks to the gameplay mechanics are all commonsense and welcome; the customisation options are more user friendly; and the graphics are worth considering a $600 splurge on a new video card. ■

CUSTOM ROBO-A-GO-GO

Experienced players should head straight to the garage to build their own custom mechs. The interface uses a pleasant series of drop-down menus that let you pick and choose the chassis, weapons and so on that you'll take on to the battlefield.

Players can select a clan-based or sphere-based design, and then the general character of the chassis such as light or heavy. There are sixty weapons divided into beam, ballistic and missile classes, which are attached to the mech according to the number of slots on their arms, torsos and shoulder mounts.

From there it's a question of armour. Reflective armour works well against beam weapons; reactive armour is best against ballistic and missile weapons; and ferro fibrous is for the majority of people who'll sit on the fence. And don't forget the paint job. There are around 30 different camouflage schemes, with an option for more to be downloaded from the Internet. And for the sneaky buggers already thinking about it, there is a water camouflage available by default.

PLUS

Drop-dead gorgeous graphics
Huge number of weapons, chassis etc to fiddle around with.

MINUS

Mechs this big have nowhere to hide.
Navigation is still very mechanical, with no shortcut moves like strafing available.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
93	91	91

OVERALL

92

Pure mech-blasting goodness. MechWarrior 4 is a worthy sequel for the series.

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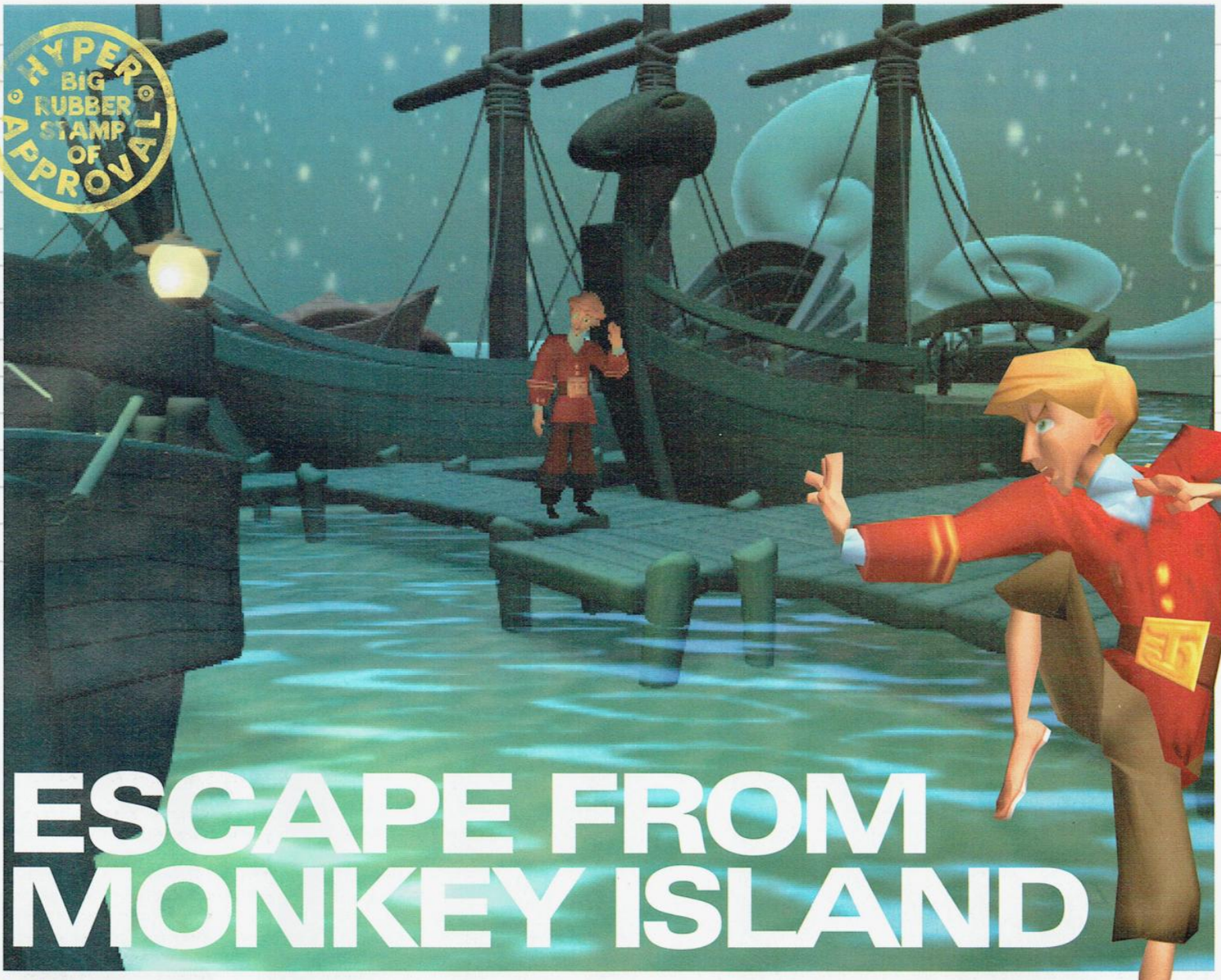
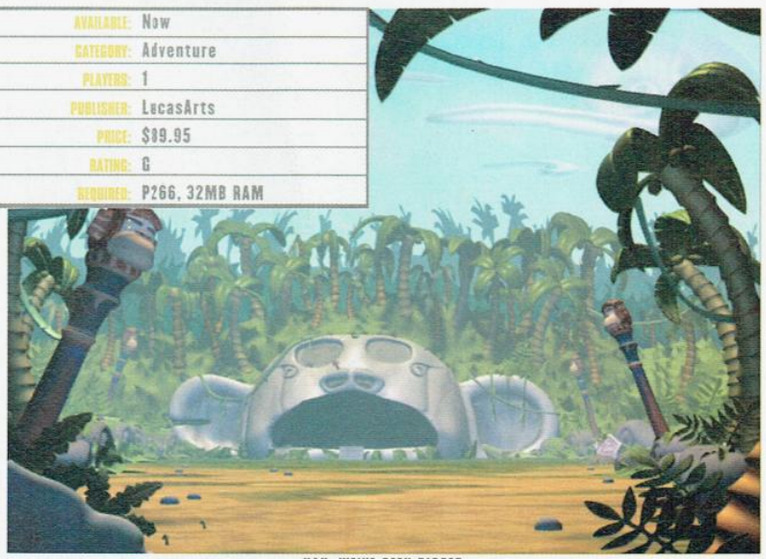


ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

The monkeys are listening. **Eliot Fish** grabs his bottle of grog, duck and bowl of pretzels...

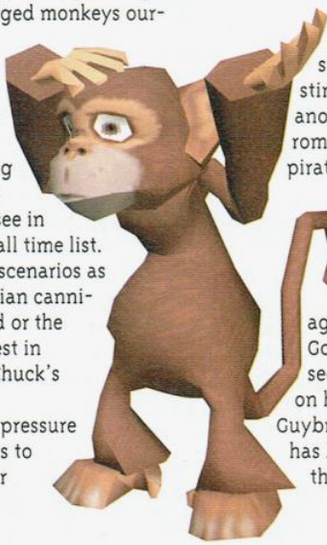
AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Adventure
PLAYERS:	1
PUBLISHER:	LucasArts
PRICE:	$89.95
RATING:	G
REQUIRED:	P266, 32MB RAM



NAH, WE'VE SEEN BIGGER

>> When Monkey Island 4 was announced, we probably spent the rest of the week here at Hyper HQ grinning like a bunch of deranged monkeys ourselves. There's no denying that the Monkey Island series has provided us with some of the most memorable PC gaming moments ever, and it regularly gets a looksee in our Top 50 games of all time list. Who can forget such scenarios as the village of vegetarian cannibals in Monkey Island or the loogie-hocking contest in Monkey Island 2: Le Chuck's Revenge?

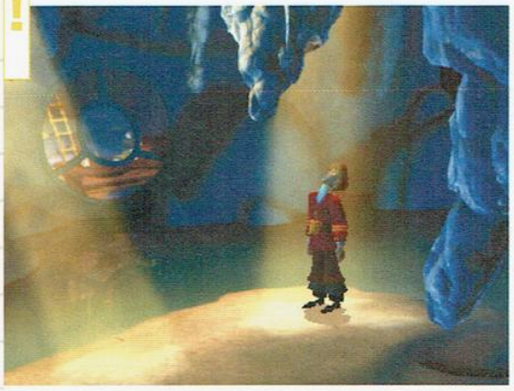
Of course, the real pressure has been on LucasArts to come up with another sequel that is equal to or greater than that classic Monkey Island experience. So... does Escape From Monkey Island smell like a squishy, stinky banana? Or is this yet another brilliantly bizarre romp through the land of pirates and primates?



EEK OOK OOK CHEEE!

The ever-aspiring pirate, Guybrush Threepwood, is back again with his new wife, Governor Elaine Marley. It seems that poor Elaine was on her honeymoon with Guybrush for so long, that she has been declared dead, even though she's very much

There is a real island called Monkey Island located in the Caribbean. The island is actually called "Monos Island", but "mono" is Spanish for "monkey".



"BUT IT'S... PINK!"

ELAINE POPS A CAP IN SOMEONE'S PEG

alive. As a result, a pushy politician (Charles L. Charles) has stepped in to try to nab her position as Governor and a team of pirates have started to demolish her mansion. Even more mysteriously, an odd Australian man (Ozzie Mandrill) has been appearing around the place buying up all the land, or winning it in a variety of Insult Games... yep, insult swordfighting is back, along with other crazy insult games like "insult armwrestling"! Ozzie Mandrill seems to have no problem winning these insult duels, due to the fact that his insults are full of Australian slang that none of the pirates understand! Guybrush ends up having to rope together another crew and set out to restore Elaine to the position of Governor and more importantly, find the mysterious "Ultimate Insult"... a treasure even greater than Big Whoop.

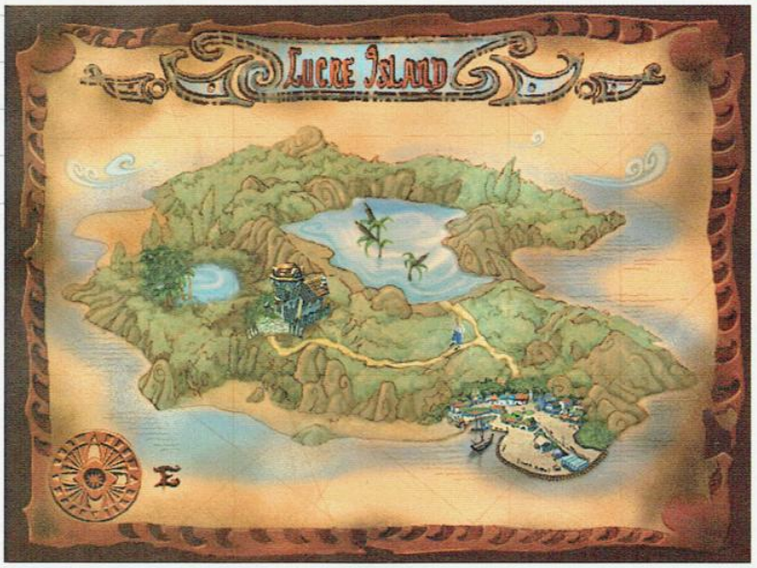
The first thing you'll notice about Guybrush this time around, is that he's in 3D. In fact, most of the game is a mixture of 3D and 2D backdrops – much like the wonderful Grim Fandango. Yes, it uses the Grim Fandango engine, although the menu system has been changed to suit the Monkey Island adventuring style (which sometimes requires combining objects). Unlike the way Grim Fandango only had Manny's turning head to pin-point objects in the environment that you could manipulate, Escape From Monkey Island includes text pop-ups at the bottom of the screen so that Guybrush can choose from more than one item to interact with. Thus, if you are holding something in your hands, a selection appears with how you could use that object with what's in front of you. You can also "use" items in your inventory to see if they combine in some weird and wonderful way. This is a pretty major improvement that manages to retain the original Monkey Island style of gameplay with the new 3D engine. As a result, the visuals in Escape From Monkey Island are absolutely brilliant, with smooth, fluid character animations and interesting colourful environments in that wonderful LucasArts adventure style.

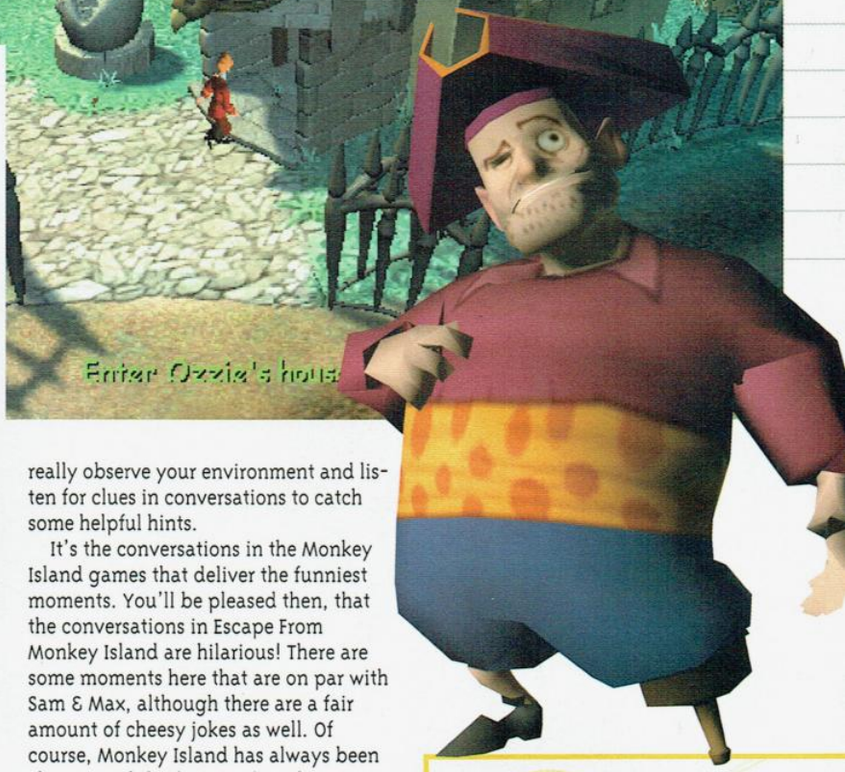
A PLETHORA OF PUZZLES

When an adventure game requires you to place a prosthetic hand inside a termite

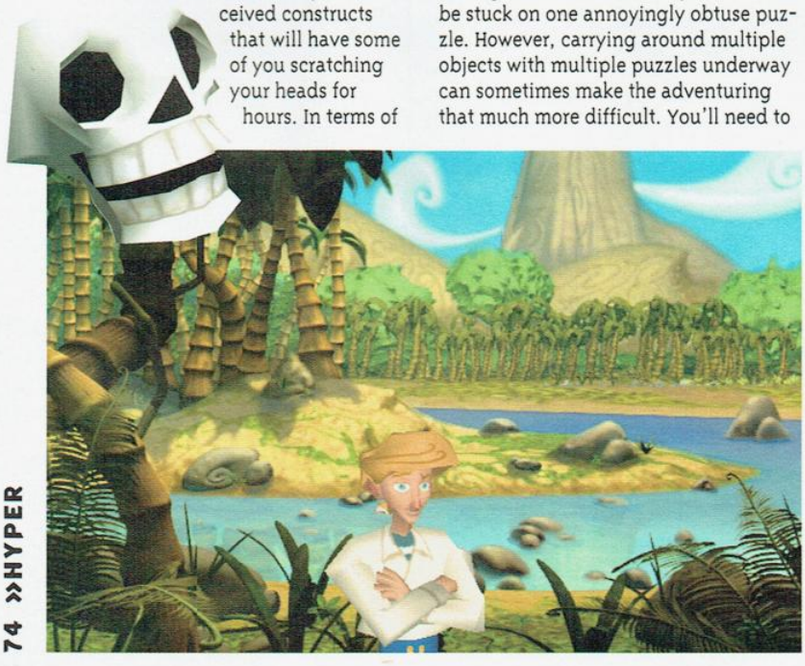
ONCE UPON A TIME...

Here's a look at the first Monkey Island game! You actually had to click on the verbs at the bottom of the screen and use them on objects in the environment by rolling your mouse around the screen to find "spots" of interaction. There's something about the way Guybrush was animated, and the fact that the conversations were all text, that made Monkey Island all the more memorable. The way you heard the jokes being delivered in your head was sometimes funnier than the way you hear the voice actors doing it these days.





circus to solve a puzzle, you know you're going to be in for some good adventuring. The kinds of puzzles in Escape From Monkey Island are a combination of simple no-brainers, fiendishly weird scenarios, cheesy conversations, and brilliantly conceived constructs that will have some of you scratching your heads for hours. In terms of difficulty, Escape From Monkey Island is a little more tricky than the last Monkey Island, and far more interesting as a result. This is certainly a richer experience than number three in the series, as the puzzles and objects you are carrying seem greater in number so you'll never be stuck on one annoyingly obtuse puzzle. However, carrying around multiple objects with multiple puzzles underway can sometimes make the adventuring that much more difficult. You'll need to really observe your environment and listen for clues in conversations to catch some helpful hints.



It's the conversations in the Monkey Island games that deliver the funniest moments. You'll be pleased then, that the conversations in Escape From Monkey Island are hilarious! There are some moments here that are on par with Sam & Max, although there are a fair amount of cheesy jokes as well. Of course, Monkey Island has always been cheesy, and that's part of its charm. Fans will love all the in-jokes and references to the other games in the series, but there's plenty of humour here for even the Monkey Island virgins. There is so much character, wit and deviousness in this game it is astounding.

The voice acting is, on the whole, excellent. Guybrush is suitably naïve, cunning, witty and dumb. Then there are all the old Monkey Island favourites, such as Carla the swordmaster, Murray the talking skull, Meathook and other characters that will bring a nostalgic tear to your eye. You'll love the way some conversations can seemingly go on forever, take unexpected turns and even be incorporated into puzzle solving.

Escape From Monkey Island is a game that shouldn't be missed if you've had a taste for this kind of adventuring. It's wonderful to see such a great continuation of the Monkey Island series come out of LucasArts at a time when they don't seem to be getting much else right. Let's hope it's a sign of even greater things to come. ■

PLUS
You'll laugh yourself well into next year.

MINUS
Solutions are not always logical. You'll need to be patient.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
93	90	94

OVERALL

93

The award for "Excellence In Adventure Gaming" goes to LucasArts.

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RED ALERT 2

From potato farmer to tank commander, **Frank Dry** steers the reds to victory...

AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Real Time Strategy
PLAYERS:	1-8
PUBLISHER:	Westwood
PRICE:	$89.95
RATING:	M
REQUIRED:	PII 266, 64MB RAM
DESIRED:	PII 400, 128MB RAM

HYPER BIG RUBBER STAMP OF APPROVAL

>> In what can best be described as the sequel to the prequel, Red Alert 2's story picks up some 20 years on from the first encounter. As in the original, players choose to lead Soviet or Allied forces. Soviet commanders invade North America and try to claim it for mother Russia, while Allied commanders fight to push back the invaders and save liberty. So who's going to win... the psychic potato farmers or the patriotic burger munchers? That, my friend, is up to you...

THERE'S A RED UNDER THE BED

The fact that the Soviets are invading American soil brings about the first major change to come from this latest instalment of C&C. The baron wastelands of rolling hills and rocky landscapes have been met by real world locations, including such U.S. hotspots as Chicago, New York, and Washington DC, plus an assortment of foreign maps including the Urals, Moscow and Paris, which warrants a substantial change to the way the game is played. If you can imagine having to navigate your team within a healthy looking Sim City environment you can start to understand the new obstacles you face (literally). Of course, there are still plenty of maps offering sparse expanses, such as the Colorado wilderness, the Texas desert, and the Arctic.

To create the visuals for this game, Westwood have turned to a stripped down version of the Tiberian Sun (TS) engine, minus the line of site and terrain deformation. Using a mixture of sprites and voxel graphics the overall look of the game is simply stunning. A zoomed in view of the units show they are now up to 30% bigger, featuring even more detail than any of Westwood's other strategy titles. Another reason for using the TS engine was to increase the overall pace of the

WHO FORGOT TO WEAR THEIR ASBESTOS SUITS TODAY? TSK TSK.

LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE LIT A MATCH AT THE BAKED BEAN FACTORY

gameplay, as the developers want players to think quicker, and act even faster.

The game interface and general play controls have seen improvements, such as an easier to use new tab system and the now infinite queuing system. Another much touted feature is the beacon system where in a multiplayer game your allies can leave a little flag saying "put a trooper here" or "assemble here in 2 minutes".

One of the strongest elements Westwood has had going for their strategy titles has been their ingenious unit designs. Red Alert 2 is no exception with its Tesla troopers who have the ability to recharge off site tesla coils, or Uri the mind-controlling soviet troop capable of turning allied troops against their friends and family. However the allies have their own deadly tricks too, like a weather control machine that can throw down lightning and rain destroying man and machine alike, or new chrono-technology that can literally make whole buildings shift out of time. To say too much more about the remainder of the new buildings, units, and technologies could risk spoiling much of the reason many people buy strategy games (besides a full rundown would easily consume the remainder of this page). What you 'can' expect to see is more highly powered units than ever before, plus a much sought-after new feature, the ability to combine units for enhanced effects and extra abilities. With regards to experience gained in battles, units now become elite more easily, and when they do, the improvements in their offensive and defensive characteristics are much more obvious.

BEWARE THE GIANT SQUID

Garrisoning is another welcomed addition to gameplay. Infantry units may occupy any neutral structure, from which they can fire weapons from while remaining safe from damage, until finally the building is destroyed under enemy fire, at which point they're automatically thrown out into the open, and into battle. Garrisoning will not only increase the inherent value of infantry units, but also to make a real contribution to the strategic elements of the game.

True to Westwood's previous form, the single player missions are seamlessly linked by very stylish FMV cut scenes, helping convey the storyline. Recognised actors include Kari Wurher (Beverly Hills 90210), Ray Wise (Twin Peaks), and Barry Corbin (WarGames).

Once again Red Alert 2 features enhanced support for intense Local Area Network and Internet battles, including a built-in worldwide ranking system for tracking player's victories and defeats against other net gamers. Plus a Worldwide Domination mode that let's players compete in an ongoing war for global control. Along with single and one-on-one battles, players can also join cooperative 2 player campaigns and missions.

With a look and feel familiar to partisans of Red Alert, the game's new pace, updated battle facilities, colourful urban environments, and unpredictable twists are a welcome addition. It's perhaps not the complete rebuild some gamers were hoping for, but when you're following in the footsteps of such a successful title, there's every good reason not to mess with the formula. Red Alert 2 succeeds in easing fresh faces into the C&C universe, while still offering enough new in-depth strategic gameplay for seasoned tactical commanders.

ANYONE REMEMBER "POTTY TIME"?

If cheesy FMV is what you desire (and we love cheesy FMV) – just wait until you check out the hilarious cutscenes in Red Alert II. Of course, we don't think they're meant to be hilarious...

PLUS

Enjoy Urban warfare over familiar surroundings.
Re-tuned engine increases the pace of the action.

MINUS

No risks taken, its simply more of the same gameplay.
Could be time to move into the graphical world of glorious 3D.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
88	89	90

OVERALL

91

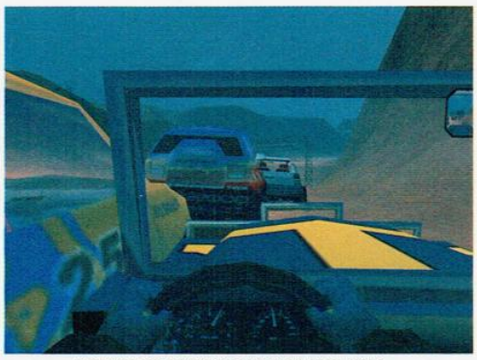
A true classic 2D RTS title that upholds the tradition of this dying form.

1NSANE

Eliot Fish finds himself upside down in some ditch somewhere.

AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Racing
PLAYERS:	1-Multi
PUBLISHER:	Codemasters
PRICE:	$89.95
RATING:	G
REQUIRED:	PII 233, 64MB RAM
DESIRED:	PII 500, 128MB RAM, 32MB 3D card

>> Codemasters. The name conjures up warm gooey memories of ripping through muddy fields in Colin McRae Rally, of sliding down a straight in TOCA and now, of flying off the edge of a canyon with but a set of springy wheels to prevent you from creating a big fat crater in the desert below... welcome to insane (that's insane with a number 1). Codemasters (or Codies as we like to call them) have taken their experience with driving games and jam-packed it into a big, bright arcade game that re-invents the "go anywhere" racing game experience. Take Motocross Madness 2 and cross-breed it with Monster Truck Madness, and then give it to Powerslide for a bit of parenting, and hey, you just might raise yourself a copy of insane...



