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Plus the latest on **Pokémon**

OUR PS2 SPY REPORT
JAMES BOND
007 Agent Under Fire

Reviews

- PC** Pool of Radiance II
- PS2** Twisted Metal Black
- N64** Tony Hawk 2
- GBA** Jurassic Park III
- GBA** Mario Kart
- PSone** The Italian Job

PREVIEWED

SSX TRICKY

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business on PS2 & GameCube!



INTERVIEW

SID MEIER'S SIM GOLF

On par with The Sims?



HUGE FIRST LOOK

XBOX: NEW LEGENDS

The all-action
launch title set
to smash all
opposition!

PLUS:



PS2 REVIEW

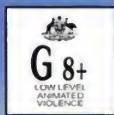
SPYHUNTER

Cool car combat at 100 miles an hour!

WE'RE GIVING AWAY AN XBOX!

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PlayStation 2



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MX2002

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RICKY CARMICHAEL



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Subscribe to Hyper this month to win a whole bundle of classic PC games, including Thief, Tomb Raider, Commandos and more!



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HYPER»»



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97
NOVEMBER
2001

WRITE TO HYPER!

78 Renwick St, Redfern
NSW 2016, Australia
Ph: (02) 9699 0333
Fax: (02) 9310 1315
E-mail: freakscene@next.com.au

EDITORIAL

Editor: **Eliot Fish**
Deputy Editor: **Cam Shea**
Art Director: **Malcolm Campbell**

ADVERTISING

National Sales Director: **Sue Ostler**
E-mail: sue@next.com.au
Ph: (02) 9699 0346
Advertising & Creative Co-ordinator:
Mariam Dib
E-mail: mariam@next.com.au
Advertising Manager: **Matthew Warren**
E-mail: matthew@next.com.au
Ph: (02) 9699 0349
Production Co-ordinator: **Monique Layt**
E-mail: moniquel@next.com.au
Ph: (02) 9699 0300
Fax: (02) 9310 2012

SUBSCRIPTIONS

For all enquiries phone: 1300 36 11 46
E-mail: subs@next.com.au
Fax: (02) 9699 0334

MANAGEMENT

Chief Executive: **Phillip Keir**
Finance Director: **Theo Fatseas**
Operations Manager: **Melissa Doyle**
Circulation Executive: **Karen Day**
General Manager Online: **Leonard Howell**

CONTRIBUTORS

Contributors: Kevin Cheung, Dan Toose, James Cottey, Kelly Starr, Andrew Bulmer, Derek dela Fuente, George Soropos, Tim Levy, Hillous Lesslie, Jackson Gothe-Snape, Steve Polak, Victoria Flanagan, Frank Dry and OOM-9.

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Fax: 1300 65 0777

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EDITORIAL

»» We finally let Tim Levy off his leash. We're not sure if it was a good or bad decision, but maybe you can take a look at what he got up to in our Arcade Mode special feature on page 42 and decide for yourself. He wasn't the only Hyper slave in Japan though, as Kelly Starr made it to SpaceWorld – Nintendo's own expo where they show all their upcoming goodies.

Kelly got to run her hands over the GameCube controller and even absorb the wondrous genius emanating from Shigeru Miyamoto himself as Nintendo unveiled the new-look Link and a peek at the next Mario game. Once again, Nintendo show that they're more interested in moving forward into new territory rather than just trying to flog something that's a safe rehash of a successful license.

Meanwhile, down the road from SpaceWorld, Microsoft were having a private little show of their own, announcing that the Xbox will launch in Japan in March 2002. They showed some footage from Jet Set Radio Future that looked truly awesome, and gave everyone a not-so-subtle reminder that they've got just as many big guns as Nintendo. Now when are we going to get those goddamn local release dates?

Eliot Fish »» Editor

THRONE OF DARKNESS



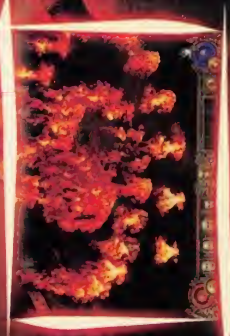
IN THE ANCIENT LAND OF YAMATO,
AN AGING AND POWER-HUNGRY
WARLORD TURNED TO DARKNESS IN HIS
INSANE QUEST FOR ETERNAL LIFE.

LEAD YOUR SAMURAI AGAINST
THE DARK WARLORD,
BATTLE HIS HELLSPAWN AND
DEFEAT THE HORDES OF UNDEAD.

...SEEK YOUR REVENGE!

Lead your samurai through TEN
HUGE environments of fast-paced
ACTION role-playing.

Get ready for INTENSE multi-player mayhem!
Up to 35 people can play ONLINE
and vie for the mantle of DARK WARLORD.



NEWS

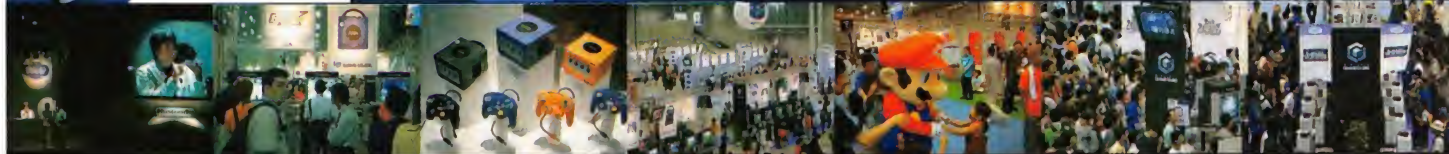
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- Nintendo Spaceworld
- World of Warcraft revealed by Blizzard
- Quake IV
- First screens of Buffy on the Xbox



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NINTENDO SPACEWORLD 2001

Mario & Zelda reborn!

Nintendo's Spaceworld saves the best until last

With the release of Nintendo's GameCube just around the corner, Spaceworld 2001 was an important event in terms of demonstrating both the power of the machine, and the quality of the software that will be available around launch. The GameCube will be released in Japan on the 14th of September 2001 (we'll have one by the time you read this — muaha ha ha!), while the US date has been pushed back two weeks to the 18th of November 2001. The reason for

➤➤ The US release date has been pushed back two weeks to the 18th

the delay, according to Nintendo, is simply to ensure that they have enough units ready on launch day. The figure is now 700,000 units on day one, with 1.1 million units total to be available in the USA by year's end. Apparently, the launch of the Xbox on November 8 was not a factor in the decision.

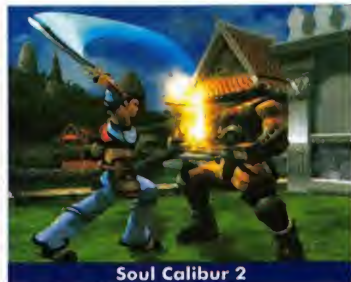
Although no news was heard on

the Australian launch (we still think it might be in late March), it has been confirmed that both Japanese and US gamers will have a choice between an indigo GameCube and the new black design. Funkier still, shortly after launch Japanese gamers will have a third choice - the awesome orange 'Spice' unit. There'll also be four different

controller colours to choose from - indigo, black, spice and the half-indigo, half-clear version. Then there's the wireless Wavebird controller in a snazzy silver, which will be launched sometime in the near future, when we can also expect to see the Game Boy Advance controller link cable that will allow you to use your GBA as a GCN controller. We can expect to have the full range of options available by the time the Nintendo GameCube debuts in Australia!



1080 2



Soul Calibur 2



Pikmin



Super Monkey Ball

Poké-news

➤ The Game Boy Advance will also be breaking new ground with the Pokémon E-card reader. Only Nintendo could have been brave enough to go backwards with their new game and decide to store game information the old fashioned way, on paper! The new Pokémon game will use special Pokémon

cards with barcodes running down the sides that you scan into the e-card reader to upload into the game. Should be a nice little earner for Nintendo... unless the bottom falls out of the Pokémon phenomenon (no jinx intended – well, maybe a little one). There's no news on the launch of this product outside Japan as yet.



Scan your way to Poké-victory! Time to buy a new set of cards...

THE MISSING LINK

➤ Without a doubt, the biggest reason to attend Spaceworld this year was to see the unveiling of the true sequel to Mario 64, and for a first look at footage of the next instalment of the Zelda saga. To say the response from the crowd was one of stunned fascination is an understatement.

Nintendo showed the Spaceworld audience short teaser trailers (about a minute all up) of both Mario Sunshine and the new Zelda game. The Mario Sunshine footage was very cool, but clearly demonstrated that Nintendo didn't want to give away anything about the game. Even so, what we did see showed huge potential. The snippet found Mario in a seaside town filled with houses, cobblestone paths, parks etc. The only new move that Mario really showed off in the demo was the ability to boost jump off walls, allowing him to boost between two walls up to an indeterminate height – a very ninja-esque move that opens up huge gameplay possibilities. The most intriguing part of Mario Sunshine, however, is the contraption on Mario's back. It looks quite a bit like a glass hookah pipe, but no real clue was given to its use. Close inspection of the footage, however,

reveals hypercolour trails criss-crossing most of the landscape, as well as emissions spraying out of the heads of the large creatures lumbering around. We suspect then, that some element of the gameplay involves using Mario's device to either wash away the trails or to suck them up. Indeed, there are two meters on screen in the footage – one is like a water level that no doubt measures how much Mario has sucked up or has left to spray. The other is a number, correlating to how many of the coin collectables spread throughout the map Mario has found.

The graphics are detailed, but not overly so. The really impressive part is the amazing view distance, as well as the speed that the engine handles such a large environment. Another surprising new element is the unfamiliarity of the creatures inhabiting the world. They look more like massive Pikmin than the Goombas and Koopas that have graced previous games. We also believe that it's no coincidence that the new Mario game and the new Luigi game feature both characters with backpacks. As you no doubt recall, Luigi is searching for Mario in his game, and the night/day contrast between the imagery in both games



Link in all his cel-shaded glory!



is so striking that we're expecting the games to be tied in together somehow. Mario Sunshine will be out mid 2002 in Japan.

Coming as a much bigger shock than the new Mario, however, is the direction that Nintendo have taken GCN Zelda since last we saw it. Remember the hyper realistic looking fight scene between Link and Ganon that Nintendo showed at last year's Spaceworld? Well, in typical Nintendo style, they've done a complete about-face, and taken Zelda in a radical new direction. And we, for one, couldn't be happier. The new Zelda game (no

title yet), is to be a cel shaded cartoony adventure – looking for all the world like the best Disney and Warner Bros have to offer combined. The mature Link of last year's video has been replaced by a very young, cute Link, and the game is very comical in nature and already brimming with personality. It's a risky decision, especially with so many fanboys clamouring for Link to grow up, but we think it's very refreshing for Nintendo to shy away from simply remaking Ocarina with better graphics, and to attempt something completely different. Good work, Shigsy!

Kick it to the Kirby

➤ The ability to use the GBA with the GameCube will provide Nintendo with plenty of opportunity to use this interactivity in new and creative ways, as was demonstrated at Spaceworld. The new Kirby game, which is currently in development, will be one of the first to take advantage of this new symbiosis. The game uses a tilt cartridge for the GBA along with a disk for the GCN, so the GBA will function as a tilt controller to manoeuvre Kirby around the screen. However that's just the beginning. When Kirby falls off the edge of the platform on



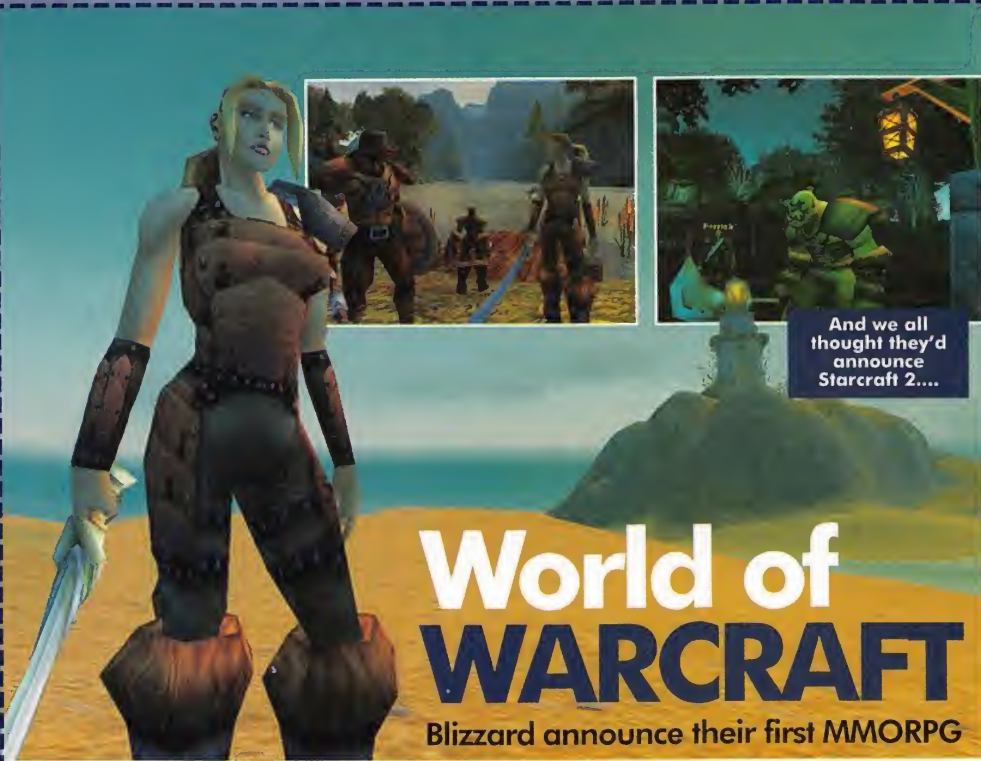
your TV screen, he'll fall onto your GBA screen, where you can continue to play, before launching him up onto the TV screen again. The use of both screens works incredibly well, and highlights the vast number of possibilities for this feature. The GBA/GCN compatibility will also be useful in taking part of your game with you, and uploading information from the GBA cartridge to the GCN. This can be seen in the upcoming GameCube game Animal Forest, where by using your Game Boy Advance will allow you to visit new areas in the game, and take your data to your friends houses, so that they can go there too. And remember, this is only the beginning.

CAPTION THIS!

Our monthly Caption This competition gets funnier all the time. Your entries either crack us up or make us feel sick, or elicit almost no response other than a subtle grinding of teeth. Think of a funny caption to this pic and email it to us at captionthis@next.com.au, but you must write "Caption This Part 24" in the subject line. Get to work, readers!



Hardy har har



And we all thought they'd announce Starcraft 2....

World of WARCRAFT

Blizzard announce their first MMORPG

ECTS, the European version of E3, rarely holds any huge earth-shattering news, as it's more of a further showcase of stuff that was already unveiled in Los Angeles in May. However, this year there was a rather large announcement from Blizzard, the company behind Starcraft, Warcraft and Diablo. World Of Warcraft was unveiled as Blizzard's first foray into massively multiplayer online gaming, an RPG set in the world of Warcraft, that looks simply stunning.

Absolutely nothing was known of this game before the announcement, and by the

amount of media that Blizzard showed (screenshots, and a clip of the game in action), development has been pumping along for quite some time already, much to the surprise of the gaming press packed into the convention hall. World Of Warcraft is just about on par with Star Wars: Galaxies in terms of visual splendour, and apparently it took the cleaning crew about four hours to mop up all the drool that was left behind after the unveiling.

Blizzard promise that World of Warcraft will be a seamless, persistent world set in the land of Azeroth in the time after Warcraft III (which has not yet

been released). Gamers will be able to meet, adventure and trade with thousands of other gamers as a Human, Orc or Tauran — the Tauran being a new race of noble, bull-like hunters.

Blizzard have also revealed (rather cryptically we might add) that World of Warcraft will initially be available only for PC... "initially" no doubt hinting that the game will also release for either console or Mac sometime down the track. We can only hope. The more that get to play the better!

If you're not excited about this game, you're obviously dead from the neck up.

Quake IV

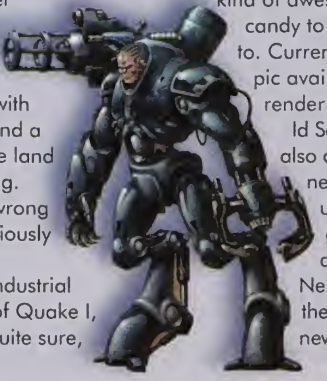
Did you hear us? We said QUAKE IV!

Id Software and Raven Software are co-developing another Quake instalment! Mysteriously dubbed Quake IV (that was a joke), the game will be a return to the single player experience that id Software attempted with Quake II, and a return to the land of the Strogg. What was wrong with the seriously trippy medieval/industrial weirdness of Quake I, we're not quite sure,

but back to blasting Strogg it is, even if it is highly predictable.

The game will use the new Doom engine, and if you've seen snippets of that online, then you'll know just what kind of awesome eye candy to look forward to. Currently, the only pic available, is this render of a Strogg.

Id Software are also developing a new as-yet unannounced game with developer Nerve... so there's more news to come yet.



WINNERS HYPER 95

I-WAR 2

- S. Mitchell, QLD
- R. Anderson, VIC
- M. Thomson, QLD
- M. Ryan, QLD
- J.J. Boulton, SA



MTV MUSIC GENERATOR 2

- C. Crichton, NSW
- L. Thomson, QLD
- F. Fricker, QLD
- A. Wardrop, TAS
- S. Lester, VIC

OVERFLOW

GodGames (that's Gathering Of Developers, folks) have officially closed their doors — Max Payne being their last published game. They have been absorbed by Take 2 Interactive in New York, and now become a subsidiary label. Most of the staff and even the CEO have left to start up a new venture, SubstanceTV, an interactive DVD-based videogame magazine that explores contemporary culture.

Croteam, those wacky guys behind the outrageous shooter Serious Sam have promised that after they finish the Serious Sam expansion, The Second Encounter, they will get to work on a brand new game. One of their big promises for the new game is "no more Egypt". Thank God for that.

There's a nasty rumour going around that Electronic Arts have cancelled both the PC and Xbox versions of their upcoming Harry Potter videogame, making it pretty much a PSone exclusive aside from the handhelds, although there is possibly a GameCube version in the works. After they paid \$100 million for the license to produce the games, you gotta ask yourself, what the hell are they thinking?

Hahahahahahaha... sorry we just heard that Duke Nukem Forever has been delayed until 2002. Wahahahahahahahahaha... *sigh*.

Namco have confirmed that both Ridge Racer New Version (is that really a game title?) and Soul Calibur 2 (oh yes... yes!) are both coming to the PS2, GameCube and Xbox! Smiles all around!

Sega are in talks with Microsoft to produce online games for the Xbox, currently the only console that is really pushing the online gaming card. Now if broadband in Australia only picked up a bit, we might get excited. We can't wait to see how many billions Telstra have made in profit last financial year, although we've used up our 3 Gig limit so we'll have to buy a newspaper.

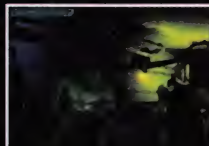
Activision have announced a new deal with Marvel comics to produce games based on the Iron Man and Fantastic Four licences. Both are becoming new movies a little while down the track, so expect a plethora of Marvel goodies in a year or two. Spiderman the Movie will be out soon, and Ang Lee is also making The Incredible Hulk, which should be truly incredible indeed!

Peter Molyneux has officially announced that work has begun on Black and White 2. Lionhead are listening to the Black and White community quite closely to find out what gamers want featured in the sequel, such as importing creatures from the first game, and so on. Apparently, the world you once left in peace is raging with vicious warfare... Don't hold your breath on its release, though. It'll be a few years yet until we return to the lands of Black and White.

BATMAN VENGEANCE™



Hold On For Non-Stop Action



GAME BOY ADVANCE

PlayStation.2



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(#01)



XBOX AUSSIE LAUNCH

Microsoft recently confirmed that the European launch of the Xbox would be "Quarter 1, 2002", which is encouraging news after their revelation that the machine would not release in Japan until March, 2002. Microsoft have a plant in Hungary that will manufacture machines specifically for Europe, so that the Japanese launch will not have an impact on available units for the PAL territories. We all know that Australia is also a PAL territory, so chances are the Xbox will launch here in Australia on the same date that Microsoft announce for Europe, which is expected to be revealed by Microsoft sometime in October.



IMMORTAL KOMBAT

We hate to bring you bad news at Hyper, but unfortunately it's part of our job. Yes... Mortal Kombat is returning to a console near you. We know, we know... here have a tissue.

Okay, maybe it's not that bad, for from what we can tell from the screenshots, the game might just turn out to be a re-invention of the series that we've come to... abhor.

Let's give Midway the benefit of the doubt and show some enthusiasm for this announcement! Hurrah! Maybe.



HOT! TERMINATOR ON PS2! FIRST SCREENS!



HOT! BUFFY ON XBOX! FIRST SCREENS!



DUKE NUKEM FOREVER



AZURIK: RISE OF PERATHIA

>> XBOX MICROSOFT


Azurik could be to the Xbox what Soul Reaver was to the PlayStation. This is moody, third-person action platforming with a fantasy storyline. The lead character, Azurik, is exceptionally detailed, even down to actual eyes rolling about in his eye sockets. This game is a visual powerhouse, and Microsoft have spent months now on tweaking the gameplay as the US Xbox launch approaches. Azurik could turn out to be a stunner.





STAR WARS: ROGUE SQUADRON II: ROGUE LEADER

>> **GAMECUBE** LUCASARTS

 With one of the longest titles in the history of Star Wars games, *Star Wars: Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader*, or *Rogue Leader* as we like to call it for short, just keeps on looking better and better as development continues on this anticipated flight combat sim. The realism in the spacecraft is amazing, with all of them sporting that dirty, roughed-up Star Wars look. What more reason do you need to get a GameCube other than *Rogue Leader*?



EYE CROWD

>> HYPER 15

THE CREATION OF A LEGEND

Need another reason to buy an Xbox? **Eliot Fish** has one right here.

严 格 训 练

ONCE UPON A TIME...

China, under the leadership of Rhoa Khan, has finally found peace between the warlords. Xiao Gon, who has been amassing his armies in defiance of this peace, strikes out. He is not satisfied with the peaceful resolution that Rhoa Khan has built, and takes the matter into his own hands.

Xiao Gon's own words:

"Emperor Khan is a Mongol half-breed and a weakling. The fact that he let our enemies thrive at our borders is an insult to our great country. They mock our very strength. I am but a blade of grass in the winds of rebellion. These are the voices of my ancestors, who call for China to be great again."

He begins to destroy each of the clans throughout China, becoming stronger and more powerful as his army moves across the territories. One by one the clans fall and soon there are very few left to fight.

The game begins when Xiao Gon attacks the Soo Kingdom. This is the home of our hero, Sun Soo. His father, Yen Soo is the leader of this clan. Our hero experiences the downfall of the Soo Kingdom, and the death of his family. He is the only Soo left alive. Xiao Gon uses him as a symbol of treason and he is taken to the prison camps in Mongolia...

Justin Chin, president of Infinite Machine (and creator of the PC classics *Dark Forces* and *Jedi Knight*), took some time out of his hectic schedule to give us a spicy insight into the creation of their Xbox launch title, *New Legends*.

HYPHER: First off, give us a quick overview of *New Legends*.

Justin Chin: *New Legends* is a combat-driven action-adventure that takes place in futuristic China. The country has been divided into the feudal lands of the ancient past. An evil dynasty terrorizes China led by a

character named Xiao Gon. The Soo Kingdom is one of the few kingdoms who stand against this evil.

Players step into the role of Sun Soo, a young warrior king to be. The game focuses on cinematic combat, but is very story driven. There are a variety of ranged and melee weapons featured in the game. Players will be able to wield two weapons at once while performing a number of attacks and special moves.

HYPHER: *New Legends* was originally conceived as a PC game. Why the move to Xbox and what



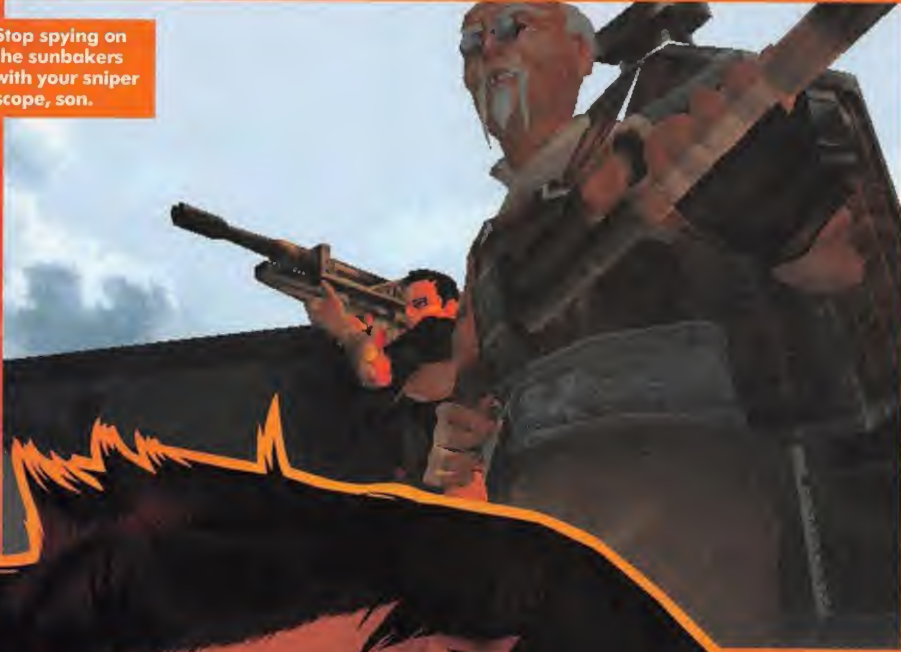
All that Hula-Hoop training pays off.



He learned that move from a Destroyer Droid.



Stop spying on the sunbakers with your sniper scope, son.



INTERVIEW

»HYPER 17



has changed?

