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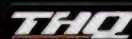
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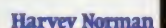
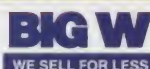
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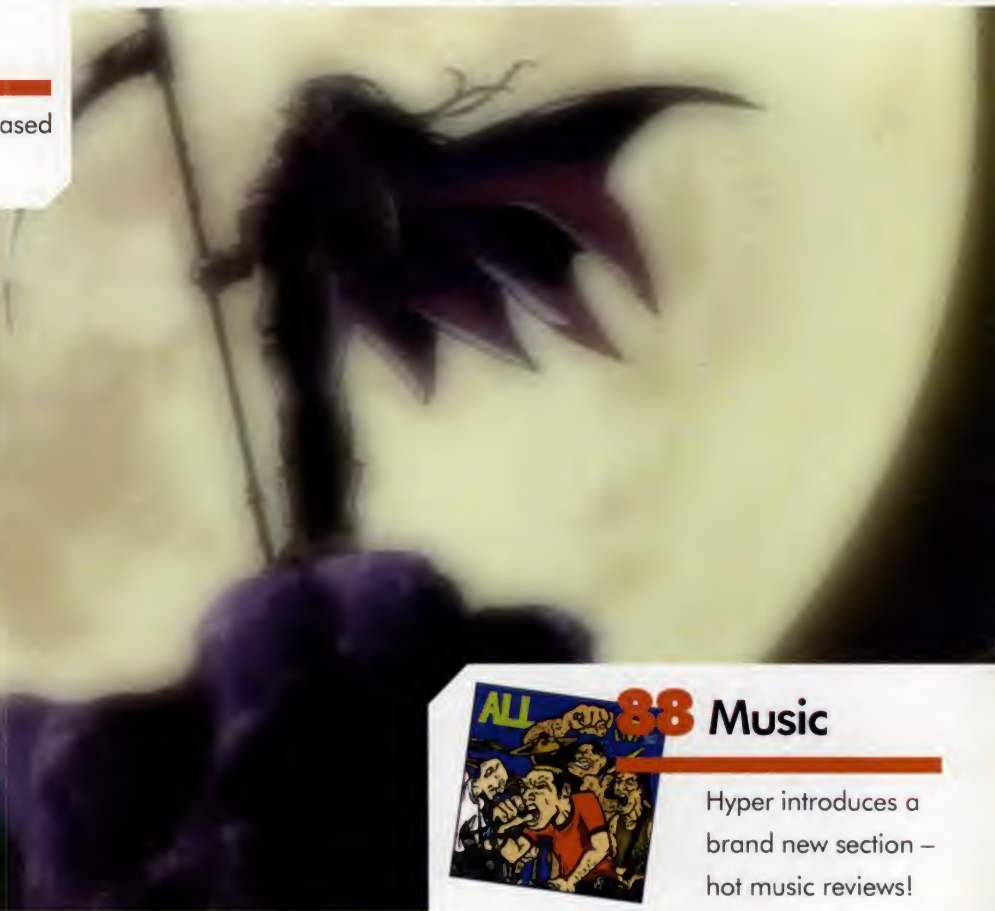
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CLASSIFIED

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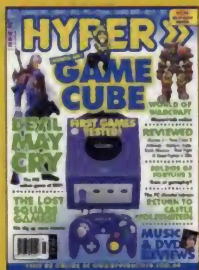
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2001

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EDITORIAL

>> This is the month for new things! First, let us introduce you to our new friend, Shiggy. Shiggy is our shiny new Japanese friend. He's purple, kinda cute and a lot of fun to have around. He seemed to survive the trip in his little cardboard box okay, although he got a bit hungry and ate some of those puffy packing things. Shiggy doesn't like being locked up at night, nor having things plugged into him, but sometimes you have to be cruel to be kind. You can read more about Shiggy on page 10.

We'd also like to introduce you to three new columns (and not so new columnists). Game Theory will discuss the inner-workings of the games we play, and you can find that on page 53. Ms. Information will give us a monthly insight into online happenings, and you'll find her on page 40. Lastly, there's the idiosyncratic Junk, a monthly portion of pop culture on page 89, which happens to be in our new Music section.

See? Added newness.

Eliot Fish >> Editor

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NEWS

IN THE NEWS

- GameCube hands-on impressions
- Hot! Half-Life on PS2 & Wrath on Xbox
- PS2 price drop



Eliot and Cam are really much taller than this.

GameCube Released!

We have one and we want to tell you all about it...

The Australian launch might seem like an eternity away, but those lucky Japanese gamers have already got their hands on one of the most anticipated consoles yet — the Nintendo GameCube. Because we know you guys want all the dirt on Nintendo's latest, we've smuggled our very own unit out of Japan and into Hyper HQ, and subjected it to all sorts of hardcore tests.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

How does the GameCube shape up in terms of styling? Well, until you get your hands on one, it's hard to believe just how small this baby is. It's so tiny that the box it arrived in sat in our reception for a couple of hours because we thought it was too small to be the package we were waiting for!

The unit itself is quite light —

»» The infamous carry handle at the back is an integral part of the design.

probably about as heavy as a PlayStation, and definitely lighter than a PS2. There's the standard power, reset and eject buttons on the top, as well as a cool little light at the front of the lid that lights up when it's on. Stylistically, the (somewhat) infamous carry handle at the back is an integral part of the design. It's actually very useful, and looks funky too — literally rounding out the design of the unit to give it more in the way of sexy curves. Oddly enough, we were expecting the carry handle to be made from heavy rubber rather than normal plastic. Shame that it isn't, but we'll have our guide to modifying your carry handle in a later issue (cough — Ed.).

As for Nintendo's partners, the IBM logo graces the front and top of the GameCube's box, whereas the ATI logo is present in sticker form on the front of the unit itself, just in case you were wondering.

It's a little pointless to compare the look of the GameCube to the PS2 or Xbox, simply because Nintendo are obviously targeting such a different market — wanting less slick and more chic in their design. The GameCube is an undeniably cool-looking unit though, and compares very favourably to the stylish N64. And once the new colours are available, Nintendo will be more popular with the hip-tech crowd than Steve Jobs at an iMac convention.



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DAS BOOT

»» Booting up the machine, you're greeted by a little square that unravels to form the GameCube logo — it's a very carefree and slick little boot up, and fast too. Indeed, everything about the GameCube is fast — almost as fast as the N64's cartridge boot times. The time it takes to go from switching the machine on to the game loading is literally a few seconds, and loading a level ranges from instantaneous to a few seconds. Nintendo cartridge freaks are going to love it.



HYPER GETS A GAMECUBE:



THE CONTROLLER

The controller is nothing short of superb – feeling more natural than the Xbox's and looking funkier than the PS2's. Since testing it at E3, Nintendo have refined the controller a little – the C-stick has changed the most – its nubbin is now larger, and has a rubber tip instead of plastic. Although in many situations it will still be used in the same way as the old N64 C-stick, the decision to turn it into an analogue stick was definitely a wise one. Another change is that the B button is no longer kidney shaped, but circular, making the face buttons easier to use as a whole. Another subtle design element that Nintendo have employed for ease of use is to raise the X and Y buttons so that they're easier to reach.

As we've said before, despite being so small, the controller melts in your hands. The

shoulder buttons are curved to perfectly accommodate your index fingers, and the "click-in" when you press them all the way in feels very sturdy.

We only really have two qualms with the pad at this stage. First of all, the position of the Z trigger takes a little getting used to – it can feel a little awkward moving from the large shoulder button to the Z trigger – especially since it's hinged in the same way as the GBA shoulder buttons, meaning you have to press it on the outside. Of more concern, however, is the D-pad. If it looks familiar, that's because it's exactly the same D-pad used on the GBA. Exactly. It's okay, but we think it's a little too small. Of course, you'll rarely need to use the D-pad, but let's just hope it's not a problem for genres like fighting games where the D-pad is often integral.



HONEY, I SHRUNK THE DISCS!

The discs are... well, the only way to describe them is "cute" – we just can't help ourselves. If you thought the unit was small, wait until you get your hands on the discs – just take a look at our comparison pic. That's actual size! Very cool to know that they can fit 1.5gig of data, eh?

The Japanese games are packaged in small plastic cases, with a slot for your memory card – small enough to look funky, but not so small that you'll lose them. Everything is small!



SIZE MATTERS NOT...

On the right, you can see how the GameCube shapes up to the PS2 and the old Nintendo 64. Compact is the word. The memory card is also quite smaller than any other on the market!

CAPTION THIS!

Can our monthly reader caption competition get any dirty, filthier, surreal, sick or funnier? We hope so! Get cracking and send us your ideas for this screenshot. Just remember that you must label it **Caption This Part 25** in the subject line of your email. Captionthis@next.com.au.



Not so easy this month.

PART 25

HYPER GETS A GAMECUBE:

FINALLY: THE GAMES!

Ghosts, monkeys and wetsuits ahoy

The GameCube launched in Japan with Luigi's Mansion, Wave Race: Blue Storm and Super Monkey Ball. While these are all A grade games, none of them are the genre-busting generation-defining epic-masterpiece that Nintendo fans have come to expect from a Nintendo launch. But before you get your undies in a knot, just think.

The N64's launch was delayed time and again until Mario 64 was absolutely perfect –



Nintendo wanted to come out all guns blazing... but the result was a system two years late. This time around, Nintendo have been content to launch with merely good software, and to let the killer apps – games like Mario Sunshine and the new Zelda, that require extra development time, to wait until the machine has been out for a while.

We're certainly glad that Nintendo have taken this approach – they

simply wouldn't have had the time to ready either of those games for launch, and they certainly couldn't afford to launch in Japan or the States much later than they will. From an industry perspective, PS2 has



Once you pop, you can't stop! Our GCN yawns.

broken from a walk into a run, with great games coming regularly now, and with the Xbox on the horizon, it's sensible for Nintendo to get their console out now. Not that Sony or Microsoft will be of much concern to Nintendo, but getting their machine out so much earlier than the Xbox in Japan (September versus March) will certainly mean a huge install base for Nintendo before Microsoft even hit retail.

THE HYPER CREW'S IMPRESSIONS



LUIGI'S MANSION

Eliot Fish (Editor):

Out of the three launch titles, Luigi's is the only one that seems to have that elusive Nintendo "magic". There's love in every pixel and you'll be grinning from ear to ear the entire time. Quality... There it is.

Cam Shea (Deputy Editor):

This isn't, as some have suggested, Resident Evil for kids. Luigi's Mansion is based firmly around puzzles and lots of 'em. It's hugely entertaining, and the graphics are very, very slick. Oh, and Koji Kondo's soundtrack is awesome!

Malcolm Campbell (Art Guy):

Fun, funny, and incredibly addictive. The sound is fantastic and the graphics are excellent without being flashy. Favourite bit so far: the occasional cupboard filled with money, which comes flying out and floats gently around the room.



WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM

Eliot:

The original Wave Race made a big splash on the N64, but this launch title doesn't really have that "next-gen" wow factor that I was expecting. It's solid, playable and pretty, but kinda predictable. Personally, I found the controls left something to be desired.

Cam:

This title doesn't have the same impact second time around, but rest assured that it's as much fun as ever, and a big leap graphically.

Malcolm:

The underwater coral, turtles and vibrant colours and lighting on the first level are instantly impressive. The new wave and water effects are also amazing. It's a pity the gameplay seems exactly the same as Wave Race 64, but if it ain't broke...



SUPER MONKEY BALL

Eliot:

A quirky, fun game from Sega that is much deeper than it looks. There are hours of challenging gaming here, and the multiplayer options are huge amounts of fun for four players. It's not really going to knock your socks off graphically, but it's solid and smooth and immensely playable. A great party game!

Cam:

Based loosely around a dream that Michael Jackson once told his psychologist, Monkey Ball is sheer puzzle genius. About time someone updated the Marble Madness concept... with monkeys to boot!

Malcolm:

This game is tough. Fun, but tough. Just wait till you try the Guitar level. Oh yes... the Guitar level will make you forget those cute little monkeys and yummy bananas real quick.

OVERALL

>> All up, this is a fairly modest selection of launch games, which might explain the quiet launch for Nintendo in Japan. The GCN shifted only 300,000 units in its first weekend compared to the PS2's whopping 900,000. You could blame it on the terrorism that occurred in the USA three days beforehand, or you could blame it on this low-key selection of launch titles...

However, one thing is clear, the Australian launch will be very different. We will have a broader range of titles on day one, so it's still looking good for us Aussies.



re•con (n): the sole unit an infantry battalion relies on for intelligence operations. Arguably the most specialized and highly trained troop formation of any regiment.

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U.S. Army Photo

"...our boys are now free to do what we've always wanted to do in Clancy's techno-thriller world - break out the baddest hardware and cut loose." - *PC Gamer*, July 2001



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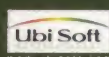


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OVERFLOW

\$499 is the new price for the PS2, making it a pretty enticing purchase this Christmas. Just take a look at the immensely tasty catalogue that is growing every day and the solid DVD playback, and you'll agree that at \$499, the PS2 looks like pretty good value. A much needed price drop.

Due to the relative failure of *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* at the box office, Square Pictures have closed up shop and canned any plans for future feature-length CGI motion pictures.

Sega have confirmed that their Nintendo GameCube launch title, *Super Monkey Ball*, will be released in the near future on the PlayStation 2.

The much-loved *Resident Evil* series has now become exclusive to the GameCube. All the early games are being ported over for GCN release, with beefed up next-gen graphics to get everyone excited for the eventual release of *Resident Evil 4* exclusively on the GCN.

There is a Monopoly Tycoon Championship event taking place on December 1st at major Harvey Norman stores in each state. Go in, play, and win a place in the final where you can compete for \$3,000, a PC and more! You'll also help raise money for Variety, the childrens charity. Go for it!

WINNERS HYPER » 96

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HOT! HALF-LIFE ON PS2! FIRST SCREENS!



HOT! WRATH ON XBOX! FIRST SCREENS!

DAVE MIRRA 2 freestyle bmx™ 2



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PlayStation 2



BATMAN VENGEANCE

» PS2 UBISOFT

The dark knight returns in this PlayStation 2 action title that is based on the Batman cartoon series. Not only does the game feature the proper voice-overs from the show, but the animation of the characters, even during the combat, is suitably stylised and bursting with coolness. If you've always wanted to BE Batman, then you'll want to grab a hold of this one when it hits stores everywhere. Full review soon.






04



JET SET RADIO FUTURE

XBOX SEGA

 ne of our favourite Dreamcast games ever is finally returning in a no-holds-barred blockbuster on the Xbox. The developer, Smilebit, have made the environments bigger, exaggerated the tricks, and even made the characters look cooler than before. Jet Set Radio Future is going to be a serious reason to buy an Xbox on day one.





LOST CLASSICS

THE GREAT **SQUARE** PLAYSTATION RPGS WE NEVER GOT TO PLAY

Living in Australia has its pluses and its minuses.

On the plus side is freedom, democracy, pies, beaches and a whole bunch of other stuff that people like Ray Martin like to talk about when they're doing centenary specials and federation day speeches. The minus side can pretty much be summed up with the words 'Home', 'Away' and, most especially, 'PAL'.

Bloody PAL. We've been denied so many quality titles because of this ridiculous system. Squaresoft, in particular, is known for its practice of confining quality titles to an NTSC only release. Why would a company spend money on the lengthy process of converting, translating and distributing games for PAL release if sales are probably not going to be that spectacular? Why should powerhouse's like Square bother at all with PAL? Chrono Cross, Legend of Mana, Xenogears ... all these games and more have been denied us because of PAL.

If one wants to play them legally, one must go through the costly process of importing both them and an NTSC compatible PSX while making sure that there is access to an NTSC television or video input. A lengthy and laborious process indeed.

Sometimes, though, the games make it all worthwhile and that's what this feature's here for. Six of the most famous, locally unreleased Square games will be put under the spotlight and judged on their 'importability'. Is it, as a serious Square gamer, worthwhile to go to all the trouble? **DANIEL STAINES** does his best to find out...

FINAL FANTASY ANTHOLOGIES/ FINAL FANTASY CHRONICLES

RELEASED: 2000/2001

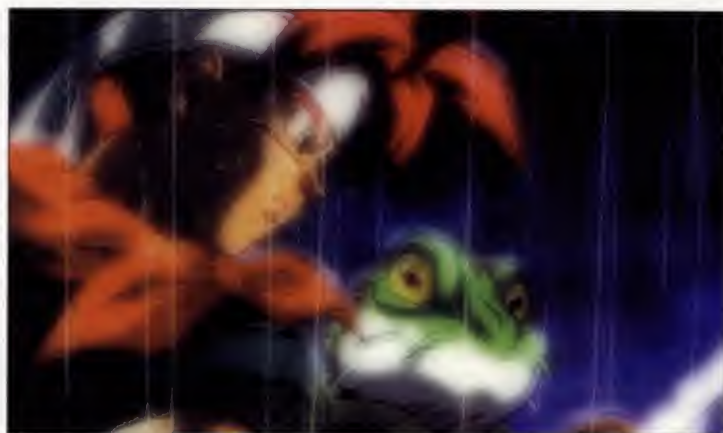
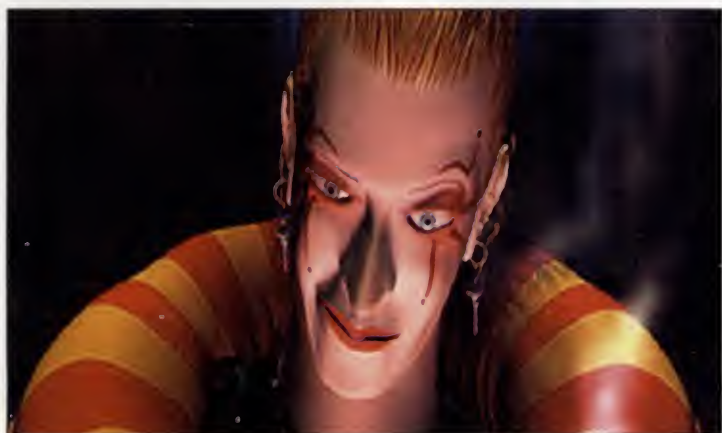


The fact that you're reading about these games in this feature is the equivalent of being kicked in the face by Squaresoft. Remember that Square had already released all of these games except FF V in the US already. They neglected to release a single one in PAL territories. So what does Square do when the time comes to capitalise on their old product? They re-release all the games we missed in the countries that already bloody had them in the first place. We don't see jack-diddly. Instead, we get Ergheiz and Frontier Saga 2. Why on earth we got those games instead of FF VI and CHRONO TRIGGER is so amazingly beyond me that I can't

even attempt to explain it. So let's talk about the games instead.

Looking at Final Fantasy Chronicles first, it's pretty apparent that one would only want to buy this for Chrono Trigger. Chrono Trigger is arguably Square's best game ever and just getting to play this masterpiece on a TV with an actual control pad makes it so worthwhile and so much better than merely playing some dodgy illegal ROM. The extra features in the set — which also features Final Fantasy IV — are generally of the highest quality, with the Akira Toriyama CT anime being a special treat for fans. Strangely, however, FF IV seems to have got the short end of the stick features wise and, when compared to CT, pretty much has jack-all. But, hey, who's buying it for FF IV?

This leaves Anthologies containing Final Fantasy V & VI. FF VI is, in my somewhat controversial opinion, the best of any FF game bar none, so having it complemented by stunning FMVs, solid features and a free collectors edition soundtrack CD can only be a good thing. It also contains Kefka, who is, without doubt, the best



villain in any game in the whole history of everything. Let's just say he likes to poison children and leave it at that. FF V, it should be noted, is also rather snazzy, if not only for the fact that it contains the series' only overtly gay lead character. Square says he isn't, but he is — we know it.

Are these compilations worth buying if you've already played the games they contain? That's a decision I'll leave up to you. If you're a collector and have been procrastinating about picking these up, then go for it. If you're just looking for a good game to play, however, you're probably best sticking to local releases or getting Chrono Cross instead.



IMPORT-O-METER



Collectors' gold, but might not excite everyone else.

CHRONO CROSS

RELEASED: 2000



Well, it's not as good as Chrono Trigger.

I thought I should get that out of the way first. You probably wanted to know, so there it is — Chrono Cross, despite being made with a higher budget and better technology, is not as good as its SNES predecessor, Chrono Trigger. Having said that, however, it should be mentioned that Cross is quite possibly the best RPG you'll ever play on your PSX. It's just that, well, it lacks ... something. It's a certain spark, if you will — unidentifiable yet there — that somehow separates the unquestionable genius that is Trigger from the mere brilliance of big brother Cross. In fact, the more one plays Cross and subsequently compares it to Trigger, the more it becomes apparent that the SNES classic was indeed gaming art while its PSX successor seems an imitator:



an imitator attempting to capture the unique vitality of a gaming milestone. A fantastic imitator, granted — but still an imitator nonetheless.

Anyway, with that out of the way for now, let's get to the hard stuff, shall we? What is Chrono Cross? At its most basic, it's a typically Square RPG that attempts to combine the play dynamic of Chrono Trigger with the established elements of the Final Fantasy series by melding them together with an entirely unique battle system. The mechanics of this system are deceptively complex and can be quite strategic once properly grasped by a

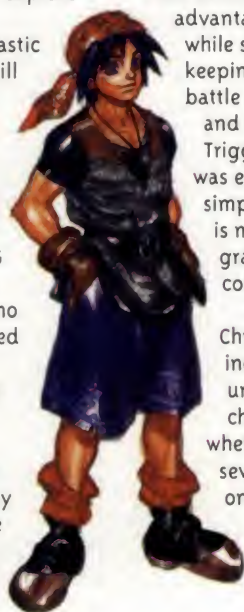
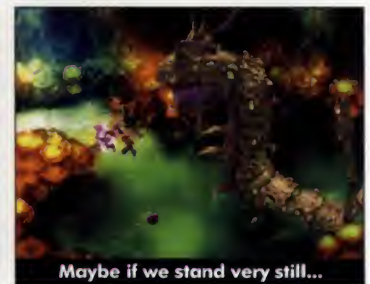
discerning player. Basically, it's all very Magic: The Gathering in a way and, frankly, too bloody convoluted to go into with any detail here so let's just keep it at its most basic.

During the course of the game, your characters (and you can end up finding about 50 of them) will find Elements. Elements are the acquirable magic abilities that can be used once or several times every battle depending on their type. The way these are allocated and cast within battle is far too complex to waste space on, suffice to say that it's all generally pretty intuitive once you get into it. What's necessary to know for now is that each Element has a colour and each battle is fought within a coloured Element Field. This field, consisting of three colours, changes according to the colours of the Elements cast and the innate colours of the combatants themselves. Conversely, the colours of this field affect the power and effectiveness of the Elements and the aggressors that cast them.

So, if one was fighting an innate black monster within a black Element Field, any opposite white colour elements used would be weaker initially but gradually gain strength as the colours of the Element Grid eventually shifted over to white with each individual Element used. Hence, battles really are extraordinarily entertaining as often you'll find yourself in a mad

rush to control the strategically advantageous Element Field while simultaneously keeping abreast of normal battle concerns like healing and attacking. If Chrono Trigger's battle system was elegant in its simplicity, then Cross' is most undoubtedly graceful in its complexity.

As mentioned, Chrono Cross does indeed include 50 unique playable characters. However, whether this fact is a plus is severely debatable. For one, the inclusion of so many playable characters will have obvious



consequences upon the execution and flow of the plot. Having so many characters invariably means that they are not as well developed as they could be and, more often than not, seem rather superfluous within the context of the narrative. Honestly, the reasons some of them give for wanting to join your party are so unbelievably shoddy. 'Hi, you have blue hair! The sea is blue! I like the sea! Let's risk our lives together fighting an evil demi-god!' Well, perhaps

not that bad, but you get the picture — they're poorly developed. And since they're so poorly developed, one doesn't feel attached to them and, as a result, disassociated from the plot in general.

Which is a big shame because the plot is exceptionally good and lives up to the Chrono legacy in all respects. Despite dealing with some decidedly complex issues, Square knows that some of us are not playing Chrono Cross in order to consider the implications alternate dimension theory has on the concept of individuality. Some of us are just playing for fun. As such, the more delicate parts of the plot — particularly those dealing with the effects of time and dimensional distortion — can be completely ignored by a player only wishing for a bit of uncomplicated adventuring.

LEGEND OF MANA

RELEASED: 2000



Here's a suggestion: instead of going to the trouble of importing this game, why don't you instead make a cigar out of the money you would have spent on it and then have that cigar extinguished on your forehead by the president of Squaresoft? Doing this will not only be more challenging and enjoyable than playing Legend of Mana, but also, will probably leave you feeling less burned than if you had actually bought this awful piece of trash. It is a noxious, deplorable cash-in and I say all this without the slightest exaggeration or regret because, frankly, Square should have known better.



good at all. The characters are mundane, combat is a tedious button mashing affair and the plot ... oh god, the plot.

A brief synopsis of LoM's plot runs something to the effect of this: walk around for 30 hours doing menial tasks and then fight a dragon. The End.

And because these said menial tasks are not connected by any sort of plot line or meaningful narrative, playing through LoM feels more like a chore than anything else. It's all random, all repetitive and, most importantly, all very, very pointless. The frequency with which the question 'why' pops up during play is nothing but alarming. 'Why am I collecting the goblin fruit?' 'Why am I finding the lost dolly?' 'Why am I even bothering with this worthless crap of a game?'

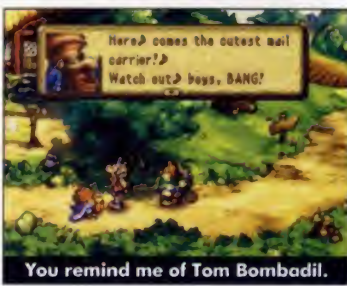
Unfortunately, these are questions that can not be readily answered, either. There is simply nothing to make you want to keep playing LoM for hours on end. Fantastic storybook style visuals and an engaging soundtrack don't mean anything unless there's a meaty game underneath them. Square have obviously tried to fill the enormous vacuum left by the missing plot with a hastily done two player team up system. Yeah, good try boys — too bad that's pointless and boring as well. Perhaps, next time, you could make it so the second player can do something aside from just fighting? Maybe then they won't feel so utterly superfluous and bored as well as ripped off and agitated.

It's a shame Square had to botch this up so badly, because a lot of us were looking forward to it. It promised to be the game that SD3 wasn't, a game that would live up to the lofty legacy of Secret of Mana and perhaps even best it. Unfortunately, LoM is nothing more than Square's first attempt to shamelessly cash in on one of their established franchises by using it to shield dodgy product. Let's hope it's their last.

They should have known better than to try and pawn off any old garbage under the hallowed Seiken Densetsu banner. Seiken Densetsu 3 was fairly regrettable and one might think that Square would have learned from their mistakes and, perhaps, made LoM all the better for them. Obviously not. Aside from a rather impressive audio-visual presentation, LoM lacks anything that made any of its predecessors — Secret of Mana in particular — any



Those wisdom teeth look painful.



You remind me of Tom Bombadil.



Look out, it's Mickey's love glove!



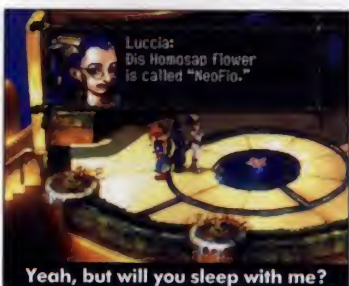
Don't be such a pussy.



Shall we look behind it?



Okay, maybe it's time to panic.



Yeah, but will you sleep with me?



Scandal'us reveal their newest member.

It can either be a simple, straight down the line 'good vs. bad' biff fest or a satisfyingly philosophical narrative — the choice is entirely up to you and that, my friends, is what makes it so great.

On a technical front, Cross is sound. Sound in the sense that its excellence is what we've come to expect from Square. There are, however, a few quibbles. Quibbles, like, for instance, the fact that Akira Toriyama is gone and so are his brilliant character designs. I'm not saying that the characters are poorly designed — they're great — but, well, there ain't no Magus here. Also, the soundtrack leaves a little something to be desired. It is a

great soundtrack, granted, but it isn't a great soundtrack in the Square, Uematsu sense of the word. Oh, and the battle music is quite possibly the worst tune you'll ever, ever hear.

