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ISSUE 103
MAY 2002

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PlayStation 2

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All you have to do is fill out one simple little form.



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Ecks Vs Sever

HYPER»



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EDITORIAL

»» The PlayStation 2 strikes back at the Xbox this issue with a Game of the Month in the shape of Final Fantasy X. Square have returned to form with this one, and without a doubt you'll love this first outing for Final Fantasy on the PS2. It's interesting to note that Square have also confirmed that they will return to making games for Nintendo. Considering that the first Final Fantasy game we played was on the Super Nintendo, we all had warm fuzzy feelings when we heard this news. I wonder how Microsoft feel, knowing that they have been courting Square for quite a long time now in an effort to bring the series to the Xbox, but as yet with no result. Will we see an Xbox/Square announcement at E3? Time will tell...

Eliot Fish »» Editor

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MCCANN XBOX32/HALO/C

NEWS

LIFE
2

IN THE NEWS: New Mario and Metroid pics ■ New Xbox controller ■ First Look at EA's *Lord of the Rings* game ■ Halo wins awards!



Mario Gets His Hose Out

Nintendo's GameCube full of sunshine and plumbers

There's been plenty happening in the world of Nintendo lately, but perhaps the most exciting thing of all are the screenshots and tidbits of information regarding Mario Sunshine. As you can see, Mario Sunshine is looking surprisingly similar to Mario 64 in its visual style. It features a very primary colour palette and some similar themes to Mario 64, except with the obligatory higher resolution and much larger environments. No doubt we've only seen a small section of the game though, as the village setting in the Spaceworld demo was quite different to anything we'd seen before in the Mario world. Oh, and have we mentioned that the entire world morphs as you play?!

Mario's ability set has expanded somewhat too. It seems that the water kit on his back is used to spray away the multicoloured trails that litter the levels, but it will undoubtedly have other uses. Mario can now climb trees, walk tightropes and execute boost jumps off walls. Plus, fans of Super

❖❖❖ Miyamoto has stated that it is really only an extension of Mario 64, rather than a revolution

Mario World will peak when they see the return of the mesh fences for Mario to climb, complete with sections that can be used to flip Mario over to the other side! Mario Sunshine will be out later this year, and even Miyamoto has stated that it is really only an extension of Mario 64 rather than a revolution. While this is disappointing in some ways, the length of time it would take to develop a revolutionary new Mario game really isn't feasible for Nintendo any more. We can't wait to see what they have up their sleeves.

E3 can't come soon enough!

❖❖❖ Curious as to which Nintendo Games are confirmed to be playable at E3? How about the new Legend Of Zelda, Mario Sunshine, Metroid Prime, and possibly even Mario

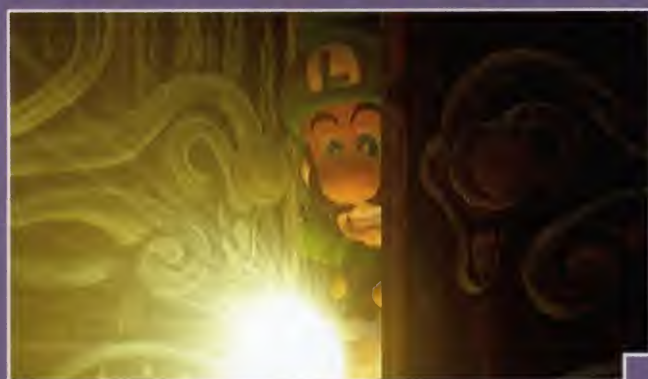
Kart GCN! Oh, and next issue we'll finally be bringing you reviews of all the GameCube launch titles as we celebrate the Cube's arrival in Oz. Finally.



THE POWER OF THE TRIFORCE!

Link eat your heart out

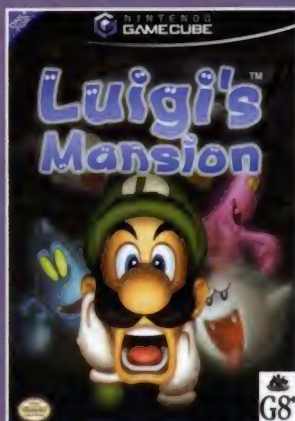
❖ Nintendo also recently announced a new arcade board called the Triforce, which is based around the GameCube architecture. Why Triforce? Because it's a partnership between Nintendo, Namco and Sega! Woo hoo! Talk about a dream team! Don't expect to see Nintendo games hitting the arcades any time soon though, as we suspect Nintendo's part in the deal is mostly hardware-based. After all, it's a great way for them to ensure plenty of A grade arcade ports hitting the GameCube. So what is the difference between the Triforce hardware and the GameCube? Well, it can connect to any media, whether that be Sega's own proprietary GD-ROM format, Nintendo's mini-DVD or even ROM based technology. Also, the amount of iT-SRAM has been doubled to 48MB to give developers a little more room to move. Aside from that, we'll have to wait until more information becomes available.



LUIGI GETS A FACELIFT PAL release tweaks!

❖ In some very surprising news, Shigeru Miyamoto has mentioned that changes have been made to the PAL version of Luigi's Mansion to increase the game's longevity. Nintendo wouldn't go into specifics, but we do know that the hidden mansion (unlocked after you've beaten the game) has been given a tweak – and hopefully expanded. We'll have the full story for you when PAL copies arrive here at Hyper HQ.

It's nice to see a company bothering to use the time between NTSC and PAL releases to improve the software. Just don't expect any huge changes, as our insider insisted the changes were minimal.



METROID PRIME

Here's a pic of Metroid Prime, because it's cool.

LEFT FIELD LEFT OUT

1080 sequel goes internal

❖ Nintendo second party developer Left Field Studios have been ousted from the Nintendo fold. It's no great surprise, as the company's track record wasn't exactly glowing. To date they'd completed one GCN title – NBA Courtside 2002 – and also lost a title, the sequel to 1080 Snowboarding. Left Field is now planning on trying out some multi-platform game development. Plus, as we suspected, it's now official that the 1080 Snowboarding sequel is being developed internally at Nintendo. It's rumoured that Giles Goddard (the original game's lead programmer and

EAD game guru) is involved. Other good news for 1080 fans is that the game will be sticking to a more simulation representation of snowboarding. "1080 2" will be out sometime in 2003.

AND ANOTHER FLIES THE COOP

Long-time Nintendo producer Ken Lobb (responsible for liaising with second party developers and several other critical roles) has left Nintendo and moved over to Microsoft. We're unsure as to what led to his decision, but we're assuming a massive pay cheque from Microsoft is the most likely explanation.

CAPTION THIS!

Hey there faithful readers – think you have the wit to make the Hyper team chuckle? Then think of your best caption for this screenshot and email it to Captionthis@next.com.au with Caption This Part 30 in the Subject line.



Whahahahahaha.

NEWS

» HYPER 11



THREE CHEERS FOR MICROSOFT!

Better late than never...

Just last issue we spoke out about what we perceived as design flaws in Microsoft's Xbox controller. Well, praise be to Microsoft, because they've heard our (and plenty of other people's) criticisms and have announced that they plan to release a redesigned controller, called Xbox Controller S. Perhaps the S stands for Slender, and the old controller will be renamed Xbox Controller FA (for Fat Arse).

The Controller S is very similar to the Japanese Xbox controller, with a couple of differences — like more play in the triggers, a longer cable and a black jewel on the front instead of a green one. Compared to the standard controller, it's quite a bit smaller, with the face buttons arranged in a cross pattern — like the PlayStation dual shock — and the B&W buttons moved from above the primary buttons to underneath. As far as the Hyper team is

concerned, the buttons are now spaced and aligned properly and should lead to a much more intuitive play experience. Also of note is the much more useable D pad, and the move of the start and select buttons to underneath the left analogue stick. All up, this controller looks like just what the doctor ordered.

What's most refreshing is that Microsoft are willing to admit they've made a mistake, and to take steps that will benefit all Xbox gamers. Well, not necessarily all. The redesigned controller won't replace the old one, but will co-exist alongside it. The old controller will still come packed with the machine, but if you want to buy extras, you'll be able to pick up the new one from your local gamestore. No announcements have been made regarding the Xbox Controller S coming to Australia, but it should only be a matter of time.

GATES CLOSED TO JAPAN?



It was always going to be a tough ask for Microsoft to crack the insular Japanese market, so unsurprisingly, initial sales for the Xbox have been slow. 123,000 units were sold on the first weekend, over 50,000 less than the GameCube and roughly 560,000 less than PS2! The software tie-in ratio was also quite poor — just over 1.5 games sold per Xbox, as compared to the 2.4 ratio in the USA. Unsurprisingly, most Japanese gamers seemed to be buying the console for Dead or Alive 3, with 70,000 units sold. Aside from DOA3, only Project Gotham Racing and Genma Onimusha cracked the 10,000 mark. It's interesting to note that Halo was not a launch title in Japan, which explains its absence. Japanese gamers don't seem to go for First Person Shooters. Weirdos!

WINNERS HYPER» 101

SMACKDOWN: JUST BRING IT!

Marc Anthony, SA
Gary Walker, Vic
Darren Delforce, Qld
Rebecca Evison, NSW
M. Whitney, Qld

MEDAL OF HONOR: ALLIED ASSAULT

Rowan Meldrum, WA
Shaun Radford, Qld
Mathew Reed, NSW
J. Hillyer, SA
S. Wheeler, Qld

OVERFLOW

Square's next PS2 RPG, the online-only Final Fantasy XI, will feature at least 14 jobs for your character to grow into. They include the Warrior, Thief, Monk, White Mage, Red Mage, Black Mage, Knight, Summoner, Poet, Ninja, Samurai, Gunner, Hunter, Dark Knight and Beast Rancher. Let's hope Australia sorts out its broadband problems before this game arrives.

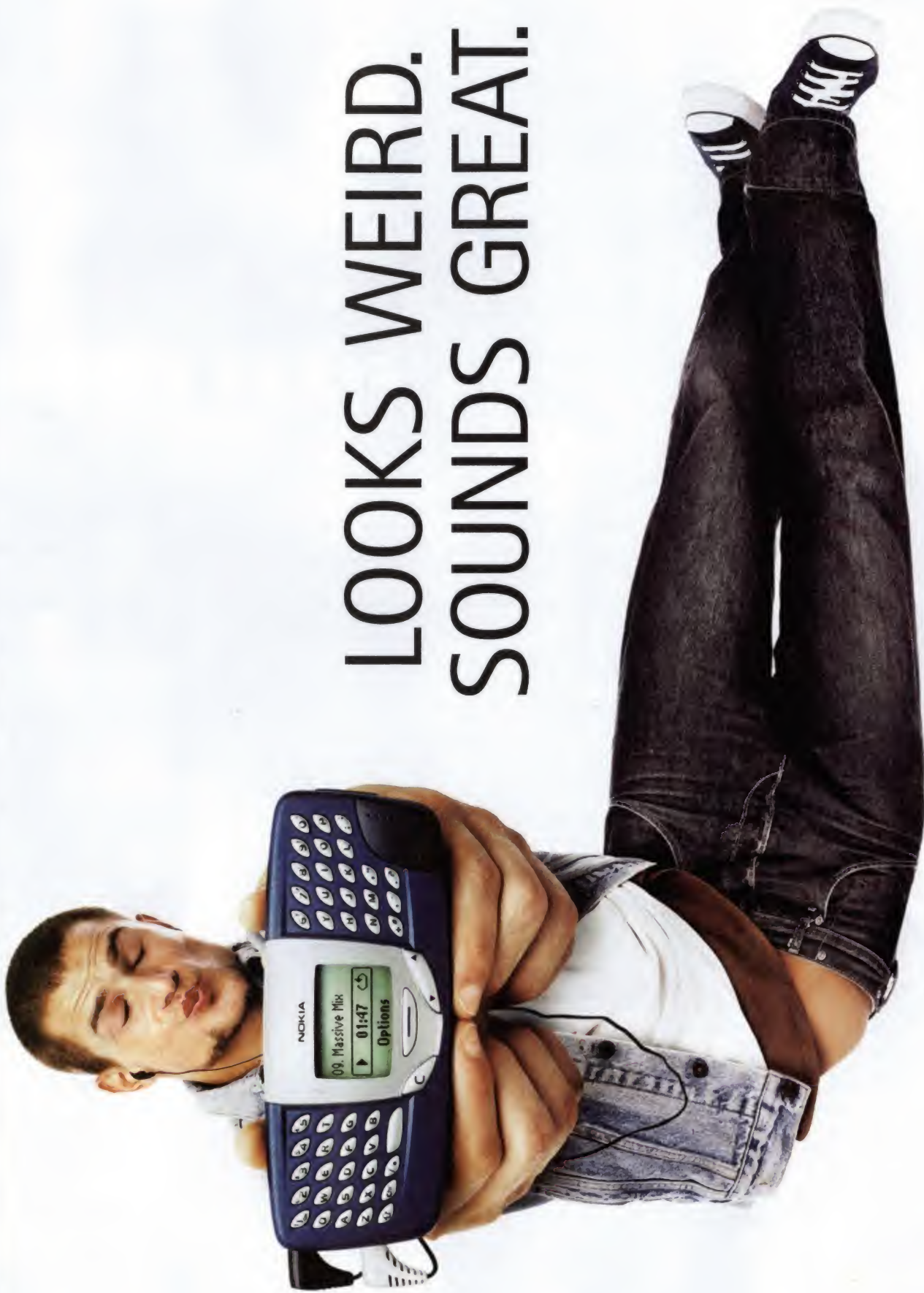
Hiroshi Yamauchi, the 74 year-old president of Nintendo Japan, is planning to retire after the stockholder's meeting that takes place in June this year. It is not known who will be chosen as the new president. Talk about the end of an era...

Konami's Japanese Castlevania producer, Koji Igarashi, recently announced that he was working on the next Game Boy Advance instalment of the series. Strangely, the next game will be titled Castlevania for the first time in Japan, as it has been known as Akumajou Dracula (Demon Castle Dracula). The game's full title is Castlevania: White Night Concerto. In America, the game will be known as Castlevania: Harmony of Dissonance. Not much better really. Well, in Oz it seems we'll call it: Castlevania: Spectral Fractions of Blind Orchestras... okay, we made that last one up.

Lynda Carter, famous for her role on 70's TV as Wonder Woman, will be supplying her voice talents to Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind, the Bethesda RPG coming to the Xbox and PC later this year.

Cahners In-Stat/MDR, publishers of the Microprocessor Report, named nVIDIA's proprietary Xbox processors the "Best Gaming Chip Set of 2001". The Xbox processors feature the dual-processing architecture of nVIDIA's Xbox Graphics Processing Unit (XGPU) and Xbox Media Communications Processor (MCPX) to power the system's graphics, audio and networking capabilities.

Stop the press: Square will again make Final Fantasy games for the Nintendo systems! Whoo! Our brains are giddy with excitement. Also, Nintendo are re-making Mario Tennis and Mario Golf for GCN... man, does this get any better?



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HALO AWARDED

✦ The Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences (AIAS) recently awarded Microsoft's Halo with its top four awards at their videogame version of the Oscars. Halo won Game of the Year (all platforms), Console Game of the Year, Console Action/Adventure Game of the Year and Outstanding Achievement in Visual Engineering. Woah, those are some pretty mighty accolades for a videogame. We think you could safely include Halo as one of your Xbox launch purchases. Now just sit back and imagine what Bungie will be able to do with the inevitable Halo 2...



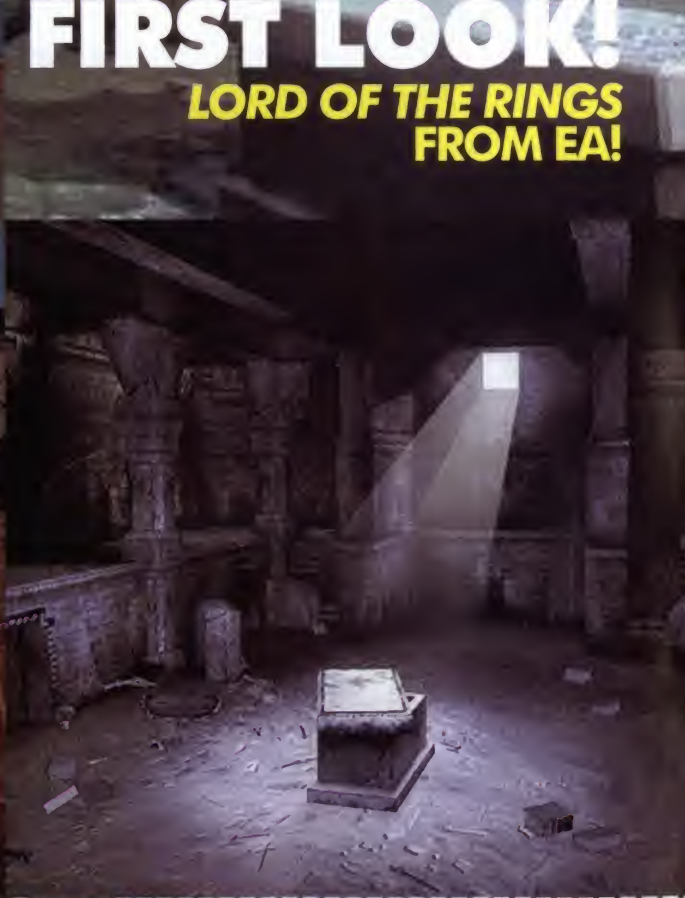
METROID LOOKING PRIME

✦ Nintendo have unveiled more on Metroid Prime in the last few weeks, and we must say this game is looking better every day. Nintendo and Retro Studios are working very closely to capture the vibe of the series while taking it into new territory. Most of the game is played from a first person perspective inside Samus' visor. This view is awesome, with numerous energy and weaponry displays. Samus can also roll up into a ball when required, and the game switches to a third person perspective. Miyamoto has stressed that Metroid focuses on exploration and puzzle solving and that it shouldn't be considered a First Person Shooter. Just the way we like our Metroid.



FIRST LOOK!

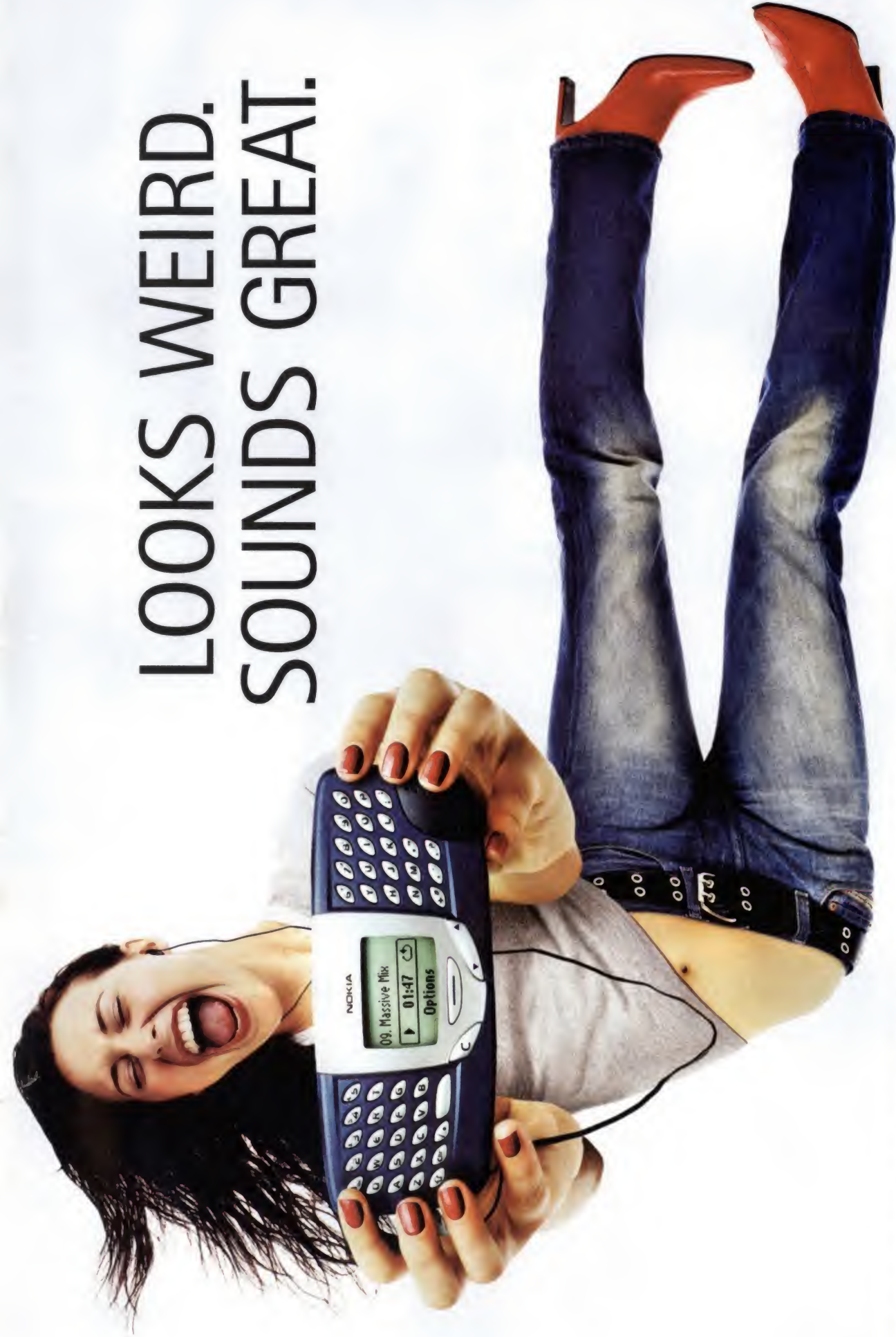
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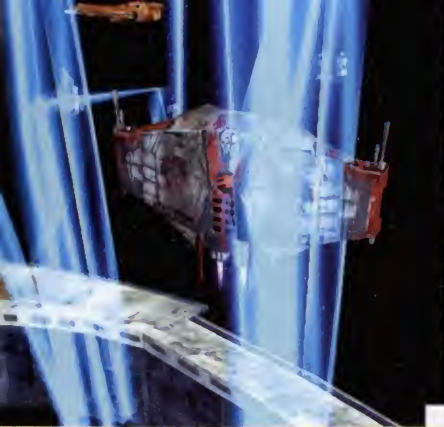
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JEDI STARFIGHTER

PS2 LUCASARTS

F Almost there... Stay on target! We'll have a review of Jedi Starfighter for you next issue, but in the meantime, wrap your eyes around these tasty screens of this Jedi combat treat. LucasArts have pumped Jedi Starfighter full of midichlorians and it's looking like a more-than-worthy sequel to last year's Starfighter. The game features craft from *Episode II*, so keep your eyes peeled.

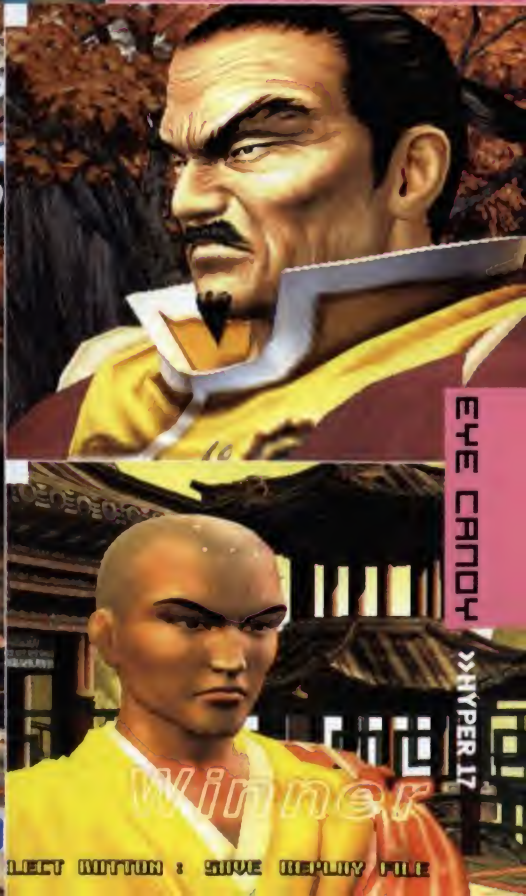




VIRTUA FIGHTER 4

PS2 SEGA

E LAU! Sega's Virtua Fighter 4 is about to knock you about on the PlayStation 2. We've been playing the preview code pretty much non-stop since it arrived and we can report that this is everything it's cracked up to be. If you like a bit more complexity and depth to your 3D fighting, then make sure to grab this as soon as it hits the shelves.