Justin Chin: This is simply where the market is heading. We always envisioned having New Legends on a console system, it was just a matter of having one powerful enough. As soon as the Xbox came along, the opportunity was there. The Xbox has a lot of power, and we are going to take full advantage of it. We are now able to do many new things with New Legends. Gameplay in general has evolved. Primarily this is because of the Xbox controller. We are not only doing new things with how the player will control movement, but how we deal with camera views and the overall level design. We also adapted and improved the combat system to better suit the controller and console player.

HYPER: You worked on classic games like Dark Forces and Jedi Knight, what did you learn on the creation of those titles that you are applying to New Legends?

Justin Chin: I learned a tremendous amount on Dark Forces and then even more while working on Jedi. New Legends is kind of a natural progression from those games, but really an attempt to expand the action-adventure genre

as a whole. It's an action game that explores the story telling aspects of an adventure game. Mainly, the player will be in combat, but not all of the missions require combat skills. There will be stealth missions, escape scenarios etc.

HYPER: Why did you decide to go third person as opposed to first person for New Legends?

Justin Chin: Third person is suited much better for melee-style combat found in the game. Plus you'll be able to see all the special attacks that your character performs with different weapons. We are also able to do more with the camera system and give the game a more cinematic feel.

HYPER: What are you doing with New Legends in terms of graphics and the overall visual style?

Justin Chin: We are really taking full advantage of what the Xbox can do in terms of graphics. We have bump mapping on the characters, pixel shading and plenty of fantastic weapon effects. One thing, we're proud of is that all the characters in the game all show real-time emotion when speaking. We have massive levels with plenty of variety, including different terrain and locales. As far as visual style goes, the game blends the look

INFINITE POSSIBILITIES...

>> Infinite Machine are also reportedly working on another hot Xbox game...



Sam & Max 2! That's right, the classic adventure game from LucasArts is finally getting a sequel, and it's going to be on the Xbox. Will Sam & Max 2 be able to take the original's crown as the funniest adventure game of all time?



Body odour - more powerful than any sword.



NEW LEGENDS



This game rocks. Or it's full of rocks...



of ancient China with the technology of the future. The result is a completely original world, and a great setting for an action game.

HYPER: There are several non-player characters in the game. How will these characters come into play?

Justin Chin: The non-player characters are there to really help progress the story line. They will interact with you in some levels and even fight alongside Sun Soo. Also, they will lay out mission objectives and keep the player feeling they are part of the New Legends world.

HYPER: Could you tell us about the weapons that we'll see in the game?

Justin Chin: There are two types of weapons in the game, melee and ranged weapons. The

ranged weapons vary from bows to guns to rocket launcher types. All of them have a primary and secondary firing mode. Most of the melee weapons are traditional Chinese weapons like triple staves, axes and swords. Each melee weapon will have a special attack so they will perform better in certain situations. We also have a few surprise weapons that I can't really talk about right now...

HYPER: Given that melee combat seems to be a primary focus of New Legends, can you give us some details of how the player can utilize two weapons at once?

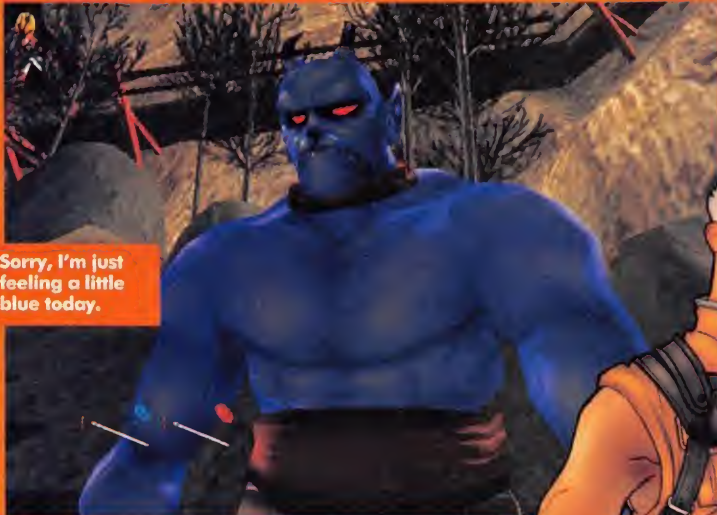
Justin Chin: Basically, the player is able to carry four weapons at one time, but only wield two. This can be any two weapons as long as they require only one hand to use. So, a player could run



“ We are really taking full advantage of what the Xbox can do in terms of graphics. ”



NEW LEGENDS



Sorry, I'm just feeling a little blue today.



Have some lead for lunch, you freaks!

through a level using a sword and a machine gun. This way they have the ability to attack at long range, as well as deal with enemies up close. Players will discover which combinations of weapons are best suited for certain levels. This also helps add an element of strategy to the game.

HYPER: Will players be able to adapt easily to using all of these different combinations, or will it be challenging?

Justin Chin: The battle system is very user friendly and the average player will have no problem picking it up. There a lot of basic fighting game elements with different combinations and weapon attacks that have been drawn out and designed for a full 3D world. The challenge for players will be to figure out when and where to initiate these kinds of attacks.

HYPER: How did you come up with some of the moves that Sun Soo is capable of performing?

Justin Chin: We actually have a friend who is a professional fight choreographer who has worked on several high profile films. He helped us map out the different weapons and how they are used in battle situations. We took that and stretched it into the world of videogames where characters are able to jump higher and move faster than is typically possible.

HYPER: Do you guys find other video games are still inspiration? Or do you now turn to other media, like comics and anime?

Justin Chin: I think we find



inspiration from a lot of different sources. Of course we play a lot of games, but just using other games for your inspiration would limit you in the end. You have to expand your awareness and skills outside of what you see in our industry. I read a lot of books to research the subjects that we explore in our current games and our future ones.

HYPER: What is the main appeal of developing New Legends, or any game for that matter, for the Xbox?

Justin Chin: The Xbox is a fast machine and has plenty of

memory to back it up. In general, I think the Xbox has a lot going for it. Microsoft is planning some interesting things for online gaming, if that goes well, than Xbox owners will have something that no other game console has right now. Adding to that, is the hard drive. Who wouldn't want to download cool new levels, characters etc. for your favourite game?

HYPER: What do you think of the GameCube and PS2?

Justin Chin: Both of those machines have their qualities. From a gaming standpoint I'm really diggin' the idea that there will be all these great games to play. MGS2, Jet Set Future, Luigi's Mansion, Rogue Leader, Silent Hill 2 - Wow.

Must be all the spirulina he's been drinking.



HYPER: What is the most essential ingredient in a successful video game?

Justin Chin: That kind of thing is hard to pin point in a design. But I do feel that games should have great moments - things that the player find really cool and have an emotional impact. It could be in the story or most importantly something that's in the game. It could be as simple as, "Wow, I was able to beat up 10 guys with that weapon!" to, "When that boss came out of the ground it spooked me the hell out of me!"

If you have enough of those moments throughout a game, you'll keep the player interested. Making sure it's fun is a whole other story. But even then, that shouldn't be all that hard, should it? ;) <<<

MACHINE PARTS

>>> So who are these guys? Infinite Machine are a new development house, started up by Justin Chin, comprising of a whole team of ex-LucasArts employees. The team includes: Che-Yuan Wang (a programmer on Descent 1 & 2, Jedi Knight), Stephen Hwang (level designer on Mysteries of the Sith), Chris Hockabout (Dark Forces, Jedi Knight, Shadows of the Empire, Curse of Monkey Island), Stephen Kalning (Curse of Monkey Island, Force Commander), and Matt Tateishi (level designer on Dark Forces, Jedi Knight and Droidworks) amongst others.



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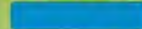


SID MEIER'S Sim Golf!

Hyper talks to gaming legend, **Sid Meier**, about his first foray into sim gaming.

CATEGORY: Sim >> **PLAYERS:** 1-TBA >>
PUBLISHER: EA >> **AVAILABLE:** December

WOW-O-METER



WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

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Create the world's most challenging and outrageous golf courses in a variety of different environments including parklands, desert, tropical and British Isles.

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Build your own version of Hyper Headquarters!

Electronic Arts have allowed Sid to model the game's interface after The Sims



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Sid Meier is one of the few true games industry icons. Having brought us some of the finest strategy titles to ever grace the PC (the Civilization series), he has put his creative mind to producing something slightly different. At present, his team at Firaxis is creating a 'sim' golfing experience that will allow the player to become a golf course designer, CEO and/or resident Pro of their very own golf resort!

Derek dela Fuente caught the attention of Sid for a quick fire Q&A session on Sim Golf.

HYPER: So how did Sid Meier decide that a Golf Sim would be exciting and fun?

Sid Meier: I've always designed games around topics that I think are fun and engaging - whether it's pirates, history or golf. First the topic has to be fun and then we work on the very best way to present and gradually unfold the interesting and cool aspects of that topic.

The idea for the golf game came last summer as I was at the library leafing through a golfing magazine. In the middle of the magazine was this cool map showing a lovely piece of land with a stream, hills, grass, trees, and wetlands. There was a contest to use this piece of land to design the three most interesting, varied, and attractive golf holes possible. I thought to myself, that might make a cool computer game. Nobody had really made a fun game out of designing and building a golf course. So I grabbed some trees and textures from Gettysburg, built a couple of golfer animations in Poser, and threw together a quick



prototype and started playing and the next thing I knew I was really hooked.

In a few seconds I could plop down a tee, lay down a little bit of fairway, position the green, scatter around a few bunkers, and turn my little golfers loose. There was something mesmerizing about

watching my little golfers whack that white ball and seeing it sail through the air. It reminds me in some ways of watching the trains run in Railroad Tycoon or checking the traffic in Sim City. Not only is it fun to play, but it can be fun just to watch what's happening.

HYPER: Will it help to be a golf fan to enjoy playing the game?

SM: I've tried to bring players a fresh, light-hearted look at the game of golf. A golf course is really just a big playground for grown-ups - and whether you're a golfer or not, I think you'll find lots of fun and surprises in playing Sim Golf. Some members of the Firaxis team

Who would ever have thought golf could be so... emotional?



don't have a deep knowledge of golf and they are the folks creating some of the most creative courses, interesting golf characters and fun stories. If you're a more avid golf fan you may want to design an extremely successful course, pursue a career mode, hold big purse tournaments and try to be recognized by the Sim Golf Association (SGA) as a top course designer and CEO. Sim Golf really has something for everyone, golf course design, building, managing, playing the course and a lot of fun player and story customization.

HYPER: Have you based the ideas, resources, set up, even looks, on a number of courses in real life?

SM: We provide players with 4 environments from which to play. You may build an Eastern Woodlands course (grass, trees, lakes, ducks) or an English links course (heather, sheep and pot bunkers). They'll also be a Southwest Desert course (sand, cactus, and target golf) and a lush Tropical course (beaches, palm trees, and crocodiles). In addition, you can customize your courses with landmarks reminiscent of some of the most famous courses. Things are partially based around real courses.

We haven't licensed any players, courses, etc., because we think a really fun aspect to this game will be to allow players to create their own favourite courses, characters and themes. Players can create their own version of St. Andrews or



Love Palm trees? Go crazy!



Pebble Beach. They can also create customized golfers, from celebrities to famous golf pros, and determine the golfers clothing, personality, and face (including importing digitized faces from snapshots, etc. — I included my own face and my son's in the demo so we could go golfing together.) You may also customise the dialogue your golfer character uses on the course. This allows you to put your entire family on the course or to create theme courses with Star Trek characters, your co-workers, international supermodels, or your favorite real golfers. Of course you can share your creations through the Sim Golf web site.

HYPER: Are you a fan of the Sim games that have come before Sim Golf, like The Sims?

SM: I've enjoyed playing Will Wright's games for a long time - all the way back to Raid on Bungeling Bay! My favorites would have to be SimCity and, more recently, The Sims. I've spent countless hours unsnarling traffic jams, raising property values, and trying desperately to make new friends to get that next promotion. As soon as you begin to play one of Will's games you realize that a lot of the old rules don't apply - there's an exhilarating sense of freedom in being able to explore any path you choose, whether it's maximizing

your score, tormenting your citizens, or creating something of beauty. Of course, being a game designer, I soon came to the conclusion that I'd like to write a game like this - to borrow some of the ideas that Will has pioneered and combine them with a few of my own. I think you'll find Sim Golf is a totally unique experience in that there are many ways to play the game. You can focus on designing and building really interesting courses, managing a successful resort or have fun tinkering with your golf members. Each course is different, each game is different, and each player creates their own unique story.

HYPER: Maxis produced Sim Golf for EA a few years ago. A cause for possible confusion?

SM: We don't think so. The games are in no way related.

HYPER: Have you employed any Golfing experts to assist you in the game's creation?

SM: The initial idea began as a game about golf course design and at that point we consulted with some local pros on the creation and



“ There are many ways to play. You can focus on designing and building courses, manage a successful resort or have fun tinkering with your members. ”

Let's go back to the clubhouse and get smashed.

Skill Rating: 0.55

Don't go hitting someone else's balls, now... ouch!

building aspect of the game. But as we continued development we found that a really fascinating aspect to the game was bringing the golfers to life using dialogue, animations, and golfer AI. The golfers are really the primary feedback mechanism in the game — they tell you what you're doing right or where you need to try something new. I don't think this has been done before; it is certainly something new for me.

HYPER: Have you looked at other golf games to see where they may have gone wrong, and attempted to rectify those problems in Sim Golf?

SM: In the case of Sim Golf it didn't seem appropriate to model features from other golf games. Traditional golf games are more about the mechanics of playing a course and not focused on designing, building and managing your dream resort. I don't think there's any other game out there that allows the kind of player feedback, customization and the ability to tinker with the lives of your members.

HYPER: Thanks Sid!

SM: No problems. <<





PlayStation®2



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JAMES BOND 007 IN AGENT UNDER FIRE

WOW-O-METER



CATEGORY: First Person Action >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: EA >> AVAILABLE: November

PS2

Midway got Spy Hunter out just in time...

Eenie, meenie, minie, mo...

Did you know the 20th Bond film is coming?

The last few Bond console outings, *Tomorrow Never Dies* and *The World Is Not Enough*, left us more shaken than stirred, so we're approaching *Agent Under Fire* with a small amount of caution. 007 games became all the rage in the wake of *GoldenEye*'s success on the Nintendo 64, and we've seen the Bond license get a tad thrashed since then. 007 Racing? Ughhh. Electronic Arts seem confident that they can restore some credibility to Bond's name with this high-action thriller in the works for the PS2 – the full title being "James Bond 007 in... *Agent Under Fire*". Grab a martini, sit back and let's see what the super spy is up to this time around.

GETTING YOUR BOND BACK

Agent Under Fire, is primarily a first person shooter, but it promises to deliver a well balanced mixture of missions filled with action and stealth, as well as some driving levels that will allow you to take the gadget-packed Bond mobile for a spin.

As Bond, players must defeat the evil criminal mastermind Malprave, head of a rising terrorist organisation that is bent on ruling the world with their clone technology and army of clones.

Bond is out to stop an "attack of the clones" if you will. Helping Bond along the way will be the obligatory sexy co-spy, Zoe Nightshade (the press release promises a bevy of strikingly beautiful women actually), and a cast of the usual British Secret Service characters like M and Q.

This is also a completely new and original storyline – it's not based on any upcoming Bond film – but it will attempt to stay true to the Bond film legacy.

EA are aware that gamers demand a lot more from their shooters these days, so they've tried to implement multiple paths into the missions to allow for different styles of play. If you're the kind of spy who wants to kick the door down and let loose with a spray of bullets from your Uzi 9mm, you can do so. But you'll probably have just as much success sneaking in the back door and staying out of the sight of the guards in the first place. As Bond, you'll be able to carry a stash of cool gadgets to help you out in stealthy moments

such as these, so you can expect some more interesting solutions to situations that appear to only require a big fat gun on first inspection. Gadgets like the Q-Claw allow you to scale buildings with ninja-like ability, whilst the high-powered sniper rifle will dispatch your foes from the safety of distance.



WHAT YOU LIKE TO SEE:

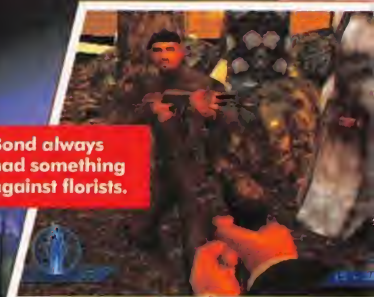
If they promise stunningly beautiful women in the press release, then goddamn, they'd better deliver! Just how interactive is this game, anyhow?

RE

Watch this!
Ho ho ho...



Bond always
had something
against florists.



Stop calling me
Basil, James.



PK or Juicy
Fruit? You
decide.



Where you will need the big guns, though, is up against the many bosses you'll encounter at varying stages of the game. When it comes down to disposing of scum, it seems that Bond still prefers a nice solid rocket launcher on his shoulder.

BACKSTABBING YOUR FRIENDS

The driving aspect of the game is being developed by members of Electronic Arts' Need For Speed team, so you can expect some quality here. In fact, the driving stages were originally in development as a completely separate James Bond driving game. At some stage in its development, EA decided to merge it with the first-person shooter to create Agent Under Fire. A good decision.

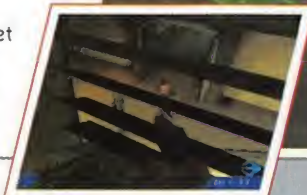
Continuing the legacy of GoldenEye 007, Agent Under Fire will also have a four-player splitscreen and two-player splitscreen multiplayer

mode so you can face off against your friends. Not only will there be the typical deathmatch scenarios, but it seems that EA have lifted some ideas from the popular Counter-Strike mod — there will be a "Protect the VIP" mode, where one side must escort a character to safety, with the other team doing their best to assassinate them along the way. However, the old problem with splitscreen still remains — you can always see where your opponents are on the map just by looking at their window. Maybe it'll be worth investing in one of those crazy big cardboard screen splitters... or maybe not. It'll still be heaps of fun. There will also be some car warfare that is playable in the multiplayer mode, which just reeks of coolness!

It looks like Bond is back to his best, so send that tuxedo off to the dry cleaners and get ready to have your license to kill reinstated.



This game has
a license to
thrill.





SSX Tricky



Sick. Gnarly. Bodacious.



They're not pants, her legs are just very cold



CATEGORY: Snowboarding >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >>
PUBLISHER: EA Sports Big >> **AVAILABLE:** November (PS2)/Early 2002 (GCN, Xbox)

GCN/XBOX/PS2

EA's Big studio has been hard at work eating home delivery pizzas and playing on their computers developing the multi-platform sequel to the hugely popular boarding title, SSX on PS2. The new game in question is SSX Tricky, and it's an extension of the arcade-like snowboarding mayhem that came to life in the original. Thanks to the power of the new consoles like the Xbox and GCN, plus a deeper understanding of the PS2's architecture, SSX Tricky shows massive improvements over what was already a very fun game. Bigger, better, faster... SSX Tricky is going to have it all.

WOW-O-METER

shortcuts, and a more dynamic environment. Out of the new tracks — Garibaldi in Canada and the Alaskan Wilderness — the Alaskan wilderness track excites us the most. The more free-form the game, the more thrilling the snowboarding. Allowing the player the freedom to play the way they want to play is what makes a sport such as snowboarding a truly fun video game experience. You only have to look at the upcoming game, Amped, on the Xbox, to see why big non-linear

IN SEARCH OF SNOW BUNNIES

So what would be your main desired additions to this SSX sequel? Wider, more non-linear slopes? More tricks? More customisable characters? Well, SSX Tricky promises to deliver it all. Electronic Arts have revamped a lot of the old SSX racing tracks for inclusion in Tricky, so whilst you can't expect more than maybe three new circuits, the old tracks have gone through quite a transformation to suit this new sequel. There are more jumps — and they're bigger too. There are also a bunch of new



WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
 How about some local Aussie artists on the soundtrack? Or a run modelled on Perisher?

mountain slopes make for a truly exciting game. The original SSX had a large open mountainside,

but it was only one track — not a feature of the entire game. We're hoping EA decide to make more of Tricky this open and explorable, and from the early version of the game we played, it seems they've made strides in this direction. Character will also play a large



There goes her small change...

Hey, aren't your boots meant to be strapped in?

part in the Tricky experience, and EA have included a set of very different snowboarders, all who seem to have some kind of relationship outside of the racing track. Yes, there appear to be cutscenes to get you more emotionally involved in the race – like being sledged by your opponents whilst waiting for the chair lift, or wanting to win a race to impress a cute snowboarder who's caught your eye. The only side-effect to this injection of personality is that EA have pumped up the in-race competitiveness and aggressiveness of your AI opponents, meaning that you'll be pushed and shoved more than you were in the original. For us, that puts a small red x on EA's report card. Who wants to fall over even more often than in SSX? We're hoping this kind of on track fighting doesn't infringe too much on the gaming – we want speed and fluidity of racing, not a stop-start experience that results in frustration... and broken controllers.

POWDER FINGER

But Tricky promises so much more than just giving your opponents the finger whilst you hurtle through the powder. Just taking a look at the

stunt tracks shows us that EA want Tricky to be twice as fun as the original. Huge jumps, rails, frightening drops... Tricky is going to be a hell of a ride. The great thing is that each version of the game, from the PS2 and Xbox to the GameCube will have something to offer. All versions of the game should be great. The PS2 has a slight advantage, as SSX was originally designed for the Dual Shock controller and it has been in development the longest, but the Xbox and GameCube versions of Tricky should sport better graphics – higher polygon player models and richer texturing.

Little is known about the final soundtrack to the game, but we do know that EA have garnered Run DMC's Tricky – which is all that matters, really. "It's tricky, tricky, tricky..." yes, guaranteed to drive you bonkers with repeated listens. Mad! <<<



Well, at least it keeps his head warm.





They modelled Cam Shea for this.



WOW-O-METER



SPLASHDOWN

CATEGORY: Water Racing >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >>
 PUBLISHER: Infogrames >> AVAILABLE: November



Remember to ride it like a horse.



I'm churning up for your love...

Rainbow Studios really are doing some great things on PlayStation 2 at the moment. A couple of issues ago we were quite impressed by their ATV Offroad racing game, and now we've had a chance to check out an early build of their latest — Splashdown. Perhaps the best way to describe it is a cross between ATV Offroad and Wave Race — not a bad combination, eh?

THIS'LL FLOAT YOUR BOAT

Although our preview version of the game was extremely limited, it was enough to convince us not only that GCN Wave Race has some

competition on its hands, but also that the PlayStation 2 can handle complex wave physics and expansive environments with relative ease. The level we played was set in a tropical paradise dotted with tiny islands, and sported gorgeous visuals. Just like Wave Race: Blue Storm, there are several layers to the water effects — transparency through the water allowing you to see the bottom of the water, objects moving through the water, and reflections of the environment on the surface of the water. The combined effect is stunning.

At this early stage, the water doesn't move quite as well or respond quite as realistically to the rider's actions as it does in Blue Storm, but on the other hand, the surface probably looks more realistic. More importantly, however, the "feel" of both battling against and using the waves to your advantage is most definitely there. From following every undulation at low speeds

through to skimming over everything but the largest of waves at top speed, Splashdown's mechanics have the depth that gamers crave.

The Motocross Madness games were often described as having "floaty physics", so it's no surprise how well Rainbow have adapted to water-based extreme sports. The physics work in much the same way as in Wave Race, so using your bodyweight by leaning forwards and backwards is integral. In fact, one of the coolest tricks we discovered is to lean forward and dive down into the water then pull right back to shoot up out of the water and into a full backflip (preferably over an island or boat). Dope.

ANYTHING BUT WET

The player has a lot of freedom with the camera mechanics, and again, just like Motocross Madness, placing it back and slightly to one side is

the best trade-off between eye candy and useability. Where the tricks in Motocross Madness and ATV Offroad were there almost exclusively for show, in Splashdown

they'll play a much more integral role. Each rider has a performance meter that can be kept high by sticking to the course and busting tricks. The better

the trick, the higher your performance meter and the faster you go. Just like Unirally!

Splashdown will have 18 courses, and hopefully feature the same range of play options that Rainbow have packed into their previous racers — in other words, the full range of race styles, from tight, narrow circuits and stunt-based courses, through to epic point to point racing. Unfortunately, only two-player splitscreen will be supported, but with such great physics, speed, stunts and freeform racing, Nintendo may be a little worried. ☹️

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
 Splashdown on GameCube... mmmm, water effects.



What goes up...



Hey, who put that mountain range there?



CIVILIZATION III

PC CATEGORY: Strategy/Sim >> PLAYERS: 1-Multi >> PUBLISHER: Infogrames >> AVAILABLE: November



If you added up the number of hours people all over the world have spent playing Civilization I and II over the years it would probably equal the time it took to build the Pyramids and the Great Wall of China put together. Quite apt really.

It has been ten years since the first release of Civilization back in 1991 and PC Gaming has come a long way since then. On the surface, Civilization III looks as though most of that progress has passed it by, but after more than three years work Firaxis have changed many aspects of the design, balance and feel of the game, creating something new and quite different.

RISE OF THE EMPIRE

The real heart of those changes lies in the trade, resources, nationality and cultural aspects of the game. For example cities are no longer responsible for the units they create; your entire nation is called upon to share the burden and part of that

burden is ensuring that your empire has the right materials to build and maintain units.

If your civilisation has no bronze then it cannot build Phalanxes and trading for that bronze becomes very important early on in the game. On the subject of resources, it's interesting to note that special resource tiles in Civ III don't appear until your civilisation has the science to use them. In other words it's not possible to plant your first city deliberately in a rich area, as you won't see any special tiles until much later.

This new emphasis on resource types for production also has an important side effect. Now it's important to defend your territory as well as your cities in order to safeguard your trade roads and resources. Trade is a necessity to build up your military and trade, therefore, becomes a primary target

in warfare, an interesting new twist.

Another new twist is the way that a city's influence over the terrain around them no longer grows as a function of the cities size, but of their culture. In other words you can no longer just leave cities to themselves and wait for them to grow. You have to nurture the culture of each city in order to expand its influence and then increase its population.

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
Let's hope the box includes a social security cheque so you can quit your job and just play Civ III.