So we now at last come to the end, the conclusion, the final verdict — and that verdict is this: Chrono Cross is brilliant. It is brilliant because of so many reasons. It's brilliant because it's fun, because it looks good, because it's simple, because it's complex... It's brilliant because it is Chrono Cross. But, having said all that, one can not help but feel that there's something missing from it. That certain something that Trigger had that Cross lacks. Something that would have made it more than brilliant. Something that, perhaps, would have made it genius ...

Ahh well, you'll love it regardless.



Don't touch my magic ring.

IMPORT-O-METER



You must get this game. You MUST.

IMPORT-O-METER



If you're a collector of the series, yes. Otherwise, no.

XENOGEARS

RELEASED: 1998



Xenogears is a game that, for all intents and purposes, is about killing God. Consequently, Xenogears is also a game that was very freakin' lucky to see the light of day outside of Japan. In fact, it caused quite a bit of furore in the good old US of A, where the notoriously anal religious-right attempted to have 'certain parts' of the story 'made suitable' for a western audience — whereby 'made suitable' means 'given the chop'. However, due to the fact that all those 'certain parts' to be 'made suitable' were the ones that, you know, actually made the game good, the conservatives were unsuccessful in their attempts to deny the English speaking world an intriguing title in its entirety. Assuming that he's not dead, let's thank God for that.

But perhaps a little bit of elaboration is in order. Xenogears is a game about killing God, certainly - but that is only one element of an incredibly complex and immersive Nietzschean narrative. Beginning with a quote from the New Testament's Book of Revelations, the plot will ensnare you as it quickly develops into a

quicksilver stream of pseudo-Christian mythology, Freudian psychoanalytic theory and dystopian techno-fiction underpinned by the emotional pilgrimage of a robust cast of characters. Suffice to say, it would be an exercise in futility to attempt to do it justice here, so let's just make it as plain as possible: this is unquestionably the most adult, well developed plot of any Square game to date.

However, despite all its brilliance, this wonderful plot still can't completely obscure some of the very obvious flaws Xenogears suffers from. Just navigating the play area, for instance, can be an absolute bloody nightmare. Think a Vagrant Story prototype — except replace transparent textures with opaque, camera blocking obstacles and 'running and jumping' with 'running and falling off cliffs thanks to poor control response'. And boy, isn't it a shame that the battle music is so bloody annoying because you'll be hearing it



This must be that "Xeno" gear.



Jeez, is it the way I walk?



Another violation of someone's ring.



The Jedi Council frighten more kids.

approximately 10,000 times thanks to the ridiculous amount of random encounters the game throws at you. Oh, and the graphics aren't much to write home about either — unless, of course, you usually open your letters home with the line "Dear Soandso, today I saw a pixelated mess..."

So then, that's Xenogears — a game in which flashes of brilliance are often counter-balanced by equally obvious streaks of error. These streaks, however, can and should be forgiven. We should forgive them because to take Xenogears to task for these mistakes would be to ignore the fact that, in this game, Square has produced one of the most unique games you're likely to ever play. Flawed technically only when compared to the impossibly high standard set by its successors, Xenogears is a genuinely annoying yet fundamentally profound gaming experience. To put it in the simplest way possible - it's good. It has to be good... they wanted to ban it.



Dear God, hope you got the letter...



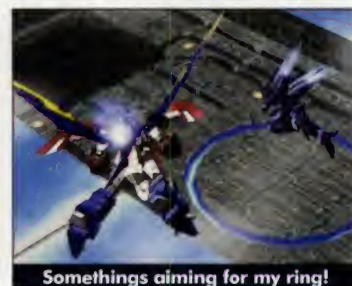
Time to mech your Maker.



Big robots a go-go.



Mech beggars... not a pretty sight.



Some things aiming for my ring!

IMPORT-O-METER



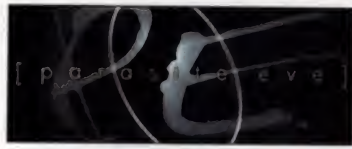
It's bloody rare these days, but if you can find it, grab it. You won't regret it.

PARASITE EVE

RELEASED: 1998

The front cover may have been ripped and one of the FMVs may have skipped a lot thanks to a large scratch on Disc 2, but holy crap am I glad I bought this game second hand from a dodgy Nevada discount store. Ordinarily, I'd never purchase a Square game on the cheap – it's just not done. However, after watching Parasite Eve's end credits roll after a measly 8 hours and 42 minutes worth of (rather monotonous) playtime, I'm even willing to overlook the very large and very questionable stain on the last page of the instruction manual. Honestly, it simply isn't worth paying full price for.

This is true for a variety of reasons but most of them boil down to the fact that the game could conceivably be completed in the average time most PC games take to



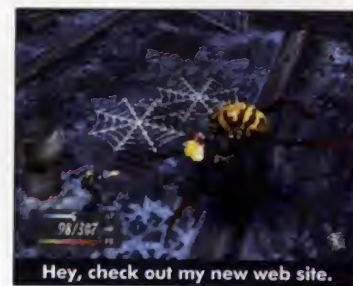
install. Assuming that you're not going to spend 5 hours replaying the first super-wow cleavage Eve FMV – which, I can understand, a lot of you might want to do – then you'll be very lucky to get more than 10 hours worth of enjoyment out of PE. This might just be a good thing too, because Square has produced as exceptionally formulaic title here.

Anyone who's played the locally released PE 2 will know how it goes, but for those who didn't, here's PE in a nutshell: Resident Evil with magic and an attack gauge. Except, where RE had scary zombies jumping at you from scary broken windows, PE has annoying spiders and rat things biting your ankles. And if that doesn't sound scary, that's because PE isn't scary. It's boring.



Boring to the point that, if so inclined, one could quite reasonably view it as a simulator for finding lost keys in darkened rooms. It sounds silly, but that's what most of game involves – finding keys and using them to open doors where, hopefully, one might get a chance to find yet more keys. The fact that Aya, the title's femme fatale protagonist, has really, really good reasons for wanting to find her keys does not, unfortunately, obscure this sad truth.

The Parasite Eve series was always a mistake. Why should Square want to emulate Capcom when they already make some of the best titles around? The obvious answer being that they shouldn't. Despite it's original and



engaging plot, this is not a game you want to play. It's not bad per se, it's worse – it's bland. So very, very bland.



Unless you can get it cheap, don't bother.

Square Dancing

>> Games aren't the only things that are difficult to get hold of in Australia. OSV's or, for you laymen, game soundtracks are also bloody hard



to come across unless you've got the right connections. That's a shame too, because some of today's game composers – Nobuo Uematsu and Yasunori Mitsuda in particular – rival and even best any of Hollywood's current crop of melody mongers. Fortunately, most game soundtracks can be bought online and often come with neat-o booklets and other goodies. So if you can get 'em, do so – they're a Square fan must.

SO LONG AND THANKS FOR NOTHING

There we have it. Six Square games, none of them released here and at least three of them undeniable gaming classics. The only question that's left to ask then is the one asked in the introduction to this feature – why?

Why should gaming giants such as Square bother with the arduous task of releasing brilliant titles such as Chrono Cross and Xenogears to the PAL market? The simple answer to that question is because we deserve it. Games have a history of selling reasonably well within PAL territories and the countries within those territories are home to some of the most fanatical gamers in the world. Gamers that like good games and, furthermore, deserve them.

We deserve good games because we've been a cornerstone for industry over the past 20 years. We, as PAL based gamers, are sick and tired of being seen as nothing more than a difficult market by software houses that are rewarding our loyalty by denying us their finest titles. Understandably it's difficult for companies to translate complex titles into a myriad of different languages, but perhaps the cost of this could be more than adequately covered by a modest price rise on selected titles? It's not a question anymore of why should companies bother, but rather one of why should we bother?

A feature like this shouldn't be necessary. Gamers deserve good games no matter where they live or what language they speak. Here's hoping that the corporations behind these great titles realise that, and hopefully, make sure we'll never have to talk about the games 'we never had' ever again.

AT THIS LEVEL,



\$89⁹⁵

*Command &
Conquer:*

Renegade (MA15+).

Harvey Norman

THE COMPUTER & GAMING SPECIALISTS

IT'S NO GAME.

\$99⁹⁵

Command & Conquer:

Theater of War CD
(MA15+). Includes:
Command and
Conquer, Tiberian
Sun, Red Alert, Red
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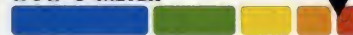
Stop or I'll stick this staff up your arse...



BIFF! KAPOW! BAM!

HYPER CALLS UPON THE FREEDOM FORCE!

WOW-O-METER



PC

CATEGORY: Tactical RPG >> PLAYERS: 1-Multi >>

PUBLISHER: Crave Entertainment >> AVAILABLE: Early 2002



Big bubbles?
No Troubles...

(DBG) WHACK!
(DBG) CULL
MOVE TO
FLY TO
LIBERTY NUCLEAR GRENADE*
STUN GRENADE
ENERGY GRENADE
WISS*

USING: LIBERTY LAD

DAMAGE: 100% STUN: 5% KNOCK: 0

26 >> HYPER INTERVIEW

Australia really is the lucky country.

Irrational Games are the talented folk behind classics such as System Shock 2, and we're lucky enough to have them here in the Australian Capital Territory, hard at work on their next game. **ELIOT FISH** caught up with Lead Designer, **JONATHAN CHEY**, to get an inside view on Freedom Force, their upcoming super hero strategy game.

HYPER: The character art you've done so far has a classic Jack Kirby style. What comics did you re-read to get inspired for the game? And did re-reading old comics change any of your initial game design plans?



JONATHAN CHEY:

The game has always been centred on the "Silver Age" comics and the Kirby/Lee work, obviously, is very important. I personally went back and read a lot of old comics that I missed out on the first time around (hey, I wasn't even around for many of them!). I really enjoyed reading the first series of the Avengers and the Fantastic Four. There's an incredibly rapid progression in the sophistication of the storylines and drawing in the



space of a few years. The original X-Men were also a lot of fun, though a little later chronologically.

As well as influencing the art style of the game, these comics really have directed our gameplay development too. There are a lot of really important conventions that we have to respect: the endless discussions between the characters in combat, the naivety of the violence (no gibs in this game) and so on.

HYPER: How have you balanced the role playing/character development with the meat and potatoes strategic action? What will the player spend more time fiddling with?

JC: That's definitely a delicate balance. I guess we are mostly focused on tactical action. Everything in the role-playing system is built to support and interact with this. So you won't find a lot of other kinds of skills (like thief type skills or skills that give you more options in conversation trees). Instead we are focusing on letting the player really customise the combat abilities of their characters, to the level of being able to create completely custom powers using the same system that we designers put them together with.

HYPER: So the player can create a completely custom hero? What about skins etc?

"Blinded by the light, wrapped up like a..." eh?



JC: Yes, it's a major focus for us. There are really two levels at which customisation works: in-game and out-of-game with the latter being targeted more at the mod community. In-game the player will be able to choose between different models and a bunch of skins that we are shipping with the game. They will then be able to use the RPG system (including the custom power creator) to set up their own heroes.

Out of the game, the more ambitious user will be able to create their own skins or even modify the character meshes and animations (if they have access to a modelling program). We've already

released the "Character Tool" that allows users to view some of our models and the mod community is already very active creating their own skins and meshes (check out www.myfreedomforce.com or www.freedomforcecenter.com to see what's happening here).

HYPER: How did you design the superpowers? Did the gameplay restrict you to certain types of powers?

JC: Yes, clearly some superpowers just aren't possible in a

computer game. For example, Green Lantern can create pretty much anything he wants. How could that possibly be simulated? So we are somewhat restricted but we have attacked the problem along two lines: firstly we have a very flexible system for designing "basic" combat powers which we divide up into a bunch of classes: projectiles, beams, melee, direct, area, passive defences and active defences. This system allows you to tweak parameters (damage type, range, etc, etc) to come up with a huge variety of powers. Then we have the "specials" that do things that don't fit into that system like teleportation, burrowing into the ground and so on.



INTERVIEW

HYPER: Have you been expecting a phone call from Marvel or DC to warn you that you've come too close to some of their characters? How did you avoid stumbling into a copyright nightmare?

JC: I hope we never get such a phone call and we've worked hard to make sure that it doesn't happen. Of course, we consulted with intellectual property lawyers to ensure that our characters and title didn't infringe on existing properties. The fact that the characters came out of Ken Levine's head means that they truly are original creations but, even so, we did have to follow up to ensure that they didn't accidentally stray too close to an existing character concept (and there are a lot of super hero characters out there!).

HYPER: Who and how have you cast the voices for the superheroes?

JC: Eric Brosius, our sound guy in Boston, has been handling all the voice casting. There will be a mix of actors and guys from the Boston office. Many of their voices will be familiar to people who have played System Shock 1 and 2 or Thief...

Our Australian office guys are missing out on the chance to do any voice acting, unfortunately. There just aren't any Aussie heroes on the team, an omission for sure.

HYPER: How have you made the interface intuitive and different to other games on the market?

JC: Through a lot of hard work, sweat and tears... Really, this is the most difficult part of any game design, particularly with a real-time game in which you are required to control multiple characters. Our solution is simple on the surface but hides a lot of complexity. The basic interface metaphor is a right click context sensitive menu that is pretty familiar to anyone who has used Windows. Just right click on the target and you get a menu of all possible actions that work with the currently selected hero and the target. By default, the game also pauses whenever you do this so that you can take your time looking through the actions and selecting the one that is appropriate. As you move the pointer over the menu items a "status bar" shows you details on



Why don't you all just truck off.



that power and what the expected effect will be on the target.

To supplement this there's a left-click interface that supports the usual RTS like actions such as drag selecting, clicking on targets to launch a default attack and so on.

HYPER: How does the camera control work? Can the player position the camera during combat?

JC: We believe in keeping the camera controls very simple. Too many 3D games have been spoiled either by annoying camera "AI" that swings the camera around against your wishes or excessively complicated camera controls that mean you have to spend the whole game re-positioning the camera. Although we are a fully 3D game our default camera model is almost exactly like a 2D real-time strategy game (i.e. you push the edge of the screen to move the camera around). The only real addition is that you can zoom the camera in and out as you need.



Drop-down death is only a click away.



There's also a "cinematic" view key, which you can hold down at any time that zooms in on the action close up to show you what's going on at ground level. And power users can go in and rotate the camera around to their heart's content, if that's what they really desire.

HYPER: How does interaction between the characters work? Will there be a depth to the relationships between the characters?

JC: Character interactions are obviously very important to a team-based superhero game. To be honest, it's one of the areas of the game where we probably won't achieve as much as we would like. Mostly these interactions will come out of the story part of the game and the setups for the missions. There are certainly all kinds of relationships in the team that cause problems: some of them don't get on as well as they should and others



are involved in romantic situations.

HYPER: Who is handling the music for the game? What did they use for inspiration?

JC: Again, Eric is handling all of this stuff. He's been listening to a lot of period stuff to get inspired like old movies and 60's rock and roll.

Eric did a lot of sound and music work for many Looking Glass games in the past and has come up with some awesome compositions.

HYPER: What recent computer and/or video games have kept the team inspired?

JC: A lot of Counter-Strike to start with though that has worn off a bit now. Soul Calibur remains a favourite and the more nerdy amongst us have been known to play some Space Empires (an innovative and free online strategy game).

HYPER: So... Will Freedom Force find its way to a console?

JC: Almost certainly... though in a fairly new format. <<<



PlayStation 2



FOR A CLOSER, SMOOTHER SHAVE

There's nothing more satisfying than spending your free time hacking a path through your enemies. Welcome to the world of Baldur's Gate™ where monsters and dungeons alike are waiting to be explored. Three and a half million people have experienced the PC version - but this is different, way different. This is 55 levels of intense combat. This is casting devastating magical attacks. This is Baldur's Gate™: Dark Alliance™.



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Forget all that has gone before.



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Mind if you show me the whites of your eyes?

USAS-12

02

250

AUTO

Soldier of Fortune 2

CATEGORY: First Person Shooter >> PLAYERS: 1-Multi >> PUBLISHED: Activision >> AVAILABLE: First Quarter 2002

WOW-O-METER

PC



Sensible gib-resistant clothing.



KENN HOEKSTRA from Raven Software put aside his AK-47 for a moment, and let **Derek dela Fuente** take a look at the upcoming sequel to the controversial Soldier of Fortune.



Let me give you some breathing holes.



A troubled bridge over water...

HYPER: Are you striving to make the sequel as realistic as possible?

Kenn Hookstra: A 100% realistic game probably wouldn't be much fun. If a game were 100% realistic, there would be no way to save, one bullet would kill and if it didn't, you'd need to spend time in a hospital to recover from even the most minor of combat wounds. That's where the line has to be drawn. Really, a game should just be fun.

There are realistic elements in *Soldier of Fortune 2*, yes. But they aren't intended to shock people. They're meant to make the game look and feel more real and less cartoony than most games. Yes, some might be shocked by the realistic elements, but that's certainly not the goal.

When all is said and done, *Soldier of Fortune 2* is a first-person shooter game. The focus is on the action and fast-and-furious gameplay above all, just as it was in the original. The difference this time around is the more realistic approach we're taking with the characters (no over-the-top villains in body armor), the weapons (no prototype microwave pulse guns) and the environments (no fictitious German castles) as well as with the overall look and feel of the game. Newer technology allows us to make larger levels, more detailed characters, weapons and environments and, in general, allows us to make a game that's a lot closer in appearance to real life than the original was. We're not setting out to make a simulation game or a tactical exercise training game. We just want to focus on the action and excitement that made the original so much fun... and fine-tune it a bit.

HYPER: What kind of research has gone into the game in terms of weapons and their real effect on the body and environment?

KH: All of the weapons in *Soldier of Fortune 2* exist in real-world arsenals from around the globe and carry the military designations and operate with the characteristics described in the *Jane's Guide To Weapons*. *Soldier of Fortune 2*'s environments will be as interactive and destroyable as we can possibly make them within the limitations of the game's engine. As far as the damage zones go, I believe the original game had 26 of them and *Soldier 2* will have about ten more.

HYPER: How important is the story, and who scripted it?

KH: The plot/story of *Soldier of Fortune 2* is more in-depth and serious this time around. The team leads outlined the story in the game's design document and I'm actually writing the script and dialogue. No outside authoring is being employed for this title. I believe the original story was a little more "action movie" and a little less "real-life" than we intended. We're adjusting those elements for this story, based on what we learned from the original and from the consumer feedback we received.

The events in *Soldier of Fortune 2* aren't recreations of actual events, for the most part. John Mullins, our consultant, gave us ideas based on some of the missions he performed in real life, but we didn't take them and recreate them 100% true-to-life inside the game.

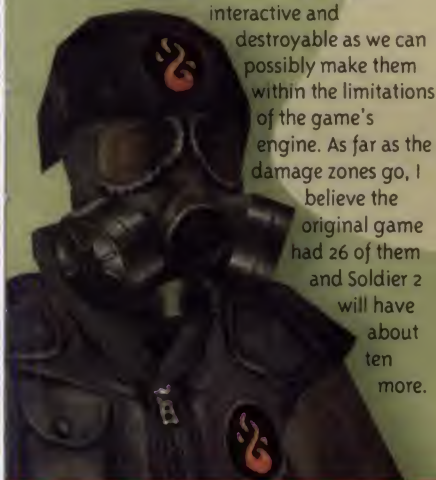
HYPER: How central is the AI to the game?

KH: The LICH AI system in *Soldier of Fortune 2* is going to be far more advanced than the AI of the original game. Artificial Intelligence is extremely difficult to balance in games today. It's easy to make AI extremely deadly to the players and it's easy to make the enemies a bunch of pushovers. But it's nearly impossible to find the balance between easy and difficult to the extremely fine line they call "fun". In some cases, I do think too much emphasis is placed on AI.

The AI in *Soldier 2* goes far beyond the scope of anything seen in the original game. In the original *Soldier of Fortune*, the AI depended a lot on designer scripting and triggers in specific areas of each map. For *Soldier 2*, the enemies will have a vast portfolio of AI functions, which can be turned on or off, called for in scripts or triggered during enemy placement in the maps. The LICH system overall will make the enemies more interactive with the environment by default, rather than having to be told specifically what to do in each instance with a script or trigger.

HYPER: What do you feel *SOF2* offers that is new and interesting and even compelling from a gamer's perspective?

KH: I believe that *Soldier of Fortune 2*'s combination of realistic weapons, enemies and environments, combined with its compelling story, cutting-edge graphics technology and gritty, action-oriented gameplay will give gamers everything they could ask for in a first-person shooter game. <<





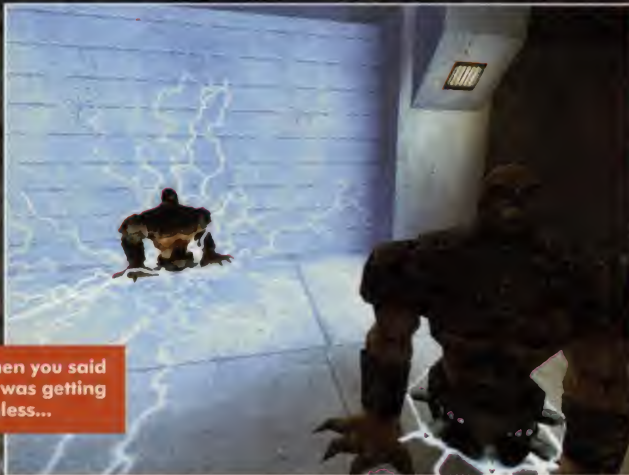
Achtung! He's escaped AGAIN!



Oktoberfest security is harsh.



When you said he was getting legless...



Return to Castle Wolfenstein



Ask any veteran PC gamer of their most memorable gaming moments and a majority will relate one common favourite pastime: shooting Nazis. This ideologically sound pursuit has its roots in id Software's seminal shooter, *Wolfenstein 3D*, the game that pretty much invented the first-person shooter genre. Since then, however, there have been depressingly few Nazis to shoot.

What better way to resurrect the activity (and unite PC gamers worldwide, except in Germany where the game is certain to be banned) than to return to Castle Wolfenstein. Gray Matter Studios, creator of *Kingpin* and several *Quake* series add-ons, has been tasked by id Software with doing just that, courtesy of the cunningly titled *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*. We caught up with Executive Producer Greg Goodrich for an intelligence report.

HYPER: Nazi Germany remains a sensitive subject matter. What has been your attitude towards utilising such a setting? Have there been times when you've said, "We can't cross that line"?

Greg Goodrich: Yes, it is Nazi Germany, but it is "Wolfenstein Nazi Germany." Our primary goal throughout the development of *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* has been to create the most entertaining game possible. We want to tell players a great story, give them cool weapons, interesting characters, and believable environments. This period in history has all of those elements and we've been able to build even further on it by pulling in some of our own ideas and thoughts about what might have been going on at that time.

HYPER: What sort of balance are you seeking between historical plausibility and sheer fantasy in terms of period detail?

GG: This is another great thing about working in the Wolf universe. We've been able to pull from a large base of World War II information on everything from weapons to settings and characters, but have also been able to take the game into a more mysterious and bizarre realm when we want to. The balance works out well though as we generally keep the player in familiar settings with familiar types of weapons, but always have that edge of unusual that keeps things mysterious and a bit scary. Even in creating some of the weapons and characters that are not completely "accurate" we always keep it in the realm of believability — and as we've found out, the Nazis did have



SS Venom Soldier

some bizarre practices. They were doing genetic experiments, their leaders believed in the power of the Occult, and they were trying to invent weapons that were almost science-fiction. We pull all of this together into a story that we think of as, "what if they were actually successful?" — this is what a real-life BJ Blazkovicz [the game's main character] would have had to face.

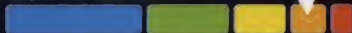
HYPER: What are some of the most interesting facts or myths you discovered in your research?

GG: With the amount of research that we've done, this answer could be an entire story in and of itself. The Germans were working on some unbelievable armoured vehicles and planes — in fact, some of the planes and other vehicles that players see in the game are based on secret plans the Nazi's had on the drawing board. Probably the most interesting information we found surrounds their leaders. Heinrich Himmler [Hitler's right-hand man and head of the SS] was obsessed with the Occult. He took control of the castle at Wewelsburg that became his spiritual centre for personal enlightenment. He believed this was where he would harness the power of the undead and made many political and strategic decisions based on advice from mystics located at Wewelsburg.

HYPER: You're using the Quake 3 engine for the game. Team Arena introduced large outdoor terrain maps to this engine. Has this capability been further extended for *Wolfenstein*?

GG: Yes, the terrain technology developed for Team Arena has been incorporated into *Wolf*, and utilised quite a bit in both the single player and multiplayer portions of the game. We had a number of very cool ideas for outdoor areas in the

WOW-O-METER



CATEGORY: First Person Shooter >> PLAYERS: 1-32 >>>
PUBLISHER: Activision >> AVAILABLE: Late November



original design, but once we saw what could be done with the terrain technology, it allowed us to fully realise these ideas and bring them to life. In our forest level, for example, players will need to navigate through a Nazi-patrolled forest full of outposts, guarded bridges and sniper towers, infiltrate a large fenced base, and then escape in the back of a truck.

HYPER: How do you approach level or map design in an outdoor environment given that the player - freed from the shackles of corridors - now wants to explore that environment however he wants?

GG: When the player begins a mission, there is a script that sets the environment in motion. Enemies begin to patrol, stand guard, interact with each other, etc. As the player moves through the world, they encounter different situations based on how long they have taken to get to that point, what they've done prior, whether or not they've been quiet or noisy, etc. Almost everything the player does has an effect on the timing of the events in the world, so it gives them more of an opportunity to explore and fight as they wish.

HYPER: Still on outdoor environments: developers have thus far struggled to come to grips with the possibilities it opens up. Beyond heavy use of sniper rifles, what sort of gameplay mechanics can we expect to see in this field in RTCW?

GG: The outdoor environments give us many opportunities, including allowing us to present visuals that haven't been seen in many FPS games. With the large outdoor areas we can present players with multiple options - we can present combat from all sides and set up situations where players must consider things like surveying an area from a distance or a strategic path through an area. We also use the outdoor environments quite extensively in the multiplayer portion of RTCW. Since the multiplayer component is a team based, front-line combat-style game, the larger environments work incredibly well not only for realism, but in opening up multiple paths and strategies for the teams to accomplish the goals.

HYPER: Have you built upon the Team Arena AI or implemented wholly original code?

GG: We've created a completely new state-based AI system that has each enemy react differently depending on what they're faced with. Generally all of the enemies in

the world are in a "relaxed" state when the level begins - guards will patrol, smoke cigarettes, talk with each other, keep watch with binoculars, etc. Once they see or hear something suspicious such as a bullet hitting the wall near them, see a door opening, or even come across a dead soldier, they enter an "alert" state where they begin to actively search for whatever it is that caused the disturbance. If they don't locate you, sometimes they will return to a "relaxed" state. If they do see you, they will enter a "combat" mode where they can signal other guards, set alarms or simply try to gun you down. Enemies will take cover, work in teams and even make combat decisions based on what type of weapon you are carrying and what type of weapon they are carrying. It is a very complex and flexible system that always creates moments (even after playing the game hundreds of times) where we say, "Wow, I didn't know they would do that."

HYPER: What sort of balance is there between close combat, ranged combat, stealth, driving vehicles, etc?

GG: This is a big game, so there is quite a bit of all of those elements at some point in the game. There are a few missions that are set up so the player must almost exclusively use a stealth approach, as well as missions that are designed for run-and-gun action. The gameplay and pace of the majority of missions is really in the hands of the player though. This is how our level scripting system and AI system work so well together. The player enters an environment and can approach enemies and situations from very different perspectives while still accomplishing the goals.

HYPER: Finally, what is the primary emotion you want the player to feel? Will RTCW be scary? An adrenaline rush? Funny? Harrowing? Serious? Tongue-in-cheek?

GG: Hopefully we've created a game that can't be described with one word or emotion. In working with the Wolf universe we've been able to create situations that are exhilarating, terrifying, intriguing, and even mysterious. We like to describe Return to Castle Wolfenstein as World War II meets the X-Files - so as the story unfolds there is always a sense of mystery and suspense, but the story and characters are so rich that players will probably run the gamut of emotions. It's going to be a fun Christmas. <<

Heil Heidl!
Leather-clad
Nazi babes!



“ Enemies will take cover, work in teams and even make combat decisions based on what type of weapon you are carrying and what type of weapon they are carrying. It's a very complex and flexible system. ”



Mutants... I hate those guys.