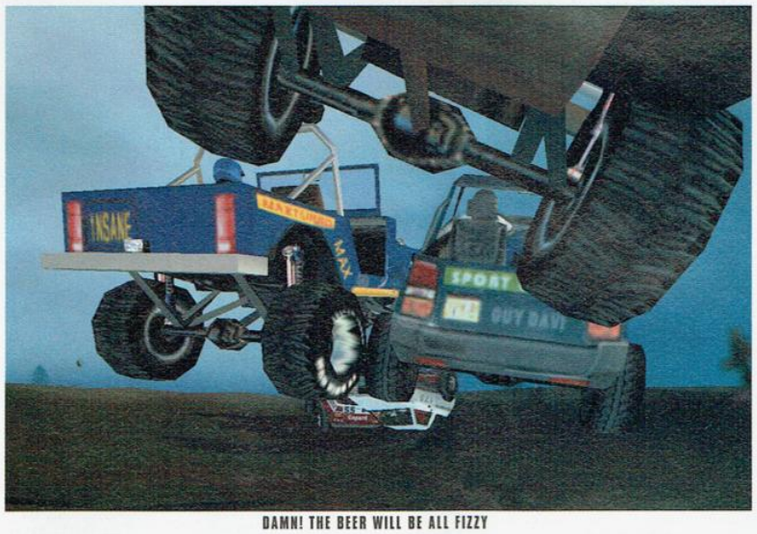
WHAT USE IS A WINDSCREEN IN AN OPEN JEEP?

CAPTURE THE FLAG WITHOUT GUNS?

insane has a huge amount on offer for what is essentially an outback crash and bash racing game. The structure of the tournament is excellent, allowing you to complete each stage in a fairly non-linear fashion, choosing which event to tackle next, with more options opening up as you successfully win the stage you're on. The menu grid allows you to choose from a variety of different game modes in different locations, so you're never stuck replaying the same race until you progress. This kind of intelligent design, thankfully, seems to have permeated every aspect of this game.

The racing involves negotiating some wildly different terrains, keeping control of your vehicle no matter what, and taking some pretty hilarious risks with getting yourself to where you need to be in the environment. Each car (and there are lots of them) feels fantastic, each with its own handling depending on what kind of class you're racing in. There

The Codemasters Multiplayer Network software comes with your copy of insane. The network launches on November 24th and will allow for future online console play against PC gamers!



UNFORTUNATELY FOR CODEMASTERS, IT'S A LITTLE BUGGY. WE'LL NEVER GET SICK OF THAT ONE.

DAMN! THE BEER WILL BE ALL FIZZY

are sporty buggies, pick-ups and all sorts of four-wheel drives, and you'll thoroughly enjoy testing each of them out over the different terrains. Speaking of terrains, these ones are fantastic. Muddy fields, sandy desert floors, snowy mountains... the variety and unexpectedness of each map is lovely, plus each car handles as you would expect on each surface. Try and accelerate up a steep incline that's covered in ice, and you're going to be digging a hole in the ground below with your rear-end.

The basic gameplay is a mixture of checkpoint chasing, straight racing, demolition, capture (and return) the flag, and it's all mixed together nicely. It must be noted that insane has been designed for some serious multiplayer LAN play, as well as ripping it up against other players on the new Codemasters online gaming network.

VEWY PWETTY TOO

Graphically, insane is... well I don't want to say insane, but what the hell... insane. All the cars, environments and environmental effects are excellent, and if you have a decent PC and good 3D card, you'll be able to enjoy some gorgeously smooth play and serious eye candy. There are a plethora of camera angles to select from – from in-car driver's seat perspectives, to the good old bonnet cam, chase cam and even helicopter-style angles. The undulating terrain, rivers, cliff tops, dunes, grassy plains and hill-top farms all look pretty damn good as you hurtle past in your customised vehicle.

Racing the other cars to the checkpoints can result in some pretty hilarious crashes, thanks to the dangerous and bumpy terrain. You'll be stacking all over the place, and therein lies half the enjoyment – trying to master the environment and survive huge crashes and still win the race. The cars are affected by the damage they take, so it's possible to cripple your chassis so badly, your wheels can't turn. Luckily, there's a repair button that you can use, sacrificing a few seconds of race time. It's the same for getting stuck in deep water - the rescue button will get you back on land.

insane is a true thrill ride, and you'll love the fact that you can tackle any mountain and possibly get to the checkpoint in time to beat your rivals. Whilst it's a fun single player racing game, with some pretty dastardly AI, the multiplayer prospects are too good to be true. But true they are. Check out the demo on our cover disc if you want some convincing... ■

PLUS
Addictive. Huge amounts of pure racing fun.

MINUS
For maximum longterm enjoyment, you'll need to play online or at LANs.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
91	90	87

OVERALL

89

A big fat arcade-style racing experience... But the cars feel REAL.

WHAT THEY DON'T REALISE IS THAT THERE ARE FOUR TRAILERS FULL OF LOGS BACK AT THE STARTING GRID

HONK!

MERCEDES BENZ

TRUCK RACING

George Soropos slaps on a cap and grabs the fluffy dice...

AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Racing
PLAYERS:	1-8
PUBLISHER:	THQ
PRICE:	$79.95
RATING:	G
REQUIRED:	PII 300, 64Mb RAM, 3D card
DESIRED:	PIII 600, 128MB RAM, 32Mb 3D card

>> Around five hundred years before the birth of Christ, Socrates was setting up the first school of philosophy in ancient Athens, Archimedes was taking a bath and Russel Crowe was teaching advanced cutlery skills to the Romans. It took a long time but mankind has finally realised our instinct for higher learning is nothing more than a desire to build better trucks. The physics of trucks, the philosophy of trucks, and the undeniable link to the Gods provided to us by trucks (see Eric Von Dainiken's Trucks of the Gods, sequel to Chariots of the Gods).

TRUCK YOU

Mercedes Benz Truck Racing (MBTR) is the first truck racing simulation that we can recall, and it's about time! Many times have we sat in front of SBS TV watching the truck racing and thought gosh that looks like fun, and it is! Many fans of racing titles are getting a bit bored with the usual clichés, and these days, for PC heads at least, the releases are coming few and far between. Not only is MBTR a good solid racer but it also provides a new experience for gamers used to dealing with fidgety F1 cars or slippery rally machines.

Because it's a licensed title, all the trucks in the game are Mercs, no surprises there. But the detailed setup options and customisation possibilities let you adjust your truck to suit your driving style and besides, having an even field makes for tighter racing. One important thing missing from the truck setup screen however is an adjustment for your gear ratios. For some reason (probably simplicity) the developers have only given the trucks just five gears. Trucks usually need five gears just to get up to 20km/h! If you're going to make a truck racing game why not go all the way?

The circuits have been lifted from the European truck racing championship and are well suited to these big machines, although there are a few twisty ones to keep you honest. MBTR also has a good virtual cockpit view mode that sits you up nice and high and gives the player a totally different feel to any other racing title.

THE WORLD IS AN AMAZING PLACE

If you've ever watched the truck racing on SBS on Sunday afternoons you'll have noticed that when these monsters get some wheels off the road and onto the grass it doesn't faze them at all. They've got six to ten big wheels on the ground carrying a lot of weight and it's actually very, very rare to see one of these things spin out. Unfortunately, one flaw in MBTR is that the trucks spin out all too easily, detracting from the realism of the game.

The multiplayer side of MBTR is lots of fun, a bit reminiscent of TOCA 2 in the sense that it's fast, fun and close racing but even better as the trucks don't come off the road as easily as the cars in TOCA 2.

Mercedes Benz Truck Racing is surprisingly good, and lots of fun. In fact the developers really don't seem to have taken the fun part of it as far as they should have and the game probably would have been better if there were some Italians or Brazilians on the development team as well as those boring Germans. ■

! Truck races tend to be short, between 6 and twelve laps of a given circuit. Why? Racing trucks weigh a lot, and they go very fast, so imagine trying to stop that momentum over and over again at every corner. Most trucks use water-cooled brakes but even that isn't enough to stop them wearing out very quickly.

PLUS
Something different if you're sick of the usual parade of F1 sims and rally games.

MINUS
Plays a bit too much like a car racer; trucks should have been louder, heavier and more stable.

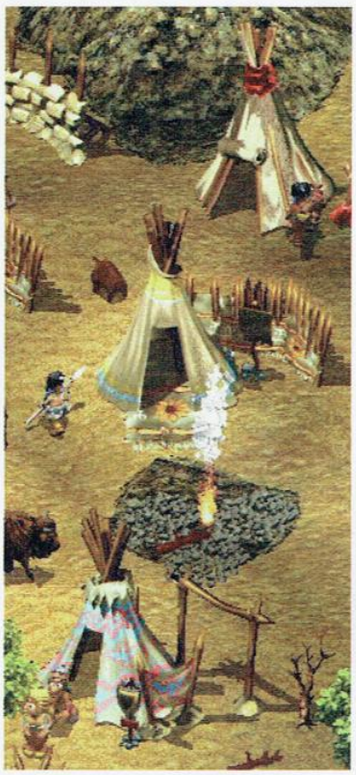
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
85	70	80

OVERALL

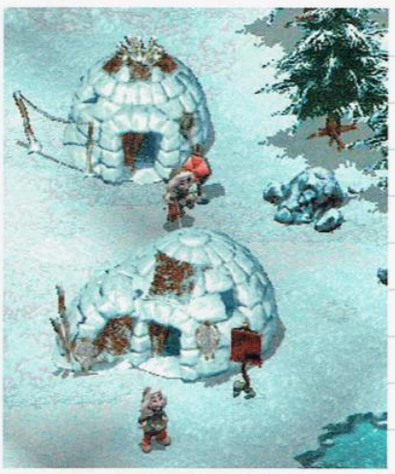
81

Keep on truckin'.

BACK AT THE EWOK VILLAGE, THE DEATH STAR EXPLOSION FALL-OUT HAD BEGUN TO TAKE ITS TOLL



WICKET TURNED TO EATING HIS OWN KIND



CULTURES

Roland Flanagan has had his own personal breeding ground of cultures for years...

AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Sim/RTS
PLAYERS:	1-5
PUBLISHER:	THQ
PRICE:	$89.95
RATING:	G
REQUIRED:	PII 266, 32MB RAM
DESIRED:	PII 300, 64MB RAM

>> Cultures tells the story of a tribe of Vikings leaving their native land in search of comet fragments, eventually landing on the shores of North America and establishing a settlement. You must take this fledgling community and manage both the concerns of the tribe as a whole in addition to fulfilling the needs of the individual. From basic resource management, through to military operations, trade opportunities, and the all-important art of lovemaking, the aim is to gradually travel across the rugged terrain of America, taking your tribe from strength to strength as you go.

BREEDING GROUND FOR DISASTER

In the tradition of Settlers, Cultures is a unique title in that the emphasis is as much on the individual as it is on traditional god elements. Indeed, it's the focus on the individual that gives this game so much charm. Each person is unique, not just in looks but also in personality and skills. This individuality and personality is pressed home through some excellent animations, and the cute cartoony look of the game as a whole.

Cultures sticks to the original Settlers ideology of "you don't build people who are warriors or gatherers, you train people in professions". Professions include the simple yet necessary fisherman, the carpenter and even shoemaker. Your civilized members can be trained in any profession provided there is a professional workshop somewhere in your land. More importantly, new tribe members aren't just rolled off the production line. Instead, one of your saucy males will have to woo one of the village woman before an extra tribesman will appear.

You have control of each individual to a certain extent. You can tell them where to go and what to do, but you can't make them work till they drop! You must feed your population, you must house them, you can buy them shoes for faster movement, or upgrade them to more efficient professionals. You are regularly informed of your peoples' problems, as well as news from the province. In short, you have to care about these little buggers to really enjoy the game.

SEX AND CARPENTRY

It's not all sex and carpentry though. You get attacked in missions, and must prepare the men for battle! Unfortunately the battles seem so... slow and ineffectual. This has to be the only game in the broader RTS genre where the computer can win with less units. Where's the note in the readme - "AI has advantage in combat of 999-1"?

The music, for the record, rocks. Cheery tunes of the sort I imagine would have been strummed in a tavern about 1000 years ago are played throughout the game, making for a soundtrack worth listening to, and very much in keeping with the gameplay.

Overall, Cultures is an enjoyable game that strays from the usual Real Time Strategy formula, allowing the player to focus on building a civilization of free thinking dudes who have their own characteristics and personalities. Just like the Settlers trilogy, this gives Cultures a unique and rewarding feel. Cultures would make a great addition to any strategy nut's collection, and is a worthy purchase for anyone who is interested in putting some serious hours into staring at their computer screens.

PLUS
Cute graphics, immersive gameplay.

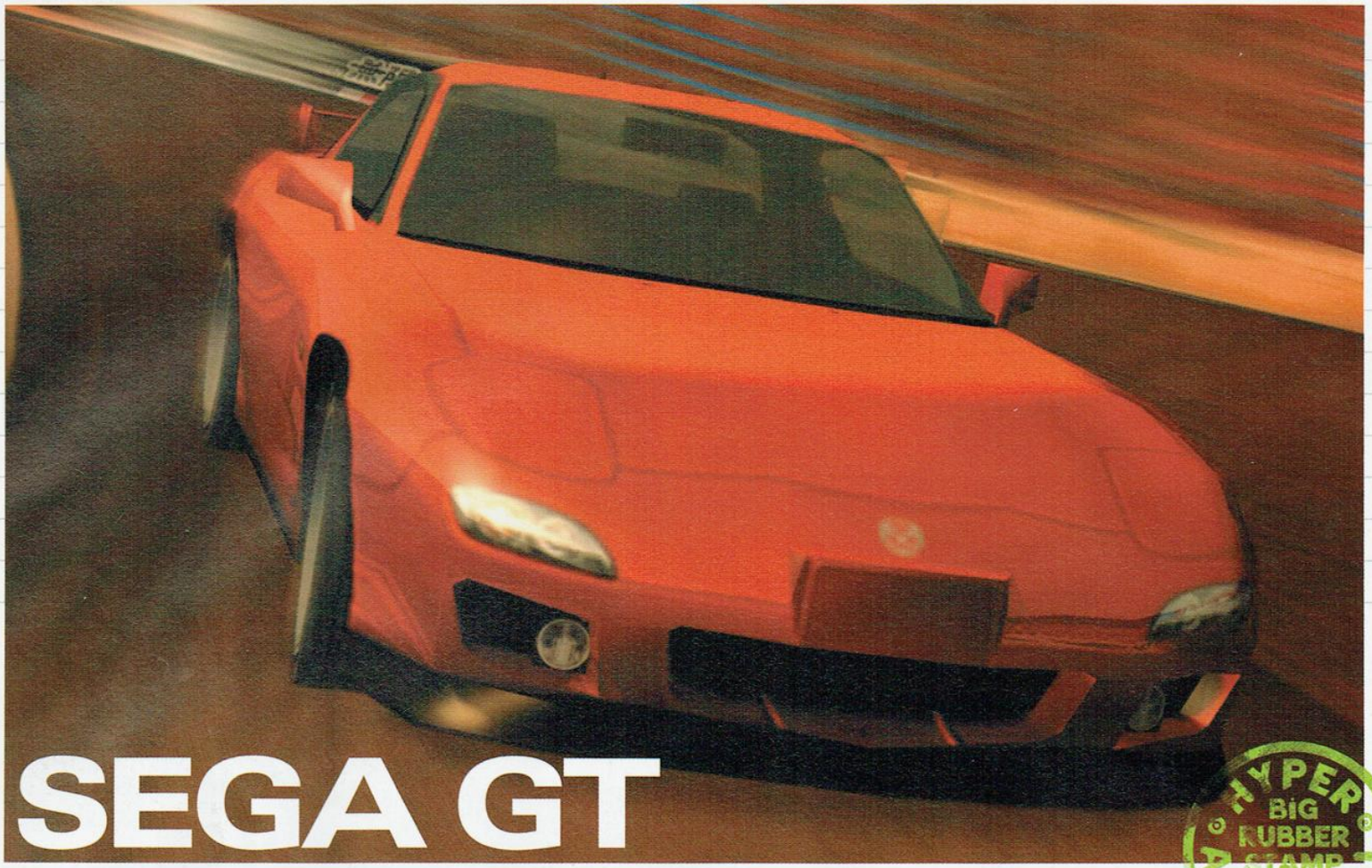
MINUS
Not for everyone – especially those looking for war.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
83	86	82

OVERALL

82

A worthy successor to Settlers, Cultures is an engaging title.



SEGA GT

Something special from Sega, or a "me too" racing ripoff? **Dan Toose** investigates.

AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Racing
PLAYERS:	1–2
PUBLISHER:	Sega
PRICE:	$99.95
RATING:	G
SUPPORTS:	VGA Box, Wheel

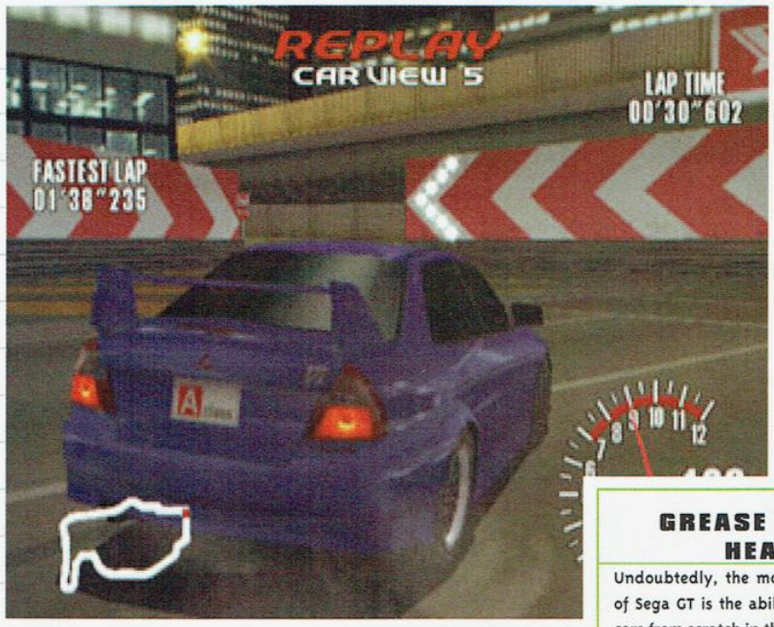
HEY DAN, CAN WE STOP AT THE NEXT SERVO?

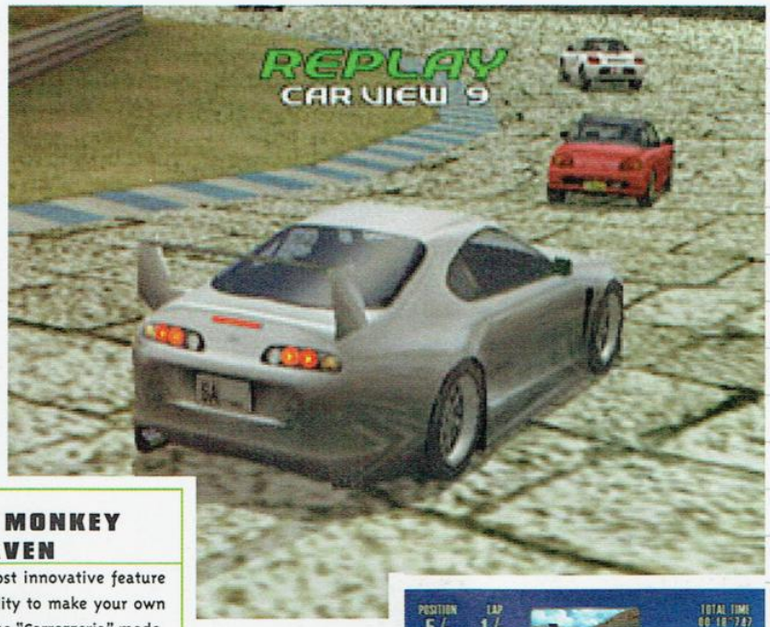
>> The Dreamcast has promised a lot for racing fans, and thus far it would be fair to say that the system has delivered quite nicely. Games such as V-Rally 2 Expert Edition, Le Mans 24 Hours and Sega Rally 2 make a pretty decent lineup of racing games to choose from in the first year of the Dreamcast's presence here in Australia. However, one look at the way racing games have panned out on the PlayStation, and it's obvious that the GT niche of racing is indeed a popular one, to the point where Sega can hardly be blamed for following in Sony's footsteps. Some might call it a shameless ripoff, but Sega GT is an excellent racing title nonetheless, and manages to add a little to the genre along the way.

A TAD SURREAL

The basic gameplay structure in Sega GT is so similar to Polyphony Digital's Gran Turismo that anyone who played the PlayStation classic will feel right at home. Once again, you have to earn licenses that will allow you to enter various races. You earn money according to your race results, and can spend that money on new cars, from a wide variety of manufacturers, and on parts/upgrades for those cars. This is very much a racing simulation, with realistic physics, a wide variety of championships to work through, and a couple of arcade style modes thrown in for a quick fix.

Visually, Sega GT is on the money, with fantastic modelling and texturing making this racer stand out. From the detail of the tiny air intakes, through to the way you can see the suspension working as you throw a car into a turn, Sega GT





serves up a meaty slab of realistic visuals that kick along at a solid 30 frames per second. It would have been nice to see this gorgeous hi-res game at 60FPS, but the rate is so consistent that there's little to complain about in the end.

Sega haven't gone quite as ballistic with the over the top reflection effects, but have thrown in some nice lighting effects, and thanks to the hardware capabilities, dust and smoke clouds blown up by angry tires look far smoother than anything we've seen on the PSX. Motion blur on streetlights and brake lights are a tad surreal, but help add a great sense of movement. Fog effects also come to the fore in the Snowy Mountain tracks, and help make things look that little bit closer to reality. It must be said that despite the higher resolutions, and vastly superior texturing, we're still not looking at photo-realistic gaming just yet, but it's getting there.

As you'd expect in a sim-style racer such as this, the sounds are all extremely realistic. From engine whine, through to tire squeal, it all sounds pretty darn realistic. However, it's pretty easy to be critical of the music, as the Gran Turismo titles have had some excellent tracks to drive along to, and this is really an exercise in suffering MIDI generated rock tracks, and some very so-so trance. On the whole, the sound quality is good, but some more environmental sound effects would have made it sound special.

IT'S RACING, JIM, BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT

Of course being a simulation rather than an arcade racer, the racing physics are extremely important to Sega GT, and while some may feel a little daunted by the steep learning curve, once you've had time to take everything in, it's hard not to appreciate the work done here. You might say that some of the effects are a little over-pronounced, but this helps you get a real sense of what is happening with the weight of the car, which is something you can sense when driving a real car, but not when you're holding a control pad. This makes adjusting things like your suspension a much more intuitive process than you'd expect.

The first championship seems a snap, but from there on, you'll be doing a LOT of racing to earn the cash needed to work on your cars, to ensure you can win the championships at hand. Fortunately, the learning curve remains pretty sharp throughout the game, so you'll feel challenged again and again, rather than just feeling like you're passing time.

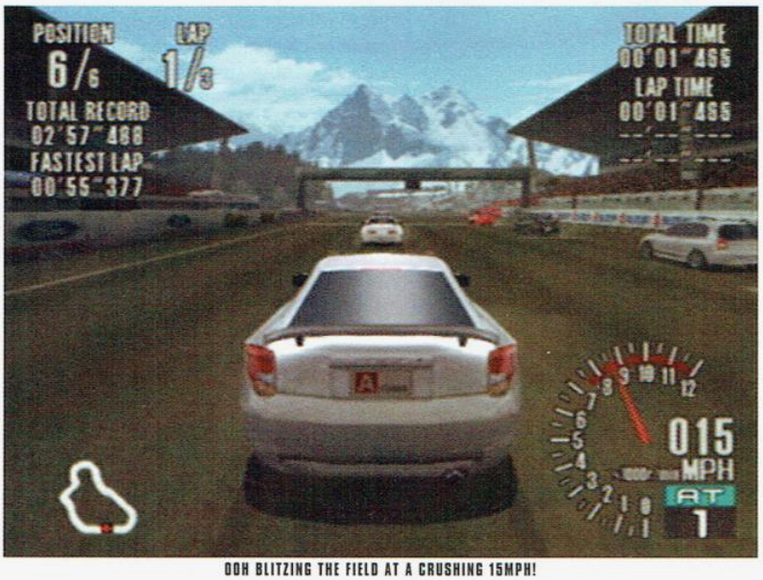
Sega GT lacks the massive lineup of cars that Sony's Gran Turismo titles have, and also doesn't have quite as many tracks, but there's still more than enough to keep any racing game fan busy for a long time. Having things like drag racing championships out on a salt lake help break the monotony and give you some different situations to gear your cars for.