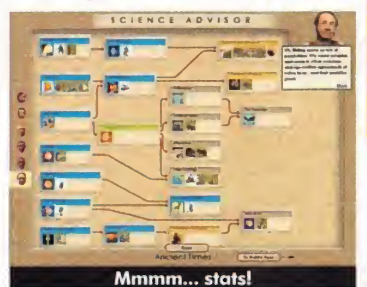
RULE THE ROMANS

Civilisations also now have one special unit that only they can build, the historical timing of which depends on the nation involved. The Americans for example have the F-15 fighter, which obviously doesn't become available until later in the piece you might choose to rule the Romans who get their special unit very early on.

Attached to this idea is another new concept introduced in Civilization III,

the "golden age", which is meant to represent the period in history when your civilisation is at its zenith. The "golden age" of your civilisation makes all worked tiles in your empire cough up one extra trade and shield per turn. Golden ages only happen once, last twenty turns, and begin when any one of your civilisation's 'special units' wins its first combat against another an enemy.

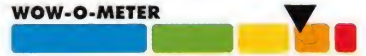
Civilization III looks like it's going to turn out to be something truly worth indulging in for fans of the series, and even something truly inspiring for newcomers.





GBA
DUKE NUKEM
 CATEGORY: FPS >> PLAYERS: 1-TBA >>
 PUBLISHER: Rockstar >> AVAILABLE: November

While we're all waiting for Duke Nukem Forever on the PC, and in the light of a Doom port for the GBA, Take 2 Interactive have announced Duke Nukem for the Game Boy Advance. Looking pretty close to the original PC title, Duke Nukem on the GBA will be an all-out shooter —



with the return of the pig cops, double shotgun and all! We're wondering how many classic Duke wisecracks they can digitise and fit onto a cartridge...

We're not sure at this stage whether this is a port of the original Duke Nukem PC game or a brand new Duke game using the old 3D engine, but one thing is for sure — it looks to have retained the classic Duke shooter gameplay. The screenshots give it all away.

Let's see... Doom GBA, Duke Nukem GBA... Okay, next we want Dark Forces!



Hog breath. Ugh.



Duke has a coke habit.



GLOBAL OPERATIONS

CATEGORY: Team-based FPS >> PLAYERS: 1-24 >>
 PUBLISHER: Crave >> AVAILABLE: 2002



In the worst case yet of "hey, that's popular, let's just copy that", Crave are bringing us a team-based shooter that has Counter-Strike stamped all over it. Global Operations, or Global Ops for short, offers the player a choice of four teams (which is two better than Counter-Strike) — Special Forces, Terrorists, Peacekeepers and Guerilla Forces. Each side also has seven different classes — Reconnaissance, Commando, Heavy Weapons, Medic, Sniper, Demolitions and Intelligence Officer.

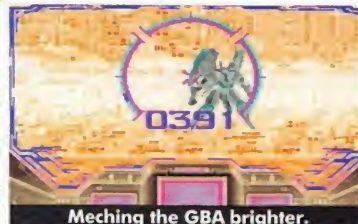


transport, although you have to wait for a short period of time before you can become active again.

If anything, it seems that Crave are attempting a "Counter-Strike 2" before the Counter-Strike team can get around to it. The only thing that baffles us, is how the development team at Barking Dog can sleep soundly at night. Ah well, the game could be lots of fun, but there's a chance we might be over the whole Counter-

Just like Counter-Strike, each map has a time limit and an objective that is appropriate to the map location, with teams fighting it out to complete or prevent the task. If you get killed during the round, you actually get re-inserted into the map via a troop

Strike experience by the time this gets released.

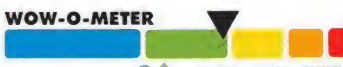


Meching the GBA brighter.



Map meching is always popular.

Z.O.E. 2173: TESTAMENT



CATEGORY: Action/Strategy/RPG >> PLAYERS: 1 >>
 PUBLISHER: Konami >> AVAILABLE: 2002



Most of us played Zone of the Enders on the PS2 if only because we wanted the Metal gear Solid 2 demo disc that came with it. Come on, admit it. Now, Konami have been gracious enough to bring the Z.O.E. universe to the GBA, even if they've handed the development over to someone else. Creator, Hideo Kojima, may have nothing to do with this game, but it seems this GBA game still retains all the mood and strength of story that was so important to him.

Combat plays out using a turn-based system, almost like an RPG, with a main map being used for tactics and strategy. The player has control over a variety of different units, from tanks and jet fighters to LEVs (the big mechs). Units level up with experience after battles, and players can upgrade their units to make them capable of new kinds of attacks.

For fans of the Z.O.E. universe, this is really something to look forward to.



Stick together team! Roger, that.



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TARAWL

ELIOT FISH



Battle Isle: DARK SPACE

[HTTP://WWW.DARKSPACE.NET](http://www.darkspace.net)

[HTTP://WWW.PALESTAR.COM](http://www.palestar.com)

Dark Space is a massively multiplayer space combat strategy game, from small US developer, Pale Star; located in Austin, Texas, the home to many a game development team. Dark Space takes place in a tumultuous universe of political infighting, economic sanctions and diplomatic posturing. All of the major factions have definite hostility towards one another, but a few splinter outposts are staying neutral, at least initially, to determine their best interest. In the middle of all of this, is you. And hundreds of other online players!

A LONG TIME AGO...

In the midst of turmoil and civil unrest, players start as an ensign,

piloting smaller craft, eventually working their way up to the position of Grand Admiral, controlling a capital ship and plotting maneuvers in one of the three initial factions.

Hundreds of players can join together online in a fast paced struggle for mankind's destiny. Individual mission goals vary and successful completion of objectives will alter the galaxy toward that faction's favour. The galaxy is designed to be altered directly by concerted player effort, so the more players online and the better they play together, the more the game world and its politics are affected. By co-operation within a faction or group, players will achieve scenario objectives and push back the rival

factions. Even random events are possible, which will definitely require player co-operation to save the chosen faction from obliteration. If you ever wanted to take part in a living, breathing (with space helmets on of course), warring society in space, Dark Space is your chance.

MAKE IT SO!

Much like Independence War, once you are commanding your starship, you won't actually be hands on with the guns or the ship's throttle. From your position as ship commander, you will delegate orders to specific sections of your ship, from engineering, to gunnery, communications... just think of

Captain Picard on the Starship Enterprise and you'll have an idea of what exactly you'll be doing whilst on the "bridge". This way you have complete control over what your ship does, whilst still having time to ponder the larger star map and decide upon tactics or where it is you want to travel to.

If space is dark, how can we see it?

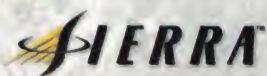
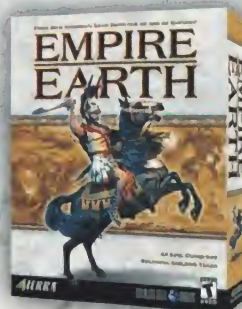


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WIN WIN WIN

ENTRIES CLOSE OCTOBER 26th



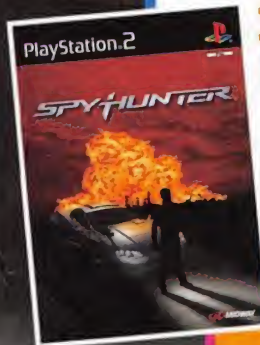
WIN SPY HUNTER!

FOR
PS2

Acclaim has generously offered five copies of Spy Hunter up for grabs this issue. Seeing as it's our game of the month and all, we suggest you get your pens out and enter this comp immediately. It's a rip-roaring game, full of action-packed spy goodness. Four wheels of futuristic firepower, and the power is in your very own hands. To win a copy of Spy Hunter, just answer this question:

What is the title of the Spy Hunter theme music, and who wrote it?

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FOR
PC

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Get behind the controls and send legions of Mechs into battle in this excellent sequel to MechCommander. Microsoft have a pretty good strike rate lately with good games, so grab them while they're hot! We have five copies of Mech Commander 2 to giveaway, but you must answer the following question to enter:

Name another Mech game released by Microsoft.

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THE ARCADE



Nameco, Taito, Konami, Capcom and Sega - The five mighty Japanese powerhouses of the arcade game world. Without them, the arcade world wouldn't exist as we know it. The arcade fan, it is safe to say, wouldn't exist either. It is also safe to say, that the world would therefore not be a safe place to live in. Thousands of would-be arcade hangers would be just left wandering aimlessly on the streets throughout the 'first' world. With nothing to focus their attention on, most would turn to the 'edge' and the risks of a life of crime, which would then lead to major civil disturbances, and finally, the breakdown of society as we know it. So to assess whether the security of the precious world is at stake, HYPER sent **TIM LEVY** to Tokyo, Japan. There he was to recon the arcades in Shinjuku, Shibuya and Roppongi to evaluate whether the arcade world was in good hands, and if not, he had orders to phone Hyper Command Headquarters so that they could head down to the army disposal stores and stock up on survival gear, sandbags and beef jerky.





スペシャルフィーチャー

ES OF TOKYO



Q hhh, Tokyo, there is no other place like it on earth. After literally rising from the ashes after being destroyed by U.S. fire bombing raids in World War II, Tokyo has ascended to house the most technologically integrated society in the world. Tokyoidians (Tokyoites/Tokyooids??) have surrounded themselves with technology in every aspect of life: They have just recently created the robo pet, which is a couple of steps up from the Tamagotchi; Computer activated voices tell you whether your bus is approaching or if your shower is too hot; Their latest mobile phones have cameras in them; Huge neon signs and giant TV screens pump out ads inviting you to buy and consume more; Tokyo kids spend more time in front of a television than anyone else in the world; Even the humble toilet is now computer controlled. Yes, Tokyoites 'love' their technology to the point where even their pop stars are computer generated.

So now that computers have supplanted traditional pets and acted as replacement teenage love crush fantasy objects, it is no wonder that the Japanese have embraced the arcade game 'simulation' so wholeheartedly. Hey, why dance with smelly people when you can dance with a computer a-la Dance Dance Revolution? Yes, the 3D arcade game simulation has been taken to the extreme in Tokyo, Japan. There are sims that enable you to 'be' a train driver, a boxer, a fireman, a dancer, a keyboardist, a martial artist, a photographer, a sniper, an excavator driver, a stuntman, a bus driver etc. Don't get us wrong, we are not trying to say that simulations are supplanting real life, we are just beginning to wonder if they are ever going to bring out a simulation simulator.

Unfortunately, many of these games will not reach Australia, so read on and find out what you may or may not be missing out on.





Punch Mania - Konami

❖ Tired of hitting a simulation of a drum kit in "Drum Mania"? Would you prefer to be hitting a simulation of someone's face? Punch mania will have you take on various Kung Fu masters who will test your punching speed, accuracy and endurance. Six retractable punching mitts act as targets for you to punch, elbow or hit with any object you can smuggle into the arcade. The game suits a Wing Chun Martial Arts style of fighting, but does not really cater for the wrestling styles such as judo. Although there are punching gloves provided, only wimps use them.

Chance of making it to the land of No Ozone Layer **30%**



DREAMS DO COME TRUE!

This game can be obtained on import for DC and PS2 - with train console control interface!

Let's Go By Train (Ver. 1,2,3) - Taito

❖ Your first impression of a train simulator game is "How f**king hard it is to drive a train?", right? But no. After playing this train simulation based on real Tokyo rail lines, you will have a new found respect for train drivers. If you go too slow, you won't be on schedule. If you brake too hard or overshoot the platform, citizens may be injured by being thrown around or when they stupidly step out of the platformless train (if you activate the door switch). Also, imagine the humiliation and point loss if you arrive TOO early at a platform. This love and total respect for punctuality is what helps the Japanese to be Japanese. It also means that this game probably ain't making it out of the country.

Maybe Taito could make a train simulator based on the Sydney rail system where the goal is NOT to run on time and to somehow break down as often as possible. How realistic we say. Chortle!

Not a hope in hell. **0%**



Tokyo Bus Guide - Sega

❖ Whilst most driving games have you racing furiously against the clock, it is a strange impatient feeling to be playing a driving game where you have to wait in real time for about 15 seconds at a traffic light. Yes, this is a real time bus driver simulator that will take you up, down and along Tokyo's roadway system.

The game goes something like this. Put on your indicator, pull out slowly from the curb, making sure not to accelerate too hard - you don't want to throw those passengers around. Stop at the traffic light - don't break too hard - you don't want to throw those passengers around. Drive along the street (don't speed). Indicate and make sure you don't swing your rear end into other traffic. Pull over at the next bus stop. You are getting sleepy. Yes it's been a long day. The boredom is creeping in. So that's it. See - it is hard to be a bus driver. The trick is to think about other stuff whilst you are driving so that you don't get bored. Nonetheless, this is a good yet bizarre game and if you liked Sega's '18 Wheeler' truck game, this may be your thing.

BUSING OUT ALL OVER

But you CAN get it on import from Japan for Dreamcast and (would you believe?) rumour has it that a sequel is coming out for PS2.

Will this game make it to Thong Land? Very very unlikely.... **2%**

乗降口



Mocop Boxing - Konami

❖❖ Whilst Punch Mania is a fun game in it's own right, it doesn't include the fact that a fighter often uses bobbing and weaving to create a moving target. Mocop takes the body motion sensor set up first seen in Konami's light gun shooter 'Police 24-7' and adds some new fan dangled punch sensor that can tell where you hit your on-screen opponent's body. Whilst you have to knock down each successive fighter 3 times per match, you are allowed only 3 knockdowns per game. If you get your opponent to the third knockout, you are often required to take him out with up to 50 punches which have to be delivered within 12 seconds. I have been told that 'normal people' could find this part of the game to be very tiring.

Will it make it to the place with the highest percent of Vegemite eaters per capita in the world?

80%



Power Shovel Simulator - Taito

❖❖ Without the promise of destruction, many simulators wouldn't exist. Power Shovel Simulator is almost a rare exception to this rule, as PSS has you helping to create - instead of destroy (mostly). This is a beautiful thing. The other beautiful thing is that this sim will teach you how to control 3 types/sizes of excavators that Komatsu currently has on the market, thus increasing your employability level.

The game has two types of play available, with the first using a shovel in numerous real life situations found on a building site. The other type of play is choosing 1 of 9 mini fantasy games, such as demolishing a limousine and some sheds, or scooping up a turtle and relocating him in another pool (I didn't say MY fantasy).

Although it takes several goes to learn the game's cool interface and controls, it's a satisfying feeling that you now know how to control a mighty tool which has about the same power as at least 100 council workers.

It's a pity it won't hit our shores.

0%



Golgo 13 - Namco

❖❖ Whilst Silent Scope (Konami) has been a very successful game around the world, the 'prototype' to this game is based on one of Japan's most popular Manga characters - Golgo 13. Golgo 13, whose name stems from 'Golgotha' (the hill on which Jesus was crucified) and the 'evil' number 13, is the world's top emotionless modern day samurai-esque sniper assassin. In the game you will utilize his trademark M-16 rifle (which has a real telescopic sight) in 20 different static scenarios.

Each stage reads like a comic book and briefs you about the target, who, as the karmic forces of the universe may have it, are about to pay the ultimate price for not believing in karma. But the game is not purely about assassination head shots. The missions will test your sniper skills to the limit (you often only get one shot or about 6 seconds to take it) in situations such as having to shoot a tire on a rally car travelling at high speed. Or you may have to cap a Mafia Capo whilst trying to aim from an unstable small boat. Or maybe shoot the hand of a diamond dealer from a considerable distance or even pick off a whole gaggle of gangsters in a blizzard.

While the comparisons with Silent Scope abound aplenty due to the snipe-u-larities of the interface feel, Golgo 13 gives you a more in depth study of the situations faced by a real life sniper assassin.

Unlikely to be seen here due to the Golgo 13 factor.

5%





Photo Battle - Namco

❖ Contrary to the title, this ain't no game where you bash people with tripods, garrote them with lengths of film and throw developing chemicals in their eyes. No, this game is a battle of reflexes and reflex mirrors, where you have to use a replica professional 35mm SLR camera to precisely frame and then apply intricate timing to obtain a great shot.

There are four categories to see if you have got what it takes to be an all round photographer:

Sports: Mainly reflex shots where you must depress the shutter at the precise moment such as when a soccer player kicks a ball or a karate exponent has broken the first couple of tiles in a large stack of tiles.

Art: Tests your vision and powers of observation in mini games such as locating three four leaf clovers in a few seconds or discovering mistakes in a still life photo.

Scoop: Take a photo of a getaway car's number plate or get a shot of 3 aliens concealed in a crowd.

Technic: Try achieving some nice panning shots of racing cars or depress the shutter as close to a preset time on a stop watch.

So will Photo Battle enable you to become a better photographer? For sports, yes. But it doesn't teach you about camouflage techniques or the patience required to stake out celebrities on their so called 'secret' holidays.

Chance of making it to the home of the world's biggest rock? **30%**



Magical Truck Adventure - Sega

❖ Part workout, part adventure, this game will see you pumping your way to glory in this 'on rails' scenically dangerous rail cart mission to catch a couple of bad guys. The rail line will take you through 5 different 'magical' lands. There isn't really much control in this game as you can only control speed through pumping, but the action occurs when you have to avoid rock slides, logs, buffalo, crocodiles and other trains that somehow wander or fall onto the rail line. To avoid these obstacles, activating a foot pedal will see your cart jumping or tipping onto 2 wheels.

Not much replay value and actually quite lame.

Unlikely to make it to the place that inspired the title **0%**
- The Wizard of Oz.



Stunt Typhoon - Taito

❖ If you like your driving games, then this game will give you a bit of a brain melt down. You take on the roll (no pun intended) of a stunt driver who has to complete a movie scene within a set amount of time, with the most amount of damage - which is a totally rad concept for a game. As it is your duty as a stunt driver to really smoke it up and create a high level of destruction and action for the cameras, you are awarded bonus points for stunts such as: planting a nice 'scratch' along the side of other vehicles or making a nice hand brake skid 'side turn' around a corner or driving through a heavily propped area to 'hit' stuff. But don't damage your vehicle too much, it can only handle so much punishment before it breaks.

There are 15 different locations to drive through and after finishing each 'scene' then you can review all the stunt action via the strategically placed cameras (very cool).

If this game doesn't make it to Oz, I'm off back to Japan. **90%**





Brave Fire Fighters - Sega

Since the dawn of man, fire has played a central role in lighting, heating, powering and shaping his world. Unfortunately, bad wiring, unattended raw flame, pyromaniacs and spontaneous human combustion have created the constant need for Brave Fire Fighters. Brave Fire Fighters is a part of Sega's 'Real Life Career' games, which includes, would you believe, 'Crazy Taxi' and, more believably, 'Tokyo Bus Guide', '18 Wheeler' as well as the about to be released 'Emergency Ambulance'.

The game in itself is a bit like a first person shooter with no one to shoot. Once again it is the real life interface which really puts you in 'the zone' as you scroll your way forward through a serious fire in an old down town hotel. The goal is to locate and bring to safety trapped guests by using your trusty fire hose to hose down fire and soak areas that are about to flare up.

Some guy was telling me how that, originally, the game came with 2 huge heaters which simulated the heat of the fire depending on how well the player was controlling the blaze. But, ironically, the heaters actually caused a fire, so they took the heaters off.

HOT TECHNOLOGY

An interesting inclusion to this game is the new programme board powering this game and many of the new generation Sega games. Yes, Sega's faithful Naomi board has been relegated and the Hikaru board is now the Ichiban (number one). The Hikaru board is able to reproduce very realistic fire and water graphics, which, like a snowflake, has infinite numbers of shape, colour levels, opaqueness, shading and shadow, all of which takes a lot of computing power to emulate.

Due to the high amount of pyromaniacs in Oz, there is only a slight chance of this. **5%**



ARCADE WARS

Although there are privately owned arcades, the major arcade developers have their own arcades where most of the games are exclusively theirs. There are several in the Tokyo metropolis, but there are also large 'game lands' situated in the outer suburbs.

Star Wars Racer Arcade - Sega

Whoa! This one's just arrived here. Although there are Star Wars pod racer games for the home consoles, it's this game's push/pull jet rocket control levers that give you the full Star Wars pod race feel. This game allows you to choose from 4 characters and 4 of the best pod racer courses in the Star Wars universe. Very cool and a great realisation of speed.

Go play it now!

100%

Air Trix - Sega

In 1997, Sega released 'Top Skater' to much acclaim. Although the street trick section was good, the best bit was the sickly awesome half-pipe sections and giant airs you'd score off them. Air Trix devotes the whole game to that bit by allowing you to cut it up on 3 stages and 5 huge ramp sections with 5 different skaters, each with their own unique moves.

A fully articulated deck enables you to pull off a multitude of moves and will have you working up a sweat. The graphics are dope and give the feeling that you are really soaring high in the sky, while a pumping soundtrack finishes the full audio visual package.

No doubt this game is already headed our way. - Low impact skaters rejoice!

90%



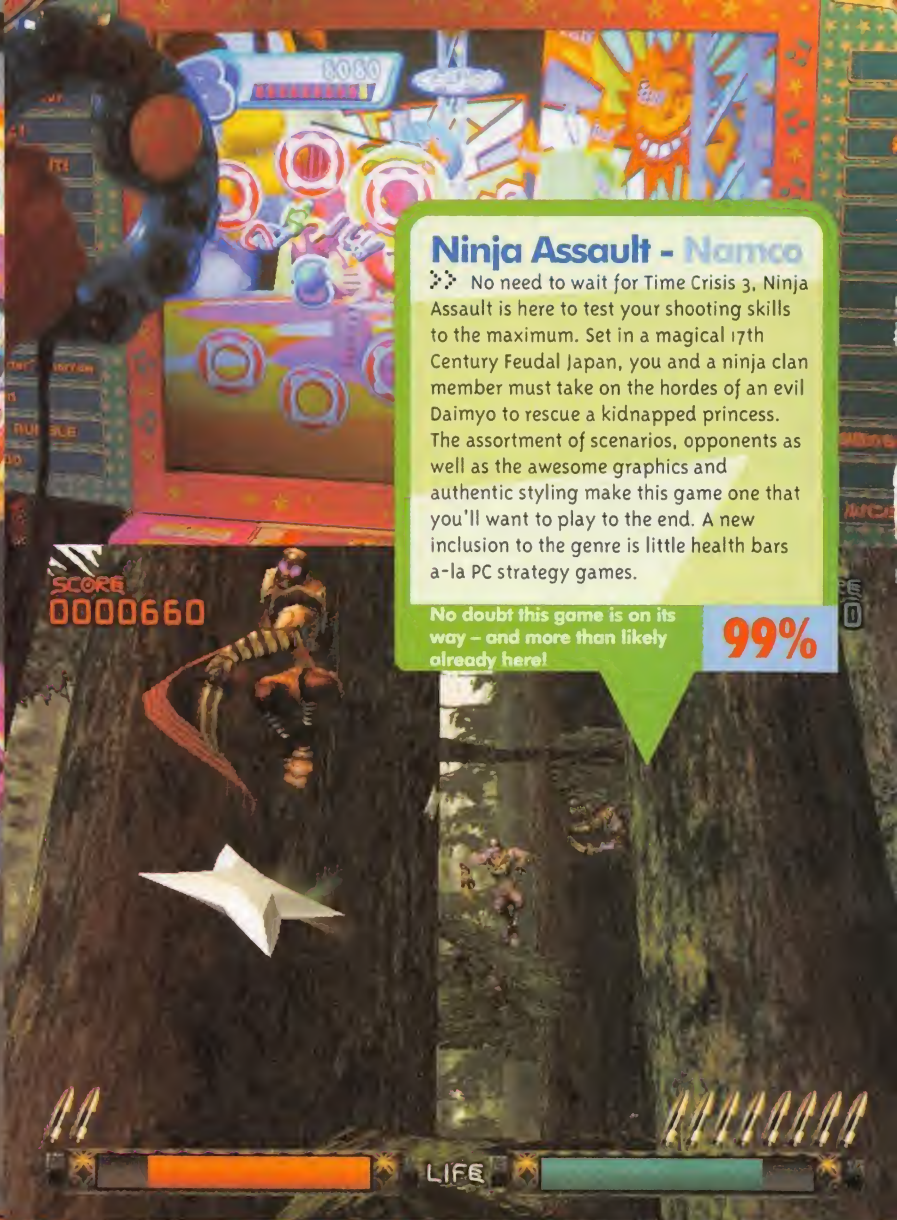


Shake the Tambourine - Sega

Warning - Feelings of old-school gay abandonment will exude from every pore of your body whilst playing this game. Choose from 26 different songs (including the theme song from Lupin III a.k.a Wolf) in this trippy test of your shaking skills. Instead of the tried and tested vertical scrolling bar graph type as found in the other B-Mania games, Sega have opted for having six positional circles that you have to either hit (glows red) or shake (glows blue).

There is uncertainty whether this will reach Australia.

3%



Ninja Assault - Namco

No need to wait for Time Crisis 3, Ninja Assault is here to test your shooting skills to the maximum. Set in a magical 17th Century Feudal Japan, you and a ninja clan member must take on the hordes of an evil Daimyo to rescue a kidnapped princess. The assortment of scenarios, opponents as well as the awesome graphics and authentic styling make this game one that you'll want to play to the end. A new inclusion to the genre is little health bars a-la PC strategy games.

No doubt this game is on its way - and more than likely already here!