Nazis... I hate those guys more!



**TO FINISH FIRST,
YOU FIRST HAVE TO FINISH.**



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PlayStation®2

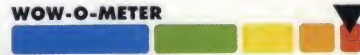


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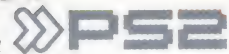


Put the Lightsaber down, buddy.

DEUS EX: THE CONSPIRACY



CATEGORY: Shooter >> PLAYERS: 1 >>
PUBLISHER: Eidos Interactive >> AVAILABLE: Early 2002



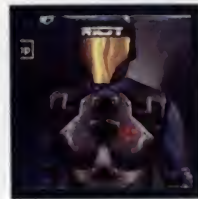
The PlayStation 2 port of Deus Ex has been in the works for a while now, to the point where new features have begun to creep into what was originally just a straight port of the PC masterpiece.

Besides the complete re-design of the game's interface (some who played the game at E3 believe it is an improvement over the PC version), there are now new character models in the game with vastly improved character animations, and more realistic weather effects for enhanced atmosphere in this gritty world. Deus Ex: The Conspiracy is now shaping up to be a uniquely different and possibly superior experience for PS2 owners whether you've played the original or not. The PS2 version is

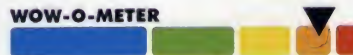
being developed by Ion Storm Austin, the same studio that brought us the PC version, so naturally, the team is perfecting issues they had with the PC version whilst modifying the game to suit the console. One of

the only negative aspects of bringing the game to the PS2 is that the console's RAM limitations requires the game's levels to be broken down into smaller sections, with warp points needed to

bridge areas. This isn't going to hinder the gameplay, which should be just as gripping and intense as the original. Augment your agent and become a master of combat, stealth or technology — or a subtle balance of all skills. Deus Ex: The conspiracy will be a must-have title.



BURNOUT



CATEGORY: Racing >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >>
PUBLISHER: Acclaim >> AVAILABLE: December



Take the furious dodgem car antics of Crazy Taxi and wrap it up in a more realistic setting and you'd be close to capturing the rush hour mayhem of Burnout — the PS2 racing game that has tongues wagging. With nine different vehicles, 14 circuits (set in city streets and on multi-levelled highways), and a spectacular damage/collision model, Burnout promises to be amazingly entertaining.

Essentially, this is a race to the finish line against a series of ruthless opponents, with both of you having to contend with all the innocent traffic that seems strategically placed to cause the maximum

number of pile-ups and cinematic crashes. A novelty addition to the high-speed racing, is the heart meter at the bottom of the screen. This represents the adrenaline of your driver, and it increases the more you drive recklessly without crashing. Once it maxes out, you can tap into a supersonic burst of speed, where everything almost literally becomes a blur. Avoiding collisions isn't going to be easy. Even though civilian traffic is equipped with a smart traffic AI (cars swerve to avoid you, flash their lights and beep their horns), the thrill of ploughing into the side of a bus or speeding through an intersection without slowing down is devilishly good.



Are you happy, Bryce?

TEKKEN ADVANCE

CATEGORY: Fighting >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >>
PUBLISHER: Namco >> AVAILABLE: Early 2002

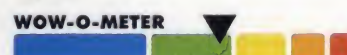


With nine instantly playable characters, mode 7 backgrounds, two-player link cable support and stunning graphics, Tekken Advance proves just how well equipped the GBA is to handle fighting games. This handheld version of Tekken is being developed internally by series creators, Namco, and is modelled after the PlayStation version of Tekken 3. The A and B buttons become punch and kick, with the shoulder button handling throws, tag-ins, and as a "shortcut" for pressing A & B together at the same time.

The game looks ridiculously impressive, with the GBA simulating

a 3D feel by zooming in and out of the action, and rotating around the players — just like its 3D big brothers. Some frames of animation are naturally missing, but this seems necessary to keep the game pumping along at the speed that it currently manages — which is smooth and fast. The action seems to be absolutely faithful to the Tekken series, so fans looking for that portable Tekken dream just might get what they've always wanted.

So what's up next for the GBA and Namco? Ridge Racer? Well, if that little birdie was telling us the truth...

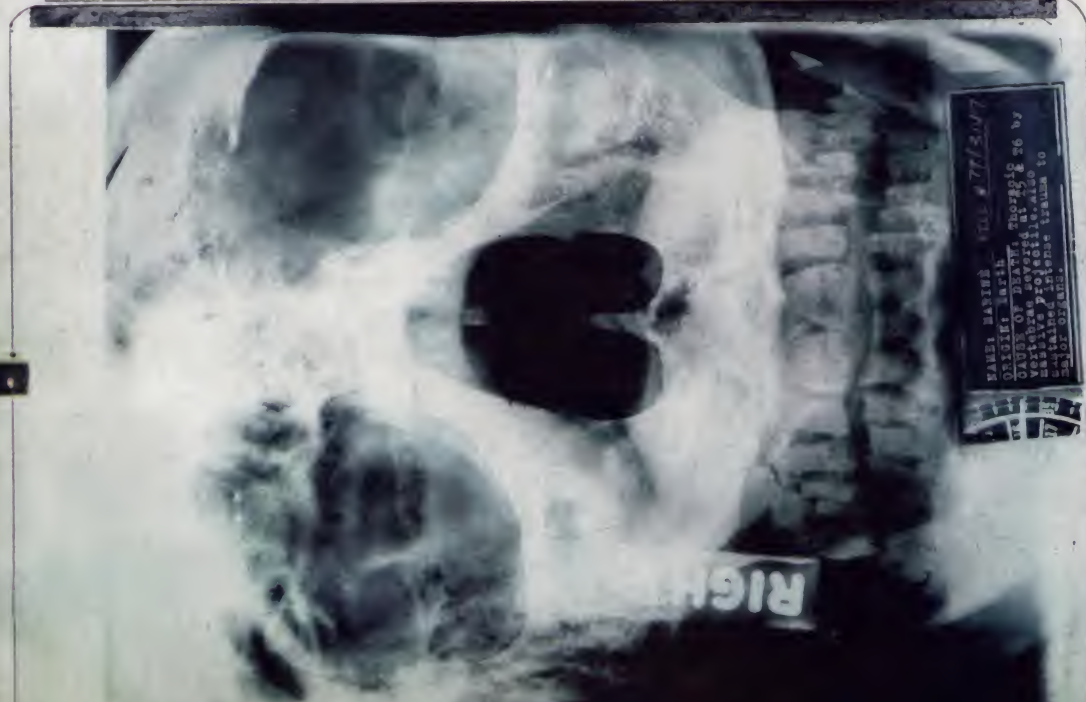


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World of Warcraft

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Qerek dela Fuente, Hyper's UK correspondent, had the golden opportunity of speaking with Chris Metzen, the creative director on World of Warcraft. This massively multiplayer online RPG set in the Warcraft universe is well into development, and although gamers may still be divided as to the significance of online games, you could not ask for a more enticing role-playing world. Everything from buildings to life forms look so good that you just want to step into the screen and immerse yourself! Blizzard's Chris Metzen elaborates...

Chris Metzen: World of Warcraft takes place four years following the aftermath of Warcraft

III: Reign of Chaos, where great tension has settled over the ravaged world of Azeroth. As the various races begin to rebuild their shattered kingdoms, new threats, both ancient and terrifying, have arisen to plague the world once again. Players must explore the lands of Azeroth, forge fellowships with other players, and build their strength in order to prevail.



We are 'shooting' for a wider breadth of world where there will be a number of different kingdoms and zones/sub zones to adventure in. We are trying to focus on core quest systems for hardcore players. So that if you are the kind of gamer with the massively multiplayer element that spends 40 hours a week,

you'll be able to join guilds and go on massive extended quests that could take weeks to play.

For the casual gamer as well, you will be able to join the game in your lunch hour or whenever you can and still have a meaningful play experience. You will have any number of tasks or quests, which do not involve that much time. There will always be an element of completion — you will feel that there are things you can accomplish in a short time. The world will be dynamic, constantly changing!

HYPHER: So what's the advantage of having both a 1st and 3rd person view?

CM: Typically, I enjoy first person view cause it is a little



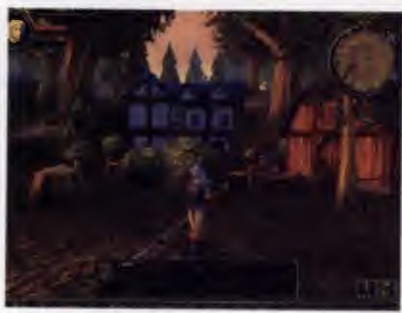
Lucky its not World of Basketweaving



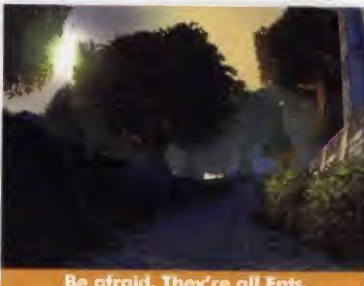
bit more immersive. I feel like I'm specially running around in the game and it helps me to role-play and to explore in a much more immersive mode. Third person typically is more tactical, especially for combat. You have a much wider range of peripheral vision, so you can explore tricky areas!

HYPHER: What elements of the other Warcraft games are being used?

CM: We intend to use all the lands, cities,



The gates to Luigi's Mansion...



Be afraid. They're all Ents.



Fiddling with menus is half the fun!

kingdoms, magic items, spells, unit types, we will finally extrapolate into whole tribes and whole groups and really pull on the mythos of the Warcraft universe. After Warcraft III, it will be far bigger than anything anyone has ever seen.

I can't give you an exact size of the world but it will have around 6 major continents and to compare that most people have seen Warcraft II and that only had 2 major continents! You will have a much grander sense of scale and of the world!

On offer there will be fully customisable character classes, innovative races, and thousands of weapons to allow for a truly diverse gameplay experience that will appeal to both hardcore and novice gamers alike. A simple, intuitive user interface will allow players of various skill levels to easily join the adventure. World of Warcraft also features support for advanced graphics hardware, giving the player superlative graphical enhancements, as well as a sophisticated, massively multiplayer network architecture capable of supporting thousands of players in a world simultaneously.

HYPER: So tell us about character creation and how you start.

CM: We have attempted to put in costuming and body designs that represent, iconically, the core races of Warcraft up to this point. There are endless costume combinations and when playing the game it will lend more to customising your

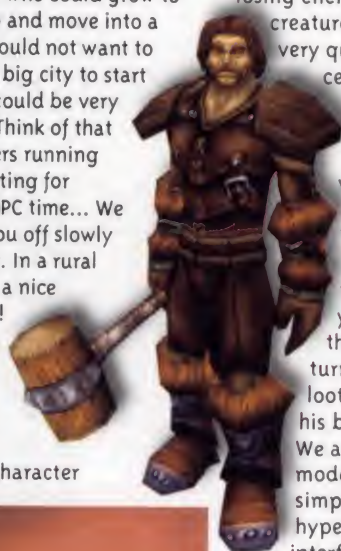
character more! So starting off, you can choose from the three races and male or female. This will be significant, for most people haven't seen female orcs! There are options for face styles (different beards, hair) for Taurens, specifically, you can change the look and breadth of your horns — different colourations, even different skin tones, pony tails, etc. The same deal applies with humans — loads of options.

HYPER: So you have your character and then place him in the World... Then what?

CM: You will start out in say, West Falls, but the start point will not always be the same. It could be specific to the race you choose. It will be in a little hamlet near one of the cities for we want to give the feeling that your character is an average entity who could grow to become a hero and move into a big city. We would not want to put you into a big city to start with, for that could be very intimidating. Think of that many characters running around competing for monster and NPC time... We wish to start you off slowly and intuitively. In a rural area. It will be a nice learning curve!

HYPER: So what of combat and dying then?

CM: By your character



portrait you will see your hit and mana bars. You will see it ticking down if you are facing defeat — losing energy. When you roll up on creatures or monsters with a very quick mouse scroll, in the centre of your screen you will see the character name and/or hitpoint bar at the same time, very much like the interface in Diablo II. You can gauge how tough it is and how many hit points it has. If you manage to defeat the baddie, your icon will turn from combat icon to loot meaning you can loot his body of any valuables. We are aiming for a combat mode that pulls from the simplicity of Diablo, which is hyper-simplistic in terms of interface. The combat itself, as anything else, has complexity of play in terms of a difficulty to master different combat moves or class abilities, but the ease of interface is critical. It must be easy to do and understand but not so easy in winning and achieving things! We want the difficulty curve hard to master so people will come back for more, with the flow of play constant. There will always be things to master, learn and improve on.

HYPER: So what of weapons, rewards, etc?

CM: There will be hundreds —

thousands — of goodies to find and I do not know if we will get into randomising things. Any number of weapons, clothing, items, artefacts, magic will be available. We want people to have fun, first and foremost!

HYPER: How about the player making or designing their own weapons, equipment, or items?

CM: That's possible... Hmm, not sure if we will do that. Maybe later. Good idea!

HYPER: Describe what you see as the perfect Massively Multi Player world?

CM: With World of Warcraft we are trying to immerse you in a world full of not only NPCs but also world type characters. Just like any other online game we love the element of random people running around, helping you out, being supportive — or people playing as they want. There is nothing better than playing in a role-playing game with anonymity! It is not AI or computer generated characters, it's people running around developing friendships and relationships and guilds which we want to encourage. How many is too many and how few is not enough is yet to be decided. Getting everything right from how you go from class to class, how you grow, we are working on. Too many online games have been too combat-based. We intend to make this the perfect challenge. We are devising ways and alternate modes to ensure this.



He's been drinking too much Red Bull.

MS. INFORMATION



AGATA BUDINSKA

»»As we all know, on the 11th of September, hijackers made a terrorist move on the

United States. As we might not all know, a group of hackers calling themselves "The Dispatchers" made a fast move to deface web pages and access the systems of anyone they thought was involved in the terrorist action. Posted at the homepage of Iran's Interior Ministry is a picture of a mushroom cloud and Osama Bin Laden's head, with some guns pointing at him to round off the image. They have also vandalised the Taliban's UN mission page, and other sites they have deemed to be associated with the terrorist action.

I'd like to know whom they're trying to impress. Considering that the Taliban have made the Internet illegal in Afghanistan, and many Afghans are having a hard enough time getting a regular meal in their war ravaged country, isn't the group's actions the equivalent of just sending funny pictures and dirty jokes to our workplaces' mailing lists? I don't know.

Anyway, if any of the Dispatchers are residents of Australia, they really want to be hoping that they're L33t H4x0r5, as Australian Federal Parliament has passed its first set of cyber-crime laws on the 27th of September.

New crimes include Hacking, D.O.S, vandalism, spreading viruses and using a computer to stalk, plot or to fraud. Just a thought for you all: in an article in Australian IT, Senator Chris Ellison said, "If a person makes unauthorised use of a computer in an attempt to murder, they will be sentenced as if they have committed murder, rather than a computer offence". What were they doing with that kind of evidence in the past? 'Bravo old chap, although the police have the email you sent with the payment details of your wife's assassination plot, you're only getting fined for misuse of your neighbour's computer'. Maybe Optus spammers will be first up to bat...



Discourse, flames, opinions to: budinska@another.com

LINKS

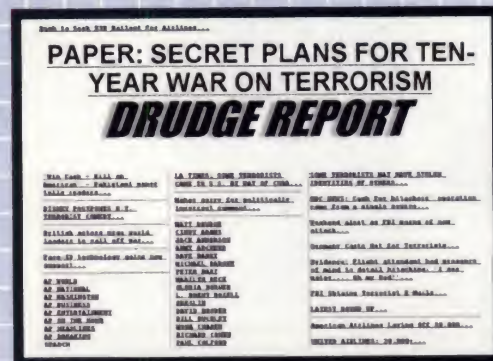
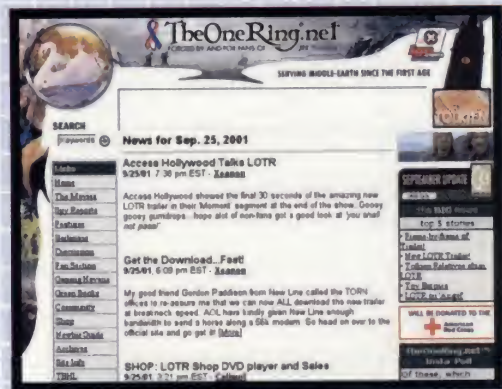


Fellowship of the Ring wins our "coolest trailer" award.

THE ONE RING

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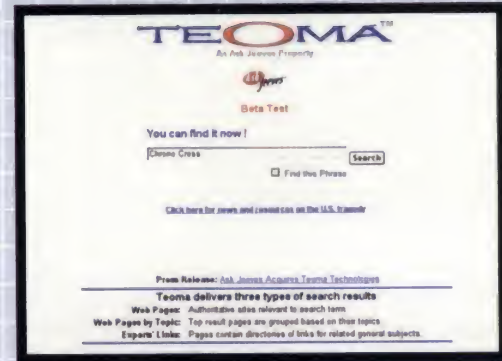
»»Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy kicks off this Christmas with *Fellowship of the Ring*. Whilst the official site at lordoftherings.net is a damn comprehensive destination, fansite TheOneRing.Net is perfect for fans after more daily updates, spy reports, pics from the set, rumours and discussion all things J.R.R. Tolkien. If you weren't already frothing at the mouth with excitement for this film, you will be after ferreting through the pages of this great site. Their shot-by-shot description of the full theatrical trailer is the perfect thing to get your mind racing with anticipation for Middle Earth come to life.



DRUDGE REPORT 2001

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»»Matt Drudge is the man behind the semi-famous Drudge Report, a website that compiles the latest big news headlines from various web news services and provides quick links to them from one clean, quick-loading webpage. There are also plain links to every news wire, and search fields for the major news services. If you want the latest world news in a flash, then you can't go past visiting Drudge Report. It's been supplying the best no-frills news for years, and isn't afraid to write up its own exclusive and sometimes controversial reports.

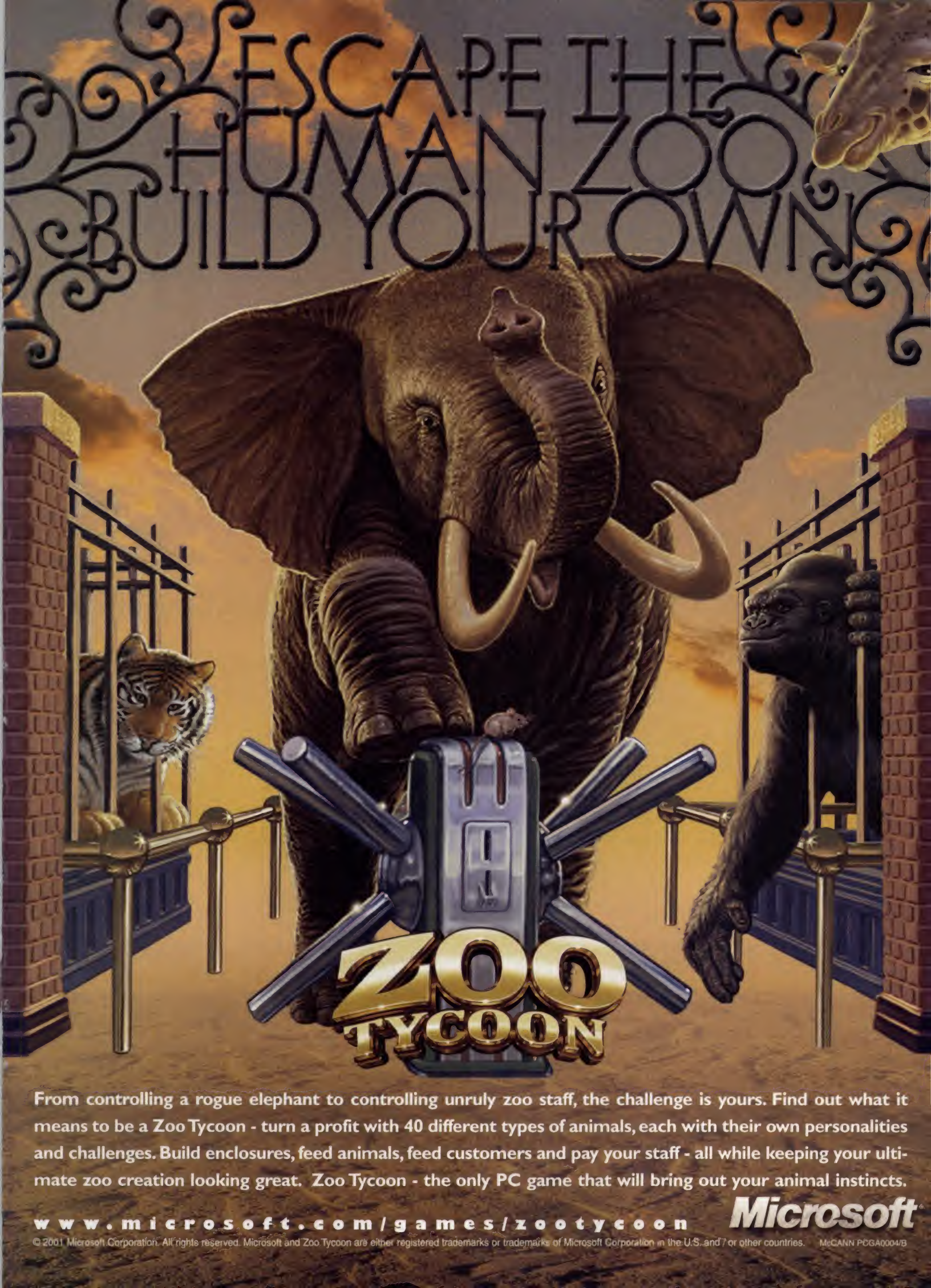


TEOMA

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»»Google too slow for your liking these days? Not finding what you want? A new search engine dubbed Teoma is proving to be a likely successor to the widely used Google search engine. Besides still being in beta testing, Teoma is based on the Google methodology of taking your search string and looking for those words in websites the world over, except that Teoma then narrows down the sites that concern themselves with your search string. Basically, it's proving to be one step more thorough and accurate than Google. It also offers three types of search results: normal rankings, web pages arranged by topic and "experts' links". It's also damn fast.

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FOR
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SPRINKLES

In 1989, Will Wright had a finished game based on a novel concept, that of simulating the day-to-day life of an entire town. There was no objective, and the game never ended. Your sole task was to encourage your sims to live happy, healthy lives. He couldn't get a publisher to touch his product, so he formed his own: Maxis. Over the past decade the Sims games have sold millions of copies, culminating with The Sims, the most addictive version yet. After all, why live your regular boring life when you can create a perfect one on your PC? Over the following pages **JAMES COTTEE** will show you the sordid history of The Sims, from virtual people to synthetic cities and everything in between. If you thought they got the Sims formula right the first time, then think again. There's more than one way to skin a sim...

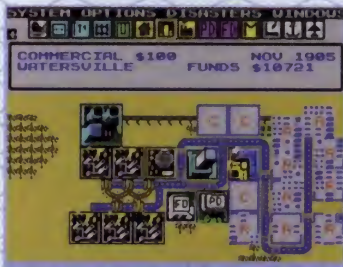
SIM CITY

Maxis (1989)



The first game ever to bear the Sim name, Sim City, was years ahead of its time. Eschewing simplistic notions of conflict and hand-eye-coordination, it presented players with a completely open-ended experience. Taking a large square plot of land you had to turn it into a teeming metropolis, by whatever means took your fancy. For most this began with spelling out their name in large tracts of roadway, but soon the sheer complexity of the task drew you in.

After all, it wasn't just a question of giving your little virtual people places to live, work and shop. You had to allow them to commute, be it by road or rail. Traffic copters would patrol the skies reporting in garbled



Have at you number crunching!

game, mostly mundane matters like fires and floods. But you could also pit your crisis management skills against the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, a meltdown in 21st century Boston, or even defend Tokyo against Godzilla! Addictive gameplay, staggering complexity, and a sense of humour: Sim City had it all.

It may be difficult to imagine how early Sim City was in the scheme of PC game evolution, so consider this: there was also a version available for the Commodore 64. The action unfolded in real-time, yet it predated the first influential RTS titles by years. You might have been playing it in 2-colour CGA on a crusty old PC, but you knew that at some level the individual lives of your sim-citizens were being tracked, and molded by your actions. Allow a neighbourhood to thrive, or bulldoze it flat? The choice was yours.

An expansion was released that offered six new "settings" which were basically just tile sets. It was all the same rules, but you could nurture a medieval township, futuristic cities in the US or Europe, or even build a moonbase! All the changes were superficial, but real power came to the home user when a level editor was finally released, allowing any cityscape, real or imagined, to get the Sim City treatment. It was called the Sim City Urban Renewal Kit, or SCURK.

SimAnt(tm) 1991 Maxis

Full House View



SIM ANT

Maxis (1991)



The Electronic Ant Colony

One of the first Sim spin-offs, and one of the strangest. Your mission, should you choose to take it seriously, was to take command of an ant colony and lead it to prosperity. Sharing the same vast expanse of backyard was a rival ant colony, the red ants. Using a combination of strategy and tactics, you would have to route the invading ants, defeat all the other insectoids in the backyard, and render the entire map uninhabitable.

At your disposal were various different classes of ant: worker, breeder, queen and soldier. You had to produce queens to colonise new parts of the map, and the others were vital in your war effort against the evil army of the red ants. Note that the red ants

weren't a different species to your black ants, they were just a different colour.

Ambitious players could push rocks over the entrances of rival ant nests, or even take control of a spider and have it eat hundreds of enemy ants at a time! Unfortunately, the ultimate enemy in Sim Ant wasn't the red ants, or the elements, or even the humans. It was boredom. Sim Ant threw together all the right-RTS ingredients, but it came across as being half-baked.



© 1991 MAXIS



SIM EARTH Maxis (1992)

Ohis one hit the shelves at the same time as the huge surge in public awareness of environmental issues about a decade ago. While the TV pundits droned endlessly about the difference between the ozone layer and the Greenhouse Effect, you could actually do something about it, albeit only within the confines of your PC.

Sim Earth would simulate the natural processes of an entire planet over billions of years. In the standard game you would start with a primordial, Earth-like planet, and your objective was to encourage sentient life to evolve. You viewed your world either from Civilization-like maps or spherical projections, and like in Sim City, you could access a raft of charts and graphs to judge the effects of your indirect controls.

Make no mistake, even though your actions were indirect, they could be devastating. The big draw card was vulcanism, and making it work for you. It may go hand in hand with primordial soup, but once the spark of life was underway you'd want to tone down the lava and work on more subtle areas. Albedo set the amount of light, and thus heat, that was reflected away from the planet, a good way to fine-tune your temperature levels.

The greenhouse effect was also at your command, a feature ripped straight from the headlines of the day. Finally, you could tweak the

levels of mutation and evolution in the critters that sprawled randomly across

your planet's surface. If you weren't satisfied with the burgeoning intelligence of your charges, then you could plonk down a 2001-style monolith, and the first creature to touch it would automatically become self-aware. This technique could be used, for instance, to give rise to a species of intelligent, flesh-eating plants.

There were many endearing touches to the game. For instance, when two critters bred, you'd hear a French-sounding voice say "oo-la-la!" Also, if you destroyed a city with an atomic weapon, you'd find super-intelligent death robots would rise from the ruins and swamp your planet! Sadly, all the scenarios available were fairly shallow, with no real prospect for inter-species conflict.

Indeed, the missions didn't get much more interesting than terraforming Mars. Sim Earth is perhaps most notable for being one of the few games that made it as big on the Mac as on the PC. It certainly isn't memorable for any level of lasting appeal. For all your Gaia-like powers, you had little real control over events, and there was precious little reward for doing so.