In the end there is no question that Sega GT lacks originality, but it also does what it does very nicely, to the point where it's hard to be too critical of the game. The introduction of Carrozzeria mode adds something new to the genre, and quite frankly, is more interesting than giving you a few hundred extra cars to choose from that you probably won't want to drive anyway. With Gran Turismo 3 due to hit on PS2, the bar will no doubt be raised again shortly, but the bottom line is this is an excellent racing title that Dreamcast owners would be crazy to overlook. ■

GREASE MONKEY HEAVEN

Undoubtedly, the most innovative feature of Sega GT is the ability to make your own cars from scratch in the "Carrozzeria" mode, where you construct custom made cars from the ground up. Just as you need to earn licenses to enter races, you also need to obtain licenses to create more powerful cars. Your basic decisions revolve around choosing the engine, body, driving system, etc. From there, you have to spend money and tinker to turn it into your dream car. Some championships require you to use a car you've made yourself, adding extra incentive to build the perfect automobile.

UNIDENTIFIED FLYING MIRROR



OOH BLITZING THE FIELD AT A CRUSHING 15MPH!

PLUS
Awesome visuals. Great physics. Excellent "Create-a-car" mode.

MINUS
Not quite as many tracks or cars as the opposition. Decidedly unoriginal.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
91	80	91

OVERALL

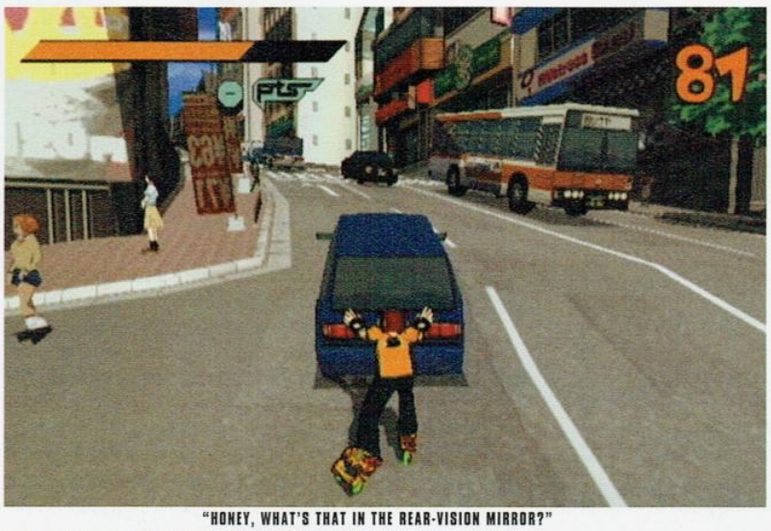
90

Hardly original, but Sega GT is a must have for Dreamcast owners who like their racing games.

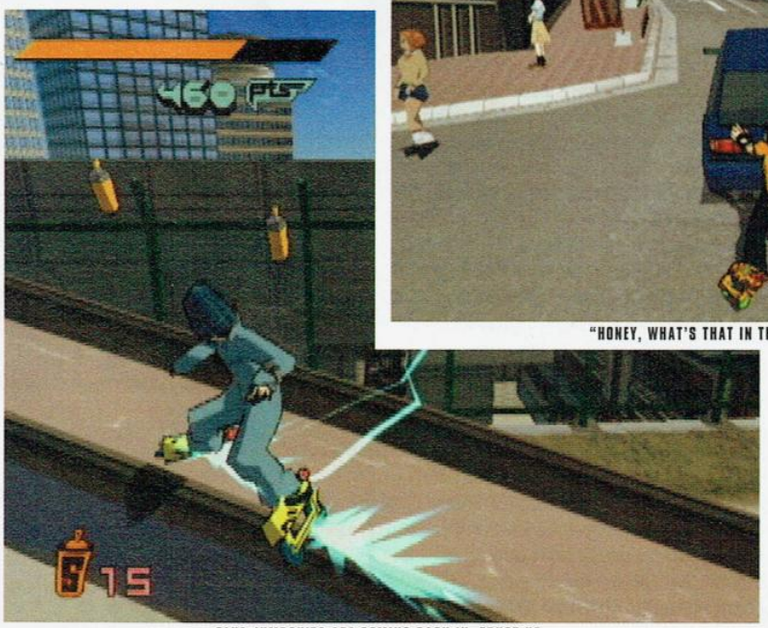
JET SET RADIO

Cam Shea carries a ghetto blaster on his shoulder and says "yo yo" a lot... we think he owns this game.

AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Crim sim
PLAYERS:	1
PUBLISHER:	Ozisoft
PRICE:	$89.95
RATING:	G



"HONEY, WHAT'S THAT IN THE REAR-VISION MIRROR?"



BLUE JUMPSUITS ARE COMING BACK IN. TRUST US.

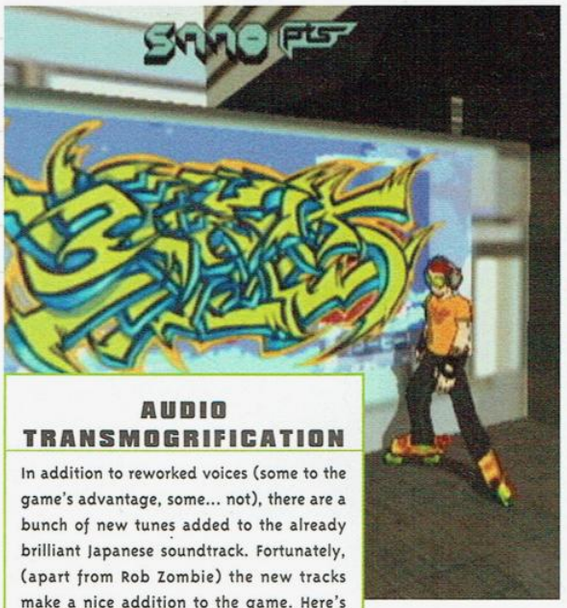
>> It's been a long wait, but Western gamers have finally been blessed with Sega's tag 'em up masterpiece Jet Set Radio. And it's been worth the wait. Jet Set Radio PAL style has been retrofitted with all sorts of goodies, like a whole new city area and storyline, not to mention some new music too. We thought the Japanese version was great, but after getting our hands on the localised code, it's spraypainting addiction affliction on a whole new level. Jet Set Radio is a game that every self respecting DC owner should have in their collection.

A TALE OF ONE CITY...

Jet Set Radio is set in Tokyo-To, where gangs roam the streets on jet powered rollerblades tagging up the hood with spraycans. As part of the GGs gang, players are guided through the game by Professor K, local underground DJ and loudest mouthpiece in the city. He gives you the 411 on what's up, as well as spinning def jams while you're out on the streets.

Each mission takes place in a different area of the city, and to begin with, your task is simple – avoid the keystone cops and tag up any objects that have flashing red arrows nearby. Things rapidly get more difficult, however, as the police (headed by Captain Onishima) call in extra firepower in the form of dogs, paratroopers, helicopters equipped with guided missiles, and tanks to thwart your artistic endeavours. Tag locations also become trickier, often requiring an extensive grinding and jumping combo to reach. Each level must be completed within a certain time limit, without getting busted and beat down by the pigs.

It's a shame that there's no free-skate mode. It would have been fun to simply skate around levels for the hell of it, without worrying about a time limit or being nuked by a barrage of missiles.



AUDIO TRANSMOGRIFICATION

In addition to reworked voices (some to the game's advantage, some... not), there are a bunch of new tunes added to the already brilliant Japanese soundtrack. Fortunately, (apart from Rob Zombie) the new tracks make a nice addition to the game. Here's the list of newbies:

Mix Master Mike – Patrol Knob
Cold – Just Got Wicked
Professional Murder Music – Slow
Jurassic 5 – Improvise
Rob Zombie – Dragula (remix)

GRAFFITI FOR ALL!

Collecting icons called "graffiti souls" within Jet Set Radio unlocks new art that you can spray in the game. There are around 100 pieces to collect, making for a huge art collection by the time you're finished. On top of this, however, is a graffiti editor, that enables you to type in your own text (we suggest something along the lines of "Hyper Rules"), then graf it up by choosing from a database of 128 textures, warping the letters, adding in shadows, and more. With time, you can customize the entire look of the graffiti in the game. Very cool. The last element in the tagging puzzle is the ability to download jpgs from the net and use these as your pieces in the game. Sweet!

Outrunning the cops is a simple matter of outpacing them and getting to a safe area before they catch you.

You'll also be going head to head with rival gangs, and further into the game, the local crime syndicates pop up to show these yuppie punk kids who's boss. You'd think that they'd be grateful for getting the cops off their backs...

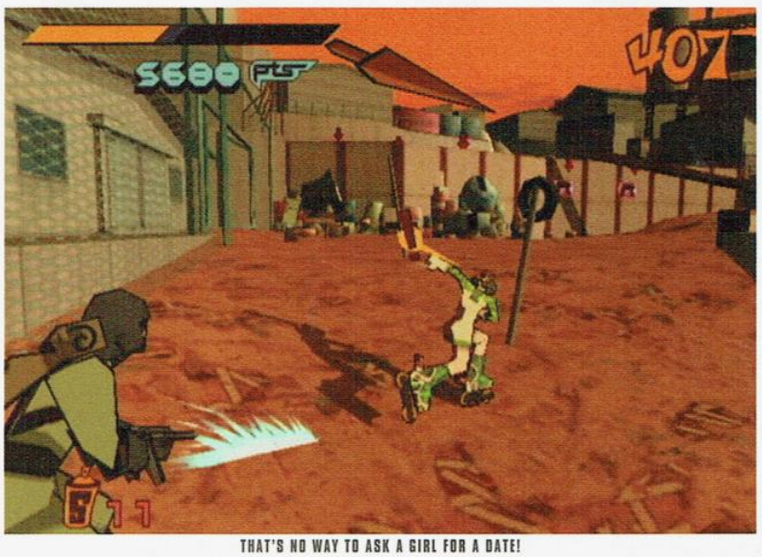
The city is divided into several sections, each signifying a rival gang's turf. There are three main gangs – the Poison Jams, the Love Shockers and the Noise Tanks, as well as an all new crew. After completing all the missions within a gang's domain, you own their turf, so the next step is to grind them into submission... or more appropriately, paint them into submission. Talk about a warped boss battle, as you chase the gang through the streets painting the GG's tag on each member's back.

A CARTOON IN MOTION

As you progress through the game, the GG's gang gets steadily larger. After every couple of missions, you have the chance to recruit a rival gang member into your crew by beating them in a competition. These usually involve copying a tricky sequence of stunts or a race. They're not just for decoration either, as each character has his or her own set of stats varying in the areas of power, graffiti and technique. And the Love Shocker goth skater is a fox!

We covered the visual style extensively in our preview, but just to refresh your memory – this is the freshest looking game we've seen since Parappa the Rapper! Jet Set Radio simply oozes style, and looks very much like a cartoon in motion. Sega have really nailed the visuals, in terms of slick design as well as the cel shading technique that has been used to give the game its distinctive look. The level design is also of a high quality, with a huge potential for devastating combos and acrobatic maneouvres to reach tag locations and secrets. Likewise, the new city area that has been added for the Western release is brilliant, and obviously designed with stunts in mind.

Jet Set Radio has gameplay that is not immediately gratifying. It can seem a little daunting at first, as you overshoot rails and struggle to navigate your way around the city streets. All we can say is - keep at it, and believe us when we say the effort is more than worth it. Jet Set Radio signals a return to form for Sega, with the sort of cutting edge attitude that they were renowned for back in the day. ■



THAT'S NO WAY TO ASK A GIRL FOR A DATE!

PLUS
This game rocks. Nuff said.

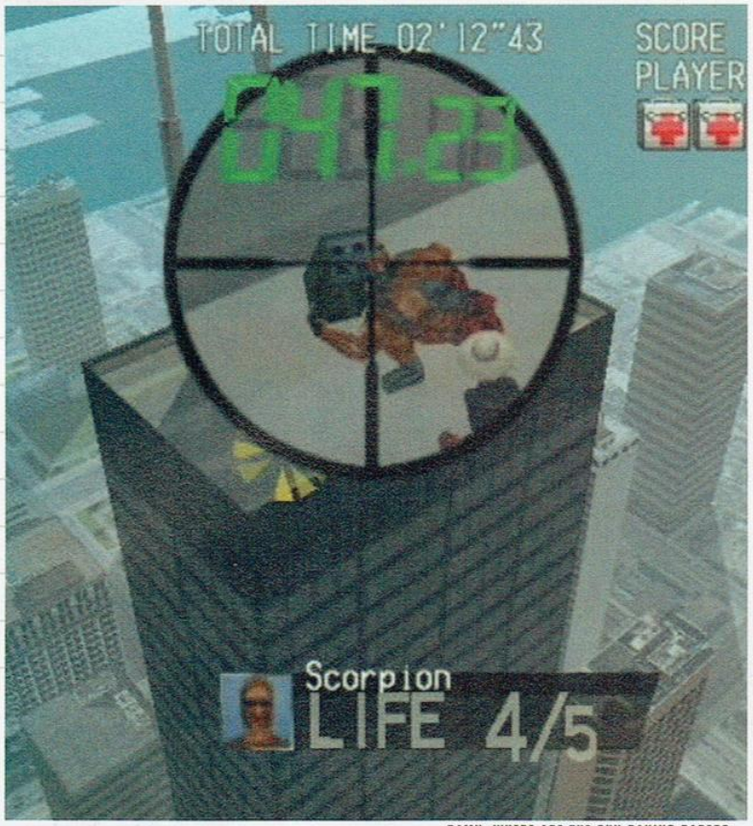
MINUS
No multiplayer. Camera a little sluggish. Rob bloody Zombie.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
92	88	87

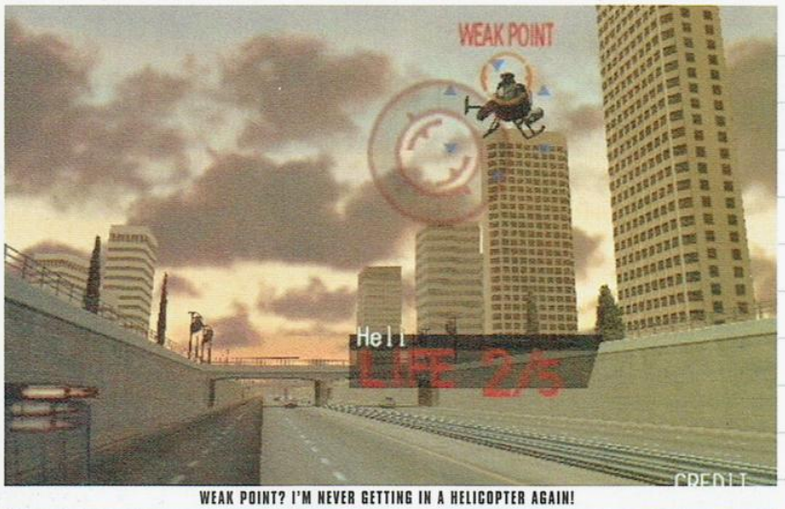
OVERALL

90

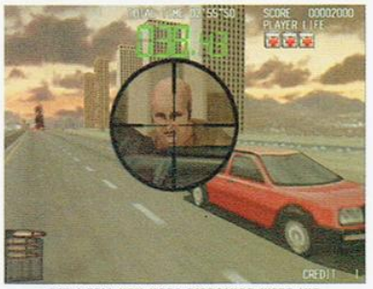
One of the most original titles in a long while. Irresistible.



DAMN, WHERE ARE THE SUN-BAKING BABES?



WEAK POINT? I'M NEVER GETTING IN A HELICOPTER AGAIN!



DID I TELL YOU NOSE PIERCINGS WERE IN?

SILENT SCOPE

Cam Shea goes postal... again...

AVAILABLE:	December
CATEGORY:	Sniper sim
PLAYERS:	1
PUBLISHER:	Konami
PRICE:	$89.35
RATING:	MA15+
SUPPORTS:	No light gun support. Grrr...

>> Is there anything quite like the thrill of standing, sniper rifle in hand, picking off people from the roof of a tall building? Or taking people out at a football stadium? Or while they're driving along in their car? Oblivious to your presence until the shot rings out and the searing kiss of hot lead bulldozes its way through their flesh? Aaah... computer games. The last bastion protecting the common man's right to have a gun and to shoot stuff with it.

DEGENERATIVE DRUG ADDLED YOUTH... OR D-DAY FOR SHORT

You may remember this little doozy from the arcades. It really was a great extension of the light gun game concept, demanding speed, skill and accuracy. On each level a terrorist situation (usually involving a hostage) would unfold, and armed with a sniper rifle, you'd have to resolve the situation before any innocent people got hurt. Placing you in a variety of situations, from a rooftop to rooftop shootout, through to sniping from a helicopter or moving car, Silent Scope worked really well in the arcades. You looked through the gun's site to zoom in, and the tension was palpable as you struggled to quickly dispatch all the bad guys with a steady hand and accurate aim.

Unfortunately, hysteria over the effects of videogame violence on our kids, and the youth of today's obviously fragmented schizophrenic porn-obsessed drug-addled slacker-hacker fabulous-furry-freakout monkey-see monkey-do mentality has meant that this is a control pad only title. To be honest, a greater factor in this decision is probably the costs and logistics involved in creating a rifle light gun add-on, but frankly we'd prefer our scapegoat to be American idiocy.

In any case, what we have here is an arcade game that should not have been ported to the home systems. Even with a gun in hand, this title would have had very little replay value, as it's a very arcadey experience with few levels, and an un-engaging storyline. With only a control pad, however, Silent Scope becomes laughable. Pointless is the best word for it, and even the impressive graphics can't hope to redeem this title.

THUMB SNIPER 2

The control pad simply takes all the fun out of the game. Holding a gun requires you to keep your aim steady and actually delivers some sense of realism, but when using a controller and mechanically moving a stationary site across the screen, you're immediately distanced from the action. Thus, there's always a limit to how efficient your skills can get, and how much satisfaction you'll get out of playing.

One element that we did like was the effect that wind has on your accuracy. If there's a decent breeze blowing, your shot will curve in an arc on its way to the target, forcing you into some guesswork adjusting your aim. It's really satisfying to aim askew of a target and watch the bullet curve around and pop them in the head. Missing from the game, however, is an option to vary the strength of the wind, which would have added much need longevity to this title.

Unfortunately, Silent Scope is far too short, it's lacking in options and the gameplay is awkward without the gun. ■

PLUS
Graphically nice.
Good idea for a game.

MINUS
No light gun support.
Few levels.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
86	69	59

OVERALL

61

Silent Scope is a weak title that should have stayed in the arcades where it belongs. Not good enough, Konami.

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385 Clock Tower 2
130 Code Name: Tenka
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386 Colin McRae Rally 2
132 Colonisation
133 Colony Wars
387 Colony Wars 3
134 Colony Wars Veng
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140 Cool Borders 3
138 Cool Borders 4
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149 Dark Forces
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397 Fisherman's Bait: Big ol' Bass
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179 Formula Karts
180 Forsaken
181 Forty Winks
182 Frenzy
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187 Gex: Enter the Gecko
188 Ghost in the Shell
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190 Gran Turismo 2
191 Grand Theft Auto 2
192 Grand Tour Racing 98
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503 Hot Shots Golf 2
196 Independence Day
197 Indy 500
198 IS Soccer Pro 98
504 IS Soccer Pro Evolution
199 J MaGrath Super X 98
505 Jackie Chan: Stuntmaster
506 Jersey Devil
200 Jet Moto 3
201 Judge Dread
202 Jurassic Park: Warpath
203 K1 Arena Fighters
204 Kagero Deception 2
205 Killer Loop
206 Kiona
207 KKND: Krossfire
208 Knockout Kings
209 Knockout Kings 2000
210 Krazy Ivan
211 Kula World
507 Legend of Mana
213 Lego Racers
214 Libero Grande
508 LMA Manager
215 M.K. Mythologies
216 M.K. Trilogy
217 M.K.4
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218 Madden NFL 98
219 Madden NFL 99
512 March Madness 2000
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221 Marvels v Capcom: Clash
222 Mass Destruction
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224 Max Power Racing
513 Max Surfing 2000
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535 Silent Hill
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300 Small Soldiers
301 Smash Court 2
302 Soul Blade
303 South Park Rally
304 South Park:Chefs Luv Shack
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374 WWF War Zone
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376 Xena Warrior Princess

Nintendo 64

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447 Mario Golf
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455 Nagano Winter Olympics
456 NAS Car 2000
457 NAS CAR 99
458 NBA Hangtime
459 NBA in the Zone
460 NBA Live 99
46[illegible] NFL Qback Club 99
462 NHL 99
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491 WCW Mayhem
492 WCW Revenge
493 World Driver Championship
494 WWF Attitude
495 WWF Westlemania 2000
496 XENA: Talisman of Fire

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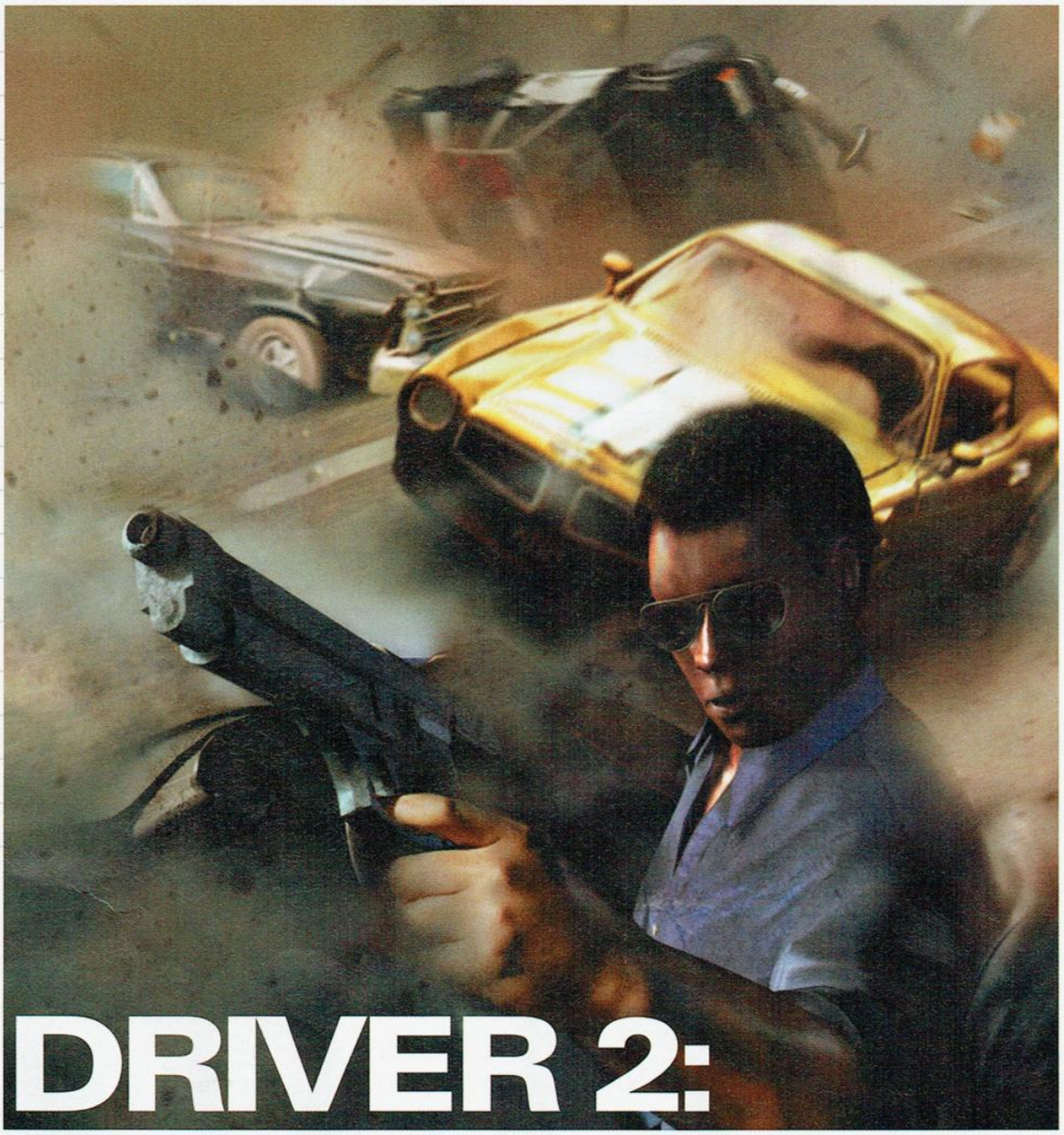
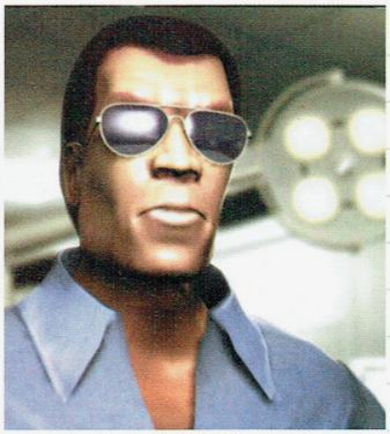




STILL THE MAN

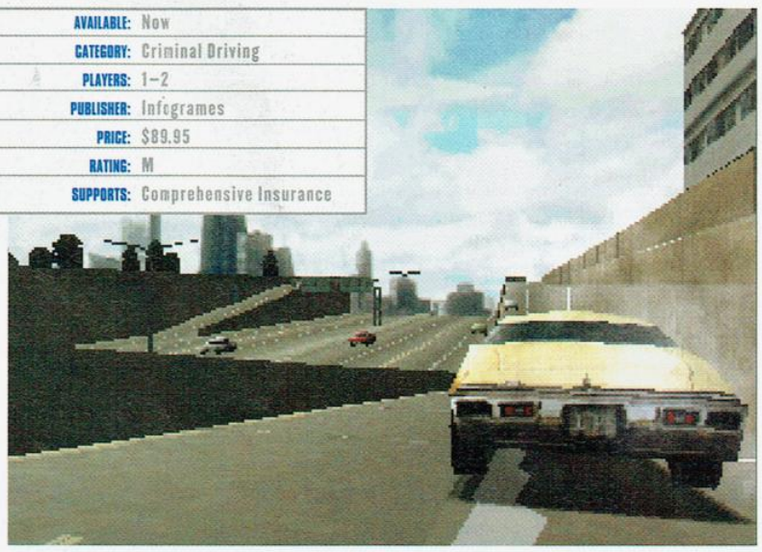
"HEY WANNA POKE AT SOME BALLS?"