99%

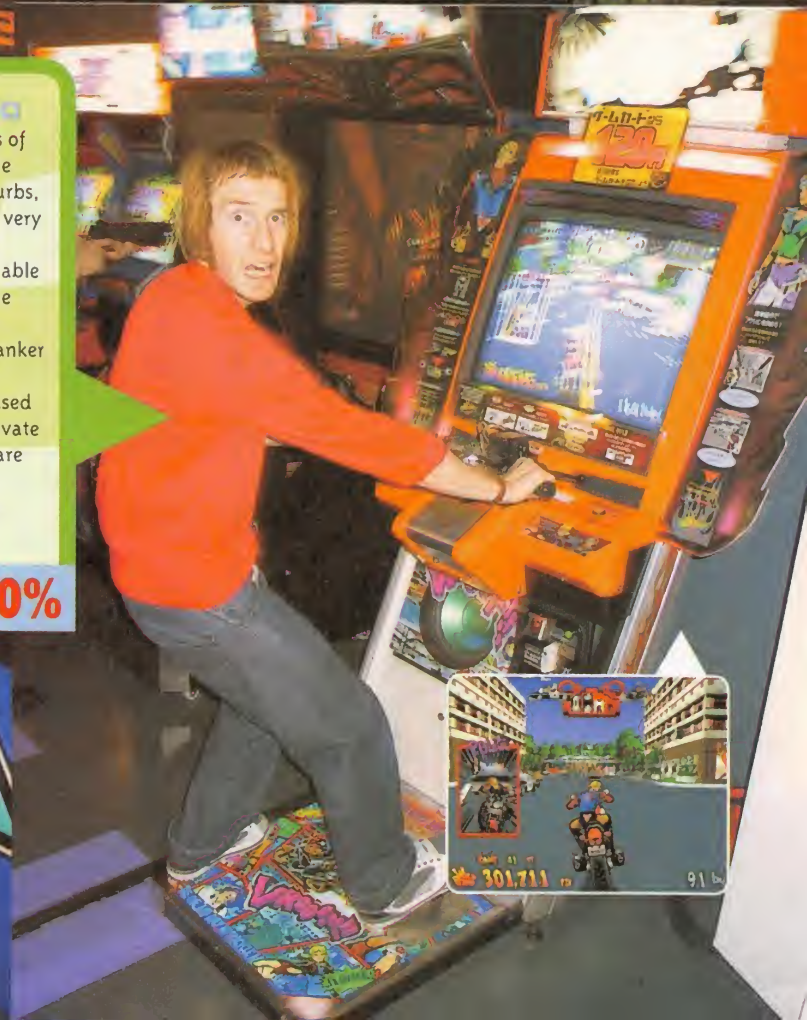


Wild Riders - Sega

Starting out in the outskirts of Massive City, you attempt to ride your motor cycle through the burbs, the CBD and the Bay area in this very stylized comic book take on the police chase scene. Your bike is able to do jumps by pulling up on the handle bars and is able to slide under objects such as a petrol tanker by pushing down on the handle bars. This gets a bit of getting used to as you often accidentally activate the jump or slide action as you are negotiating some of the games tighter turns, but otherwise, the game is quite a thrill ride.

Chances of making it to the boondoor of the boomerang?

60%





Planet Harriers - Sega

❖ A real 3D 'space shooter'. Choose one of four different Jet Pack equipped space mercenaries sent in to destroy evil aliens from infesting an Earth-like planet. You can use your rapid fire laser or missiles with 'lock' features. Very fast and furious action. A very strange addition is that one of the mercenary characters is a short-skirted nurse armed with a large laser syringe.

Chances of this game making it to the world's smallest continent?

75%

RETRO ARCADE GAMING LIVES!

If there is an arcade heaven where all the good old arcade games go, it must be Game Shibuya Kaikan in Shibuya. Kaikan has 5 floors full of mainly old school games. With most of the games only being 50 Yen (normally games are 100 - 200Y), it ensures a steady flow of arcade fans all day and night. Many of the classics are here including: Elevator Action, Pac Man, Dig Dug, Rally X, Tank Force, Danus, Ninja Warriors and Galaxians as well as many games from the mid to late nineties.

Located in the same building is 'Game Las Vegas', which as the title doesn't reveal, is possibly the largest collection of those sticker photo booth things under the sun.

GAME OVER

Typing of the Dead - Sega

❖ Whilst any self-respecting arcade gamer will know Sega's light gun shooter 'House of the Dead', not many gamers would have ever dreamt on this title in their wildest nightmare.

Typing of the dead retraces the steps of the game it is based on except that you now, err, ummm.... 'type' down zombies with your keyboard, which is a perfect way for receptionists to show of their skills or for amateurs to increase their word per minute rate. Although the game will probably not make it to Australian arcades, Typing of the Dead could go on to be one of the most popular 'learn to type' edu-tainment games ever for PC.

BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

If Typing of the Dead is just far too violent for you, then you may be more interested in the "typing of" sequel - Typing of the Date. Yes, romance a bevy of lovely ladies and impress them on a date with your mad typing skillz. It's out in Japan now!

Would it introduce the need for a keyboard license?

3%



So is the arcade world and therefore THE world in good hands? Well... kind of... YES! Unfortunately, there are SO many good games out there and on their way to Australia, that a normal allowance or pay cheque isn't enough for arcade-loving Australians to be able to afford to indulge in all these great toys.

This high cost of arcade gaming will no doubt be offset by the only way the gangster rap induced kids know how - by turning to a life of crime.

Big ups 'n respects going out to The Antman, Mr Matto and the Lovely Yuko - Thanks for all the assistance

REVIEWS



» PS2
p52 Spy Hunter

The hottest four wheels on the PS2
explodes into action.

HYPER #97

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THE HYPER CREW'S TOP 5

Eliot Fish – Editor

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2. Advance Wars – GBA
3. Spy Hunter – PS2
4. Arcanum – PC
5. Star Wars: Galactic Battlegrounds (Preview Beta) – PC

Cam Shea – Deputy Editor

1. Mario Kart: Super Circuit – GBA
"Red shells haunt me in my dreams."
2. Devil May Cry – PS2
3. Advance Wars – GBA
4. Spy Hunter – PS2
5. This is Soccer 2002 – PS2

Malcolm Campbell – Art guy

1. Final Fantasy X – PS2
"They talk! They act! It's amazing the difference speech makes."
2. Devil May Cry – PS2
3. Spy Hunter – PS2
4. This is Soccer 2002 – PS2
5. Capcom vs. SNK – DC

James Cottey – Reviewer

1. Worms World Party – PC
"I just know the next Worms game will be a blast!"
2. MechCommander 2 – PC
3. Civilization – PC
4. Galaga – GBC
5. Wipeout 2097 – PSone

THE HYPER SCORING SYSTEM

The Overall Score – what's it all about?

90+	Excellent and worthy of a Big Rubber Stamp. Buy it!
80-89	Very good. This is a quality game, but not perfect.
70-79	Good, verging on average. Try before you buy.
60-69	Average, verging on bad. This game is badly flawed.
50-59	Bad game design and possibly not even worth renting.
0-49	These games simply suck. A total waste of money!



Don't scratch the paintjob. Arrggh!

Is this McDonald's drive-thru?

Spy Hunter



CATEGORY: Action >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Midway >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: M >> AVAILABLE: October

ELIOT FISH goes for a gentle Sunday drive...

The Midway name was once one of the coolest around. In the days before Mortal Kombat and Cruisin' USA, Midway pumped out an absolute classic arcade game that borrowed heavily from the James Bond movies doing big business at the time. That game was Spy Hunter, and in the early 80s, it ruled the arcades. It may have just been a simple top-down racing game, but it also had bonnet-mounted machine guns, the Peter Gunn theme and insanely fast gameplay. To play Spy Hunter, you actually needed true arcade gaming talent. Hell, you had to drive and shoot at the same time, which was a whole new set of skills back then.

Midway's decision to re-invent the game for the 3D age could have been a disastrous one. In the wake

of games like Asteroids 3D, you could be forgiven for assuming that Spy Hunter would be another old classic brought back from the dead for the not-so subtle cash-in on its retro appeal. Well, the good news is that Spy Hunter on the PS2 retains enough elements from the original to bring a smile to the face of those who remember the old arcade game, whilst still providing a whole new gaming experience.

CUE THE COOL MUSIC

The concept is this: you're a secret service agent equipped with the



hottest four wheels on the planet. Your car, the G-6155 Interceptor, is an 845 horsepower armour-plated killing machine, equipped with high-powered machine guns, rocket launchers, defensive weaponry, the ability to transform into a powerboat

and even the ability to shed its chassis and morph into a jetski or motorbike in times of emergency. In this car, you can do almost anything. Forget Knight Rider, Herbie the Love Bug or the Bat mobile... the Interceptor is the king of the road.

As the secret agent entrusted with this machine, it's your duty to accept some of the most dangerous



Forget Knight Rider, Herbie the Love Bug or the Bat mobile... **the Interceptor is the king** of the road!



spy missions on file, and this time around, that so happens to be saving the world from the evil multinational corporation named NOSTRA. Over the course of the game, you'll be tackling every spy task in the book, from diffusing bombs, destroying evil weapons, rescuing and escorting good guys to safety, placing tracking devices on enemy vehicles and more, all from behind the wheel of the Interceptor. Because of the speed you need to be travelling at in certain sections of the level, most of your important decisions need to be made in a split-second. There's no room for hesitation in Spy Hunter. Just like in the original arcade game, you need to keep

moving to stay alive, so learning how to drive, target and shoot and evade, all at once, is essential to completing your mission. This results in some truly spectacular scenarios, and once you get the hang of how the game works, you'll be pulling off some pretty impressive manoeuvres, stunts and death-defying feats that just feels damn cool.

The interceptor is driven with a set of fairly simple controls, like most other racing games, except for the fact that double-tapping the accelerator kicks in a turbo boost that can give you some incredible distance and air off certain ramps or a much needed catch-up. The handling of the Interceptor is very arcade-like, but the power slides feel awesome and for what is necessary to achieve

during the missions, the car drives like a dream. It's pretty obvious that the main design criteria during development of Spy Hunter was that the car be the ultimate in coolness, because really, that's all the game is about. Half of the enjoyment in Spy Hunter is watching your Interceptor transform – from the way the mounted missile launcher pops out of the roof, to the way the panels

slide and shift around to prepare your vehicle for the water – it just reeks of coolness.

Also coming soon from Acclaim is Burnout for PS2, and it's hot hot hot!

slide and shift around to prepare your vehicle for the water – it just reeks of coolness.

THIS MESSAGE WILL SELF-DESTRUCT

Out on the road, you have to contend with a variety of enemy vehicles, from motorbikes with machine guns, to sleek black cars with blades protruding from their hubcaps, dive bombing helicopters and a host of

Driving with the top down

Never heard of the original Spy Hunter arcade game? Well, here it is in all its retro glory. You raced up the back of repair trucks, dodged deadly oil slicks dropped by your foes, and blasted away at the bumper bars of eerie black cars who were determined to make you road kill... just like this PS2 version.

The reason Spy Hunter was so exceptionally difficult at the time, was that the top-down perspective gave you very little indication of what was coming up on the road ahead, and the speed you were travelling at made it pretty tricky to do a last minute life-saving manoeuvre. You could drop into low gear, but there was a time limit forcing you to go as fast as you possible could. Ahhh, the stress, the pressure, the sheer thrill of the original Spy Hunter!



Sorry to interrupt your Gondallier trip.

Back in black.



other pesky opponents. In the thick of the action, everything happens at once – you'll be hurtling down the road, avoiding civilian traffic, steering out of the way of missiles homing in on your car, shooting off your guns at the enemy vehicles you're pursuing and keeping tabs on secondary objectives such as collecting the SATCOMs scattered throughout the level or making sure to blast planted explosives with your EMP weapon. The missions are constructed in such a way, that besides needing to complete your main objective, there can be a handful of secondary objectives, that whilst not necessary to successfully completing the mission, will eventually tally up and unlock the next level. If you don't complete enough objectives, you simply don't progress to the next mission. Thus, replaying missions a number of times

is essential to getting things done right and progressing. The beauty of the game, is that each level is an enormous amount of fun, and replaying them over and over is anything but a chore. There are enough satisfyingly cool cinematic moments in each mission that you'd play these over even if you didn't have to.

As you get better at the game, it becomes a lot easier to handle the multiple objectives in each level – it takes a fair amount of dexterity to remember to pull off all your tasks at once whilst you're flying down the freeway getting bombarded with enemy fire. Not only are you speeding past obstacles, but you're cycling through your weaponry to equip whatever is necessary for the target you're rapidly approaching, and this requires a fair amount of fidgeting between shoulder buttons and control



Where'd you get such phat tyres, man?



Look, it's my "arch" enemy!



Jet! Ooh-ooh-ohh-ohh-ohh...



Did I do that? Gee, sorry!

Instead of a **predictable face-off**, the multiplayer in *Spy Hunter* is quite hilarious.

buttons — it's even required to click in the left analogue stick whist you're driving, to acquire a lock-on target for your missile launcher. There is the odd mission that regularly deteriorates into a frustrating mess, but it's all a matter of learning your controls and if you stick with it, you eventually pull it off.

TWO SPIES ARE BETTER THAN ONE

Spy Hunter's multiplayer mode involves split-screen action between you and a friend. Instead of a predictable face-off, the multiplayer in *Spy Hunter* is quite hilarious. Once you unlock all the objectives in a single player level,

then that level becomes playable in multiplayer. The difference being that each level has a different objective. For instance, the Colombian level in multiplayer becomes "Chicken Hunter" in which both players must run over and shoot as many chickens as they can during their race to the end of the level. But it's not all as wacky as this... Globetrotter requires the players to pickup more Satcoms than their opponent, with the Satcoms placed strategically just after some big jumps and other areas where players will tussle for the best position to nab the item before their friend does. A lot of thought has gone into the

multiplayer mode, and there's lots of variety here to make it more than just a token addition to the already solid gameplay. It's nice to also note that the level of detail and geometry in the multiplayer mode is just as nice as in the single-player game, with only the most subtle difference in frame-rate — it still plays and looks just as good even in split-screen, which is no mean feat.

With the slinky Peter Gunn theme in place, and all the action-packed gameplay, *Spy Hunter* in 3D feels just like it should. Amazingly, Midway have pulled off this re-invention of the original game with great aplomb, making it a very worthy addition to your PS2 games library. <3>



PLUS: As cool as the original but in entirely new ways.

MINUS: Overly difficult at times, just like the original!

VISUALS 88 SOUND 85 GAMEPLAY 87

OVERALL 90

Fun, fun, fun, 'til daddy takes the Interceptor away.



Twisted Metal Black

PS2

CATEGORY: Car Combat >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: SCEA >> PRICE: STBA >> RATING: MA15+ >> AVAILABLE: October

HILLOUS LESSLIE targets the parking police...

The peculiar genre of vehicular carnage has just been upgraded to match the abilities of the PS2 and it will never go back. Playing good old Twisted Metal now, after tasting the delicious violence and witnessing the visual splendour of Twisted Metal Black, is like getting out of a Jaguar and catching a bus.

Fast, frantic, fluid, fun, Twisted Metal Black is a lot of good things beginning with 'f'. It's a top-quality game that satisfies in almost every way, and the areas in which it falters clearly have nothing to do with its main aim... which is to pump your adrenaline.

BOUNTY OF BUTTONS

Firstly, the laws of physics in TMB are close to our own, but not perfect.

This is of course a game about maniacs driving supercharged vehicles armed with guns, rockets, missiles, satellite-targeted nukes, etc. killing each other, so we can overlook discrepancies in the driving model as applied to racing conditions. Who's going to compare it to GT3 anyway? Nobody.

Secondly, being so much more than a mere driving game, it uses up all the buttons: machine gun, special weapon, turbo boost, brake, rear view, next weapon, previous weapon, etc. Despite its intelligent use of R3 for the turbo boost, there is no way to appreciate the subtleties of analog acceleration, braking and steering and use the sharp-steer button at the same time.

But really, all that means is that it may take a few days to grow

accustomed to the peculiar engine model. Once you've chosen a character you like and played around with it a bit, you'll be fine.

Thirdly, some of the menu fonts are a bit hard to read. Anyway, onto the good points. There are fifteen diverse characters and many sprawling environments. Characters are richly detailed both visually and in their background story crap. Most of them are ugly — many deformed — like Axel, a man with a monster truck wheel surgically attached to each arm. They all have names like Mr Grimm, Shadow and Slaughterhouse.

The thoughts of one's selected freak are conveyed during loading screens in Story mode (which is good as the bigger levels can take

up to fifteen seconds to load up). The characters all have varying statistics for speed, strength and whatnot, but truth is that they are remembered best for their weapons.

GREAT GUNS

There are loads of weapons. Some are satisfying and familiar items like rockets and homing missiles. Others are really weird. Some even require skill to discharge with great effect, like the Reticule. On the first press you start loading up missiles and





Booked for not indicating.



Not a wise place to sit and wait.



This game is shocking.



That's for giving me a ticket!



Ever seen a movie called DUEL?

Knock over the ferris wheel and watch the carnage as it **rolls heavily through suburbia**, ripping up buildings in its wake.

you have five seconds in which to fire them. The longer you wait, the more missiles are fired, but wait too long and you lose them all.

The many environments range from small to so big that you could drive in a straight line for a while and wait pretty safely in a remote corner of the territory until everyone is half dead from killing each other somewhere in the middle of the map. Naturally, everything within the levels (lamps, trees, houses, civilian cars, civilians etc.) is fully destructible. Still, some things are bound to give you more pleasure than others in the razing of. Houses and streetlights are easy to fell, but knock over the ferris wheel and watch the carnage as it rolls heavily through suburbia, ripping up buildings in its wake.

The environments are dark, disturbed places where chaos reigns. The atmosphere is strong in

each area, be it a colossal cathedral left for dead after a holocaust or a bleak urban wasteland complete with houses and an amusement park. This is thanks to the exquisite detail put into these levels, which feature everything from telephone booths to fire hydrants. The weather tends to play up a bit in some of them, decreasing visibility in spasmodic intermission.

It could be said that the field of vision is not as great as it could be, great as it is. This is because of an extremely subtle gradation of polygon shading toward the outer limits, effectively making it impossible to judge exactly where the redraw point is. Admitted, some of the visual aspects of the game are not perfect, but you'd have to be fussy to complain.

!!! To get the most out of this game, you'll really need to invest in that multi-tap.

Best of all, the framerate rocks. Even when things are boiling, seven vehicular behemoths letting rip in every direction with multiple incendiaries, cluster bombs and

sixteen-way missiles, the game remains as slick as hair gel. The frames don't suffer in multiplayer modes

either, which is where the game shines the brightest.

Musically, the game stays true to its morbid motif with grand, powerful, almost intimidating orchestral compositions, which awe the player into a survival state. All other sound effects are superb, each explosion resounding with clarity and depth, every collision tangibly chunky.

TMB is a sterling effort. It's fast, fantastic, fiery, furious, frenzied, ferocious, fierce, frightful, frantic, and full-on fun. <<<



PLUS: Fast, smooth, loud and spectacular.

MINUS: Awkward control mechanics.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

92 89 87

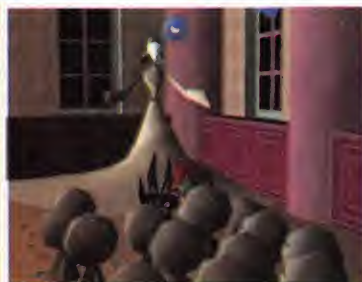
OVERALL

90

Beautiful, brooding, intense and chaotic. A heart pounder.

REVIEW

» HYPER 57



Slight case of Elephantitis.

Freak Out

» PS2

CATEGORY: Platformer >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Acclaim >> PRICE: \$TBA >> RATING: M >> AVAILABLE: Now

CAM SHEA knows there's a time for drugs, and that's Uni...

Japanese development house, Treasure, are well known for producing quirky off-beat titles with great gameplay. They have something of a cult fan boy following here in the West, where their games are infrequently released and often hard to come by. At first glance, *Freak Out* is so cool and err, freaky, that we were ready to sign up for life with Treasure's cult commune. Unfortunately, first impressions can be deceiving.

I'D SELL MY SOUL FOR A DONUT

This is the unusual story of an unusual little girl... or so begins the intro to *Freak Out*. This is something of an understatement. If it were up to us, the intro would open with "This is the nonsensical story of a

bizarre little girl shaped like a candy apple". Although *Freak Out's* FMV does deal with the storyline on some level, if this was the only explanation you had of what was going on then you'd be very confused indeed. Perhaps this is why *Freak Out* is so unique - it's the first platformer (and we use the term very loosely) where reading the manual is absolutely vital.

Having read the manual myself, I can pass on the following. The game is centered around a young girl named Linda and her twelve compulsively vain sisters. After being offered eternal beauty by the demons of vanity, the sisters are possessed and sucked into an alternate realm. For some reason, Linda's scarf is also possessed, growing a hand and moving of its

own accord (we think she wears it to strengthen her neck and stop it from snapping under the weight of her watermelon head), but luckily for her it's a friendly scarf who will not only help her rescue her sisters but also rolls a mean spliff (okay we made the spliff bit up, but it did remind us a little of Towelie). Linda jumps through the gateway determined to rescue each of her sisters from their own possessed hell-space.

The main hub of the game is the Museum of Agony - some of kind of unreal limbo-world mid-dimensional safe house. From here Linda can access each sisters' realm, as well as the EX worlds through the paintings hung around the room. This is your first taste of *Freak Out*, and this room is probably the single

coolest room ever in a videogame. Existing as it does somewhere between the living world and the spirit world, the room looks like it has been sketched into existence with nothing more than a pencil. Everything has a transient shimmering quality to it, and the overall effect is mesmerising. Ironically, this room alone is the highlight of the game.



You're not match for my... scarf.



❖❖ The room looks like it has been sketched into existence with **nothing more than a pencil.**

CINDERELLA MEETS THE EXORCIST

Freak Out's play mechanics revolve around the abilities of the possessed scarf and it really is an interesting concept. You see, although Linda and the scarf move around together, you can move the tip of the scarf independently of Linda's movements (one on each analogue stick), positioning it for the strike. Using its hand, the scarf can reach out and grab hold of anything close in the environment and stretch it. It's a very cool and surreal touch to be able to grab a wall and pull it towards you. This ability is really the core of the gameplay. Linda can grab the environment and use the scarf's tension to catapult herself up onto ledges or across gaps. She can grab, twist and pull her enemies and use offensive moves like the Snap Attack, Torpedo Attack or the

ultimate in her arsenal - the Scarf Bomb, to first disable then exorcise the demon within.

Given that there are twelve sisters to defeat, you'd probably assume that each realm would take the form of a huge platform world with minions galore and some tricky puzzle solving, with the sister as the boss at the end. Wrong! Instead, Freak Out boils down to nothing more than twelve boss battles. Granted, each boss is creatively designed and requires different tactics to beat, but you're more likely to be struggling with the controls and shonky camera mechanics than you are to be enjoying the challenge. Simply put, the mechanics are at odds with the gameplay - finer, faster control would make this game much more fun.

!!! Treasure have a long history. Other Treasure games include classics like Contra, Castlevania IV and Gunstar Heroes.

With persistence, you will get used to the controls, and many of you may enjoy just taking on bosses, but for our money, Treasure have missed a lot of potential. With this kind of ability set, Linda really should be traversing a large non-linear world. After all, with a longer range, the scarf could function as a

whole range of things, like a grappling hook, a sniper rifle, a surveillance camera or even a remote controlled pickpocket. Treasure could have designed some mad puzzles around abilities like these. But it wasn't to be. Despite immense initial promise, Freak Out relies a little too much on trippy graphics and kooky design, and not enough on solid gameplay. A real shame. ❖❖



PLUS: Twisted graphics and gameplay concepts.

MINUS: The ideas don't feel fully fleshed out.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

86 83 68

OVERALL

74

Freak Out is one of the most original games for the PS2.



Kuri Kuri Mix

» PS2

CATEGORY: Puzzle/Action >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: Empire Interactive >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now

ELIOT FISH reveals his love for bunnies...

Step one in identifying a video game as having originated in Japan is to check to see if it contains animals. In this case, two bunnies named Chestnut and Cream feature — so that's a check. Step two: Are the animals dressed as other animals or wearing something unusual? In this case, one is wearing a flowerpot on its head and the other has an umbrella sprouting from its cranium. That's a check. Step three: Do the animals at some stage sing or play musical instruments? In this case, there's an entire musically themed level that involves plenty of strumming, horn parping and tub-thumping. That's a big check. I don't think we need to investigate any further... Kuri Kuri Mix not only qualifies as a suitably loony

Japanese game, but hell, it's called Kuri Kuri Mix in the first place! We don't even know what that means!

BRAINY BUNNIES

In case you were wondering, it's the eve of the Moon Festival, but the moon is nowhere to be found. The festival, which has been a rabbit clan tradition since time immemorial, has been cancelled. As Chestnut and Cream (our two brainy bunnies) are wandering home, they decide of course, to go in search of the moon to ensure that the festival takes place. It seems that to find the moon, they have to take orders from a small chicken (as you do) and involve themselves in a series of deadly time-based puzzle packed levels. It's pretty whack, but quite a bit of fun.

The most startling thing about Kuri Kuri Mix, is that whilst it's primarily a two-player game, you can actually play the game on your own, by controlling both characters on the one controller. The left stick moves Chestnut and the right stick moves Cream, with the shoulder buttons being used for Jump and Action. The screen is split down the middle, so you can actually run both characters through the level and attempt to complete the platforming and puzzles for both characters at the same time, if you're feeling suitably dextrous. This is beyond challenging... it's nice that the option is there, but it's simply an insane way to try to play the game. Grab a friend, sit them down, and you'll have more fun helping each other out as you both



race co-operatively towards the finish line in each level.

The world is split up into differently themed levels — there's the obligatory ice world and ancient temple level, but there's also a music world made up of giant instruments that involves each player to co-operate in a series of musical puzzles. Each world has its own unique obstacles and enemies,



Spiffing scenery.



The flowerpot must induce headaches.



You can actually run through the level and attempt to complete the platforming and puzzles for both characters at the same time.

so you'll constantly be challenged through the game.

As the clock ticks down, you need to bypass seemingly impassable areas by solving small puzzles that may affect the path in front of your friend's character, who may then be able to achieve something that similarly helps you get past a precarious trap of your own. Co-operation is the key to making it through the level efficiently before the time runs out. Naturally, this means certain areas will be replayed multiple times until you both figure out what needs to be done to progress. Many of the puzzles are as straight forward as pulling a lever to open a gate on your friend's side of the screen, but there are some more obscure puzzles, such as the giant organ that require you to both jump on keys one after the other to play a specific musical tune — with no mistakes.