Winner

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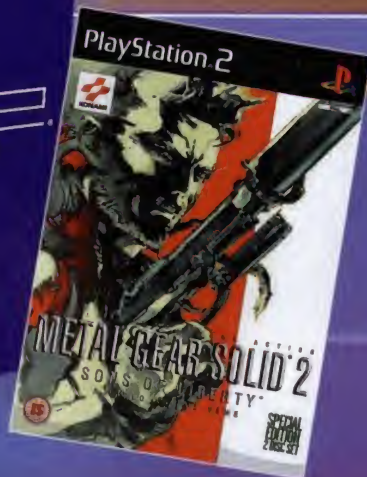
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DUNGEON SIEGE

**AN AUDIENCE WITH GAS
POWERED GAMES HEAD
HONCHO, CHRIS TAYLOR.**

Role Playing Games are finally entering the brave new world of three dimensions. Recent hits such as the Baldur's Gate and Diablo series have still stuck to traditional 2D formats, but there is a new breed of RPG in the pipeline. Titles such as Neverwinter Nights, Knights of the Old Republic and Dungeon Siege are taking third-person RPGing into the lush landscapes of fully fleshed-out 3D worlds. Gone are the illustrated or pre-rendered backgrounds, we're now exploring brave new worlds flourishing with swaying trees, scampering wildlife, realistic real-time weather and environmental sound. Dungeon Siege is the first of this

new breed of 3D RPG that thrusts us into a convincing landscape where trees tower over our characters' heads, fragile rope-bridges wobble precariously over deadly chasms full of fog and streams bubble and pool into lakes. A world we can rotate, zoom and inspect from any angle with the simple flick of the mouse. Even more astounding is that the world of Dungeon Siege is seamless, with the player adventuring across diverse regions and never encountering a single loading screen.

We pulled aside the game's creator, Chris Taylor, to find out a little more about what we can expect from our time spent in the land of Ehb.



Chris, Cam and Eliot get drunk on some old dungeon ale.



The denizens of Ehb hold their yearly rave. Bang on!

HYPER: What was the inspiration behind *Dungeon Siege*?

CHRIS TAYLOR: I love RPGs and I really appreciate all the work that people put into making them, but for me, a lot of them are too complicated or too simple; just one extreme or the other. There were also little subtle things in the interface that I wanted, that would allow me to just focus on what I call a reward-based system, rather than a punishment-based system. If I screw



Dan Toose, "Farmgirl" and Elliot.

something up, it kind of forgives me, or if one of my party members dies, they just go unconscious so I can rescue them later and they'll come back to life. Just things that make it easier to play. And I wanted this rich world... Like a forest that really feels like a rich, lush forest. You couldn't really do that in 2D or top-down.

It looked like the right time to make something like this. I felt like we could go for it; build something really big, create some new technology, push the state-of-the-art... y'know, blow the genre out a little bit, and also make some cool tools and make something for the mod community.

You could call this game an "RPG platform" — everybody out there who wants to try their hand with designing their own RPG, we're giving them the tools. Go to the store, buy the game, download the *Siege* editor from the internet, download Gmax two months after the game ships, and you're gonna have millions of dollars of professional software tools at your disposal to go crazy with.

HYPER: So is it the hardcore gamers that you're pitching this game at?

CT: Well, we really do want people

... There's so much cheese on this pizza that the cheese is like a meal in itself."

who are the more casual gamers to come in and enjoy this game. "Easy" is really easy, whereas "Normal" is challenging to the average gamer, and then "Hard" is for the hardcore gamers who really like to get into those pickles.

HYPER: How long did you spend working on the story?

CT: It's evolved from day one. Since we started in May of 1998, we probably did engine work for the first year, and then started getting into the story. For the last two and a half

Just who is this guy?

Name: Chris Taylor

Position: President/Designer

Company: Gas Powered Games

History: Chris is the creator of the PC smash hit RTS, *Total Annihilation*, released in 1997 by Cavedog. *Total Annihilation* went on to win over 50 games industry awards. Chris formed Gas Powered Games in 1998 after the huge success of TA, fulfilling his dream of starting up and running his own development studio. *Dungeon Siege* is the company's first game and will be published by Microsoft.



years, it's just been constant polishing and saying "well, this doesn't work because of this, and we gotta change this because of that..." So, it's really just been an ongoing process of refining it and improving it.

HYPER: How many quests can you have going at any one time?

CT: Well, you can have them all going — and you don't have to finish any of them. That's what's interesting. You can just kind of go through the world, ignore the story, just say "to hell with it, I'm just going to have fun and play." We don't ram story and all that sort of stuff down the player's throat. There is a game here to be played that doesn't mean the player has to want to participate in all the other stuff that's going on.

I was very pragmatic when I

designed the game; I was like, "there shall be no 'rescue the cat' quests!"; or what people call UPS quests, "go fetch something for me and bring it back". It just means that half the distance you've covered just has to be repeated as you come back. I hate that. So, I trimmed down the main story to "non UPS" quests, they are more "go here; go rescue this person; go find this guy", they all continue on; they're all linking up across the world. There are a few quests to embellish that along the way, and if you're not interested in those, you don't have to solve them.

HYPER: So, how non-linear can the single-player game become?

CT: Well... the best way to describe this... imagine a foot long line, and imagine every inch costing you



\$500,000. Okay? Now imagine if that's a linear story and there's a section that doubles up, that's how much story someone probably won't see of money you've spent that they won't experience. You can quickly realise that it's a losing proposition to create paths on a story that people won't see — unless it's cheaply done. It's like cheese on a pizza — if you want to cover ten pizzas with the same amount of cheese, it's shitty pizza.

HYPER: So *Dungeon Siege* is a single pizza with a huge amount of cheese...

CT: Yes! In fact, there's so much cheese on this pizza that the cheese is like a meal in itself.

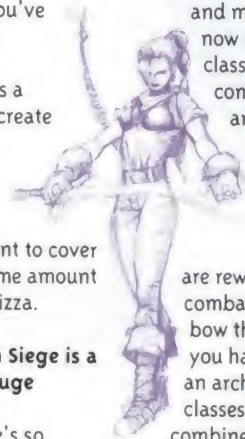
HYPER: In character creation, you don't get specific skills or classes,

so how does the character evolve?

CT: It's a skills-based class system, so if I keep using melee weapons, my character gets experience as a fighter and my melee skill goes up. If I now switch to using a bow, my class will change to a combination of fighter and archer. It's the same for magic.

But if you don't focus on one area, you will end up being a jack-of-all-trades and a master of none. There are rewards for focusing on your combat type, as in finding a great bow that you can't use because you haven't levelled up enough as an archer. We've got over 100 classes, depending on how you combine your skills.

You actually earn your class, unlike in other games where you bring it home from the store, you haven't played it even a minute, and you just pick a class straight



Geek central. Multiplayer *Dungeon Siege* goes off at the launch.





Luckily, the Mortein protect spell holds out.

away. In this game you actually have to go out in the world and earn it, and it feels good when you get it... like a reward.

HYPER: What about the magic system – when you level up as a magic user, do you get to choose your spells?

CT: Oh yeah, there's a shitload of spells. You can just drag and drop them onto your spellbook, like adding pages. You can have more than one spellbook too; for instance, you could fill one up with all your older lower-level spells, just to keep things nice and clean. In multiplayer, you can trade spells between characters, just like pages from a book.



CT: Yeah, you set them all up strategically. You can set up formations, and characters know how to attack depending on the range of their weapons. There are options that you can set, so they attack or defend, hold their ground etc. You can get your magic user to hang back and just cast healing spells on your fighters. Of course, she'll heal herself first... it's like that mask that drops on airplanes – you put it on yourself first, instead of your child, otherwise nobody lives. You can set-up 10 hotkeys for different settings to change your party behaviour on the fly. I give everybody a bow, and set everyone on range attack, and then have a hotkey to flick my party over to the fighters using their melee weapons and the mage switching to healing. You can change their posture however you want.

HYPER: How did you design the seamless gameworld?

CT: Okay, the simplest analogy to use is that of an audio CD. An audio CD basically loads in the information before it needs it. So, you know, the listening experience is continuous and seamless. That's what's so brilliant about it – it has that chunk



Chris shows the Hyper crew his serpent.



Spooky.



of memory that it uses to buffer. In the game it's really not that much different, except that it's a 3D box, and it looks through the world and it loads and unloads 3D data as you run through the world. Sometimes it falls behind, and sometimes it catches up, so it generally averages out so that running through the world is seamless — you don't even know all this is going on in the background. Like when you enter a building, and the world fades out — it's just visual, it's all still there. It's all exactly as it was.

And besides the single player, we have a completely different world for multiplayer. You fight the same monsters and get the same weapons, but you get a brand new world to explore. And every player can go off on their own and meet up in the world later.

HYPER: So, if some freak bought the game, sat down and played it to the end without stopping, could they do that without seeing a single loading screen?

CT: Yeah, they could do that.



Microsoft locked us all in this real dungeon until we finished the game.

Though it's hard to imagine someone playing that much...!

HYPER: Can you play through the game with one character, or do you have to end up with a party of eight?

CT: Oh, you can play however you like. You can tell the other characters to stay behind and go off on your own. Whatever you want.

HYPER: How important to you is the music in a game?

CT: Very! Jeremy Soules is a very talented composer. He did the music for Total Annihilation, won all kinds of awards... he's amazing. He's handcrafted a score for every region of this world. It's over 100 minutes of music.

HYPER: So what about consoles... Would you like to see Dungeon Siege on the Xbox for instance?

CT: Actually, that would be kinda fun to see this on Xbox. Especially multiplayer. We're looking at it, but working on the sequel is much more important to us at this stage. <<



the battle is on!

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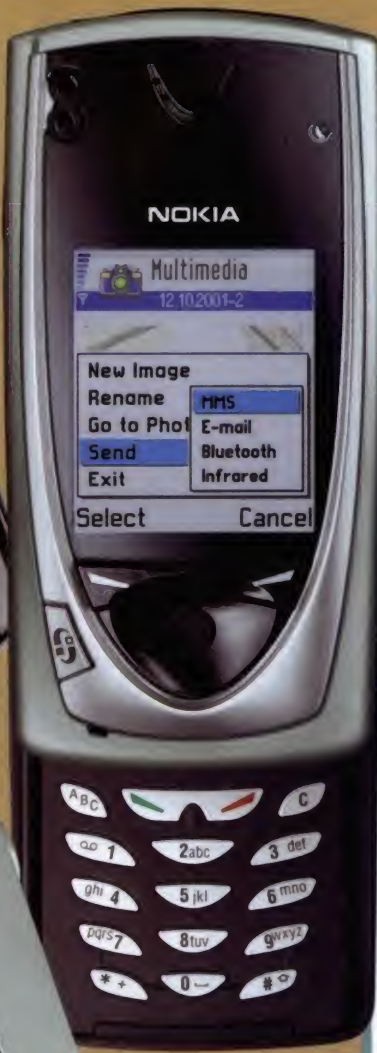
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HURRAH



Screw the Dick Tracy wrist-phone idea...



If only we could sell you the Hyper ringtone.



TECH SPECS

- Availability – Europe, Africa, Asia Pacific
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- Dimensions – 114 x 56 x 26 mm
- Talk Time – 2-4h
- Standby Time – 90h -230h
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- Operating frequency – Class 4 dual band EGSM900/1800 in Asia Pacific
- Imaging resolution – (VGA, 640x480 pixels) Graphical colour display (176x208 pixels, 35x41 mm)

NOKIA 7650

Nokia
Price: TBA

» Welcome to the next generation of mobile phone. It's sleek, it's refined, it's sexy, and its looks are only outclassed by its technological savvy. This is the Nokia 7650, and it's going to be the most fully featured new phone on the market. In fact, we haven't been this excited about a new model since the 7110 – which is really saying something.

FUNCTIONAL AND FLEXIBLE

Nokia have been holding back on several key technologies for a while now... but with the 7650 they're springing them on the market in one sweet swoop. How does support for GSM, HSCSD and GPRS sound? Pretty standard stuff? Then how about we throw in an integrated digital camera, a huge colour screen, a new OS, and support for WAP, Bluetooth, SyncML, infra red, e-mail, MIDP Java and MMS? HELL YEAH!

In the tradition of other models in the 7000 series, the 7650 has a neat click down function to reveal the keypad. Particularly cool though, is that the keypad slides down from the back, not the front – and it certainly seems more sturdy than the 7110's click down (which, after two years of use has become less than reliable). The display on the 7650 is another standout feature – it's large (176x208 pixels) and in colour. Hurrah! The large screen is essential for viewing photos and long messages, but will also work well for more PDA-style applications like calendars, to do lists and games. Plus, the 7650 has a neat little joystick with five-way navigation to make traversing the GUI even easier.

The 7650 is also the first phone to run on the Symbian OS v6.1, with support for GPRS and MMS. Symbian is owned by Nokia, Ericsson, Panasonic and Motorola, and licensed by the likes of Siemens, Fujitsu, Kenwood, Sony and Sanyo. It's going to be the standard operating system for 2.5G and 3G mobile phones and mobile internet devices. To that end, it provides an excellent open base for next gen applications and features. You'll be able to purchase software add-ons from third party developers, exchange data between your phone and PC/PDA, and even swap applications like games with your friends. All up, it's a good thing, and will keep the next generation of phones functional and flexible.

SAMPLE A SNIPPET

But one of the biggest selling points for this baby is Multimedia Messaging (MMS). Considering how addicted we are to SMS... we're scared to think how awesome MMS is going to be! Essentially it's a similar deal to SMS, except you'll be able to combine text, graphics, animations, photos, video and audio into the message. Imagine the scene – you've rocked up to a club, and are having a mad night out... except a couple of geek friends decided to stay home and play Scrabble. What's the best way to rub their noses in it? Take a photo of the crowd going off with your grinning face in the centre, sample a snippet of the music and package it all up with the text "wish you were here". Hehe. The possibilities are delicious! Of course, at first, the number of people who will have phones that will be able to accept that message will be few, but it won't take that long for everyone to switch over to the next generation of phones. Nokia estimate that by the end of 2002 more than half of all Nokia terminals will be MMS capable. Plus, until that time, you can still send the message to your friends' e-mail accounts.

If it's pure streamlined technology you're after, then the Nokia 7650 is going to be the phone to have. Available soon.

ARE

TECH SPECS

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SAMSUNG PLANO CS29A200

Samsung

Price: \$2499

Yep, you can hook it up to your PC.

»» Here at Hyper we're always going on about the quality of graphics and sound in games, but what difference does it make if you're viewing it on a crappy old TV? The image will be rounded, the colours washed out and the clarity lost. Chances are you don't even know what you're missing either. Here at Hyper HQ we thought we had it pretty good until Samsung sent us their latest model to take for a ride. Damn this TV is nice!

AMAZING PICTURE QUALITY

What you're looking at here is the top of the line model in Samsung's new "Plano" range... yeah, we don't think much of the name either, but what this new range is all about is perfectly flat screens, more inputs than you'll ever use and amazing picture quality.

The screen isn't overly large. At 68cm, there are plenty of much larger TFT screens on the market, but this is a very good size for gaming and DVDs, and an excellent cost/performance solution. More importantly, the screen is 100Hz progressive scan. Most sets only refresh

their screen at a rate of 50Hz, which is why you can always see some flicker. Move to a 100Hz set, however, and the image becomes steady as a rock. The difference really is amazing, and you'll find it hard to go back to 50Hz after you've seen 100Hz.

The top of the range Plano comes with just about every conceivable input you could ever want. On the back you've got connectors for rear and centre speakers, RCA audio output, three audio/video RCA inputs, one set of RCA audio/video outputs, S-Video input, DVD component inputs and an aerial connector. Plus, on the side there's yet another set of RCA audio/video inputs, S-Video input, a headphone jack and an RGB PC input. All this connectivity means not only will you be able to have a plethora of games machines and stuff plugged in at once, but you'll be able to experience your games at their peak. Simply pick up some component cables for your Xbox, plug in your Logitech Z-560s and sit back and enjoy. Although possibly more than you'd want to spend on a TV, for the price you're really getting an awesome gaming solution. In fact, we liked the Plano so much that we're keeping it - sorry Samsung!



Official *Star Wars* Web Site www.starwars.com

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UNREAL II

>> PC CATEGORY: First Person Shooter >> PLAYERS: 1-Multi >> PUBLISHER: Ozisoft >> AVAILABLE: Mid 2002

WOW-O-METER



Unreal II is nearing completion, and from what we've seen, this title is going to make just as great an impact as the original did. A separate project to Tournament II, Unreal II is very much about crafting a compelling, story-driven single player experience. Appropriately, development duties have been handed to Legend Entertainment, a development house well known for excellent adventure games. So that's the story part covered. Now what about the relentless action? Well, Legend also made the Unreal mission pack "Return to Na Pali", as well as the action/adventure hybrid "Wheel Of Time" (Hyper 76, 91%). In short,

they've been making good games for well over a decade, so their credentials are solid. Plus, they're not exactly starting from scratch — technologically or in terms of art. In addition to experience in the world of Unreal, they've been given the Unreal Warfare engine to build the game around — surely one of the most advanced game engines available today.

The game is set in the same Universe as the original, with the player cast in the role of a law enforcement officer in a backwater region of space. It's just you and your crew of three (pilot, engineer and intelligence officer) on the starship Atlantis at the start, but it's not long

before war erupts around the search for seven mysterious artefacts. You're placed in the unique position of being an impartial body in this new war and must unravel exactly what is going on, at the same time as protecting innocent civilians (colonists, miners, archaeologists etc) caught in the crossfire. It's a cool and chaotic scenario, and should give Legend plenty of scope for some fascinating battle situations.

I WILL SURVIVE...

The enemies in Unreal II include the Skaarj, Terran Marines, mercenary armies hired by profit-driven megacorps and several brand new alien races. Plus, many of these (the Skaarj for instance) are further divided into size classes, which determines how much armour they have and what weapons they can use effectively. Mission objectives will be quite varied, and include rescuing survivors from downed ships, infiltrating and escaping from enemy bases (to rescue hostages and retrieve strategically important items), base defense, civilian escorts, and search

CHATting WITH NPCs... DOES IT GET ANY BETTER?

>> Not only is the story a great set-up for action sequences, but unravelling it should be quite compelling too. Many of the story advancements will take place on the Atlantis between combat. Those impatient to get straight back into the action will be able to find out what they need to know quickly, but those looking for a little more immersion will be able to explore the ship and have long chats with the crew.





Is this Temptation Island?



Gorillas in the mist. Well, missiles maybe.



Boring conversation anyway...

and destroy missions. There will even be situations where the best course of action is to simply let opposing sides fight while you sneak through to rescue the innocents!

Like all the Unreal titles in development, there are quite a few missions in Unreal II where you take control of a team, both to defend an area, and to infiltrate one. The team are aiming for a balanced amount of control for the player during these sequences. In other words you won't have to babysit your team — they'll be intelligent enough to look after themselves, but you will have some control if needed.

In addition to the story-driven single player game, there'll also be several tournament ladders for those after some

pure bot action, as well as a major multiplayer component, with 20 multiplayer maps and a variety of play modes, including a variation on Team Fortress Classic.

AI in the single player game is going to be awesome. The AI routines Legend have developed allow your opponents to evaluate which weapon to use in any given situation, depending on their class, position and distance from their opponents.

Animations are looking great too thanks to Legend's new skeletal rendering and animation system. This allows for free form context dependent animations, giving the enemies a better and less predictable range of potential actions, not to mention no movement loops in the dialogue sequences. Oh, and this is all topped off with

precise lip syncing and head tracking. All in all, another bar raised in the world of FPSs.

UNREAL TEKKNOLGY...

Unreal II will have at least ten distinct settings, and the variety on offer (combined with the detail in the visuals) is astounding. From a creature so large it can be explored like a planet (outside and in!), to an underwater world, a volcanic planet, the ruins of an ancient alien city, inside enemy starships, research labs and even a low gravity asteroid belt!

There'll be around 18 weapons in the game, many of which are alien in origin, so have to be reconfigured

for use by a human between missions. Each weapon has a secondary fire mode, so there's a huge amount of firepower on offer.

And of course, Unreal II is visually amazing. In addition to amazing particle technologies and geometrically intimidating polygon counts, the game also supports 8:1 Direct X texture compression, so a next gen video card with

hardware supported T&L will really be needed to fully enjoy this game's visual finesse. Better start saving because Legend are in the final stages of development on Unreal II, and it's looking absolutely packed with features and solid design. <<

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
Unreal II packed in with GeForce 4 cards!



Are you my mother?



Get me off this rock!



BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER



CATEGORY: Action/Adventure >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >>
PUBLISHER: EA >> **AVAILABLE:** June

WOW-O-METER



Each generation there is a chosen one... yadda yadda yadda. Buffy the Vampire Slayer is into its sixth season now, and still going strong. Despite the name (and the god-awful movie that started it all), Buffy has been one of the most consistently excellent shows on television over the last six years. The world Joss Whedon and co have created features a creative and consistent mythology, believable characters, intelligent writing, witty dialogue, great fight scenes and sexy women wailing on demons... and each other. What more could you want? How about an interactive Buffy episode.



The game is meant to be like a lost episode from the show. We're not sure exactly when the game is set in the Buffy-verse, but it seems to be during season three, which means that Angel has returned from hell, slayer super-vixen Faith has arrived, Wesley is irritating everyone, Mr Trick may be around, the mayor is planning his ascension, Oz and Cordy are still in the picture, Willow is still hetero, Xander is still cool, and a broken Spike is back (sans Druscilla). Better yet, it means that Riley "I have no personality" Fin hasn't entered the picture yet! Hurrah!

Regardless of when the game is set, one thing is for sure — in order for it to work as a Buffy property, it will have to be story driven. A simple third person beat 'em up will not be enough to satisfy Buffy fans. Even the GameBoy

Buffy game recognised this, including entertaining cutscenes that had the trademark Buffy slang and attitude. We're relatively hopeful for the Xbox game as plenty of actual cast members have been recruited to do the voices in the game — Xander, Willow, Angel, Cordelia and Giles have all been confirmed. Rumour has it, however, that Sarah Michelle Gellar is not going to be on that list, which would be quite tragic for a game based on her character. Ditch Prince Junior already and get with the program woman!

We don't know all that much about the story just yet, but we're assuming it will follow the generic "demons trying to open the hellmouth" blueprint... with the Master somehow resurrected after Buffy killed him at the end of season one. Regardless, we have seen quite a bit of the fighting, and the combat

element is looking cool. In addition to the usual martial arts combos the world will be quite interactive, with heaps of useable objects, including rakes, shovels, chairs etc. A nice touch is that each weapon Buffy uses only has a finite amount of energy (represented by an energy bar) that



INSIGHT

32 >> HYPER

DISSED BY THE SLAYER HERSELF...

Well that's exactly what developers The Collective are hoping to achieve with Buffy's first outing on Xbox.



Go on you ponce, suck in those cheeks!



Sometimes you gotta take it on the chin.



wears down. When the object breaks, if there is a wooden component a handy stake will be left behind. In typical Buffy fashion, players will be able to stake vampires with a wide variety of objects, including pool cues and pushing them onto broken tables. Of course, vampires can be killed without resorting to the old stake through the heart routine — we're really looking forward to getting our hands on some big swords and cleavers for some decapitation action.

Just like the show, weapons, ammunition, items and the environment can be used somewhat creatively too. Pour a little holy water into a pool of normal water and you've got yourself a deadly vamp trap. And let's not forget sunlight! It should be fun busting open boarded up windows then wrestling vampires into the stream of light flooding in.



MY SLAYER SENSE IS TINGLING!

In addition to Buffy's health meter, she also has a special meter. Using her "Slayer Powers" uses up a portion of this meter, but fortunately enough it can be replenished through killing and collecting the orbs left behind. The range of moves available to Buffy increases throughout the game as you build up your experience in the areas of martial arts, gymnastics, super jump, quick healing and slayer sense.

Buffy on Xbox will consist of 12 main missions broken up into 30 or so sub-missions. You can expect to see all the classic Buffy haunts in the game - missions will be coordinated in the library, and other locations include the Bronze, the factory, the cemetery and of course, the high school. Many of the enemies will be familiar to fans of the show too — you'll be able to face off against Spike and Dru, not to mention the Master. Of course, to preserve continuity with the show we assume you won't be

able to kill Spike... otherwise how could Buffy fall for him in season 6? Heh, yeah it's a spoiler, but who didn't see it coming? Better yet, the enemies benefit from an intelligent combat system so they'll be a little smarter than your average videogame thugs — evading and countering attacks and using the environment to their advantage.

The game looks great too. Spike and the Master look truly freaky, and The Collective have captured the young but maturing look of Sarah Michelle Gellar from that period of the show very well. Damn she's fly! Buffy's

motion capture was actually done by her stunt double too, so the moves will be totally authentic. Of particular note is the effect when a vamp gets dusted — the puff of

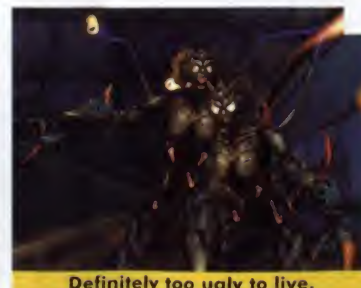
disintegrating chalky bones is very true to the program. The environments are looking quite stunning too — large, complex and very atmospheric. It could easily be another generic licensed action game,

but if Buffy the game captures even a measure of the show's irreverent humour and adrenaline packed action, then Buffy fans will have a game to be proud of. <<

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
We're praying that the game is set in the alternate world from "The Wish" where the Master rules Sunnydale and Xander and Willow are both vamps!



EA stakes a lot on this game.



Definitely too ugly to live.



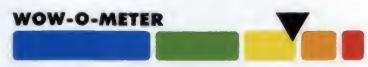
Green car, what's that secret you're kee-ping?