DRIVER 2:

BACK ON THE STREETS

Hillous Lesslie has a lead foot on his bicycle at least. Just look out!

AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Criminal Driving
PLAYERS:	1–2
PUBLISHER:	Infogrames
PRICE:	$89.95
RATING:	M
SUPPORTS:	Comprehensive Insurance



>> After two long years in development, Driver 2 is finally ready for the shelves. You can all expect more crazy carnage and burning rubber in this second Sunday-driving spree, as well as a couple of new ideas to prolong the interest in the car chase scene.

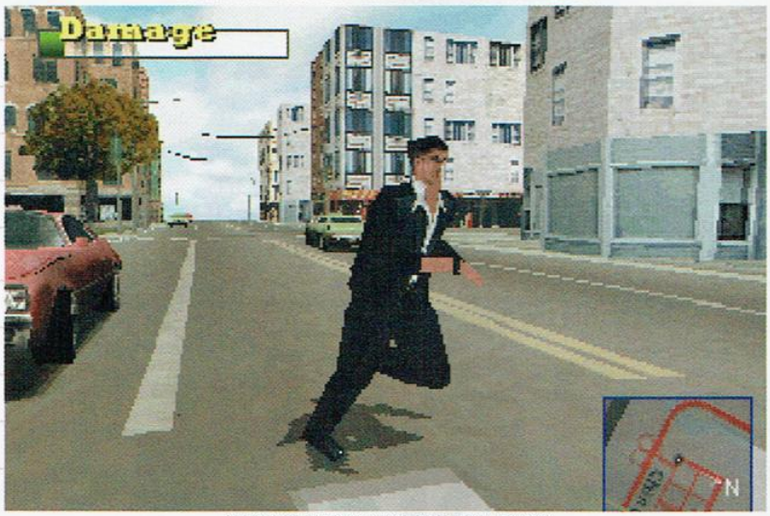
OLD GREY MARE SHE AIN'T WHAT SHE USED TO BE

Driver 2 extends the criminal gameplay theme an inch or two to allow for spontaneous bursts of indecency, bringing the game a little closer to the chaos of the GTA line-up. Just don't expect marvelous graphical improvements on the old grey console. Most importantly, the driving model remains the same as it was. You can feel the sloppy suspension on all four wheels of the car through every turn. Surely enough, after easing back into the tigerskin seat of a souped-up hotrod and settling into seventies mode, controlling the broad American automobiles through hairy corners becomes part of your own ego.

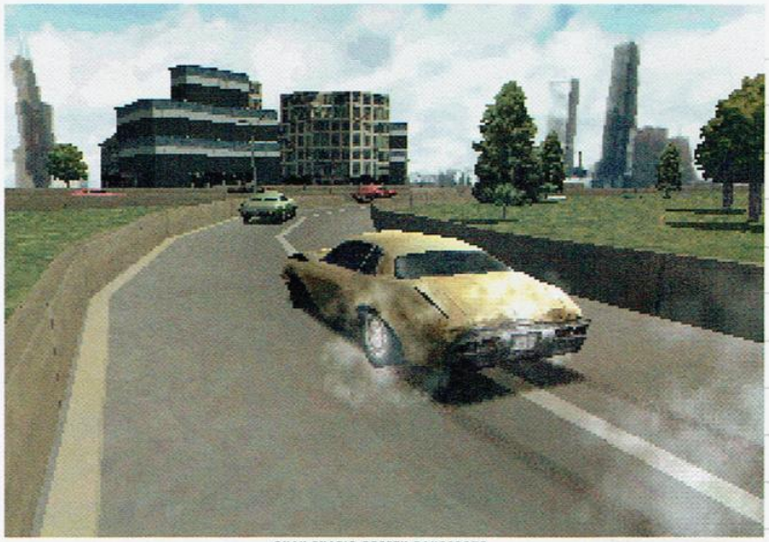
With different buttons for braking, handbraking, accelerating, sharp steering and beeping the horn, this game was made for irresponsible onroad behaviour. Unfortunately the pedestrians about town are too quick and nimble to be caught beneath your behemoth vehicle.

The burnout button is there too, for those fast getaways and tight U-turns. Like a comfy old bed in your grandmother's house, this feature of Driver remains unique unto itself. No other game gives you such filthy smoke, such screechy skids or such black tracks that you leave behind as you

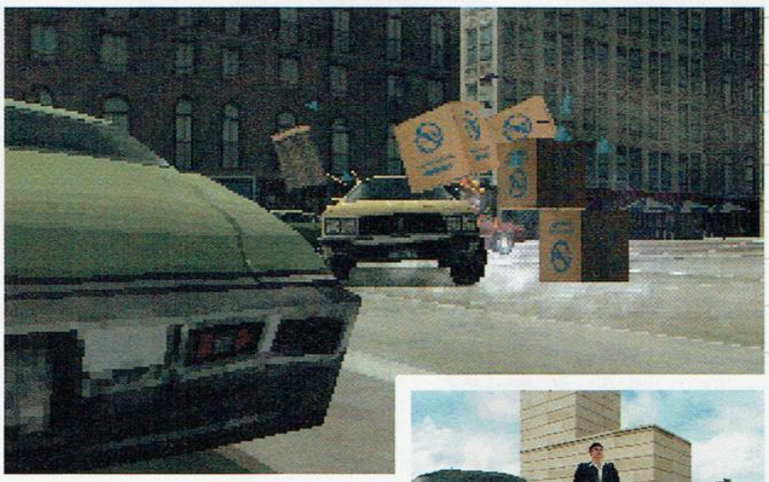
DRIVING ON THE LEFT ISN'T DANGEROUS IN THIS COUNTRY BUDDY



LOOKS LIKE HIS HEAD NEEDS SOME PANEL BEATING



OKAY THAT'S PRETTY DANGEROUS



tear away from the law making its long arm look that much shorter.

This time the game spans another four major American cities, and they are much more accurately represented than the capital cities in Driver. Instead of just plonking a bridge here and a landmark there, the developers have gone to the considerable effort of mapping out entire districts and neighbourhoods to recreate them faithfully in the game. The city maps are so good that those who are familiar with the cities will have no problem finding their way around town.

GET OUT OF MY CAR

The key difference between this game and the original would have to be the ability to leave the car. Driver lived up to its name a little too literally for most. A lot of people were irritated that you could not do something so fundamentally basic as exiting the vehicle.

Provided you do not have the cops on your tail, you may at your leisure bring your car to a halt and step out for a stroll. Not only can you get out of your own car, but if you feel so inclined, you can take anyone else's car you like the look of. And you will feel so inclined.

This ushers in a new wave of criminal indulgence and gameplay potential as it allows you to prolong any mission indefinitely, unless there is a time limit. Whenever your vehicle gets too smashed up for your aesthetic appeasement you can simply steal a brand new one. And the best part is that with a new car comes a new number plate, wiping your felonies clean.

Some of the missions take advantage of this feature. In one of them you begin the game with the mob on your tail and no vehicle to escape in, so you must steal one to get away. Every type of vehicle in the city has its own set of driving physics. The fire engine even has a siren instead of a horn.

NO HIDEOUS VIDEO

Anyone familiar with Driver will no doubt recall its Spartan cinema scenes filling in the plot. It is clear where most of the production money went for this sequel. FMV was addressed very seriously for D2 and the results of the extra efforts are plain to see.

Not only is the video quality during the cutscenes very high, there is also plenty of it. After almost every mission you will be treated to a little movie running for at least a couple of minutes. Tanner returns to terrorise the streets, forced undercover once more by a sinister citywide criminal threat. To infiltrate the new criminal ring he must play the game of doublecross and blackmail again. Lucky for him he happens to be very good at playing the bad guy.

Although one could scoff at the time and effort that could have gone into extra gameplay features, the effect of the top notch movies is definitely gripping to say the least. Your eyes will peel back as you watch intently for little clues and subtleties littered throughout the highly choreographed cinema.

It is during these scenes that the game earns it M15+ rating too, with the cops and the gangsters all just begging to have their mouths washed out with a hard bar of soap. Cats are pinched. Drops are made. Caps are busted.

It's just unfortunate that the PSX can't compete in real comparisons these days. If we were to look with sympathetic puppy dog eyes at the old box and remember the good times before DC and PS2, we might convince ourselves that Driver 2 is worth something in the 90 percent range (of an overall score – Ed.). If we were to judge the game based solely on what we'd seen of the FMV, it'd get 100%.

However, as it is lacking any substantial innovation over the first game we are forced to score Driver 2 based on how effective the improvements really are. You can exit your vehicle, but control of pedestrian Tanner is sloppy at best and it only makes you want to get back in a car as quickly as possible. Oh yeah. It's got curved roads too. ■

PLUS
A return to that classic Driver gameplay.

MINUS
A return to that dated Driver gameplay.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
80	86	85

OVERALL

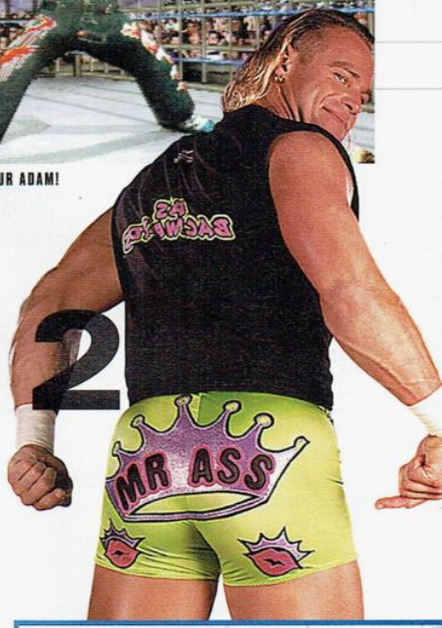
84

Whilst not a huge advancement over the original, Driver 2 is still exciting.

[RIGHT] SO THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED TO ARTHUR ADAM!

WWF SMACKDOWN 2

KNOW YOUR ROLE



AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Wrestling
PLAYERS:	1–4
PUBLISHER:	THQ
PRICE:	$79.95
RATING:	M
SUPPORTS:	Dual Shock

George Soropos gets his spandex out. Again.

>> Some of this month's reviews have been a real cultural experience for us, first Truck Racing and now the WWF, both highlights of the American way of life. Actually it's a good combination as both sports probably share many of the same fans. At this point we could indulge in any of the obvious jokes about oiled bodies, blokes getting intimate or chick wrestlers with surgically implanted airbags but that would just be gratuitous because Smackdown 2 deserves to be taken seriously as the best wrestling game to date.

UNLOCKABLE THIGHS

Where do we start? This game has so many new features, modes and options you can spend hours farting around without even entering the ring. For example it's very easy to get lost in the creative sections of the game that allow you to make your own Superstar wrestler, manager, PPV and even a whole 'stable' of wrestlers.

The detail and features in the "Create a Superstar" mode are phenomenal. Due to the massive number of physique, costume and personality options you can make virtually any wrestler you can think of. We made a pretty passable version of Andre the Giant in about 15 minutes! You might also get a laugh, as we did, out of the fact that some of the body parts are locked at the beginning of the game. "Hey I just gotta finish this match so I can unlock Hollywood Hogan's nose!" True.

Even though these creative features are quite impressive, the number and variety of new play modes in Smackdown 2 is even more so. We don't even have enough room here to talk about them all but we can mention some of the more interesting ones.

For example the Special Guest Referee match allows (in a multiplayer situation) one player to referee another players bout! Casket Matches have you trying to knock your opponent into a coffin and Ladder Matches put prize money at the top of a ladder and the first to get it wins. The Slobber Knocker match is similar to the old gauntlet match where you had to knock out as many opponents as possible but now there's a time limit.

To keep the player interested there are some locked matches too, like the recreation of the TLC (table, ladder, chair) match between the Hardy Boyz, Dudleyz, Edge and Christian at Summerslam!

MORTAL KOMBAT

There are some locked wrestlers in the game as well, a lot of the big names like The Rock and Mankind are available immediately but don't go looking for Shawn Michaels, Cactus Jack or Ken Shamrock 'cause you have to unlock them first.

From a technical standpoint Smackdown 2 is a bit more refined than its predecessor with more solid 3D models and more happening on screen during matches. The game also supports a lot more moves for each wrestler and the same fast paced intuitive interface keeps the action flowing, unlike those wrestling games that make you play like Tekken or Mortal Kombat!

Wrestling is a pretty specialised genre and won't appeal to everyone but the real uniqueness of wrestling games is that it's the only kind of wrestling where the participants don't already know who's going to win! ■

PLUS
Lots of variety and a mountain of options, plus it's WWF.

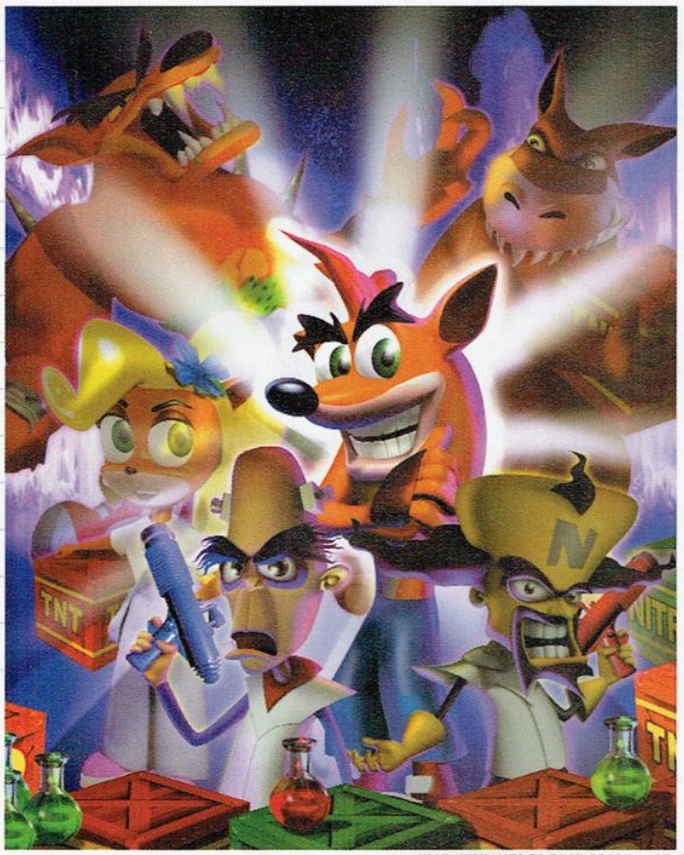
MINUS
For control freaks the moves are a bit automatic in their execution.

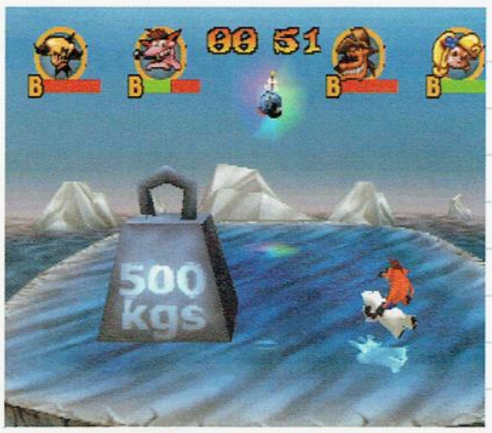
VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
84	80	84

OVERALL

85

If you love your sweaty beefcakes (male and female), then go no further than Smackdown 2!





YEAH, WE'D LIKE TO BASH CRASH... OH, CRASH BASH

CRASH BASH

Hillous Lesslie likes to bash his controllers too...

AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Party Game
PLAYERS:	1–4
PUBLISHER:	Universal Interactive
PRICE:	$49.95
RATING:	G
SUPPORTS:	Dual Shock

HYPER BIG RUBBER STAMP OF APPROVAL

>> Once again it takes good old Crash to replicate the sort of gaming excellence already available to Nintendo 64 owners. Crash Bash is a party game through and through, but should under no circumstances be restricted to children alone.

CRASH'S CRAZY CAREER

Crash Bandicoot has been jumping on turtles and hopping into powerslides for years in his adventure and racing games, closely modeled on Nintendo's Mario titles. With very few Mario games left to replicate with a cute marsupial in the place of a fat Italian plumber, Universal Interactive have wisely decided that a party game would be the perfect cherry on top of Crash's crazy career.

Don't be fooled. We wholly approve of the blatant rip-off jobs Crash is accountable for. They have brought the child-like wonder of gaming for the pure joy of it to a wider audience. They are all good to their own credit, richly infused with Crash's unique flamboyant flavour of fun.

Crash Bash (CB) is no different. It has been built on a solid foundation of cute games that are fun to play. Simple to pick up and immediately addictive, this is the type of game that has far too often been overlooked in PSX development in general. The focus on adult game content has deprived the PSX of games like this for a long time.

JUSTIFYING THAT MULTITAP

If you have a multitap, this is the game it has been awaiting all these years. Every single mode in CB caters for up to four players. There are always four characters in play anyway, multitap or no, the missing seats filled in by a clever CPU.

Demonstrating a deep insight into the minds of competitive gamers, it seems quite difficult to get annoyed while playing any of CB's many modes with friends, even if you're getting your arse whipped. The happy music is but a small part of this grand tapestry.

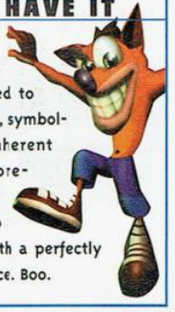
The gaiety of the charismatic characters, the exaggerated animation of their gestures and the vibrant, jovial nature of everything else onscreen all combine to induce an overwhelmingly positive effect in the mind. Even if three brutish opponents gang up unfairly on your innocent little indigenous creature, the impulses received by your brain are still ones of merry amusement and placid pleasure.

Structured similarly to other Crash games, you must pass four initial game types to unlock others. There are at least seven game types altogether, each with at least four levels of complexity.

For example, in Crash Ball each character mans one side of a square and tries to prevent any balls in play from getting past them. It's just like four player Pong, but you have the four arenas to choose from. Each arena has its own set of rules. In one you can capture and fire balls at will. In another the four corners of the square tilt wildly at random.

So... every age and intellectual level is catered for. Toddlers can get into the basic games. Big kids can have more intense fun on the tank stages, driving in all directions, rotating the turret seperately, shooting and laying mines. Absolutely everyone will love the pogo games. Even my mother had a go! ■

THE EYES HAVE IT



I would just like to complain about Crash's eyes. They used to be utterly asymmetrical, symbolic reminders of his inherent craziness and unpredictable nature, but now, Crash appears to be completely sane with a perfectly symmetrical countenance. Boo.

PLUS
Bright colours and smooth textures for clear and rapid action.

MINUS
Party games aren't much fun on your own.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
89	87	90

OVERALL

90

Faultless simplicity plus immediate playability equals big fun. Best with friends.

FANTAVISION

PLAYSTATION 2

Fantavision is all eye-candy, but behind the pulsating neon flashes of fireworks against a bay city is a simple puzzle game of connect-the-like-coloured-dots. All you have to do is concentrate on the radial arm that locks on to them, which is controlled by the left analogue thumb pad.

The ideas are simple but smart – the greatest rewards come through daisy-chaining multi-coloured sequences of fireworks. Detonating enough stars will also take you to a Starmine bonus area, where you can go nuts with a barrage of like-coloured fireworks for maximum effect. Replays can be saved and run in the background with nice ambient effects.

The only major change from the Japanese edition is the inclusion of a split-screen simultaneous 2-player mode. Players interact with each other primarily by detonating a swirly arrow icon that swaps their screens around. Additionally some new fireworks have been added that basically make bigger explosions.

Unfortunately, there's no getting past the fact that Fantavision is a very short game. The PAL localisation team has also seen fit to replace the groovy 60's pipe organ music with generic techno beats, which is completely out of place with the rest of the game.

KEVIN CHEUNG

AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Puzzle
PLAYERS:	1-2
PUBLISHER:	Sony
PRICE:	$79.95
RATING:	G

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
84	72	74	75

SAN FRANCISCO RUSH 2049

DREAMCAST

Generations of consoles change, but some games stay the same... San Francisco Rush being a good example. Despite peering into the future and giving us a taste of what suicidal racing will look like in less than fifty years time, one could be forgiven for thinking that nothing had changed. Indeed, the only real indications that this game may in fact take place in the future, are the transparent sections of track (we don't have the technology for such high tech motorways yet – although God willing we will) and trackside objects like house sized lava lamps (the future may be lamer than we thought).

For some odd reason, I've always had a soft spot for the San Francisco Rush games. Something about the combination of a huge numbers of shortcuts, massive air, fantastic 15fps speed, shithouse midi music, no steering and budget textures did it for me. Seriously. The same is true of Rush 2049, but Midway haven't really taken the game to any new levels. The tracks feel worn, the secrets aren't as compelling, and the game simply isn't optimized for DC at all – the texture set is far too similar to the washed out garish look of the last N64 game. Also of concern is the weird stuttering effect on the scenery when you go around any corner.

Like the last title, the stunt mode is a highlight. There are now four stunt courses to enjoy, but the fun factor is somewhat hampered by the addition of wings to your car. The wings enable you to get the car spinning much more rapidly – leading to more spectacular stunts, but also diminishing the perverse satisfaction of trial and error flips off every possible object. Try before you buy.

CAM SHEA

AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Racing
PLAYERS:	1-4
PUBLISHER:	Midway
PRICE:	$89.95
RATING:	G

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
76	75	77	76

THIS IS SOCCER 2

PLAYSTATION

The title certainly pulls no punches – this is definitely a soccer game, and a fairly decent one at that. An official license entitles you to nab any two teams, the world over and pitch them against each other, regardless of how ludicrous the match-up. With the usual smattering of options you may bastardise Mother Nature to your heart's content, picking the weather conditions, ref skill and match type. I cranked the ref's perception to blind, made damn sure the injuries were 'on' and sunk right into the game.