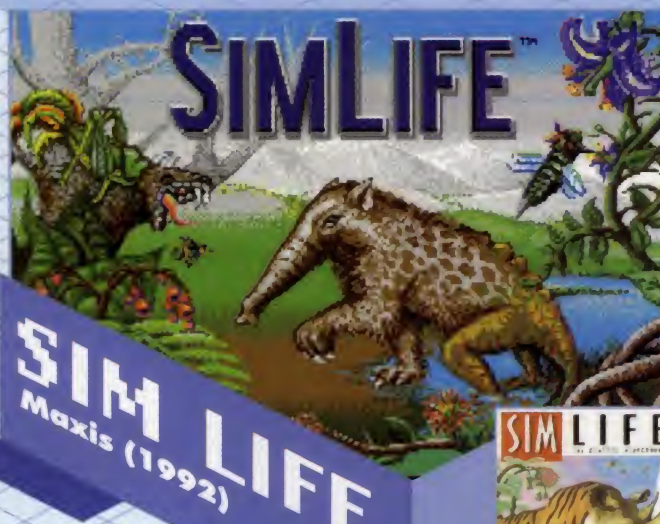
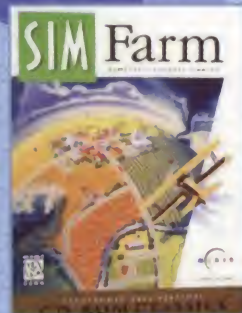
Sim Earth proved that bigger wasn't necessarily better.



Gamers are so down to Earth.

SIM FARM Maxis (1993)

Harvest Moon this ain't. More of the usual Sim-planning, choosing crops and livestock, building fences, buying tractors, and so forth. Don't forget those salinity and Ph levels, either! Just like watching Landline, it could be curiously compelling. An interesting diversion, and very close to the pure Sim City bloodline, but without offering the same visceral appeal it was never destined for success.



SIM LIFE Maxis (1992)

Since the dawn of computing, artificial life programs have been a fascinating diversion. Typically using primitive ASCII graphics to simulate the life cycles of single-celled critters, they could be used to create cascading patterns on the screen long before Mr. Mandelbrot was in the house. In extreme cases they were a source of crippling computer addiction; what better genre to move the sim franchise forward?

Unfortunately, Sim Life wasn't the same species of artificial life program as those that went before it. Rather than being influenced by raw mathematics, it was more of a computer version of a kind of children's book. Only instead of flipping different pages around to put a zebra's hindquarters on a giraffe, you were running a tiny eco-system to practice some perverse eugenics.



We played it in German to up the difficulty.

SIM CITY 2000 Maxis (1994)

The logical successor to Sim City, and a worthy sequel. SC 2000 really fleshed out the civil engineering experience; budding mayors had to deal with subways, plumbing and the decadent, whining sims themselves. The isometric view allowed for rolling terrain and a more "realistic" view, and the built in map editor could see you running a crude approximation of your own home town in a matter of moments.

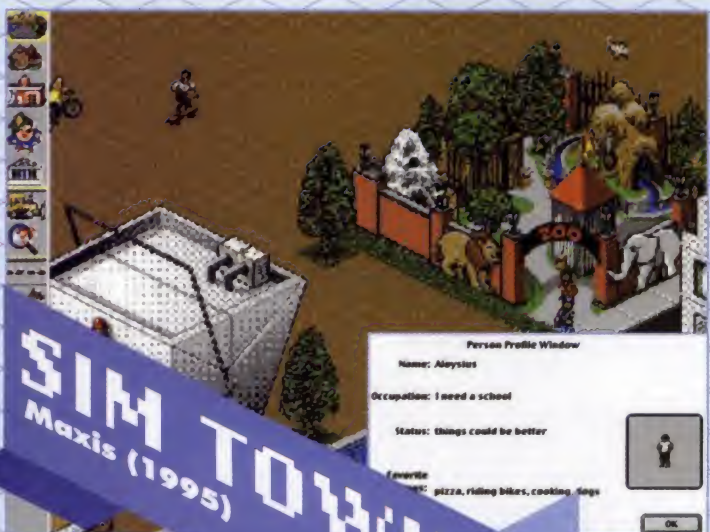
You could even try alternate power sources, like putting windmills on the tops of hills. As the game clock advanced into the 21st century, exotic new technologies opened up to you. You could build "arcologies," huge skyscrapers, each



Still one of our favourite games.

a city-within-a-city, to max-out the population of your metropolis. Rumour had it that if you got 3 million sims in your town, you'd unlock the Sydney Harbour Bridge!

This was the most distinguished product Maxis would produce in the 90s, with the rest being timid spin-offs or evolutionary dead ends.

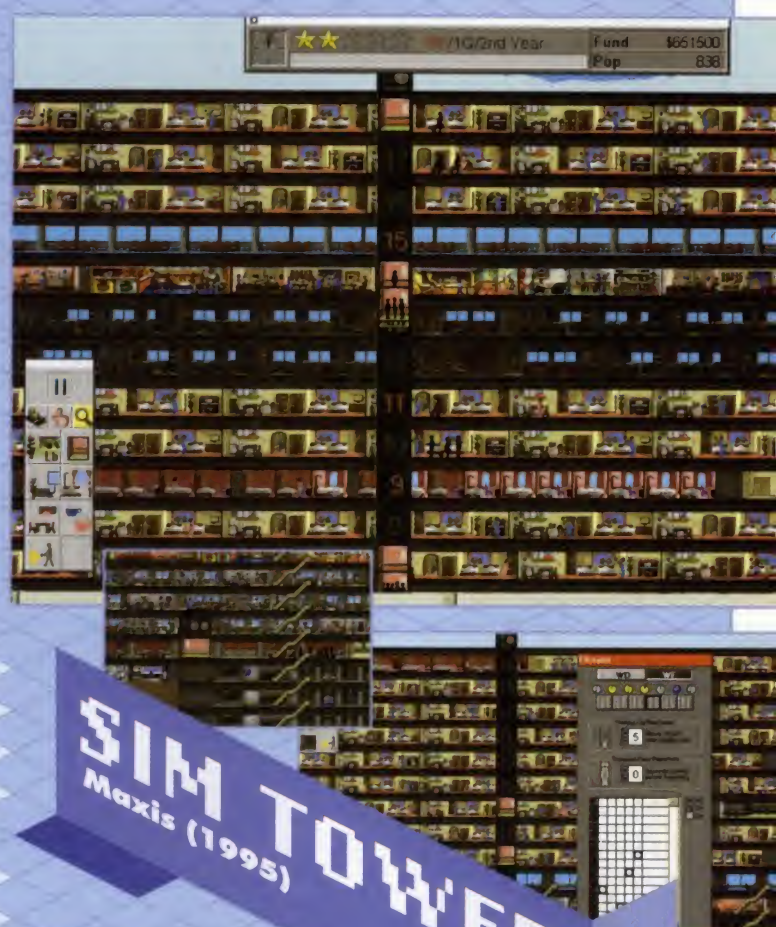


SIM TOWN Maxis (1995)

An emphasis on crime and pollution and urban sprawl, and more focus on parks and zoos and pizza joints and happy little people going about their business. This was an early glimpse as to where the Sims phenomenon was evolving, with environmental and social concerns displacing financial matters completely. Each structure that could be built had a cost in trees and water, not to mention your dignity at sinking to such a base economic model.

Still, you could create your own

sims. Choose their name, appearance, likes, dislikes, turn ons and turn offs, and let them loose in your garden of Earthly delights. The missions weren't particularly taxing. A town may be afflicted with a lack of trees, the solution being to plant more trees. Sim Town was much more useful as an indoctrination tool, ensuring a new generation would grow up to enjoy the fine line of Maxis products.



SIM TOWER Maxis (1995)

Rather than an entire city, this simulation had you concentrate on a single building. The objective of Sim Tower was to construct a latter-day tower of Babel, a towering monstrosity filled with shops, restaurants, hotel rooms, apartments and so forth. Beginning on the ground floor, your establishment began with a measly one star, but your ultimate objective was to create a 5-star, world-class arcology.

This was the first Sim game where the little people you manipulated could be seen going about their daily lives. Granted, each was but a handful of pixels tall, but each had his own hopes and dreams, which you could easily crush by doubling the rent. While the financial side of the game was relatively straightforward, the real challenge came in managing the lifts. Placement of your normal, express and service shafts was pivotal to success, and you could go so far as to alter their schedules and home floors.

They could have called the game Sim Shaft, but doubtless that wouldn't have looked as good on the box. It had an alien feel to it, for a number of reasons. For one it ran only under Windows, a rarity at the

time. It was also developed in Japan, where there's an entire industry built up around this sort of anal micro-management. The ambient level of quirkiness couldn't be escaped, from the roaches that would infest your floors if you let them, to your final objective: reach 100 floors and build a cathedral on the roof.

It was rumoured at the time that Maxis were working on some manner of uber-sim, one in which each structure in your sim-city would be emulated to the degree of complexity portrayed in Sim Tower. In turn, numerous cities would be stretched across the surface of a completely simulated planet. Was this needlessly complex sim-headache ever truly considered for development? Who can say? While certainly unique, Sim Tower failed to capture the imagination of the public at large. There's something about a game that you can leave running for hours by itself, and return to with no discernable disadvantage that just fails to spell "classic."

SIM PARK

Maxis (1997)

Maxis continued its navel-gazing, tree-hugging downward spiral through the 90s, producing this little gem from its "Maxis Kids" label. Targeted at "Kids B and up," it boasted of introducing youngsters to the importance of ecological balance in a natural world. The idea was that Jnr. would not only create a loving, caring, sharing eco-system where critters of every race and creed could play hacky sack, but learn a lesson or two about biology into the bargain.

What it actually delivered was about as exciting as watching grass grow. While you could plant trees, and shrubs, and flowers, and encourage all manner of critters from bumblebees to grizzly bears to

inhabit your plot of land, the level of development never rose above tree level. If a bear relieved itself in the woods there were no adverse consequences, but if you didn't clean up after your park's human visitors, you could be attacked by an army of rats!

The only other disasters that could affect Sim Park were fire, alien invasion, and something called "kudzu." There was also the ever-present threat of boredom, but this was more of a design error than a feature.



SIM ISLE

MISSIONS IN THE RAIN

Maxis (1996)

This one encompassed a topic that most Australians should be familiar with: ruthlessly exploiting a South East Asian island solely for economic gain. Across its surface one would clear terrain, construct settlements, hire natives, and strip the land of its bounty. Like in the Settlers games, elaborate networks of resources would converge to create a single piece of manufactured goods, such as a luxury car. Unlike the Settlers games, one had to pay careful attention to the toll being exacted on the environment.

You could see it all unfold before

your eyes, too. Put too much smog in the air and you'd kill off all your forests. Plants and animals needed careful consideration in your plans, as for the first time in a Civ game you could have a real, and dangerous environmental impact.

Due to its hokney tree-hugging philosophy and un-engaging gameplay, Sim Isle didn't make much of an impact on the games industry, either. Isometric terrain, mission-based development and pesky advisors had all been done to death. By this stage, gamers didn't just want something new, they needed it.



SIM COPTER

Maxis (1997)

As the countdown to the next "real" Sim City game continued, the spin-offs from Maxis became ever more tenuous. The classic example is Sim Copter, a novel idea, yet one of the most unessential PC titles in recent memory. As a brave helicopter pilot over a bustling metropolis, you had to perform simple missions such as rescuing desperate civilians from burning buildings. The flexibility was limited, the maps were small, and the nature of the helicopter simulation was simplified in the extreme.

So what was the appeal? Sim Copter was a spin-off product for Sim City 2000. You could import any city you had created using SC 2000, and proceed to fly around inside it. If a non-SC2000 fan were to purchase Sim Copter it would not be in vain, as the game came with 30 ready-made metropolises. In short, it was a

classic example of a novelty product.

Missions included clearing traffic jams by yelling at individual motorists and even suppressing riots. The career mode was lent some degree of depth by the number of cities and variable difficulty, but the graphics were ugly, the missions obtuse, and each success was rewarded with more of the same.

Still, it was an enticing glimpse into what would be offered with Sim City 3000; a living city that bustled and churned before your very eyes. Little vehicles and little people, albeit shoddily rendered, would skit about on the ground far below. One still had no idea what it was like to be them, but their lives seemed closer all the time.



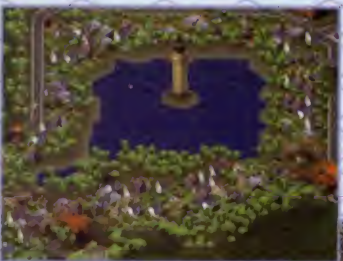
"World Trade Center? Roger that."



A spotlight on the gameplay.



A simple model of the Hyper HQ.



The Redfern "Eliot Monument".



Far from the 3D extravaganza we had been promised, Sim City 3000 proved to be little more than a visual upgrade of Sim City 2000. Maxis wasted a good three years trying to make a truly 3D version of Sim City, but in the end abandoned the project. It would have been The Sims on a massive scale, well beyond the scope of PCs then; or even now. Thus the gaming public was treated to more of the same.

Not that Sim City 3000 was a bad game by any means. It took the basic formula of SC-2000 and expanded in a number of key areas. For one thing, famous world landmarks were supported. For a nominal cost you could spruce up your city with Big Ben, The Empire State Building, or everybody's favourite, the Petronos Towers. It



"Hey Bob, is that a... 747?!"

Added Value? Sim City 3000 World Edition – Maxis (2000)

»»Your standard mission pack. With the addition of new building skins, one could simulate life in Europe or Asia. New campaigns were included, such as one where you could topple the Berlin Wall, and proceed to re-develop the formerly communist eastern side of the city. An uninspired add-on to a disappointing product.

was a nice touch, as while the regular buildings that sprung up looked better than ever, they still had a generic, repetitive feel to them.

Local government legislation played a much greater role, with the ability to fine-tune your society with a variety of bills that affected everything from home composting to sports gambling. The number of specialised structures you could build to keep your decadent little sims happy had been broadened, with marinas and the like alongside old standards like the stadium. And of course there were more scenarios, more disasters, more pre-packaged cities, and more on-line goodies to be downloaded over another novelty product called the Internet.

But at a fundamental level, nothing had changed. All the player's controls were still indirect. While on the maximum level of zoom you could see sims wandering about, the minutiae of their lives remained a mystery. Their hopes, their dreams, distilled to mere charts and graphs. You were your God, but you never really knew them.



Timed perfectly to coincide with the boom in reality television, The Sims was Big Brother and The Game of Life rolled into one. It had subject matter that anyone could understand: ordinary people living ordinary lives. Wrapped in an easy to use interface was both a compelling simulation of modern life, and a deeply satirical view of consumer culture. After all, success and happiness in your sim's world were measured almost exclusively in terms of material possessions.

The Sims, and its expansion packs, Livin' Large and House Party, have topped the Australian games charts for the past year. We've all wondered what games would look like when they finally cracked the "mainstream", and now we know. The future of games lies in virtual doll houses.



Cam is so dedicated, eh?

Wannabes...

»»The runaway success of the Sims games over the years has inspired countless rip-offs. While some products may have experienced parallel development, such as Civilization, or even pre-dated it, such as Railroad Tycoon, countless others have tried to steal that certain something from the Sims franchise. A-Train was the first big entry, followed by many others. Transport Tycoon and Roller Coaster Tycoon were both worthy entries and highly addictive. The Theme Park games, by comparison, fell flat in the long run, crippled by a two dimensional economic model. Populous had its own charm, being primarily focussed on winning battles and finishing levels. Populous would evolve into the overblown Black & White. Many entries were quite unplayable, an insult to the genre.

God-sims now encompass worlds much more diverse than those in Sim City, but there's no denying that it was the first one, inspiring all who followed.

THE FUTURE...

SIMSVILLE

Maxis (2002, now cancelled)



With Simsville, the formula would have come full circle. Rather than Sim City, which worked from the top down, The Sims has evolved from the bottom up into a privacy destroying vision of an entire town. This game had the potential to annihilate civilisation as we know it, but

Maxis have decided that something about it wasn't up to their usual standard, and the game has been indefinitely shelved. All good things come to an end.

SIM GOLF

Firaxis (2001)

It seems Uncle Sid isn't confident that Civ 3 will set him up for life, otherwise why muck about with a glorified add-on pack? Sid Meier's Sim Golf, upon its imminent release, will allow players to import their sims from The Sims, and pit them against each other on the links. It will come with its own character generator, of course, making The Sims less than an essential purchase for its

enjoyment, but one suspects that this isn't the point. Anything with the word "Sim" in its title is destined to sell like hotcakes, and Sid knows it.

Technically, Sim Golf is a strategy game the vein of Theme Park, with the objective to convert your pitiful put-put range into St. Augusta. Whether it will fall to mission-pack-syndrome remains to be seen.

THE SIMS: ONLINE

Maxis (2002)

Arriving early next year, The Sims Online is a terrifying concept. It will combine the broad appeal of The Sims with the heroin-like addiction of Everquest. Players will be able to take direct control of their sim, interacting with other sim-humans in a completely synthetic world. The god-like distinction between you and your sim is no longer there, as you become your sim full-time!

The Sims online will borrow properties from TV sensations like Survivor and Big Brother. Say a number of sims share a house, and one of them is pissing the others off. Hold a vote, and out he goes! And

rather than gaining levels and magic items like in Evercrack, the objective in Sims Online is to gain "fame." That is, the more you interact with other players, the higher your fame rating. This eliminates the need for any skill in the player at all; one must merely be persistent, living one's entire life online!

This could be worse than the pokies! With jobs to work at, parties to schmooze through, dozens of new ways to communicate, and much, much more, The Sims Online promises a Matrix-like level of immersion in a pure fantasy world. Yikes!

THE SIMS: HOT DATE

Maxis (2001)

This will be the third expansion pack for The Sims from Maxis, and is the most radical yet. Hot Date will round out the love-lives of your sims, by creating endless opportunities for mercenary love-play. Hot Date adds Downtown to your sim-world, a place your sims can partake in elaborate mating rituals. Visit restaurants, go shopping, buy top-heavy ice cream cones, and so forth with the tiny little polygon person of your dreams. Like everything in life, and in The Sims, Hot Date revolves around money. Spend enough "attention" on your cyber-broad and you'll be rewarded with kisses, necking,

and very heavy petting! Charm her cyber-socks off, and she may come home with you, for good! Hot Date will also expand the options for virtual weddings — that mall bunny will be picking up your socks in no time! As a bonus your sim will even receive, get this, a dowry! Dating games have been around in Japan for years, but this could finally be the first big one in the West. Throw that boring old real-life girlfriend away, and have a hot time with Hot Date! Due out for Christmas.

But has he got a Hard or Floppy Disk?



FROM A JUMBO JET TO THE FLYING SCOTSMAN YOU'RE IN CONTROL



The choice is yours; fly across the world in the cockpit of a Boeing 747-400 or hammer down the line at the controls of the Flying Scotsman. The stunning graphics and ultra-realistic sound effects of Flight Simulator 2002 and Train Simulator will make you feel like you're there. They're so real the only things you'll miss are the steam in your hair and the Av-gas in your nostrils.

www.microsoft.com/games/train simulator
www.microsoft.com/games/fs2002

Microsoft

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REVIEWS



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» PS2

GAME OF THE MONTH

Devil May Cry

Capcom take the survival horror genre to all-new heights with this devilishly good action game.



76 Dead or Alive 2 - PS2



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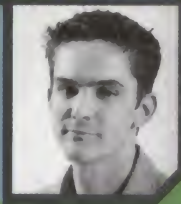
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GAME THEORY

DAVID WILGODOOSE



>> Is the practice of reviewing videogames an art or a science? We all know what we like in a videogame.

We all recognise those certain special features that come together over the many months and even years of the development process in the creation of electronic entertainment excellence. We do, don't we?

This column isn't quite so sure. Everyone knows that Mario 64 is a better game than Gex, but do we really understand why this is the case? Half-Life rocks, but Daikatana sucks – that much is evident. But why? In both instances, the two titles are superficially similar; indeed to the untrained eye they may well appear identical. Yet the gulf in quality between them is in both cases enormous. What's inherently superior about Mario's running, jumping and collecting antics? Why does Daikatana's run-and-gun ethos pale next to most first-person shooters? Let's find out...

It's the directive of this column to dissect and deconstruct game design. It won't preach about what makes a game good or bad, though it may get you thinking about why you believe a particular game is good or bad. In the coming months we'll discover how the design decisions taken by game developers affect the type of gameplay experience delivered by the end product.

It's no longer sufficient for a game review to praise a game because it's "fun". This column wants to issue a challenge to all game critics to explain why the game is fun and what type of fun players will have with the game. It's not a soapbox, but rather a forum for debate. As such, if you have any questions or comments relating to any issue discussed here, please drop an email to:

hyper_game_theory@hotmail.com



Super Mario 64, is it still the best console game ever? Find out in issue 100.

THE HYPER CREW'S TOP 5

Eliot Fish – Editor

1. Luigi's Mansion – GameCube
- "I spent the whole game looking for Bill Murray."
2. Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance – PS2
3. Devil May Cry – PS2
4. Galaga – MAME
5. Super Monkey Ball – GameCube

Cam Shea – Deputy Editor

1. Parrappa the Rapper 2 – PS2
- "Masaya 'Messiah' Matsuura, busts another musical masterpiece."
2. Luigi's Mansion – GameCube
3. Burnout – PS2
4. Klonoa 2 – PS2
5. Wave Race: Blue Storm – GameCube

Malcolm Campbell - Art guy

1. Luigi's Mansion - GameCube
- "Maaaaario? Maaaaarioooooo?!?! MARIOOOOOO!!! Mario?"
2. Devil May Cry - PS2
3. Final Fantasy X - PS2
4. Capcom vs. SNK 2 – DC
5. Burnout - PS2

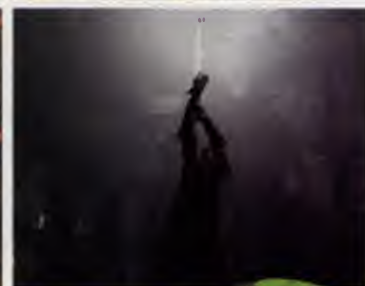
Bryce McDonough - Reviewer

1. Devil May Cry – PS2
- "Swords and guns. Yum."
2. Burnout – PS2
3. Tekken 4 – Arcade
4. Super Monkey Ball – GameCube
5. Castlevania – GBA

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!



Devil May Cry

» PS2



CATEGORY: Survival Horror >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Capcom >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: MA15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now

BRYCE MCDONOUGH is a little devil himself...

After multiple Resident Evil outings, people could be forgiven for thinking the Survival Horror genre to be growing a little stale. However, earlier this year, Capcom one-upped themselves with the incredible Onimusha: Warlords, proving that there is definitely room for growth within the formula. Now, Devil May Cry (DMC) appears wearing the Capcom badge, and it takes the genre even further into an almost brand new category... Stylish Hard Action.

DEMONIC BLOOD

You play the role of Dante, who just so happens to have a pint or two of demonic blood coursing through his veins. His dad, Sparda, was quite the go-getter, bringing harmony between the natural world and the

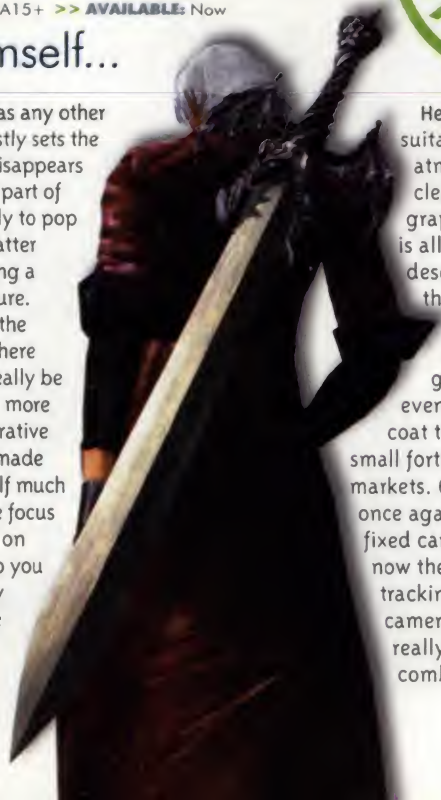
Underworld. Unfortunately, a demon by the name of Mundus is back to try and take it all for himself, and the only person who seems to be in a position to stop him is you - Dante.

Dante himself is no stranger to weird and wonderful events, as throughout the game he meets some of the ugliest and scariest bosses ever devised, yet always keeps his cool demeanour intact. After watching the opening scene you will realise that not only was Dante absolutely nothing like you expected, he is also not really meant to be taken seriously. His attitude would earn him more than just a slap in your average city pub if it weren't for the four-foot blade strapped to his back.

Of course, if stories aren't really your thing, then don't worry about it... Capcom didn't. Whilst the story is

as plausible as any other today, it mostly sets the scene then disappears for a greater part of the game only to pop back in the latter stages to bring a sense of closure. This is really the only place where DMC could really be criticised - a more coherent narrative would have made the story itself much stronger. The focus is very much on the action, so you will probably barely notice it at all anyway.

Helping to create a suitably foreboding atmosphere are the clean and crisp graphics. The setting is all very Gothic - a deserted castle on the water, crumbling pillars in the graveyard and even a funky red coat that would cost a small fortune in the Glebe markets. Capcom have once again stuck with the fixed camera angles, but now there are some tracking and leading camera shots which really help during combat, as they pan

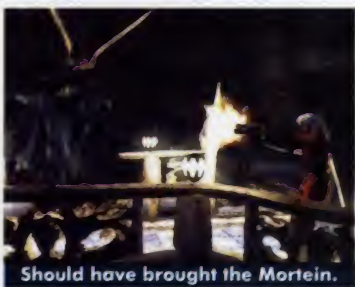




Dante shoots to thrill.



The pool construction went awry.



Should have brought the Mortein.



That poor Jester. He's dying up there.

More than once you are pitted against **three** or more **sub-bosses** in just the one mission!

along with the action.

The sound is perhaps even more important than the graphics. The general score is virtually non-existent, creating more atmosphere than noise, with special tracks kicking in for battle. The fighting tracks all blend in and out seamlessly, from the general enemies to the sub-bosses, and completely suit the attitude and pace of the game.

MOUNTAIN OF MOVES

There isn't a huge range of enemies, but they are all very different to fight. There is a large sub-boss team though, all of which can really stretch you. More than once you are pitted against three or more sub-bosses in just the one mission! Thankfully the missions are relatively small which means that frustration is minimal.

Unlike the stunted character

movement of the RE series, DMC throws a mountain of moves, combos, and special moves into your arsenal, finally putting complete control back where it belongs - in the hands of the player. You can jump in any direction, and by holding down your aim button, you can back flip away from an enemy, or even roll evasively to the side opening up their flank for attack. Speaking of attack... this is where DMC steps into a world of its own.

Apart from the twin pistols and standard sword, there are several other weapons to pick up along the way, from a shotgun to Alastor (a very funky electric sword), all the way through to the cryptically named 'Nightmare Beta'. Physical attacks have been assigned to a different button than shooting, which means any combination of attacks that flows will effectively

mow down enemies standing in front of you. Moreover, there are special attacks that launch your enemy, allowing for multiple slashes, or almost endless gunfire on them while they are still in the air.

Thanks to the demonic blood of Dante, he has a Devil Trigger Gauge which can charge up and be used to perform possession attacks linked to his weapon of choice. The two key weapons are Alastor and Ifrit, electricity and fire, and mastering when to use which attack, when to evade and fire from a distance, and when to go for a Gauge attack all add up to make the combat system so diverse, interesting, and most importantly, fun.

It won't last forever, and isn't incredibly difficult, but DMC has plenty of replay value stashed into it. Capcom have taken their survival horror games to the next level, 'Stylish hard action'. One of the best PS2 games to date. <<

!!! Finishing the game unlocks the Hard mode. See if you can then unlock "DMD".



PLUS: Best controls ever. Brilliant atmosphere.

MINUS: Story isn't strung together too well. A little short.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

94 91 92

OVERALL

93

This game should be in everyone's collection.

REVIEW >> HYPER 55



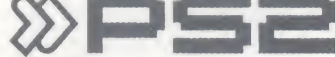
The enterprising Klonoa opens a toll.

I feel motion sick just looking at it.

Hope he's wearing his glasses.

Klonoa 2: LUNATEA'S VEIL

CATEGORY: Platformer >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Namco >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: November

CAM SHEA steps between two dimensions and three... 

Klonoa: Door To Phantomile was undoubtedly one of the best platformers on PlayStation. Laughing in the face of the seemingly unstoppable move into 3D, it was one of the first pseudo 3D platformers — 2D gameplay in a 3D world. Although a few years have passed, it seems the game industry still hasn't learnt its lesson, so Namco are back with Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil to remind people that even on PS2, gameplay isn't dependent on dimensions.