GRAND PRIX 4

PC / XBOX
CATEGORY: Racing >> PLAYERS: 1-multi >>
PUBLISHER: Microprose >> AVAILABLE: June

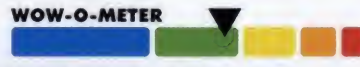
Since 1992, the Grand Prix series of games have been at the forefront of PC Fi racing sims, with Grand Prix 3 the latest and greatest to date. The good news for fans of anally retentive racing is that number four is on its way, and it's coming to Xbox as well! Headed once again by Geoff Crammond (in fact, it's officially titled "Geoff Crammond's Grand Prix 4", just like next issue will be titled "Eliot, Cam and Malky's Hyper"), as you'd expect the game has the full FIA 2001 World Championship License, so you'll see



all the official drivers, teams and tracks from the 2001 season. Of course, that's just for starters, as this series is renowned for its amazing attention to detail in just about every area. Grand Prix 4 is going to be even closer to complete realism in a simulation, thanks to an all new graphics and physics engine, tracks created using actual GPS data, and some of the best AI in racing sims today. It's looking stunning and we'll have a full review soon.



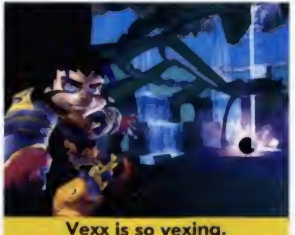
VEXX



PS2 / GCN / XBOX
CATEGORY: Platformer >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >>
PUBLISHER: Acclaim >> AVAILABLE: October

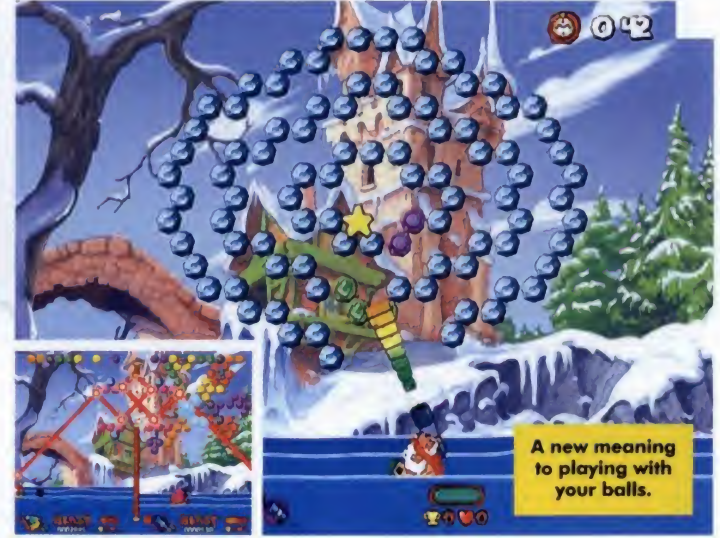
Vexx is the story of the planet of Astara, and a Shadowraith named Dark Yabu who swoops in and enslaves all the inhabitants of the world. Fortunately, young Vexx manages to escape the notice of the conquering army, and stumbles upon the last pair of Astani Battlegauntlets. Instead of throwing down the gauntlets, Vexx puts them on and is (surprise surprise) infused with special powers. From there it's up to you to take Vexx on a quest to save his people and defeat the Dark Yabu. Vexx has been in development for almost two years now and is already looking great. The epic scale of the

worlds in particular are very impressive, and the 18 levels will take you from desert temples and frozen palaces to volcanic islands, medieval castles and underwater cities. Better still the game has proper day and night cycles, and once it gets dark the landscape will change and enemies will become more menacing. The gameplay is looking quite fast paced and combat intensive. Indeed, Vexx seems more inspired by platformers like Sonic than by the Marios of the world. Although packed with cliched characters and settings, we have a good feeling about this one.



Vexx is so vexing.

He just wishes he was Wolverine. Snik! Snik!



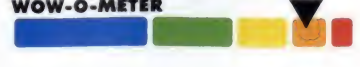
A new meaning to playing with your balls.

WORMS BLAST

PC
CATEGORY: Puzzle >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: UbiSoft >> AVAILABLE: TBA

With Worms Blast, Team 17 are taking the Worms franchise in a slightly new direction, and the possibilities are delicious! While still a 2D cartoony game, Worms Blast is very much inspired by Bubble Bobble style puzzle games. The play area is set on water with your worm in a boat, and the aim is to shoot the coloured blocks out of the sky before they reach you. Of course, there are different coloured blocks, and these correspond to the different colours of ammunition your worm can use. If you hit a block of the same colour it will be destroyed as will any blocks of the same colour linked to it. However, if you hit a

block of a different colour it will change to the new colour as will the blocks surrounding it. In addition to the standard bazooka there are a host of bonus weapons like grenades, shotguns, dynamite and laser guns that can be picked up. The game consists of 60 single player puzzle-based missions and an awesome head to head mode. In head to head, the screen is divided in two with you and your opponent racing each other to clear their screen faster. Better yet, the dividers between the sides of the screen sometimes open to allow you to attack your opponent. More wormy goodness? We can't wait!



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PLAYSTATION



MAC



PC-CDROM



CHAT



SEGA



ARCADE



NINTENDO 64

WIN WIN WIN WIN

ENTRIES CLOSE MAY 3RD

WIN JEDI STARFIGHTER!

FOR
PS2

The sequel to last year's Starfighter has finally arrived. Jedi Starfighter lets you dogfight to your heart's content with the help of the Force, no less! Piloting the new Jedi Starfighter from *Attack of the Clones*, help put a stop to Count Dooku's evil plans and get caught up in some high class space combat action. Electronic Arts here in Oz are offering 5 copies of Jedi Starfighter for PS2 to 5 lucky Hyper readers this month. All you have to do to enter is answer this question:

Who pilots the new Jedi Starfighter in *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones*?

Put your answer along with your name and address on the back of an envelope and post it to: Jedi Goodies, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016. Good luck!



WIN COMMAND & CONQUER: RENEGADE

FOR
PC

Our dreams have come true — now we can experience the Command and Conquer universe on foot! Renegade lets you get down and dirty with a huge arsenal of weaponry and go toe to toe with the GDI or Nod. Electronic Arts are offering 5 copies of this cool game to 5 Hyper readers — all you gotta do is answer this question:

Name the game developer responsible for C&C.

Put your answer along with your name and address on the back of an envelope and post it to: Renegade Funk, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016.



ONLY
FOR



NINTENDO
GAMECUBE™



UNLEASH THE BEAST WITHIN



Battle it out as 16 unique fighters – each with an alternate Hyper-beast life-form and special attack moves.

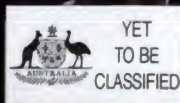
FROM THE CREATORS
OF BLOODY ROAR™ 1, 2 AND 3 –
THE FIRST FIGHTING GAME
FOR NINTENDO GAMECUBE™.

BLOODY ROAR® PRIMAL FURY



Fight to the finish in 2-Player head-to-head gameplay modes or run the gauntlet through 5 Single-Player modes.

ACTIVISION



activision.com

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XBOX unleashed



saved
games

many
more
games
TO CHOOSE FROM

Sleek and powerful. The **XBOX Console** has 4 game controller ports that allow easy multiplayer gaming and enable other peripherals ranging from game pads to voice activated headsets. The console features an Intel 733MHz processor, the **most powerful CPU** of any console, as well as an internal hard drive for massive storage of game information - a first in the console gaming industry. **Extra controller \$68**



ALL XBOX GAMES

\$88

G - suitable for all ages; G8+ - suitable for children 8 years and over; M - suitable for persons 15 years and over; MA15+ - restricted to persons 15 years or over

**store
LOCATIONS**

NSW

BANKSTOWN
The Christies Homemaker Centre,
Corner of Chapel and
Canterbury Roads
Phone (02) 9793 9677

NEW! CHATSWOOD
2 Endeavour Street
(Corner Orchard and
Endeavour Streets)
Phone (02) 9413 2806

MACQUARIE CENTRE
Macquarie Centre,
New Loft Level, Waterloo Road,
North Ryde
Phone (02) 9878 6422

MOORE PARK
Moore Park Supa Centa, Top Floor,
Corner South Dowling Street and
Todman Avenue
Phone (02) 9697 0244

NORTH PARRAMATTA
Cnr James Ruse Dr and Windsor Road
Phone (02) 9890 5548

PENRITH
Corner Mulgoa Road and Batt Street
Phone (02) 4721 1544

WARRINGAH MALL
Warringah Mall Shopping Centre,
Pittwater Road, Brookvale
Phone (02) 9905 2088

EXPAND

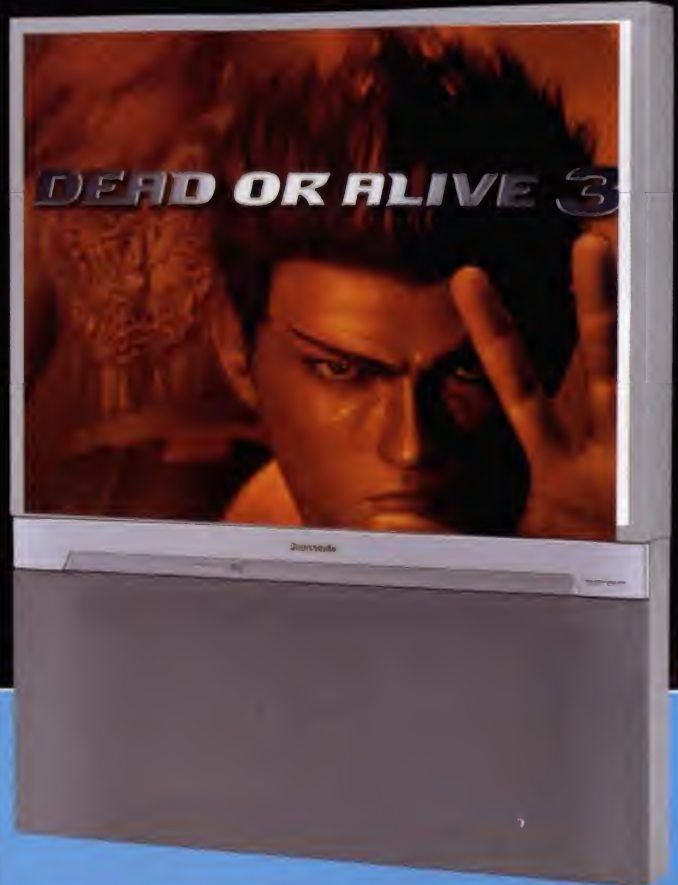
the XBOX EXPERIENCE



JAMO X5 LOUDSPEAKER PACK

6 powerful bass reflex speakers handle 100W each. Made in Denmark. A 2593

\$1796



PANASONIC 130cm TV

The ultimate TV for XBOX! Flicker-free Digital Cinema Reality. Smooth image transition. Deep sound from the 2-way four speaker system. This is being there!

G 8054

\$5394



PIONEER DOLBY DIGITAL RECEIVER

Plug your XBOX into this for intense surround sound. DTS/Dolby Digital/Dolby Pro Logic decoder. Pumps 100W each through 5 speakers.

A 2710

\$698

XBOX RF Adaptor
Y 4309



\$28⁸⁰

XBOX DVD Kit
Y 4306



\$48

XBOX Memory Unit
Y 4305



\$58

XBOX Controller
Y 4304



\$68

12 MONTHS INTEREST FREE

VICTORIA

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312-314 Melbourne Road
(Princess Highway)
Phone (03) 5277 3033

HIGHPOINT

167 Rosamond Road, Maribyrnong
Phone (03) 9317 0311

PRESTON

138 Bell Street
Phone (03) 9416 7366

NUNAWADING

311-315 Whitehorse Road
Phone (03) 9894 0566

NEW! FOUNTAIN GATE

Shop 1083, Westfield Shopping
Centre, Magid Drive
Phone (03) 9705 6298

NEW! SOUTHLAND

Store 3090,
Westfield Shopping Centre,
1239 Nepean Highway,
Cheltenham
Phone (03) 9584 0677

FAST-TURN-
POWER





The real Tony Hawk getting air.

So fast, he's a blur.



Tony's back again.

HYPER CHATS TO SKATING LEGEND, TONY HAWK.

THE HAWK HAS LANDED

INTERVIEW

40 » HYPER

The day finally arrived... we got to see the man in the flesh pulling off the world's most incredible acrobatic move on 4 wheels stuck to a piece of wood — the 900 degrees. Yep it's true folks, Tony Hawk was in the land down under to give us a quick demo of his mad skills in addition to promoting one of the best games available, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater. The Globe World Skateboard Championship was an incredible event not only for the skaters but also for the thousands of fans who packed into the

Rod Laver Arena for 2 days of stylin' moves and killer grooves. The arena had an absolutely incredible street setup covering most of the floor with rails, ramps and drops. Most of the crowd was spread throughout the arena either watching the floor or the jumbo-tron screen over the vert ramp. Combined with an incredible sound system and a live DJ, the place had an amazing energy. Once it was announced that Tony Hawk was about to start his demo the entire stadium rushed to the vert ramp to try and

catch a glimpse. Tony spent the next 30 minutes pulling of some great air alongside the other skaters in the vert competition including Bucky Leseck (Who took the top prize of \$10,000 in the competition) and Sandro Dias. Tony hit the ramp again on Sunday and to everyone's amazement pulled off his signature 900 degree spin. For those who missed the event you can have the moment burnt into your computer monitor with a screensaver courtesy of Globe. Download it at <http://www.globeworldcup.com>



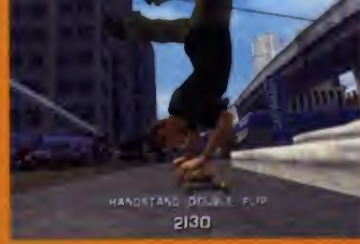
You want me to do what?



All the action was on the big screen.



We salute you Tony!



The bottom of Tony's deck.

HYPER: What do you think the Tony Hawk Pro Skater games do for the sport of skateboarding?

Tony Hawk: Well... I think they get more kids interested in skating. I get email all the time from kids who started skating after playing the games. I also think that the games have created more recognition for skating, people finally know the trick names!

HYPER: Do you always pick the Tony Hawk character when you play the game?

TH: I always play and finish the game as the Tony Hawk character first. It's important for me to know all of the secrets and moves for my character. After that I can play any character... even my kids.

HYPER: With a fourth game just announced in the series, did you ever imagine your games would become this popular?

TH: I've always loved video games... I can still remember playing Skate or Die on my Commodore 64! I think it's great that people really enjoy playing the games. Neversoft have dug really deep to make these games so incredible.

HYPER: What sort of involvement do you have with Neversoft when designing the games?

TH: I'm basically a beta tester. They send me builds of the game every few weeks and I play through every part. I guess you can say I'm very involved.

HYPER: What can we expect from Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4?

TH: Better motion capture and more detailed level design.

HYPER: How has technology changed your job as a pro skater and the sport of skateboarding in general?

TH: I think it's the immediacy of technology that's had the most impact. I get over 100 emails every day! While I don't get a chance to reply to all of them I do read every one. The emails from kids saying they got into skateboarding after playing the games are very cool. Web video has also really changed the sport. The day after a competition there are videos online showing every trick to the world. 15 years ago we'd go to Europe and show them tricks they'd never seen before, now they've seen it all.

HYPER: What words of advice can you give new skaters?

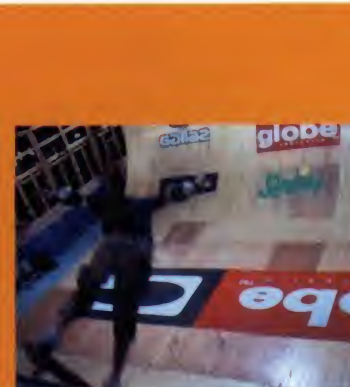
TH: Take it slow. You've got to learn the basics before you can pull off a lot of the big moves in the game. By practicing the basics you get good



Tony's had enough, he's walking out.



Tony thanks the crowd for bein' there.



Flapping your arms won't help now.

I've always loved videogames. I can still remember playing **Skate or Die on my C-64!**



"Believe it or not, I'm walkin' on air..."



Tony gets personal. Evil!

GWC RESULTS

>> STREET

RICK McCRANK \$10,000
KERRY GETZ \$4,500
CARLOS DE ANDRADE \$3,500

>> VERT

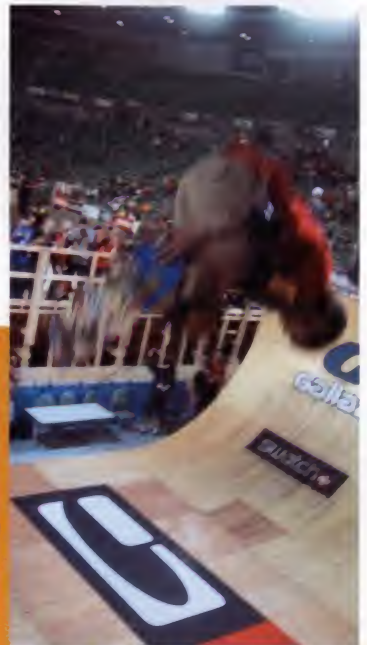
BUCKY LASEK \$10,000
SANDRO DIAS \$4,500
PIERRE-LUC GAGNON \$3,500



Skaters go nuts at the GWC.



Tony signs some stuff for our wall!



Break a leg! Oh wait...

through consistency.

HYPER: What's been your worst injury?

TH: I just broke my elbow a few months back and that's the first bone I ever broke! My son just broke the same bone too — weird.

HYPER: Has your son taught you any new moves?

TH: He pulls off some great moves and says "You do it Dad!" and I'm like no way. He's pulling off kick flips already. By seeing my son skate I'm viewing the sport through a fresh perspective which has been great for me.

HYPER: Have you been to Australia before?

TH: Yeah. I think I've been here every year since '88!

HYPER: When you first went pro in the 80's did you make any money?

TH: Back in '84 you'd get \$150 for first place. My monthly royalty cheques were like \$4. I just always believed in it so it wasn't about the money.

HYPER: Considering you carried the Olympic torch a few months ago what are your views on the games and are you keeping up with the US team while you're in Australia?

TH: I've been keeping up with the snowboarding events. Very cool. A

lot of people have asked me about getting skateboarding into the Olympics lately. I just don't know if it's a good idea. Having the sport in something like the X-Games has been great because it represents the real sport whereas the Olympics are just too controlling.

HYPER: With all that you've accomplished in life do you have any other immediate goals?

TH: I just wanna skate. It's what I enjoy the most. Through skating I've created the Tony Hawk Foundation which builds skate parks in under privileged areas. That's why I'm here in Melbourne — the sponsors donated money to the foundation. I'm also looking into putting together an arena style skate event with loads of great skaters and bands — big, fun and entertaining.

HYPER: Do you skate every day?

TH: No. You'll just get burned out if you do. After I take a few days off I'm all fired up and ready for anything. <<<

BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

>>> We've got even more Tony Hawk for you next issue! We'll be revealing the winners of our enormous Tony Hawk Pro Skater competition. We'll judge the photos you guys and gals have sent in to see which Hyper readers can trick with the best of 'em.



Tony gets ready to blitz.



Tony's back again again.



F*** Off Hyper!



**IT'S NOT ABOUT TACTICS, TEAM RULES OR TYRE CHOICES. IT'S ABOUT
GETTING OUT THERE, PUTTING YOUR FOOT DOWN AND SMASHING THE
HELL OUT OF ANYTHING THAT MOVES.**



**IT'S NOT THE WINNING.
IT'S THE TAKING APART.**



Rage



TARAWL



Asheron's Call 2

WWW.ASHERONSCALL.COM/

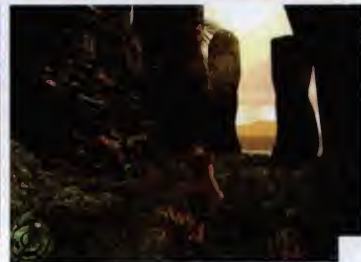
It really doesn't seem like such a long time since joint developers Microsoft and Turbine let Asheron's Call loose on the Massively Multiplayer market. The world of Dereth was a nice alternative to Antonica or Britannia, and continues to provide a fairly enjoyable romp for fans of the genre. Times are changing however.

EverQuest and its fifty expansions continue to grow ever more popular, Dark Age of Camelot's fan base increases by the minute, and certainly with Star Wars: Galaxies looming the struggle to keep Asheron's Call's valuable subscribers is imperative. So it is that the developers already have their heads-down at work

on the sequel, determined only to resurface with something special.

CHAOS HAS COME

An era of chaos has come and gone since the days of Asheron's Call (AC), and out of the darkness three races will struggle to regain a foothold in Dereth. Where last time we were stuck picking from three types of human, (the Aluvian, Sho, and Gharu'ndim), we thankfully have a little more diversity this time around. The humans have merged into one race and two new species rear their ugly heads. The Tumeroks, originally introduced as a part of the story in the AC expansion and now further developed into a playable race, resemble shamanistic goblins, favouring the ways of tribal



magic. And then there are the Lugians, a stoic bunch of club-wielding, boulder-throwing stone giants. Admittedly three races still isn't a heck of a lot to choose from but Turbine promise entirely different styles of play from each.

Hundreds of separate character abilities are on offer in the form of a set of skill trees. Each race has its own distinct tree where one can dabble a little in "the art", melee or missile combat, or simply concentrate on mastering just one path. Like its predecessor, Asheron's Call 2 will let players upgrade their skills on the fly with any recently acquired experience points as opposed to waiting for their character to level up. Sounds like pretty straightforward

stuff so far, however what's new is the option to unlearn skills. As implausible as it may seem to simply "forget" a skill, this capability may prove a particularly nice idea as it allows players the freedom to undo any regrettable choices.

EASY ON THE EYE

To involve the players more in combat, AC let you hit high or low which, oddly enough, was an interesting touch back then. In the sequel we can look forward to seeing this taken a step further. Mid-fight combos along the lines of what we're seeing in Dark Ages of Camelot can be used for extra damage, but are only possible at specific points in a battle. This should do much to keep players



Argh, attack of the lens flare!



While you're down there...



to wonder whether this won't just turn out to be a major inconvenience. I guess we'll have to assume Turbine know what the hell they're doing!

That aside, Asheron's Call 2 is really shaping up to be a worthwhile choice in the now insanely competitive MMORPG genre. Expect to see it out towards the end of the year, in the US at least. <<<

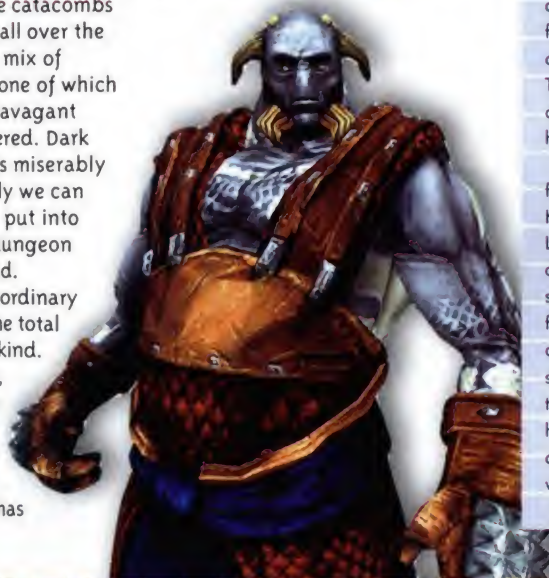
on their toes.

Anyone that spent a bit of time playing the game would find it hard to deny that, even for its time, AC sported some rather lackluster visuals. The good news is that the upcoming installment undoubtedly looks to correct that shortcoming with the powerful new G2 engine. High-poly models, a complex animation system and all sorts of swanky environmental features are on the cards, ensuring the world of Dereth will be very easy on the eye. Evidence of the game's beauty can be seen in the couple of short downloadable movies floating around the net. Impressive stuff to be sure!

Lacking in AC were any truly memorable dungeons. Opting for

quantity over quality the catacombs of Dereth were speckled all over the map. Most were a bland mix of tunnels and corridors, none of which held a candle to the extravagant dungeons EverQuest offered. Dark Age of Camelot even fails miserably in this regard... Hopefully we can expect some more effort put into keeping the interest in dungeon crawling this time around.

Perhaps the most extraordinary feature in this sequel is the total exclusion of NPCs of any kind. No barkeeps, no smithies, nothing! Instead, players are left to fend for themselves, buying, selling and making their own gear. Of course one has



LORE OF THE LAND

In the distant past, the land of Dereth enjoyed a golden age. The Humans, overcoming their history of dislocation and enslavement, slowly built their strength, tamed the threats to their peace, and claimed Dereth as their home. Guided by the wizard Asheron, the Humans mastered the ways of steel and magic to hold in check their nemesis, the insect-like Olthoi, and to stave off the encroachment of the Lugian and Tumerok civilizations. Though the unpredictable tides of magic surged all around them and new foes seemed to spring up endlessly, the Humans carved out a happy existence on Dereth.

However, this golden age was not fated to last forever. Bitterly opposed foes of unthinkable might struggled with one another to control the primal source of Dereth's magical power. Struggle turned to war, and war invited a horrible cataclysm. The denizens of Dereth fled deep underground into shelters created by the protector Asheron. The land above them twisted under dark waves of chaos for three hundred years.

Now, after generations of hiding in fear, the three civilized races—the Humans, the Tumeroks, and the Lugians—forge an alliance, setting aside their past enmity to work side by side. As you play Asheron's Call 2, you fight alongside the first brave adventurers to emerge from the shelters. All of the races strive to reclaim their ancestral lands from the evil that has flourished in the ruins left by the cataclysm. Together they rebuild the world, and face an uncertain future.

LINKS



I Need Coffee.com

Need Coffee.com is a website dedicated to coffee lovers. It features a search bar, navigation links, and various articles and recipes related to coffee. The site is designed to be a central hub for coffee enthusiasts.