After devoting a fragment of my attention to the wonderfully non-interactive training videos, I hauled the Glasgow Celtics in to play against my proud Australian team. We weren't quite so proud when by half time an embarrassing four goals had been scored against us, but by now we'd learned how to pass the ball to each other, instead of booting it into the crowd. Still the defeat rolled on, complete with ultra-humiliating replays to display our incompetence from every possible angle. Oh well, it was a friendly game anyway – despite the numerous times I had a go at sweep kicking the goalie. Serious fans will surely derive the most pleasure from this polished soccer title. The rest of us are doomed to spend our time scoring own goals and 'accidentally' earning red cards. Hell, what fun is swinging your foot in a videogame if you can't kick a few Scottish heads?

MARTIN ENGLISH

AVAILABLE:	Now
CATEGORY:	Sports
PLAYERS:	1-2
PUBLISHER:	Sony
PRICE:	$49.95
RATING:	G

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
79	81	85	83

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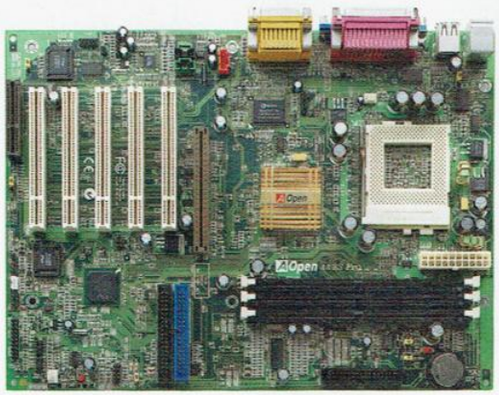
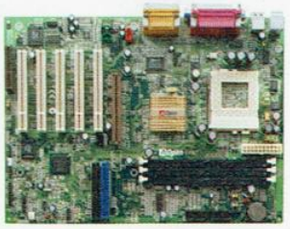


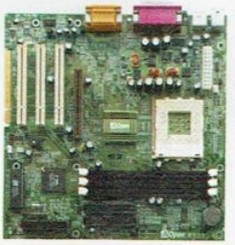
AX34 Pro - VIA 694X

Die Hard Bios with external switch • VIA 694X chipset • Jumper-less design • Supports PC-133 RAM • 4x AGP • Sound on-board



AX3S Pro - Intel 815E

Supports Intel Celeron and Pentium III Socket 370 CPU • Die Hard Bios with external controller • Supports PC133 SDRAM DIMM • Enlarged 24K gold plated heatsink for chipset • Intergrated 2D/3D graphics engine with Dynamic Video Memory Technology: 4MB SDRAM display cache on board and one AGP slot for 4x/2x/1x AGP graphics card upgrade



MK33 - Duron 2 Athlon

Supports AMD Athlon and Duron Socket A CPUs • Supports PC133 and VCM133 (virtual channel memory) DIMM • Supports 1x/2x/4x AGP mode • Resetable fuse providing short circuit protection for keyboard and USB device • ACPI S3 (suspend to RAM) and S4 (suspend to disk)

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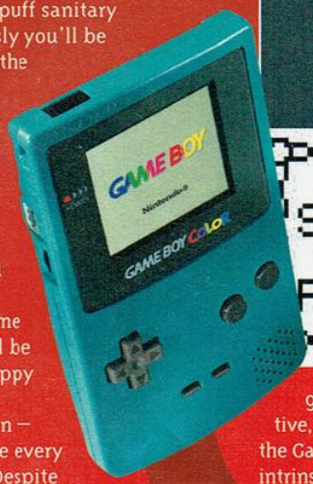
M&ASER1006

POKÉMON GOLD & SILVER

AVAILABLE: Now
CATEGORY: Pokémon
PRICE: $59.95
PUBLISHER: Acclaim
FORMAT: Game Boy Color Only

Since Pokémon took over the world, it's been easy to forget why we loved it in the first place. Taking a walk through your local supermarket will reveal plastic Pikachu sporks, Bulbasaur tea towels and Jigglypuff sanitary pads and thusly you'll be swelling with the urge to pull the offending merchandise from the shelves. However, slot Pokémon Gold or Silver into your Color Game Boy and you'll be lost in that happy little land of Pokémon again – and you'll love every minute of it. Despite the way the popularity of this creation has been exploited, you simply cannot deny the fact that the Pokémon games are special – and they actually keep getting better.



WILD HOOTHOOT HAS APPEARED

If you're the kind of gamer who played both Pokémon Red and Blue, then you'll no doubt justify the purchase of both Pokémon Gold and Silver, although essentially they are the same game. But what a game. The Pokémon games really are the most interactive, challenging and fun games on the Game Boy Color – despite their intrinsically simplistic gameplay, we'd recommend them over the majority of platform tosh available for the handheld any day. The basic story is that there are a crapload of Pokémon hidden in the game, and it's your task to discover and train them all, as well as complete the adventure that paves its way before you (and yep, it's a brand new adventure). You start the game with one Pokémon and before you know it, you've earned enough money to purchase PokéBalls and thus the ability to capture and train more Pokémon. The more battles they win, the more experience they gain, abilities they learn and eventually it transforms them into stronger types. You all know how it goes.

The Game Boy Color does a remarkable job of making the visuals so much more enjoyable this time around. Not only are all the little blighters a variety of colours, but their attacks now involve cute, unique animations. For instance, Totodile's water spray attack creates a wavy "you've just been soaked" effect over your Pokémon. Simple but cool.

BELLS AND WHISTLES

If you were hoping that Gold and Silver would have new features and options, then your prayers have been answered. In fact, there is so much cool new stuff here, that we have to applaud the developer, Game Freaks, for not getting lazy and pumping out a lame cash-in sequel with the bare minimum additions. Even if you played Red, Blue and Yellow to death, there's new stuff here to get you excited all over again. For starters, Gold and Silver allow the full link-cable play so you can battle your friends and trade stuff, plus the infrared port allows two gamers to send each other bizarre little mystery gifts. As far as the single-player game goes, your PokéPack now contains a mobile phone (called a "cell" phone in the game – silly Yanks) that allows you to call and be called by the cast of characters – from your own mother to other Pokémon trainers wanting to battle it out.

You can now also give items to your Pokémon to hold, which they will then use themselves in battle, like a healing potion or cure for poison. There are also now a huge amount of new custom abilities to teach your Pokémon, as well as some brand new breeds to discover, Dark and Steel. Get to know Elekid, Gligar, Chikorita and literally heaps more brand new Pokémon. Some only come out at night, and the game will switch between day and night depending on the internal clock which you set when you first play. The fact that the gender of your Pokémon is now also displayed is no novelty – breeding Pokémon will result in new Pokémon. In fact, you learn a lot about where Pokémon come from during your adventure.

Some people may be ready to take to Nintendo's headquarters with a barrelload of home-made firebombs over the Pokémon phenomenon, but we urge you to go play Gold and Silver and we bet you'll change your mind. Brilliant.

FRANK DRY

9/10

>> BY TIM LEVY

Mitchell
MIGHTY PANG

A good game idea never dies. It either becomes set in its 'way' and standardised like Chess or Twister or it slowly evolves to become a more enjoyable experience where the game's goodness is added to, to create a game that is... er... gooder. Mighty Pang is one of these games.

EXPLODING BALLS

Wind it back to 1990 where a video game world was firmly entrenched in 2D. The shooter genre (Galaga, Galaxians etc) was about to find a new lease of life in the form of the Capcom game Pang! Instead of blasting non-peace-loving aliens, you took on the guise of an intrepid explorer who toured the world exploding balls. Makes sense, Ja?

Nonetheless, Pang took the hectic gameplay of the shooter and added obstacles, ladders and an interesting array of powerups to create a new genre that could be called the 'puzzle shooter'.

The game was re-released in 1996 to much acclaim and has just been re-re-released to remind us that this genre is not dead.

There are 3 modes of play in this game. The first is the unrecommendable sleep-inducing for-unco-people-only mode called 'Panic Mode'. The second is the fantastic 'Tour Mode' that has a whopping 57 stages which fortunately is grouped into sub sets of 3-4 stages so that you are able to bypass lower stages and access the more cryptically challenging higher stages with ease. The third mode of play is the unbelievably difficult 'Expert Mode' which novices would find hard to even complete one or two stages.

The tour mode is the pick of the bunch and it is quite a daunting mission to complete all the stages, as it would not only take lots of skill, but large amounts of time -over an hour, which IS a long time to play an arcade game.

BOUNCING BALLS

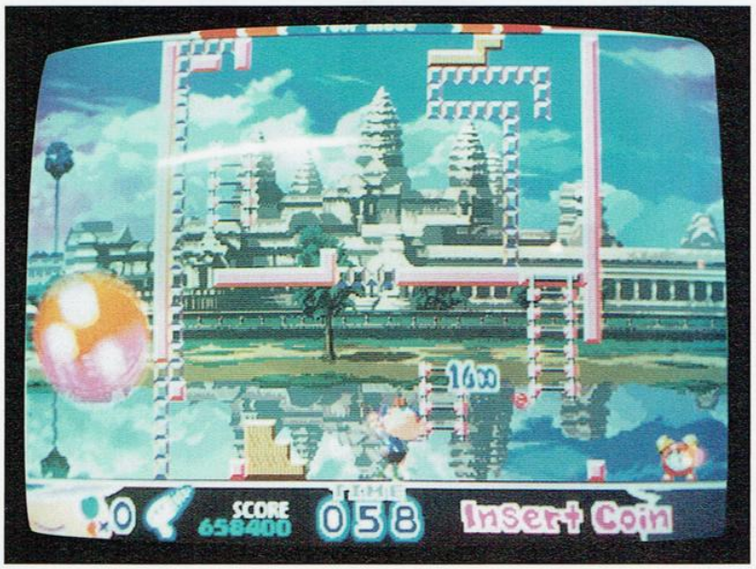
The trick to this game is to be able to predict the trajectories of the bouncing balls and also keep in mind that each time a ball is shot, it splits into two smaller balls. Try to keep the minimum amount of balls on the screen by destroying one set of balls before attempting the next set. Another way of disposing of a lot of balls is by trapping a ball in a corner and rapidly depressing the fire button whist moving incrementally AWAY from the corner.

There are many breakable blocks that contain useful items and power ups. Try to steer clear of the 'sticks of dynamite' as they break up all the balls into their smallest size simultaneously thus making it much harder. Other powerups are ingeniously laid to tempt you, only to be trapped. Be warned.

In the higher stages, there are numerous changes to the playing field. Often the horizontal ground will be made of conveyor belts or will change suddenly to become diagonal. In other stages you must reach balls which are trapped by surrounding walls. The balls can only be reached by destroying the walls, pushing stepladders and using a lot of foresight.

All this gameplay is accompanied by cutesy type graphics and funky techy tunes which are based upon music characteristically found in the country you are playing in.

It's good to see that the classic Pang! has reached another generation of gamers as it is a great game and almost twice as fun when played in two-player mode.



SCORE
9/10

NEWS FLASH!!!!!!!!

Apparently, video game arcades are to be banned in mainland China. Arcade owners were given 2 weeks notice to close shop and the military will be confiscating all the machines. Supposedly, the video games are a stepping stone towards gambling and are crime inducing. One wonders what will replace the arcades? Crime and gambling, maybe? Oh well, at least the kids can hang at home and gamble online and play Carmageddon on their home computers.

DVD

>> KEVIN CHEUNG

DVD is the format of choice for anyone who's serious about their home cinema experience. Once you enjoy the rich visual splendour of an all-digital picture, there's no turning back. This issue we have another pile of the latest reviews and some fantastic Anime. Find the couch, kick back and let Hyper help you decide what you should be watching...

LOOKS LIKE THE CURE ARE BACK IN TOWN AGAIN

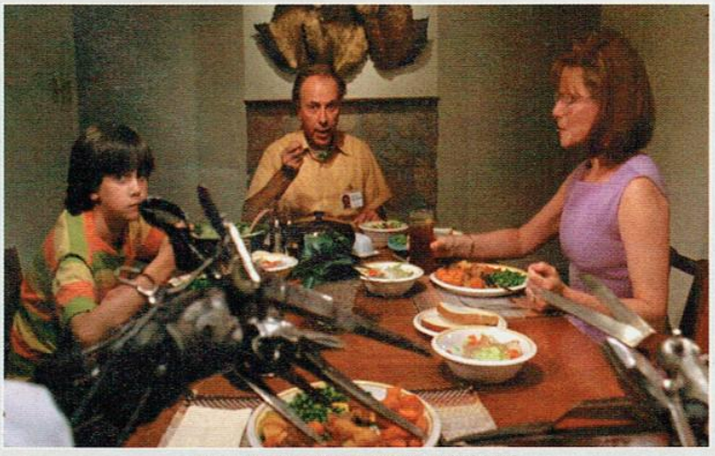
Edward Scissorhands – 10th Anniversary Edition

20TH CENTURY FOX
PG

A goodly inventor gives the miracle of life to a robot named Edward, but dies of old age before finishing the job. As a result, Edward is left with scissors for hands and no-one to guide him through life. Enter Dianne Wiest, the local Avon lady who takes him in and makes him part of the family. Edward becomes the community spectacle, but all the while a love story is brewing between him and Wiest's daughter, Winona Ryder.

Edward Scissorhands is a modern classic. Director Tim Burton brilliantly weaves this noble yet tragic love story amidst a comedic world of social dysfunction. The striking contrasts of Burton's artistic vision are beautifully complemented by a Danny Elfman score, both of whom you can listen to in a commentary track.

EXTRAS: 6/10 | MOVIE: 8/10



SO THAT'S WHERE THE SET OF STEAK KNIVES WENT

NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL WET BEHIND THE EARS

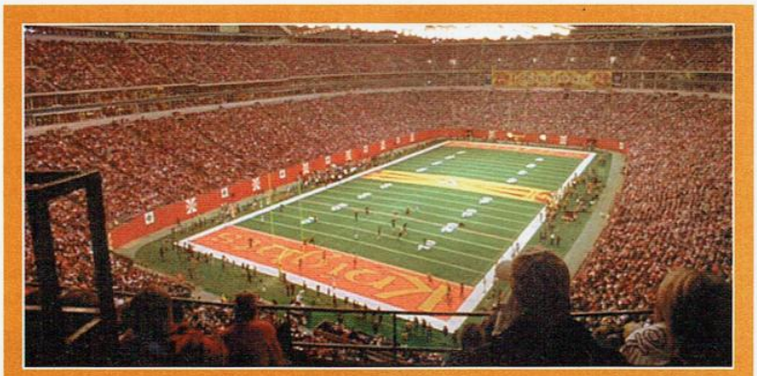
The Abyss – Special Edition

20TH CENTURY FOX
M

Ed Harris and Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio lead an undersea search team in a bid to salvage a sunken US military submarine. They are accompanied by Michael Biehn's navy detail, who suspect the sub was attacked by a secret Soviet weapon – all the while they were just the subject of attention of a few curious critters living 25,000 feet under water.

Unlike Aliens, Terminator 2 or True Lies, The Abyss is more about suspense than action – though the water tentacle is still known as the precursor to the T-1000 in T2. Claustrophobia, paranoia, drowning, and other related fears play a central role. This re-release of the film contains both the original theatrical release and the special edition version with 28 minutes of extra footage. Given the film's age, though, the extra features aren't as good as other big sci-fi titles.

EXTRAS: 6/10 | MOVIE: 7/10



Any Given Sunday

WARNER BROS
MA15+

Oliver Stone's perspective of American pro football was so controversial the NFL refused to endorse it – the result being a completely fictitious football league that can bend history a little. NFL fans will be able to spot the roles played by Terrell Owens, LT, Jim Brown (and Heaven forbid Barry Switzer), as well as the parallels being drawn to the Niners' Montana/Young dilemma.

Al Pacino is the head coach of the struggling Miami Sharks. Star QB Dennis Quaid is both old and out with injury, and it's up to third string Jamie "Steamin Willie Beamen" Foxx to save the season. NFL mightn't have much of an audience in Australia, but this is essential viewing for the clusters of fans who hang on to every moment of it on cable. Stone's across-the-board exploration of the commerce, politics, glory, and sleaze in the NFL is made all the more compelling with his unique style of direction.

EXTRAS: 5/10 | MOVIE: 8/10

Hard Boiled

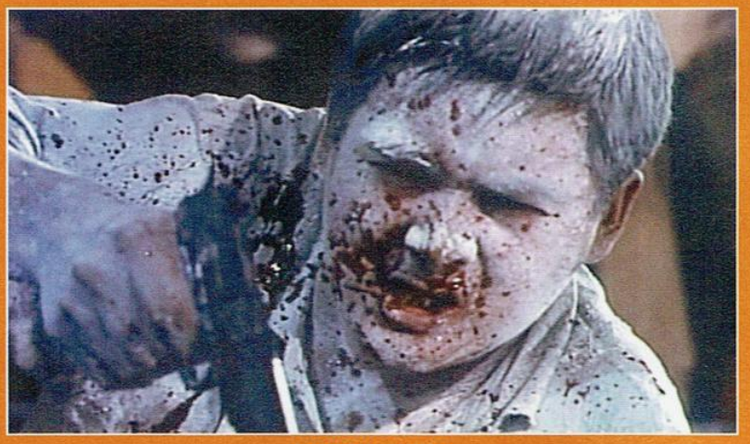
GOLDEN PRINCESS

MA15+

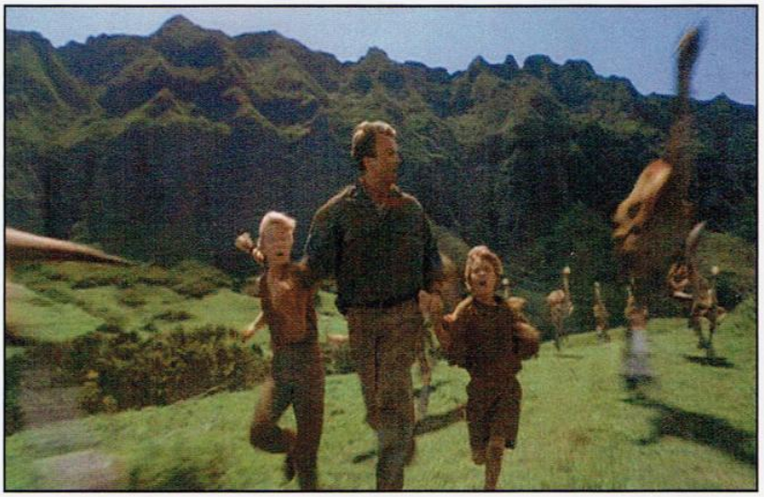
Chow Yun Fat plays a hardened cop in Hong Kong. The city is ridden with ruthless underground gun-runners, and his department is jumping loops trying to catch them. Only after the police department settles its internal differences can it have a showdown with the big boss.

This is one of the movies that made director John Woo famous, and Chow Yun Fat a big name in Asian films. The shootouts are absolute top viewing, the non-stop two-handed mid-air gunplay showcasing glimpses of the genius that only the big budgets of Face/Off and Mission Impossible 2 could make obvious. Except in Hard Boiled, Woo isn't restricted quite so much by Western sensitivities, and ends up garnering one of the highest body counts in any film.

EXTRAS: 5/10 | MOVIE: 8/10



ANYONE GOT A KLEENEX?



Jurassic Park

UNIVERSAL

M

This is the one that started the wheels turning — where big time special effects during post-production make or break a film. Quality actors? Who needs 'em? Using the very latest in stop motion animation, robotic puppetry, and computer animation, Steven Spielberg's interpretation of Michael Crichton's original nail-biting novel about dinosaurs reborn is splendid. In this film, scientists discover a way of bringing dinosaurs back to life by extracting DNA from prehistoric mosquitoes trapped in amber. All hell breaks loose when they try to open a dino zoo.

Everything about this DVD is great. The picture and audio quality, the featurettes, the production notes — top notch. All that spoils the view is Spielberg's idealistic belief that 'once he has his audience in the palm of his hands, they'll believe anything' (paraphrased from the Jaws DVD). Hence the original ending was butchered to keep the puritans happy.

EXTRAS: 4/10 | MOVIE: 7/10

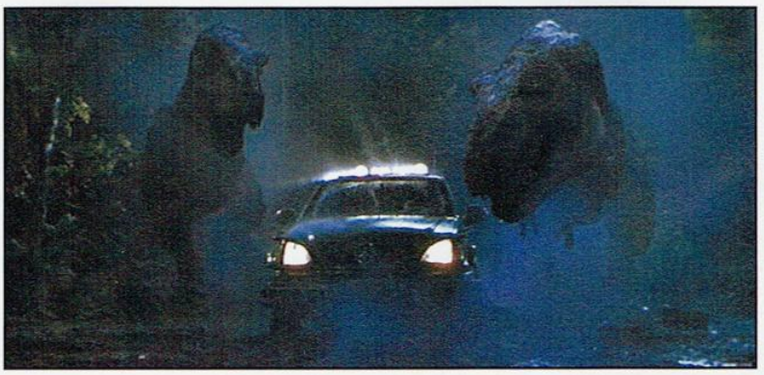
The Lost World

UNIVERSAL

M

The sequel to Jurassic Park takes us to Site B, the place where the dinosaurs were bred before being taken to Jurassic Park. Special effects are obviously taken up a step. There are more dinosaurs in both quantity and variety, and with a lot more human interaction as well. The main attraction is just in seeing the dinosaurs in action.

Unfortunately the plot takes a serious dive. Most characters are unlikable, so much that one ends up wishing a horrible, slow death on the heroine played by Julianne Moore. All the usual Spielberg devices are present — an innocent child sneaking on to the island, heroic posturing, unbelievably timed rescue choppers... the ridiculous Godzilla rip off at the end takes the cake for cheesiness. But what can you do? There will always be families and kids to soak up the cliché.

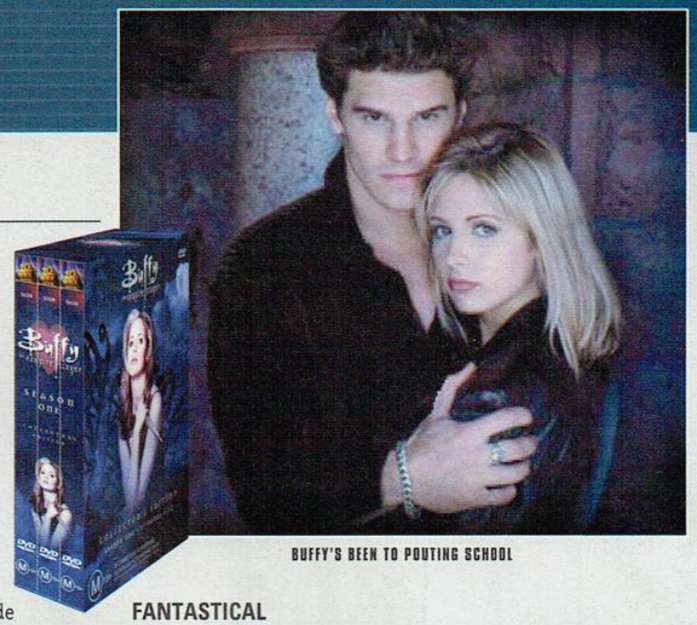


EXTRAS: 4/10 | MOVIE: 6/10

Buffy The Vampire Slayer – SERIES 1 AND 2

TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT

M



BUFFY'S BEEN TO POUTING SCHOOL

Perhaps it was the name that initially put me off. "Buffy". What the hell, or who the hell, is called that? And then it was probably the fact that Buffy became a "phenomenon". But once I dropped my guard (after my Buffy-loving siblings copped two years of unfounded derision mind you), it effortlessly sucked me in.

SLAP MY BUFFY UP

Buffy is set in a highly complex world - with a sophisticated history and conventions of its own - that can be difficult to penetrate if you jump in at the wrong place. Which is why the release of series one and two (on DVD and VHS respectively) is the ideal way for all you Buffy-virgins out there to experience the brilliance of this show from the most appropriate place: the beginning.

The original idea for Buffy came from creator, writer and director Joss Whedon's desire to challenge the conventional path taken by oh so many horror films, in which the pretty, blonde chick is usually the first and most helpless victim of whatever it is that happens to be doing the terrorising. Buffy takes the ditsy blonde girl and empowers her, creating a force to be reckoned with.

In Whedon's world, darkness (in the form of vampires, demons, mutants, dark magicians etc) lurks just below the surface of normal society. There is a protector, however, one girl whose birth rite it is to battle the forces of evil - "The Slayer". Buffy unhappily learns of her destiny just before moving from LA to the small town of Sunnydale, effectively swapping cheerleading and vacuous bitchdom, for social ostricism, incredible power and never ending evil. Speaking of evil, Sunnydale is conveniently situated on a "hellmouth" - a gateway between Earth and the underworld realms, thus explaining the rampant evil activity in town.