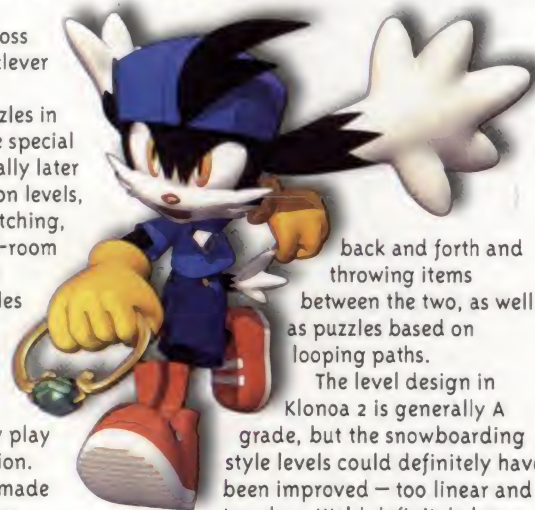
WARNING - RING JOKES AHEAD Klonoa is, unsurprisingly, the lead character in Lunatea's Veil. He/she/it appears to be a cat with over-sized novelty ears, although we can't quite be sure... since you don't start the game with nine lives. What we

do know, however, is that Klonoa leads quite a good life. Not only does he have two bestest friends (the soppy Priestess Lolo and the sassy sidekick Popka) who travel with him throughout the game (well, the cutscenes at least), but he's blessed with a magic ring. If you don't know the story of the origins of Klonoa's ring and his gradual probing of what lies inside, then go buy the first game, for it examines Klonoa's ring in graphic detail.

The ring basically enables Klonoa to grab his enemies. He can then throw them or use them to get extra jumping height. It's a very simple mechanism, but through this simple idea, almost all Klonoa's exquisitely crafted gameplay is born. Levels range from old school side scrolling platform fare, through to

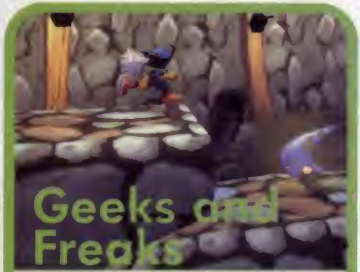
hoverboarding, boss battles and very clever puzzle sections.

In fact, the puzzles in this game deserve special mention — especially later on in the indecision levels, where gravity switching, mirrors and multi-room puzzles come into play. All the puzzles are meticulously designed set pieces, where every ledge, switch and enemy play a role in the solution. Namco have also made good use of puzzles involving a foreground and background plane, where you're using a cannon to shoot Klonoa



back and forth and throwing items between the two, as well as puzzles based on looping paths.

The level design in Klonoa 2 is generally A grade, but the snowboarding style levels could definitely have been improved — too linear and too slow. We'd definitely have preferred more puzzle-based levels, and less pseudo racing levels. An overall speed increase for



»»What's clever about Klonoa is that it's the enemies that determine what you can do at any given time. Klonoa's raw abilities are incredibly basic, consisting purely of jumping and grabbing. It's ensnaring the different enemies that give you different abilities. For instance, there are the Erbils, hovering creatures whose electric charge can be used to catapult high into the sky, bursting through crates and into secret areas. Then there's the Boomie, which act as timed explosives, and come in long and short fuse varieties. There are a whole host of new additions for the sequel, and Namco have balanced their abilities beautifully.



Aesthetically, this is one of the most **stylish games thus far** in the PS2's entire catalogue.

Klonoa would have added a lot to the game as well.

TECHSTHETICALLY SPEAKING...

That said, the amount of variety in Klonoa 2 is hugely impressive — levels range from snow capped peaks to a circus, a village and an underground iron foundry. Although the models and environments aren't that detailed, Klonoa's visuals are still hugely impressive. Technically, the levels are large and you can often see the entire world laid out before you. Aesthetically, this is one of the most stylish games thus far in the PS2's entire catalogue. This game simply oozes style — the variety and quality of the artwork is quite awesome.

Namco have used the extra processing power of the PS2 to ensure that even the traditional platform

gameplay driven levels aren't too predictable. As an example, the bounce pads that litter some levels have been amped up, boosting Klonoa ridiculously high into the air. The camera mechanics accentuate this



Klonoa is also coming to the Game Boy Advance, so keep an eye out.

beautifully, switching from a side on perspective to top down, so you really get a good impression of height. Namco have taken advantage of the fact that the entire game is built in 3D to really lend some style to the way the camera works. Generally speaking, the camera is utilitarian, but there are plenty of situations, like when Klonoa is shot out of a cannon, that the camera really goes to work, panning around to show off both Klonoa



and the gameworld.

Although Klonoa 2 is one of the best platform games we've ever played, it can be comfortably beaten in a single evening of play. While there's some appeal in playing through each level again to collect all the gems and stars, the game itself should have been longer. We respect Namco's decision to pack so much variety into the game, but the puzzle mechanics have so much potential that it's a shame that Namco didn't devise more devious puzzles and pitch the game at an older demographic. We would have loved to award

Klonoa 2 a big rubber stamp, but unfortunately it's just too short, and a little too easy. <<<



PLUS: Fantastically stylish.

MINUS: Too short, too easy.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

90 86 91

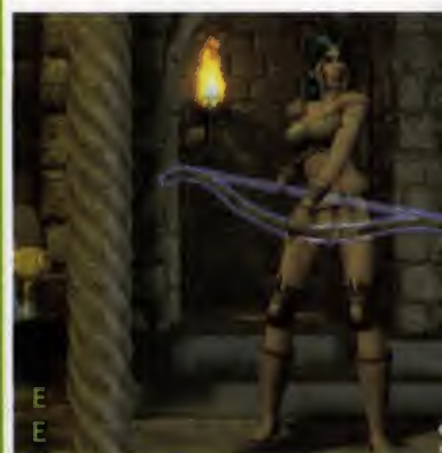
OVERALL

87

This could be used as a textbook for budding game designers.

REVIEW

»HYPER 57



I was just kidding about the smell!

Baldur's Gate: DARK ALLIANCE

CATEGORY: Action >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Interplay >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: November

ELIOT FISH pesters the barmaid for another round...



The anticipation over this game has been bubbling under for quite some time now, ever since Baldur's Gate II on the PC sapped the strength of gamers countrywide. But there's just one thing about this game that we tried to make clear in our preview that we hope has been communicated to the buying public... Dark Alliance on the PS2 is not an RPG in the traditional Baldur's Gate mould. This has been designed exclusively for the console, and it seems that the folks at Interplay wanted a "have at you" action title over a cerebral stat shifting experience. Naturally, this is going to disappoint many whom were expecting the Baldur's Gate transition from PC to PS2 to be a faithful one. It's a popular license

because it's a great PC RPG, but as a console action game is it any chop? That's the big question.

TWO BIG JUGS... OF ALE, PLEASE

There's no denying that this is one of the prettiest games we've seen on the PlayStation 2. In fact, this is one of the best-looking console games bar Gran Turismo 3 and Luigi's Mansion. The atmosphere, character and scintillating detail in the environments makes Dark Alliance truly droolworthy. The craftsmanship that has gone into all the monster models, environments and character animation is truly inspiring. As you adventure through the eerie dungeons, you truly feel as though those pen and paper D&D experiences have finally come to life in the most captivating way. Water ripples as you wade through it's

murky depths, blood splats on the floor as you hack into your opponents and flames waver with the haze of true heat... it's the little details that truly impresses in Dark Alliance. Each time you wander out into the town square, there are random weather effects, each droplet of rain making a teeny splash. The shop keeper actually comments on your last mission as you browse through his wares, telling you that you stink of the sewers, or slapping you on the back for tackling the local thieves guild — his movements all fully animated. In fact, the



NPC animation is stunning, with every word perfectly lip synched and even small mannerisms and hand gestures included to give each character true personality. It's not that often that you need to talk to anyone, and it's always plot related, but the effort that has gone into these exchanges helps make the whole experience that much more convincing. As you would expect from a D&D game, you'll find yourself up against some classic monsters — everything from Kobalds, Beholders, Trolls, and a deadly Frost Dragon to the good old Gelatinous Cube! Another impressive aspect of the



+4 chainmail undies. Ouch.



Cool, here... carry my excess items.



Now I can see... Ahhhh!



But which switch to switch?



Yes, it's one pretty as hell game.

Stains of **blood, acid and goo** permanently blemish the floor, leaving you a virtual roadmap of your own carnage.

game is that dungeons never refresh after you leave and return the area, even after loading transitions. Dead bodies remain where they were slain, items are still there for collecting at any point in the game, and stains of blood, acid and goo permanently blemish the floor, leaving you a virtual roadmap of your own carnage.

HACK AND SLASH

At the beginning of the game, you can choose to play as either a human ranger, dwarven fighter or elven sorceress, and whilst you can't name your character or determine their starting stats, you will be able to choose skills, spells and increase the attributes of your choice every time you level up in the game. The action pretty much comes down to hack and slash gameplay, although the magic does give the game some

added depth. However you'll need to equip your character wisely to get the most out of them, and there are plenty of different weapons and armour types as well as magical items. If you fancy using a bow, you can even switch between your arrows and melee weapon on the fly using the d-pad, and your success at archery is dependant on whether you've improved your skills in that area. Basically, although the combat is fairly meat and potatoes, there's enough depth here to keep you fascinated on a much more personal level than a game such as Diablo.

Although at times the game feels too linear and somehow hollow, Dark Alliance manages to throw in a few curve balls at just the right time to keep you happy. The thrill of finding a new magical weapon –

one that glows or bursts into flames when enemies are near – is always going to put a smile on your face. Whilst the single player combat borders on rushing in and button

!!! If you want to see how tough your character is, remove his or her armour and watch them run around the game naked!

mashing, the two-player co-operative mode will really ignite your imagination. Playing

with the fighter and the sorceress, we had a ball with luring enemies down hallways and employing true strategy to clearing the area of baddies. The inclusion of this co-operative mode should be applauded, although it only offers playing through the main story again. It makes the role-playing experience even more engrossing, as you have your party member sitting right next to you. Just try not to speak to each other in character... <<<



PLUS: Gorgeous visuals, convincing D&D world.

MINUS: Too linear at times, and sometimes button mashing.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

93 93 88

OVERALL

90

The Action/RPG some of us have always wanted on a console.



GunCon comparisons

>> The new G-Con 2 is fantastic – the design is way cool, it's light and it has heaps more buttons that it's predecessor - you can even play one handed!



Time Crisis 2 » PS2

CATEGORY: Light gun shooter >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Namco >> PRICE: \$99.95 (\$129 with G-Con 2) >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: November

CAM SHEA is always busting caps in one thing or another...

Welcome to Time Crisis 2, buffed and polished for PS2. You'll notice quite a large graphical leap between the arcade and the home version – and rightfully so, as we've been waiting for three years! The visuals are much sharper, the environments are more detailed, collision detection has been improved, and enemy movement and death animations have been revamped. Even small details have been attended to, such as improved gun powder and smoke effects, as well as the look of the water in the boat chase scene. But aside from the visuals, what have Namco been doing over the last three years?

UTILISE THIS, MOFO
Well... not inventing new gameplay modes, that's for sure. Unlike the original Time Crisis, which escaped longevity problems (to some extent) by offering an original mode as well as the arcade mode, Time Crisis 2 has no such bonus. Indeed, the arcade mode is agonisingly short.

So what options does Time Crisis have? Well, in addition to the normal one player game, there's a double gun mode so you can look ultra cool picking off enemies with both hands. There's also a link option, so that if you and your friends have two PS2s, two copies of Time Crisis 2, two TVs and two guns you can link via the iLink port and play the game as it was intended. Although almost no one out there will be able to utilise this option, we're glad that Namco put it in.

Aside from the arcade mode, Time Crisis 2 has a few extra modes hidden away. First of all there's the "Agent Trainer", which is really nothing more than a series of shooting ranges. Then there are two "classic" games from Namco's arcade stable – "Quick and Crash" and "Shoot Away II", both of which suck very very hard. Fortunately, however, "Crisis Mission" makes up for the inclusion of skeet shooting white pixels on a static background. It's essentially a large number of

mini challenges, so you may have to shoot 45 bad guys in 50 seconds while avoiding civilians, or get 30,000 points.

RUSH HOUR
There are heaps of these "one scene" challenges, and although they're all set in areas that the arcade mode covers, none of them are actual scenes from the game, so they're all fresh. These missions are good fun, often very challenging and make a nice change from the straight arcade mode. An excellent inclusion.

That said, even Time Crisis 2's Producer, Naoto Kumagai, commented that the development team would have liked to implement some new stages for the PS2 version of the game but weren't able to because of the tight development schedule. What's the rush? We don't know, but as much as we like Time Crisis 2, it simply doesn't provide the long term play value to make it a must-buy. <<<

!!! You can still play two-player on the one screen, it's just a little too shrunk down for our taste.



PLUS: Smooth graphics, good pacing.

MINUS: Three years old and counting.

VISUALS 89 SOUND 68 GAMEPLAY 86

OVERALL 84

You've played it in the arcades, now play it at home...



This tupperware armour ain't bad.



"Team, attack! Team? Team?!"



Yep. Too ugly to live!



Project Eden

PS2

CATEGORY: Action/Puzzle >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: Eidos >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

GEORGE SOROPOS goes looking for his Eve...

The chaps who put the bounce in Lara's tank top have returned to the fray bringing with them their new adventure, Project Eden. Set in a Judge Dredd style Mega City of the far future, Eden puts you in command of four specialised operatives working for the UPA on a sticky mission concerning, you guessed it, a dark network of evil that stretches all the way to the top. Don't be surprised if you come across some Half-Life/Resident Evil style genetic mutations and possibly some Sin style mind-altering substances.

Unoriginal plot aside Eden has a lot to offer for any PS2 owner willing to take the plunge. It is most certainly one of the most sophisticated games yet seen on a console system and has more than the usual amount of variety.

SWITCHES AND LOCKS

The four person party system in Eden is reminiscent of Activision's Vampire: The Masquerade, while the use of different characters to perform different actions is much like Interplay's Messiah, and the ability to pick locks and hack

computers works in a similar way to System Shock 2 and Deus Ex.

The main focus is around problem solving, mainly by combining the various skills of your team members. These include the usual things: computers, locks, gynaecology, yoga and other necessary skills for survival. Your characters also have some very handy gadgets at their disposal that are vital to the success of every mission.

Your Rover and Flycam for example are both capable of getting into otherwise impossible to reach places and manipulating switches and locks. Pretty much whenever you get stuck in the game it's because you haven't used your Rover or Flycam to scout out all possibilities.

Which brings us to combat. Targeting your weapons in Eden is a little different to a typical FPS title in that your sight has some 'play' in it before the movement causes your character's body to move as well. This creates a slight delay and can be a pain when aiming. There is a good variety of weapons in the game,

however, you have access to all of them right from the start (which is a bit of an innovation, but unfortunately one that makes things a bit dull after a while).

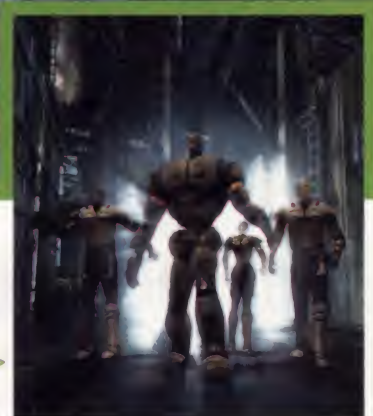
REALLY IMPORTANT

Apart from this lack of 'collectables' and the usually disappointing 3rd person camera that always focuses in on the really important stuff like what your shoes are doing, Eden has another more serious problem with its team system. Sometimes,

members of your team will simply decide that one particular corner or crate is too much for them to negotiate and they'll just stop without any warning. You'll go charging into a room full of bad guys waving your gun around only to find that your team is 400 meters behind you discussing the merits of flocked wallpaper.

Project Eden's multiplayer action is quite good, though it doesn't beat either UT or Quake III on the PS2 in that regard. As a last word, if you have the option, the PC version is slightly better due to the mouse interface and options for customising the game. <<

!!! Eidos just announced Hitman 2 for PC. The bald guy is back!



PLUS: Complex gameplay both satisfying and fun.

MINUS: Party member behaviour suspect at times, too linear.

VISUALS 85 SOUND 75 GAMEPLAY 80

OVERALL

80

A sophisticated action adventure title, lacking in polish.



Wave your arms like ya just don't care.



He just wants to lend you a hand.



Erm, I think he's dead now.

Resident Evil: CODE VERONICA X

CATEGORY: Survival Horror >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Capcom >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now

DAN TOOSE tries to survive the horror once more.

It would be fair to say that the PlayStation owed much of its success to a few key titles and series: GT, Tekken, Metal Gear Solid, Tomb Raider, and of course, Resident Evil. With that in mind, it may shock some to know that as we take a look at Code Veronica X for the PS2, we're looking at the last game of the series to grace this system. Ironically, Nintendo, known for their "youngster friendly" line-up of games, are the ones taking over the series exclusively. So does the Resident Evil series go out with a bang on PS2?

HORROR EPIC

Well, if you're a rabid fan of survival horror, then sure, this is a nice addition to the series, but if you've played the game on Dreamcast or you're wanting to get a game that can take advantage of the power of your PS2... Then the answer is no. Hardly a surprise, when this is a port of an eighteen month-old Dreamcast release, but with Capcom delivering some other tasty titles for the PS2, they're leaving little reason to make Code Veronica X sit at the top of your wish list.

If you're hoping that this was going to look better than it did on Dreamcast, then I'm here to burst your bubble. There may be slight differences with poly counts, etc, but nothing noteworthy. Considering Code Veronica uses 3D polygonal backgrounds and environments, maybe there was a window of opportunity for Capcom to juice the game up for PS2, but they didn't take it. The only thing that you'll get to look at that's new is 10 extra minutes of FMV, focusing on the highly shift-y Wesker. A definite plus for Res Evil fans, but not one big enough to warrant buying the game for unless you didn't play it on Dreamcast.

If you haven't played it before, then this really is one of the best games in the series, and has more than a few merits. Despite the lack of relative change, the visuals are very nice, with in game graphics that don't fall far behind the excellent FMV that pops up frequently through the course of the game. There are multiple characters you'll use as you play

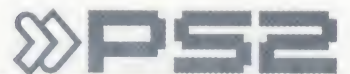
through the game, and following the tradition set in the earlier games, there's the option to play in extra modes if you can earn them.

AN EYE-OPENER

So why be down on Code Veronica X? Well, it still has all the things that we wished weren't there in the old Dreamcast version, like the traditionally clunky control system, and god-awful inventory system. More to the point though, Capcom themselves have already done better on the PS2 with Onimusha and Devil May Cry.

It's this simple really... If you're a Resident Evil fan from the old PlayStation series, and you didn't get to play the game on Dreamcast, then you're likely to love Code Veronica X to bits. However, if you have played the Dreamcast version, or simply want a game that doesn't rely on a heavily dated control scheme and gameplay formula, then there are other Capcom titles you should be looking to get for your PS2 instead. <<

!!! The Resident Evil movie should be out soon, starring Milla Jovovich.



PLUS: Extra FMV. Gripping storyline.

MINUS: Just a port. Same old shonky controls.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

82 80 75

OVERALL

79

A great game, but Capcom could have done much more.

The Bandicoot is BACK!

CRASH BANDICOOT

THE WRATH OF CORTEx



Now Crunchier than ever.

With hotter moves, mind blowing graphics and cooler vehicles to face his toughest adventure yet: The wrath of Cortex. It's going to be just like the good old days, only better.



unleashed on PlayStation 2



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Page 4 of the Sea-Doo Kamasutra.



Splish splash I was takin' a bath!



Sea-Doo. Say it. Wahahaha!

Splashdown

CATEGORY: Racing >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Infogrames >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now

CAM SHEA touches down with a splash...

Welcome to the world's first "Sea-Doo" racing game. Sea-Doo's, aside from holding the world record for "stupidest name ever" (a title formerly held by the fanny pack), are the lazy man's water racing craft, since standing up isn't required. If jet-skis are the motorbikes of the water, then Sea-Doo's are more like the yank tank — slower, less manoeuvrable and a whole lot bigger. On the other hand, they're easier to use, more buoyant and much harder to fall off. Whatever. This is the craft that Rainbow Studios have chosen to base Splashdown around.

WET WET WET

Splashdown has 18 courses, and the game is broken up into the standard Career, Arcade and Versus modes. Career mode is a little frustrating, because it's long, with little in the way of rewards and you're required to qualify for every race. Nonetheless the racing action is solid. Splashdown incorporates tricks into the racing in the form of a "performance meter". The more tricks you land, the higher your craft's performance. This whole

concept just doesn't work as well as it might, with little skill or judgement really required for pulling off tricks. Indeed, Rainbow Studios might have been better served to focus less on the tricks and more on raw racing, because on this level the game is excellent. The feel of your Sea-Doo (snigger) through the water is spot on, and the physics can be used in a number of ways to bring greater depth to the gameplay. For instance, leaning back when you've built up some speed reduces the friction under your craft allowing you to go a lot faster. You can also dive down into the water and "submarine" under objects or take shortcuts. The other racers provide a reasonable challenge and there's a good amount of skill to learn in handling your craft and taking the right line through the courses — it's not rocket science, but it's good fun.

AUTHENTIC PHYSICS

Splashdown is quite a pretty game — the water effects are stunning, the

environments are large and varied, and the player and Sea-Doo models are detailed. The game runs at a solid 30fps and the impression of speed is great when caning along with your craft at peak performance.

Considering how complex the

environments are, however, perhaps it shouldn't come as a surprise that some courses suffer from regular slowdown.

Splashdown is mostly about flat water racing. There aren't much in the way of waves in this game. The riders themselves create a cool looking wake, but there's really only one or two instances on all of the courses where there are significant waves, and these are very structured — not at all like the freeform wave mechanics in Wave Race: Blue Storm on GCN. It's a real shame considering how authentic the physics feel and how great the water looks, as this would have added another layer to the gameplay. Splashdown is still a highly playable game, it just doesn't reach the heights we were hoping for. <<<

!!! Alternate titles for Splashdown: "Desperately Seeking Sea-Doo", "Sea Doo. Sea Doo Run", "Monkey Sea Monkey Doo".



PLUS: Feels good, looks good, So Good in your puddings and pies.

MINUS: Long load times, poor game structure.

VISUALS 88 SOUND 70 GAMEPLAY 80

OVERALL
80

Splashdown shows lots of potential, but is lacking.



'MIRROR, SIGNAL, MANOEUVRE'
The Art Of Driving #1
(November 2001)

BURNOUT

**"Crashes are the most dramatic and wince-inducing that we've ever
seen in a video game. You come away shattered"**

PSM2 Magazine October 01


Criterion
GAMES

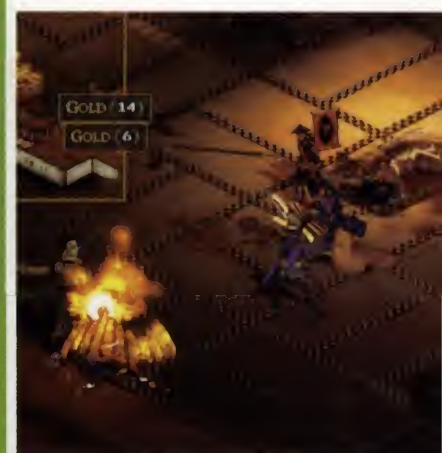
www.ACCLAIMuk.com

www.theartofdriving.org

Acclaim

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PlayStation 2



Throne of Darkness



CATEGORY: RPG/Strategy >> PLAYERS: 1-8 >> PUBLISHER: Sierra >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >> REQUIRED: PII 400, 64MB RAM

DAN TOOSE discovers the "evil" in Medieval Japan.

Very few game developers stay put in the one company, so it's no surprise that an ex-Blizzard animator by the name of Ben Haas co-founded a new development team called "Click". Perhaps it was a desire to do it better, or maybe it was habitual, but Ben's team has produced this heavily Diablo-inspired game, *Throne of Darkness*.

But if you were expecting to guide a lone samurai, ninja or monk through a long perilous quest, then think again. This time you've got seven characters, under the service of their Daimyo, whose mission is to thwart the efforts of the Dark Warlord, formerly the Shogun.

DIAL-A-SMITHY

In gameplay terms this means playing a game with a Diablo-style interface that allows you to control a

group of four characters. Each Daimyo has powers allowing him to teleport his seven samurai to and from his chambers, so he can dictate which four of his men are operative at any given time. You only ever directly control one character at a time, with the rest of your team acting according to tactics and roles you assign them, as the action constantly moves ahead in real time.

The tactics and roles you assign to the group and individuals has a genuine effect on their success, and allows you to have your team change their actions quite dramatically, although not quite dramatically enough in some certain instances. You have 12 customizable tactics, which simply determine the formation your four men will take, and what the basic role of each member of that

formation will take. The only problem is that characters you're not directly controlling only use the single spell you've assigned to them in their "roles" setting, making your spell-casters very limited unless you take control of them specifically.

Having a priest and a blacksmith to deal with is nothing unusual. The priest can identify your items, sell you potions, remove curses from items, and help you offer magic items to the gods. Your clan's blacksmith can repair and make items. What's different in *Throne of Darkness* is that you can use these two members of your clan, even when you're nowhere near them. In gameplay terms, this is extremely convenient, saving you returning to base, but it's not really explained just how this works, which is pretty dodgy in terms of realism.

Those who like making their own magic items will dig the blacksmith's ability to add components to your items, imbuing them with certain powers and bonuses. He can also make you new items from scratch, so long as you've given him raw materials in the form of discarded equipment.

SO IS IT A DIABLO CLONE OR WHAT?

In most respects, yes, this is a Diablo clone. For starters, the basic interface in *TOD* is extremely similar, not only in terms of the action, but also your inventory, spell tree, and character screens. Even your basic stats and resistances are way too similar to those used in *Diablo* for it to be called a coincidence.

However, there are a few elements that differ markedly from *Diablo I & II*



Goodness gracious great balls of fire.



It's Leap of Faith time.



Skeleton Archer

How do skeletons see without eyeballs?



Eliot's housewarming gets out of control.



Most melee attacks are somewhat unspectacular, while **the spell effects are quite dazzling.**

that should be pointed out. For starters, controlling a group of characters is far more akin to Baldur's Gate, although this is totally real time, with no ability to pause and think about things. There is however the tactics and role elements which are also decidedly different. Of course, there's the "portable" priest and blacksmith phenomenon, which is probably original because it's so questionable.

On it's own merits though, Throne of Darkness is quite an aesthetically pleasing game. Some of the backgrounds are gorgeous, particularly the wilderness areas, although they can also get a bit repetitive with all the running from village, to castle, to village, etc. Like Diablo, there's a set resolution, which

isn't a problem thanks to an automap/radar allowing you to see where your characters run off screen. The animations seem to vary highly in quality. Most melee attacks are somewhat unspectacular, while the spell effects are quite dazzling. Your characters themselves vary in size, shape, and general appearance. However, it must be pointed out that playing the game as a different clan does not result in any change in appearance of your team, besides their clan colour.



Dan Toose actually owns a real Samurai Katana. Pretty scary, huh?

Perhaps the biggest let down for Throne of Darkness is that having a character die is no big deal at all. Bringing them back involves sending them back to the Daimyo, and having him resurrect them. With extra characters back at base, you can replace a dead

character with an active one while you wait for them to recover, so basically, the only way to be stopped is to have all your characters in the field dead at once. In multiplayer this isn't altogether a bad thing, but for the single player game, it takes a lot of the tension and excitement out of the game.

While it may prove to enthrall some multiplayer enthusiasts, Throne of Darkness has a few too many niggling issues with the single player game to become a classic. The dire lack of interaction with NPCs leads to a feeling of plotlessness. If you're after an epic RPG experience, this isn't it. However, this game presents enough interesting ideas to suggest Click may nail it for a certain breed of Diablo freaks that simply don't care about the issues above. Each to their own. <<



PLUS: Diablo with a party-based system.

MINUS: Dying lacks consequence. Lack of character interaction.