I NEED COFFEE

www.needcoffee.com

Coffee addicts unite! This is the ultimate coffee lovers site dedicated to brewing, grinding, roasting, worshipping and drinking coffee. Find out the history of coffee, learn about cafe culture and check out some javalicious recipes.

TO DEFACE THE PRESIDENT:
 • Click on the president
 • Click on the dollar sign
 • Click on the dollar sign
 • Click on the dollar sign
 • Click on the dollar sign

Let him know what the world thinks...

TEXAN DRAWL

www.futurefarmers.com/texasdrawl

Release your creative urges and deface a picture of the American president — you know you want to! This simple little Flash program is hilarious, and you can view a gallery full of recent defacements. Just hit "save" and others can view your masterpiece. Have at you, Bush!

HOW STUFF WORKS

www.howstuffworks.com

Ever been perplexed as to how a fire extinguisher works? Or flash memory? Or slot machines? Or lock picking? Or jet engines? Or operating systems? Or the most recent videogame systems? This great website, How Stuff Works, has explanations for just about anything that pops into your head. If you've always wanted to know, then this is the only place to go.

FARK!

www.fark.com

News with a twist. Fark was started by a guy named Drew who got a kick out of sending his friends funny emails containing links to weird, funny or downright odd news stories. He'd been sitting on the domain name Fark since 1997, so he decided to combine the two into the Fark.com we know today. Each story falls into a number of different categories, from "obvious", "spiffy" and "amusing" to "boobies". Warning: Some links are not suitable for people under 18.



WORTH 1000

www.worth1000.com

This website challenges Adobe Photoshop artists to manipulate images in a series of competitions. Current challenges include "Invisible World" in which artists must remove people from their clothes... but leave the clothes behind not the people. You can browse galleries of previous challenges and see some truly incredible Photoshop work. Makes you think anything is possible with a digital brush. There is also a great hoax gallery of fake photos.





AGATA BUDINSKA

>>I was going to write my column this month on the issues I'm currently

having with my contact email address, budinska@another.com, but then something much, much more interesting came up.

Yet another ISP has bitten the dust. On the 7th of March, customers subscribing to Dingo Blue for long distance, mobile and Internet were informed that they have 8 weeks to jump ship.

Fair enough, they're giving plenty of notice of when services will cease, but I can't help but feel sorry for a certain group of their customers. You see, when One.Tel dropped out, Dingo Blue was named as the preferred ISP. Even as I type, "A dingo ate my Internet" jokes are doing the email rounds.

Along with One.Tel and Dingo Blue, Asia Online also bowed out of the Australian dial up market a few months ago. You can't help but think, who's next on the block?

But it's not just ISPs who are running on a loss, which brings me back to my original planned rant: My free email is free no more.

The free email account that I signed up for about 1 year ago, budinska@another.com, is no longer free. In fact, it is now my "30 pound a year just for an email address" account. I went to check my email to see if there were any flames from my "I'm bored with the Net" rant (PS - yeah, yeah, User Friendly, I know, I know - oh, And I'll eventually get back to you all), when I got a pop up stating that in 3 days I'll be asked to pay 30 pound (or almost \$80) to keep the account open, or else, too bad. According to the pop up, the charges will ensure that another.com will be ad free. I don't have an issue with ads if I'm getting free web based email that I can check if I'm OS or even just down the road.

I mentioned this to some friends at work, who didn't seem surprised at all. Apparently there are rumours running rife that the next one to start charging for the free mail is Hotmail - possibly the longest running free web email available.

Maybe this is just a jinx, but for all flames please mail to happymealwithaj@hotmail.com

Don't ask us what it means... we don't know.

Information

PSN3

machines (2000)

- machine 0100 (2000)
- machine 0200 (2000)
- 17
- (24) skush
- machine 0500 (2000)
- machine 0700 (2000)
- machine 0800 (2000)
- machine 1100 (2000)

machine 0100 (2001)

machine 0200 (2001)

Slack and orbit

machine 0300 (2001)

Sliders (3 c)

Some truly unique digital art. Stylin'.

taquitos.net
The Crunchiest Site on the Internet

Snacking International!

Around the world: Our chiptasters have been traveling far and wide to bring you the greatest variety of snack reviews that you'll find anywhere. Recent chip expeditions have included England, Israel and Barbados, and we've got a correspondent headed this week and to Montreal, where the selection of ketchup chips is among the best in the world. Stay tuned to Taquitos.net for the latest reports on what we find.

Newsreel: What are the Simpsons saying about snacks? They're saying more than ever, as you can see from our updated list of **Simpsons Food Quotes**.

Crunch it up! Here are a few of the more unusual snacks that we've reviewed recently.

Potato Chips

Crunchy Potato Chips

Crunchy Potato Chips

Crunchy Potato Chips

PRAYSTATION
www.once-upon-a-forest.com

>>> PrayStation is run by artist and technologist Joshua Davis, who has come up with some beautiful pieces of digital art. Mostly small pieces of Flash, don't try too hard to find a meaning behind these pieces of work. As Davis himself says, "This project is very simply a place for me to amuse myself and lay down concepts, like a sketchbook or diary."

Slashdot
News for Nerds. Stuff that Matters.

Science: Table Top Fusion Courtesy of Tiny Bubbles
Posted by [thard](#) on Monday March 04, @08:11PM
Does the sun go right all along?
Link: [thard](#) writes "The peer-reviewed journal Science is carrying a cover story about the possibility of table top fusion. Not cold fusion, mind you, but the apparatus might look that way to some. Out. Judge and other labs say they have gotten the fingerprints of fusion reactions in their steel production from collapsing bubbles in liquid, a process that heats a local area to temperatures as hot as the surface of the sun, and releases photons. The diagnosis are already here - notably from Dr. Robert Park of the American Physical Society and from critical reviewers who say they haven't repeated the neutron production. But the authors say the critics don't calibrate their equipment correctly. Articles regarding the discovery can be found on Slashdot Alert." CD Looks legit, but Pans and Plinkans (and the University of Utah for that matter) talked a good game. I suppose TI-99s in tabletop fusion when a generator comes stacked to my next laptop. The subject of this post also has a longer article up at the [Video Voice](#).

Slashback: 640K. Pioneer. Payback
Posted by [thard](#) on Monday March 04, @06:59PM
Does the sun go right all along?
Slashback tonight with a new avalanche of updates and corrections on Pioneer 10 (it's not a Star Trek series). Canadian copyright law says I can't reuse any CD/DVD and under laws, and -- Oh, Yes, whether 640K really is enough for anyone. Read on for the details. Update: 03:45 00 15 GMT by J. Pioneer - not "Voyager" Ateep at the keyboard.

The Incredible Invisible Green

TAQUITOS
www.taquitos.net

>>> These guys are professional snack tasters. Yep, you read that right. For the good of humankind, Taquitos taste every new chip and related crunchy snacks, so that we know what is worth buying. Of course, there's a bunch of weird and crazy American products here that we'll never get in Australia, but it makes for some interesting browsing.

SLASH DOT
slashdot.org

>>> "News for nerds. Stuff that Matters", as the site itself proclaims. If you need more than your daily dose of computer geekery, IT and weird obscure geeky stuff, then you should bookmark Slash Dot today.

REVIEWS



GAME OF
THE MONTH
»PS2

Final Fantasy X

Here it is... The best Final Fantasy game since the much loved PlayStation classic, FFVII. The adventure begins on page 50.

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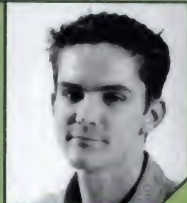
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GAME THEORY

DAVID WILGOOSE



>> Two issues ago, I started some thoughts on how games tell their stories. Fundamentally, I was interested in how a linear story can be "shoehorned" into an interactive videogame.

It's clear that many developers don't even attempt to do so. In most games, it's entirely possible to view the Plot and the Gameplay as discrete entities unaffected by the machinations of the other. The next cut-scene plot revelation is the carrot to the control pad's stick.

The Final Fantasy series is founded upon this formula. Here the story is king, with the player relegated to negotiating an interminable series of battles and pressing X to cycle through copious linear dialogue. The gameplay serves as an obstacle to plot progression rather than facilitating the narrative.

At the other end of the spectrum lies The Sims, a game that is the complete inverse of Final Fantasy. In The Sims, there is no plot that has been scripted by a game designer. Instead, it is left to the player to write his or her own narrative using the tools provided by the gameplay.

Which leads me to the final game up for analysis – Deus Ex: The Conspiracy (reviewed this issue) – and the third method by which a game can tell a story. With the player actively involved and therefore implicated in each new narrative twist, the gameplay is king in Deus Ex. Events happen in your presence and you're constantly called upon to take decisive actions to which the gameworld then responds with meaningful consequences. Sure, the main plot thread is as scripted as any game, yet the illusion of choice is so delicately maintained it feels like you've penned the tale yourself. Indeed, the gameplay depth is so great, no two players will experience it the same way. Anyone who's played Deus Ex will know what it's like to discuss what you did and how you traversed a certain area with another player.

In Deus Ex, the player gets the best of both worlds – a compelling story provided by the designer (a la Final Fantasy) and the ability to leave his or her own stamp on it (a la The Sims). That's why it's the best game of all time.

hyper_game_theory@tjotmail.com



THE HYPER CREW'S TOP 5

Eliot Fish – Editor

1. Star Wars Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast – PC
"There's nothing like beheading a Stormtrooper."
2. Dungeon Siege – PC
3. Metal Gear Solid 2 – PS2
4. Final Fantasy X – PS2
5. Rallisport Challenge – Xbox

Cam Shea – Deputy Editor

1. Halo – Xbox
"Physics experiments baby. This game has so much depth!"
2. Jet Set Radio Future – Xbox
3. Quake 3 Arena – PC
4. Super Mario World – SNES
5. Namco Museum – GBA

Malcolm Campbell - Art guy

1. Tech Romancer - DC
"Less a beat-em-up, more a tribute to giant robot anime."
2. Super Baby Dash - SNES
3. Jet Set Radio Future - Xbox
4. Sonic - GBA
5. Super Puzzle Fighter - PSone

David Wilgoose – Reviewer

1. Halo – Xbox
"Look, it's the Rumlbers from System Shock 2!"
2. Deus Ex: The Conspiracy – PS2
3. Project Gotham Racing – Xbox
4. Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee – Xbox
5. Strange Adventures in Infinite Space – PC

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! |



Final Fantasy X >>PS2

CATEGORY: RPG >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Squaresoft >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: MA15+ >> AVAILABLE: TBA >>

FRANK DRY thinks they should call it "Ongoing Fantasy"...



50 >>HYPER REVIEW

Hindsight is a wonderful thing. It lets us ask why Squaresoft allowed such an off-key storyline to be used in the Final Fantasy movie when the plot of Final Fantasy VII or IX would have worked so much better. Too much to absorb? Too hardcore? Tell that to Peter Jackson. A CG movie of that calibre based on either one of those games would've worked just fine. The approach of Final Fantasy X brings us to another impasse, as the next in the series will be online. Another mistake? It could be.

For Western gamers, FFXVII is remembered as having the greatest impact with its story. FFXVIII had a terrible character and combat system, but the designs and FMV were unquestionably brilliant. FFXIX struck a chord with all veteran

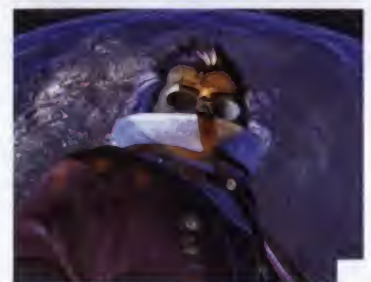
gamers for bringing back the FF style of old. With Final Fantasy X, Squaresoft has well and truly surpassed itself by bringing together the best of those elements, with the most refined, balanced, and heart-wrenching RPG of its kind on any home platform. It would be a shame to divert from this path.

WOOS THE LADIES

Final Fantasy X begins in the harbour city of Zanarkand. Players assume the role of Tidus, a young blonde-haired superstar who woos the ladies with his impressive skills in the sport of Blitzball. Think of it as full contact water polo, except you play inside a giant sphere of water floating in mid-air. It just so happens he's scheduled for his next game, and we're treated to some

amazing DVD-quality FMVs of the match. However, in the background we can see the ocean rising to an ominous height, and before we know it, it lays siege upon Zanarkand. Tidus survives the initial onslaught, and when he reaches his mentor, Auron, he learns that the city is being attacked by a mysterious force called Sin. Before long, not even Auron can save Tidus from Sin, and they are sucked into a giant swirling vortex, leaving the fate of Zanarkand at its mercy.

When Tidus comes to, he finds himself stranded in the middle of the ocean with little clue as to his bearings. But those are the least of Tidus' problems. As far as people know, Zanarkand was destroyed over 1000 years ago. Ever since Sin flooded the planet, people have destroyed all





What do you mean I'm voted off the island?



Help, my poloneck is attacking me!



When nature kills.



D-D-D-Decoré.



You're the light of my life.



Tidus: So you know where she is?



Yunalesca: Now, choose.

technological artefacts that may attract its wrath, and have turned to religion and the magical arts to rebuild their society. Even Blitzball, is revered as a religion of sorts.

Eventually, Tidus meets Yuna, a young and beautiful woman who is mastering the art of summoning.

She's obviously a very important person, given that she's constantly flanked by bodyguards. There's Lulu, a dark and impossibly elegant sorceress in a floor length gown; and Kimari, a fearsome tigerman. When we meet Yuna, she's just mastered her first summoning spell. Her aim is

to master all the summoning spells of the world in order to defeat Sin, and after a little drama, Tidus commits himself to helping her achieve that goal.

LOADED TO THE HILT

The design and graphical representation in Final Fantasy X are absolutely top quality. Without exception, the surrounding environment is always impressively detailed. Whether it's tall, majestic towers with ornate architecture you're looking at, or trees swaying in a gentle breeze against the waterfront, Final Fantasy X creates an incredible sense of scope, depth and atmosphere.

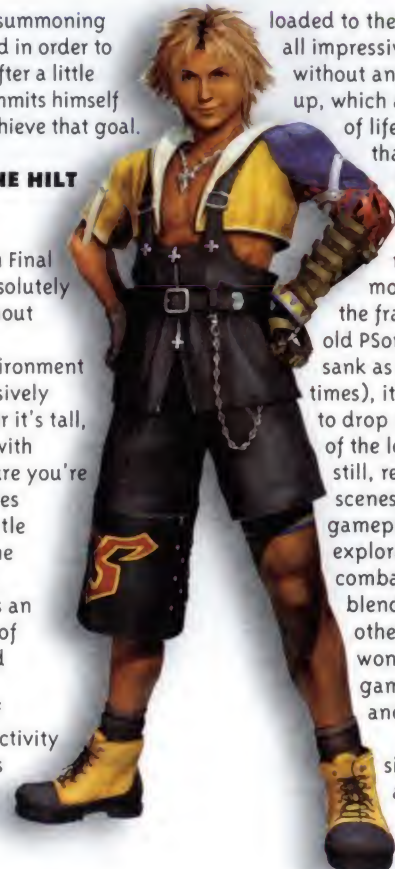
There's a lot of movement and activity as well. The cities you travel to are

loaded to the hilt with NPCs, all impressively detailed and without any unsightly pop-up, which adds that sense

of life and vibrancy that was found in Final Fantasy IX.

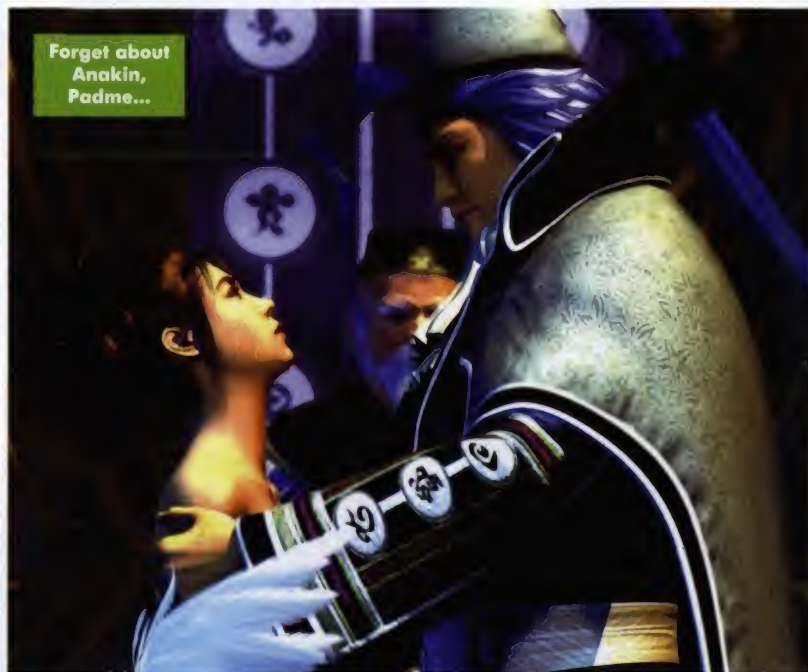
But when it's running at high resolution and more than double the frame rate of the old PSone games (which sank as low as 15fps at times), it's impossible not to drop your jaw at some of the locations. Better still, real-time cut-scenes, FMV and gameplay (for both exploration and combat) are seamlessly blended into each other, which does wonders for the game's presentation and pacing.

The most significant addition,





Lulu: Where in Spira have you been!?



Forget about Anakin, Padme...



The gameplay is simply electric!



Girl, you've married a conehead.

however, is the inclusion of voice acting. Previous Final Fantasy games required us to read through an extraordinary amount of text. Players were allowed to let their imaginations run wild in interpreting the lilt and timbre of a character's voice. Final Fantasy X is the first in the series to hand these interpretations to you on a silver platter. The important thing is that the characters remain likeable, and in that respect, it's not an unwelcome feature. Voice acting in Final Fantasy X is translated from original Japanese dialogue, and is surprisingly well acted and synchronised with the animations. It makes the experience feel less like a game and more like



a movie — but like Metal Gear Solid 2, there are times when you'd wish for less yapping and more zapping.

THE FIELD OF BATTLE

Gameplay has undergone several major changes. First, in keeping with the 'let us hold your hand through the story' approach to role-playing, Squaresoft has done away with the world map.

Players are lead from one location to the next as the situation demands, and keeps the game going at a steady pace. This comes at some cost, as curiosity will naturally take hold of any player to explore the world, but there's still a decent amount of exploration in the game's main locations.

Secondly, the character development system has been completely revamped. Rather than junctioning abilities, collecting gemstones or earning abilities through a Job system,

Final Fantasy X introduces the Ability Sphere. It's actually a complex network of spheres, each dictating a set of elements, spells and abilities that the characters can gradually move through and accumulate as they level up, limiting them to a particular field of expertise.

This carries many implications on the field of battle. In previous games,

you'd typically have a full set of attacking, defensive and healing abilities made available to every character, or at least a balance of abilities so that they can keep each other topped up. In Final Fantasy X, the Ability Sphere confines, but not necessarily restricts, the characters to their given roles. Some will specialise solely in airborne attacks, others in



Man, he is such the beach dude.

Tidus: Blitzball!



Check out the chassis on that baby...



PAL - THE GOOD AND THE BAD.

>>> Final Fantasy fans who have been waiting an eternity for the PAL territories release will be heartened considerably to hear it is based on the FFX International version, released in Japan in December. The game includes a revamped Sphere Board and new boss challenges, and will be packaged alongside a bonus DVD featuring interviews and Square game demos. Definitely worth the wait!
The downside? Like so many dodgy PAL conversions before it (stand up Devil May Cry) the copy we played was letterboxed and slower than the NTSC versions. Can't win 'em all, eh?

Without giving anything away, Final Fantasy X is the kind of game that **will rekindle your faith and love for the genre.**

offensive magic. Characters like Yuna specialise in summoning magic and Tidus in ground-based assaults. This doesn't mean you'll have to save before a key confrontation in case you've selected the wrong characters – they can be switched in and out of active service during a battle, allowing them to function more like a team.
A few minor changes have been made to the combat formula. Weapons can be switched mid-battle, and the effectiveness of Overdrive attacks are often determined by small feats of skill, like pressing button combinations. Summon spells no longer bring down the fiery wrath of God in a cut-scene – instead, all Summon creatures like

Ifrit and Shiva can be controlled, managed, and levelled just like any other character. The only catch is the Summon creatures have to fight without the aid of others.
Finally, there's the issue of the story. Without giving anything away, Final Fantasy X is the kind of game that will rekindle your faith and love for the genre; and is easily the best and most worthy of playing since Final Fantasy VII. With such a rare convergence of high production standards, gameplay design and audio/visual, as well as a slew of welcome changes to the old formula, Final Fantasy X is a truly magnificent RPG to own on the PlayStation 2. <<<

!!! So what's next... online Final Fantasy in Australia? We pray.



PLUS: Well-balanced character and combat system.

MINUS: Very scripted. But hey, it's supposed to be.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

95 93 92

OVERALL

94

If you only buy one console RPG this year, get FFX.



Deus Ex: THE CONSPIRACY >> PS2

CATEGORY: Action/RPG >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Eidos >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: MA15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

DAVID WILDGOOSE is more than happy to play this game again.

Where do you start with this game? Deus Ex was hailed as a masterpiece upon its release on PC in June 2000. It scooped countless Game of the Year awards and has since been acclaimed as the best of all time in several magazine polls. Hyper itself was not immune to the Deus Ex virus, awarding it a cover and an astonishing 97% review. Despite the tardiness of this conversion, the good news for PS2 owners is that Deus Ex: The Conspiracy has lost nothing in translation, and in fact has been notably improved in several areas.

ELIMINATE OR AVOID

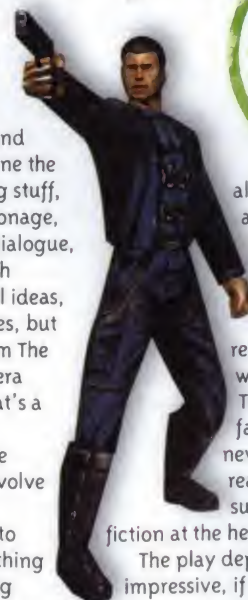
Deus Ex presents a dystopian future where authority is centralised in the grasp of hidden, undemocratic groups comprised of powerful

technocrats and shadowy government figures. The Grey Death virus has devastated nations, and the only cure — a vaccine known as Ambrosia — is in short supply and thus kept secret from the general population. Protests and riots are commonplace, with one so-called terrorist group — the NSF — going as far as hijacking a shipment of Ambrosia and commandeering New York's Liberty Island and beheading the famous statue.

Liberty Island is the base of operations of UNATCO (United Nations Anti-Terrorist Coalition), and the starting point of the game. You play JC Denton, a UNATCO agent fresh from the academy and implanted with experimental nano-augmentations which give you superhuman powers. Your first task is to wrest control of the island from the NSF and retrieve the

shipment of Ambrosia. Soon JC finds himself implicated in the eponymous conspiracy that will take him from Hell's Kitchen to Hong Kong, Paris and Area 51 in an effort to determine the fate of the world. It's gripping stuff, crammed full of stealthy espionage, memorable characters, taut dialogue, fantastic theories, sexy hi-tech gadgets, provocative political ideas, and aliens. Imagine The X-Files, but costumes and set designs from The Matrix and with Total Recall-era Arnie in the lead role. Yes, that's a very good thing.

The narrative depth is quite staggering. Conversations involve real choices, whether it's as immediate as which weapon to carry on the mission or something as critical as killing or keeping



alive an important character. Such decisions have long-term implications for how your relationships develop with other characters. There's also a host of fascinating books, newspapers and email to read that completes the superbly realised world fiction at the heart of the game.

The play depth is equally impressive, if not more so. An RPG



Y'know, I gotta hand it to ya...



Sittin' round a campfire, tellin' tales...



Red Arrow Triad Member: That is a dangerous question to ask.

skills system, binary augmentation choices, and limited inventory capacity allow the player to tailor JC's character to reflect an individual playing style. Will you opt for Heavy or Low-tech weapons? Computer hacking or lockpicking? Do you implant the Run Silent or Speed Enhancement aug? Should you heft around that flamethrower or stock up on multitools and grenades? Again, these decisions impact in obvious ways on the gameplay because each situation you encounter will always have multiple solutions. Enemies and security cameras, to give but two simple examples, can both be eliminated or avoided in numerous ways, meaning you're never going to be stuck figuring out what to do or unable to progress because you're short of some required item. Whether you prefer stealth, combat or hacking, there's always going to be several variations of these methods available to you.

THE BETTER THE WHOLE

Despite what some had feared, the central tenet of Deus Ex — the

Solid Snake is yesterday's man; JC Denton is this century's coolest action hero.

emphasis on player freedom, as outlined above — remains intact for this console version. It must be stressed that nothing at all has been "dumbed down". In fact, countless minor and major alterations to the level design have only extended the already vast possibilities. For instance, there's now yet another way to rescue captured fellow UNATCO agent Hermann on Liberty Island, while in the second mission an additional route into Castle Clinton is available to those with the requisite abilities. Since Deus Ex is a game about options, the more there are the better the whole game.