ZOOM ZOOM ZOOM

The camera perspective is fixed, although you can zoom in if you want to look at something closely or traverse a particularly tricky series of jumps. Whilst it doesn't bother most of the time, the fixed camera can certainly sometimes become annoying with both characters trying to move about independently on the screen. Sometimes a well-timed jump can be spoiled by your friend forcing the camera to scroll by accident, disorientating you at the last minute. You really have to concentrate quite hard on playing as a team, staying aware of what your friend is attempting to achieve on their side of the screen. If you get the shits, you can always take it out on them in the versus mode and make them pay for their sloppy play. The versus mode is

chock full of items for you to utilise against your opponents, as you again race to a finish line, like a hammer to hit them with, or a vacuum cleaner that you can use to suck up the star

!!! Here's another game that shines a little brighter if you have a multi-tap and three other friends...

shaped points that are scattered about — the person with the most points wins. The camera is another

problem in the versus mode, as it seriously slows down the gameplay. If someone is dithering about at the bottom of the screen, the player at the top of the screen can't progress. And this is meant to be a race?

Kuri Kuri Mix is fun for short periods of time, but it can drive you a little batty with extended play. The puzzles range from dumb to devious and some of the levels feel almost impossible on first attempt, but the Story mode and its bizarre puzzles are great for two-player action. <<<



PLUS: It's original, challenging and endearing.

MINUS: No good as a single player game. Frustrating.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

80 82 84

OVERALL

83

Puzzle-tastic! Great for a romantic night of gaming. Maybe.



MX 2002

» PS2

CATEGORY: Motorbike racing >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Ozisoft >> PRICE: STBA >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: TBA

HILLOUS LESSLIE goes around the office clutching at things...

HX 2002 is a fine recipe for addiction. Being both a fine-tuned motocross dirt bike racing game, as well as a spectacular and enjoyable stunt show, gives it loads of replay value. MX 2002 offers more than just the enhanced graphics and smoother frame rate one expects from the PS2. On top of the very long lists of actual riders and courses, there are a couple of cool ideas that really make the game shine.

CLUTCH YOURSELF

This is dirt bike racing at its finest, as represented thus far on a console. You can choose from a massive thirty real people or invent your own, then dress them up in whichever current big motorbiking accessories label you favour. Begin a game in Calendar mode and you're away.

At first the game may seem tame, but by the third track you realise that the first ones were just to ease you into the deep end gently. In no time at all you are riding waves of air 40 feet up, spanning gaps as wide as ten buses, pulling Suicide flips and Supermen out of your arse, then landing sideways into a powerslide and clutch boosting through the corner!

The clutch feature is one of the game's best features. By holding the clutch for half a second and releasing, you will receive a little burst of speed from the engine. It can be done at any time, giving players unlimited scope for using this nifty tactic. It is also a great way to kick-start a race.

To win a race, you must learn more skills. A Powerslide button

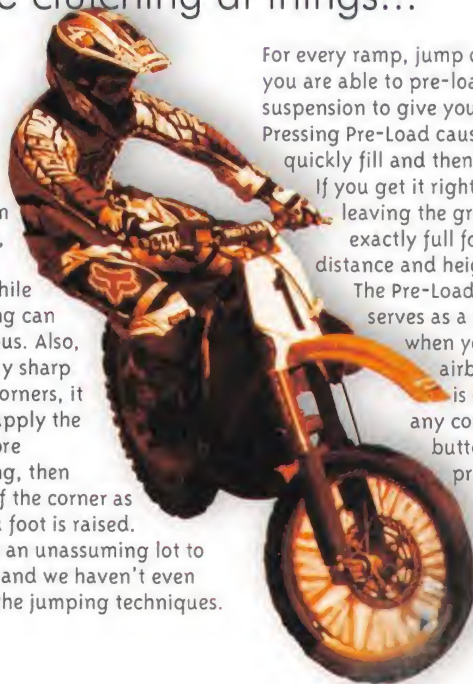
comes into play for sharper cornering whereby you put your foot on the ground, but clutch boosting while powersliding can be dangerous. Also, for the really sharp sustained corners, it is wiser to apply the brakes before powersliding, then boost out of the corner as soon as your foot is raised.

All this is an unassuming lot to remember, and we haven't even started on the jumping techniques.

For every ramp, jump or drop-off, you are able to pre-load your suspension to give you bigger air. Pressing Pre-Load causes a meter to quickly fill and then empty again.

If you get it right, you will be leaving the ground at exactly full for maximum distance and height.

The Pre-Load button also serves as a trick button when you are airborne. While it is depressed, any combination of buttons will produce a different trick. For example, Triangle makes a Heel





The least you guys could do is stack.

Stop, I wanna get off!



Gap 86'15"

The only way he can get his nailpolish to dry.

Ever copped a bike in the back of the head?

The stunt levels are fun, giving you quick injections of supreme air, but the game is best appreciated for its racing dynamics.

Clicker, but Triangle Square makes a Saran Flip, while Triangle Triangle Triangle is a Superman.

Meanwhile you can rotate your rider to perform backflips, a frontflip, 360s and other strange stunts using the directions. If you want to go further, you can try to master the arts of Wheelies, Stoppies and Fakies. These tricks actually require skill, timing and delicate employment of the analog sticks.

The stunt levels are fun, giving you quick injections of supreme air, but the game is best appreciated for its racing dynamics. The AI opponents are definitely not stupid, nor do they totally humiliate complete novices. They tend to go a bit slower of you're doing really badly, but don't think they go easy on potential contenders for their throne.

SAVING RACE

The replay feature lets you review any moment in any race from any angle with instant replay and freeze frame commands. You can also save the good ones to Memory Card.

The tracks are awesome not only for their attention to detail but especially because each one you unlock seems to have bigger jumps than the last. There are enough corners, drops and twists that you won't be able to win a race on the first go and there is an option to practise each before racing. However, the game is forgiving and lets you retry any challenge should you fail against opposition.

Aurally the game is best at the start of a single player championship, when all the bikes are lined up revving their cute little

engines (125cc sound much higher). The light goes and the noise swallows you up as bikers tear past you on all sides. The monotony of the typical engine noise is broken up by the incessant operation of clutches all around.

MX2002 is a top game, with more than a little thought put into it. If you're already a fan of motocross type events or dirt racing, look no further. Otherwise, give it a go anyhow. It is surprisingly versatile in the number of ways one can glean satisfaction from it. The design is simple enough that anyone can pick up and play, yet adequately complex at the same time, giving more focused gamers something to chew on. And once you unlock the 250cc bikes, you'll be literally flying.

For more bike action, Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2 for PS2 is just around the corner, and it looks good...



PLUS: Innovative, compelling control features. Big air.

MINUS: Lacking in graphical special effects.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

72 85 85

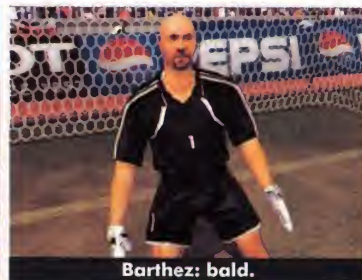
OVERALL

83

A rich racer, complex and yet accessible.



Viduka shoots... and Australia qualify!



Barthez: bald.



This is Soccer 2002

PS2

CATEGORY: Soccer sim >> PLAYERS: 1-8 >> PUBLISHER: Sony >> PRICE: \$TBC >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now

CAM SHEA gives in to his hooliganistic urges...

There'll never be one definitive soccer simulation, and the sooner we get used to that simple fact the happier we'll all be. As much as soccer fans would love for one developer to get it completely and utterly right, it's just never going to happen. So how to choose between the FIFA's, ISS's and now TIS's of the world? Well, after giving This Is Soccer (TIS) 2002 a thorough playtest, we're confident that for most gamers, this is the soccer sim to own. Oh, and it's tempting, but there'll be no Man U bashing in this review...

SLIDE TACKLING THE REF

TIS 2002 has the usual assortment of options, including a comprehensive full season mode, where you can compete in Domestic, European and World Cup tournaments. Of course,

the Australian league doesn't make it in, but did you really expect it to? Impressively, TIS 2002 features a huge number of licensed teams and players — somewhere in the vicinity of 375 international and club teams, comprised of over 8000 authentically named players! You can even play with classic club teams from the 50s onwards in the Timewarp League. Also impressive is just how up to date the review code we received was. In terms of players and kits, the game was accurate to about three weeks earlier — a sure sign of commitment to accuracy on the part of the developers, Studio Soho.

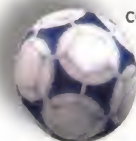
Despite all this attention to detail, it's the gameplay that really makes TIS 2002 stand out. The style of play may take a little getting used to if you're accustomed to the FIFA mechanics.

Basically, the big difference between the games is that FIFA is much more about pinpoint player to player passing, resulting in a much more stuttered game. In TIS 2002, passing is far more realistic, allowing you to anticipate where the pass reaches them, rather than forcing them to stand still and wait for it. Thus, it's much more about players running onto the ball, with through balls and interceptions very much the order of the day. In this respect, TIS 2002 is the more

realistic game.

The control configuration is intuitive, with the full range of moves at the player's fingertips, whether it be a one touch pass, a basic one-two, or more tactical moves like a one-two with return through ball, or a one-two with a chip return pass. In defense, Studio Soho have implemented some simple, yet efficient options, such as the ability to call in a team mate to assist you, or to call the goalie to rush out and greet the striker running in. Also

cool is that yellow and red cards are now yours for the





Foul Fowler

»» Studio Soho have mapped the faces of over 200 international soccer stars for This Is Soccer 2002, and the results are quite good. Some players look absolutely spot on, such as David Beckham, Sol Campbell and Zinedane Zidane. Others however, were quite average, such as Paolo Di Canio and Robbie Fowler. In fact, if you thought Robbie Fowler was ugly in real life, you'll be quite amazed to see just how ugly he is in this game!



Players can **get smacked in the head by the ball**, and handballs occur more frequently than in other games.

taking. Running toward goal and don't like your chances making the shot? Then take a dive! Or conversely, launch yourself Eric Cantona style at the opposing forward and put him out of commission.

HANDLING YOUR BALLS

There are a few options that we would have liked to see make it into TIS. For one, you can't turn player fatigue off. Why be forced to play a completely realistic game every time? The other is in game speed. Compared to the light and fluffy FIFA, TIS can feel very slow, and doesn't it defeat the purpose of having a sprint button if you have to hold it down the entire game? Granted, the engine may not have been able to handle a faster game, but perhaps a lower detail/faster play option would have been good.

!!! FIFA 2002 is almost upon us, so look out for a review very soon!

The players are solid high polygon builds, and are far more varied than most next gen soccer games. Perhaps the most impressive aspects of the visuals, however, are the animations and collision detection. The range of movement is first class, giving the game a very natural, earthy look. Studio Soho obviously spent a lot of time getting this angle right, with over 800 motion captured animations making it into the game. Watching the game, you'll be pleasantly surprised by just how appropriate many of the moves are. For instance, launch a long ball upfield, and your forward chasing it down may have to reach out and take the ball on the full to keep it under control. This is complemented by the best collision detection we've ever seen in a soccer game. Players can get smacked in the head by the

ball, and handballs occur more frequently than in other games. This Is Soccer 2002 isn't perfect, but no soccer sim is. After a short amount of play, you'll settle into a flowing and very satisfying game. Now if only we had two multitaps and eight controllers! <<<

Sega's Arsenal

»» Interestingly, when we went to select Arsenal in the English Premier League, we could only find a team called "Highbury" (Arsenal's home ground). Considering every other team made it in, we can only assume that it's either a terrible mistake that will be rectified for the retail version, or that Sega's sponsorship of Arsenal had something to do with it...



PLUS: Flowing gameplay, great graphics.

MINUS: A little too slow.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

88 87 90

OVERALL

88

TIS 2002 is a worthy contender for best PS2 soccer game.



Mech Commander 2

PC

CATEGORY: Real time strategy >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: Microsoft >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: G8+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >> REQUIRED: PIII 450, 128 MB RAM, 3D card

If you want **JAMES COTTEE**, he's in the mech lab...

While many board game stalwarts of yesteryear like Ker-Plunk and Battlin' Tops seem to have died out completely, it's good to know that some have evolved and embraced the shiny new world of video-games. The Battletech franchise has been a successful game series on the PC for 12 years now, a logical move for a board game so bogged down in statistics that it could take an entire day to simulate a minor skirmish. Obsessive fans have made it a hit, a well-rounded sci-fi universe steeped in as much tradition as Star Trek or Dune.

While many familiar weapons platforms of today are still around, like helicopters and hovercraft, the dominant war-machines of tomorrow are battlemechs. Towering humanoid robots, typically weighing from 20 to

100 tons, 'mechs strike fear into the hearts of mere mortals that cross their path. Bristling with rockets, lasers and other exotic weapons, the degeneration of targetting technology has made these otherwise vulnerable machines the most important factor in any conflict.

THE TACTICAL SOUL

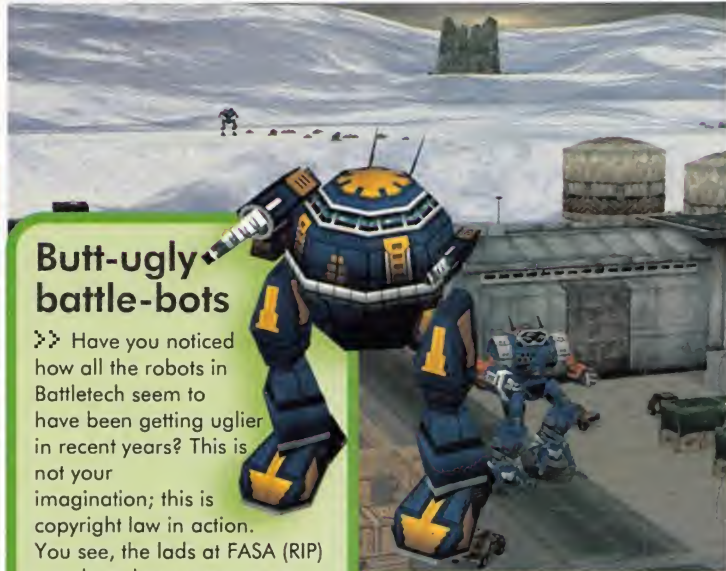
While there have been four MechWarrior PC games now, they have effectively translated a top-down strategy game into a first person shooter. The Mech Commander games meanwhile have aspired to the tactical ideal of the pen-and-paper Battletech of yore, by portraying squad ("lance") based combat. The action may pan out in real time, but the tactical soul remains, and success in the

campaign mode is dependent on one's grip of battlefield logic in the Battletech universe.

Terrain plays a huge part in every skirmish. Forest cover can make your mechs harder to hit. The same can be said for shallow bodies of water, which have the added bonus of cooling your atomic robots down. An overheated mech is as useless as one which has just had its legs shot off. The ground undulates, too. Some mechs have a harder time than others when scaling gradients, so it's best to take the high ground. Terrain features also make it possible to set ambushes.

Dozens of different mechs can be used throughout the game, and each can be fully customised in your mech lab. I mean, "mech lab." Heavy





Butt-ugly battle-bots

»» Have you noticed how all the robots in Battletech seem to have been getting uglier in recent years? This is not your imagination; this is copyright law in action. You see, the lads at FASA (RIP) may have been great game designers, but they were lousy artists. Rather than rely solely on their own dubious abilities, they lifted a swathe of 'mech designs out of Robotech. These rips were easy to spot: they didn't even remove the UN SPACEY logos.

As part of a hefty settlement, FASA agreed to phase out the pirated designs. Now that the franchise is in the hands of Microsoft, global champions of intellectual property, the purging is complete. Look on the bright side; at least they're easier to tell apart now.



Mech use of all this info.

Meching friends.

»» One can also dabble with lighter mechs for scouting or hit-and-run...

mechs piled high with lasers and autocannons require little subtlety for effective use, but one can also dabble with lighter mechs for scouting or hit-and-run attacks. Other specialties include fire support mechs, which just hang back and bombard their targets with rockets, or close quarter models sporting flamers and machine guns. Battletech fans won't be disappointed with the range of equipment on offer.

KICK UP THE PANTS

The mechs you choose for a given mission are just as important as how you use them. One way to revel in the three-dimensional environment is to fit your mechs with jump-jets. With these you can hop between islands, or sail over the back wall of an

otherwise impregnable compound. Every option from every game and supplement is in here; it's a Battletech fan's dream come true.

But perhaps the biggest enhancement is in the interface. Now fully 3D, Mech Commander 2 lets your viewpoint flit around the battlefield like it was a god sim. Granted, the fog of war is quite thick, but this is again consistent with the tried-and-true Battletech rule system. Through grouping and keyboard shortcuts you can execute layered attacks, pincer attacks, or just throw your men at the enemy. Credits earned through the mission can call in fire support, minelayers, repair trucks, and salvage vanquished mechs to join your ranks.

This is a very solid strategy game, with all the important areas of play

balance and tactical flexibility in place. The little details are great too. You can take over enemy bases, hacking their defence grids to serve your own ends. Cars drive on the roads, crates litter courtyards, and the radio chatter of your men satisfyingly conveys the urgency of your situation. Even the cut scenes are tolerable, although the Asian woman with the plastic tubes in her nose is a bit rich.

With a huge campaign, comprehensive multi-player options, and a rock solid game engine, Mech Commander 2 is a worthy heir to a gaming legacy that stretches back to when PCs were only good for text adventures. If you're sick of resource collecting and human wave attacks, then a dose of real tactics may be the intellectual kick up the pants you need. <<<



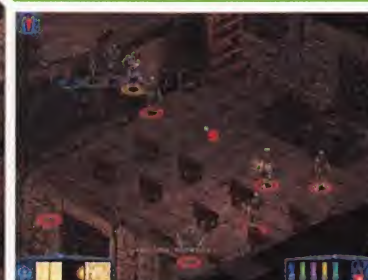
PLUS: Well-realised mech combat, interactive environment, deep.

MINUS: Suitable tactics not always obvious, system intensive.

VISUALS 88 SOUND 92 GAMEPLAY 90

OVERALL 91

Big Robots + Big Action = BIG FUN



Gunj - initiative roll: 12
Gunj - attack roll: 9

Wow, great party.

Pool of Radiance THE RUINS OF MYTH DRANNOR

CATEGORY: RPG >> PLAYERS: 1-6 >> PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >> REQUIRED: PII-400, 64MB RAM, 16MB 3D accelerator

DAN TOOSE played the first and now hopes this is the last.

I remember when Pool of Radiance was first released by SSI for the Commodore 64. Oh boy, I was one excitable little dork that day. While it was quite simple visually, the original Pool of Radiance offered the gamer a decent number of non-linear quests to complete and a good combat system. Suffice to say, a lot of RPG fans who remember the old SSI glory days have been very excited about the upcoming, Pool of Radiance: The Ruins of Myth Drannor. It is not only a return to SSI D&D gaming, but it's also the first D&D computer game to use the new 3rd edition rules. However, with Black Isle and Bioware working wonders in recent years with games like Baldur's Gate I & II, and Icewind Dale, does this new SSI game meet with today's standards?

CLEANING THE POOL
The plot for Pool of Radiance is alarmingly thin for an RPG, especially after the likes of Shadows of Amn. Basically, the city of New Phlan is once again under threat from a dreaded pool, and your collection of four "Never had my hands dirty" adventurers are the ones sent off to fix things. This basically involves pushing your way slowly through the massive dungeons in and around Myth Drannor, collecting loot, and of course, trying to find a way to save Phlan. Things don't really develop regularly with the plot, because there's hardly anyone to talk to, and those that will talk to you aren't overly verbose. Thus, this is an RPG that focuses on character development, rather than an intriguing plot (although we should be hoping for

both these days), and in many respects Pool of Radiance delivers, thanks to the 3rd edition D&D rules. In the past, characters in D&D games that have wanted to develop a multi-classed character had to split their experience points between their two (or three) classes, meaning they went up levels very slowly. 3rd edition rules changed all this, with characters now simply choosing the class they're going to level up in, being able to go back to old classes freely. This makes it easy to ensure that you're covering all bases, by having a couple of your characters dabble in a class that you will need, but not all the time. There are other changes to the rules, including the Sorcerer class (mages that don't have to restudy their spells constantly), the introduction of "Feats" — a special kind of character

trait, different roles for some of the stats, and host of new skills. The new rules basically offer more freedom for the player to develop their character as they wish. Unfortunately this game doesn't exploit this as well as it could. For starters, there's no "old school" stat rolling, where you can keep re-rolling to get something good. Now while it's good in a way that you can't create a super-character, it's not going to sit well with a lot of gamers who like building their party up from scratch. You also appear to get the same feats every time, which is a shame, because there are so many in the 3rd edition rules, and to be forced into using specific ones spoils this aspect of the new rules. The biggest stinker is that you cannot play as a wizard, which



Yeah, but where are the goddamned toilets?

Think anyone will notice if I go behind this tree?

This is an RPG that focuses on character development, rather than an intriguing plot – although we should be hoping for both these days.

really looks like a case of the developers wanting to skip around having to cater for two styles of magic-users, because there's no good reason to omit what has always been considered one of the major classes in the game. When developers make games to match an official license, they shouldn't skip bits like this. You also can't play as a bard, which is less of an issue, but still not good news, seeing as you can play bards in the other D&D games we've seen lately.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Gameplay itself is simplistic, and easy to understand, with everything being easy to do with the mouse, without needing to change screens to equip different items, thanks to a



Stay on the lookout for *Dungeon Siege*, *Morrowind* and more...

thoughtful menu interface brought up by the right mouse button. Basically, you can get to ALL your actions in a couple of clicks, which is great. The only real black mark on the controls and basic interface were issues with being unable to click on the character you want when characters and monsters are bunched up. This is particularly annoying when you have a character go down, and can't heal them because a monster is standing on the same basic spot, and you can't find a spot to click on your character.

At least what has been done is presented beautifully, with an engine that draws all the characters and monsters in 3D, with excellent animations for both physical attacks, and also for spell effects.

The first area of the game will take your breath away, with the gorgeous artwork of the Stillwater area. The dungeon areas often look like they've used a very limited tile based system, with repetitive presentations of often-pointless rooms. A lot more could be done with this most capable engine.

The bottom line is that *Pool of Radiance: The Ruins of Myth Drannor* is not the same sort of mind-blowing D&D RPG that we've come to expect in recent years. The engine is capable, but has only been used to create a long series of seemingly pointless encounters, without a gripping plot to push you through them all. With improved game balancing, a faster paced combat system, and more attention to creating an involved plot, this could have been an impressive RPG. ❄️❄️



PLUS: Nice visuals, Introduces 3rd edition rules.

MINUS: Lame plot. Most locations are pointless.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

88 82 65

OVERALL

69

A decent RPG engine with a not-so-decent storyline.



ICC: Ashes Edition



CATEGORY: Cricket Management >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Empire Interactive >> PRICE: \$69.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >> REQUIRED: Virtually nothing

ELIOT FISH thanks the indoor office cricket training...

International Cricket Captain: Ashes Edition has "the Diablo factor". What is this "Diablo factor" exactly? Well it has something to do with the seemingly mindless addition of stat-based mouse-clicking gameplay, coupled with a small degree of strategic planning. It's called the Diablo factor, simply because Diablo is such a great example of a game that has become immensely popular, based upon what is really, pretty limited gameplay. It's all about how well you set up your character, and then it's a case of sitting back and clicking your mouse button for hours upon hours to see the result. Thus, in a way, ICC: Ashes Edition is another case of the "Diablo factor". It's amazing how many hours you can waste away, simply cycling through a series of statistical tussles.

SHANE WARNE CAN BAT THIRD

The most alluring aspect of ICC: Ashes Edition, is getting to command the Australian cricket team (or any other international or English county cricket side) to victory, by telling each member of the squad exactly

how to play every step of the way. Yep, this is cricket management, and there's no other game like it.

This game has all the teams, all the players, all their career records, and all the stats you can eat. When selecting your Australian side, you're not even restricted to just the known players — you can choose from a whole set of domestic players who you've always thought should have been selected to wear the baggy green cap.

Once your team is selected (you can choose a squad of 18), you then decide who needs to spend some time training in the nets, working on their technique, or even who needs to spend some time with the physio. When you're ready to play the match, it gets really interesting.

You choose who you wish to bowl, what line and length they should bowl and how aggressive they should be in attempting to take wickets — which also determines the field setting, which you can naturally edit as you desire. Players take a while to settle in, indicated by green bar, but they also

lose stamina. The more settled, the better the chance at taking a wicket. But you have to take into account the batsmen you are facing and how they like to play, and figure out the best attack — or defense as the case may be. As you can imagine, the planning

is the same for the batsmen — balancing their aggression with how settled they are, also

taking into account the bowler they are facing and what the pitch is like. You'll be fiddling around for hours.

HOWZAT?!

As you click through the deliveries, the game will play out much like real life, based upon all the statistics and factors involved. It really becomes quite fascinating and addictive. The smarter you are, the better your results — you really end up role playing exactly how each player would approach the situation in real life. A cute little animated TV-style screen is even available so you can watch the game in progress.

For the cricket freaks, this game will satisfy every nerdy urge. <<<

!!! If you're looking for more action, Cricket 2002 is coming...



A clear case of gut before wicket.



A cricket freak fantasy.



Where do I fix the matches?



PLUS: Everything is catered for, even stats of the game in progress.

MINUS: The animations for the match are primitive as hell.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

45 60 80

OVERALL

79

Serious cricket fans will love every crunching number.



Walking on the moon... er, road.



Did you say your name was Sting?



Hey, come back and sing Roxanne!



The Sting!

PC

CATEGORY: Burglary/Puzzle >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: JoWood >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: M >> AVAILABLE: Now >> REQUIRED: PII-300, 64mb RAM, 3D card

JACKSON GOTHE-SNAPE twirls his moustache...

Strangely, bee-keeping sims have never really captivated gamers in the way one would expect. Despite offering action, strategy and everything in between, the honey making process is hard to transfer to gaming. Thankfully, small Austrian developers Neo haven't tried to buck this trend, and have instead chosen the only slightly more popular burglary genre.

THE REAL MEAT

The Sting! initially dumps you in your apartment in the middle of a fairly large industrial city. You can wander around, visiting pubs and checking out shops, while all the time cars chug past and bakers run around with the morning's bread. As the game progresses, you'll have to use this real-time component to meet more accomplices and buy better gear for more advanced heists. Thankfully the control is fairly intuitive, with both the view shifting and moving all done with the mouse.