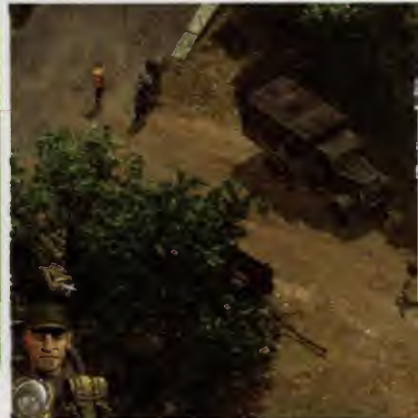
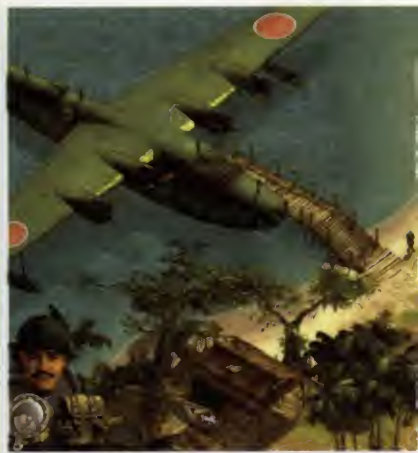
VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

81 78 77

OVERALL

79

A few niggling issues stop this good game from being great.



For all the little people out there...

Man, berets are so not in.

Commandos 2: MEN OF COURAGE

CATEGORY: Puzzle/Strategy >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: Eidos >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >> REQUIRED: PII-300, 64MB RAM

DAVID WILDGOOSE is our resident man of courage...



68 >> HYPER REVIEW

If war is hell, then hell is a videogame that punishes you for every little mistake. In this regard, the subtitle adopted by Commandos 2 is unwittingly appropriate: it will take players of enormous courage to endure the hellish Quicksave/Quickload exercise this game requires from start to finish. Commandos 2 delivers a potentially great gaming experience beaten into submission by endless moments of sheer frustration.

AN ELITE TEAM

World War II is in full cry at the beginning of the game. You assume control of an elite team of Allied commandos tasked with bringing Nazi Germany to its knees. Each team member possesses a unique assortment of skills and abilities,

thus placing the onus on cooperation and complementary teamwork. Missions are encountered in a linear fashion, the narrative gradually revealed through cut-scene briefings and conversations.

The gameplay dynamic revolves around stealth. In all circumstances the commandos are significantly outnumbered and outgunned, so a frontal assault is futile. Typically, too, the mission objectives proscribe anything other than a covert operation. As such, silent elimination of the enemy or avoiding them altogether is the order of the day.

Patrolling enemies have Metal Gear Solid-esque sight cones to inform you of exactly where they can or cannot spot you. For some inexplicable reason though, this useful device can only be assigned

to one enemy at a time. When they do spot you, there's roughly a half-second pause where you can act before they open fire and raise the alarm. It's all rather unforgiving.

To fight back, your commandos have their special skills and equipment. Besides a standard batch of guns and grenades, they have some unusual techniques at their disposal. The Green Beret can bury himself (in a shallow grave) to avoid detection; the Thief can stalk enemies; the sultry Natasha can distract guards by simply applying her lipstick; and Whiskey the dog is able to ferry items between estranged team members. The Driver, Sapper and Diver all have their own self-explanatory traits and abilities.

Helpfully, a range of context-sensitive actions allow them to do

things like snipe from an open window, hide under a bed, bound and gag unconscious soldiers, disarm mines, hijack vehicles, shimmy up telegraph poles, and so on. In fact, the vast number of possible actions is quite overwhelming. And it's a situation only made more confusing by the insubstantial manual and frighteningly slight tutorials.

TRY TRY AGAIN

But don't be deceived by the wealth of options—they're a mirage. The maps and objectives are structured so that there's always one best solution. Alternatives are conceivable yet rarely achievable. It's like being a kid in a cake store that houses every sugary delight imaginable, and then told you can



Each map presents a complex conundrum where **tactical invention** counts for nought against second-guessing the puzzle's creator.

only choose the cinnamon donuts. The creative player faces a stern challenge if he dares venture from the path the designer had in mind. Each map presents a complex conundrum where tactical invention counts for nought against second-guessing the puzzle's creator. There's no sense of satisfaction at the completion of an objective, more a sigh of blessed relief. Despite its appearance, *Commandos 2* is not a strategy game. In fact, it has most in common with ye olde point-and-click adventure games such as the *Monkey Island* series. Both games have you guiding a character through a series of increasingly difficult puzzles where success is met thanks to judicious use of an increasingly large inventory of

items. Except *Commandos 2* ups the ante by forcing you to manage multiple characters and introducing the possibility – nay, likelihood – of almost instant death every few minutes. It's impossible to pinpoint exactly why the game is so frustratingly hard, but a combination of factors certainly doesn't aid the matter. For a start, there's no way to issue orders while the game is paused. Your commandos have no AI to speak of; every action they take must be directed by the player – they won't even return fire or flee when under attack unless specifically instructed to do so. And, lastly, the perennial curse of the PC strikes once more with a host of (often unfathomable and occasionally even undocumented) hot keys that

absolutely must be committed to memory and used with split-second timing in conjunction with a far from intuitive mouse-driven interface. Thus when you have characters facing life-threatening situations they will inevitably die. And you will have to reload and try, try, try again. And again. And probably ten times more for good measure. *Commandos 2* is laden with wartime atmosphere and period detail. It's consistently gorgeous to behold and the personality of the squad members does much to entice some emotional investment from the player. But at its core it's a heartless game of trial-and-error. You'll feel bewildered, nerve-wrecked, and in constant fear of your life. I suppose that's a fair approximation of the experience of war, but it hardly makes for an enjoyable videogame. <<<



PLUS: Character, atmosphere and visual detail.

MINUS: Endless trial-and-error spawns misery.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

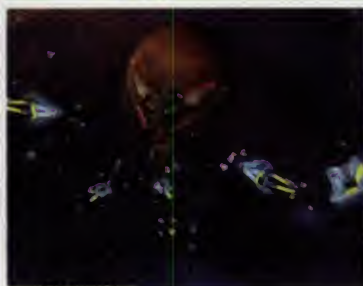
86 82 75

OVERALL

79

Plenty of potential, but crippled by several frustrating flaws.

There is a *Commandos 2* website at eidosinteractive.co.uk with forums and more.



Conquest: Frontier Wars

CATEGORY: Strategy >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft >> PRICE: \$79.95 >> RATING: G8+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >> REQUIRED: PII 350, 64MB RAM

JAMES COTTEE is a space-case. Ask anyone.



Space, they say, is big. Really big. But it just isn't big enough for expansionistic species with severe ideological differences, and is thus a never-ending source of conflict to base video games around. Conquest: Frontier Wars skirts around a number of different gaming genres, borrowing from some of the best space strategy games, both turn-based and real-time. It most closely fits into the real time strategy mold, and is such a good homage to Starcraft, to the untrained eye it must look like plagiarism. Not so.

SPACE IS THE PLACE

Granted, there are some superficial similarities. The three competing alien races are the human Terrans,

the insectoid Mantis (Zerg) and the energy-based Celareon (Protoss). Rather than duking it out on the surface of planets, Conquest is a game of interstellar warfare. Each screen is a huge star map that symbolically represents a solar system. Planets, nebulae and asteroid fields can be harvested for resources, and wormholes can be used to link 16 maps together to give the game a truly epic scale.

To keep things from getting too abstract, all three sides have very distinct personalities, if not play styles. Terran units have a certain smart-arsed quality to them, the Celareon are snooty and superior, and the Mantis have an arse-backwards grammatical structure reminiscent of Yoda! As a Mantis commander, you'll find your units

responding to orders with quips like "orders receive we," are likely to sign off with an enthusiastic "hail queen!" The Mantis are also an equal opportunity employer, with many senior ranks filled by female space insects. Very progressive!

Conquest employs a couple of techniques to discourage players from the old "tank rush" tactic in the first few minutes of a game. First is the concept of "command points". In addition to the game's three basic resources of ore, gas and crew, the size of one's fleet is limited at any time by a certain number of command points. Once your quota is used up, you can't build any more ships. The only way to get more is to build certain types of command and defense structures

around planets; in other words to build up your forces in a reasoned and steady manner.

The second game design trait to limit your rush tactics is concept of supply. In most RTS games, units have a magically replenishing ammo stockpile; the magic pudding of arsenals. In Conquest, each ship can only fire off a certain



Maybe we should call Flick.



Don't look now, but there's a very pissed-off planet behind you.



Is that Uranus' ring?

The Mantis have an arse-backwards grammatical structure reminiscent of Yoda.

number of shots before it needs to be re-supplied. This can only be achieved by being within a certain radius of planetary bases, or by the judicious use of re-supply ships. Either way, it forces the budding space admiral to think very hard about logistics, just like all great commanders have to.

These new design features, combined with the fog of war and the effort involved in assembling a fleet of any usable size, make even the smallest skirmish a tense affair. If your flotilla is caught in an ambush, or doesn't have the right mix of ships, or runs out of ammo at a crucial moment, then it's curtains.

STAR BLAZERS

Conquest has a lot going for it. Not original by any means, it instead combines everything we've learned

about what works and what doesn't in an RTS since Dune 2. There are all the options we've come to expect, like build queues, standing orders, way-points, and humorous sound bytes when you click on a unit. But there are also serious shortcomings, most noticeable the tendency to substitute complexity for depth.

Each upgrade you can build in the course of building up your forces may be cosmetically different, but the fact you have to build all of them to get anywhere makes it feel like busywork. There is very little discretion on the part of the player on what structures and upgrades to buy, and such matters are small fry compared to the epic space battles you must build towards.

But perhaps the biggest shortcoming is that the three sides

are essentially the same. While each has their own specialised needs, this only affects your resource collection priorities. Ships and bases are cosmetically different between the sides, but they all have equivalents that perform essentially the same function. If anything this is a step backwards from Starcraft, with the sides showing no greater difference than the colours in rival Quake teams.

Make no mistake, Conquest is a lot of fun. It gives you, the player, the chance to while away hours on end building up elaborate plans, to see them all come to fruition at the blaze of your laser cannons. But it will offer the seasoned strategy gamer nothing new. Younger players will probably get the most out of it, but old hands would better save their space doubloons for Master of Orion 3. <<

Curious as to how MOO 3 is coming along? Head over to moo3.quicksilver.com and find out!



PLUS: Three huge campaigns, low system specs, humorous setting.

MINUS: All three sides function identically, finicky tactics.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

88 92 80

OVERALL

83

Competent and engaging, but too simplistic to be a classic.

REVIEW

>> HYPER 71



Breath of Fire IV

PSone

CATEGORY: RPG >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Capcom >> PRICE: \$TBA >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now

DANIEL STAINES goes on one more adventure...

E because of this game, my neighbours are conspiring to have me removed from my apartment as we speak. See, the walls are thin here and they've got a young daughter of about three. Her bedroom happens to be right next to my lounge room and my lounge room happens to be where I've been playing Breath of Fire IV (BoF4) for the past couple of nights. This game, you must know, has a habit of making me scream out words that would make your grandmother cry. And that's unfortunate, because my neighbour's daughter has acquired the habit of listening to and subsequently repeating these words at the breakfast table every morning. Apparently it wasn't too bad until she told dad where he could 'stick his f—ing grapefruit'. So they're pretty mad now.

KICK KITTENS
But honestly, it's not my fault. Because BoF4 is quite possibly the most annoying thing on earth that isn't Oprah Winfrey, I contend that it's categorically impossible to play it without screaming out every dirty synonym for the word 'penis' you've ever heard. This is true for a variety of reasons, but most of them boil down to the fact that BoF4 is not really a coherent RPG in any sense. In fact, it's a difficult task to even consider it is a whole game at all. What BoF4 is, in essence, is a collection of mini-games annoying enough to make you want to kick kittens. These mini-games pop up with an infuriating, predictable regularity and are quite obviously devices employed to extend and propel BoF4's entirely ineffectual narrative. Perhaps this wouldn't be such a

problem if the games weren't so awfully bad - but they are, so it is. They're simplistic, frustrating, and repetitive with a mediocrity that is exacerbated by shonky camera mechanics and sloppily constructed 3D environments. How Capcom managed to fashion a majority of the game's locations so that almost every wall you see ends up getting in the way of your characters and the camera is beyond comprehension. Crate pushing mini-games are bad enough, but having to continuously repeat them because it's impossible to see what's going on half the time is just ridiculous. Elementary design principles - like giving the camera a zoom function or implementing object transparency - have been blatantly ignored, thus leaving us with a very uncomfortable question: 'why'?



Well, if the plot is anything to go by, I'd say Capcom simply didn't want to invest too much time or money into what is undeniably a dying platform. Usually RPG narratives are too extensive to go into with any detail, but here it's simply a matter of thinking of every Square game you've ever played and adding about a thousand dragons. Of course,

Enemy Toxic



How - cough - romantic, babe.



That's because you've lived a sheltered life, baby doll.

❏❏❏ Crate pushing mini-games are bad enough, but having to continuously repeat them is just ridiculous.

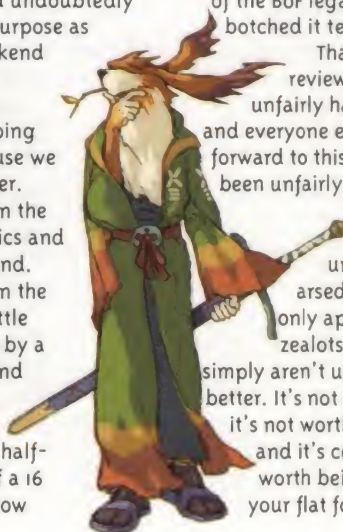
this is pretty much the scenario for every BoF game and the only thing that really differentiates number four from its laudable brethren is the inclusion of a completely impotent, almost laughably cliché cast of characters.

!!! Did you know that the original Breath of Fire was developed by none other than Squaresoft? Wonder what they think of this little doozy...

CRAZY JAPANESE ROBOT
Just look: we've got the strong silent protagonist, we've got a magic using princess, we've got a crazy Japanese robot ... oh! And there's a big stupid muscle man too! We haven't seen any of those before. Thank you, Capcom, for broadening our horizons on what an RPG should be. Perhaps next time you can redefine the FPS by making one with lots of crates and rocket launchers. Yet, despite all this vitriolic abuse it must be said that BoF4, while bad,

is not bad in the 'Superman 64/Daikatana' sense of the word. The game is playable - there's no denying it - and would undoubtedly serve its purpose as rainy weekend entertainment for the fantasy deprived. The reason Capcom is copping it so hard here is because we know they can do better. They can do better than the barely passable graphics and disturbingly awful sound. They can do better than the significantly bland battle system complemented by a set of significantly bland enemies. They can do much better than merely churning out a half-baked 32 bit remake of a 16 bit classic. And you know

what? They should have done better. Capcom had the resources and the experience to make this game a truly remarkable RPG worthy of the BoF legacy, and they botched it terribly. That's why this review might seem unfairly harsh - its writer, and everyone else looking forward to this game, have been unfairly disappointed. It is an RPG exuding an unforgivable, half-arsed paucity that will only appeal to series zealots and people who simply aren't used to anything better. It's not worth your time, it's not worth your money and it's certainly not worth being kicked out of your flat for. <<<



PLUS: Well, it's Breath of Fire for the PlayStation...
MINUS: ...so why does it feel like we're playing it on the SNES?

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
67	40	59
OVERALL		
59		

Someone should be beaten with a bamboo rod for this.



X-Men Mutant Academy 2

CATEGORY: Fighting >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Activision >> PRICE: \$79.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now

BRYCE MCDONOUGH gets his claws out...



Marvel comic fans will flock to a videogame based on their favourite characters, much like *Star Wars* fans will desperately seek out any old game with the *Star Wars* logo on it. It doesn't really matter about the game, does it? Well, what we have here is a one-on-one fighting game. Sure, the 3D fighting genre isn't exactly flooded with titles, but there are certainly enough available for the connoisseurs amongst us to be picky. With this in mind, does *X-Men Mutant Academy 2* stand a chance? Yes, yes it does.

X RATED MEN

After about an hour of rather boring Versus Mode button-mashing, I kicked everyone else out of the room and sat down to see how the game actually works... and found myself really enjoying it.

Your basic options consist of Versus, Arcade, Survival and Academy Mode. All pretty self-explanatory, except for Academy Mode, which is your basic practice and training mode. A minor disappointment, as we were kind of

hoping for a story driven or Tobal 2 style quest mode to really flesh this game out. Also included is Cerebro, where all the little goodies you unlock through battles are laid out in a nice orderly fashion.

Graphically, the game is a bit of a mixed bag. Even for the PSone, things are a little drab and plain. Whilst the arenas and characters are all rendered in 3D, it has been done better in other titles. The characters themselves all animate very nicely and even though the age of the PSone system does show through a little, Marvel fans will revel in seeing their favourite characters all over again.

INCREDIBLY TINY

The characters and arenas may very well be 3D, but the fighting most definitely is not. In fact, the 2D plane on which the fighting takes place is incredibly tiny, which makes it feel very restricted. However, the controls are a standard 6 button style and actually feel really good and responsive... chaining from jabs to launches and air juggles is

something that doesn't take long to pick up at all, and makes for some very rewarding juggles. Mid-air juggles work a little like the *Rival Schools* series with several ground hits stringing into a juggling move and then jumping up to deal more

damage in the air. The great thing is, combos really are pretty intuitive, and with the

controls feeling so tight, improvising some serious pain on the spot is both easy and fun to do.

However, it seems that even with 15 separate characters to choose from, longterm play will be a tad limited. All characters seem to play in fundamentally the same way — keep away tactics don't work nearly as well as a poking game (since all pokes can lead to launches), and the very limited size of the playing field merely emphasises this.

Fighting fans looking for a last breath of life in the PSone should definitely check this one out, and *X-Men* fanatics no doubt don't care what I say anyway. Everyone else, rent before you buy. <<

!!! X-Men 2 the movie is in pre-production. Can't wait for that one!



PLUS: Fun combo system, responsive controls.

MINUS: Bland graphics, limited playing field, very few extras.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

78 75 80

OVERALL

78

It's a lot of fun, but may prove too shallow for the long haul.



How does one "bust" air, exactly?



Man... fashion sense!



On yer bike.



Airblade

CATEGORY: Arcade/Skating >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >>
PUBLISHER: Criterion >> **PRICE:** \$TBC >>
RATING: G >> **AVAILABLE:** November >>

It's probably every young kid's dream — to save the world using nothing but his or her skateboarding skills. Well, it isn't gonna happen unless you're playing Airblade, I'm afraid. So you can stop fantasising about foiling crime with a mad kickflip or two.

Your cyber-deck is a sought after device with the power to explode trucks by grinding along the top of them. Apparently, you see, by performing tricks at certain points on the map (like swinging on security cameras, or grinding along the dish of a satellite) you can overcome evil and make things blow up. A ridiculous concept, and it's strung together by some even more ridiculous FMV with your typical "bodacious" skater babe and "sick" skater dude who wants to "stick it to the man". Thankfully the gameplay is actually quite a bit of fun.

The game pumps along at a silky smooth rate, with some slick animation and some fairly complex environments to pull tricks in. There's a time limit enforced upon the story mode, so you may be replaying levels a few times to figure out how to achieve the next objective (like figuring out how to get to the roof of a house by grinding on a particular pole). It's pretty mindless fun though, and requires almost no skill whatsoever to pull off some impressive looking stunts, so it delivers some quick satisfaction. Serious gamers who swear by Tony Hawk will probably find this one too fluffy for their tastes, but your average gamer will probably find Airblade quite a bit of fast-food fun. — **Eliot Fish**

Capcom vs SNK 2

CATEGORY: Fighting >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >>
PUBLISHER: Capcom >> **PRICE:** \$89.95 >>
RATING: M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

The cross-over "that would never happen" not only happened, but spawned a sequel. And as sequels go, this is a damn fine one. Long-time arcade rivals Capcom and SNK brought out the original CVS to mixed reactions... this time around however, they have gone all out to try and create the ultimate 2D fighting game.

The biggest issue with the original was that no one really felt at home playing it. Whilst it did supply a Capcom or a SNK groove, it just didn't feel right. Now a whopping 6 are available, from a nice standard X-ism, through to a Samurai Spirits style super bar. Each 'groove' also includes a bunch of added extras to help balance things out such as air block, parry, dodge etc. so give them all a try and see which one you prefer for yourself.

The roster is bursting at the seams with characters, plus a couple of extras you will have to work at unlocking. The animation is really nice to look at sometimes, and at others, quite unmentionable. As a whole, they look more than nice enough, but it would have been nice if it was all in high-res. The backgrounds are all 3D which is initially strange, but a few hours in and it really grew on me.

The biggest thing about this game is its playability. In the last week, no game has been played more in the Hyper office, and that is saying something. With huge combos to practice, 6 grooves to choose from, and a huge roster of characters, you could really lose yourself in this one. A must have for any 2D fighting fane. — **Bryce McDonough**

Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2

CATEGORY: BMX >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >>
PUBLISHER: Acclaim >> **PRICE:** \$89.95 >>
RATING: M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

The BMX genre has a long way to go. The first two entrants on PlayStation were Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX and Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX, and although both games were competent, they were hardly anything special either. Indeed, both seemed too inspired by Tony Hawk, without the inspiration of Tony Hawk... if you catch my drift.

Now it's the PS2's turn, and once again Dave Mirra has hit the scene first. Have developers Z-Axis learnt from their previous experiences? Well, yes and no. This is a game that's impressive in some ways - levels are intimidating in size and the trick system is easy enough to get a grip on, but difficult to master. The Park Editor is excellent, and the soundtrack, while predictable, is a classic mix of rock and hip hop. As in Thrasher, "Respect" is the measure of success in the game. Respect can be earned through high scores and by completing certain objectives — all standard fare for extreme sports games. Levels are unlocked in a similar way to Tony Hawk, although one thing that Z-Axis have introduced is several sets of objectives for each level — Amateur, Pro and Hardcore. A nice touch.

Unfortunately however, the more we played Dave Mirra 2, the less we liked it. Z-Axis have built a solid foundation, but the game simply isn't polished enough. There are numerous flaws in the game design and level design, and one too many glitches to make it recommendable. Plus there's frequent slowdown and the "feel" of riding a bike still isn't quite right. Worth a rent if you're a BMX nut. — **Cam Shea**

VISUALS

84

SOUND

79

GAMEPLAY

75

OVERALL

79

VISUALS

89

SOUND

88

GAMEPLAY

93

OVERALL

91

VISUALS

78

SOUND

85

GAMEPLAY

72

OVERALL

73

REVIEW

>> HYPER 75



Kamasutra 2 research begins...



Dead or Alive 2 » PS2

CATEGORY: Fighting >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Tecmo >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

TERRY RAYTON loves the jiggles... er, juggles.

Way back when the PlayStation 2 first arrived on supermarket shelves, many people were disappointed to see no 'I'm gonna buy a PS2 just for this' type of games. Tekken Tag made a bit of a splash, mainly because it was the only title in the fighting genre at launch time. However, that gravity-defying game that most of us gamers came to know and love in the arcades: Dead Or Alive, made a comeback in a very big way in the form of a bra-busting sequel: Dead Or Alive 2 (who would've thought).

ANTI ALIASED 747S

Considering the largely...erm, disproportional sizes of the female characters of this game, and also considering that the gaming populace is for the most part male, is there a reason this game shouldn't be picked up by every gamer with a PS2? To be blunt, no game is like that. However, everyone should at least try it. This game will impress visually, with everything being anti aliased, awesome lighting effects and the general fluidity of the characters' motions. A new graphics engine has replaced the NTSC version, and it shows.

Unlike Tekken Tag, characters can fully explore the environment around them. For example, in one level, you begin fighting on a rooftop of a building and instead of an invisible boundary, you can knock someone off a ledge and they'll go flying a few stories downwards! You can also knock characters through walls, off waterfalls, and cliffs.

The only qualm I could perhaps have against DOA2, is that polygon counts on the characters don't seem to be as high as in Tekken Tag. That's not to say that they're not very highly detailed, but to an expert's eye, it can be seen that those awesome muscle definitions seen in Tekken Tag are just not there. Perhaps this was necessary to keep the frame rate at a constant 60fps. Oh, and another annoying tidbit, is that you must have a 60-hertz capable television or you'll be playing in 50-hertz mode, which has a letterbox the size of a bantha.

ALL YOUR BASE ARE BELONG TO US!

If the shockingly bad voice acting, and translation from Japanese to

English won't have you on the floor in fits of laughter, then the final boss: Tengu, will. Never has an end boss looked less threatening. The reason being that he looks like a fat version of Pinocchio, with tiny wings and big horns on his back. However, I must admit that the use of the PS2's motion blur capabilities for the fight against Tengu, is rather cool. The tagging feature is also excellent. The other characters on your team (controlled by you or another human player) can tag in to finish a combo for you — that's an example of how quick tagging works — and overall, the speed of the game is fast. After going back to play Tekken Tag, I thought the PS2 was playing tricks on me and had turned on some hidden slow motion mode. The game comes close to the Street Fighter series in terms of speed.

Anyway, for the fighting fans out there, this game should do you well. With very few drawbacks, great visuals, kick-ass gameplay, and speed to boot, DOA2 will quench your thirst for the fighting genre (or lack of) for a while. Top stuff. <<

!!! 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.

PROS: Great gameplay, awesome for parties (four player tag).

CONS: Bad Japanese translations, 50-hertz sucks.

VISUALS 93 SOUND 80 GAMEPLAY 90

OVERALL

87

Any game with breasts this large, you have got to play.

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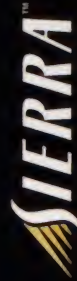
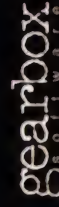
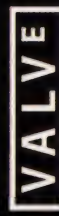
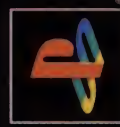


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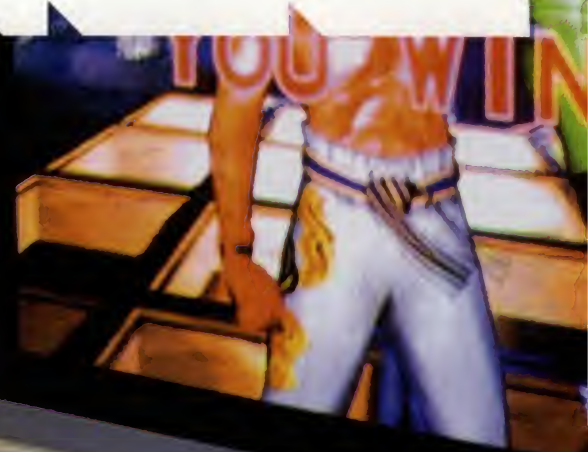


HALF-LIFE® PlayStation®2

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ARCADE



Tekken 4

NAMCO



"Unda maaah thumb, there's a wo-man..."

There's something odd about the ambience of waiting (im)patiently in line for your turn of the latest fighting game down at the local arcade. You quietly place your coin on the console. Your prospective opponents eye you up and attempt to gauge whether or not you look like a master who is going to rob them of their credits or whether you are just some learner chump that is going to make them feel good about their on screen martial prowess. Although, I don't feel kinda chumpy, I nonetheless can take on a chump-like status against a true Tekken master who has surrendered his youth to mastering the multitude of moves involved with each character.

PANTY LINES

The Tekken series has been with us since 1994 and if there was any example of the evolution of the polygon, then this game would be it. With Tekken 4, the polygons are

virtually gone. The first thing you notice is the complete roundedness of each of the characters' faces and panty lines. In parallel with Tekken's graphical makeover is some very stylish wardrobing — for martial arts wear, depress punch or for street wear, press kick.

But it's not all about the visuals. There have been some new inclusions to the Tekken world with the most prevalent being walls and subsequently, the 'wall stun'. If you power hit someone into a wall, this stuns the opponent long enough to line up another power move. Other wall usage includes combo attacks where the opponent can be slammed into the wall and then juggled, or you can use a reverse move (using the throw buttons) which places your opponent with his back to the wall instead of your own. The other wall use is a wall jump, which is both an attack and escape in one. Not all of the fight locations have walls, but mastering their usefulness will pay dividends.

GET REVENGE

Like any good quality martial arts film, the Tekken 4 story is based on revenge. Heihachi, who is trying to play god and create a new life form, has attempted to splice his own genes with those of Ogre's (Tekken 3). The experiment proves to be unstable, but through scientific analysis, he realises that the missing ingredient to the equation is the Devil gene. He searches for Jin Kazama who was last seen in a devil form after being shot in the back by Heihachi in T3. In his search, he happens upon his son Kazuya's lifeless body, who then becomes reanimated in a devil form, destroys a large Tekken force and then disappears. In an attempt to lure Kazuya (and hence score the devil gene), Heihachi creates The King of Iron Fist Tournament 4. Kazuya knows that it is a trap, but nevertheless enters the competition as he sees it as a chance to bash the crap out of Heihachi and get revenge for being thrown into a

volcano by his own father over 20 years ago.