Other changes include significantly more detailed character animations (particularly for deaths), a streamlined and improved interface (for your onscreen inventory and all computer

terminals), pre-rendered as opposed to in-game engine cut-scenes, and smaller maps. The latter is the only conceivable downside, since due to the PS2's memory restrictions each location has been divided across several maps (there's probably four maps here for each one in the PC version), and the resultant more frequent load times can be a drag. However, the load points are wisely placed to detract as little as possible from the pacing of their respective missions.

Deus Ex: The Conspiracy can be likened to a first-person Metal Gear Solid. Its similar core gameplay is at least as strong (perhaps even superior), and without endless cut-scenes it provides you with far more actual playing time. Solid Snake is yesterday's man; JC Denton is this century's coolest action hero. <<

!!! Deus Ex 2 is still in development for PC. Can't wait!



PLUS: Brilliant design that gives the player power and freedom.

MINUS: Load times are a bane.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

84 89 96

OVERALL

96

A masterpiece just got better.

REVIEW

>>> HYPER 55



Eve of Extinction

>>PS2

CATEGORY: Action >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Eidos >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

NARAYAN PATTISON reckons this game will be extinct pretty soon.

Eat 'em ups are a deceptively tricky business. A decade ago they were so popular they gave movie licensed 2D platformers a run for their money as the most prolific genre, but these days they're a rare breed. Squaresoft recently threw a whole bunch of money at the cause with its brawler, *The Bouncer*, but that game suffered from a bad case of crap gameplay and disappeared without a trace. Eidos has stepped up to the plate with the aptly named *Eve of Extinction*, a game that could be one of the last hopes for this dying genre.

FEEL THE FORCE
The main gimmick separating EOE from other biff-fests is that our hero, Josh, has got his hands on the latest model Lightsaber. Not only

can this baby create the traditional glowing blade of choice for all Jedi Knights, including last year's double bladed style favoured by side-splitting Sith Lords, but it's also capable of morphing into plenty of other lethal weapons of the glowing persuasion. These include a bo staff, spiked gauntlets and a ridiculously oversized axe. Beginning the adventure with only a couple of standard issue lightsabers, you'll soon discover that two and three hit combos can be coaxied out of them easily. As well as the regular attacks each weapon is also capable of a special function. The bo staff can be used as a pole vault to leap great distances, the sword activates a slick somersault attack and even abilities like freezing time can be mastered later on in the game. While the

combos for each weapon are initially basic, with experience you can learn more elaborate strings of attacks. With every crim you clobber you gain experience points. Favouring one weapon for a while will gather enough experience to unlock new attacks that can be strung on the end of previous combos. To add some much-needed spice to this combat setup, the game also allows you to switch weapons mid-combo. This

means instead of getting bored with endless slash, slash, slash attacks you can start off with a spinning sword slash, stagger them with a kick in the love spuds and finish them off with an overhead axe swing.

STEVIE WONDER ON CAMERA

The biggest frustration you'll face with EOE is the absolutely hopeless camera system. This game feels like a movie that was filmed by a blind cameraman who was tied to the actor with a ten-meter rope. Run around a corner and you can expect to get a great look at





WE LOVE KEANU

»» Whether the developers are fans of the Wachowski brothers' directing skills or Keanu's pecs is unclear but there are a ridiculous number of nods to The Matrix in this game. In the movie Neo constantly battled Agent Smith and his two buddies. In EOE it's Agent Beta and his two buddies, Gamma and Delta, but the suits sure look the same. As if that wasn't enough proof, the trigger happy Agent Delta just loves shooting his gun, complete with very Matrixy transparent bullet trails. Case closed.



I thought only slugs left green trails...



Look, he's going to turn into Thor!

the wall of the corridor you just left for a few seconds until the camera man finally feels that tug on the rope and decides to wander around the corner himself. This process rarely happens fast enough to avoid having the snot beaten out of you by a gang of sword-swinging nasties that you couldn't see. You don't even want to know how frustrating it is to try and swing that bloody cameraman around if you're unlucky enough to get attacked from behind. Before long you'll realise you're better off taking that rope, making a nose out of it, dangling the braindead cameraman from the nearest streetlight with it and manually adjusting the camera yourself. While



»» This game also features "interactive cut-scenes" that hark back to **the mighty Dragon's Lair days of old.**

this does improve your visibility noticeably it's pretty dull having to hit the camera button every time you walk around corners, and it's a nightmare facing opponents from multiple angles in cramped locations.

This game also feature 'interactive cut-scenes' that hark back to the mighty Dragon's Lair days of old in which buttons must be pressed in time to flashing screen prompts. As a wise but muppet-like Jedi master once said "Fun gaming, this is not!" And if you thought painfully repetitive background music died out on the 16-bit consoles then you'll be pleased to hear EOE's soundtrack is a homage to games of old; featuring such gems as 'I Just Learnt a Third Key on My

!!! This game was made by the same team responsible for Sword of the Berserk.

Yamaha CS2X' and 'Yet Another Ten Second Looped Techno Classic'.

If you desperately need a new dose of biff, don't despair, EOE isn't all-bad. There's a great variety of attacks to weave into your custom combos and you won't have gained enough experience to max out all of the weapons until your third time through the game, but most people will tire of the repetitive gameplay long before they get that far. Fixing the hopeless camera and adding a few throws and projectile weapons might have made this a contender but it looks like beat 'em fans are going to have to pin all of their hopes for next-generation salvation on something else. <<



PLUS: You can switch weapons in the middle of a combo.

MINUS: Horrid camera system and repetitive gameplay.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

78 49 71

OVERALL

69

An average stab at the beat 'em up genre.

REVIEW

»» HYPER 57



This is for humming Savage Garden!



Anyone got a marshmallow?



Smoking stunted his growth...

State of Emergency

» PS2

CATEGORY: Action >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Rockstar >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: TBA >> AVAILABLE: TBA >>

ELIOT FISH beats in a few heads.

There are occasions when ultra-hype is completely justified. Rockstar have been there with Grand Theft Auto 3; a game that was banned by the OFLC shortly before being declared the console game of 2001 by half the world's press. Now that GTA3 is back on shelves, it wouldn't be surprising to find out that sales have slowed as the media latches onto lambasting some other piece of objectionable software. Which game will be the next scapegoat for today's surging youth crime and bad behaviour? Well, one wonders whether the "controversial" tag wasn't applied to State of Emergency (yes, another Rockstar game) by the marketing gurus this time around and not the righteous politicians.

WEST END RIOT

State of Emergency needs all the controversial press it can get. If anything is going to sell this game, it's not going to be the gameplay. Upon booting up and playing through the first few missions, a few words come to mind: "cheap",

"silly", "mindless" and "moronic". There's no doubt State of Emergency will make you laugh, but it'll also make you want to switch the PS2 off and go do something more productive with your time. Why not exercise your brain with Deus Ex: The Conspiracy or enjoy the rich storytelling in Final Fantasy X? We don't need to indulge in this kind of high-sugar, MSG-coated game. State of Emergency is the sloppy happy meal; the re-heated single slice of cheesy pizza in the window of the milk bar; the lukewarm street dog eaten in a drunken haze.

It wouldn't surprise us, if during development of GTA3, Rockstar thought, "hey we could make a whole game just out of the running-around-the-street-with-a-baseball-bat bit", and so they did. The problem is, State of Emergency puts all its money on shock factor and the reality of this is that the novelty wears off so quickly that all you're left with is a headache-inducing button-masher.

RUN FOR YOUR LIFE

Mission objectives are delivered to the player through small pop up boxes of text that don't really succeed in portraying any kind of convincing plot. The game really lacks personality, other than what is presented in the unlockable player characters. There is really no motivation to progress through the missions other than the hope of picking up new more powerful weapons to go nuts with. The fact that the game is driven by the desire to wreak as much havoc as possible would have been fine if there were more convincing penalties to behaving incorrectly or screwing up your mission objectives. As it stands, the game is far too arcade like in its structure to provide any kind of longterm playability.

State of Emergency is fine if you're looking for a game that you can just pop in for ten minutes and have a blast, but we'd like to think that gamers are looking for more valuable gaming experiences than this piece of fluff. <<

!!! Come on Rockstar, just stick to developing GTA4! That's all we want!



PLUS: Chaotic beat 'em up action that'll make you laugh.

MINUS: The gameplay is so simplistic you'll zzzzzzzzzzzzz...

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

70 69 55

OVERALL

59

Call in the national guard and have this game arrested.



I think you found the landmine.



We have taken the enemy's provisions. Now we can strengthen our forces.

Fear my beard!



The Melbourne Cup is always fun!



Due

Kessen 2

PS2

CATEGORY: Strategy >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: KOEI >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

DAVID WILDGOOSE goes out to war... Back in five minutes.

Ueteran Japanese developer Koei made its name throughout previous console generations with painstaking, historical war simulations such as *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* and *Nobunaga's Ambition*. On the studios' first PS2 outing, the original *Kessen* dumbed down the formula to produce a beautiful, strategy-lite wargame that proved accessible to a wider audience, albeit lacking the layered depth of its ancestors. For *Kessen 2*, this reductivist approach has been extended further, resulting in an immensely shallow experience.

LOVE AND WAR

The emphasis is very much on presentation. The "epic" tale of "love and war" set in centuries old China is told through exhaustive cut-scenes. Before and after each battle scene, the numerous key generals of your army participate in melodramatic verbal exchanges, analysing their inner anguish and plotting their next move. Likewise, on the battlefield itself, opposing generals seem to have plenty of time to stop amid the fighting and hurl insults and choice

witticisms at each other. These frequent interruptions lend a staccato rhythm to play that detracts enormously from the flow of the battles and, consequently, the whole game. It might not be quite so jarring were the script not so laughable and voice acting not so preposterous.

For something purporting to be a strategy game, there are remarkably few opportunities for the player to influence proceedings. Before a battle, your generals present several possible courses of action to follow — pick one and you're away. Post-victory scenes offer a similar choice, only this time you're determining how to best improve your army. It's all very intuitive, sure, but the simplicity is mind-numbing. The most glaring absence is an option to select the composition of your army.

MAGICAL ABILITIES

On the battlefield, you control each army at a macro-level, whether directing them from the overhead map or manually controlling troop movement with the analog stick. When opposing armies come within range,

!!! If you want the pure action, check out *Dynasty Warriors 3*.

they engage and fight to the death. Factors at play include formations, morale, and occasionally terrain. At a micro-level, you can command each individual general, whether whipping up morale with a bold charge through the enemy line and duelling with the enemy general or utilising one of a host of magical abilities such as tornadoes and earthquakes.

Building on the *Kessen* engine, this sequel looks gorgeous. The vast scale of each battle is portrayed in convincing fashion, while up close it's highly reminiscent of Keoi's own *Dynasty Warriors* series. Troop detail hasn't progressed markedly since the original, but now there are at least five times as many units present on screen at any time. Most impressive of all are the spell effects.

Yet for all the lavish production values vying for your attention, *Kessen 2* has sadly little to offer in terms of gameplay. The lack of strategic options leave you detached from the action, something for which the elaborate cut-scenes and overwrought story fail to compensate. <<



PLUS: The vast scale and detail of the battlefield is impressive.

MINUS: Very little to actually do. Poor script and voice acting.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

89 80 55

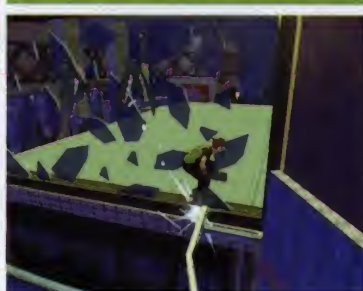
OVERALL

60

An uninvolved and shallow strategy title.

REVIEW

>> HYPER 59



Jet Set Radio Future

>> XBOX >>

CATEGORY: Graf & Blading >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: Sega/Infogrames >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

CAM SHEA makes no disclaimers. Graffiti is hella sweet.

Funky. Stylish. Impossibly cool. The Dreamcast may have failed, but Jet Set Radio proved that Sega still had the attitude and talent to produce cutting edge games. Now that the sequel has arrived, on Xbox no less, can Sega redefine cool all over again?

F**K THE 5-0

At first glance, nothing much has changed — once again it's DJ Professor K giving you the lowdown on what's up in the city. He's looking a little older now, with his grey dreds and all,

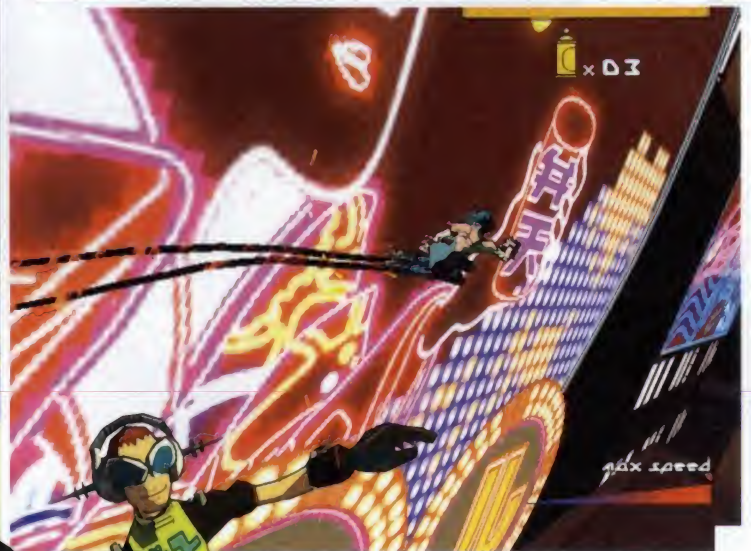
but he's still the same old crack-fiend we know and love (although some rudimentary lip syncing wouldn't have gone astray). The storyline still focuses on the ongoing battle between the rollerblading yuppie street kids and the Rokkaku police (and their mysterious big corporation backing), not to mention the interturf scuffles between the various rival gangs. Although it isn't exactly groundbreaking stuff, there are enough twists, turns and nefariousness to keep you entertained. In terms of features, Jet Set

Radio Future (JSRF) is an interesting sequel. As you'd expect, the move to Xbox has enabled developers Smilebit to go nuts on the size and scope of the play areas, but at the same time, they've also "streamlined" the gameplay somewhat. To that end, the graffiti mechanics no longer require the player to follow analogue stick movements to successfully paint the larger pieces. Instead, the five piece sizes are now only distinguished by the number of cans required — all the player



SHARING THE CANS AROUND

>>Although there's no network or online play supported, JSRF does have a good multiplayer splitscreen mode, with five games to choose from. And even with four players, the frame rate is very decent.



does is hold down on the right trigger. In the original, it was often a pain trying to complete your piece while the cops were on your tail. Thus, it makes more sense to keep the mechanics simple so you can do it quickly while on the move.

Oddly enough, however, Smilebit have partnered this change with taking the police presence out of the general game and restricting them to (what amounts to) mini-games within the levels. A strange decision, since the streamlined spray mechanics would have allowed you to quickly do your work while on the run. In any case, instead of being pursued throughout the general level, you now only go up against the law in certain small sections where the police will trap you and you'll need to beat them in order to get out. The number of cops you're up against rises the

further into the game you are, and after a while you'll even be facing off against tanks, giant mech attack choppers, and all sorts of kooky machines. Unfortunately, regardless of the opposition, the difficulty level for these battles is painfully low. Knock them down – spraypaint them. Repeat. There's little to no real challenge in these "boss" sections, and the absence of the cops in the levels removes some of the urgency of the original. Are you a criminal or not, goddammit?

A SEAMLESS WHOLE

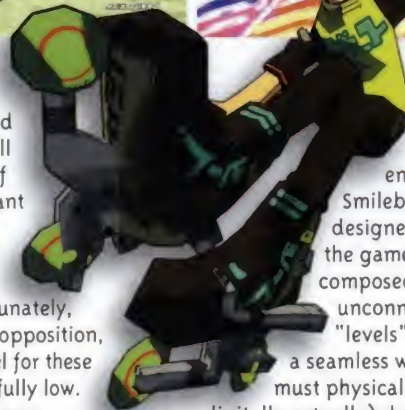
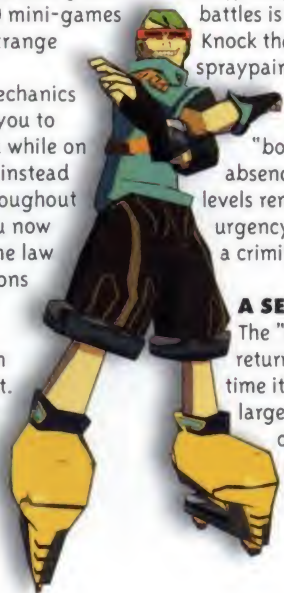
The "garage" concept has returned in Future, but this time it takes the form of a large HUB area, in which you can skate around, practice tricks, talk to other skaters in your

crew and access the level entrances. Smilebit have designed JSRF so that the game isn't just composed of abstract unconnected "levels", but works as a seamless whole – so you must physically (well, digitally actually) skate to all the areas in the game. This certainly makes the gameworld feel more organic, but has the downside that you wind up spending a lot of time skating between areas.

The whole point of the HUB system is to give players more freedom and a less linear experience, and at times it does do this. However, at a fundamental level, you will always get to a point when one objective must be completed before you can move on,

which occasionally leads to frustration... especially when you miss a vital clue and can't work out what that objective is! That said, most of the tasks within the game are entertaining, and quite similar to those in the original. Plus, finding all the graffiti souls and completing the secondary challenges bring more depth to the gameplay.

JSRF's environments are easily the most impressive aspect of the game. Future has upped the ante quite considerably in comparison with the original's futuristic city streets. You'll be blown away by the epic size and height of these levels. From bright, busy city streets and the chaotic housing of a rundown shanty town, to an industrial underground lair and a surreal sky high Egyptian themed





amusement park, there's plenty of variety in the settings. Plus, there's no longer a time limit, so you can spend as long as you like skating around, trying out different runs, and generally ogling the amazing visuals. Some of the city environments in particular really catch the eye, as they're just so busy — bustling crowds, plenty of traffic, street stalls, planes in the sky and flocks of birds that scatter when you skate through them. JSRF is a visual treat, and this extends to the skaters themselves too. There are some pretty funky character designs on offer, A grade motion capturing, and dope anime-style visual effects like speed lines, motion blur and grind sparks. Very cool.

As pretty as JSRF is, it's still plagued by the same

camera issues that affected the original. For instance, spraypainting on the move can be very disconcerting. As you spray, the camera switches from behind your skater to a perpendicular view that affords a cool view of the wall. However, cutting back to the original perspective is really off-putting. What would have worked well is a picture-in-picture approach. When you start spraying, the perspective should stay behind your skater, while a small window pops up in the top left of screen showing the artistic angle. The camera mechanics can be overcome, but they certainly make the game less immersive than it should be.

BUMP'N'GRIND BABY

One of the biggest changes in JSRF is how much more fundamental tricks

and grinds are to the gameplay. In fact, you almost spend more time grinding than skating. It's no Tony Hawk, however, as the tricks are really just garnish — you have no control over what trick you perform. Once again there's no grind button, so you'll automatically start to grind if you hop onto a rail. Once you're grinding, you can switch between normal and fakie with a press of the Y button and can switch grinds with the X button. Switching grinds has a practical angle, in that it will increase your momentum, and if you time your presses evenly, you can keep switching and building up speed for an extended period. And with the motion blur, sparks flying and dope positions your skater is switching between — it

MUSICAL MUSINGS

Disappointingly, Jet Set Radio Future will not allow you to import your own music into the game. While we can understand that Smilebit were going for a certain vibe with the tunes, the reality is that not all people are going to like their soundtrack, and even those that do like it will tire of it eventually. We take objection to this high and mighty attitude of Smilebit to simply disregard the tastes of others and fail to implement a simple system that allows users to import their own ripped music. Also annoying is the lack of any audio options in the game's pause menu — you'll have to trek all the way back to the garage to turn off the music. Even so, the soundtrack is 30 songs strong and quite quirky and cool, but you will get sick of it...





Some of the coolest backdrops ever.



"All in all it's just a-nother grind on the wall."



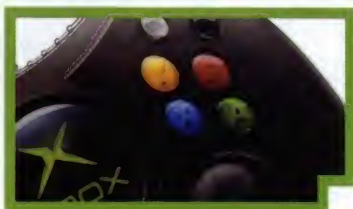
To lend a more surreal nature to the game, you can now **grind up many vertical surfaces, like lampposts and smoke stacks.**

looks awesome. To lend a more surreal nature to the game, you can now grind up many vertical surfaces, like lampposts and smoke stacks. Plus, many of the runs also have wallrides built in that help make the game feel more dynamic. All up, the emphasis on grinds in the game is excellent — and you'll really appreciate the style involved when grinding up a long corkscrew shaped rail or hopping between sets of criss crossing wires. It's a shame, however, that all the highwire grinds available serve no real strategic purpose. If the police were still chasing you throughout the game, you'd be able to hop on a long grind sequence as an elegant way to

!!! There are a total of 24 playable skaters to unlock in JSRF... but to get them all you'll have to play through twice!

escape. Plus, with grindable surfaces everywhere, we can't help but think that Smilebit should have included a grind button. As it is, it can be very frustrating accidentally touching a grindable ledge and suddenly zooming off.

JSRF is certainly bigger than the original, but it's debatable whether it's better. Smilebit put the entire game together in under 12 months — a very short development cycle, and it shows. With more time, and more thought put into the play mechanics, this would have been a big rubber stamper. Even so, JSRF still has an irresistible allure, and Xbox owners should definitely check it out. <<<



PLUS: Mad grinding and graf action.

MINUS: Changes to the gameplay not hugely effective.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

94 86 85

OVERALL

88

Lacks the impact of the original, but an excellent game.

REVIEW

>>> HYPER 63



Oddworld: MUNCH'S ODDYSEE

CATEGORY: Action >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Microsoft >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>



DAVID WILDGOOSE checks how to spell "Odyssey".

Part of the expectancy that accompanies every console launch is the pressure to perform. Every aspect of the software, hardware and peripherals is scrutinised in painstakingly minute detail by critics and consumers alike. Each success is read as a sign of the Second Coming; each failing becomes evidence of the new Emperor bereft of clothing. Hyperbole reigns supreme. Yet in the end it matters little. Console launches are wars of attrition, never won in the fleeting initial skirmishes.

AN ARRAY OF COOL STUFF

If any Xbox launch title is under pressure to perform then surely it is Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee. You know the story: it was originally destined for the PS2 before

developer Oddworld Inhabitants believed they had already reached the limits of the machine, thus they struck a sweet deal with Microsoft and — voila! — Munch becomes an Xbox exclusive. Lorne Lanning, the charismatic and outspoken head of Oddworld, never held back his criticism of the PS2 architecture. Once the switch to Microsoft was made, Lanning subsequently assumed the mantle of Xbox evangelist, hyping the system's potential at every opportunity and heightening anticipation for his own game at the same time.

Yet in the end it matters little. Removed from the hyperbole, Munch's Oddysee is a game like any other. It has highlights and lowlights; impressive features and obvious flaws. It's definitely not the

Second Coming, but nor is this Emperor nude. He's got a teeny loincloth, for a start.

Munch's Oddysee is the third instalment of the Oddworld series. For the uninitiated, the previous titles — Abe's Oddysee and Abe's Exoddus — were 2D platformers with a high puzzle quotient in which Abe was tasked with aiding his oppressed fellow Mudokons to escape the clutches of the evil Glukkons. While the cleverly designed puzzles provided a solid structure, the chief appeal of both games lay in the skewed sense of humour and inventive approach to interaction, a tradition commendably upheld here. Munch's Oddysee takes this same basic framework, extrapolates it into a real-time 3D environment,





I'm a woman trapped in a Munch's body.



Abe, please stop farting...



"The sun'll come out... tomorrow..."



Bloody hippies.



Munch, you'd really love München.



adds an extravagant array of cool stuff, and introduces a new hero to the adventure.

As the title betrays, unlike Metal Gear Solid 2, for at least half of the game you will not be playing as Abe. Instead, you'll be stepping into the shoe (singular, as he has only one foot) of Munch, sole survivor of a peculiar race of creatures known as Gabbits. Munch, much like Abe, is a

CONTROL FREAK

»»The transition from linear 2D platforms to expansive 3D world can be troublesome, especially when it comes to a game's interface. However, Munch's Oddysee passes the test with flying colours. Control is loose yet forgiving, a context-sensitive system allowing for as much leeway for inept thumbs as possible. This means there are few instances of pixel-perfect jumping, but even here there are no camera issues to report either.

very ugly fellow yet endearingly cute all the same. Meeting up shortly into proceedings, they remain constant companions thereafter, with the player able to switch between control of each at any time.

THE DYNAMIC DUO

The dishevelled duo complement each other nicely. While Abe is agile and fleet of foot, Munch slowly and clumsily hops around on land, unable to leap over the smallest obstacle. Compensating for his unipedal uselessness, Munch — and only he — can ride in a rickety wheelchair. With it, he's capable of terrific speed, and can even easily outpace Abe in a foot(wheel)race.

In water, of which there is plenty throughout Oddworld's 25 levels, it's a completely different story. On one hand, Munch can swim like a salmon racing upstream, darting and turning on a sixpence, and leaping with a grace that would do Ecco proud. Abe, on the other hand, drowns if he even gets his gnarled toes wet.

Character differentiation extends further still. Abe can chant to

possess enemies, thus enabling the player to turn them against other enemies or simply instruct them to self-destruct. He can also pick up creatures — Munch included — and throw them over fences, rocks, chasms and the like. Munch is equipped with a flexible head-mounted device (essentially a Swiss Army Hat, if you like) that lets him zap enemies, control useful machinery, and transmit sonar to point him in right direction.