FANTASTICAL

Tolkien once wrote that in order for a work of high fantasy to be taken seriously, the writer had to create a world that was real, a world of logical internal cohesiveness that had the power to totally absorb and envelop its audience. Buffy is a perfect example of this, with cleverly written, imaginative story-lines based around a compelling mythology. Joss Whedon has clearly put a lot of thought into the rules and boundaries of this world, taking ubiquitous folklore and horror themes and reinterpreting them to work in a modern context.

Such is the skill of Whedon and the cast that despite its fantastical pretence, Buffy always seems authentic and genuine. This is partly due to the way in which humour is never far from the surface in any given episode. Buffy pokes fun at itself, urging the viewer to laugh at its idiosyncracies, and is laced with an endearing self-referentiality. Complementing the offbeat dialogue and pithy one liners are some beautifully choreographed and funny fight scenes. Buffy is worth watching for the martial arts action alone.

Another of Buffy's triumphs is its skilfull character portrayal and development. The divisions between "good" and "evil" are never clear cut, nor are they diametrically opposed to each other. Our definition of what comprises evil is constantly challenged by complex situations and multi-layered characters.

Buffy is clever, consistently well-written and, for anyone who's interested, it's definitely post-modern in orientation. The DVD release is actually available here in Australia before the rest of the world which is pretty cool, and the extras include interviews, screensavers, a music video and a copy of the pilot script with commentary from Joss Whedon.

VICTORIA FLANAGAN

SERIES 1: EXTRAS: **6**/10 | MOVIE: **8**/10

SERIES 2: EXTRAS: **N/A** | MOVIE: **9**/10

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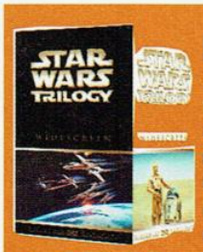
MAY THE BOX SET BE WITH YOU



The Star Wars Trilogy is being re-released by Lucasfilm and Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, in a fancy new VHS box-set this holiday season. This is the 1997 cinema release (ie the Special Editions) of the original classics which hit cinemas in 1977, 1980 and 1983. Episode IV, V and VI are here to be enjoyed all over again, or maybe for the first time for those of you who were introduced to the Star Wars galaxy by Episode One. The cool thing about this box-set, is that it includes a ten minute sneak peek at the production of Episode Two, complete with interviews and footage of the set – but no actual footage from the film as far as we know.

ANIME

Bubblegum Crisis: Tokyo 2040

CATEGORY: SCI-FI, ACTION
PRODUCTION COMPANY: JVC

Bubblegum Crisis: Tokyo 2040 looks like a very slick re-interpretation of Kenichi Sonoda's original work. In this version of the series, future Tokyo is reliant on the help of synthetic robots — or Boomers as they are called — for the day to day running of the city.

However, every once in a while a Boomer will mutate and cause havoc, which is when the police are usually called in. Unfortunately, the Knight Sabers, a vigilante group composed of athletic, buxom young women in skin-tight "hard suits", always beats them to the punch. The series focuses on Linna, a country girl just moved into Tokyo who is absolutely obsessed with the Sabers and eventually becomes a member.

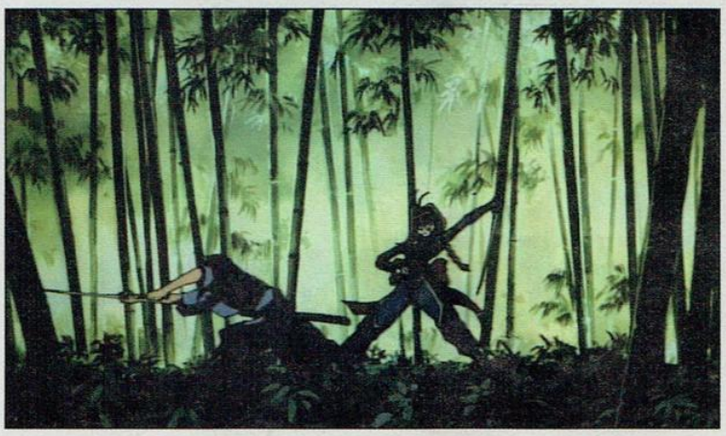
While the underlying conspiracy theories hold a little promise, the plot is paced very slowly. Too much time is spent establishing the unimaginative future society, and character development is so overdone that the Sabers look like a bitchy variant of Charlie's Angels. The animation is a mixed bag — character designs are excellent, but the smoothness of motion is inconsistent.

BUXOM WOMEN IN SKIN-TIGHT HARD SUITS? WHO CARES IF IT STINKS!

ANIMATION: 5 | PLOT: 2 | JAPAN-NESS: MEDIUM | OVERALL: **2**

SERIES UPDATE!

All three tapes of the Photon series are now available. The second tape is easily as funny as the first (see Hyper #83), but in drawing the series to its conclusion in the third tape, the story goes completely pear-shaped. By the end you'll wonder why the twist was needed at all. Martian Hunter Nadesico and Rurouni Kenshin are current favourites and still going strong, but for some reason the disturbing yet brilliantly animated Ninja Resurrection series has come to the same kind of production impasse as was experienced by Giant Robo. As for Princess Mononoke, Disney has finally decided to include the Japanese audio track. Woohoo!



JUST PRUNING THE GARDEN

Jubei-Chan: The Ninja Girl

CATEGORY: ACTION/COMEDY
PRODUCTION COMPANY: MADHOUSE/BANDAI

Jubei Yagyu, master swordsman, Japanese folk hero, and star of the popular Ninja Scroll film, makes a final wish to his servant Koinosuke to find a suitable person to carry on the legacy of his sword. With his dying breath, he asked that this person be possessed of plump, bouncy bon-bons.

A few hundred years later, Koinosuke finds Jiyu — affectionately called Jubei for short — a 13 year old schoolgirl with plump bouncy bon-bons who has a tendency to cause every breathing male around to fall madly in love with her. Though reluctant, once she puts on the Yagyu eye patch she becomes the modern female reincarnation of Jubei Yagyu. The Yagyu presence rekindles an old rivalry with the Ryujoji clan, which has been waiting for a chance at revenge.

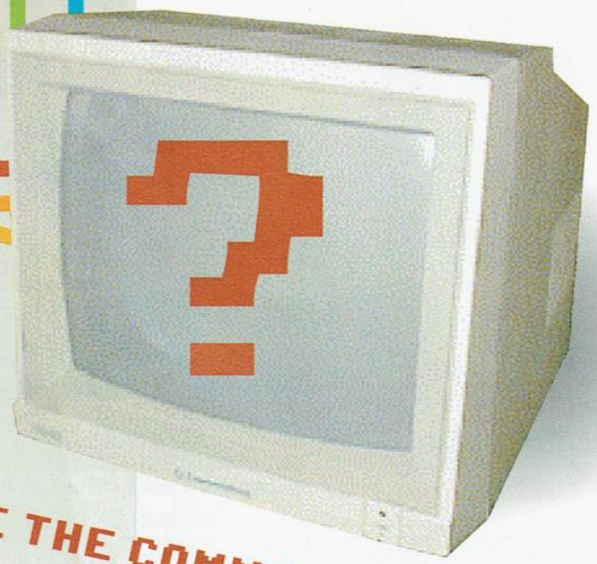
The first four episodes has a great combination of comical art direction, multiple love triangles, slapstick humour, harmless hentai, and the odd fight scene. There's definite potential for this series to get better later on.

ANIMATION: 10 | PLOT: 8 | JAPAN-NESS: LOW | OVERALL: **9**

>> James Cottee

COMMO

ARE YOU KEEPING UP WITH THE COMMODORE 64



CAUSE THE COMMODORE 64 IS KEEPING UP WITH YOU.

Regarded by some with abject derision, and others with fond nostalgia, the Commodore 64 has left an indelible mark on the public's conception of the home computer, and on video games in general. Its production ran for a full decade, from 1982 to 1992, and 22 million units were sold worldwide. A versatile machine, it could be used for business, hacking, composing and word processing, but most commonly for games. It was the single most popular home computer ever built, and in the pages that follow we will look at how it changed the world, and why.

THE EARLY EIGHTIES

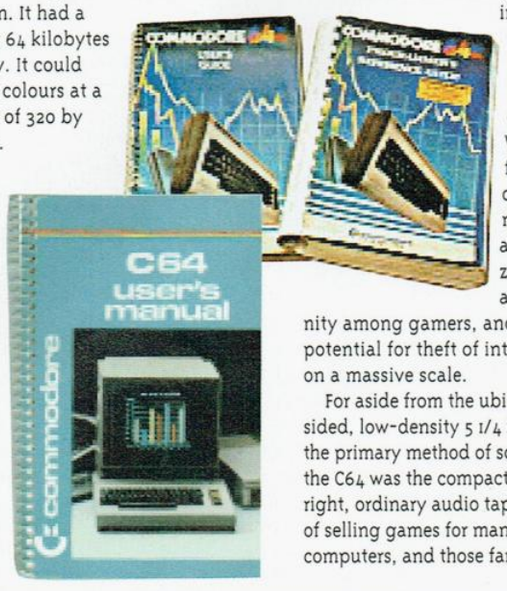
The punk era was over, and with the senile Reagan in the White House, planet Earth was closer to nuclear armageddon than ever. Synth-heavy pop sensations clogged the charts, and cinema didn't get much more sophisticated than "Red Dawn." Home computers, or "micros," were either shoddy little toys that were as likely to melt as do as they were told, or hideously expensive beige monstrosities that ran MS-DOS, or worse, CP/M.

Commodore Business Machines was still alive and well, and sought to build on the success of their Vic-20 by making a new and improved version. It was housed in exactly the same shell, but instead of boring white was cast in futuristic brown. It had a whopping 64 kilobytes of memory. It could display 16 colours at a resolution of 320 by 200 pixels.

64K OF MEMORY... PHWOAAR!

It came with a cartridge port, an I/O port, a serial port, and two joystick connectors (cleverly placed right next to the on/off switch). It possessed the most powerful sound chip available at the time, and its components and capabilities were so well balanced that it was ideal for gaming. It was the Commodore 64, and naturally the executives that created it tried to market it as a machine for business use.

This idea didn't really catch on, and instead it became the de-facto standard for home video game entertainment. With a standard format came cheaper games made for a wider audience, magazines that created a sense of community among gamers, and of course the potential for theft of intellectual property on a massive scale.

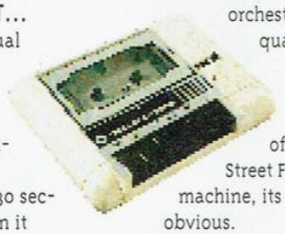


For aside from the ubiquitous single-sided, low-density 5 1/4 inch floppy discs the primary method of software storage on the C64 was the compact cassette. That's right, ordinary audio tapes were the means of selling games for many brands of home computers, and those familiar with the

DORE 64

technology will know how easy it is to copy them. It was not uncommon for WaReZ tapes to come with a dozen or more games on a single side, and the astute software pirate would have to patiently wait for the counter on his "Datasette Drive" to clock over to the required three-digit number before loading could commence.

LOADING. PLEASE WAIT...



Those familiar with the usual loading times of tape-based games will be aware that they constituted a hobby in and of themselves. These days people complain if a game takes 30 seconds to load. But back then it could take five minutes. Or ten. A game with mulitple levels would typically be spread across several tapes, and each time a stage was conquered the waiting game would begin afresh.

While there is a case for building tension in the gaming audience, this was beyond a joke. There was no guarantee that your game would load properly on the first attempt, as these were ordinary tapes, subject to stretching and breakage and all the other mortal foibles of the medium. It's hardly surprising that the disk-drive add-on was the most sought after peripheral amongst young Commodore enthusiasts, more so than comparatively useless devices like thermal printers and 300 baud modems.

THE FALL OF THE C64

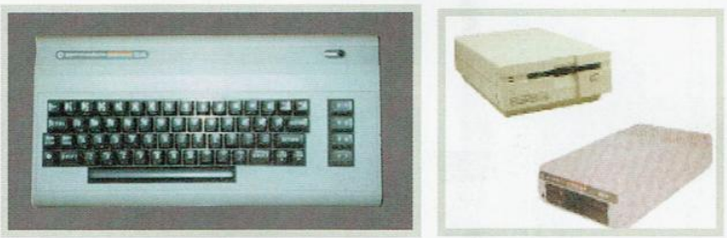
For an eternity it seemed as though life was getting better all the time, and at every step the red power LED of the Commodore was there to light the way. Unfortunately, this run of success couldn't last forever. Despite the falling price of the machine and increasingly tempting software bundles, the early 90s was the beginning of the rise of the PC as the dominant games platform. At first the C64 with it's assembly-coded software could hold its own against the IBM-compatible, as its games were generally written in higher languages and then compiled, thus negating a great deal of its raw-power advantage. Also, it was not common for PCs to come with sound cards at this point in history, and the PC gamer would be forced to listen to game music pumped through the horrid in-built PC speaker, which made the Sid chip look like an orchestra by comparison. But the quality of PC games took off regardless, and the Commodore was left behind. By the time ports of games like Sim City and Street Fighter 2 appeared on the machine, its limitations were painfully obvious.

There were several failed attempts by CBM to broaden the appeal of the C64 and extend its life. The Commodore 128 had twice the RAM, but cost more and didn't really catch on. The 64GS was a C64 turned into a game console; it had no keyboard, just a cartridge port and a butt-ugly case. It failed horribly. In the last days of the C64, and of Commodore itself, a new backwards compatible machine was developed to be its successor, dubbed the Commodore 65. It never made it past the prototype stage, and wasn't even as powerful as the Amiga 600, made by the same company.

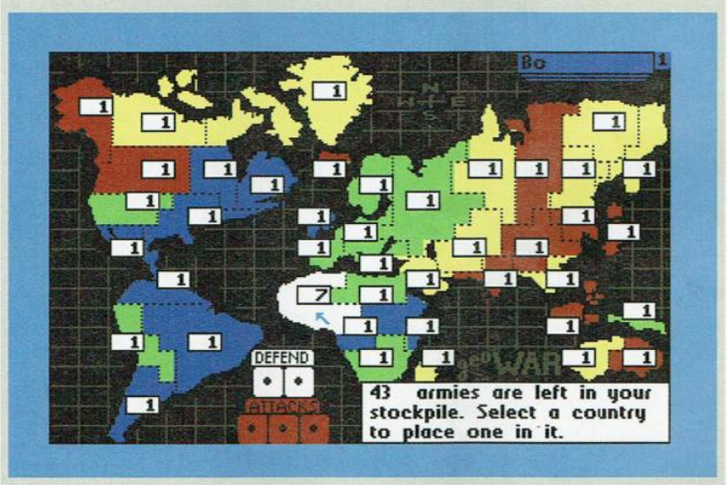
A few fruity gamers still use the Commodore 64, and you hear strange stories of them being fitted with PowerPC chips and hard drives. While its BBS scene is dead there are countless fan sites on the web where C64 enthusiasts lovingly guard their memories of the brownest computer ever built.

You can of course also get emulators and ROMs of most games to grace the system. By far the best is CCS64, a shareware program that simulates the machine right down to its disk drives.

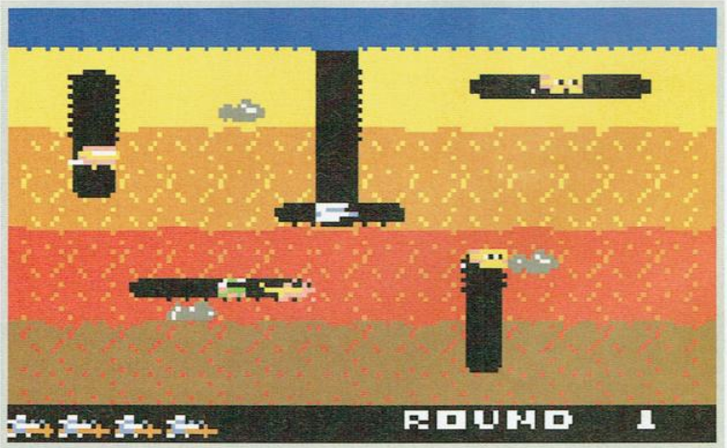
If you believe in the C64, then it still lives inside of you. It's in all of us, really. It was an ugly grey wedge that defined a generation.



A TRUE GAMING TEMPLE



BOARD GAMES SUCH AS RISK CAME TO LIFE IN 16 COLOURS!



AHH! THE PIXELS ARE HURTING MY EYES!

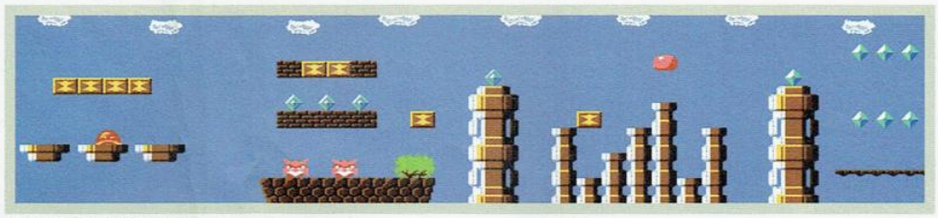
the games

Over 10,000 games were written for the Commodore 64. To put that in perspective, only about 2,700 have been written for the PlayStation, and that's including all the strange Japanese ones where you seduce schoolgirls. Many new genres were forged on the platform, and many of them still hold up today.

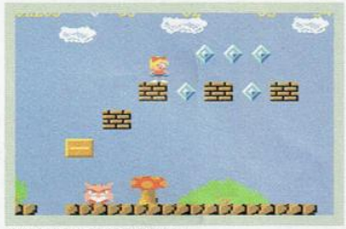
DRUID

DRUID

This resembled a single player version of Gauntlet, in which the player played the eponymous druid on his quest to rid the land of countless identical monsters. By the collection of various types of mana one could cast spells based on the elements: fire, water, wind and so forth. Not exactly an original concept, but very well presented, and of course a source of crippling addiction.



THE GREAT GIANNA SISTERS



THE GREAT GIANNA SISTERS

THE GREAT GIANNA SISTERS

A blatant rip-off of Super Mario Brothers, this is nonetheless a superbly balanced platform game that is quite addictive. Since this was made in 1987, the power-ups increase the size of Gianna and Maria's punk hair-dos.

In addition to superb gameplay, The Great Gianna Sisters featured music by Chris Hulsbeck, German godfather of video game music. A child prodigy, he started composing for C64 games when he was 14, and is still part of the industry today.

KAST NINJA TRILOGY

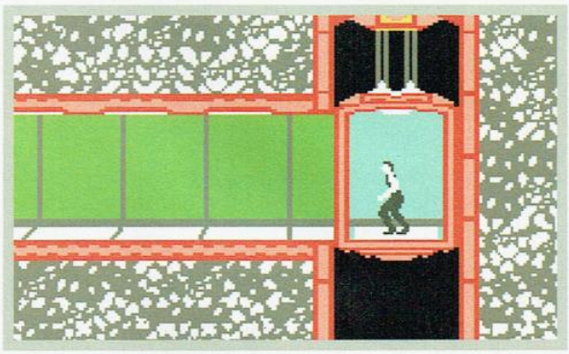
LAST NINJA TRILOGY

Perhaps the finest flip-screen isometric adventure games ever made, the three Last Ninja games combined ingenious puzzle solving with varied combat. Throw shuriken at your foes, or close in and whop them with nunchucks. The graphics were quite outstanding for the time, and the immensely difficult levels dared the player to inhuman feats of repetition and endurance. The creators of The Last Ninja are still around, and a fourth game is in production for PC, PS2 and Xbox.

KAST NINJA TRILOGY

IMPOSSIBLE MISSION

Considered by many the finest game on the C64, the smooth animation of the main character in this platformer predate those in Prince Of Persia, and the use of voice synthesis was more than appropriate, it was chilling. Upon starting the game you were confronted with: "Another visitor. Stay a while. Stay FOREVER!" (This one makes an excellent Windows startup sound). Further progress through a vast bunker full of deathtraps might prompt your tormentor to exclaim: "Destroy him, my robots!" And of course the simple "Aaaaaaaargh" your character emitted whilst dying was at once foreboding and



IMPOSSIBLE MISSION

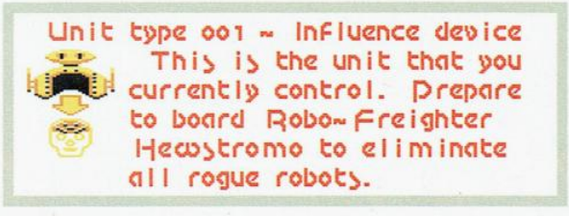
maddening. This game wasn't impossible, but only a handful of living humans have finished it.

M.U.L.E.

The finest multi-player game on the C64, some would argue on any platform, ever. It concerned prospecting for precious minerals on a strange new world, and up to four players could indulge in devious shenanigans therein. The innovative, and seldom replicated, aspect was the implementation of a realistic economy, with supply and demand affecting the prices of supplies. One player could make the others suffer by buying up a given commodity to drive up the price, for instance. Garish colours and infectious music added to the fun. Some would even call it perfect; it's certainly hard to imagine how it could be improved. An early release from EA.

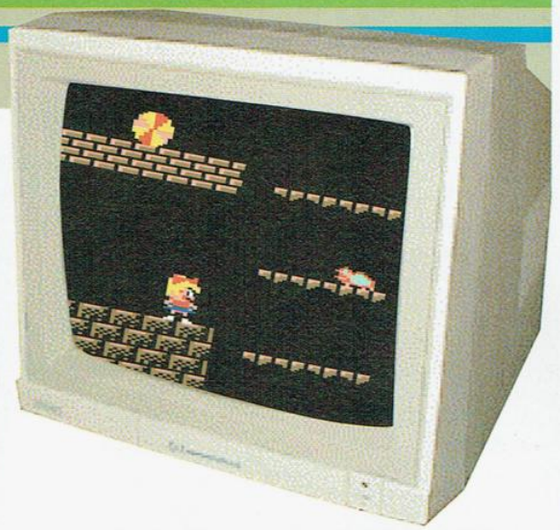
PARADROID

An excellent game set on a huge starship where the robots have run amok. You control a commando robot on a mission to set things straight, and possess the ability to hack your way into other robots on the ship, and thus temporarily control them. Intriguing and compelling with a unique game design, Paradroid held one on the edge of one's seat for hours on end.

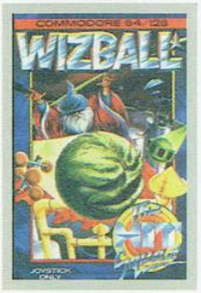


PARADROID

WIZBALL



WIZBALL



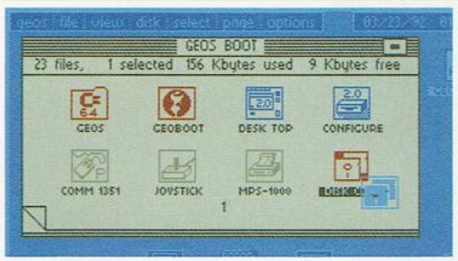
From Sensible Software, who later went on to make Cannon Fodder and Sensible Soccer, this is one of the most strange and addictive games ever made. An evil wizard has sucked all the colour from the world, and playing a noble wizard in a floating green ball you had to set things right. By collecting red, green and blue globules with your loyal cat (flying in its very own "catellite") you could mix them into any colour and restore order to your strange, cosmic dimension. With loopy trance music by Martin Galway and a compelling co-operative mode, Wizball was addictive, surreal and utterly unique.

SID MUSIC

The sound chip in the Commodore 64, known as the "Sid" chip, was capable of three voices across eight octaves, and could also support PCM files. A typical game on the C64 would only allow a few K for music, and this could easily be of an extremely primitive and repetitive nature. However, the tireless efforts of composers like Rob Hubbard and Martin Galway could turn such simple sets of sound into aural poetry, melody-heavy works that tricked the ear and moved the heart.

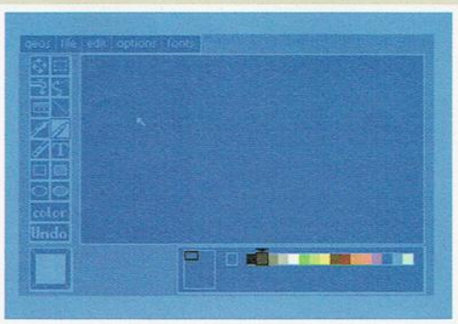
Making music on the C64 wasn't just a matter of composing, it was also programming in machine code to coax the most out of the limited silicon resources available. Now that all modern game machines can simply stream CD-quality audio off the game disc, this virtuosity of old is something of a lost art. This luxury of sound quality has encouraged indulgence and creative stagnation, in the same way that the explosion of system power encourages sloppy coding.