Yet the real meat of the game comes in the form of planning your robberies. Full marks to Neo for

originality, but the whole structure just seems truly bizarre. To make a plan you use the computer in your apartment, and after choosing what tools/people/cars you want to take you appear near the building. However, you are not actually there, and the whole thing can only be explained by suggesting that this part is your imagination. In this mode, you try to hide from guards and avoid alarms while picking up all the 'loot' — which are items such as cash, toilet rolls and fire extinguishers (cross Austria off the travel destination list after this). Then, after getting back to your car and saving your plan, you get to watch your burglary proper. Here, unlike in the plan creation mode, guards actually bust you for making too much noise or being seen, but strangely there is no punishment for getting caught.

WANDERING AROUND

Visually, The Sting! is fairly average, and although lacks real detail, does portray a 3D comic book world fairly well. Some effects like the glowing

streetlights are great, but at the same time other elements look definitely sub-standard such as many of the building textures. The soundtrack on the other hand is good, with a variety of up-beat funky tunes, adding to the cartoon atmosphere.

Apart from the sometimes inexplicable game structure, The Sting! fails for a few reasons. Firstly, it's morbidly slow — from the repetitive structure, to the essentially pointless real-time aspect. Perhaps if there was a more interactive world, then wandering around would have been fun, but as it is it just feels so unnecessary.

The game is essentially an entertaining basic puzzle game, almost like a turn-based Pac-man, but Neo haven't really pulled off dressing it up. Granted, the plan creation element is fun, but in the end, this concept doesn't even need three dimensions, and would work better in a simpler form. The Sting! definitely has some entertainment value however, and as a whole is rather likeable. <<<

JoWood have a cool Graffiti game coming for the GBA...



PLUS: Fun planning, and attempted originality! (wool!)

MINUS: Far from refined, in any aspect.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

70 84 71

OVERALL

71

Charm alone will get you nowhere.

REVIEW >> HYPER 71



The Italian Job

» PSone

CATEGORY: Driving/Action >> PLAYERS: 1-8 >> PUBLISHER: SCI >> PRICE: \$49.95 >> RATING: M >> AVAILABLE: Now

ELIOT FISH likes minis of the skirt kind...

The Italian Job is an odd little game. It's based on a classic mobster movie that was released in 1969 called, obviously, *The Italian Job*, featuring the wonderful Michael Caine. However, we can't help but think it's ironic that this game SCI have made is probably only going to appeal to the younger gamer, and the younger gamer would never have seen *The Italian Job*. The younger gamers won't get any of the references, and the older gamers will find the game is geared below their skill level. Ah well, without fully understanding the logic behind this decision, let's hop behind the wheel and see how much fun we can have on the streets of London anyhow....

LICENSE TO DRIVE

It's no secret that *The Italian Job* borrows all its ideas from *Driver* — even the menu screen is completely plagiarised. The in-game engine looks fairly similar, and certainly the gameplay is based on the very same concept — driving like a madman to escape pursuing police.

The main body of the game is the Italian Job mode, which is split into three levels — London, Turin and the Alps. London and Turin are pretty large city maps that you can drive around in for a fair whack of time and still not see the same street corner. Naturally, SCI modelled the cities on the real thing, so there's logic to where everything is located, and if you've been to London then you'll recognise the odd landmark here and there. The gentle traffic flow is in for a pretty big shock

when you start tearing through the streets, sending huge double-decker buses hurtling sideways and rolling innocent vehicles into the river. And just like *Driver*, there are plenty of innocents to get in your way and generally make the driving more hazardous.

Avoiding the attention of the police is your primary concern. As soon as the coppers see you, they'll tail you relentlessly, slowly jotting down your numberplate — if they get the full number, you're nicked. As you get some distance on them, they conveniently "forget" what your license plate number was. A nice idea, except for one thing... there's no rear-view mirror or backward camera perspective. So, unlike *Driver*



where you could flick your view behind to see exactly what the cops are doing, in the Italian Job you have no way of checking just how close they are to nabbing you, other than a big red fat arrow that gets larger the closer they get. It's kind of frustrating not being able to tell if you've avoided them by hurtling around a corner. Seeing as half of the driving experience in real life is being able to check your rear view mirror, it's a strange omission. This is just a small giveaway that not as much thought



Let's pull over for a battered sav.



Crusty demons of dirt!



I think we took a wrong turn, Guvnor!

The gentle traffic flow is in for a big shock when you start sending **huge double-decker buses** hurtling sideways!

has gone into the gameplay as has gone into the presentation and replication of the film and its era. How much did they pay that Michael Caine impersonator, anyhow?

ELABORATELY ARRANGED

All the added modes help to add variety, but essentially they are all an extension of the same thing — driving around recklessly. The destructor mode, for instance, involves you smashing into progressively more elaborately arranged witches hats. This is fine at first, but tends to become slightly tedious after extended sessions, as you have to drive a very strict line in order to get them all, and the clock doesn't allow for mistakes. The other additional modes are fun for a laugh, but the excitement doesn't really last throughout, and you'll be wishing there was more to the game than just learning how to corner well

or keep your car on the road after a nasty jump.

The further you get in the main mode of the game, the more enjoyable the game does become — the Turin missions are probably the best in the game. But some basic flaws prevent the Italian Job from achieving the same kind of gameplay thrill that can be found in *Driver*. The AI of the police cars is virtually non-existent — you'll regularly see them perform the dumbest manoeuvres in their attempt to nab you. They also cheat, as regularly you'll duck down a series of side streets, but somehow the cops know which way you went, even if they didn't see you do it.

The graphics are okay, but the PSone has a hard time coughing up anything these days that stands up

well against the new generation of consoles, and the Italian Job is certainly not quite as polished as it could have been, even compared to other PSone racing games. There are

!!! If you really want to see the film, it's through Paramount Pictures and only available on video. But it's cheap!

some particularly dodgy looking elements — from the squat, blocky characters, to the chunky looking cars. Thankfully, when you're speeding around streets and your palms are getting sweaty, you forget these kinds of things — which says something for the gameplay. Certainly, the party play involving up to eight players is a great addition that transcends graphics or mission structure.

If you're a fan of the film, you might get a kick out of following the thread of the story throughout the missions, but anyone else should just look on this as a poor *Driver* clone. <<<



PLUS: Crazy stunts and reckless driving are always fun.

MINUS: Terrible AI, no rear-view, long load times.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

70 72 73

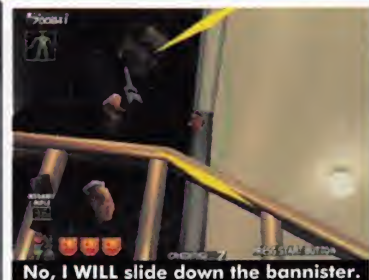
OVERALL

73

Too many flaws spoil - in essence - a fun game.

REVIEW

>> HYPER 73



Confidential Mission



CATEGORY: Light gun shooter >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Sega >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: M >> AVAILABLE: Now

DAN TOOSE locks and loads for the last time on Dreamcast...

If you didn't play House of the Dead 2 on Dreamcast, then you missed out on one of the best light-gun games to grace a console. House of the Dead 2 gave us enough gaming goodness to keep us occupied for quite some time; long term play being where a lot of arcade conversions fall short. Having branching paths throughout the game, plus a bunch of extra modes made this one a classic. So is the Virtua Cop-style shooter, Confidential Mission, another classic conversion? Yes and no... Here's why.

GIBSON, HOWARD GIBSON
A new terrorist organisation is seeking to take control of a high-tech weapons satellite, and only the "Confidential Mission Force" (generic dorky name for good-guy

spies) can stop them. You play as either Howard Gibson or Jean Clifford, two stereotypical secret agents who run like they've got virtual carrots shoved where the sun don't shine, and speak like they've just passed a remedial English course. These things are of little consequence in terms of how well the game comes off, and what we've got here is a great light-gun game, thanks to excellent level planning and character animation. The only question remaining to be answered here is, "Is there enough?"

Unlike other light gun games that have graced the arcades in recent times that feature the ability to duck behind cover, Confidential Mission is a straight up shooter, where the only thing you can do to better your situation is to shoot the bad guys

faster. However, it's not like this one is totally stale or devoid of merit. Gone are the days when the enemy would just slowly move from behind cover to eventually take a pot shot at you, as these guys dive through windows, slide along polished floors, and even drive in on snowmobiles to attack you in a surprising manner.

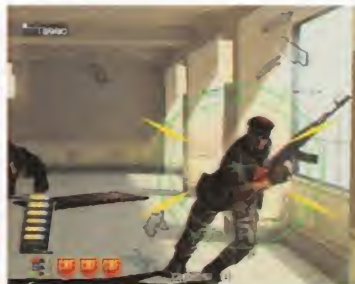
It's fair to say that although Confidential Mission isn't an ugly game, it's quite plain compared to other Dreamcast titles, particularly the one light gun game before it, House of the Dead 2. A couple of elements of the visuals are impressive, particularly the effects shown for

your shots, which beat the pants of the tiny little flash marks shown in most games of this genre. However, low poly counts and lacklustre textures make this a rather drab game in the Dreamcast's twilight days.

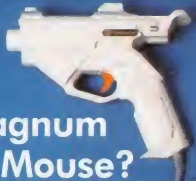
HALLUCINOGENIC

The lack of visual punch would be forgivable if there were a tonne of excellent gaming to blast your way through, but unfortunately, there's only a small amount of excellent gaming to be had. Each level of the game is nicely set out, and feels just right, but





these guys dive through windows, **slide** along polished floors, and even drive in on snowmobiles to attack you.



Magnum or Mouse?

>> An odd feature of Confidential Mission is the ability to use a mouse, rather than a light gun or a standard Dreamcast controller. Anyone who played the PC version of House of the Dead will know that this is the easiest way to play a light gun game, by a long shot. It's basically a case of being able to see exactly where your shot is going to go, while allowing you to reload with the click of a button, rather than having to aim off screen.

unfortunately, it doesn't take long to plough through the three chapters of the game, with each stage ending in a rather easy boss encounter. There are a couple of special challenges within each stage, where you're presented with a sort of mini-game that will either give you a short-cut if you succeed, or make you slug it out the long way if you fail. Some of these challenges are pretty cool, like having to fire adhesive pellets at gas vents, otherwise your screen becomes wobbly as you fall victim to the hallucinogenic mist.

One element of the game does offer some longevity, and that's the training mode, where you are up against some amazingly tough challenges. Those using a mouse will find some of these challenges a

little more humane, but otherwise, you'll have to be a crack marksman with lightning reflexes to have any hope of completing these challenges. You're given tasks such as making justice shots (dismarming), combo hits, and shooting the right target (shoot the bad guys, not the innocent bystanders).

It's not that Confidential Mission is by any means a bad game, in fact it's a good game, there's just not enough of it. The difficult Agent Academy (training mode) doesn't really make up for the lack of time it'll take you to see what the rest of the game has to offer. If you can find this one cheap somewhere, then it's worth picking up, but otherwise you could probably see the whole thing in a rental sitting. <<

!!! We've just heard that Outrigger has been cancelled. Another one bites the dust. Sob sob sob.



PLUS: A pretty challenging training mode.

MINUS: It's just way too short.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

77 67 80

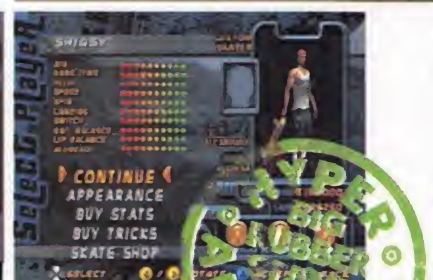
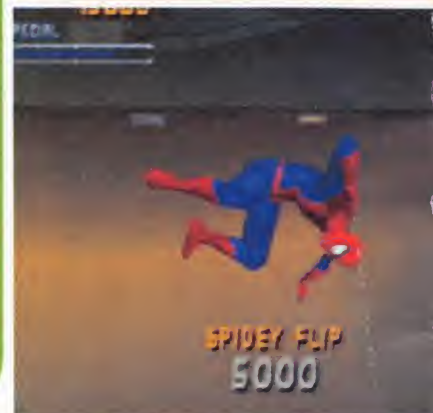
OVERALL

78

A good game... Just not enough of it.

REVIEW

>>>HYPER 75



Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2

CATEGORY: Skating >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Activision >> PRICE: \$79.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now

ANDREW BULMER performs CPR on the N64...

» N64

PlayStation and Dreamcast owners have most likely had the pleasure of playing Tony Hawk 2, but alas for N64 fans the wait has been long for this second instalment of the world's most popular extreme sports franchise. While many people are casting their eyes forward to Tony Hawk 3, or even Tony Hawk 2X, N64 owners can finally learn what they have truly been missing out on all this time, as the Hawkmeister hits the slumbering Nintendo console.

BUT I DON'T HAVE A MANUAL LICENSE

The most talked about upgrade to TH2 has been the inclusion of manuals, a trick that involves balancing on the two front or two back wheels which enables you to

link tricks and combos for huge scores that reach the tens of thousands with little effort. Aside from this you will find that the upgrades are numerous and quite exceptional in their design. The old system of collecting tapes has been slimmed down to collecting only a secret tape each level and an objective based system has been introduced that, although similar to the original concept, awards you cash for the completion of each objective. Cash is then used to upgrade your stats and buy new tricks and specials.

The new levels give you huge variety and options in the tricks department with the only real limit being your imagination (oh that's so sweet). The levels are modelled around real skating spots with

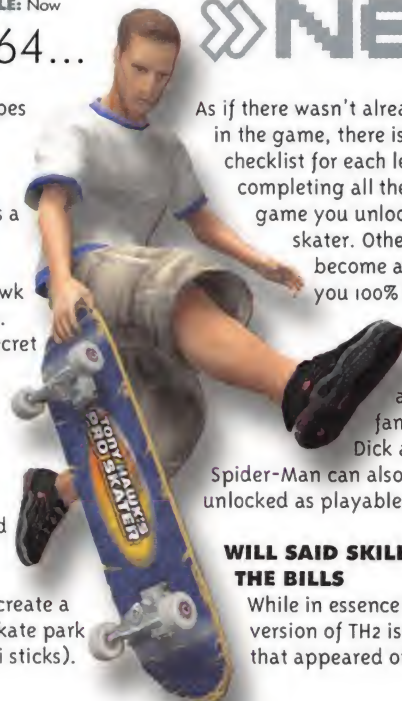
quarters and half pipes thrown in assorted locations for good measure. The final level, The Bullring, is a recreation of the infamous ramp in Mexico that Tony Hawk had built for a video. There are also two secret levels - Skate Haven and Chopper Drop - that can be unlocked.

Other options included are the "create a skater" and "create a park" modes where, you guessed it, you can create a skater or your own skate park (complete with punji sticks).

As if there wasn't already enough in the game, there is also a gap checklist for each level and by completing all the gaps in the game you unlock a hidden skater. Other cheats will become available if you 100% the game with different characters and the familiar Officer Dick and even Spider-Man can also be unlocked as playable skaters.

WILL SAID SKILLS PAY THE BILLS

While in essence the N64 version of TH2 is the same that appeared on the PSX





Bustin' some chops.



360 BONELESS + AIRING GRIND +
FS 50-50 + FS ONE FOOT SMITH
2989 X4



Cam arrives at Redfern train station.



Um... this is going to hurt.



MUTE BACKFLIP
4500



Here comes the face plant...

The final level, The Bullring, is a recreation of the infamous ramp in Mexico that Tony Hawk had built for a video.

and DC there are limitations to the cartridge format that have resulted in some noticeable differences between versions. As you would expect, the limited cartridge size means that there are no videos to unlock which was a major motivation for finishing the PSX and DC versions with every character. More unexpected is the limited soundtrack, that although of good audio quality, is confined to only six different music tracks, with a noticeable absence of all my favourite tracks from the DC version. At times the sound effects can also be on the shady side, lacking the overall polish that one would expect. The biggest injustice however is that there is no blood to be seen and as Grandpa Simpson put it best, "we paid for blood".



The Hyper crew just recently played Tony Hawk 3... it's awesome.

Despite some minor transgressions, bringing TH2 to a 64-bit console some time after it has appeared on a 128-bit console was a brave move by Activision, as comparisons are inevitably drawn with the visuals. While it's obvious that the N64 version doesn't have the same polygon count, textures or draw distance, it stacks up well in the most important department - speed. Sure the surfaces are fairly smooth and there is a lot of fogging to mask such a short drawing distance, the feel of play approaches the DC version, always smooth and fast, with no slow-down.

The N64 version of TH2 may lack some of the features that are so entertaining in other versions, but at its heart it has the same addictive

Out of Control!

>> The control setup for TH2 is exactly the same as the DC and PSX version, the C-buttons represent ollie, grind air and flip in the same positions and pressing the D-pad in various directions will determine the style of trick with L and R spinning the skater. A simple yet easy-to-master and intuitive control style that has needed no improvement since the original.

and fun style of gameplay that has become synonymous with the Tony Hawk franchise. Owners of the PSX or DC version of the game will not be interested in this new conversion but for those sole console owners of the N64 variety, this game is an obvious dynamo in an otherwise barren release list. <<



PLUS: Great sense of speed. An involving game.

MINUS: No videos, limited soundtrack, no blood.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

78 74 87

OVERALL

90

The best N64 release in a while. Much needed too.



Snowy.



Choppy.



Streety.



4x4 Evolution

CATEGORY: Racing >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >>
PUBLISHER: Take 2 >> **PRICE:** \$79.95 >>
RATING: G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

4X4 Evolution has finally raised its murky face for PS2, a long time after it first appeared on Dreamcast, and disappointingly not sporting the kinds of improvements one might expect from such a long sojourn into gaming limbo.

As our more gifted readers will no doubt already have deciphered, 4X4 Evolution is a four-wheel drive racing game. Unlike most four-wheel drive owners, however, you're doing more than just picking the kids up from private school and not bothering to use your blinkers when changing lanes. In fact, you'll be taking part in the fantasy world perpetuated by oh so many slick marketing campaigns. Think sand dunes, think construction sites, think careening over narrow bridges, think steep inclines, think road-kill and you're there. Unfortunately, although the "thinking" behind the game is solid, Evolution forgets that fun is also a necessary factor in modern racing games, failing to capture even the level of excitement one may glean from successfully picking the kids up from school (granted, that is quite a rush — especially when they're not your kids).

The visuals are smooth, but desperately lacking personality, as well as the level of detail gamers rightly expect these days. This is no frills. Despite the wealth of tracks, vehicles and tweakage on offer, Evolution's racing is really dull. Handling is unrealistic, the game mechanics are unforgiving, the gameplay is slow and the basic premise of the game — "go anywhere, cut corners" simply isn't worth pursuing in-game. A terminally boring game — get ATV Offroad Racing instead.

Cam Shea

City Crisis

CATEGORY: Helicopter sim >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >>
PUBLISHER: Take 2 >> **PRICE:** STBA >>
RATING: G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

City Crisis' concept is a simple one — you're a heroic helicopter pilot in a sprawling metropolis and it's your job to rescue citizens in trouble, put out fires and help the police when possible. It's a cool premise that translates to what is, initially, a very addictive game.

Jumping into a rescue mission, you'll find yourself in a large and packed city, staring at your helicopter from an almost top down perspective. Control is excellent, with movement in all directions on the left analogue stick and altitude/turning on the right. The radar on screen will direct you to the fire — typically a large building with several people/animals stranded strategically on it. You have two firefighting options — a water spray (infinite but needs to be recharged regularly) and a water cannon (powerful but limited). You also have a dude on a winch, who you lower down to rescue people. Generally each mission has a few fires to go to, and the battle against the clock is good fun indeed.

After mastering your chopper's control and playing through a few missions, however, you'll start wondering where the "real" single player game is. The entire game feels like a prep mission for something far more involving and far less linear, but it's not to be. City Crisis, despite much promise, simply doesn't offer any medium or long-term play value. Surely it would make sense after creating such a large city to randomise fires all over town, have a variety of difficulty levels and offer a storyline. Instead, the few missions that are on offer are the same each time and the game has no real personality.

Cam Shea

Monopoly Tycoon

CATEGORY: RTS >> **PLAYERS:** 1-8 >>
PUBLISHER: Infogrames >> **PRICE:** \$79.95 >>
RATING: G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

When you think of Monopoly as a videogame I'll bet you don't get images of a hard-core high end business simulation with loads of depth. More likely you are pondering another walk around the virtual gameboard, chucking dice and trying to not land in jail. However, you'd be wrong, as this latest effort delivers much more than you'd expect.

Monopoly Tycoon dispenses with dice and moving tokens around the board. Instead you must play the game as a property developer, looking covetously on the blocks of land that bear the same names as those in the board game. You'll develop all sorts of buildings on these blocks in a very Sim City inspired fashion with the objective being that you financially overpower your rivals.

The game is essentially about buying block leases, developing apartments or the right business on the blocks earning money and hammering your opponents in auctions. There is a lot of depth if you have a desire to really poke around and see what is what. You can do market research on areas you are interested in developing a business in, tune the prices in your shops (so that you beat your competitors) and you can even check what the interests of individual citizens are.

This all may sound rather dry, but the game has a style all of its own, some really decent 3D visuals (for a business sim) and is mighty good fun multiplayer. Give it a try and you might be pleasantly surprised.

Steve Polak

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL	VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL	VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
65	60	40	55	70	70	72	69	74	68	86	84



This is no time to boogie.



He deftly side-steps the fishpond.



NBA 2K1



CATEGORY: Sport >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: Sega >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: import only >>

AL LOFTS takes it to the hoop...

In the minds of 99% of the sports gaming population the NBA Live series is the king of basketball; and rightfully so, having conquered the courts for so many years and through so many systems. NBA 2K1, of Visual Concepts design, has put their best team on the court, and only in their second year have swatted Live way back into the cheap seats.

FULL COURT COVERAGE

NBA 2K1 is a class product. From the opening screen, the options presented to you are outstandingly comprehensive. Player creation has never been so in depth, giving you at least 20 options on just appearance alone with an enormous range of sweatbands, sneakers, hair, physique, and any other option you care to name. Deciding where to play your freak is just as easy - slot him into any roster and watch him explode in exhibition, franchise, season and street-ball settings.

The season mode is the basic form of basketball - and a very satisfying form it is, due to the ease of trade and small amount of tinkering required to play to the maximum enjoyment. Pick the four plays out of your team's playbook and assign them to a hotkey, effortlessly played out on the court when implemented. Trades are

just as simple, accepting (almost) fair trades or giving you an option of overriding their good sense of not trading Dan Majerle for Lamar Odom.

Franchise mode throws in an entertaining curve - player ratings, permanently stuck in Season mode, now become free wheeling objects of player streaks - Derek Anderson playing hot? It will reflect in his player rating, a very satisfying feature added to this game.

ALMOST IVERSON-LIKE

Of course, NBA2K1 is not clean sailing - there are some features missing or under-done. Whereas Create-a-Player is perfect, Create-a-Team is not - only maybe a dozen logos to choose from, no stadium selection, and limited options available to your budding franchise. All-star weekend activities are non-existent; a really puzzling move from a game so comprehensive in nature. NBA 2K1, like every other basketball game, has yet to really perfect low-post moves - it is done well in this game with spins, hooks and dunks, but still not magnificently, a point that will undoubtedly be first class in the next installment.

The franchise mode really needs to take a leaf out of NFL 2K1's - giving people real salaries (not points as they are in NBA) and letting them progress naturally from draft to retirement, ie. Some go bust, some obviously train so well they need to be played and some who remain middle ground, like real life. Franchise mode isn't nearly as enthralling as its football sister and the playbook is not customisable, which is baffling considering both games come from under the same roof.

In the end these quips really don't count up for much against the enjoyment that is to be had playing this game. It really is bordering on faultless after tip-off, with good balance between paint and post play, awesome cinematic replays, crowd interactions (cheers and boos, team chants going up and free-throw sledging a-plenty with player chatter and those white foam wavy things they use in the crowd), and general satisfaction you get from this beautiful, option-packed game. The players look perfect, Shaq could be a little more dominant, but generally this series is looking pure gold. <<

!!! We look forward to reading more of what YOU think. Keep sending your reader reviews to freakscene@next.com.au with READER REVIEW in the subject line.



PLUS: Fantastic, comprehensive b-ball experience.

MINUS: Dreamcast - so good, so unloved.

VISUALS 92 SOUND 84 GAMEPLAY 90

OVERALL 92

NBA2K1 claims 2001's golden basketball.

Mario Kart: Super Circuit



CATEGORY: Kart Racing >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >>
 PUBLISHER: Nintendo >> PRICE: \$69.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

CAM SHEA spends too much time playing with the beast in his pocket...



Welcome to gaming nirvana dear readers. Yes, Mario Kart Super Circuit rocks very hard indeed, and there's now no excuse not to own a GBA. Although it will feel instantly familiar to Mario Kart veterans, Super Circuit is very much an all-new Mario Kart game — not just a regurgitation of the SNES classic.

SEASONED TO PERFECTION....

For starters there are 20 brand new tracks in Super Circuit, and they're superb. Nintendo have obviously worked hard to build courses with plenty of long term play value. They've also, importantly, worked hard to bring more variety to the selection of courses. In addition to old favourites like the Mario Circuits and Ghost Houses, there are some great new settings that really round out the game. Sky Garden, for example, is a rally-style course suspended in the clouds, whereas Ribbon Road is like the next generation of Mario Circuit — ultra high speed, tight grip, great corners and lots of boost pads. Capping it all off, we should add, Super Circuit has a classic Rainbow Road course — the long arcing corners remain, but Nintendo have added in lips on the track edge making innumerable shortcuts and stunts between sections of track possible.



Who's the fairest of them all?

>> The items in Super Circuit are very much a "best of" collection, with the classic triple green and triple red shells of MK 64 making a welcome return. And of course, you can shoot shells backwards, as well as trailing bananas and shells to protect yourself from attacks. It's the little touches like these that make



Mario Kart so compelling. Better yet, this is the "fairest" Mario Kart yet, with the items allocated in a semi-random way. Although you'll still get better items if you're coming last than first, you won't get successive lightning bolts like the previous games (except in multiplayer, annoyingly enough). It's more about skills... just as it should be.