As you can see, through both characters' unique abilities there's a wide range of commands and tools with which you can interact with the gameworld. Things begin slowly, as objectives are literally signposted and tight constraints are placed on player freedom. By the time you've arrived at the 5th or 6th level however, those shackles are loosened and the levels transform into



REVIEW

»»HYPER 65



Krayt Dragons are dropping like flies.

The fart police are finally out to get him.



virtual playpens. The further you get into the game, solutions to puzzles become less obvious and greater in number, finally allowing you to experiment with the full gamut of character options.

Vending machines and other contraptions litter the environment. You can consume drinks to enhance speed, jump higher, zap enemies, and turn invisible. Munch's headport allows him to operate remote-controlled cranes in the sky that can pick up heavy objects (bombs, enemies, even Abe) and drop them in more convenient places. Similarly, he can control a Snoozer, a three-legged robot whose gun turret can put enemies into a deep, but temporary sleep.

All these power-ups and toys are there for you to use as you see fit. They don't prescribe a specific solution to a certain puzzle, they simply aid you in achieving the solution you've decided upon yourself. Half the fun of Munch's Oddysee comes from messing around within the rules, seeing what works, what doesn't, and which

combination manages to crack the biggest grin on your face.

IRRESISTIBLY LOVABLE

You'll smile a lot during Munch's Oddysee. In fact, you'll even find yourself laughing audibly on many occasions, as you try something new or encounter the next suitably ridiculous location. Not only are Abe and Munch charismatic and irresistibly lovable leads, but all of Oddworld's diverse inhabitants possess a charm and vitality that's undeniable. It's a world teeming with personality and, most of all, life.

Perhaps the key factor in this regard is the Gamespeak function. With just a tap (or hold) of a button, Abe or Munch can speak with other characters (and each other) and instruct them towards certain tasks. By pressing Y, Abe can greet his fellow Mudokons. Once he has their attention, he can order them to work (chanting to open a sealed door or pulling a group of levers, for example) or charge and attack nearby enemies.

Munch's conversational repertoire is slightly more limited, but possibly

more entertaining. Instead of Mudokons, Munch communicates with tiny, round, furry animals called Fuzzles. Although he can only command them to attack, the absurd sight of these previously cute fuzballs baring vicious teeth and devouring enemies like piranhas more than compensates for the lack of other activities.

For seemingly no reason whatsoever, Abe can also fart, thanks to Gamespeak. You'd be surprised at just how long it takes for the fart sound to lose its novelty value. While any Mudokon within earshot is preprogrammed to chortle like a schoolboy at the sound, you'll find yourself involuntarily joining in even after the hundredth time. Whether it's quite as funny as a horde of Mudokons tiptoeing in unison behind Abe is up for debate, as far as I'm concerned.

STRICT AND FINICKY

With so much in its favour — inventive puzzles, relatively non-linear interaction, and oodles of charm — you might be wondering



CRANKING IT OUT

>>> Does it push the Xbox to the limit? Compared to Halo, the answer is definitely not. Yet Munch's Oddysee is an attractive game. The primitive (wood hut villages) and industrial (grotesque factories) themes mean Oddworld's eye candy isn't as immediately impressive as, say, Jak & Daxter, but it's all eminently suited to the mood. Also, the character animation is peerless, and plays a significant role in making the whole cast so damn likeable.



Abe, think of the seafood mornay you could make!



Abe buys the latest Zap-64. How retro!

why Munch's Oddysee has not secured a higher score and a Big Rubber Stamp of Approval. The primary reason is the story — or rather the lack of it.

The plot takes too long to get going, and when it does it turns silly, convoluted, and plain uninteresting. Much of the problem is down to the way it's told. Aside from a few utterly gorgeous expository cut-scenes that serve to book-end the major acts of the story, most of the narrative details are given by a Shaman character who appears sporadically to outline objectives and guide you through the levels. As such, it falls into the trap of so many games by too

You can consume drinks to enhance speed, jump higher, zap enemies, and turn invisible.

cleanly separating the story elements from the gameplay. Compared to the powerful simplicity of the narratives of the earlier games — "Rescue the Mudokon slaves from their Glukkon masters!" — it also lacks focus and thus swiftly becomes confusing. Nonetheless, despite the flab, Munch's Oddysee retains the same social conscience that distinguishes the series. The naïve idealism, and anti-corporate and pro-environment sentiments contribute to a politically aware world fiction and atmosphere that's rare among videogames. Now if only the plight of the Mudokons and Gabbits was more coherent, who knows how affecting and compelling the game might have been...?

!!! So what's next for Oddworld? Another Xbox game of course...

Another, more minor, issue is when the puzzles do dictate a specific route or circumstance. It's particularly frustrating to reach a stage in a level where you realise you haven't kept alive sufficient Mudokons (or Fuzzles) to accomplish a later task. And the only option is to restart the entire level. You won't encounter this situation terribly often, but it will crop up some time, at which point you may decide you'd rather play another game that isn't quite so strict and finicky.

But they're just two negatives amid a host of positives. Ultimately, Munch's Oddysee is a classy, funny and highly polished adventure that grows on you the more you play it. It might not be the game the Xbox was built for, but it's still a massively enjoyable experience. <<



PLUS: Characters bursting with charisma, clever design, and fun.

MINUS: The vague story is disappointing.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

83 90 86

OVERALL

85

A worthy follow-up to an increasingly great series.





Rallisport Challenge



CATEGORY: Rally racer >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: Microsoft >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

JACKSON GOTHE-SNAPE rolls his car over the line...

Trees and shrubs have always been the bane of game developers. Those wretched two-dimensional trees took some gloss off the glory of Mario 64, and every racing game since Sega Rally has hardly given the overhanging pines more than two polygons – until now. Those crazy Swedes have done it again with Digital Illusions' new rally game Rallisport Challenge, and trees have never looked better.

Digital Illusions, having had fair success with Rally Masters for PC a couple of years ago, were signed up by Microsoft to develop the Xbox's flagship rally title. Microsoft has made a wise move, as Rallisport Challenge has enough beauty in its first-generation title visuals to attract many a gamer and developer to the mammoth black box.

ENTHRALLING TO DRIVE

It is hard to get past how great everything looks, but when you do, there's definitely an exciting game to be found. Of course, it's all based around rally racing, but there is variety here we're yet to see in other rally titles. It starts with the racing modes: the normal checkpoint events are joined by hill climbs, rally cross and ice racing. The latter two modes feature racing against computer cars, an element that has been missing in big name rally games recently. There are a fair amount of stages, although you will run into each a couple of times during your career. Thankfully the environments are both believable and enthralling to drive through, and yes, they all look stunning. The game offers a selection of more than

25 cars featuring all the big name current models, and even includes some of the great 1980s cars such as the Lancia Delta and Audi Quattro.

All this is brought together in an efficient, yet disappointingly basic way. Points are gained from each stage of each event, as well as a post-event bonus. Once you reach certain point barriers you unlock new ranges of events and cars.

There is

no season mode, nor anyone to compete with (only everyone's favourite driver "Toyota Corolla" and his mates) and you will tire of the structure before too long. The game does support 4-player split screen multiplayer, as well as the very regular single race, time trial etc.

Rallisport Challenge comes with a small soundtrack of mainly electronic and rock music from bands such as Fear Factory, as well as full integration with the Xbox's music capabilities.

Fair engine sounds also feature, as well as good navigational commentary with some great warnings from your co-driver. It's worth mentioning that it might take a bit of time to get used to the longer-





Then Frank spilled coffee on his lap...



"...roll out the barrels of fun!"



than-normal delay between direction and corner, especially when there are three successive hairpins.

Getting round the hairpins is rather satisfying, thanks to a straightforward, yet rewarding driving model. You'll definitely be forced to approach the snow, gravel and tarmac stages differently, and keep your eye out for mid-stage surface changes. Exaggerated air, effectively superficial damage and novelty cows — it's definitely 'arcade', but for sim fans it is still worth a look.

HAIR RAISING THRILLS

What is perhaps a little disappointing is the way in which the car interacts with the environment. As pretty as each element is, the product does perhaps appear less stunning than the sum of its parts. The relationship between car and track or even car and rock offers plenty of room for improvement.

What makes it all worthwhile is the speed. Thanks to an excellent framerate, great detail and variety in textures and superb topographical

It is a top title in its own right, but down the track **it might be remembered more for its visuals than anything else.**

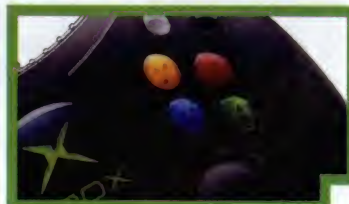
variety, tearing round the countryside has never been so thrilling. Although the surrounding environment appears a little underdone at times, the grass, trees, rocks and advertisement hoardings create some fantastic scenery to fly through. Now add to this car models shimmering with great dynamic reflections — that is before they get covered in dirt or snow — and replays have never looked better. The highlight has got to be the vegetation though, and in particular the trees that sway and shake if you are lucky enough to hit them. They don't call them next-generation consoles for nothing.

If we are going to nitpick though, the car textures can be a little stupid especially if you use the bonnet cam,

where reflections off certain cars can be more than disconcerting. Also, it might have been wiser to include an option for a picture-in-picture mirror, because these days the old "check behind" button just doesn't cut it.

The new box on the block is turning out to be one for the motor fans. Not only are we blessed with Project Gotham at the Xbox's launch; Rallisport Challenge certainly satisfies with its hair-raising thrills. It is a top title in its own right, but down the track it might be remembered more for its visuals than anything else. As arcade rally racers go however, this one follows the course perfectly — entertaining, easy to pick up, and beautiful to look at. <<

!!! Don't like Rally? Then go Gotham!



PLUS: Sense of speed, nice variety, magnificent visuals.

MINUS: Lacking in depth, suspect car physics.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

92 85 85

OVERALL

87

Just short of excellence, Rallisport is a load of fun.

REVIEW

>> HYPER 69



Special Trick

DOUBLE KICKFLIP INDY
2,400



Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3

CATEGORY: Skating >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: Activision >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: M >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

CAM SHEA has an eagle eye for hawks...



The Hawk juggernaut rolls on. As we've mentioned in previous issues, the GameCube version was a bit of a letdown — obviously rushed and suffering from some major frame rate problems. Fortunately, the Xbox version, while also completed under a very tight schedule, fares a lot better. Indeed, this is probably the ultimate version of the game, thanks to the inclusion of an all new Xbox-only level, a new hidden character and the ability to create your own soundtrack.

SORRY GAMECUBERS

But first, let's re-cap on the new additions to the Tony Hawk series that arrived with number 3. Where Tony 2 innovated with the addition of the manual, Tony 3 brings the

revert into the picture. A revert is a 180 degree slide that can be used coming down off a vert ramp, allowing you to keep your trick chain going. It has been introduced so that players can link their vert tricks with their street runs — giving the game even greater combo potential. Reverts are an essential tool to learn if you want to build monster combos, and a solid addition to the series.

The other major new mechanic is flatland tricks. These basically fall into the manual category, as they're tricks that are done on flat ground and require balancing. Flatland tricks are really included to make the game a little more complete trick-wise and to offer some more options. Instead of doing a normal manual, flatlands allow you to do tricks like

handstands and anti caspars to the same effect... and higher points. They're not a fundamental gameplay change, just very cool.

As expected, Tony 3 also expands on just about every aspect of Tony 2 — better skater animations, larger levels, a bigger trick count and a blistering frame rate. On Xbox you'll notice a few extra graphical nuances, like bump mapping and reflections on certain surfaces that weren't in the PS2 version. It's only a small touch, but nice to see Neversoft implementing a couple of the Xbox's hardware supported effects.

Tony 3 also sees some tweaks made to the game structure — gone is the cash system, to be replaced by five stat icons per level and one board upgrade icon per level. The challenges remain, however, and are

as much a curse as they are a blessing — there simply aren't enough of them and they aren't difficult enough. That said, the beauty of Tony Hawk has always been in recreating just how freeform modern skateboarding is, and giving you the





tools to construct an infinite number of different runs. In other words, the challenges may be limited, but the gameplay is limitless.

DON'T THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX...

Let's talk about the extras that Tony 3 on Xbox brings to the table shall we? Well, in addition to all the courses

MULTIPLAYER

➤➤ Although it makes no difference in the Australian market (not yet anyway!), Tony Hawk 3 on Xbox does not support online play, which is disappointing. Even so, it does have system link support so you can network machines together and choose from five multiplayer modes to go head to head with your friends. Of course you'll need several TVs, Xboxs and copies of the game to do it, so it's possibly not feasible outside of the Hyper office, wahahahahahahahahahahaha!

➤➤ The Oil Rig is an amazing level – this is a grinders paradise as **there are rails and fat pipes everywhere.**

from the PS2 game, this version has an Xbox only level – the Oil Rig – hidden away. Unfortunately, it doesn't come with a set of challenges to beat, so is only playable in the free skate and single skate modes. Regardless, the Oil Rig is an amazing level – this is a grinder's paradise as there are rails and fat pipes everywhere, and insane chaining potential. The Oil Rig is amazing for just how complex it is too – there are so many levels and areas to explore. Plus, there's even a small platform at water level that you can trick down to.

The Xbox version also has extra secret character called X-Ray. As the name suggests he's a skeletal skater, complete with pumping heart in his ribcage, and some dope special

moves. Could he be the Bones Brigade mascot from so many years ago? We'd like to think so... although for legal reasons he may not be officially. Oh, and finally being able to banish Motorhead from the soundtrack and replacing it with something more along our tastes was an essential inclusion for the Xbox version too.

Aside from these admittedly worthwhile additions, nothing else has really changed for the Xbox Tony 3. The career mode is as shortlived as ever, and the frame rate as uncompromisingly fast. Still, no complaints from us... although in a couple of months GameCube owners will have some legitimate qualms. <<

!!! The Tony 3 for GCN story next issue folks...



PLUS: Custom soundtrack and it's not Tony Hawk 2X.

MINUS: Very occasional slowdown in specific spots.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

89 89 91

OVERALL

92

You all know the score – Tony Hawk 3 rocks da house!

REVIEW

» HYPER 71



Now THAT's a pileup.



You'll believe a car can fly.



Look out! Illegal fireworks!

Wreckless: THE YAKUZA MISSIONS

CATEGORY: Arcade Racing >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Activision >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: M >> AVAILABLE: Now >>



FRANK DRY embarks on his most deadly mission yet...

Wreckless is an arcade racing game that takes its cues from titles like Destruction Derby and Chase HQ. Although the storyline concerns the Yakuza, it's actually set in the hustle and bustle of Hong Kong, and your primary method for taking down the Yakuza's operations is by... err, ramming them in your car. Yes, Wreckless is not the most sophisticated of games we've encountered. Indeed, the vast majority of missions fall into the "chase and ram" category.

FENG SHUI THIS BUDDY!

Wreckless gives you a choice between two storylines and two teams: The Flying Dragons — a pair of airhead pin-up cutesy cops with a mission to wipe out organised crime; and Ho and Chang — a pair of airhead undercover agents. At first each team has four missions open to them, and you can hop between teams at will. Many of the missions are very similar, only from each team's perspective.

All four missions must be completed to progress to the next set. Unfortunately, Wreckless is hugely variable in the quality of its mission design. The missions with

plenty of hooning around the city, busting stuff up, ramming random cars and a realistic time limit are generally fun, whereas other missions tend to be more annoying than anything else. The one where you're trying to rescue the "feng shui professor" is a good example. He's been strapped to the front of a huge dump truck for no apparent reason and driven around a small circuit in a construction site at about three kilometres an hour. Fortunately for you the dump truck is loaded with explosive barrels so all you have to do is repeatedly launch yourself off jumps, again at about three kilometres an hour, to take them out. Tedious and totally inexplicable!

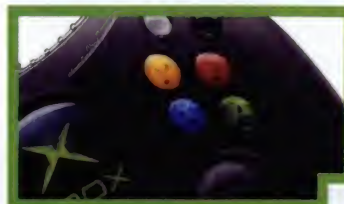
Each team has ten missions all up, which really isn't quite enough to satisfy. Even so, they do get better the further you go into the game, especially as you unlock more vehicles to hit the streets with. Each team has a funky range, including some really quirky fun vehicles like tanks and beach buggies that help give Wreckless greater replay value.

DAMN WE'RE SPOILT

Wreckless looks quite stunning in some ways, but a little below par in others. The car damage modelling for one is cool — bonnets crumple, doors and spare tyres fly off, and the sheer destruction on offer is well executed. You'll find yourself ramming much larger vehicles head on at high speeds just to see what happens. Wreckless also has great lighting, decent reflection mapping, and a very slick replay mode. However, the 30fps frame rate is an odd let down. It really shouldn't make any difference, but in the age of Xbox, it often makes the game look sluggish — almost like you're driving through water. Damn, we're spoilt!

Wreckless is subtitled "The Yakuza Missions", which seems to imply that this may only be the first in a series of Wreckless games. We'd advise before embarking on a sequel that the developer takes a little longer to ponder what makes compelling gameplay, because even though it can be fun, Wreckless doesn't possess it. <<

!!! Look out for another Activision Xbox racer next issue — Crash.



PLUS: Nice visuals, although a little blurry at times.

MINUS: Uninspired gameplay. Too simplistic.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

87 74 69

OVERALL

76

Wreckless is a solid game but with inconsistent gameplay.



How 'bout the weather, eh?



The staring contest begins here.



Darth Maul drops in for a while.



Genma Onimusha



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

ELIOT FISH sips on a fine port.

Onimusha on PS2 was an excellent "survival horror" title with a twist — there were no shotguns here (well, okay, maybe one), but mystical swords and orbs of power. As it was released before Devil May Cry (which debatably improved upon the concept twofold), Onimusha scored pretty highly, and we still consider it to be an excellent and stylish game, if a bit too short and easy to plough through. Cue, Genma Onimusha, the Xbox remake of the same game. Capcom haven't just pumped out an Xbox port here. The whole game has been given a tweak, with the combat changed considerably in an effort to extend the gameplay. Has it worked?

GRABBING THE GREEN

Our hero, Samanosuke, is back with a few new skills. Whilst attacking the monsters in the game, green souls drift from their bodies (before they have been defeated) which can now be absorbed by the other monsters, making them more powerful. To steal the souls before the other monsters do, you have to repeatedly

tap the A button. On the PS2, you could absorb to your heart's content without any interference. This, plus the fact that monsters now regenerate more often, makes the combat that much harder. Bashing the A button to absorb the green souls first rarely feels like the smartest thing to do, only because it happens during close combat and if you stop to do so, you get your arse kicked. What it does add to the combat is tension, as you fearfully watch the monsters around you grow more gruesome. Of course, the benefit of grabbing the green souls means that you can use "Ogre power" once you obtain five souls. This power makes you invincible for a short while and recharges your health, which is most handy.

CONTROLLER-THROWING

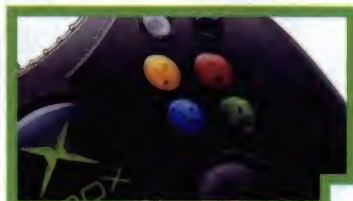
Samanosuke's other new skill is the ability to charge up his sword to three different levels of attack power by holding down the attack button. At level three, your attack will return powered up monsters

back to their original state and re-release the green soul that had been absorbed. All up, there is more tactical play in Genma Onimusha's combat and it is now far more drawn out than it was on the PS2. As a result, however, the game is far more difficult at times that it needs to be and there could be a few controller-throwing sessions.

Other than the combat changes and a new area, Genma Onimusha is pretty identical to the PS2 version. Graphically, there are no real improvements on this Xbox version, but hey, the game already looked pretty smashing.

Basically, what we're looking at is an improved port of a year-old PS2 game, and it would be hard to recommend to those who have already played through the game before. If you just bought an Xbox and never played Onimusha, then this is certainly going to provide you with some quality entertainment. Our only real gripe is that even with the changes the game can still be finished in a few days of solid play. <<

!!!
Capcom's Onimusha 2 is coming to the PS2 any day now!



PLUS: An improvement over the original.

MINUS: Suffers from fixed camera perspective flaws.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

85 86 84

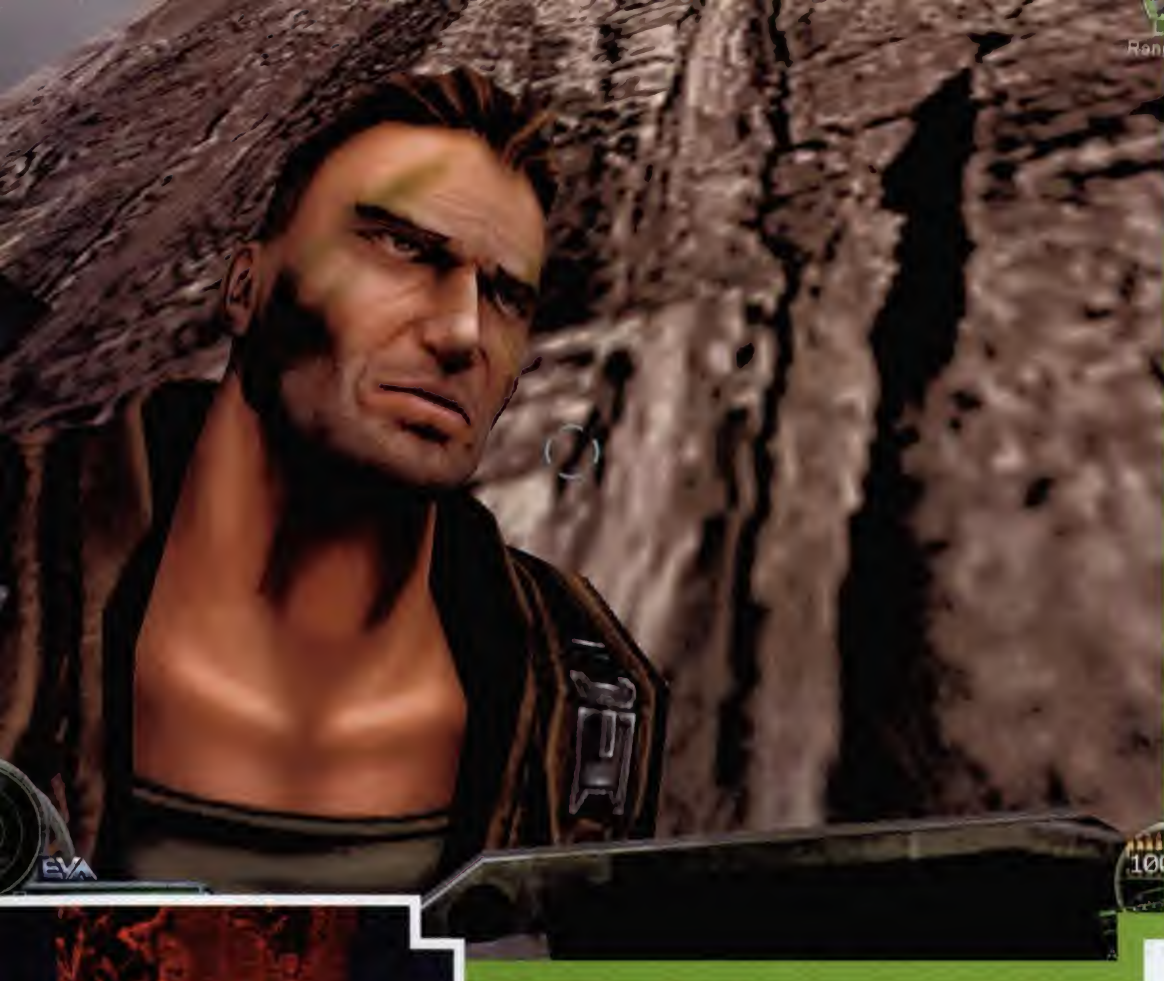
OVERALL

85

Solid action adventuring with lots of style.

REVIEW

>> HYPER 73



C&C: RENEGADE

>> PC

CATEGORY: FPS >> **PLAYERS:** 1-32 >> **PUBLISHER:** EA >> **PRICE:** \$89.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >> **REQUIRED:** PIII 500, 128 MB RAM, 3D card

JAMES COTTEE is the ultimate killing machine...

Long delayed, long awaited, Command & Conquer: Renegade puts you in the shoes of an elite GDI commando. Doing your bit for the world wide war against the sinister forces of the Brotherhood of Nod, Westwood fans worldwide can finally shoot, blast, burn, and even drive through the turbulent warzones of the C&C universe. Set around the time of the very first C&C game, we see the war between GDI and Nod just beginning, the mystery of Tiberium unfolding, and the planet going to hell in a hand-basket.

HONK IF YOU LOVE NOD
Strange alien plants have started growing around the globe, condensing minerals into valuable crystals, and emitting poison gas as a

by-product. This terrible infestation could end all life on Earth, but Nod only see it as an opportunity to amass more money and power. Crazy religious fundamentalists, led by the evil Kane, they'll stop at nothing to spread their tendrils of doom across the globe. As each new village falls to their legions, they round up the locals into camps, and force them to read the Old Testament! Imagine Stalin running a Sunday School! The horror!