For the curious, you can get a Sid file plug-in for Winamp.



GEOS

Released in 1986, this was a complete Graphical User Interface for the Commodore 64 and 128. It sported WYSIWYG applications, drag-and-drop functionality, and other features one associates with the operating systems of "higher" computers. For instance, one could cut and paste between documents and applications just like in Windows. It supported the memory expansion modules available for the C64, and could even utilise disc drives for memory-expanding swap files. Just as well, for despite its ingenious programming, GEOS gobbled up memory, and was only really useful as a platform for showing off how much of a nerd you were.



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WHAT'S NEW?

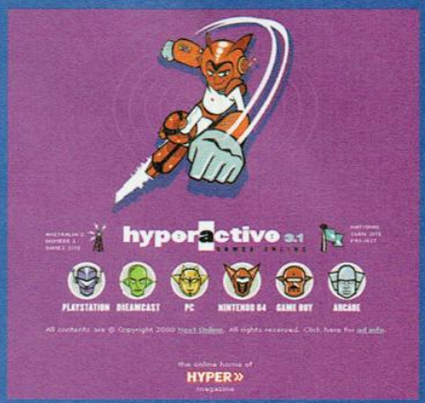
Home to philosophical discussion and heated political debate – the Hyperactive message boards have been revamped to make way for PS2 and Xbox discussion. All the popular topics and threads have been retained but we have scrapped a lot of empty topics for the sake of simplicity. Those old school Hyperactive visitors who wept when we ditched the live chat feature will rejoice with the announcement that live chat rooms will be returning. We are so nice.

FIREARMS & COUNTERSTRIKE

Unless you had been living under a large rock for the last year, the hottest game around today is undoubtedly Counter-Strike. This amazingly popular mod for Half-Life pits counter-terrorists against terrorists in many scenarios including bomb defuse, hostage rescue and VIP assassination. Counter-Strike has undergone many changes since the beta 1 more than a year ago, and is now up to beta 7.1. All that is about to change when Valve release Counter-Strike as a standalone product very soon. Counter-Strike 1.0 will mark the end of the betas but creator Gooseman assures fans that it will still be freely downloadable from the net.

The only real serious 'threat' to Counter-Strike's reign supreme is another multiplayer only mod titled 'Firearms'. Firearms had a rough start but the latest patch (2.3) sees the mod finally starting to carve its own niche. A hybrid of Counter-Strike and TFC, Firearms captures the realism of warfare with gameplay features like blood loss – meaning you will have to bandage yourself up lest you bleed to death; limping and leg breakages; different classes; a rankings system; and lastly, parachute drops into the war zone. People expecting the polish of CS will no doubt be disappointed. But as far as quality of mod goes, Firearms has what it takes. Valve has enough confidence in Firearms to include version 2.4 in Half-Life Platinum Package released later this year. Check out the review of Release Candidate 2.3 at Hyperactive.

Ryan McKay – Hyperactive Producer
ryan@next.com.au



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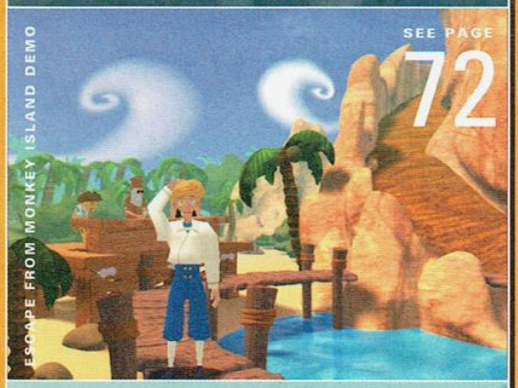
what's on the CD

This month's cover disc is loaded with Christmassy goodness. the latest patches and some great utilities – all onto the on

PC DEMOS



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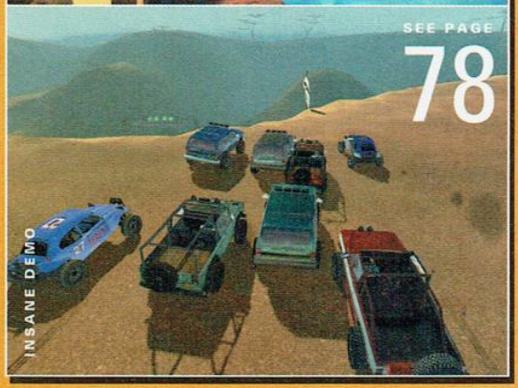


SEE PAGE 78

CRIMSON SKIES
MICROSOFT
REQUIRED: PII 233, 64MB RAM, 3D CARD
Take to the skies in this awesome dogfighting action game that we reviewed last issue. Scoring a big 92%, this is one you don't want to miss.

METAL GEAR SOLID
MICROSOFT
REQUIRED: PII 233, 32MB RAM, 3D CARD
It was a massive hit on the PlayStation and now it's here to captivate us all over again on the PC. You'll be sold on solid.

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND
LUCASARTS
REQUIRED: P200, 32MB RAM, 3D CARD
The fourth in the Monkey Island series is full of just as much life and brilliant puzzles as the originals. You'll love this little brain teaser.

HOMEWORLD: CATACLYSM
SIERRA
REQUIRED: PII 266, 32MB RAM
Another game which scored over 90% last issue, and now you can play the demo of this stand-alone expansion of the original Homeworld.

HITMAN: CODENAME 47
EIDOS
REQUIRED: PII 266, 64MB RAM, 3D CARD
This demo is damn cool. Be the best bald bandit in town, and you'll be salivating for the full game.

INSANE
CODEMASTERS
REQUIRED: PII 233, 64MB RAM, 3D CARD
Codies have done it again with this belter of a racing game. Insanely good fun.

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

e've somehow managed to bung the best demos, some cool movies, D! Merry Christmas!

GAMEPLAY MOVIES

■ DINOSAUR PLANET – NINTENDO 64

Rare have a few pearlers on the way, and Dinosaur Planet looks like one of the best of the lot. Check out this preview movie to see what we're talking about. Gorgeous.

REVIEW ON PAGE 76

■ FINAL FANTASY THE MOVIE - TRAILER – SONY PICTURES

Yes! Here is the coolest movie trailer ever made. Square's Final Fantasy movie is going to knock your socks off – just check out the CGI!

■ RED ALERT 2 – PC

We have a double bonus for Red Alert fans. Not only can you watch the exciting game trailer, but we have a small movie showing us "the making of" Red Alert 2. Not to be missed – this is great stuff.

BUT WAIT... THERE'S MORE

If you use the "explore the CD" option in the menu, you'll discover the patches and utilities folders, as well as the movies folder. This month we've squeezed on...

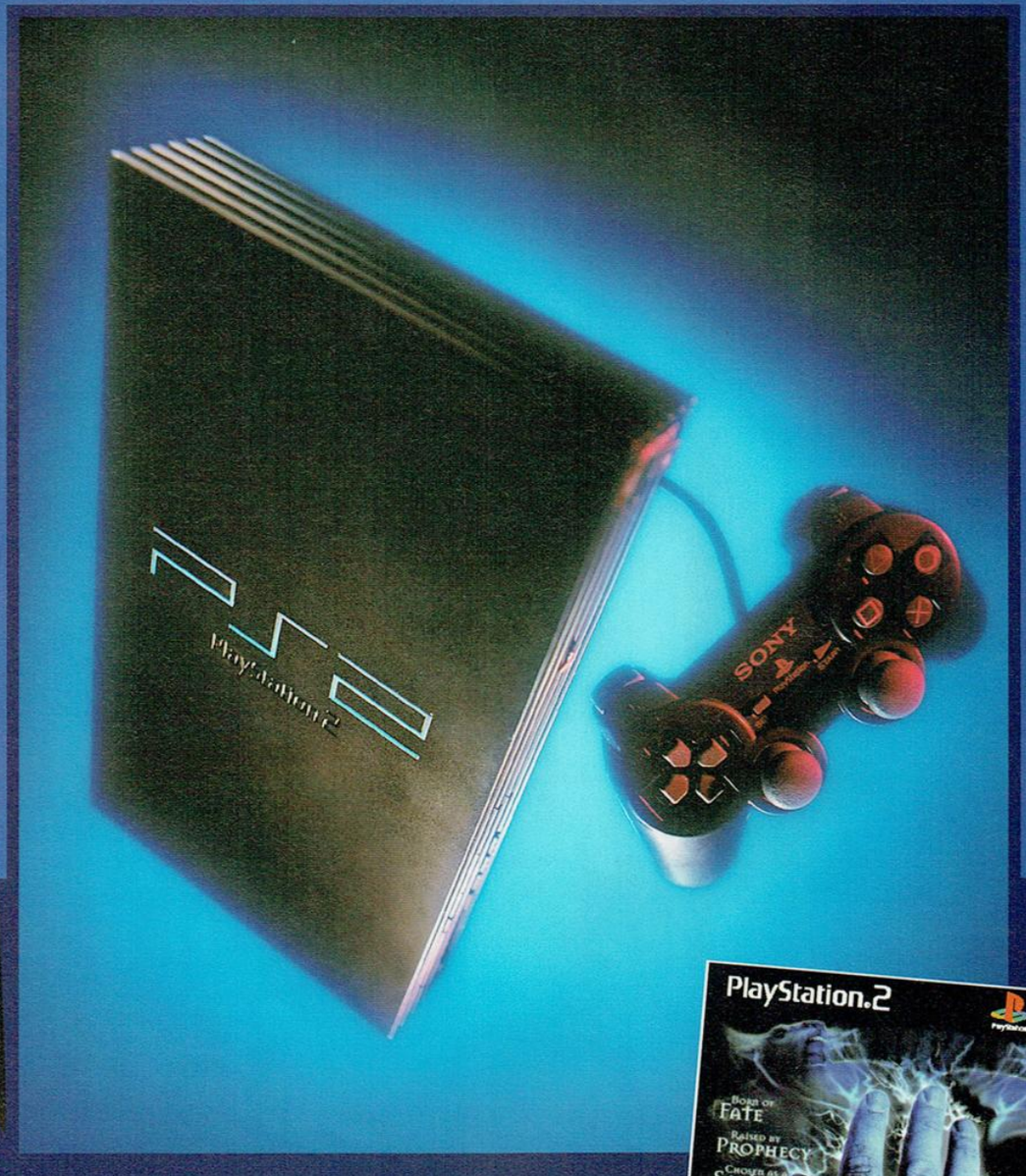
PATCHES

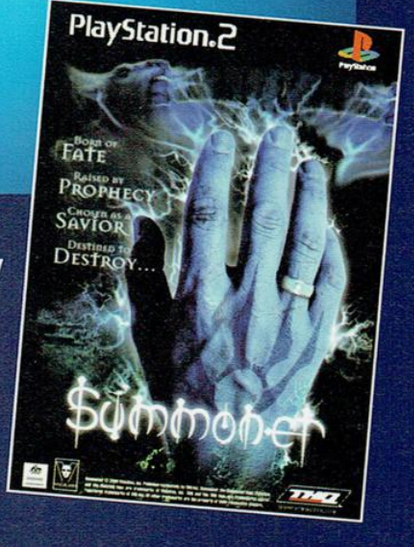
- Quake 3 Arena Point Release 125y
- Unreal Tournament 4.32
- Diablo II
- Soldier Of Fortune Gold Patch
- Flight Sim 2000 Pro
- Ground Control
- Shogun Total War
- Warlords Battlecry
- KISS Psycho Circus

UTILITIES

- Direct X 7.0a
- Download Accelerator
- ICQ 2000b
- MemTurbo
- PS2Rate
- Paintshop Pro 7
- Quicktime
- Roger Wilco
- Scour Exchange
- Winzip

WIN SUMMONER... and a PS2!





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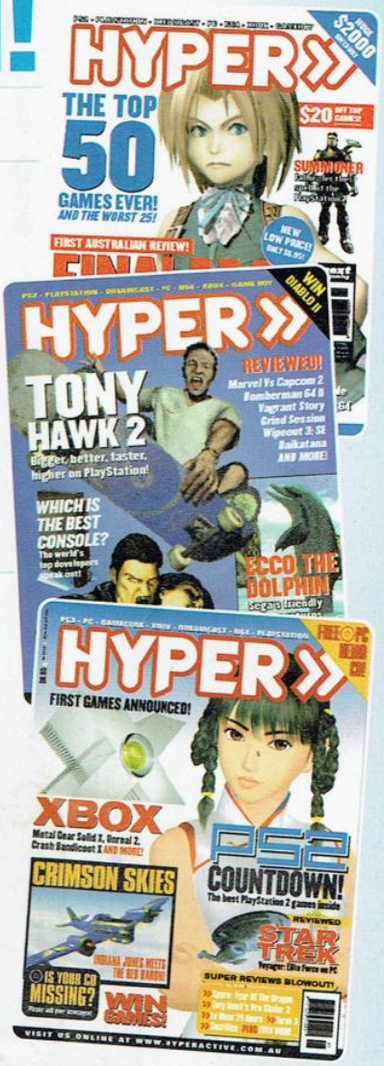

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Here it is - the debut of the Hyper Readers Forum! After ploughing through a month's worth of responses to our first Hyper Forum question (Is the PS2 worth $750?), we've compiled some of the heated replies and we proudly print them here for the first time for your consumption.

IS THE PLAYSTATION 2 WORTH $750?

NOT YET

Let's see, is the PS2 worth $750? I guess it all depends on what you're buying it for. Research shows that about 60% of the millions of people who initially bought one in Japan bought it primarily as a DVD player. That is the reason that PS2 software is generally selling poorly over there. Most people who own the console don't really care about the games. And let's get serious - is there a game to really warrant buying such an expensive console? I say "not yet."

I own a DVD player already. In my situation, I would much prefer to pay heaps less and have the console simply to play games on. And as you stated in Issue 85, the playback quality of the PS2 is not very good. I've seen it in action, and it's nothing to write home about at all. I think the company that has got it right is Nintendo (and I'm not trying to be biased, I own both of the current consoles). On the same day that the GameCube is being released, Masushita (Panasonic) is releasing their new DVD player that can also play NGC games. So the consumers have the choice. Do they want an affordable games machine that JUST plays games, or do they want the two-in-one package? That way everybody's happy.

For a cheapo DVD player with just-average games though, I think $750 is a bit steep.

PETER JENKINS

DON'T GET ME WRONG

Well, we all remember when the first PlayStation came out. Everyone loved it, but not everyone bought it. It was just too expensive!

I mean come on, the SNES launched for about $200 (I know what you're thinking, I have to consider technical advances, but do the parents think about that?). Think about it, there are a lot of gamers/parents out there who are looking to buy a console for themselves, or their kids who don't know much about the gaming biz (and I'm afraid, this is the mainstream). They're not gonna look at it and say "Hmmm, PlayStation 2, this is the choice!" They're gonna look at it, then look at the Dreamcast, and think "well, they're both new... and I could get 2 Dreamcasts for the same price as the PS2... hmmm". I'm kinda hoping, and guessing that this will lead to people turning to the Dreamcast, and finally we'll see it go somewhere. Don't get me wrong, I'm planning on getting both systems, but $750 for something that, right now, only offers an experience that is new on only a graphical high (from what I understand), is a little too much to pay. I'll do what many other people are doing — I'll wait till the price comes down... really down.

CHUM
chumbodia@hotmail.com

BOTTOM OF THE HILL

Is the PlayStation 2 worth $750? NO! Not in my books anyway. Sony has forgotten about the people who just want to play games. Sure having a DVD built in is good, but for someone like me, I just want to play games. There's no way I would pay more than $350 for a console. With DVD I'd probably be willing to pay another $150, which would bring it to about $500 dollars, but the DVD is not the highest priority of features I want in a gaming console and I'm sure a lot of people would agree. Gaming magazines always go on about the fact that a company like Nintendo alienates older gamers by not bringing out enough mature games, but in pricing the PlayStation 2 so high, Sony have also alienated a lot of gamers. Hopefully they will realise this before it is too late, and they find themselves sitting at the bottom of the hill, while Sega and Nintendo reign supreme.

JACKSON GATE
speedgate@bigpond.com.au

RIDICULOUS

In a word? No.

In more than a word: I own a PSX, N64 and a well-powered PC, so I have been sitting on the fence about the whole Next-Gen console war. After originally writing off the Dreamcast, I have decided that this will be the next console to get (after my HSC... study is more important than gaming of course. :)

Already owning two DVD players (a standalone and a DVD-ROM), purchasing a PS2 at $750 is ridiculous... particularly because none of the launch titles interest me. $400-$500 is what I'll pay next year. Hopefully this will happen just as Wipeout Fusion comes out... ooh baby, am I looking forward to that! In the meantime, games such as Crazy Taxi, Power Stone 2 and Sega Rally 2 will suffice.

Cheers,

BELLSY
bellsy@aspire.com.au

PAYING FOR THE NAME

Is it worth $750?? Maybe, maybe not.

I believe the actual hardware itself is not. In mass production terms: a DVD player, advanced chipset and the minor extras do not warrant the price of the PS2. This is the obvious and simple answer to the question itself. But is it the physical console we are paying for? I don't think so. It's like the price of a Target shirt compared to a Calvin Klein shirt. The material is the same but one is triple the price of the other because it has CK printed on it. Although shirts and game consoles

HYPER FORUM

Everyone has a different opinion and the Hyper Forum is where you can get your thoughts outta your head and onto the page for all to see. Don't forget that we have a new topic every issue! Next issue, return for readers' thoughts on whether game graphics should become photo-realistic. But for now, ponder our new question and get your opinions in!

? "IS GAMING A DAMAGING ADDICTION?"

E-mail: FREAKSCENE@NEXT.COM.AU with Hyper Forum in the subject line, and the topic of discussion at the top of your response. Please note that very long contributions may be edited.

shouldn't be made analogous, it is the principal I believe Sony is adopting. Sony is not just charging $750 entirely for the hardware, it's charging $750 for their name too. We would be paying for the possibility and privilege of playing PS2 games. We would be paying for a guarantee of quality games that has been backed up by its predecessor. We all know how successful the PlayStation has been and still is. Their success virtually guarantees quality PS2 games. Sony has built a good enough reputation that they can afford to charge substantial prices for their console. But maybe $750 is too much when considering the other next-gen consoles, for they all have good reputations too.

So is the PS2 worth $750? I can't answer that directly, but I can bet you many hardcore gamers everywhere will think it's worth saving for a quality games producing machine, not for the latest technological hardware.

Game on,

ACURA

THE CONSOLE GRAVEYARD

Well was the original PlayStation worth $700? Or the Sega Saturn? Or the Sega CD?

All of these systems retailed in our stores around the $700 mark, but were they worth the parting of the big bucks? In hindsight it's easy to say "no" to them, considering that some were big flops, all had crap first generation titles, and by just waiting a little while could easily be bought for a considerably cheaper price. I learnt from my experiences with a 3DO, which I bought from an importer at around $1000 when it first came out. It was supposed to be the next best thing since sliced bread, but as we all know it was to become a stinking pile of turd in the console graveyard. Luckily, after playing the first few games on the system, I had the sense to sell it while it was still worth something. I sold it for the same price I paid for it plus an extra game. I still feel sorry for the poor bastard that bought it off of me. :)

It's all too easy to get caught up in the glamour of promises and technology that the developers offer us with these new systems, but reality has shown us that games make a system, not the other way round. A system can only be successful if it has the games to lift it above mediocrity. Unfortunately, it's a Catch 22 where game developers will only make great games for systems that sell well and yet systems will only sell well if it has great games. This is where Sony could easily go from king of the hill to king of the dungheap if it can't produce the goods.

Just on a different note, the PS2 is touted as a set-top box with DVD capabilities and the rest of the ticks. I remember another system that was touted as the do-it-all gaming system... the 3D(ead)O(n arrival) and we all know what happened to that. Forget all the gimmicks and just make good games is what I say.

BRAD TAYLOR

btaylor@southwest.com.au

TRUE GAMER

If any true gamer wanted to waste $750 (essentially $850 with a game) on a PS2, they would have to have something terribly wrong in the head. Why waste $850 on a system not even targeted for gamers? I say wait for the Gamecube — at least that way you know you'll be getting a true gaming console.

G

the_geef@hotmail.com

IS THAT A YES?

Hmmm. To take a quote from the Simpsons... "Long answer... No, with a 'but'. Short answer... yes, with an 'if'". Mentioning the cost of $750 is quite likely to turn away many potential consumers, especially due to the cheaper alternatives (er, alternative... GameCube and Xbox are too far away to be considered alternatives yet).

However, many factors have to be taken into consideration. For one, the PS2 is currently the only console available that supports DVD. So, yes, it is worth $750, but whether or not you'll shell out that much money is up to you.

Also, we must consider that technically the Dreamcast could be considered the last of the old consoles as opposed to the first of the new. And as we are yet to see the pricing structure for GameCube or Xbox, it is too early to make judgements on the PS2's success based purely on price. For one, if the Xbox was released now, it could cost several hundred more than the PS2... and by the time the Xbox is finally launched, the PS2 will have lowered its price considerably.

Sony have definitely considered the high price of the PS2, and its effect on their market. The PS-One, for example, is an effective "marketing scheme" that will work a treat amongst younger gamers who can't afford a Dreamcast, or people who want a portable system.

So in summary, whilst the PS2's price is ridiculed today, it must be remembered that they are the first to bring out the new features. In time, the price will be lowered, and then we can all scoff at the overpriced Xbox.

THE SCORP

thescorp@telstra.easymail.com.au

COWS GO MOO. CATS GO MEOW. GAMES GO CHEAP.

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incoming mail

HYPER
78 Renwick St.
Redfern, NSW 2016
Australia
E-mail: freakscene@next.com.au

>> ED'S HEAD BY AL COETZEE. THANKS... I THINK

SEEING RED

Comrades,

In response to Saint Nic (Issue 85): Who really cares whether Hyper does go communist?

If this were to happen the ever-growing possibility of a bourgeoisie presence at Redfern could seriously debilitate prices. Workers know how to work (Duh!). So let them do what they're good at. Keeping prices down.

Oh, and everyone join me in a drink toasting the divorce of The Devil and his dear Microsoft.

Keep up the good work,

SKIP

skips@senet.com.au

Dear Skip,
Your sack of potatoes is in the mail.

CLONING

To Hyper,

How on earth did you manage to get Sarah Bryant to work for you? She's a Virtua Fighter character. Do you guys have some machine that turns game characters into humans? What next? Helena from DOA2 as Deputy Editor?

Now I have a few questions.

1. Can you please put more Dreamcast movies on your CD?

2. I've noticed in the past few issues of Hyper, that there is only about one preview for each system. Could you perhaps have a coming soon page for each system that shows mini previews for games that have just been announced?

3. Do you think the PS2 will win the next console war? I think the Xbox might give Sony a run for their money!

DUCKMAN

duckman@tpg.com.au

P.S. Dreamcast is a great machine, don't write it off. The games are great and it's cheap.

Dear Duckman,
Yeah, getting Sarah was kind of like the movie, Tron, in reverse.
1. We're trying.
2. We're trying.
3. We're trying... oh sorry. Er... actually, picking a winner is way too difficult at the moment – we agree that the Xbox and Gamecube look damn good. So who can say?

JOLIE VS ZETA-JONES

To the megalomaniacs @ Hyper,

two questions.

1. What happened to the penpal section?

2. Do you think Catherine Zeta-Jones would be better as Lara Croft?

JOSH BEAGLEY

metrix007@yahoo.com

Hi Josh,
1. Penpals was part of the Hypermart section which we've replaced with the monthly charts. The only reason for this, is that it's probably easier to buy and sell online these days, rather than waiting for 4 weeks to get your ad printed in the mag. Same goes for finding penpals. We reckon the charts are a more useful addition to the mag. Anyone disagree?
2. I always thought that, yes. Still, who's complaining? Angelina!

ARROGANT MISFITS?

I'd like to thank Hyper for the excellent article: Console Wars.

It showed how truly arrogant the console marketing and PR teams really are, in reference to the gamers. You know – the people who actually play the games.

It seems the "professionals" are too interested in numbers and performance specs (Read: bullshit) to be able to tell us anything useful or inspiring. Gamers – true gamers are not easily swooned with a few cheap screenshots and one-sided hype. Steve Wherret said; "A large percentage of the Australian population is now playing games and enjoying it immensely." While the PR departments have realised this, they have forgotten a key element. As gaming starts to play a larger role in our life, we learn to critically judge the good from the ordinary a lot easier than if we were amateurs – thus we expect them to go beyond self-glorification. (Sighs) But still, they use stereotypes – thinking that we can be fed the usual spiel and digest it as readily as five-year-old children.