It would have been good if Nintendo had added some lights on either side of the path to illuminate the way a little, because in this form Super Circuit can never be truly portable. Atmosphere should never come at the expense of gameplay.

One thing seasoned MK gamers will notice when playing through the Mario GPs and various speed classes is just how well weighted the difficulty levels are. Your opponents don't just go faster as you climb from 50cc to 150cc, nor do they simply cheat more. Instead, Nintendo have actually implemented AI — a first for the series! On 150cc, your opponents race a better line, won't think twice about ramming you, use items more intelligently, and

generally fight harder for the victory. The learning curve is excellent, and you'll need plenty of practice to master the 150cc class.

Super Circuit's controls are spot on, and the powerslide mechanics have been tweaked nicely, finding a sweet blend between SMK and MK64. Although easy to learn, there's also plenty of depth in technique for those that want to master the game. Nintendo have also added in a little speed boost reward for pulling off a long left powerslide. Very cool.

BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

Coins are scattered throughout the courses, and as in previous versions of Mario Kart, they serve a couple of

The only real criticism we have with the selection of courses is that the Ghost House tracks, and to a lesser extent, the Bowser's Castle tracks are so dark they can be really hard to see.





Deadly tyre munching turtles.



Toad isn't the smartest...



They're lapping it up.



Okay Toad, that means turn the wheel to the right.



I'm so high right now, I got no idea what's going on...

>> After several extended multiplayer testing sessions, the Hyper crew (and just about everybody else who works in this office) are pleased to report that Mario Kart's four player link-up is awesome. It's every bit as addictive as crack, and just as much fun. There are a couple of caveats, however. The game's frame rate drops noticeably when you're in multiplayer mode, making control feel really sluggish until you've adapted. Also, three and four player games have no GP option – it's single race only with no AI controlled vehicles. Not a big deal, but worth mentioning. Luckily, everything else is peachy – a huge selection of courses, the return of Battle Mode, ghost race trading, and of course... hogging the entire screen to yourself!



purposes. Firstly, the more coins you have in your possession the higher your kart's top speed.

Secondly, the coins act as a buffer against other racers, preventing you from spinning out. They also, however, serve a hidden purpose (spoiler alert!). At the end of each GP you're awarded a ranking based on how many coins you collected across the races. After you've won all the GPs in a certain speed class, go back

and play them again. This time, if you win and get a good enough ranking, you'll unlock an alternate GP to play through. And here's the best bit... wait for it... the unlockable Mario GPs

are the original SNES courses! Every single track from the SNES classic is hidden away in Super Circuit, complete with all the original music, doubling the number of courses on offer! Woo hoo!

As expected, Super Circuit is polished, accessible, charming and deeply playable. With its crisp, fast graphics, 20 new courses, 20 classic courses and excellent multiplayer racing, this is the best Mario Kart ever. <<<

!!! Gamers beware – you'll only have four courses on offer with single kart link-up!

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY OVERALL

89

88

93

90

Advance Wars

GBA

CATEGORY: Strategy >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >> **PUBLISHER:** Nintendo
PRICE: \$89.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

After spending an entire weekend playing through just the tutorial in Advance Wars, it becomes apparent just how much depth there is to the strategy in this game. Advance Wars is so much more than it appears to be on first inspection. There simply hasn't been a strategy game this comprehensive on a handheld before.

Advance Wars puts you in the shoes of an Orange Star army

advisor, fighting the evil blue forces of the Blue Moon. Using an incredibly intuitive interface, you'll be commanding an immense variety of land, sea and air units, from infantry to tanks, choppers, cruisers, subs and more, all which have different attributes, strengths and weaknesses. Even the terrain comes into play with some units



gaining higher defense ratings when attacking from cities or mountains, or having their movement halved when fighting in snow. Just when you thought the game was becoming complicated, you realise there's still so much more to learn. For instance, after completing the huge tutorial, you enter the main campaign and realise that you're even able to build units, depending on the resources you have captured.

The combat is decided by a series of unit statistics and environmental factors, and is played out using a turn-based system, allowing you to really plot out your tactics and apply serious strategy to your attack. All of this is wrapped up in a cute anime style story that keeps you motivated to crush your opponent.

Advance Wars is an incredibly deep, challenging and addictive strategy game that is a must-have for the GBA.

Eliot Fish



Tanks for the info.



I just want to tank everybody.



But we ain't broken!

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
84	82	93	92

High Heat Baseball 2002

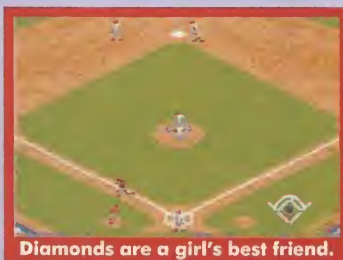
GBA

CATEGORY: Sport >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** 3DO
PRICE: \$TBA >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

EDO have packed this cart full of options... there's the exhibition mode, full season, a home run derby, playoffs and a practice mode. There is every single American baseball team also, so this is good stuff for the baseball freaks amongst us. The only thing is that the game is painfully dull to play, making it truly one for the freaks amongst us. There seemed to

be very little distinction between different players, as essentially you can press one button throughout the entire game when both pitching and hitting.

Is baseball really such a low scoring game? After nine innings, Boston won with only 4 people home. Yes, about 20 minutes was spent



Diamonds are a girl's best friend.

watching people endlessly strike out, get caught or get beaten to the plate. Surely real life baseball isn't this excruciatingly dull? The other thing we noticed about

High Heat, is that they forgot to turn the lights on in the stadium. Either that, or this is one of the darkest GBA games that we've seen yet. This is painful on the eyes, and surely a serious health hazard! If you can make out what's happening, you'll appreciate the smooth animations of the batting and pitching which looks pretty fancy for a handheld. Unfortunately, everything else is a major league letdown. They didn't even include a link cable option!

Frank Dry



But where are the girls?



Ain't no girls in the game.



Although this guy hits like one.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
75	70	55	59

Jurassic Park III: The DNA Factor

GBA CATEGORY: Action/Puzzle >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Konami
 PRICE: \$69.95 >> RATING: G8+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Jurassic Park III is a fun movie, but unless things shift up a gear over at Konami, the games are going to be hitting the bargain bins before the year is out. The first one from Konami to cross our dino-infested path is The DNA Factor for the GBA, and it's an attempt at providing platform-based action with a puzzle element.

Your task is to run around the island collecting DNA samples,

which you then take back to the LAB and combine with the incomplete strands you have on file to create new types of Dinosaur. What this actually means in gameplay terms, is struggling through an awkward 2D side-scrolling section that seems full of frustrating jumping sections picking up glowing balls on the ground, and then sitting through the DNA building, which is the so-called puzzle mode. You "fire" your DNA

up the screen and it matches in colour with a bunch of flashing sockets. There's no real puzzle solving, but more simple matching up of colours, with a bit of shifting the DNA strand back and forth a few times to get it to match up. Basically, both sides of the game are equally as undercooked and dull to play through. Another movie-license videogame bites the gameplay gerkhin.

We seriously hope things improve from here on in....

Eliot Fish



My money's on the dino. Sorry Sam.



Just like Boot Camp.



VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
73	75	53	55

Konami Krazy Racers

GBA CATEGORY: Kart Racing >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: Ozisoft >>
 PRICE: \$79.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Konami Krazy Racers might as well be subtitled "Attack Of The Klonos", as this is quite the Mario Kart rip-off. Konami have done some digging in the vault and come up with eight "classic" mascots of their own. They're not quite as recognisable as the Marios of the world though, especially for a Western audience. A few are readily identifiable, such as the Ninja from

Metal Gear Solid, Goemon from Mystical Ninja, Dracula from Castlevania and even Takesuke from Parodius, but the rest are a little more obscure.

What Konami have done to take the character themes a little further is to build all the courses around the mascots' games. It's a great idea and works pretty well – especially with really familiar games like Metal

Gear Solid (the course even has the theme music!). Of course, the amount of enjoyment you'll get out of the themes is directly proportional to how many of the games you've played.

The game is structured well, with licenses required to play the harder classes. These can be earned by completing certain challenges, such as one on one races or time trials. The gameplay is pretty solid, but really, we've done all this before. Even the powerups are direct rip-offs of Mario Kart's. Oddly enough, the one element that Konami didn't utilise from Mario Kart is the powerslide. Surely this misses the entire point of the kart racing genre! Making a kart racing game without powerslides is like making a controller without a console, or a Simpsons episode without Homer – there isn't much point and it's unlikely to be much fun. A solid game that pales in comparison to Mario Kart Super Circuit.

Cam Shea



Wait a second, that's no Toad.



Did Mario dye his cap blue?



It's-a not-a me!

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
78	76	66	73





Castlevania

Just like Dracula, Castlevania remains eternally young, rising from the grave with each new sequel. Join creature of the night, **JAMES COTTEE**, as he delves into the murky past of the crown prince of horror platformers...



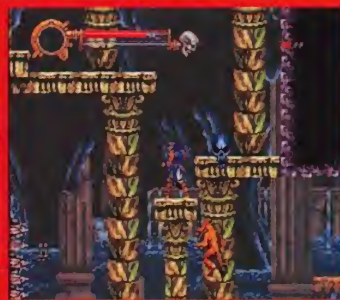
Batty Boy.



I've come to suck your midichlorians.



Don't cry.... Ewwwwwww!



Who was the architect anyhow?



One divine hammer.



I said I'd whip you up something.

In 1986, Nintendo was riding high on the second big video game boom. Having cornered the home console market with the NES, they were free to bully retailers, indulge in price-fixing, and indulge in a quality-over-quantity policy with new software releases. Before they would allow a third party developer to pay the extortionate fees to have their games published, they had to meet Nintendo's stringent quality control parameters. Castlevania, a new high quality platformer from Konami, would prove itself worthy to stand alongside Mario and Metroid in the new regime.

I COME TO SUCK YOUR BLOOD

Loosely based on the legend of Dracula, and borrowing heavily from every horror staple under the sun, Castlevania would not only succeed, but also inspire sequels that carry forth to this very day. Castlevania tells the tale of the Belmont's family's super-human strength and determination, and their on-going battle with count Dracula. The series chronology began in the 15th century, and inspires a sequel every 100 years when Dracula regenerates himself.

The gameplay behind Castlevania is relatively simple. The first game was basically Rygar with some platform game elements. Playing Belmont, one must explore the castles of Transylvania, purging them of the undead. Your primary weapon is a whip, and one also gets various expendable secondary weapons,

such as boomerangs and throwing knives. Each game involves conquering one or more castles, ultimately confronting and defeating Dracula himself.

The series has distinguished itself from more mediocre platform adventures in a number of areas. Each game has had a huge variety of different monsters, from skeletons to zombies to Death himself, all behaving differently and dictating different tactics. Each Castlevania game is riddled with secret areas and bonuses, adding a lot of replay value and chances to try alternate tactics.

While not the first to bare the Castlevania name, Vampire Killer for the MSX was the first game from Konami to display its distinctive gameplay style. Castlevania followed in 1987, a relatively straightforward scrolling beat-em-up. Castlevania II: Simon's Quest (1988) was more of an RPG, and despite sporting expansive, explorable levels, was too easy to be of lasting interest. Also in 1988 came Haunted Castle, an arcade adaptation of the previous year's home version.

Castlevania III: Dracula's Curse (1990) introduced multiple pathways and four playable characters, and at the time was the best yet in the series. Super Castlevania IV (1991) moved the series forward onto the SNES, and while very similar to its predecessors, it was the first to give Belmont's whip a versatile, almost realistic range of movement.

I AM YOUR FATHER!

CV4 was followed by a number of unremarkable entrants to the series, including versions for the Megadrive and the Game Boy. There were also numerous versions that never made it out of Japan, including the superlative PC Engine game Dracula X, which was ported unsuccessfully to the SNES.

The series peaked with the PlayStation game Castlevania: Symphony of the Night (1995). One took control of Alucard, half vampire son of Dracula.

While the gameplay was still two-dimensional, the depth of the game had been greatly expanded. The environments were huge and non-linear, requiring a great deal of exploration to conquer. One could accumulate many spells and items, and Alucard even had some useful



CASTLEVANIA CHRONICLES

>> This is an interesting new product for the PSone. Castlevania Chronicles is basically a dedicated NES emulator for the very first Castlevania game, allowing one to play a very retro game on relatively modern hardware. In order to add some value to the release, in addition to the bare-bones NES version is an "Arrange Mode," a super-up version that ups the effects. While still the same game in essence, it looks much more at home on the PSX.

This sort of revamped, repackaged game format is quite common in Japan, and even crops up in America. Old favourites like Megaman and the early Final Fantasy games have been given similar treatments, finding eager buyers in the nostalgia-afflicted ranks of 20-somethings everywhere. Yet despite the universal appeal of retro, it's quite rare that such a package would get released at all Australia.

While there are numerous ways to emulate the Castlevania games on the PC, Castlevania Chronicles represents a self-contained package, and a rare historical insight. Even the mildly curious would do well to take punt on a rental. Castlevania Chronicles is a bite-sized chunk of gaming history.

vampire powers of his own.

To get through tight spots you could transform into a wolf, bat, or mist. You also had the added pathos of being forced to kill your own father to save the world. Granted, this isn't a new dramatic theme, but when combined with the limited amounts of spoken dialogue it made for great melodrama. Who can forget the scene where you think you've found your long-lost, long dead mother, only to discover you've been fooled by an evil succubus!

The most recent addition to the series is Castlevania: Circle Of The Moon for the Game Boy Advance. Despite the GBA's notoriously dim screen, it has shone as a testimony to a game design that's still going strong after 15 years.

There have been setbacks, such as the Dreamcast version that was terminated in mid-production, but like Dracula himself, Castlevania never stays dead for long. With two new game systems coming out next year, we can be sure that the Belmont family will keep fighting the good fight well into the 21st century. Indeed, one of the characters in Ninja Turtles: Tournament Fighters listed his favourite game as being Castlevania 2095, so we can expect sequels for another century at least. <<



Hyper

DVD is the format of choice for anyone who's serious about their home-cinema experience. Every Issue we review the latest movies as well as the latest in anime. Kick back and let Hyper help you decide what you should watch!



Big Trouble in Little China

20TH CENTURY FOX, RATED M

Take a little Chinese mythology, throw in some Western imagination, and you'll end up with something like this. Amidst bloodthirsty clan warfare and gang-related crime, a 2000-year old magician residing in Chinatown seeks to rid himself of an age-old curse put upon him by the first sovereign emperor of China. He kidnaps a woman in this endeavour, which inevitably attracts her fiancé to the rescue, as well as an old high-school buddy played by Kurt Russell.

From there it's all Chinese black magic, mid-air sword fights and the power of wind, thunder and



He can rub his feet reaaaally fast.



It's those damn three amigos again.

lightning wreaking havoc in the Chinese underground, with Russell providing all the comic moments as he swears on Christ's throne that what he's seeing can't be real. Whatever it is, it's damned good.

This unbeatable classic (which is proof for Joel "Romeo Must Die and Swordfish" Silver that you don't need Bullet Time bollocks for good action) comes in 2 discs, loaded with extras, such as deleted scenes that reveal many in-jokes not included in the final cut.



Shhh! I'm hunting wabbits!



Remember Kurt... wax on, wax off.

MOVIE: 9/10 **EXTRA:** 7/10



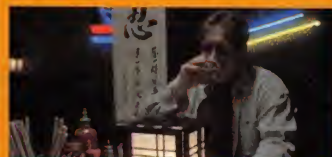
The Watcher

UNIVERSAL, RATED M

James Spader is an FBI psycho hunter who's sick of his job. He quits and moves to Chicago, but Keanu Reeves — the arch nemesis who always slips through his fingers — isn't content to give up the game. Instead, he torments Spader by moving to Chicago and continuing his serial killings there. His modus operandi:

sending a photo of the girl he's going to kill to Spader and giving him a time limit to save her.

The Watcher comes off as a weird if predictable thriller as it attempts to build up the past relationship between the main characters. Reeves' performance meanders between freakish to thoroughly unconvincing — an interesting precursor to his role in *The Gift* — but Spader fails to hold the story together as an FBI agent down on his luck. Marisa Tomei is a throwaway as the love interest who's eventually targeted by Reeves.



Ahhh, my mouth is stuck.

MOVIE: 5/10 **EXTRA:** 1/10



That's when Susan realised she took a movie with Keanu Reeves.

The Gift

COLUMBIA TRI-STAR, RATED MA15+

Cate Blanchett sees dead people. She has a sixth sense that lets her tell fortunes, see the future, and even things that happened in the past. She becomes the centre of attention during a police investigation, which was looking into the disappearance of a young woman played by Katie Holmes. All the leads have dried up, and she's the only one who might be able to provide some answers.

Written by Billy Bob Thornton and co-starring Greg Kinnear, Hilary Swank and Giovanni Ribisi, *The Gift* doesn't tell a particularly original tale, but it does a bloody good job of telling it. The roles are all played beautifully to portray the fabric of their local community — even Keanu Reeves is convincing as



Woah.



I want my free gift!

a hatemongering redneck.

Extras include a making-of featurette and a music video, but the best booty of all is in the last 5 minutes of the film, where Katie Holmes gets very naked and makes the previous 105 minutes very worthwhile.

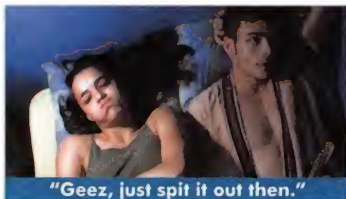
MOVIE: 7/10 **EXTRA:** 4/10

Girlfight

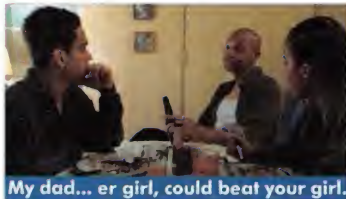
COLUMBIA TRI-STAR, RATED M

Girlfight steps into the realm of post-modern feminism, following the exploits of Diana Guzman as she gradually finds a love for amateur boxing. First-time director Karyn Kusama is neither preachy nor patronising about sexism or the merits of the sport, and keeps her eyes focused squarely on the journey that Guzman's mind and soul are undertaking.

The result is a fascinating film about the sport of boxing, almost like a documentary, revealing the rivalries and internal politics of small-time amateur boxers. It's also a fresh and uplifting character-driven film. Newcomer Michelle Rodriguez puts in a fine performance as Guzman, whose intensity radiates as much in the boxing ring as it does



"Geez, just spit it out then."



My dad... er girl, could beat your girl.



portraying her troubled family life.

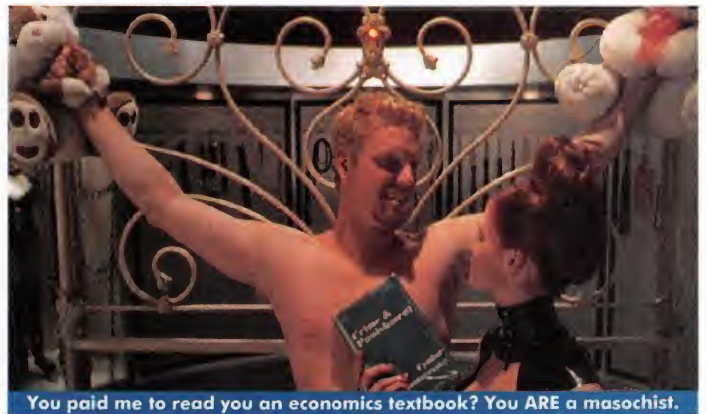
Girlfight is well deserving of its awards at the 2000 Sundance Film Festival — Best Directing, Grand Jury Prize and Young Cinema Award — and

is worth watching at least once by everyone.

MOVIE: 7/10 **EXTRA:** 5/10



No biting, no swapping gossip, no shopping sprees...



You paid me to read you an economics textbook? You ARE a masochist.



Then they told him it was windex.



Tomcats

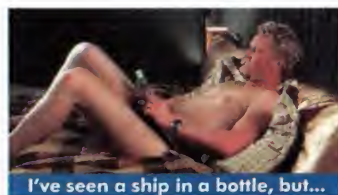
COLUMBIA TRI-STAR, RATED MA15+

Jerry O'Connell and his club of ladies' men highschool buddies enter into a pact never to get married. They all put \$1000 into a mutual fund, and whoever ends up being the last single man amongst them gets the kitty. Seven years later, only two remain: Jerry O'Connell and Jake Busey. The kitty's up to a cool half

a million dollars, but O'Connell is absolutely desperate to get it now after running up some hideous debts at the casino.

Thus begins his hilarious attempts at trying to get his friend married — to anyone. His master plan ends up being Shannon Elizabeth (American Pie), who has an axe to grind with Busey and is willing to help out for a share of the cash.

There are a few excruciatingly funny Farrelly Bros moments, but the film unavoidably degenerates into moral dilemma as O'Connell realises he's in love with Elizabeth.



I've seen a ship in a bottle, but...

MOVIE: 6/10 **EXTRA:** 1/10

20TH CENTURY FOX, RATED M15+

Raging Bull

Martin Scorsese's *Raging Bull* is a film which explores the idea of alienated masculinity, charting the downward trajectory of promising young boxer Jake La Motta (played by Robert De Niro). Plagued by insecurities and self-doubt, the violence which colours La Motta's professional life in the ring also spills into his personal life. Driven by animalistic urges - rage, lust and jealousy - La Motta is a man on the edge whose ultimate decline is both moving and tragic. Hailed by American critics as the greatest film of the 1980s,



Yeah, I AM talkin' to you, putz!

Raging Bull is an intense and forceful cinematic masterpiece - earning De Niro an Oscar for his breathtaking performance, and highlighting the superior abilities of Joe Pesci, who plays La Motta's similarly temperamental brother. Unfortunately the only bonus included on the disc is a theatrical trailer. Thankfully, the film is such a classic that it can stand on its own.

Victoria Flanagan

MOVIE: 7/10 **EXTRA:** 1/10



Life on the stand-up circuit was tough on Jimoin



If I said you had a beautiful body, would you... let me eat it?

Silence of the Lambs

FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT, RATED M15+

When a serial killer named "Buffalo Bill" (so called because his female victims' bodies are found skinned) begins to terrorise Midwest America, the head of the FBI decides that another incarcerated psychopath - the brilliant psychiatrist Dr Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins) - may be able to assist with the investigation.

Lector's intellectual prowess, however, constitutes a problem for any interviewer. The solution to this dilemma is resolved by presenting him with Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster), a young FBI trainee, whose task is to ascertain whether Lecter can provide any insight into Buffalo Bill's motives and whereabouts. Awarded three Oscars, *The Silence of the Lambs* is an intriguing and thought-provoking take on the usual serial-killer movie fare. A true Special Edition, this release has a second DVD devoted entirely to extras. Included is an interesting "Making of" documentary, deleted scenes from the film and several out-takes - as well as the usual trailer and stills gallery. If it isn't already in your collection, go out and buy this impressive DVD today.

Victoria Flanagan

MOVIE: 8/10 **EXTRA:** 7/10



I'll stop biting my nails, mum. Promise!



20 years for bad table manners.

Hannibal

COLUMBIA TRI-STAR, RATED M15+

Unfortunately the same praise which was so generously showered on *The Silence of the Lambs* (and which it rightly deserved) cannot be applied to its sequel *Hannibal*. What on earth was Anthony Hopkins thinking? Maybe he's taken up smoking illegal substances and his judgment just isn't what it used to be. (Actually, the thought of Sir Anthony listening to Bob Marley and puffing away on a pipe is a rather appealing and charming little idea...) Even Jodie Foster was sensible enough to decline this film, and that's really saying something since she's been in some godawful tripe like *Nell* and *Maverick*. Buy this DVD at your own risk - and only if you enjoy the idea of watching *Hannibal* sit down to a dinner of still-living human brain - a scene shocking only in so far as it proves



Really, it's just like Sushi...



Of course I'm Jodie Foster. Ahem.

just how far removed the sequel is from the psychological introspection of the original. It really is a great shame that *Hannibal* is devoid of substance, because the extras on the second DVD are absolutely first class. For compulsive collectors only.

Victoria Flanagan

MOVIE: 3/10 **EXTRA:** 8/10



Man, you're the worst plastic surgeon I've ever been to!

ANIME



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Akira: Special Edition

CATEGORY: SCI-FI, DRAMA
PRODUCTION COMPANY: PIONEER

Everyone who enjoys anime has heard of *Akira*. Still considered one of the greatest works of the medium, *Akira* stunned audiences with its amazing production values and attention to detail, as well as a story that broke new ground in the way people thought of animated films. *Akira* wasn't a Disney musical with a happy ending — it painted a bleak picture of a post-apocalyptic society, ripping itself apart with hate, fear and insularity.

SECRET EXPERIMENTS

At the centre of the story is Tetsuo, the butt end of a young bkie gang who is taken by government officials and operated on in a series of

experimental procedures. When he escapes the facility, he develops superhuman powers that he eventually comes to use against those he harbours bitterness towards. It's then later revealed that the experiments conducted on Tetsuo are part of an attempt to recreate a boy with similar destructive powers named Akira. By the time the threat he poses becomes obvious, it seems not even Tetsuo can control his fate.

This new edition of *Akira* features a remastered Dolby Digital 5.1 soundtrack, with completely new English voice dub designed to reflect the style of Japanese conversation rather than the Western colloquial fluff that was used to pad it out originally.

There's also a Japanese audio track, which fans will know is next to impossible to track down in VHS form. The fully restored visuals are rich with colour, and still put many modern anime films to shame. A second disc of extras comes with production notes, sound clips, trailers, and an interview with Katsuhiro Otomo.



ANIMATION: 8/10 **PLOT:** 9/10 **JAPAN-NESS:** Low **OVERALL:** 9/10



The Big O

CATEGORY: ACTION, SCI-FI
PRODUCTION COMPANY: BANDAI VISUAL

The Big O is like a glorious combination of Giant Robo and Batman: The Animated Series — both defining works in their own way. It's set in a world where everyone mysteriously lost their memories 40 years ago, where people are still trying to pick up the pieces, re-learning how to exist and function as a society. The lucky ones with photo albums and books can relearn

some of their history, but for the remainder, it's blissful ignorance or the illicit trade of memories.