It's not all doom and gloom, though, as GDI have a secret weapon to smite their foes: the commando. A one-man army, he was more than a match for a screen full of Nod troopers in his RTS days. Now that Major Nick "Havoc" Parker is starring in a first person shooter of his very own, the armies of darkness won't know what hit them! While the

FPS paradigm requires that his previously infinite ammo be reigned in, he can now make use of any of the weapons available to the enemy, including flame-throwers, miniguns, chem-sprayers and more besides. The trusty C4 is still an option, but now he can also make use of an Ion Cannon Beacon, which can call in strikes from GDI's fleet of death ray satellites.

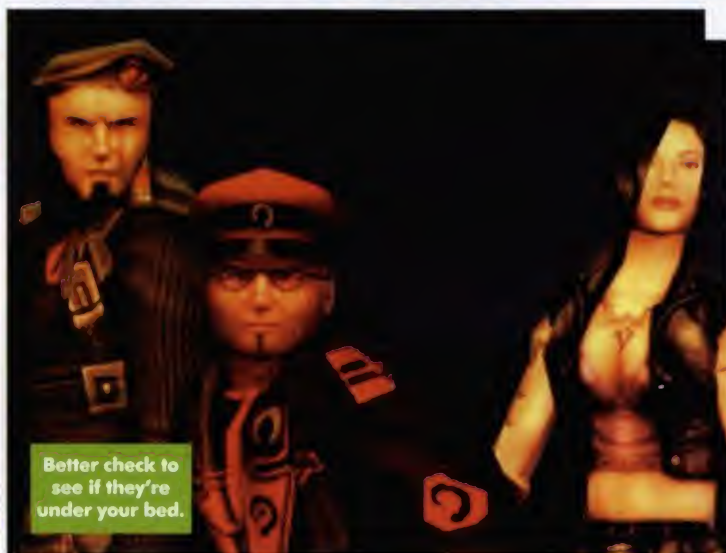
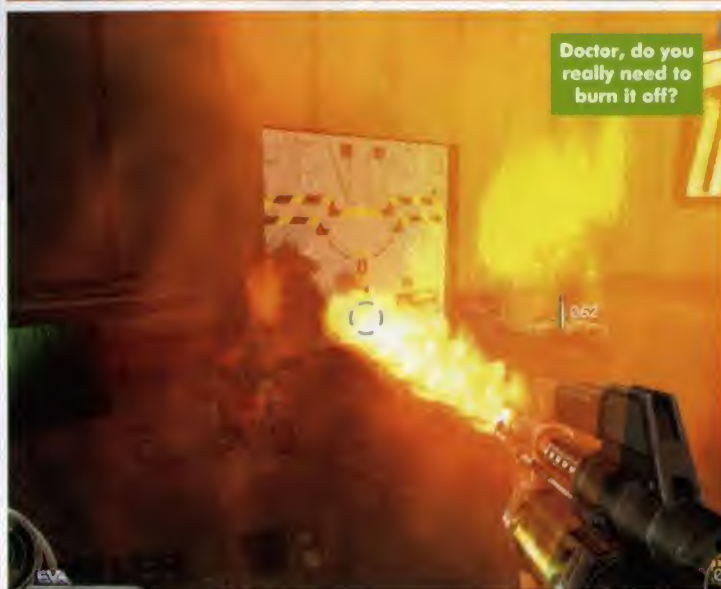
The game areas are vast, and loosely based on the types of maps you'd find in the original game. Go to the map screen, and you'll find a carbon copy of an old school C&C level staring back at you. The resolution of these maps, even with the special bonus discs littered around, is so grainy as to be useless, but fortunately the in-game compass is more than sufficient.



Primary and secondary objectives are coded and tracked, and the HUD keeps track of all relevant data in an overblown, yet functional manner.

SUMMER OF SAM

The secondary objectives go a great way towards making the game environment feel more dynamic, like there really is a war unfolding on all sides. Take out SAM sites, for instance, and friendly aircraft can drop you ammo and equipment. The



player is always at the center of the action, as a huge cast of characters, along with your Speak & Spell-sounding PDA brief you on the fly, with a lot of upbeat positive reinforcement thrown in.

All of this action is madcap enough, but when Havoc gets behind the wheel of a vehicle, things go completely mental. Most of the signature vehicles from C&C are in here, including the astoundingly overpowered Mammoth Tank. With two parallel tank guns paired with two parallel rocket launchers, you can cut a swathe through enemy armour and infantry alike, with only the slightest move of the mouse. Each



It's stupid, all-American, over-the-top action.

map feels completely different when you've got wheels, making it feel almost like two games in one.

HALO SCHMALO

The closest comparison in the contemporary games market would be Halo, but the two differ on several key points. As a PC game, Renegade benefits from higher resolution, even though there is no split-screen support. Halo has a vastly superior graphics engine, and a much smoother physics model, but Renegade is much funnier, with the most outrageous action movie dialogue to ever grace a video game.

That's not even mentioning the multi-player support, which can simulate a full-scale C&C battle with scores of independent human players. Tiberium and power supply are as crucial as before, and now the greatly expanded human element

breaks away from the drab consistency of the vanilla Westwood RTS experience.

A high-end machine is recommended. The alpine levels, for instance, combined with a white targeting crosshair on screen can make for some confusing firefights if you don't own a mighty enough beast. Some of the unit animations are a little sketchy too, and the character models are not

the best ever. But that's not what Renegade is all about. It's stupid, all-American, over the top action, the kind of which is so desperately lacking in today's PC market. It has more tactics than Serious Sam, better single player than Wolfenstein, and a powerful retro appeal for aging gamers the world over. Renegade may not rock your world, but it'll definitely rock the house. <<<

!!! Westwood are working on a new strategy game.



PLUS: Irreverent, varied, great dialogue + multiplayer.

MINUS: Chunky graphics, short shelf life.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

75 88 76

OVERALL

79

The action insanity of tomorrow: Today!

REVIEW

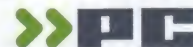
>>> HYPER 75

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Star Trek: BRIDGE COMMANDER

CATEGORY: Tactical Sim >> PLAYERS: 1-Multi >> PUBLISHER: Activision >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: M >> AVAILABLE: Now >>



ELIOT FISH sets his phaser to fun.

While we often profess our love for all things *Star Wars* here at Hyper, we still have a place in our geeky hearts for the world of *Trek*. In fact, the *Next Generation* still stands as one of the most fun sci-fi TV shows ever made, and for a while there, everyone wanted to be as cool as Captain Picard. Well, in *Bridge Commander*, now you CAN be Captain Picard! Or you can at least pretend. It's time to sit in the big chair and command your way to victory. Engage.

TRIBBLES ON THE STARBOARD BOW

Bridge Commander goes some way towards providing the ultimate *Trek* fan experience. You can play the whole game from the captain's chair, with the bridge in full 3D

allowing you to look around with the mouse and communicate directly with each crewmember. Clicking on your crew gives you access to their station, whether it be engineering, science, weapons or the helm for navigation and communications. You can even click on your Number One to get advice and take a look over your mission objectives. Sometimes there are guests on the bridge to talk to also, like Captain Picard in your very first mission.

It's true that your job basically revolves around dishing out orders. Set this course, hail that ship, go to red alert, scan this target etc. A lot of the time it feels like there are no other real options other than what is the immediately obvious one — it's not like you can really be that creative with your captaincy. Generally, the

missions are pretty scripted and it's a case of just doing the right thing at the right time. Annoyingly, crewmembers even prompt you for what you should do, as if you can't even think for yourself. This is a bit of a problem with *Bridge Commander*. Any *Trek* fan will know that the thrill of being the captain is trying out unorthodox solutions to problems at hand, but the game doesn't allow the

player that kind of creativity in their problem solving. You basically have to just go through the motions.

MAKE IT SO-SO

The starship combat is where you can exercise some true manual control — switching to a chase cam of your ship you can fly and shoot the phasers and torpedoes with the click of the mouse. The problem here is that you can't





possibly be as efficient as the AI controlled crewmembers, making manual control too risky to bother with. There are also too many things to fiddle with during combat, such as setting energy levels and prioritising repairs. This means that the combat can play out quite randomly, as

The story is very intriguing and well written, so chances are you'll play to the end.

sometimes the AI shoots at the wrong time and flies poorly — but at least it's easier to stay alive a bit longer this way. Unfortunately combat just seemed way too hard, even on the easier setting. Sometimes playing a battle would result in a quick victory, yet replaying the same battle results in a swift defeat — yet you gave exactly the same orders. The AI has quirks it seems. This can result

in some very frustrating replaying of missions, even though you appear to be doing everything right. The game also relies too heavily on combat, when more peaceful solutions would have been more authentic.

Thankfully, the story is very intriguing and well written, so chances are you'll play to the end regardless of the frustration.

Overall, the Bridge Commander experience is one that hardcore Trek fans will love. It's just like playing through a series of episodes from the show, even if it is heavily scripted as to what control you can really exercise over proceedings.

If the combat wasn't so frustrating, and there was more freedom in your decision making, then Bridge Commander could have been a classic. <<<



PLUS: Authentic Trek atmosphere and cast.

MINUS: Limited actual control. Combat is hella hard.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

84 89 78

OVERALL

80

Frustrating but lots of fun for Trek fans.

REVIEW

>>> HYPER 77



Hurry up then, chop chop!



»»XBOX

Cel Damage

CATEGORY: Vehicle Combat >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >>
 PUBLISHER: EA >> PRICE: \$89.95 >>
 RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Cel Damage is described as "Twisted Metal in Cartoon Land", Cel Damage is the magic of cartoon violence - old-school Road-Runner-and-Wile-E-Coyote-style - dressed in beautiful Cel Shaded graphics. Players take part in three different game types: Smack Attack (or Mario Kart battle mode); Gate Relay (finish 10 laps first); and Flag Rally (a basic form of capture the flag), unlocking new racers with differing handling and power abilities, plus tracks and weapons as they go.

While these three different modes and choice of vehicle ask for differing strategies of play, the basic rule of thumb in Cel Damage is this: you shoot anything that moves. Which is Cel Damage's greatest flaw: simplicity. The action is so fast and furious and the weapons so limited that devising any sneaky attack strategies is almost impossible - you simply attack anything in your immediate vicinity with the hope of scoring the most points first. This is enjoyable for the first hour or so, but becomes rather boring after that.

Don't get us wrong - there's fun-a-plenty to be had with Cel Damage, however this joy is very much short lived. Maybe give this one a rent first, and only when you plan to have some buddies over and see how it fares. Single player just doesn't really make much sense. - **March Stepnik**



Sith happens.



»»XBOX

Star Wars: OBI-WAN

CATEGORY: Action >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >>
 PUBLISHER: LucasArts >> PRICE: \$99.95 >>
 RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Late March >>

There was a day when Obi-Wan was being considered as the follow-up to Jedi Knight. Somewhere along the way the dev team realised that the game was obviously going down a path that would inevitably disappoint the hardcore PC audience. Obi-Wan was turning into Lara Croft. As a result, here we are playing Obi-Wan on the Xbox, wondering how this game could ever have been considered appropriate for the PC.

This is fairly mindless robot-like hack 'n slash gameplay with a smattering of no-brainer puzzles. If you're a big Star Wars fan you will no doubt ignore the bad camera and control issues for the fact that playing as a Jedi is always cool - no matter how bad the game is. Well, almost.

Obi-Wan also has a bunch of acrobatic moves, and a handful of cool Force powers, but there's almost too much here to make the action play out smoothly. The player has to move Obi-Wan, swing the lightsaber, plus jump and/or press the acrobatic button and/or hold down the Force trigger and press another button for a Force move. All at once. It's nice having lots of abilities, but the result is a clumsy feeling game, especially seeing as you tend to get swarmed by enemies, and need to be able to respond swiftly.

Obi-Wan also fails to look as good as it could. Considering that this game is on the Xbox exclusively, it's totally bizarre that LucasArts have not used any of the system's graphical capabilities. You also begin to wonder what happened in this game's long development cycle, when the game's frame rate grinds to a halt in your first sitting. - **Frank Dry**



Moo or less.



»»PC

Black & White: CREATURE ISLE

CATEGORY: Sim/Puzzle >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >>
 PUBLISHER: EA >> PRICE: \$49.95 >>
 RATING: MA15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>
 REQUIRE: Pentium II 300, 64 MB RAM, 3D card >>

This expansion takes us back the fantasmagorical universe of Black & White, the most detailed animal toilet training simulation ever made. Despite the joy many experienced in nurturing, training and teaching their in-game familiar animal, many more were confused and intimidated by the inscrutable game engine that could tell how good or evil you were, and warp land and beast accordingly.

Rest assured, Creature Isle is far less demanding. No good and evil, no rival gods. Just you, your animal, and a series of physical challenges. Like racing! Martial arts! And bowling! The amazingly varied set of tasks that span this isle are so wildly different, so at-odds with any notion of logic, it's almost as if the game designers implemented the first features that popped into their heads.

Importing your creature from Black & White, you must instruct it to complete all these mini-quests, so as to unlock the varied bonus creatures of the Brotherhood, and to ultimately mate with the mysterious Eve, a female mystery creature. To this end, you have to hatch a little chicken creature, which is subordinate to your avatar. This new chain of command adds a new layer of depth to the otherwise streamlined game mechanic.

Dedicated fans of the original game who still have their old creature intact will delight in this opportunity to set them jumping through hoops, and thrill to the final reward: getting it on. Those who missed the Black & White boat will find better uses for their fifty bucks. - **James Cotte**

| VISUALS | SOUND | GAMEPLAY | OVERALL |
|---------|-------|----------|---------|
| 84 | 69 | 65 | 69 |

| VISUALS | SOUND | GAMEPLAY | OVERALL |
|---------|-------|----------|---------|
| 65 | 82 | 69 | 69 |

| VISUALS | SOUND | GAMEPLAY | OVERALL |
|---------|-------|----------|---------|
| 90 | 60 | 70 | 73 |

ARCADE

»»TIM LEUY



While Mario Tennis is the best tennis game EVER on any home console, Sega's Virtua Tennis has remained virtually unchallenged in the arcades. Now there is a new challenger - Virtua Tennis 2. Although it has only been two years since the slightly boxy Virtua Tennis graced our arcade screens, a full upgrade has been made in the graphic and control departments as well as bringing equal rights to the ladies and enabling some female on female action as well as mixed doubles.

ANDROID ROBOTS

There are now 8 female characters to choose from including Venus and Serena Williams, Monica Seles, Mary Pierce, Jelena Dokic, and Lindsay Davenport. Notice how crowd/soft porn favourite, Anna Kournikova, is missing from this star studded line up because she is busy starring in her own Anna Kournikova Tennis game. Male characters Tommy Haas, Cedric Poiline and Tim Henman

appear again as well as some new characters - Magnus Norman, Thomas Enqvist and our very own Pat Rafter. Our other boy from Oz - Mark Phillipoussis (the Poo) has gone AWOL. Each of these players have their own strengths such as fast runner, big server, strong fore/backhand and 'all rounder'. One new move the players have is the ability to hit lob shots that have already gone over their head by



Tim doesn't like the service around here.

doing a 'back over the shoulder shot'.

All the players now look a lot more realistic instead of the android robot types seen in the predecessor and the characters actually hold different facial expressions quite realistically - as seen in the alternate camera close-up replays. After losing a game, the characters look genuinely on a major downer.

There are four different courts from around the world, each with its own surface type. Playing on the harder surfaces (concrete) enables the players to be very agile, whilst the softer surfaces (sand/grass) makes it hard for the players to change direction while on the run.

SMASHING THAT BALL

Somehow, Sega has not really improved that much on the controls and the game is still a little too simplistic in comparison to Mario Tennis (which has 10 different ways of hitting the ball). This however

does make for a shallower learning curve, which of course can make it a little more arcade friendly.

The button use has changed slightly as there is no lob button. Instead, there are top and back spin shots and lob is activated by depressing both buttons. The earlier you press the button to hit the ball, the harder the return shot will be. Therefore, predicting the trajectory of the ball is the key to really smashing that ball.

So, while the game will attract both tennis fans and casual arcade gamers alike for the one player, it is the two-player aspect that gives the game a little more longevity. If you are really down on your cash, you can make one two-player match last literally forever by continually returning the match to duce. Now that's budget (read: cheapskate) gaming.

OVERALL

7/10

COIN-OP

»»HYPER 79

Creatures

GBA CATEGORY: Artificial Life >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Activision >>
 PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

The Creatures games were an interesting experiment in artificial life on the PC. The technology behind the games was very cool, but the graphics were fairly primitive and the interface certainly could have been more intuitive. The move to the GBA is a sensible one – not only does it encourage even greater attachment to your Norns (since you can carry

them around with you), but the 2D graphics are a good match for the GBA hardware.

The basic idea behind Creatures is to give you a window into – and a limited amount of control over – a living digital world. The creatures that you look after are called Norns, and are far more sentient than your average tamagotchi.

Norns are modelled from the ground up to mimic a living creature – they have a brain that establishes connections in much the same way ours do (except drastically simplified), digital DNA that enables them to breed with evolutionary results and a nervous system that is affected by what enters their system and has its own equilibrium. They can interact with their surroundings – play with toys, learn language, distinguish between good and bad, and so on.

Nothing the Norns do is pre-programmed – it all arises from learning and experience. And of course you can use your guiding influence to teach and entertain them through the praise/punishment reward system. This game is a little more newbie friendly than the PC games, starting you off with two relatively well-trained Norns. Plus, with three large worlds, and the ability to breed your Norns with your friends', Creatures on GBA is as fascinating as ever. – Cam Shea



Berta
 Hmm... dilated pupils...



Paula
 Hey look, it's the teddy from A.I.



Majo
 The creatures hold a love fest.



| VISUALS | SOUND | GAMEPLAY | OVERALL |
|---------|-------|----------|---------|
| 72 | 73 | 77 | 76 |

Mortal Kombat Advance

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

Where Street Fighter is about elegance, Mortal Kombat is about button mashing. Where Tekken is about freeform combos and juggling, Mortal Kombat is about repetition. Where Virtua Fighter is the fighting game equivalent of chess, Mortal Kombat is the fighting game equivalent of the Sale of the Century board game. Where Dead or Alive is about aesthetics, Mortal Kombat is about poorly digitised actors and palette swapped characters. Where Guilty Gear X is frustratingly difficult, Mortal Kombat is frustratingly stupid. Where Rival Schools has cute

schoolgirls, Mortal Kombat has two dollar hoes. Need we go on?

Let's be brutally honest. The Mortal Kombat games have never had much in the way of gameplay. They were fun for a while, but it's amazing that the novelty value of fatalities and digitised characters has managed to sustain this franchise for so damn long, especially considering how many other awesome fighting games there are out there. What's even more infuriating is that as out of date as Mortal Kombat



is, Mortal Kombat Advance is even worse! This is a bad port dear readers. Essentially, take Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3, botch the button/move map conversion (from six to four buttons), change the timing of many of the moves, make the AI annoyingly difficult, reduce the size of the sprites on screen, and take out anything the art had going for it, and you have Mortal Kombat Advance. You're flogging a dead Horse Midway – let it go peacefully. – Joey Tekken



This game is shocking.



Does it really matter who you choose?



Yeah, then you can turn this off.

| VISUALS | SOUND | GAMEPLAY | OVERALL |
|---------|-------|----------|---------|
| 44 | 77 | 22 | 33 |

Ecks Vs. Sever



Big things come in small packages.

Ecks Vs. Sever (EVS) - could there be a more ludicrous title for a movie? Set in the modern day, EVS stars Antonio Banderas and Lucy Liu as, you guessed it - Ecks and Sever. Ecks is an arrogant ex-FBI agent - trained to hunt and kill, and scarred by the death of his family. How unique. Sever is a rogue NSA agent and a stone cold assassin. Plus, she's beautiful. Sigh. It may sound run of the mill, but with Crawfish on development duties, EVS has been translated into the new king

CATEGORY: FPS >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >> **PUBLISHER:** Bam! **PRICE:** \$89.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

of GBA first person shooters. The game is composed of two sets of twelve missions - from the perspective of Ecks and Sever respectively. It's a good technique, and EVS is relatively story driven for a FPS. The game itself is a marvel of design for the GBA - technically proficient, with well designed gameplay. Although there's nothing particularly new on offer, EVS succeeds thanks to good pacing and variety in the levels. For instance, one mission might be based around the sniper rifle (which even has a neat and powerful zoom function!), while another might require extensive use of night vision goggles, and another may be a race to complete your



GBA <<



Gonna Blau your arse.



Handheld carnage!



objectives and get out before the SWAT team takes you down.

Working hand in hand with the mission design is a brilliant weapon lineup that includes the Ingram Mac 11 automatic, the Pancor Jackhammer (the coolest alternative to the Doom shotgun we've seen yet) and the Heckler and Koch 40mm Grenade Launcher among others. Weapons

aren't carried over across levels, so you start afresh on each mission with only a pistol, which has allowed Crawfish to build levels around specific weapons, and around limited supplies of ammo. Damn fine portable gaming. - Cam Shea

| VISUALS | SOUND | GAMEPLAY | OVERALL |
|---------|-------|----------|---------|
| 80 | 78 | 89 | 90 |

Namco Museum



Namco made it into our top ten developers of all time list for a number of reasons, and here are five of them - Ms. Pac-Man, Pole Position, Galaga, Galaxian and Dig Dug. Yep, Namco Museum GBA style comes packing all five of these classic arcade titles, and in terms of retro appeal rates pretty high on our list. We actually debated whether or not to review Namco Musuem, simply because the

CATEGORY: Retro Arcade >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** Infogrames >> **PRICE:** \$89.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

concept was turned into such a cash cow on PlayStation, with the good games spread thinly across five increasingly tenuous editions.

Fortunately, Namco Museum for GBA really is a best-of collection, and features the must-have games from Namco's arcade past. The pick of the crop is Ms. Pac-Man - it's almost as much fun now as it was back in the day, and will undoubtedly chew up countless hours of your time. Wokka wokka wokka.

Galaga and Galaxian also hold up well, although it's a shame that Xevious missed the cut. Pole Position isn't quite as



GBA <<



Golden memories... sigh.



You'll dig Dig Dug.



cool as it used to be, but is worth a look for nostalgia alone, while Dig Dug is still as surreal and fun as ever.

Whether or not this collection of games is worth the price tag is another question, but this is the ideal way to play them. After all, these are the sorts of simple titles that you'll want to have a quick play on the bus or in the classroom, not in front of a

TV set. There's something about the lo-fi nature of a handheld that suits the old school gameplay on offer here, so if you feel like popping some power pills, Namco Museum comes recommended. - Cam Shea

| VISUALS | SOUND | GAMEPLAY | OVERALL |
|---------|-------|----------|---------|
| 60 | 76 | 80 | 80 |

the SENTINEL

Challenging, obtuse, intriguing... The Sentinel stimulated many, and confused many more.

JAMES COTTEE explores how one retro classic rose to become king of the hill.



These days, Geoff Crammond is renowned for his series of Grand Prix racing games. By collating genuine racing telemetry data into the game model, and by meticulously writing the code himself, he was able to distill a singular vision of racing into a mass market hit. Patience, science, and innovation, these are the values that have made him one of the most influential game designers in the world today.

While most of his games are automotive racers, in retro circles he is more greatly honoured for being the creator of *The Sentinel*. Utterly different to anything released before or since, it made bold use of technology to render an immersive sci-fi universe. In the strange future world depicted within, the Sentinel is a malevolent alien force that is spreading like a cancer across the galaxy, converting all that oppose it into energy it uses to replicate itself. The player's mission is to turn the tide, winning back the galaxy one planet at a time.

THE ROLE OF A ROBOT

Each game level is a finite 3D landscape. The terrain is hilly, with a jagged contrast between peaks and troughs. At the acme of each level is the Sentinel, a ruthless, abstract robot that dominates the terrain. The player, taking the role of a robot pilot, has to traverse the terrain with the aim of standing higher than the sentinel's perch. Once the player's robot becomes

king of the hill, the sentinel is defeated, and the next level begins.

With real time action, and gripping first person views, it could be argued that *The Sentinel* was a nascent first person shooter. What tied it more firmly into the puzzle and strategy genres was the manner in which the player moved, and by which obstacles were overcome. In *The Sentinel*, everything boils down to energy. Trees and boulders scattered about can be converted into energy, and then back again at more convenient locations. Even the player's robot didn't move around per se, it merely created a replica of itself at a new location, and then absorbed the old one. To raise higher up, one simply created a boulder beneath the robot, and up he went.

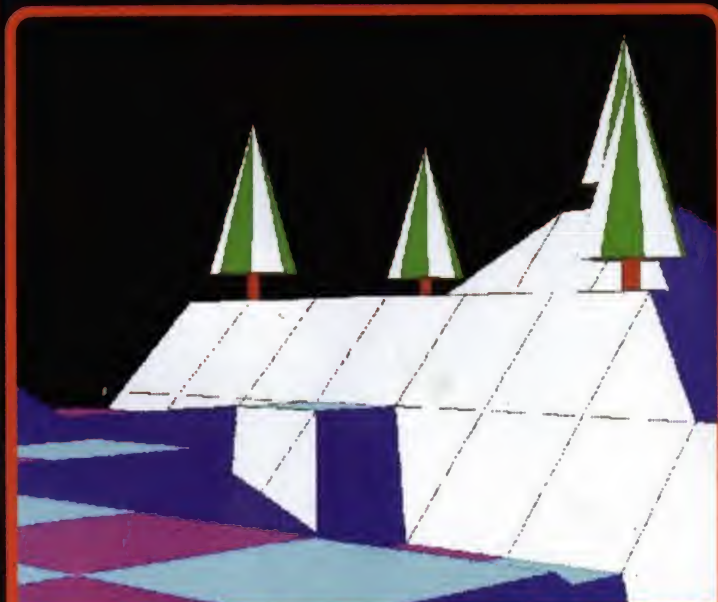
All of this energy action would draw the attention of the Sentinel from on high. Once the player started moving about, the Sentinel would begin tracking its gaze across the landscape. Anything with an energy rating higher than zero, like the player, could instantly be reduced to inanimate objects. Thus the trick was to scurry around the landscape, using hills for cover, until finally striking at its ridiculous boxy head. Some levels had smaller enemies, Sentries, each as



Wow, cutting edge vectors!