So what makes the Tekken series stand out from the pack apart from its compelling storyline? It has to be the variation of reality based fighting styles that are faithfully reproduced with the charismatic characters. Whether it be the fancy leg work of Tae Kwon Do, or the Herculean helicopter throws of wrestling, the uppercuts of boxing (as represented by a new character Steve) or the smooth and graceful kung-fu kicks and stances, each character has around 40 distinctive moves ranging from the basic attacks to very complex moves that can only be accessed in specific stances.

So will Heihachi defeat Kazuya and be able to create some new genetically modified characters for arcade fans to control? Only time release will tell. <<

9/10

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Final Fight One

GBA CATEGORY: Fighting >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Capcom >>
 PRICE: \$59.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

It's a fairly basic scenario. Bad guy kidnaps girl. Good guys seek revenge. This time around, the girl in question happens to be the mayor's daughter, and thus Haggar, the mayor, calls on his future son-in-law and his best friend Cody and Guy, to find and rescue her. Like all city mayors, Haggar is a former pro-wrestler, and her loving boyfriend Cody just so happens to

be a bouncer. As one of the first games to receive a conversion from arcade to SNES, the original console version was sorely undermined by the fact that only two of the characters were available and there was no two-player mode.

Using this to their advantage, Capcom have made sure not only that Guy is accounted for, but you

can also grab a friend, a link cable and another copy of the game (no single cart multiplayer unfortunately) and go tonking through the streets with your best friend in tow. Another very handy addition is the battery save, without which it would be very frustrating to restart the game every time you switch it back on. The battery save also means that your records can be saved in the cartridge, allowing for unlockable features the way only Capcom knows how.

The major issue here is, well, it's a damn old game. Whilst it is still great fun to mash your buttons for 30 minutes straight and beat the crap out of the Mad Gear gang, it is definitely showing its age. Instead of Final Fight One, maybe a new game adding something to a genre that is more than 10 years old would have been a better idea. - Bryce McDonough



You brought your pet slug again?



Weight 187 lb. Beefcake, beefcake or beefcake.



Check his pockets for a roast dinner.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
80	70	80	75

Super Street Fighter II Turbo Revival

GBA CATEGORY: Fighting >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Capcom
 PRICE: \$TBA >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Turbo Revival is exactly that — a revival of one of the most successful and popular versions of SF ever released. For those of us who were around in the arcades during the SF revolution, you will remember this as the first real advancement in the series since Championship Edition. The sound was suped up, graphics took a strong hit of steroids, and four new faces popped up to face the challenge. Perhaps one of the biggest advancements it made however, was the inclusion of a 'Super' bar.

With all these additions, plus the significant toning down of certain aspects of the game and damage as a whole, SF really took to another level in the strategy stakes and



Maybe it's something she ate.

proved that Capcom knew how mano et mano fighting worked. What we have here in our hands folks, is a close, but not quite perfect, replica of this game.

Due to some unforgivable oversight in the R&D department of Nintendo Japan, the traditional controls of SF have had to be compacted into just 4 buttons. Using a 'tap-or-hold' system does

actually work, but it will take some getting used to. Because of this, special moves and supers can be tricky, and Capcom have lovingly included a Simple mode that makes them simple to perform. Graphics are all included, plus some fantastic new character portrait art for the selection screen.



The sound however, has taken a back seat in all of this. Missing voice samples, dinky effects, and crappy midi music dominate what is otherwise a very professional production.

This is SF, and very good SF, and as such, is a very good game, however perhaps this game's biggest drawback is its age. This is an 8 year-old game, and with Alpha 3 coming to a GBA near you soon, it is a tricky decision for SF fans to make. - Bryce McDonough

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
85	50	85	82



Suck my toes!

Total Soccer



CATEGORY: Sport >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft
 PRICE: \$59.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Soccer videogames, or sports simulation games in general, have never garnered the same popularity in the handheld sector as they have in the standard console scene. Therefore a game such as Total Soccer doesn't really have that much to live up to, and merely falls into the "good or bad" category. Unfortunately Total Soccer fits into the latter category as the game fails to implement simple

defensive AI routines.

The game boasts a huge number of teams and countries from around the globe, such as AC Milan, Real Madrid and Arsenal, so there's a good chance your favourite team is here to play as. Graphically the game does not take advantage of the GBA, thanks in part to its bland top-down view, but on the flipside the game's sound effects are exceptionally good. With this viewpoint, control of your player is

somewhat awkward and with only two options, shoot or pass, the game lacks any real depth.

Standard analysis aside, the real reason this game fails is the inclusion of a very simple offensive strategy that was somehow overlooked by the developers. Called "operation always score", the strategy



A blimps eye view.



is as follows, when you get the ball at any place on the field simply run in a straight line towards the goal. As long as you remain running in a straight line the defence will never successfully tackle you, thus giving you an open shot at goal, and yes this works on all difficulty levels. Enough said. - Kosta Andreadis



More stats than you can stomach.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
55	80	45	49

Win a Kemco GBA CARRYCASE!



The GBA is a sweet handheld, but those tiny little game cartridges get lost so easily! Well thanks to our good friends over at Kemco in Japan, you'll never have that problem again. They've given us five of the most stylish carrycases we've ever seen, so your games will always be secure. To be in the running to win one, simply answer this question:

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HANDHELD

>>HYPER 81

Boulder Dash

What would you say to a game that can run on the simplest of computers, yet be one of the most intriguing you'll ever play? Balderdash? No, Boulder Dash! Join **James Coffee** as we look at one of the most enduring game concepts the world has ever known.

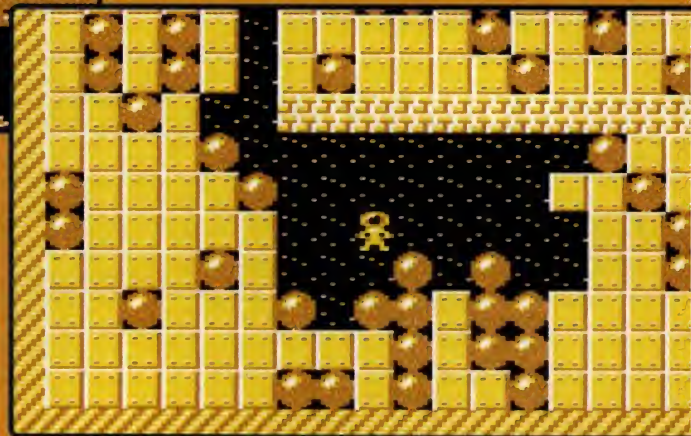
Yes, it's even "animated" by golly!



A fancy modern "colour" version.



Old game boxes. Smell the goodness.





Truly one of the best games ever.



Diamonds are a Rockford's best friend.

STONE COLD CRAZY

»» If you can't wait for BD on the GBA, there's always the option of emulation, and the dozens of clones available for DOS, Windows and Java are another source of boulder dodging fun. Just don't expect to find any of these games in the same place twice. First Star are so protective of their trademarks (and rightly so) that they're even trying to rub out games in this burgeoning "rock and diamond" genre because of their "look and feel."

In light of the overwhelming avalanche of bootleg BD games out there, you might think they have rocks in their heads! Still, the law is the law. If you can hold out for another month or so, then you'll have a perfectly legal recourse for all your rock-dodging needs. But if you give into temptation, on your own head be it: some lawyers will likely come down on you like a tonne of bricks.



the screen, pushing Rockford ever closer to success, or oblivion! The difficulty of levels ramped up quite rapidly, and each of the original game's 80 levels soon proved to require a unique strategy to beat, making the long-term challenge of such a simple game staggering.

WE WILL ROCK YOU

Several sequels were produced, and Rockford even made it to the arcades. There was even a Boulder Dash Construction Kit, which would allow players to design their own levels. Unfortunately, the program did not allow such levels to be compiled into stand-alone games; they only worked with BDCK interpreter. This was frustrating for

In 1984, Peter Liepa created a fairly unassuming game called Boulder Dash. It was published for the leading home computer formats of the period, and sold in excess of 100,000 units. It would easily run on a Sinclair Spectrum or an Atari 800, yet required keen problem solving skills as well as fast reflexes. Deceptively simple, it was to prove a formula so compelling, so addictive, that it would be ported to every system under the sun, from mainframes to calculators.

Perhaps more interestingly, it's a concept that's grown beyond the ability of its publisher and trademark owner to control. As soon as they shut down one fan site, a dozen other pop up to take its place. While they can own the name, it seems it's a game whose spirit wants to be free. Its clones may be on rocky legal ground, but the game design is still as solid as a very solid thing.

I LOVE ROCKY ROAD

The implementation of Boulder Dash is always the same. Rockford, the game character you control, explores huge cavernous areas viewed from the side. While there are seams of impenetrable material in the ground, most of the dirt can be dug through as fast as Rockford can move. Scattered throughout the caverns are precious stones, of which a certain number must be collected before you can use the level exit. Also in your path are boulders, inanimate objects that prove to be your greatest foe.

Each level began with everything in equilibrium, seemingly harmless. But as soon as you started to move,

things got complicated. If you burrowed under a boulder, it would balance for a moment over your head. As soon as you moved away, it would start falling, and if you were still in its path it would destroy you. Multiple boulders would tumble over each other in a fashion that could be roughly attributed to real physics, thus you could roughly guess what shape they'd form when they settled.

One false move and you were history! Every level soon became a race to stay one step ahead of the tumbling rocks — hence Boulder Dash! The box covers showed Rockford fleeing a giant rolling boulder Indiana Jones style, but the reality of the game was on a much bigger scale. Trigger an avalanche, and you could find the exit to the level cut off! Sometimes the only way out was suicide; to willfully stroll under a boulder and start the level again.

Sure, the rocks were deadly, but at least they stayed put while you were figuring out how to approach them. More advanced levels were riddled with hostile enemies, such as the unassuming butterflies. These innocent looking insects would explode violently upon contact with Rockford, leaving behind of all things a scattering of diamonds. They only way to kill the enemies was by skillfully tunneling them into

falling boulder traps, but even then you had to be cautious. Falling diamonds could be just as harmful as their granite counterparts.

Some levels even introduced bio-hazards. A quantity of toxic algae goop may begin confined in a corner, but once released it was only a matter of time before it filled

Boulder Dash enthusiasts who wanted to share and enjoy, but doubtless inspiration for a generation of aspiring programmers.

It was not long before Boulder Dash started attracting "homages." One of the first, and one of the best, was Emerald Mine for the Amiga. One prominent game journalist at the time said that the title screen resembled a public toilet block, but soon conceded that that it was easily of the best Amiga games of all time. Where other games dazzled players with graphics and sound, Emerald Mine shackled them to their computers with unbreakable chains of addiction.

First Star, who still hold all rights to Boulder Dash and Rockford, are also known for their addictive series of games based on the MAD magazine characters Spy Vs Spy. But Boulder Dash has proven their most enduring franchise, having been published on the Amstrad, the Apple II, the MSX, the Famicom, and even systems as obscure as the BBC micro. All up, they've sold over two million units. Presently Kemco have the licensed the publishing rights, and are promising the world an aggressive Rockford roll-out on every hand-held platform conceivable.

Most exciting of all is the upcoming version for Game Boy Advance. It will include all the classic gameplay elements such as boulders, diamonds and enemies, but looks to include some gameplay innovations as well, such as rotating game environments. The GBA is proving a boon for retro enthusiasts, and Boulder Dash could prove the most rewarding title for the system yet. <<<

HYPERVISION

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!

Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace

FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT, RATED PG

The first digital version of *Star Wars – Episode 1: The Phantom Menace* – appears to have been worth the wait. There hasn't been a DVD with this much love and effort packed into it since the US version of *Mallrats*. Don't believe us? Let's go through them.

The movie disc supports the Dolby Digital EX, the 6.1 channel surround format with a rear center speaker. It also has a scripted audio commentary from the production crew, namely George Lucas, Rick McCallum, Ben Burtt, Rob Coleman and a few others.

The extras disc contains several hours worth of material, starting with hour long documentaries on

deleted scenes and the making of the film. All of the deleted scenes are fully polished into an otherwise finished product, some of which are newly incorporated into the film for the DVD release.

The making-of documentary is a boon for anyone who wisely chose to avoid the pre-release hype, much of it being re-cut and edited from a 12-part web documentary that was available online before the film's release (also available on the disc). The remaining featurettes go into the production and design of the film, with interviews and footage that duplicates other sections of the disc. Finally, there's a full collection of trailers and TV spots and a "Duel



Lucas' son Jett didn't make the cut.

of the Fates" music video.

All that's missing is audio commentary from the cast itself. Ewan McGregor would have been great value, but their exclusion seems to run in line with the controlled reputation Lucasfilm obviously engineered for this DVD.

The film itself is still riddled with faults. Jar Jar is annoying as ever, Jake Lloyd's acting is atrocious, and Darth Maul is still the biggest waste of a great villain ever. Newly incorporated scenes means *Star Wars* fans will have to memorise a new film, and the surround sound effects are absolutely mind-blowing.

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



"Yousa think mesa a big whatsa?"



Jawas steal some props for e-bay.



Muppet Show rejects.



"Master, the will of the Force says we should cut that cable."

The Goonies

WARNER BROS., RATED PG

Starring a virtual who's who of child actors, supported by a crew that boasts as many names as Steven Spielberg, Chris Columbus and Richard Donner, *The Goonies* was a great little kids' flick that was ultimately overshadowed by the *Back To The Future* films.

Taking his love for putting innocent children into perilous situations to the extreme, this Spielberg-written adventure sees a gang of seven kids hunt down some buried treasure in a last ditch effort to save their entire suburb, which is about to be turned into a golf course. Following close behind is the dysfunctional Fratelli gang, made up of Robert Davi (*Die Hard*), Joe Pantoliano (*The Matrix*) and Anne Ramsey (*Throw Momma From the Train*).



W.C. Fields would turn in his grave.

The Goonies is a lot funnier now than it originally was, showcasing everything that was remotely cool and worth forgetting about the 1980s — like Cyndi Lauper. Kids to watch out for include a very young Corey Feldman, Sean Astin (*Lord of the Rings*), Ke Huy Quan (who also starred in *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*), and Jeff Cohen, who steals the show as Chunk.

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



Aww, you ship for brains!



"In which aisles can I find baby oil and zucchinis?"



"So... got any zucchinis left?"



Clerks

MIRAMAX, RATED R

Filmed in black and white, this was the low budget independent film that kick-started Kevin Smith's career and started what's otherwise known as the New Jersey Chronicles. Brian O'Halloran plays Dante Hicks, a store gimp at the local Quickstop grocery market who's called into work when it's meant to be his day off. While admirably committed to his job, Dante still manages to juggle a hockey game, a girlfriend who hassles him to go back to college, several berating customers, and his loser pal

Randall (who works next door) constantly making trouble. Direction and pacing is a little iffy at times, but it's the dialogue one should listen for. This is *Seinfeld* on crack, with cynical, biting commentary on why - as opposed to being right - the customers are always morons. This is bolstered further by over-the-top sitcom elements (like an ex-girlfriend unwittingly screwing a dead guy who was taking a crap out the back).



MOVIE: 8/10 **EXTRA:** 5/10

The Mummy Returns

COLUMBIA TRI-STAR, RATED M15+



The *Mummy Returns* is riddled with as many plot holes as *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace*, but in many ways, it's more enjoyable. For starters, none of the characters are as immediately pointless as Jar Jar Binks, nor is the mileage on any of the villains wasted.

This sequel sees the mummy Imhotep resurrected by the reincarnation of his lost love, Anck Su Namun. He in turn goes out in search of the Scorpion King, who he intends to use to control the world. Enter the O'Connell family, starring Brendan Fraser as husband, Rachel Weisz as wife, and Freddie Boath as son Alex. Together with the Magi army, they're going to save the world.

The Mummy Returns is loaded with great special effects. There's a new-and-improved Mummy, a gigantic army of Anubis warriors, and a tribe of hilarious pygmy mummies. Pace is cranked all the way up with relentless amounts of fighting, shooting and running for all 130 minutes of the film, which is sure to keep action fans happy.



Are you my Mummy?

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



Top Anubis breeders recommend Pal. LOTS of Pal.

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Robotech

CATEGORY: ACTION, SCI-FI
PRODUCTION COMPANY: HARMONY GOLD

Eack in 1985, Harmony Gold released a cartoon called *Robotech* to the Western world in an industry dominated by *Transformers*. It won over huge audiences with its plausible story arc and appreciation of the human condition. This cartoon, as it turns out, was an amalgamation of *Macross*, *Mospeada* and *Southern Cross*. Apart from *Astroboy*, this would have been many people's first exposure to Japanese animation.

GENETICALLY RELATED

By today's standards, the animation quality is close to appalling. Voice acting is also testing at times, with no options to switch to Japanese audio (understandable since the cartoon is so old). However, this is virtually the only way you'll find a crisp, digital

version of the classic series without any of the ads or annoying Cartoon Connection logos branded on the screen.

The *Robotech* saga begins before the turn of the century with a giant alien spaceship crash landing on the island of Macross. The island's inhabitants explore the derelict ship and discover amazing new technology, allowing them to create the transformable Veritech fighters. Before long, a race of aliens called Zentraadi attack the island. The SDF-1 is left with no choice but to fold space and teleport to Pluto and end up taking the entire island with them. Their journey back to Earth is

fraught with continual attacks from the Zentraadi, who turn out to be genetically related to humans. The story is further punctuated by a love triangle between Rick Hunter, Lin Minmei and Lisa Hayes, as well as a continuing human tragedy that includes the entire population of Earth being wiped out.

ANIMATION: 3/10 **PLOT:** 9/10 **JAPAN-NESS:** Low **OVERALL:** 8/10

Gunsmith Cats

CATEGORY: ACTION
PRODUCTION COMPANY: KODANSHA

The *Gunsmith Cats* are a pair of young ladies, Rally Vincent and Minnie May Hopkins, who happen to specialise in firearms and explosives and accept odd jobs as bounty hunters. Inspired from Kenichi Sonoda's original manga, this three-part OAV is a brisk tale involving a little political conspiracy that's uncovered during a routine investigation into a gunrunning syndicate.

MILDLY TITILLATING

Gunsmith Cats leaves little to the imagination, as it's best described as *Bubblegum Crisis Lite* and with only two heroines. On watching the making-of featurette, it's obvious Sonoda and team used the opportunity to indulge in their fascination with American culture, motor vehicles and firearms. To that end, those very things appear accurate and faithful to the genuine items – the guns, the

billboards, the Lucky Strike cigarettes; even Rally Vincent's Shelby GT 500. Meticulous attention is also paid to the operation of the guns – their reload mechanisms, rate of fire, and so on.

However, without a decent plot, *Gunsmith Cats* is doomed to being labelled a period adventure. Already the fashion, dialogue and colour schemes are out of date – hardly characteristic of most other popular anime, which exhibit a great deal more conceptualisation and imagination.

But that's not to say such an approach wouldn't work. *The Big O* and *Cowboy Bebop* are anime series that have many old-fashioned noir elements in their artistic direction, yet still they manage to captivate. The problem here with *Gunsmith Cats* is that the story is at best a mildly titillating *Thelma & Louise* adventure, and at worst an absolute bore.

One thing for sure, she's no pussy.



Just TRY eating chops with them...

ANIMATION: 7/10 **PLOT:** 4/10 **JAPAN-NESS:** Low **OVERALL:** 5/10



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BJÖRK Vespertine

UNIVERSAL MUSIC

»» It's rare that the term "genius" can be confidently applied to a contemporary artist, but the mysterious Björk qualifies to be labelled as such. Her third album, *Vespertine*, is writhing with chilling melodies and ambient grooves without ever stooping to generic beats or regurgitated sounds, remaining uncompromisingly original for its entire length.

Standout tracks like "Unison" and "Pagan Poetry" effortlessly slide between the head and the heart, with Björk's inimitable vocals gushing and shrieking their way between the layers of twinkling melody.



If you're sick to death with the state of popular music, you'd be wise to retreat into Björk's "hidden place". - Eliot Fish

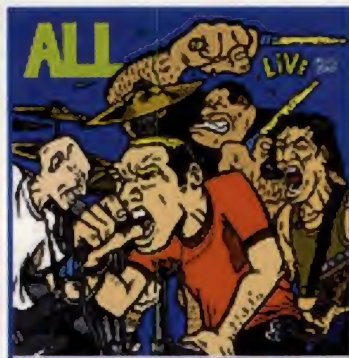


BURNING AIRLINES Identikit

DESOTO / INERTIA

»» J. Robbins was the guitar fiend behind the punk poppers, *Jawbox*, and this is the second album under the new moniker, *Burning Airlines* (after losing fellow *Jawbox* member Bill Barbot for new bass wrangler, Mike Harbin). The sound on *Identikit* is still tight, almost claustrophobic, but somewhat more relaxed melodically than on the first album, "Mission: Control". Songs like "Paper Crowns" echo the early 80's guitar quirk of XTC's "Black Sea" with a smattering of Foo Fighters for good measure. J. Robbins is still

strangling his guitar with incredible finesse, and some of the awkward arrangements are reminiscent of rock weirdos, *Shudder To Think*. Poppin', rockin' and definitely memorable. - Eliot Fish



ALL Live Plus One

EPITAPH / SHOCK

»» If Wheatus had a trace of talent and an inkling of imagination they might be able to form a very B-grade tribute band to All. Nah,

actually, they probably couldn't, but they'd like to think they could. The ultimate evolution of nerd rock, *All* simply kick arse. Better still, this live album includes a bonus live disc of the *Descendents*. Why? Because the *Descendents* are *All* with a different singer. (Well actually *All* are the *Descendents* with a different singer, seeing as the *Descendents* came first, but you knew all that, didn't you?)

- Dan Lander



CAKE Comfort Eagle

SONY

»» Sometimes you just want to feel good about life, just want to say "f*ck all the angst-ridden self pitying rage that constantly bombards my brain, I want to walk out the house smiling this morning." Well, this record might just be the answer. Don't take it too seriously, just turn the bass right up and groove to the shameless absurdity of "Short Skirt / Long Jacket", smirk at the silliness of the folk in "Long Line Of Cars" or kick back to the pointless perfection of "Commissioning A Symphony in C". Or is there more to all this? - Dan Lander



PUDDLE OF MUDD Come Clean

UNIVERSAL

»» The first signing to Fred Durst's new Flawless label, *Puddle Of Mud* might surprise a few folk who thought they had old Fred figured out - there isn't quite as much Limp Bizkit in here as you would expect an ego maniac to sign to his own vanity project. In fact, in a lot of ways, *POM* look back a lot further than Limp for their inspiration. Some classic heavy riffing and melodic vocals give *POM* a slightly different feel to your standard Durst inspired band - hard, in your face rock with a touch of style and little bit of imagination. - Dan Lander



Listen Up!

WHAT WE'RE LISTENING TO THIS MONTH

Eliot Fish - Editor

Burning Airlines - "Identikit" (DESOTO/INERTIA)

Cam Shea - Dep Editor

Aphex Twin - "DrukQs" (WARP RECORDS)

Malcolm - Art Guy

Cannibal Ox - "Cold Vein" (DEF JUX)

JAMES
COTTEE



>>The long-neglected field of video game music is finally getting some of the respect it deserves. Whether performed by a symphony orchestra, culled from top 40 albums, or an original composition, game music is now entrenched in the modern gamer's consciousness. With CD quality sound now possible in any game, some even make the music central to the gameplay. Games like Space Channel 5, Vib Ribbon, and the upcoming Rez are garnering a fanatical following that's growing every day.

And why not? Games can elicit emotional responses greater than those of any film, and the music is off central to the experience. So just as you can buy the soundtrack to any movie that comes along, increasingly it's possible to buy soundtracks to games. The biggest market for this genre is in Japan, where the music from games like Resident Evil, Chrono Trigger and Final Fantasy is freely available on CD. Europe is also a centre of game soundtrack sales, with the game music scene closely following developments in mainstream electronica.

Mirroring the explosion in emulation of classic gaming systems, emulation of game music is also a burgeoning field. Either through dedicated players, or plug-ins for Winamp and the like, musical scores from the Amiga, the ST, and even the Commodore 64 come alive. These old tracks hold up surprisingly well. It's interesting to note that when writing music for the C64, one was really programming in machine code for its synthesizer chip. One could generate amazing effects at the hardware level using source code that may be a handful of kilobytes in size!

Occasionally a game soundtrack comes out in Australia, but almost all of them are only available on import. If you're interested in game music then try some of these links. Just try to stay cool when you see the postage costs.

www.synsoniq.com
www.cdjapan.co.jp



Discourse, flames, opinions to:
jcotee@bigpond.net.au

WIN! MODERNGROOVE MINISTRY OF SOUND EDITION FOR PS2

Mix dynamic visuals with exclusive DJ sets on this interactive PS2 music CD. Designed specifically for the PS2, you can mix thousands of animated objects, video clips, images and text with over 5 hours of music, including DJs such as Tall Paul, Paul Jackson, Krafty Kurts, Paul Dakeyne and Ferry Corsten.

We have five copies to giveaway, and each pack will also include a Ministry of Sound: Dance Nation and Club Nation CD as bonus!

To win a pack thanks to Ubisoft, answer the following question:



What country are Ministry of Sound based in?

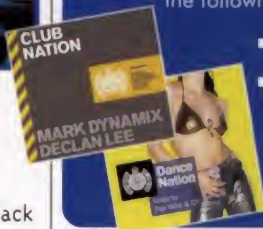
Put your answer on the back of an envelope with your name and address and send it to: **Ministry of Prizes, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016.**



MINISTRY Greatest Hits

WARNER

>>Remember that sneakers ad where the guy goes up with a black shoe and asks the serving dude 'got it any blacker'? Well, that serving dude should've just handed old mate this album and flipped him the finger. Ministry are as black as it comes, and they've always known there's more to it than just screaming over a wall of guitars - if you want to sound dark as deadman's daydream, you've gotta twist things so even the quiet bits tear the flesh from a listener's ear. If ever there was a greatest hits album worth owning, here 'tis. - Dan Lander



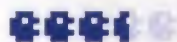
eighty's obsession with tinny little drum machines and strange Space Invader type noises. Still, difficult as his sound might be, we owe his imagination a lot. - Dan Lander



JUSTIN ROBERTSON Revtone

NUPHONIC/INERTIA

>>Justin Robertson is best known for his work as Lionrock, but right now he's put that persona on the shelf, moved from Manchester to Edinburgh and from DeConstruction to the excellent Nuphonic label. The result is an eclectic album that's falls under the broad umbrella of dance music, but owes a lot to electro, disco, 80s pop and Chicago house. In fact, the best way to describe it would probably be as "atmospheric electro cheese". Standout tracks are the soulful "Everpresent", the sultry "Love Movement" and the rolling boom of "My Dark Places". Although it's a little conservative in some ways, Revtone comes recommended. - Cam Shea



BUTTHOLE SURFERS The Weird Revolution

FESTIVAL

>>The Butthole Surfers have never failed to deliver the best brand of weird - as far as eccentric music ideas go, these guys rule their den. The biggest problem the crazy mofos have always had is getting these ideas into a format you can actually listen to. Well, the 21st century seems to suit them. Whether it be the tongue in cheek pastiche of classic riffs in "Dracula From Houston" (see "Sweet Jane") or the electronic lacings of "Intelligent Guy" the humour here is forced into a format that works, and their wit is as sharp as ever. - Dan Lander



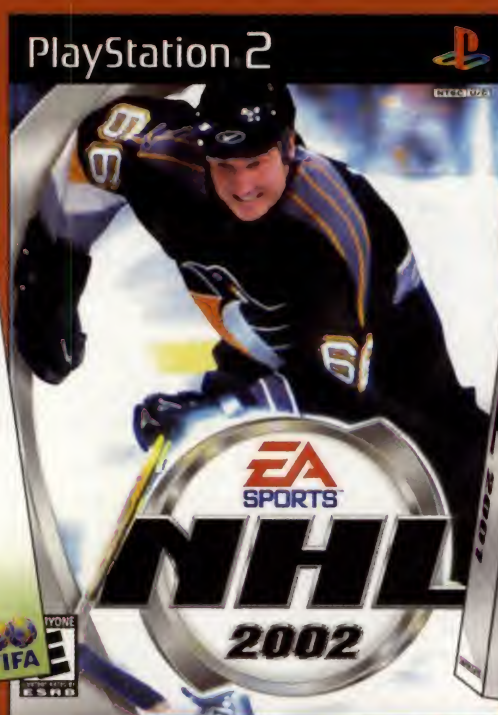
AFRIKA BAMBAATAA Looking For The Perfect Beat

FESTIVAL

>>The easiest way to put Afrika Bambaataa in his proper historical context is to say: this is the guy who did the original version of "Renegades of Funk", as covered by RATM recently. That being said, don't come to this expecting rap rock, or even hip-hop as we think of it today. Afrika was looking for his perfect beat somewhere in the most disturbed depths of the early

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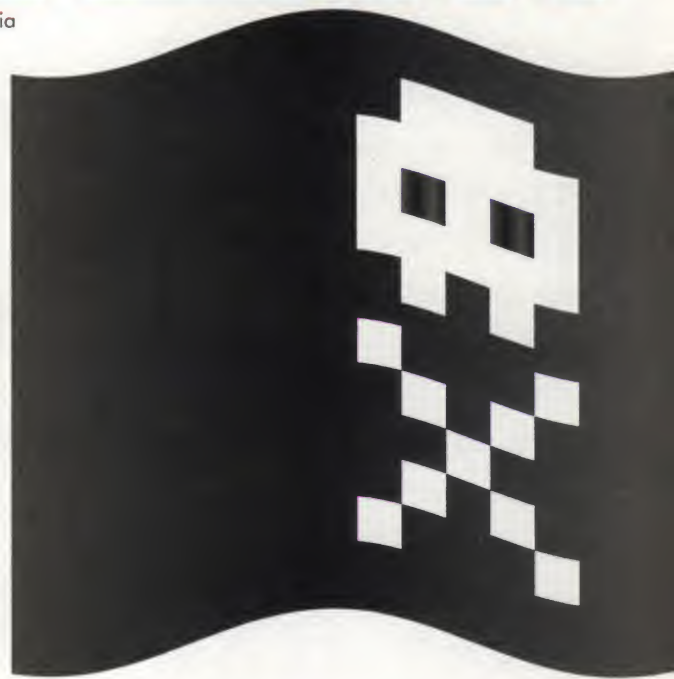
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FORUM

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

Q. IS PIRACY DESTROYING THE GAMES INDUSTRY?

Since Hyper was launched in 1993, we've always condemned games piracy and continued to promote the fact that you should support the people who make the games we play. Playing without paying will only result in robbing those talented programmers of hard earned royalties. So what do you guys think of piracy? Read on...