PARADIGM SHIFT

Roger Smith is one of the luckier ones. He's rich, well resourced, resides in a huge mansion, and is about the only person in Paradigm City who doesn't cower in fear of the subway system (which many believe to be a cave of



if it weren't for the pink helmet...

ANIMATION: 8/10 **PLOT:** 9/10 **JAPAN-NESS:** Low **OVERALL:** 9/10

unknown terrors). Perpetually dressed in black, Smith is a veritable Bruce Wayne as he struts around as the city's best Negotiator in hostage and terrorist negotiations. He also secretly pilots a gigantic Megadeus robot, the Big O, which he uses to beat the daylight out of criminals.

The first two episodes move along brilliantly with the style Batman and the pizzazz of Cowboy Bebop,

gradually introducing intriguing supporting characters like Dorothy Waynright and Angel. Some elements of the anime seem a little packaged — like the way Roger Smith ritually crosses his arms while Big O activates. The third and fourth episodes seem to lose momentum, yet the possibilities offered so far by this first DVD leave you begging for more. This series has great potential.

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FORUM

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Q. I WANT TO BUY A MICROSOFT XBOX, BECAUSE...

Personally, we can think of plenty of reasons to want the Xbox. Halo, Munch's Oddysee, Dead or Alive 3... the list really does go on. The hardware has enormous potential for some truly cracking games. However, many of you weren't as convinced. We sensed a very cynical reaction to this month's question...



HYPER FORUM

Everyone has a different opinion and the Hyper Forum is where you can get your thoughts out of your head and onto the page for all to see. Don't forget that we have a new topic every issue! The next topic of discussion...



"I want to buy a Nintendo GameCube, because...?"

Responses will be printed in Hyper 99.

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.

YES! NO! MAYBE?

Hyper,

I want to buy a Microsoft Xbox because...

...I want to play the BEST games around! Wait a minute, all systems promise to have the best games around.

...I want to play DVDs! Wait a minute, I'll have to wait for the DVD add-on kit. PS2 already does that.

...I want to play Online! Wait a minute, all new consoles promise to be online eventually. At least it will be Internet ready.

...I want a reliable company! Wait a minute, is Microsoft a well known reliable company?

...I want a machine that won't die out! Wait a minute, Microsoft are new to consoles. But they've got so much money to spend; they couldn't mess this up, could they?

...I want to support Bill Gates! Er, forget I even said that.

The truth is that all the new systems have so much going for them. I think it's a lot safer to hang back for a couple of months and see how things pick up with each system and then make your choice. Or at least hire the console first. Play it safe. Just remember this: Dreamcast, 3DO, Virtual Boy, Sega Saturn.

TOMCAT
thomasuwo@yahoo.com

THE FUTURE OF GAMING

Well my first reason is that it has superior hardware to any other console (three times more powerful than a PS2), has a built in HDD for: Speeding up load times, use as a giant memory card, for updating games such as new race circuits, ripping mp3s. Xbox has FAR better games than any other console as well. With 291 games in development today. Games like HALO, Oddworld, Project Ego, Amped and Gotham are all system sellers.

Graphics are nothing short of stunning. The reflections on the water, the shadows, the detail on the people. AI that revolutionizes gaming, the marines in HALO don't just stand in one spot and shoot, they duck, leap, hide, run and team up with you in buggies!

Another point is that Microsoft has a bottomless sea of money and WILL NOT let Xbox die. MS said they would keep funding it until the end of its lifetime, which means NO situation like Dreamcast's! Also MS has a HUGE first and second party list! MS is buying great developers and adding them to the already amazing list of existing developers.

Simply, the Xbox is going to take gaming to the next level and that's what I want. Games like Project Ego are just inspiring. The possibilities



"I have the 'Cube' targeted, sir!"

are endless! The future of gaming is coming...

Zekklen
Zekklen@hotmail.com

TAKING THE GREEN PILL

I want to buy a Microsoft Xbox because... well, to be completely honest, I don't. I feel that Microsoft don't have the expertise or grace to pull off something of this proportion. I feel that they should stick to PC games (although in theory, the Xbox is just a gaming PC for a TV), and I feel that Nintendo are going to have the goods when it comes to gameplay.

But it isn't going to stop me buying one. Why? The Matrix, of course! Being the dedicated Matrix fan I am, I really, really need this game. I don't really care what other games I'm getting, The Matrix is at the top of the list - I already have



project - ego

Ego! It's not a... dirty word.



Say you don't like Xbox into the end of this gun.



Man, I can't breath in this thing.

perks, it's already showing its major flaws. Kind of a turn off, to me.

But, like I said, I'll still buy one. No matter how pathetically flawed it is, it'll still be the superior Matrix game, so it'll still be a must-have for the fans of the movie. "sigh"

Nerje
nerje@thematrixonline.com

A RING OF CONFIDENCE

The main reason I will be purchasing this wonderful piece of technology is that the games will be so good. The games are also likely to be the PC games that were never accessible to us console gamers who can't afford a PC. Thanks to the excellent hardware specs we can also look forward to much larger games with far more gameplay than certain other consoles. The graphics will also be much superior to those certain other consoles.

The absolute MAIN reason I will get an Xbox is just so I can play HALO.

The Myystiq
Myystiq@yahoo.com.au

PLEASE SHUT THE GATES

Dear Hyper,

I really want an Xbox. I mean I REEEEEALLY want one! First of all, I'm dying to have a console that's the size

of a VCR, so that I'll have to buy a new cabinet to fit it in. And I love the look of the controllers. What an ingenious idea to make them as big as dinner plates, and have the buttons as small as Game Boy buttons!

Let's not forget what great value it is, getting a cable modem included, especially as most of Australia won't be able to use it! It'll revolutionise the industry!

I can't wait to see with my own eyes, the graphics that are so good, they need touching up with Photoshop for press releases!

And most of all, I'm really excited about a console by Microsoft. Will mine be able to crash, just like that one did at E3? Will it include the blue screen of death at no extra charge? My main reason for really wanting an Xbox though, is simply because... I AM BILL GATES AND I'M GOING TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD! BWAHAHAHAHAHAHA!

Billy Gee. XOXO
evilcorpdotcom@hotmail.com

XBOX EGO

I love your mag, but I was disappointed that you didn't have a preview of Project EGO in your Xbox E3 section. I think it sounds like an awesome game and will definitely be innovative.

Project EGO is being developed by

Peter Molyneux, the guy who was the lead designer of Black and White (which is one of the most innovative and fun PC games EVER.)

The game is about writing a hero story. In a way, you don't get to read the game's story until you beat it. The point of the game is to basically write a story through your actions and at the end, it will all be recorded and you get to read it and see what you did. The only thing set in the game is that you start out as a 15 year-old boy who's family and dog have been murdered.

Everything from that point on is completely up to you. You can be a good hero or you can be an evil backstabber. Go around and kill people if you want. Steal clothes and so on. The coolest part is that once you beat the game, you can save your story and give it to somebody else, and your story will be part of that person's game. And he will have to become an even bigger hero than you. Your actions will affect his game. Likewise, you'll be able to insert other people's stories in yours and play them.

The game has a lot of potential, that's for sure. It seems like the more people finish the game, the bigger the replay value of going through it again.

Mitsurugi
MitsurugiA@netscape.net



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MAIL

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RETURN OF THE GAMEPLAY

Dear Hyper,

There must be something going wrong in LucasArts' quality control. I have not seen one good Star Wars PC game since X-Wing Alliance. It all started with the Phantom Menace, which had crappy gameplay, voice acting and gameplay, and then to Racer, which I found to be fun for an hour, but afterwards, it just wore thin. I won't even bother with Force Commander (chucks up in background). But then came the coolest looking game yet... Rogue Leader looks like being the best Star Wars game in ages. Sure, Rogue Squadron was good, but it lacked a good story to drive it. But those funky graphics and sounds made it all look too good to be true. I am faced with the question. Which console offers the most Star Wars for a die-hard fan (geek)? The winner looks set to buy my heart (and my pocket). What do you guys think? To me it looks like Gamecube. Nintendo have offered great (and a few poor) games over the years, from Super Star Wars to Rogue Leader.

Anywho, maybe it is time to go back to the good ol' days of Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis with point and click and dodgy voice acting. Those were the days, but my brand new P4 computer lacks the EMS memory to run it and many old DOS games. Alas. There is always my old Acer 486. Sure, games like Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine were okay, but they lacked the fine gloss of Jedi Knight and those classic games. Just an hour ago, I finished off Jedi Knight for the millionth time and played an Internet game on the Zone.

Will SW Galaxies and SW Galactic Battlegrounds both fail, suffice or stand out as great games?

I think I should just go back to playing The Sims. Maybe all tortured, unhappy, malnourished and troubled Star Wars gamers should head back to their SNES and 486's and play the old games.

Richard
Richie007au@hotmail.com

Dear Richard,
The best platform for Star Wars games is undoubtedly the PC. The PC

will have over 5 games - Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast (shooter from Raven), SW: Galactic Battlegrounds (RTS from Ensemble Studios), SW: Galaxies (Online RPG from Verant Interactive), SW: Knights of the Old Republic (RPG from Bioware) and eventually, we think there will be PC versions of Racer II and Rogue Leader. There will also be as-yet unannounced Episode II: Attack of the Clones games for the PC which will be revealed next year. All these games are being developed by leaders in their respective fields, with LucasArts simply advising and guiding... which means we have huge hopes for these games! If you really want to play only on a new console, you're going to have to miss out on some great games on the other systems no matter which one you choose.

STILL DREAMING

I'm a proud owner of a Dreamcast and I'm quite disappointed about how it's going. I'm also a little surprised because with all the quality games out there, how could it have failed? I've spent quite a few sleepless nights thinking about this situation and I have come to the conclusion that it all has to do with advertising.

Take this example... I nearly bought a PS2 the other day after seeing that really good Bouncer ad on TV. That's a pretty good ad, and at the end where somebody yells "PlayStation 2", well that's a beauty. But I played it at a friend's house thinking "oh yeah this is gonna be great" only to turn it on and find, well, a pretty bad game that taught me the power of advertising.

Now I'm thinking that if Sega had played their cards right and advertised a little more they would be on the top of the gaming hill.

Stan T
Stan@ausi.com

P.S. Do you know when Half-life for DC is coming out?

Dear Stan,
Are you my greatest fan? Sorry, I had to get the obligatory Eminem joke out of the way.
We all know the Dreamcast didn't

take off here because there was virtually no advertising - stop reminding us. Half-Life for DC has been cancelled, my friend.

RPG BLANDNESS

Hey Guys.

Is it just me or are you also sick of PC RPGs? They are all the same!! I don't know about you, but the setting of swords and knights and swamps and dwarfs is just so damn bland!! The last good futuristic RPG was Fallout 2. Four years ago!! I'm sick of all the Arthurs and Excaliburs!! There should be more Clouds and Zells! It seems like the developers are afraid to break out of the mould that Baldur's Gate and all its clones have created! How many brown and green backdrops will there be until people become sick of that setting? I tell you, the next RPG that's not set a million years ago, I will buy a copy for everyone in my large family.

What are your views on this subject? Do you also want to change the dwarves and the cobblestone, to high tech weaponry and shiny surfaces?? I sure do.

Thanks for listening.

Peter Colligan
Petes_the_man@hotmail.com

Dear Pete,
It sounds like you should go and buy Arcanum. Fallout 3 is also in the works. Huzzah!

RANTING, RAVING...

Yo Hyper,

After getting the GBA on its release, I can't fault the games or its technical capabilities. But I can fault the size - it's too small. Nintendo supposedly are trying to expand their market, yet they've made a system that is a pain for adults to play. I don't know why they just did not grab a SNES pad, lengthen it a bit, and stick a screen in the middle. With the four buttons, you'd have the perfect hand-held. I respect the pocket-size concept, but they've gone overboard, and I doubt that too many people actually carry it around in their pockets anyway. Even the d-pad is smaller than my old B&W GB. It's

CAPTION THIS!

PART 22 WINNER

Our winning caption this month comes to us from **Patrick Wolfe** (pjwolfe@datafast.net.au). Nice one. If we had to read one more potty joke...



"HEY, DROP THAT THING AND GIVE ME A HAND WITH THIS PANE OF GLASS WOULD YA?"



Mark Lin sketched this lovely piece for us. Thanks Mark!

crazy. They really should have brought out a version in a larger size, along with the different colours. With sequels to older games, there was always going to be a significant adult market (I'm 32). As it stands, the only hope is that the GBA can be played through the GameCube. Maybe that is why it is so small - another incentive to get a GC? Are there any plans for that functionality or even an "adult" size GBA?

The darkness is another issue. After reading last issue that the Atari Lynx had the option to have it on or off, the GBA should have this feature too. Most of my GBA playing is at home through the mains, so the battery consumption is not as issue. Was the decision to not include back-lighting expense or battery consumption related? I suppose when you have a monopoly that the handheld market is, you can treat consumers with almost contempt. Contrast that with the home console, where Sony's competition forced Nintendo to relax their stubborn ways in making the GC. In fact, it's the first ever Nintendo system without any known vices. Pity the GBA is not the same.

GT3: What a disappointment. All they've done is upgrade the graphics. Game-wise, all you're doing is racing the same old tracks with the same old cars as GT2. Even the opponent AI seems the same as the same tactics work. Sure it looks sexy, but graphics are not the be-all, and it's surprising Hyper rated it so highly (95%) given that GT2

(87%) was somewhat criticised for its lack of improvement. In fact, it was the same reviewer I believe, yet GT2 actually had many more improvements over GT1 than GT3 has over GT2. There were 8 new tracks, a gazillion more cars, plus the new (at the time) rally mode. Compared to four new tracks (one a dumb test and one a rally), and less of everything else in GT3.

Are games reviewed in isolation or against others? In isolation, GT3 may be the best and worthy of the marks, but as a successor, it is the worst. My advice to those with GT2 thinking about buying GT3, don't.

Unless you're a graphics nut, there is barely anything new. At least with the graphics engine complete, GT4 (we hope) will be the true sequel that actually offers something new, game-wise.

The Warrior
warrior@alphalink.com.au

Dear Warrior,
Strangely, the GBA screen has stopped bothering us. Back to Advance Wars...

VISUALLY COMMA

Dear Hyper dudes and fellow gamers, I have recently bought a PS2 and I think it's the best. Super powerful, sleek, killer games and backwards compatible, it is definitely going to be (or already is) THE console to buy. Sure, it costs an arm and a leg, but I have Tekken Tag Tournament and Red Faction and I am very happy.

X-RATED MAGAZINE

G'day,

Firstly, thumbs up on your magazine. I've bought it off and on for, man, it's been ages now. I can actually remember the first issue I bought - it had a big fold out Sonic poster in the middle of it. Airbrushed thing, with a bright green background. Must've been at least four years ago. Top stuff!

The reason I'm writing to you has to do with the Xbox. I'm already a huge fan of this machine and have been following its progress avidly for about 7 months now. I'll be pre-ordering in time for March, complete with the remote control and Halo. Too bad we have to wait until pretty much the entire world get theirs until good old Aussie - bottom of the food chain yet again - is allowed to have a turn. Ah well. We have the best beaches and destroy most of the word at basically any kind of sport so I guess fair's fair.

But I digress.

I'm just wondering if you have any info regarding the possibility of any future Australian publication dedicated to the Xbox. Perhaps there will be a HYPER subsidiary set up? I think I'm safe in assuming there will be a magazine dedicated to the Xbox over here and I'm extremely interested in writing/reviewing for it. Are you guys looking for writers, perhaps?

I do realise you're busy so I will appreciate any response you can offer and take this opportunity to thank you in advance. I'm off to give my PSX yet another hammering to fill in time until March.

Cheers,

Nick Atkinson
Ragereset@hotmail.com

Dear Nick,
Hmm... A dedicated Xbox magazine from the company that brings you Hyper, Nintendo Gamer and PC Powerplay? If there's demand from the Aussie gamers out there, you never know... it's just crazy enough to work! How many of you would be interested?



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Unfortunately, I have a complaint. (Sorry 'Sertan Seral' from issue #94). It's not a huge one, but I think it's worth hearing about. I was at my friend's house a while ago and he has the nappy-tastic PSone. After playing my PS2 for a few months, and therefore not touching a PlayStation because I was way too busy beating up Hwoarang and Paul in TTT, I was not impressed with the little white bombshell at all. It was much like going from a 64 to an Atari. Shocking. I scoffed at the graphics and terrible loading times, knowing that what I had was way better. After a few long hours of playing MGS and GT2, we got bored and decided to shove in my friend's Linkin Park CD. Suddenly, WHOAH!! AMBIENCE EFFECTS!! Blobs and spikes were dancing around in a technicolour paradise to the beats of my fave band. Sure, I had seen it all before, but I seriously underestimated the PSone, never even considering that it was capable of doing this. After all it is only a

measly 32 bit. Then it occurred to me. I have a machine four times more powerful than this, imagine the ambience effects on that!

So I scooted back home and threw in Limp Bizkit. My imagination was going wild, having seen "Find My Own Way" on the demo disc, expecting things that probably weren't even possible. I went into the browser and pressed play. A BLUE CUBE. I got a BLUE CUBE. It was sitting there, spinning extremely slowly. "What did you expect, a flying green hippopotamus with a chainsaw and exploding rocketships in the background? HA! I thought I might come and spin slowly just to pi\$ you off..." is what it seemed to be saying to me. I was extremely disappointed to say the least.

What happened Sony? Did you only focus on raw gaming power, and then just decide to throw in a blue cube for the CDs? Surely they could have done more. Have they made any statement on it, or am I the only person that has

MAIL

complained? Please fill me in. I'm going now to take over the Ultor corporation and make the most of that God-sent GeoMod technology. Catch ya next month.

James
mccalj@yahoo.com.au

Dear James,
If someone can afford a PS2, they're probably not short of a CD player in the house, so, I doubt if anyone else has noticed that this feature was lacking. Any one out there care?

SPACED OUT

Dear Hyper,

I'm sure that by the time this is printed everyone worldwide will have seen the new Mario and Zelda demos shown at Space World this year. I must say that I am so disappointed in Nintendo. I have had so much hope in the GameCube, but whenever my hope peaks, they seem to constantly prove to me that they are moving in a completely different direction to where I want them to!

Let's start with Zelda. I actually really like the visual style of the game. The toon rendering is a nice

style, and it's comical. However, what annoys me is that it's Zelda. Why couldn't Miyamoto-san tried this out on some other game? To me (and before this week, I assumed to everyone) Zelda has always been about adventure. Dramatic adventure in a faraway land. Rescuing a princess. Daring swordfights. It has never, never been... comical. Funny. NEVER. So while Nintendo is calling this new-look Zelda a "return to the series' roots," I find that very, very hard to swallow. Looks to me like Nintendo's most grown-up series has just been handed over to the 5 year-olds of the world.

Then there's the other side of the coin - Mario Sunshine. What the Hell is Mario doing in a realistic suburbia?? Where are the mushroom houses and raccoon suits that always fit the series so well? No one ever had a problem with Mario being funny and cartoony, so why is he becoming more and more real with each game? WHAT ARE NINTENDO ON?? Both Zelda and Mario both seem to be going in the completely wrong direction! Metroid has gone to first-person, and from the movies I've seen the



Daniel McGregor follows up his Lara pic with this great Joanna Dark!

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HH4

series is already doomed. For a hardcore Nintendo loyalist, this Space World hasn't been the best time to reaffirm my faith in the company. Then again, the console hasn't even launched yet. Let's hope Miyamoto-san slaps himself one of these days and realises how many faithful players he's alienating with these "revolutions."

Peter Jenkins
Paga@alphalink.com.au

Dear Peter,
You raise some interesting points. But really, we should be embracing change, not criticising it. The games industry has been stagnant for some time, and I think the new Zelda looks stylish as hell. From what we can see, the game will also be lots of fun. We can't be playing the same old games forever!

UNIMPRESSED

Dear Hyper,

I've heard some pretty awful news about what Nintendo are doing with their new Zelda game for

the GCN. To be frank, it looks horrible and unappealing. I'm not even sure I want a Cube anymore as there are only three games currently announced that I'd actually be interested in (SSB: Melee, Phantasy Star Online and Dinosaur Planet). My thoughts then drifted to the PS2 with its pretty lackluster titles. Of the PS2 collection, only 3 games I would consider buying (Monkey Island, Final Fantasy X and GT3). The problem is that I can't get both of them because I'm soon starting year 12 and will only be using my console in my study breaks. My mind has been going around in circles for some time now, maybe I won't get any of these 'next generation' consoles.

Yours Insanely,
Jerec
jerecis@hotmail.com

Dear Jerec,
Don't dismiss Zelda so quickly... Maybe the style comes down to personal taste, but the gameplay will be there. Our other advice is to do your HSC first with NO distractions.

The Official Australian Games Chart

Compiled by Inform in association with AVSDA

TOP 10

PlayStation 2 Games Over \$50

W/E 26 AUG 2001
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Gran Turismo 3	Racing
2	◆	Onimusha	Adventure
3	◆	Red Faction	Action
4	▲	Tekken Tag Tournament	Action
5	▲	Rugby	Sports
6	▲	FIFA 2001	Sports
7	◆	Formula 1 2001	Racing
8	⊕	SSX	Sports
9	⊕	Dead Or Alive 2	Action
10	▼	The Bouncer	Adventure

TOP 10

PlayStation Games Over \$40

W/E 26 AUG 2001
RETAIL SALES

1	▲	World's Scariest Police	Racing
2	◆	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	Sports
3	▼	Digimon	RPG
4	◆	WWF Smackdown! 2	Sports
5	▲	Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX	Sports
6	▼	Gran Turismo 2 Ptm	Racing
7	▲	20 Games Pack	Compilation
8	▲	Final Fantasy IX	RPG
9	⊕	Simpson's Wrestling	Sports
10	⊕	Driver 2	Racing

TOP 10

Game Boy Games Over \$40

W/E 26 AUG 2001
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Pokemon Gold	RPG
2	◆	Pokemon Silver	RPG
3	⊕	Croc 2	Action
4	▼	Zelda: Oracle Of Seasons	RPG
5	▼	Zelda: Oracle Of Ages	RPG
6	▲	Pokemon Yellow	RPG
7	◆	Super Mario Brothers Dix	Action
8	▼	Shrek FairyTale Freak Down	Action
9	▼	Donkey Kong Country	Adventure
10	◆	Pokemon Blue	RPG

TOP 10

N64 Games Over \$40

W/E 26 AUG 2001
RETAIL SALES

1	▲	Conker's Bad Fur Day	Adventure
2	▼	Mario Party 3	Family
3	◆	Pokemon Stadium 2	Action
4	◆	Mario Kart 64	Racing
5	▲	Goldeneye 007	Action
6	⊕	Zelda: Majora's Mask	RPG
7	▼	Banjo Toole	Adventure
8	▼	Donkey Kong 64	Adventure
9	⊕	Super Smash Brothers	Action
10	⊕	Super Mario 64	Adventure

TOP 10

PC Games Over \$30

W/E 26 AUG 2001
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Diablo II: Lrd Of Destruction	RPG
2	⊕	Arcanum	RPG
3	◆	Max Payne	Action
4	▼	The Sims	Strategy
5	▼	Diablo 2	RPG
6	▲	Age Of Empires 2	Strategy
7	▼	Operation Flashpoint	Strategy
8	◆	The Sims Collectors Edition	Strategy
9	▼	Sim City 3000 Unlimited	Strategy
10	◆	The Sims House Party	Strategy

TOP 10

Game Boy Advance Games Over \$40

W/E 26 AUG 2001
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Super Mario Advance	Adventure
2	◆	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	Sports
3	◆	Rayman Advance	Adventure
4	▲	F-Zero Maximum Velocity	Racing
5	▼	GT Advance Racing	Racing
6	◆	Bomberman Tournament	Action
7	▲	Pinobee	Adventure
8	▼	Castlevania	Action
9	⊕	Tweety & the Magic Gems	Action
10	⊕	Krazy Racers	Racing

TOP 10

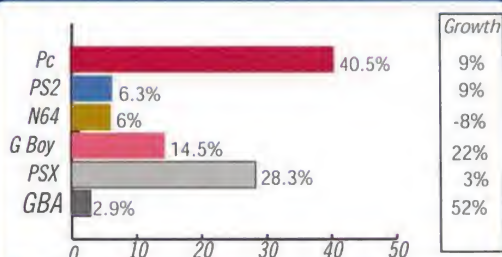
All Full Priced Games

W/E 26 AUG 2001
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Gran Turismo 3	PlayStation 2
2	◆	Diablo II: Lrd Of Destruction	PC/MAC
3	⊕	Arcanum	PC/MAC
4	▲	Super Mario Advance	GBA
5	▼	Max Payne	PC/MAC
6	▼	The Sims	PC/MAC
7	▼	Onimusha	PlayStation 2
8	▲	Red Faction	PlayStation 2
9	▼	Pokemon Gold	Game Boy
10	▼	Diablo II	PC/MAC

MARKET WATCH All Games by Platform

JUL v JUN 2001
RETAIL SALES



- ⊕ New Entry
- ◆ Non Mover
- ▲ Up from last week
- ▼ Down from last week



Charts can be viewed at www.informbd.com.au as part of Inform's comprehensive database of online market intelligence, updated weekly



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NEED WE SAY ANY MORE?



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Hyper 98  **On sale October 31**





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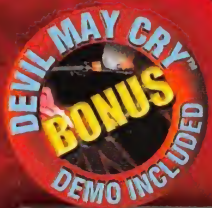
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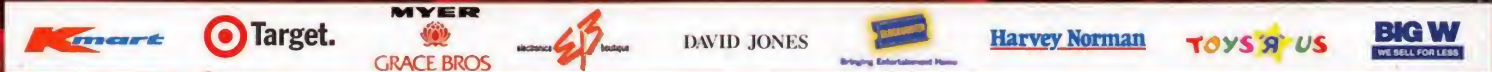
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