Again, thankyou for your hard-hitting article, showing that gamers are not gullible, and can easily see through these by-the-book business misfits.

BEN WALLER

http://sulfa.virtualave.net

Dear Ben,
Yeah, it was pretty disappointing to read some of their answers when they got back to us. One of the companies had even copied and pasted some of their answers from their own press release rather than penning us actual responses. Sad. Just goes to show how much they really care about their product and the people buying it. Thankfully, we're rescued by the game developers, a lot of who are still try to bring us original and entertaining games, regardless of the corporations behind the hardware they're developing for.

SELLING THE DREAMCAST

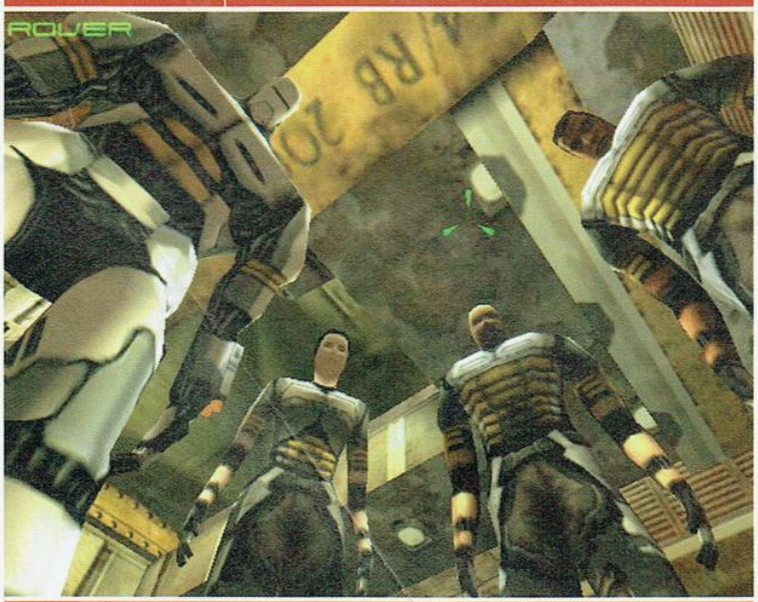
Dear Hyper,

After reading issue 85, "Console Wars" I would like to get something off my chest. This feature seemed very biased against the Dreamcast hinting it had no chance against the PlayStation 2 and was doing poorly. Well, I just bought a Dreamcast last week and I had the hardest time getting my hands on one. Every Telstra Shop and Dick Smith in Victoria had sold out of them. I finally got one at EB, which was their last one, and one of the last in the state. The $299 price tag and great games is the reason for this. This console is one of the most

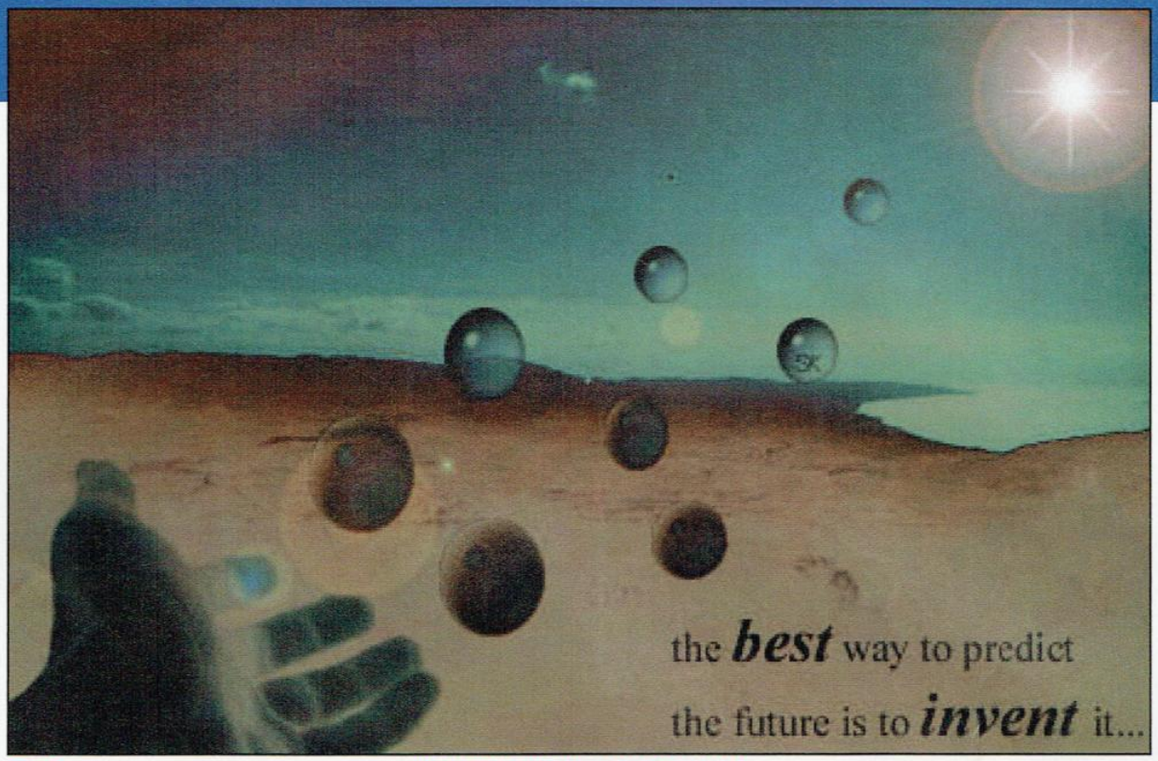
CAPTION THIS!

PART 12 WINNER

The winning caption this month comes from Peter Harman in Tasmania.



MISTAKES IN GAMING HISTORY...
ACCIDENTALLY SHOOTING THE CAMERAMAN.



>> MAT KIPRILLIS GETS ALL WEIRD AND TRIPPY ON US

innovative I've seen in years and the visual memory card is amazing and the best idea since memory cards were introduced. The only thing killing the Dreamcast is its distributors, Ozisoft. They have not marketed or pushed this system. How about making it available at Kmart? You guys are killing this great machine. My last gripe is that pirate software is killing the Dreamcast games sales. With the average game price at $100, this is far too expensive. That's why the games don't sell and is why the pirate market is booming. I refuse to buy pirate software, as I wish to support the system. Nintendo's GameCube has the right idea. DVD on PlayStation 2 is a waste of time as the picture quality will never be up there with the cheapest DVD player. These are my opinions and probably many other gamers' views as well. The Dreamcast is an excellent machine and anyone thinking of purchasing one, just do it. One demo of Sonic or Crazy Taxi and I was sold. Keep up the good work.

DAZ
dazbug@hotmail.com

Dear Daz,
We actually said in the feature that the Dreamcast had better (more original) games than the PS2 at the moment, but by next year, it might be outnumbered for quantity of titles... you can't really deny that fact. For now, it's an awesome gaming system, and certainly a cheap alternative to the PS2. But next year is going to be hard for Sega... all the heavyweights will be angling for your dollar.

MOVIE MAGIC

Hey Hyper Dudes,

Thank God an Australian magazine has finally put out a cover CD with gameplay footage. It sure beats the hell out of spending ages downloading a file that is really crappy quality.

I remember paying high prices for US mags who did the same thing, but now I can shop locally.

Any chance of getting that Metal Gear Solid 2 video on the next one? Every time I walk past Electronics Boutique I have to stop and watch the video they play there. It would be far more convenient to walk to my bedroom when I want to watch it.

Thanks again for the cover CD.

JAMIE CAMPBELL

P.S. Wipeout Fusion looks awesome!

Dear Jamie,
We'd love to include the Metal Gear Solid 2 PS2 gameplay movie on the cover disc, but Konami currently restrict us from doing so.

THIS SUCKS

Dear Ol' Hyper,

The Dreamcast is dead in Tasmania. Age: 10 Months 8 days. That is the news I found out at my local Harvey Norman in Hobart on October 7. They are no longer supporting the platform.

Now I think to myself, if I spent nigh on $2000 for a console that doesn't have any support in Tasmania as of now (save for a small variety of games at Dick Smith), then what the hell am I supposed to do?

I bought a Dreamcast with the (naive) belief that Ozisoft had a plan to SUPPORT the damn thing. But of course, that would be too hard and now I'm left stranded with a console that is less successful than the Saturn as a viable long-term gaming option.

I support Harvey Norman's decision (Tasmania's largest games shop admittedly) because if I've lost $2000, they must've lost a LOT more.

Once I believed Sony was killing the gaming industry, now I'm of the belief they will save it. The PS2 has already beaten the Dreamcast in Oz because of its reputation, and I know Sony of Australia won't screw up.

I've always enjoyed Sega games, but now the option to play them is extremely limited. I now look forward to Wipeout Fusion, Sons of Liberty and Zone of Enders. Sony, bring it on!

Sincerely,

PATRICK OF TAS

Patrick,
Yep, it sucks. We're really sorry to hear that. You could always order Dreamcast games online from the

Harvey Norman

SAVE 15%* OFF ANY TOP 20 GAME!

Harvey Norman would like to offer readers of Hyper an exclusive discount offer on the titles appearing on the Official Australian PC, Playstation or N64 Games Chart. Simply complete the coupon & take it into any Harvey Norman store to claim your discount.

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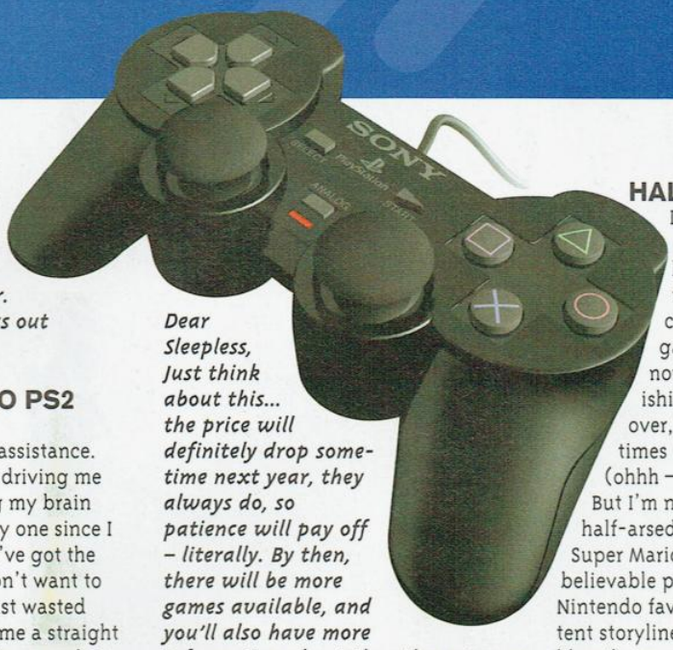
HH3



mainland, but if you've already ordered a PS2... Looks like the Dreamcast will go down as the most underrated console ever. Now who's going to miss out on Shenmue?

TO PS2 OR NOT TO PS2

To Hyper,

I'm in serious need of assistance. You've guessed it, PS2 is driving me insane. I've been racking my brain over whether I should buy one since I heard about its release. I've got the money to buy it, but I don't want to get it and realised I've just wasted $750. So please just give me a straight answer, do I buy it on release or do I wait until a later date, or do I not buy it at all? The thing is, I need to play videogames, and if I don't get a next generation console soon, I don't know what I'll do.

SLEEPLESS IN SOUTH WALES
ezekiel@norex.com.au

Dear Sleepless,
Just think about this... the price will definitely drop sometime next year, they always do, so patience will pay off – literally. By then, there will be more games available, and you'll also have more information about the other upcoming systems under your belt to help make a better decision. But by all means, if you want your gaming goodness before anyone else, then be prepared to pay the premium. Only you can know for sure if the games available make it worth it.

HALF-LIFE THE MOVIE

Dear Hyper office,

My name's Matt and I have been a big Half-Life fan ever since my friend convinced me to buy the game almost 2 years ago now. After playing and finishing the game over and over, I have been hit several times (ouch – Ed.) with the idea (ohhh – Ed.) of a Half-Life movie. But I'm not talking about some half-arsed, B-grade rip off like Super Mario Brothers, with non-believable people acting as our Nintendo favourites and a non-existent storyline (sorry to anyone who likes that movie), I mean a well thought out script and a captivating story board that will grab people's attention.

The sort of movie where you don't have to have played or even heard of the game to understand what's going on. The sight of marines running around inside the vast tunnels of the Black Mesa Facility and Gordon Freeman exploring the vast alien world of Xen, really wets my whistle.

And who to play Gordon? Well, I don't know if you've seen American History X, but stunning actor Edward Norton bears an absolutely uncanny resemblance to that of Gordon Freeman. The beard, the hair, the build, everything. In fact, I think they were separated at birth. All he needs to do is don a HEV and some thick frame glasses and you've got yourself Freeman in the flesh. But I don't think Mr. Norton has a Phd in theoretical physics like Mr. Freeman.

Anyhow, this is just a thought that I've been dwelling on for a while now, but I'd like to know what you guys think of it.

Cheerio,

MATT

Dear Matt,
Thanks for the pics you sent with your letter. It made the whole concept even funnier. No really, a Half-Life movie would be quite cool.

letter of the month

DAMN A.M.P.

Recently, I was visited by me, 20 years from now...

Unfortunately, I had no good news to tell me about my future financial status. In fact by the smell of me it was pretty certain I am to become a bum. His (my) message to me was pretty clear. Although his (my) voice was slurred due to excess alcohol consumption, he (I) proceeded to warn me from the dangers of my current lifestyle.

Amongst other things, such as partying too hard and not sleeping due to fear of a possessed Linda Blair (after watching The Exorcist), he told me to give up video games, now, before it's too late.

At this integral part of my life (one week till HSC), time is too precious to be wasting on flashy images on a screen which perform no educational purpose. His message was a simple one - stop playing games and start studying.

He warned me of the dangers of Diablo II, and how I need not bother getting my character to a stage where I could successfully kill Diablo with one fell blow. He warned me of the Final Fantasy series, and that it didn't really matter that all my characters aren't yet level 99. He also notified me that no matter how much money I pumped into it, I'd never kill that damn flying thing in House of the Dead 2.

It was about this time that the laws of reality caught up to us and realised there was some serious shit that could screw up the universe going on here, and he (I) promptly disappeared. But his message had been communicated. I pondered for a while, as to whether I should take heed of my Life-Changing advice.

The change in my attitude wasn't instant, in fact, the very next thing I did was to boot up the computer. But after an hour or so of navigating Sir Galahad through Hell, I did consider that my future self may be worth saving, and retired to my bedroom for a while, if not to study, at least to listen to music with a text book on my desk.

The moral to the story? I dunno. By all means, have fun whatever you do. I mean, it's not worth living if you ain't having fun. But just remember that there's a you in 20 years time out there too, and although he may not have access to a time machine, he may also be praying that you stop every once in a while to think about him.

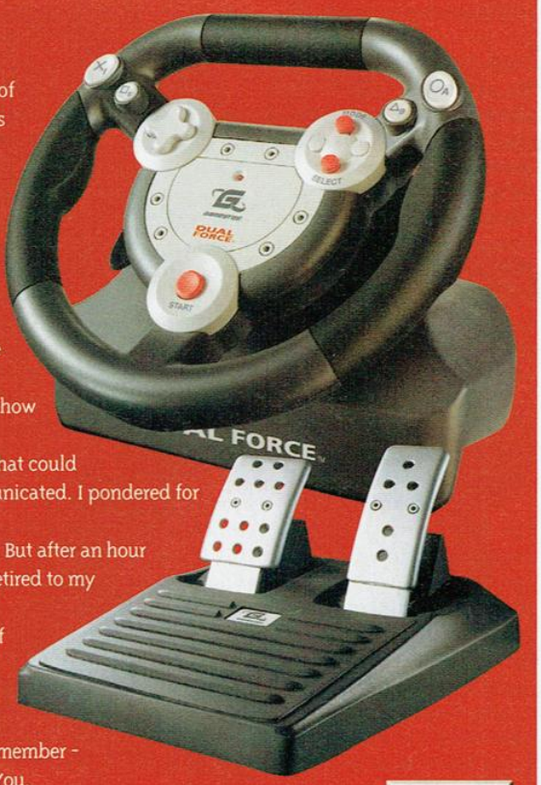
Well I'm off to take some of my own advice now - I have one week to cram 6 years worth of studying. Remember - a balanced diet of games, partying and unfortunately, studying is required to maintain a Healthy Future-You.

Lets hope there's a Hyper in 20 years time too, eh?

All the Best,

JEZZMAN
jezzman2000@hotmail.com

Dear Jezzman,
You just reminded me. I have to go back in time 6 months and warn myself to give the Daikatana review to someone else.



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Don't forget to include your contact details ON your letter.
You've won a Gamester Steering Wheel! For PlayStation.

See the coupon on page 111 to save 15%* on any of the Top 20 Games listed here.

The Official Australian Games Chart

Compiled by Inform in association with AVSDA — September 2000

Top 10 Best Selling Full Price PC Games
(>$29.95 inc. GST)

Position		Game Title	Game Type
1	✪	Baldurs Gate 2	RPG
2	⇩	Diablo 2	RPG
3	⇧	Age Of Empires 2	Strategy
4	⇩	Sim Mania Pack	Bundle
5	⇩	The Sims	Strategy
6	⇩	Grand Prix 3	Racing
7	⇩	Cmmd. & Cngr. Tiberian Sun	Strategy
8	✪	Sydney 2000	Sports
9	✪	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	Sports
10	✪	Rugby 2001	Sports

Top 10 Best Selling Full Price PlayStation Games
(>$39.95 inc. GST)

Position		Game Title	Game Type
1	✪	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	Sports
2	✪	TOCA Touring Cars	Racing
3	✪	Sydney 2000	Sports
4	✪	Tony Hawk's Skateboarding	Sports
5	✪	Tenchu 2	Adventure
6	✪	Supercross 2000	Racing
7	⇩	Gran Turismo 2	Racing
8	⇩	Colin McRae Rally 2	Racing
9	⇩	Driver	Racing
10	⇩	Muppet Race Mania	Racing

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	⇧	Tony Hawk's Skateboarding	Sports
4	⇔	Mario Party 2	Family
5	⇩	Donkey Kong 64	Platform
6	⇩	Mario Kart	Racing
7	⇔	Super Mario 64	Platform
8	⇔	Goldeneye 007	Action
9	⇔	Diddy Kong Racing	Racing
10	✪	Excite Bike	Racing

Top 10 Best Selling Full Price Dreamcast Games
(>$49.95 inc. GST)

Position		Game Title	Game Type
1	✪	Virtua Tennis	Sports
2	⇩	Dead Or Alive 2	Action
3	⇧	Tonk Hawk's Pro Skater	Sports
4	⇩	Resident Evil: Code Veronica	Adventure
5	✪	House Of The Dead 2	Action
6	⇧	Crazy Taxi	Racing
7	✪	Hidden & Dangerous	Strategy
8	✪	Sydney 2000	Sports
9	⇩	Sega Rally 2	Racing
10	⇩	Sonic Adventures	Platform

Top 20 Best Selling Full Price Games - All Formats

Position		Game Title	Format
1	✪	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	PlayStation
2	✪	TOCA Touring Cars	PlayStation
3	✪	Pokemon Yellow	Gameboy
4	⇩	Perfect Dark	N64
5	✪	Sydney 2000	PlayStation
6	✪	Baldurs Gate 2	PC
7	⇩	Pokemon Blue	Gameboy
8	✪	Tony Hawk's Skateboarding	PlayStation
9	✪	Pokemon Red	Gameboy
10	⇩	Diablo 2	PC
11	⇩	Pokemon Stadium	N64
12	⇧	Age Of Empires 2	PC
13	✪	Tenchu 2	PlayStation
14	⇧	Tony Hawk's Skateboarding	N64
15	✪	Pokemon Trading Card Game	Gameboy
16	⇩	Sim Mania Pack	PC
17	✪	Supercross 2000	PlayStation
18	⇩	The Sims	PC
19	✪	Toy Story 2	PLayStation
20	✪	Tony Hawk's Skateboarding	Gameboy

inform

A V S D A
Australian Visual Software Distributors Association Ltd

✪-New entry
⇔-Non mover
⇧-Up from last month
⇩-Down from last month

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NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE DECEMBER 20th

THE SECOND WAVE OF PS2 GAMES REVIEWED!

DYNASTY WARRIORS II, READY 2 RUMBLE BOXING: ROUND 2, X-SQUAD, SMUGGLER'S RUN, TIMESPLITTERS AND MORE...

INTERVIEWS

LUCASARTS ON
STAR WARS: DEMOLITION

VOLITION ON
SUMMONER

PLUS

THE MAKING OF THE
HYPER TV SHOW!

HYPER»

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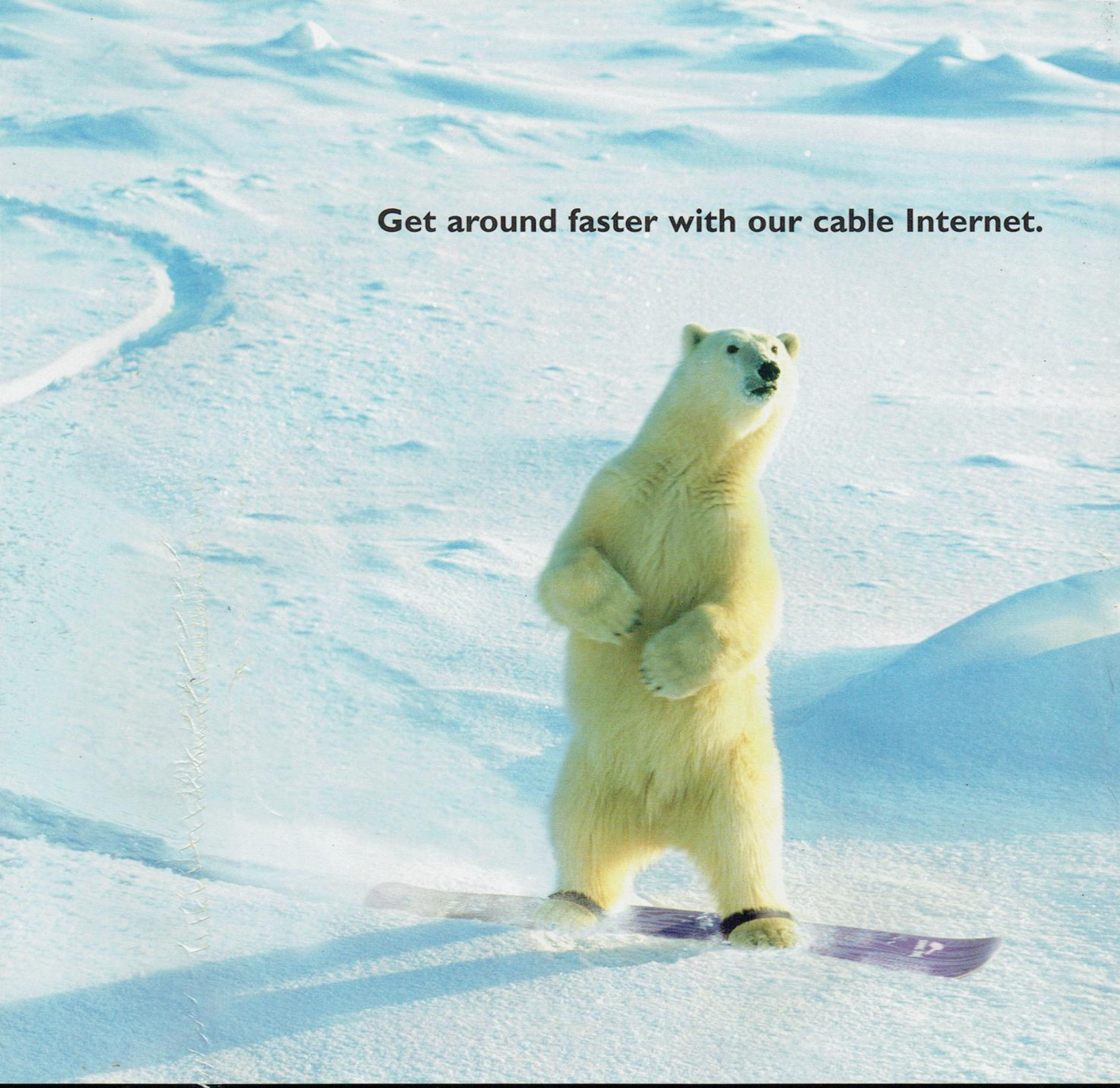

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