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'll stick with the Sony PS2 in 2002 because...?"

Responses will be printed in Hyper 100.

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.

MILLIONS OF DOLLARS

Pirating... hmm... yes, it most certainly does. But there is one thing that annoys me. I sometimes feel that the authorities and anti-pirating groups are aiming their shots at every teenager/young adult that owns a burner. Now I'm not saying I'm perfect, I had a couple of copied PSX games a few years back but I was shocked when I went to Manila for a holiday last year and I walked into a HUGE software store that had everything. Now I'm sure that this all sounds great for the average gamer, but absolutely every item in the store was pirated. They were easy to pick and they had DVD PS2 games selling for US \$10 a pop! I went over to the counter and looked at the man standing behind it and thought to myself, "How can YOU stand there and make millions of dollars for yourself and stop developers from feeding their families?"

So people my overall point is that, yes, pirating is damaging the gaming system to an extent. However, I think the police should concentrate their efforts on the big players rather than just the average teen with a burner.

Name not supplied
tpscheik@powerup.com.au

ALMOST HONEST GAMERS

Not a chance. The music industry stands as the comparison: with Mp3 becoming so prevalent, it would stand to reason that they would lose a stack of mulah... However, this has been proven to be false - they are still thriving (as much as they would hate for us to believe). Friends of mine who are computer illiterate just get the friends who are capable of manning a computer to burn them their CDs.

Piracy has been a major component of the computer gaming industry since day one. Forums and pathetic attempts of piracy protection to curb the issue have also been initiated since day one, to little or no effect.

A new approach must be taken - pricing games at \$110 does nothing but promote piracy. Console-producing companies must band together to drive up the price of the base console, and give all attempts to make their money out of controller/memory card/ add on resales. They must also remove the fee charged to game producers, so as to lower the prices of games significantly and appealing to the morals of all us (almost) honest gamers who don't mind paying \$20



more for the real thing.

KiP
Email withheld by request

MISERY INDUCING EFFORTS

The average cost of a PS2 game is around \$100, which is around a quarter the average wage of an Australian. Not everyone can afford games, so piracy will always exist. Hence the cost will always be 'high'.

I think that the only thing destroying the gaming industry is sub-standard games.

I mean, who can blame people for pirating a game that they are only going to get 20 hours of play out of?

It is okay for you guys, sitting there, playing sponsored copies of the latest releases, your perception of the quality of the game tainted by



Why would you want to pirate this game anyhow?!



I can smell the fakery from here.

the fact that it has not cost you a cent, and that you are in fact being paid to play it, but for the average John on the street, this is not the case.

I don't condone piracy, and do not involve myself in it - I believe that if you enjoy a game, then the developer should be rewarded for the time and effort they have spent in producing it. However, the flipside to that is, if some kid's mum forks out \$100 for a piece of shit for her kid's birthday, and he hates the game, then why should the developer be compensated for his/her misery inducing efforts?

Before we even think about eradicating piracy, we should first look at eliminating the droves of crap software from the market. And remember, the perceived price of piracy is always going to be factored into the cost of games, regardless of the actual piracy occurring.

Cheers,

[miscrant]

narcis@datapimp.org

DO SOMETHING FAST

Hyper,

I think piracy is destroying the games industry. No, wait, I don't 'think' it's destroying it, I 'know' it's destroying it (actually, everyone should know!).

Proof, look at the price of games nowadays, they're so high! Another sign is the poor quality of games, the first one is top notch but later on, the sequels totally suck because the developers don't have the money to make a good quality game (but you guys mentioned that already).

The games industry is too rich at the moment to fall, but in a couple of years time it 'will' fall. We could say that "piracy is slowly but surely destroying the games industry". I

scanned some game covers for you guys to see how far the shops around my place have gone with game piracy. There's a shop that even copies PS2 games (and heaps of 'em!). These are PSone games; they even cram 5 games on 1 disc. Are you wondering how they do this? Simple, they leave out the FMVs and the speech! How crazy is that!? So, 'YES', the games industry will be destroyed if someone doesn't do something fast.

Anthony Palmer

Apalmer@vanuatu.com.vu

LESS QUALITY & QUANTITY

I am not a bigoted person. I am able to see several sides to an argument and make up my opinion with the information I receive. I can see why people would want to pirate games, and the fact that many people only pirate games because they enjoy playing them and can't afford to purchase enough to satisfy their gaming needs. Pirating is a way for these people to play as many games as they want for a very small price. Surely there is nothing wrong with people who only do it because they want to play more games and don't want to shell out \$100 for a game. Well, I believe that there is.

Piracy is destroying the games industry, when a person pirates a game and others buy copies - this is taking potential profits from the game developer who took the time and effort to make a quality game (some of the time) for the consumer. When a game is pirated, the developer gets NO money from the sale. If the person that bought a pirated copy was considering buying the retail version then the store has just lost a sale, as has the developer. If the store does not sell many games then they will not be

distributed and if the developer gets an unsatisfactory profit on their game, then they are not going to have as much money to make the next game and may eventually stop making games all together. Then what would the software pirates do? Will they make their own games? I think not.

Piracy means less quality and quantity in games and even a possible collapse in the industry. Piracy also causes the retail price to increase due to the reduction in sales, this means that loyal gamers are paying for the software pirate's games. The retail price of games is often an excuse that pirates often use, but the truth is that pirates make the prices for games increase. The longer that pirating is allowed to continue, the more retail games will cost. It is a unique situation in which the software pirates and the consumers of the pirated copies are dependent on the games industry for business and yet their very existence is against the same industry that they depend on. If piracy is not stopped soon, we may soon see the beginning of the end of creativity expressed through video games. I don't think that any of us want to see that happen, even the software pirates out there.

To the pirates I say this: you may not know how much pirating is costing the games industry but if you continue what you are doing you may be out of business sooner than you think. I am not judging you, I understand how tempting it is to be able to get games at such a small price, but think about this. How would you feel if you had just made something that you were very proud of just for the general public to enjoy and then you got no reward for it and went bankrupt due to lack of profits? This is essentially what you are doing by pirating. Fellow gamers, I urge you, continue to oppose the

software pirates in your area.

Ryan

Hastieryan@hotmail.com

WE'LL STILL WANT TO BUY GAMES

Hyper,

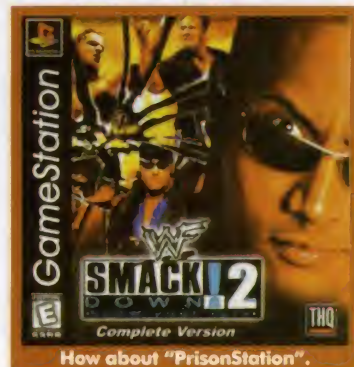
Well I thought this one out long and hard (about 10 seconds because I wanted to get back to Mario Kart Advance) and anyway I realised that, no, piracy wouldn't destroy the games industry. Copying of CDs and now DVD based games is increasing. I know that some people only bought a PS1 because pirated games are easy to make. So this will have an impact on the industry.

Game prices increase and development costs may have to decrease making game quality go way down. But nothing can destroy our love of games. Wouldn't you rather have a nice new game with the box and manuals than some pathetic burnt game? With Nintendo guarding against piracy with their mini GCN discs, we see a company trying hard to prevent this problem.

Destroy our precious games? Never! But piracy is an issue we should all be aware of.

Crystal J.

gcfreak@hotmail.com



How about "PrisonStation".

MAIL

✉ HYPER LETTERS:

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

INTERNAL OR EXTERNAL?

Hi Hyper,
I've been reading your mag for quite some time and it gets better every issue! Keep up the good werk! Anyway I'm here tell to tell U about when I was scanning the numerous games at Big W only to find the most expensive games were Castlevania, Ready 2 Rumble and Iridion for Game Boy Advance. I mean... \$85!! I know it takes more time to make Game Boy Advance games than just the colour games but you can get Red Faction on PC cheaper and how long and how much effort did it take to make that? About 100x more than Castlevania. What the hell is going on? Moving on to question time (YAY!):

1. Is DOA3 showing any sign of coming to PS2? If not, there's gonna be a lot of disappointed fans.
2. Is Golden Axe ever going to come to the PS2? Because I love that game.
3. Is our PS2 HDD going to be external or internal?
4. Bring back that awesome cover disc, pleeeeeeaaasssseeee!!!

Insane Outsider
The_insane_outsider@yahoo.com
Dear Mr. Outsider,

1. There is no indication of DOA3 on any other platform other than Xbox at this stage.
2. Golden Axe? You're kidding right? Only if you own a Wonderswan...
3. Internal, like the US one. It slots into the empty bay at the back.
4. How much will you pay me?

MARIO BROTHERS

Heya Hyper,
I was glad to read last issue that you guys agreed with me on the Zelda issue. Who cares about the cutesy graphics when this new look could actually open new gameplay possibilities!
And also you guys were one of the only people smart enough to realise that Luigi's Mansion and Mario Sunshine have a mysterious link with the difference between sunlight and daylight, no to mention the devices on their backs.
Now you guys got this far, but being an absolute Gamecube nut I made an interesting connection.
While playing a game on the system, if you opened the lid, all you had to do was close it again and you'd go right

back to where you left off! Awesome! Now here's the catch, if the system can do that, maybe Nintendo can finally implement the "Stop and Swap" option that never made it between Banjo-Kazooie and Banjo-Tooie (The ice key and sunken island ring a bell?!). By this I mean, perhaps at some point in either game, you reach a point where Mario can go to Luigi's Mansion or vice versa. This would give the game amazing replay value and odds are the jumping from game to game would open up new areas. Man, I just wasted an entire letter talking about one thing of many I wanted to discuss, oh well, guess I'll just write another one later...
So, what do you think of my theory?

Luke Orrin
Imnottellingyoumyemail@hotmail.com

Dear Luke,
It's a cool idea, but whether Nintendo could actually get that to work...

ADS SHMADS

To Hyper
I have just seen an ad for Mario Kart on Game Boy Advance and let me say that it was funny, it had me interested from the start and it showed me what the game was like. Now let me say that no PlayStation 2 ads have done that. The ads for PlayStation 2 are quite poor and don't tell you anything about anything.
I know this time Nintendo will get the advertising right because at the moment they are already trying. Also, all video game ads are cool but the best are Nintendo's. I remember at the start of N64 with Tim Ferguson - those were cool ads and also Donkey Kong's 'look what they did to my taxi' ad - they rock. Anyway, ads should be interesting and tell you what's in the game.

From Paul Murphy
P.S. Go the sharks, down the dogs and eels.
P.S.S. Bring on the reader awards they rock.

Dear Paul,
Well, it's the advertising company employed to come up with the ideas and to make the commercial - not really Nintendo - who you should be congratulating. For all we know, the

same company did the PS2 ads. But we agree, the only good game ads are the ones that show you the actual gameplay.

DEAR HYPER,

I'm a long time reader and never had a reason in the past to write into your magazine, but after reading the "Arcades of Tokyo" article I feel there are a few things that need clearing up. Having worked in the arcade industry for almost 4 years now, with a chain starting with P and T (one word however), most of the games featured in the article I have heard about and seen. Don't take this as an attack, but the article seemed to be very unresearched. My first example: Stunt Typhoon Plus from Taito - was actually in the PT arcade in George St Sydney and is now residing in the PT arcade in Highpoint Melbourne. While your reviewer seemed to like it a great deal, it's not that great a game, and certainly not that Japanese like some of the others I've seen. Brave Fire Fighters from Sega - is alive and kicking well in Melbourne as well. Intensity arcade in Crown Casino (foyer of Village Cinema) has an "Australian Version" of this game, and in pretty good condition too. Ninja Assault from Namco - is not in one place but is in TWO locations in Melbourne... TimeZone, Flinders St and Timeout, Box Hill have this awesome graphics/average gameplay shoot 'em up. I hope Punch Mania/Mocap Boxing never sees light in Australia... we have far too many morons coming to arcades playing Real Puncher and Captain Zodiac and I feel that these games send out a negative image... we don't need violence in our arcades (well, simulated, not real!) Just a little constructive criticism... Don't be harsh on me, I'm still a loyal reader!
Dans Dans Revolution
Dan_is@hardcorefreak.com

Dear Dans Dans,
We're in Sydney, so how are you meant to know they're down in some Melbourne arcade? Were they available back when Tim was in Japan? All these questions and more will be carefully sidestepped in future issues.

CAPTION THIS!

PART 23 WINNER

Our winning weedy caption comes to us from **ANDREW DOWN**. Well done, Andrew, you made us, or some, or one, of us laugh.



THE DEEP EYES SQUADRON MISUNDERSTOOD THE ORDER TO "GET THE WEED, THEN SMOKE THE JOINT."



SECRET NINTENDO BUSINESS

Heya Hyper, Great Mag, I am about to renew my subscription for the 2nd time. High praise seeing as I am possibly giving up a GBA game for it! Anyway enough praise and on to the point. In issue 97 there were a couple of letters complaining about what Nintendo have done to Zelda. To them I say REALITY CHECK! Do you think that this is going to be the ONLY Zelda game on the GCN? Of course it isn't! Gamecube is going to be out there for a long time until Nintendo even think about making a new console. Get a grip guys! Just because the first Zelda game isn't the game you were expecting, doesn't mean that all the other Zelda games will be! Think of Majora's Mask. I thought that it would be another RPG same type as Ocarina of Time. Yet Nintendo stun us with this new clock idea and create a revolutionary game! That is what Nintendo are doing with this new Zelda. Something that has never been done before. But after it we can look forward to that awesome boss battle with Ganondorf.

Nintendo are so secret that for all we know they could have already started work on a game based around that scene. Or another game that is completely different. Do we really want Nintendo to just remake OOT again with better graphics? Exactly the same game but everything looks cooler? It would be good if you hadn't played the original, but if you had you would be extremely disappointed! Here's hoping Nintendo don't waste the huge opportunity that the Boss Battle clip provided. Cheers.

Yours weirdly,
Rawn aka Simon
Littlebinzy@yahoo.com.au

*Dear Rawn,
 We have a soft spot for really well done cel shading too.*

SILLY CONSOLE WARS

Dear Hyper, I would like to start by saying that visually your magazine has improved over the past few months (congrats to the new art person [can't be bothered looking up that issue]) anyway maybe you could release the font that you are using as I think it looks really cool.

I must point out though that I am somewhat disappointed about the loss of the CD as I really liked the demos and trailers, however since I subscribed pre-GST and all this other hubbub I don't really have anything to complain about. I also liked "the Arcades of Tokyo" it really makes you aware that there is a whole different world of video gaming out there. Anyway I would like to comment about the upcoming console wars issue: I think it's silly, as buying a console shouldn't be about what console can do what, it should be about a few things. 1) The reputation of the parent company, 2) The quality of the games the developers make and 3) The controller. Not many people have stopped and wondered how the controller will fit into their hands and how it will help/disadvantage them when playing certain types of games. Now I have some questions which I would appreciate being answered. 1) Do you guys know anything about a local release of the Evangelion films? 2) Whatever happened to Hyper TV? 3) Do you know where I could find a copy of Demonstar?

Thank,
Weiz
Oilledliver@hotmail.com

*Dear Weiz,
 1. The license is still in limbo - it's all up in the air at this stage.
 2. As soon as Cam demanded a pre-show rider of Grange Hermitage, showgirls and Pez, they decided the budget couldn't handle it.
 3. Try an import store like the Cartoon Gallery in Sydney, although I don't think we've heard of that one.*

JUDGEMENT DAY

Dear Hyper people, Not being a big fan of PC gaming (because I have THE dodgiest PC on earth) consoles are the only machines I can get a decent gaming experience out of. And it saddens me that after flipping back through the relatively recent issues of your mag, I've noticed comments on consoles in the mail section that really piss me off. Firstly, I'm sick of people comparing and judging next-gen consoles. When you scrutinize consoles like this, small flaws suddenly seem like a much bigger deal. While it is all very well to consider all aspects of a console before buying, being this negative towards our beloved gaming machines is definitely not a good thing. It makes them seem much worse than they actually are. Ever wonder why the Dreamcast died? This is why. So stop it.

Secondly, I'm sick of people who say that certain consoles will be "better" than others. No one console is strictly "better" than another - they all have strengths and weaknesses. In the last console war, the N64 had the upper hand in platformers and multiplayer, while the PSX had the edge in RPGs and fighters. GCN and Xbox both look awesome, but in different ways.

GCN has that magical touch only Nintendo games have, while the Xbox looks like the one for hardcore gamers. The PS2 has already proven that it is destined to be a great machine (Onimusha, GT3, Red Faction etc.) and has a really amazing lineup at this point in time. I know a lot of N64 owners who are glad they bought their console, and an equal number of PSX owners who feel the same. There is no one console that is the "best" in every way because everyone has different gaming tastes.

Thirdly, I'm sick of people who bear grudges against certain companies. I'm sure many Nintendo fans are still angry at Sony for busting in and attracting (not stealing) their third party developers, but what a company itself has done is irrelevant to the gaming experience that their consoles have to offer.

Anyway, that's my two cents. Thanks for your time.

Velaris
Velaris43@hotmail.com

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GUNS GUNS GUNS

Sup Hyper dudes! You can call me Sniperfire (that's my cool name on the MSN gaming zone). I am a real FPS gamer and absolutely LOVE lots of gunplay.

1. What do you guys think of Operation Flashpoint? I'm doing some mission editing and think it's really cool.
2. What other games did GodGames bring out before they shut down (apart from the legendary Max Payne, which rulz)?
3. Do you think Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon will be cool? I think it's gonna rock!
4. Do you wanna scream at the fact that Duke Forever won't be out till 2002?!
5. Do you like/dislike the violence in Soldier of Fortune?
6. I've heard of a game called Silent Scope. Someone told me it's a sniper-based game. Is it?

7. Who are the gunplay junkies in the Hyper office?? Thatz all.

From Sniperfire
djleathal@ausi.com

*Dear Sniperfire,
 1. Doesn't our score of 93% answer that question?
 2. Lots. Go to www.godgames.com and poke around the pages.
 3. We've played a bit of it, and it was pretty solid. Huge potential.
 4. We're over screaming now. We just weep quietly. And laugh.
 5. Personally, I think it was too much. Quite unnecessary, really. They should have spent more time on the level design.
 6. It's an arcade game by Konami and it's old enough to have spawned a sequel already. How did you miss this one?
 7. We're gameplay junkies, not gunplay junkies!*

MAIL

FRESH QUESTIONS

Hi Hyper Dudes,
Firstly, the mag rocks. You have no idea how good it is to see a fresh Hyper magazine sitting in the mailbox after a day of school! Here are some questions:

1. How come in two Hyper magazines there has only been 1 N64 review!?
2. I sadly brought a PCPP mag and I have to say that it really sucked!
3. Why no CDs? I need CDs. That's one thing PCPP have! :(
4. GBA's are cool! But I'm sort of holding off because Nintendo can't help bringing out better and up dated versions!
5. Can the GameCube play DVDs and music?
6. Are you guys competing in the World Cyber Games?

I was reading the forum in issue 96 and I would like to say that restricting office cricket till 5pm is a CRIME! Keep up the humor (1 of the many things crappy PCPP don't have!) and all the great reviews!
Ciao,

Tom Hambrett
Email address withheld

Dear Tom,
1. Because there just haven't been

- any new games that we haven't already reviewed. The system is pretty dead now.
2. Sorry to hear that!
 3. The dog ate them.
 4. Better and updated versions? I wouldn't hold your breath.
 5. No. The discs don't fit in the tray.
 6. Competing? We're so good, it'd be no competition. They asked us to not ruin it. ;)

SUPER POTATO 64

Greetings Comrades,
For long time now Boris sit and read Hyper. Boris is simple potato farmer who need rubles to purchase Vodka. Vodka eases pain of peasant existence. However, Boris continue to buy Hyper even though it is made by bourgeoisie intelligentsia (except for Cam - he look simple to Boris). Boris has problem with evil empire, commonly known as Microsoft corporation. Microsoft are ultimate symbol of inferior capitalism, with nerdy capitalist pig at helm. Is 'microsoft' a description of his Genitalia? Boris not know. Anyway, Microsoft only interested in profit, they refuse to share the wealth. Boris warn all gamers, do



Eliot goes mad in the Hyper dungeon looking for all 100 issues...

not trust Microsoft and do not buy Xbox. Boris is smart man, he paid attention during Communist propaganda 101 and knows the evils of anything from America. Instead of Xbox buy new Russian machine. It is similar to Commodore 64, except run by a single potato! New machine is cutting-edge Russian technology. Muhaha, Russia will show the might of communism once and for all and crush our pitiful Capitalist competitors.

Boris Vladighdmgj

Dear Boris,
Make sure you don't eat your new console when you get late-night gaming munchies.

displays. At first I didn't take much notice - until I noticed that two of the monitors looked very familiar. They're both running the SETI@Home screensaver! I was agog once I realised what I was seeing. Then I was dismayed: the game's set in something like 2028 or whatever. You mean we "still" haven't found extraterrestrial intelligence by this time? Bugger! Still and all, it was nice to see that videogame characters have side-interests. Keep up the boffo work!

Adrian Bedford
ambedford@bigpond.com

Dear Adrian,
Hana and Rain were on screen and you noticed that?!

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

Hi guys!
Since it appears to be obligatory to pause at the opening and rave about your mag, I shall pause now and comment on how I have indeed been enjoying Hyper these past several months. I like the balanced coverage of the whole computer-based gaming field. I also like, in these strained financial times, that it costs about half what all those dedicated PlayStation mags I used to get now cost. Plus the funny captions. Love funny captions. What I'm writing in to say, however, is this: my wife and I are pretty keen PlayStation gamers. Lately we've been playing and greatly enjoying Fear Effect 2: Retro Helix. But I noticed this odd thing. There's a cut scene after all the first few levels with Hana and Rain on Hana's very cool boat, and they're talking up expository stuff about what comes next. But in the background there are these computer

98, 99, 100...

Dear Hyper people,
Well, it looks like the 100th issue of Australia's favourite gaming magazine is fast approaching and I was thinking about what you guys could put in it. I reckon that if you put in a re-run of the first ever issue then that would be cool. (I think the cover had "Sex in videogames" as the main story and it had some really dodgy sprites of some aliens going at it).
If you can't get the 1st issue then put parts of it in (a review of Super Mario World and its "cutting edge graphics") or have a "Moments in Hyper" sort of thing.
Cheers for your time peoples!
Dean Churchman
Deanchur@yahoo.com

Dear Dean,
Don't worry, I've been searching the dreaded Hyper Dungeon for all the old issues... "hack", "cough".

Harvey Norman

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HH4

The Official Australian Games Chart

Compiled by Inform in association with AVSDA

TOP 10

PlayStation 2 Games Over \$50

W/E 23 Sep 2001
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Gran Turismo 3	Racing
2	⊕	Resident Evil Code Veronica X	Adventure
3	⊕	MX 2002	Racing
4	▼	Red Faction	Action
5	⊕	Dark Cloud	RPG
6	▼	Tekken Tag Tournament	Action
7	▼	Onimusha	Adventure
8	◆	Street Fighter X3	Action
9	▼	Rugby	Sports
10	⊕	FIFA 2001	Sports

TOP 10

PlayStation Games Over \$40

W/E 23 Sep 2001
RETAIL SALES

1	▲	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	Sports
2	▲	Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX	Sports
3	▼	Digimon	RPG
4	◆	WWF Smackdown! 2	Sports
5	◆	Atlantis: The Lost Empire	Adventure
6	▲	Gran Turismo 2 Ptm	Racing
7	▼	20 Games Pack	Compilation
8	⊕	TOCA World Touring Cars	Racing
9	▼	Final Fantasy IX	RPG
10	⊕	Alone In The Dark 4	Adventure

TOP 10

Game Boy Games Over \$40

W/E 23 Sep 2001
RETAIL SALES

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

TOP 10

N64 Games Over \$40

W/E 23 Sep 2001
RETAIL SALES

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

TOP 10

PC Games Over \$30

W/E 23 Sep 2001
RETAIL SALES

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

TOP 10

Game Boy Advance Games Over \$40

W/E 23 Sep 2001
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Mario Kart Super Circuit	Racing
2	◆	Super Mario Advance	Adventure
3	◆	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	Sports
4	⊕	Advance Wars	Strategy
5	▼	Rayman Advance	Adventure
6	▼	GT Advance Racing	Racing
7	▼	Pinobee	Adventure
8	▲	Castlevania	Action
9	▼	Bomberman Tournament	Action
10	◆	F-Zero Maximum Velocity	Racing

TOP 10

All Full Priced Games

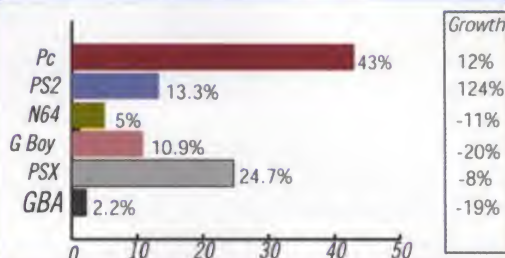
W/E 23 Sep 2001
RETAIL SALES

1	▲	Gran Turismo 3	PlayStation 2
2	▼	Mario Kart Super Circuit	GB Advance
3	⊕	Resident Evil Code Veronica X	PlayStation 2
4	▼	Diablo II: Lrd Of Destruction	PC/MAC
5	⊕	Pokemon Crystal	Game Boy
6	◆	The Sims	PC/MAC
7	⊕	MX 2002	PlayStation 2
8	▼	Pokemon Silver	Game Boy
9	▼	Diablo II	PC/MAC
10	▼	Super Mario Advance	GB Advance

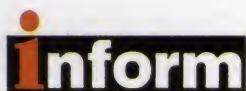
MARKET WATCH

All Games by Platform

Aug v Jul 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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98 >> HYPER NEXT

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PlayStation 2



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