The good old days?



Y'know, I think games have made progress in the eye candy department.



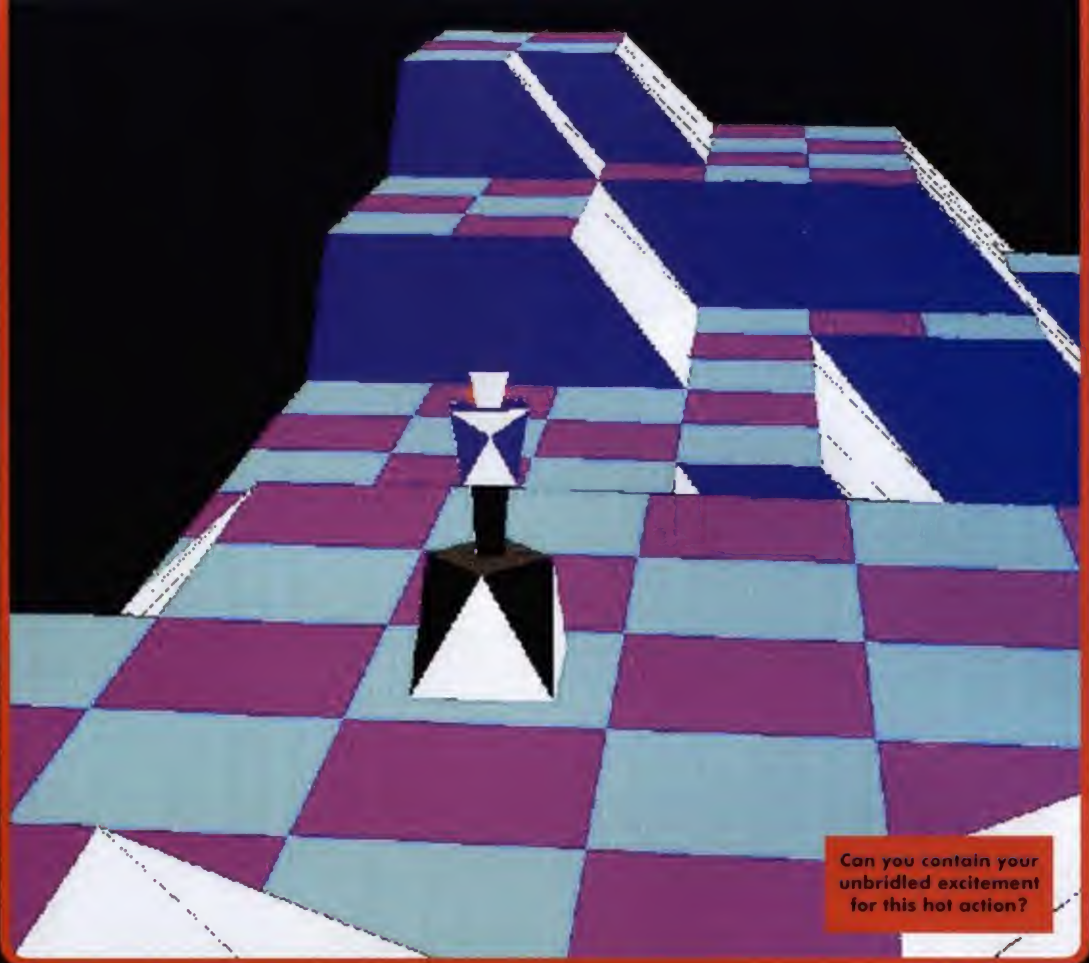
Better turn on "low-quality sky".



Just like Tomb Raider!



Ahhh, my eyes are bleeding.



Can you contain your unbridled excitement for this hot action?

deadly as its master. But each new planet was a new challenge, a new puzzle to solve.

PAC-MAN PHILOSOPHY

The longterm challenge of The Sentinel was ensured by the number of levels: 10,000. Obviously generated algorithmically, this was the same tack used to create the thousands of inhabited worlds in Elite and the boundless lands for conquest in Populous. It's one step up from the Pac-Man philosophy of repeating the same level over and over again, and somehow classier than the contrived artfulness of individually crafted stages. It also played to the ego of the hardcore, gamers who could see beyond the shallow realms of endless genre re-treads.

This feature alone speaks volumes on the philosophy behind the game design. For one, it harks back to the days when most video games went on forever, with ramping difficulty and fatigue ultimately curtailing any gamer's performance. High scores were meaningful numbers back then, and unlimited levels beckoned the player unto the infinite. It also highlights the synergy between proficiency in mathematics and efficient game design. Clever design, and solid code can create an addictive game on any machine. Nowadays games are designed by committee, with

flair and vision taking a back seat to bankable products.

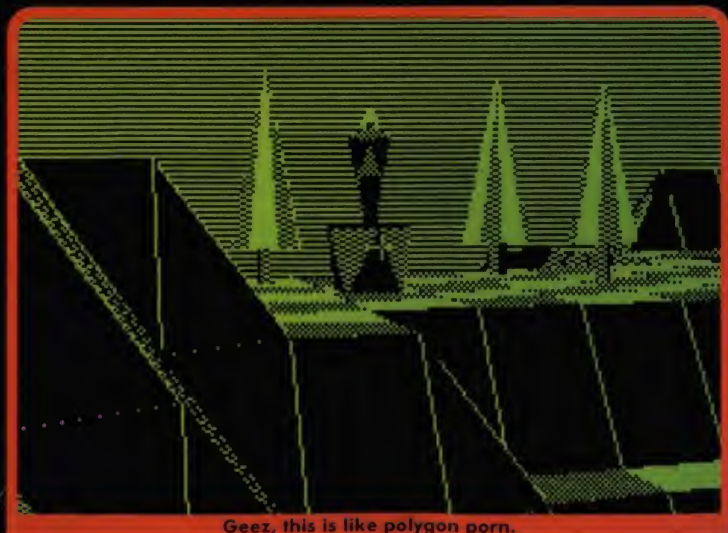
The original game came out way back in 1986 for the BBC Micro and the Commodore 64. In 1998, a glossy remake was produced for PC and PlayStation, to mixed reviews. Those who remembered the original could see a shadow of its greatness in the new facsimile, but many just didn't get it. After all, the main character was a blocky obelisk standing atop a chunky hill. Where are the cut scenes? What band did the score? This is too hard — what's the cheat code?

It's not like the music wasn't amazing; the original score was a haunting tune by David Whittaker, and two tracks on the sequel were by John "Escape From New York" Carpenter. It's not like the game was bad, either; its deceptively slow pace would instantly give way to frenzied panic as the Sentinel brought the hammer down. It's just that we live in a world where things get too easily locked into cycles of mediocrity, like fast food, TV, and Tomb Raider sequels.

The Sentinel is still out there. Gazing down from abandonware sites, from bargain bins, from the collective unconscious of the 8-bit gaming era. Some still dare to challenge this enigma, scrambling for the high ground, desperately trying to prove that a quality game can rise above the rest. <<



Big Brother can kiss my arse!



Geez, this is like polygon porn.



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!



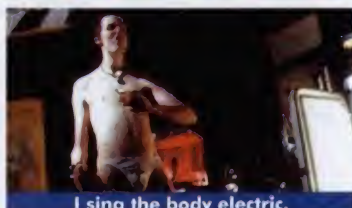
The Filth and the Fury

DIR: J.D.Y., RATED R

The *Filth and The Fury* is an epic documentary about that infamous band, The Sex Pistols. Its DVD release is well timed, as the Pistols' version of "God Save the Queen (She Ain't No Human Being)" will soon grace our airwaves again in commemoration of the Queen's jubilee. Using archival television footage from the era, director Julien Temple first establishes the impoverished social climate from which The Pistols emerged, and then paints an arresting picture of this enigmatic group and their flamboyant manager (Malcolm McLaren). The



Courtney Love, I want my soul back.



I sing the body electric.



Cracker jack.



choke

film incorporates both old and contemporary interviews with the band, footage of their live performances and television clips of the public reaction The Pistols provoked, successfully creating an energetic film that is as entertaining as it is enlightening. Unfortunately, the only bonus feature on this DVD is audio commentary from the director. Temple's comments are an insightful addition to the film, however, making *The Filth and The Fury* a memorable must-see.

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



Fat Tony.



The Bank

AV CHANNEL (ARENA), RATED M

If you belong to the ever-increasing group of people who regularly direct murderous thoughts towards their bank, dreaming every other night of wandering into a branch with a shotgun and demanding retribution for the seventh "new charge" that has just been levied on your account, then this film is definitely for you. *The Bank* tells the story of Jim Doyle (David Wenham), a mathematical genius headhunted by the fictional CentaBank to formulate a predictive theorem for the stockmarket. Although this concept is neither unique nor particularly intriguing on its own merit, *The Bank* uses it in such an

engaging manner that it's difficult to restrain yourself when you realise what's going on. A subtly humorous screenplay also adds to *The Bank's* charm, resulting in dialogue which is peppered with lines like, "I'm like God, but with a better suit", or my personal favourite, "It's quite simple... I just hate banks". The bonus features excellently complement this deliciously dark tale. They include two short films from director Robert Connolly (gotta love it when they do this!); footage from the AFI and IF awards, deleted scenes, director's commentary and more.

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

Chopper

20TH CENTURY FOX
RATED R

Unfortunately I've never understood the Australian public's fascination with Mark "Chopper" Read. I haven't read any of his books, I missed his infamous drunken appearance on McFeast, and always thought that his "tough guy" persona was a bit of an act. (Even he admits that his books aren't all based on truth.) But when the film based on his life was announced, I felt totally compelled to rush out and see it. Not because it was about Chopper himself, but because it starred Eric Bana. Does anyone actually remember how appallingly bad this guy was as a comedian? Amidst all the praise that he's currently receiving for his roles in *Black Hawk Down* and the forthcoming *Incredible Hulk*, it would seem not — precisely because *Chopper* showed the world just how great an



Bang!



Wang!

actor he is. Bana's performance is a revelation in *Chopper*, expertly capturing the contradictory essence of this psychotic and savage, yet simultaneously captivating and articulate, Australian anti-hero.

MOVIE: 8/10 EXTRA: 4/10



Do ya think I'm sexy?



Bang bang!



Just lay back and think of Tim-Tams.

Better than Sex

NEW VISION, RATED MA

Starring Susie Porter and David Wenham, *Better Than Sex* is a fresh and sexy little gem of a film. After meeting at a party, Josh and Cyn feel an instant chemistry for each other. He's leaving for London in 3 days, so both think "Why not?" to the idea of having uncomplicated casual sex for one night. The problem with this scenario, however, is that it soon becomes obvious that both would actually like something more. Using

a documentary-like style, *Better Than Sex* splices Josh and Cyn's sexual encounter with "interview" monologues from the two leads and a montage of snippets from their friends, who add their own points of view to the situation. At times this approach can be quite grating (it was done to much better effect in the similarly-themed French film, *A Pornographic Affair*), but it does add some sparkle — especially to scenes like the one which tackles that age-old sexual conundrum: "To swallow, or not to swallow?" *Better Than Sex* is a thoroughly enjoyable film, and although the extras are pretty minimal — 2 interviews with the cute Susie Porter — you won't be disappointed.



Not David Wenham again!

MOVIE: 7.5/10 EXTRA: 5/10

Atlantis: THE LOST EMPIRE

DISNEY DVD, RATED PG

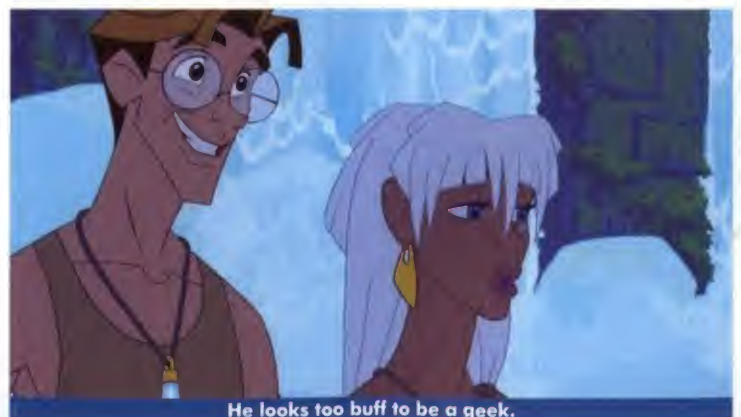
Atlantis: The Lost Empire, the latest animated offering from Disney, is not exactly what we've come to expect from this company. Although *Atlantis* was directed by Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise (whose other notable achievement is the saccharine-sweet *Beauty and the Beast*), none of its main characters suddenly burst into rapturous song and there's not a cute animal sidekick in sight. Phew! Instead, Disney delivers an action-packed and beautifully crafted film that is directed at adults more so than children, and therefore owes more to the genre of anime that it does to Disney's animated predecessors. Set in 1914, *Atlantis* tells the story of Milo Thatch (excellently voiced by Michael J. Fox), a linguist who works at the Smithsonian Museum. Obsessed



"My hairdresser, she crazy!"

with the legend of Atlantis, the lost city under the sea, he is approached to join a private party of explorers embarking on a journey to discover the fabled city. Jam-packed with extras (audio commentary from producer and directors; 2 hour documentary; featurette detailing how key scenes were created), *Atlantis* comes as a double DVD set and is the best thing Disney have done in years.

MOVIE: 7.5/10 EXTRA: 8/10



He looks too buff to be a geek.

America's Sweethearts

COLUMBIA TRI STAR, RATED M

For a movie that's supposed to be about Hollywood and the movie industry, *America's Sweethearts* misses a lot of opportunities for satirical comment. Despite its stellar ensemble cast — John Cusack, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Julia Roberts, Billy Crystal, Stanley Tucci and Hank Azaria — *America's Sweethearts* remains a rather bland film. Zeta-Jones and Cusack play Gwen and Eddie, movie stars whose very public marriage is secretly falling apart. Billy Crystal, a press agent, is given the task of convincing the media that Gwen and Eddie are as happy as ever, thus ensuring that the couple's last film together is a success. Although this premise sounds promising, the



But Catherine, what about Michael??

script fails to deliver any punches or sparkle. Even John Cusack, who was such a joy to watch in *High Fidelity*, delivers a lackluster performance. The bonus features are similarly devoid of any charm — some deleted scenes, a trailer and cast and crew filmographies. *America's Sweethearts* is a film that fails to live up to its potential.

MOVIE: 5/10 **EXTRA:** 4/10



"What do you mean someone stole our hands?"



Beauty and the beast.



Patsy in full effect.

Absolutely Fabulous SERIES 1

BBC, RATED M

If the return of Ab Fab to our television screens of late has left you hungering for episodes from the earlier series, then rush out and buy this DVD now. Eddie and Patsy are two of the funniest, sharply-drawn and acerbic female characters ever created, and their drunken (often drug-induced) exploits as the celebrity doyens of the fickle fashion industry will be sure to have you rolling around on the floor with mirth. The first series of *Absolutely Fabulous* is exceptionally good, and its parody of the world of fashionistas is spot on. It also stands up to the test of time (this series was made in 1992) remarkably well. The DVD also includes the original French and Saunders sketch on which the show was based (thankfully Joanna Lumley stepped in later and



Edina and her bubbles.

invigorated the concept), some outtakes that aren't quite as enjoyable as you might first suspect, and a photo gallery. Although the extras are a slight disappointment, the show itself is as good as ever. Grab yourself a couple of bottles of Bolly, light up a fag, and sit back and enjoy!

MOVIE: 7.5/10 **EXTRA:** 5/10

Manhattan

MGM, RATED M

Made in 1979, *Manhattan* is one of those classic films that still looks as good today as it did then. It's a typical Woody Allen effort — he stars and directs, and of course has his pick of beautiful (younger) women. There's also the mandatory love triangle: Woody plays Isaac, a man whose ex-wife (now a lesbian) has just written a tell-all memoir of their lives together. Meanwhile, he's cavorting around with an innocent 17-year old, but has fallen in love with his best friend's intellectual mistress — played by Dianne Keaton. What ensues is an enjoyable comedy, laced with Woody's biting social satire and stumbling relationship ineptitude. Shot beautifully in black and white, and paired with



A Woody in full view.

the usual Gershwin soundtrack, *Manhattan* is a testament to Woody's skills as a master filmmaker. The only bonus feature to speak of is a theatrical trailer, but don't let this disparage you from adding a timeless and quite remarkable film to your collection.

MOVIE: 8/10 **EXTRA:** 2/10



Get your hands off my Woody!

ANIME

Vampire Hunter D: BLOODLUST

CATEGORY: ACTION/HORROR PRODUCTION COMPANY: MADHOUSE/DOMO CORPORATION

Commercially, this is a match made in Heaven: a classic 80's franchise, modernised, revamped, but remaining true to the original Yoshitaka Amano designs; and production animation by the same crew that brought us the industry's seminal masterpiece of the 90's, *Ninja Scroll*. *Vampire Hunter D: Bloodlust* has everything going for it, yet there remains the slight oddity that the project was spearheaded by Americans and not the Japanese.



bunk. That aside, *Vampire Hunter D: Bloodlust* remains a title that every anime enthusiast should check out.

The animation and artistic style is simply jaw-dropping. Classic poses, gothic imagery, 100% smooth motion, all executed to the highest animation standards. The fight scenes are frighteningly fierce, arguably even putting *Ninja Scroll* to shame.

Not surprisingly, the revamped *Vampire Hunter D* story has adopted a few elements from *Ninja Scroll*.

Specifically, a tragic tale of lovers who can never be, intertwined with two warriors who must co-operate to defeat a band of super villains.

Here, D is a dunpeal (half-vampire, half-human) who must join forces with the Markus Brothers, a family of vampire hunters, to



TDK does amazing things...

rescue a young woman from the clutches of a powerful vampire. The revelation that the woman and the vampire are in love should come as no shock, and by all accounts the story should've been great, but for

this one plot-twist (no, we're not giving it away) that completely ruins the story. Still — and this is a rarity — the amazing animation, surround sound effects and action scenes still warrant a purchase.

ANIMATION: 10/10 PLOT: 6/10 OVERALL: 8/10

Magic User's Club

CATEGORY: COMEDY PRODUCTION COMPANY: TRIANGLE STAFF/BANDAI VISUAL

Aiso known as "Maho Tsukai Tai", *Magic User's Club* is a comedic breath of fresh air that exploits more modern concepts of high school humour and romantic comedy. The story is predicated on the Earth having been taken over by aliens, who happen to just sit there and don't actually do anything, apart from sending in the occasional tentacle robot. All attempts to destroy it have failed, but since it poses no real threat to everyday life, people have grown to accept it.



Thanks for the mammaries.

virgin who's watched too much hentai and has a way overactive imagination. He makes for great comedy. He's helped by Aburatsubo, who's homosexual, comfortable with flaunting it, and makes constant

passes at Takakura. The love triangle is completed by Sae Sawanoguchi, a girl with a hidden talent for magic but is otherwise a klutz.

There's plenty of hilarious boob jiggling, panty shots and tentacle humour moments within the confines of the greater tasks at hand — like trying to keep their pathetic little club afloat, and saving the school from aliens who make the occasional visit. *Magic User's Club* is sure to get funnier as the series progresses.



Sit and spin.



Her head is too young for her body.



Harry Potter ain't as sexy as this!

ANIMATION: 8/10 PLOT: 8/10 POTENTIAL: 9/10 OVERALL: 9/10

A HIDDEN TALENT

The Magic User's Club was set up by some high school students who hope to use their powers to destroy the aliens. At the helm is club president Takakura, an incompetent sod, also a

MUSIC

MUSIC REVIEWS
SPONSORED BY
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Whether it be on the soundtrack to the latest videogame, getting high rotation on the airwaves or tagged on the credits of the latest blockbuster movie, the latest music releases are everywhere. Want to know what's hot and what's not? Our **Hyper CD reviews** should keep you in the loop.



dEUS No More Loud Music

UNIVERSAL

»» This is a collection of the singles released by Belgian group dEUS, featuring all their old releases plus a new track called "Nothing Really Ends". While to a Belgian fan this probably isn't much chop (one new track isn't a lot of purchase motivation) to anybody who doesn't know these guys, this is a real bonus. Weird as f**k, these Euro lunatics create some of the most imaginative moody music you could ever want to hear, swinging from the intense vocal duel of "Suds and Soda" through the tongue in cheek folk of "Little Arithmetics" to the bent electronica of "The Ideal Crash".



CRACKER Forever

UNIVERSAL

»» The smooth folk influenced rock of Cracker has held its own in the changing music scene for over a decade, and even though they are never really going to push boundaries, the band are also never too far behind the eight ball. More than anything it is the subtle, mature humour of the group that keep these songs lively, served well by a light ironic touch. Backed by great playing (particularly keyboardist Kenny Margolis) this humour turns what could otherwise be humdrum songs into enjoyable pop rock. Think of the Wallflowers and the Pixies together in a very good mood.



BULLFROG Bullfrog

FESTIVAL

»» With the likes of Parliament and the Stone family these days seeming nothing more than myth and legend, it is a relief that bands like Canadian based collective Bullfrog are keeping something of the funk alive. Featuring the inimitable soundscaping of Kid Koala paired with the smooth-as-guitar work of Mark Robertson, this is as classy a groove as you'll get in the 21st Century. It's taken these guys seven years to get around to this, their debut album, but it has been well worth the wait. Laced with up-beat goodtime rapping and some killer humour, if you can't enjoy this you'd better look into some serious therapy.



AEREOGRAMME A Story In White

CHEMIKAL

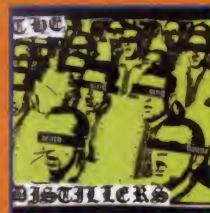
»» They say boundaries are there to be pushed, but in the case of Aereogramme, ridiculed might be a more fitting term. A Story In White is like nothing you will ever hear. From the strange grating introduction of "The Question Is Complete", Aereogramme make their intentions clear — to twist the ordinary just far enough that it hurts, without making it unrecognisable. At times unbearably heavy, others frighteningly ambient and gentle, Aereogramme do everything with an ear for the odd — muted, faded drum tones ("Egypt"), eccentric sound effects ("Zionist Timing") and ridiculously sustained piano passages make for a magic album.



THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT The Butterfly Effect

MGM

»» To the distaste of some and the immense relief of others, more and more of today's metal is embracing a noticeably melodic edge. While this melody might sound a touch contrived and limp coming from bands like Linkin Park, there are some groups doing it well. Among them is Brisbane's The Butterfly Effect, Triple J favourites and the newest shining hope for Australian hard rock. This is passionate and intense, with strong grinding riffs giving way to soaring melodic passages and even if that description sounds like a tired cliché, thankfully the band don't. This EP suggests there might be a bright future for these guys.



THE DISTILLERS Sing Sing Death House

HELLCAT/EPITAPH/SHOCK

»» I wonder what would happen if Courtney Love sang in a band heavily influenced by Rancid, Social Distortion and Bad Religion? The Distillers are pretty close to answering this question. Brody Armstrong (Tim Armstrong of Rancid's wife) delivers a ferocious lyrical bombardment that will have many ducking for cover, great thrash tracks like the title track "Sing Sing Death House" or "Bullet & Bullseye" are very reminiscent of Lars' awesome vocal work on Rancid's last release. Sing Sing Death House, however, has enough to stand on its own despite constant Rancid references, a great addition to anyone's library.



JAMES
COTTEE



»»Taste. Class. Style. On the squeaky-clean veneer of modern media, these are things you only miss when they're gone. Ultra-slick advertising, CG station breaks, watered down sit-coms, everything is polished so smooth that even if a given product isn't palatable, it's usually inoffensive. Even previously "raw" forms of art, like punk, have become just another brand of commodity in the featureless wasteland of popular culture.

Aside from the odd perelict wandering down the street in search of his trousers, really bad taste is hard to find. So, for a jolt of the exceptional, for a bolt from the blue, why not take a stroll down to your local video game retailer. Wander over to the Xbox shelves. And take a good, hard look. They're all packaged in standard DVD cases. With one small difference. They're all green. Bright, fluorescent, vomit green.

With airbrushed covers that look like trashy 40s paperbacks, the first-party launch titles look like they belong in a bargain bin. The console isn't pretty, either. Is this the future of entertainment? What the hell is going on!? Audio fans have long lamented the death of the LP and it's glorious canvass. CDs are tiny by comparison, and no matter how good the cover is, they're just not the same. It seems that presentation is on the back-foot across the board.

Video games have gained so much ground in graphics, sound, and genre-busting non-linear bollocks. But at what price? Is a voice-over from Michael Dorn more important than decent gameplay? Does a three second loading screen need the word **LOADING** to distract us with huge, hideous letters? Do we need loading screens at all in this modern age? Is it too much to ask for our overpriced proprietary media not to suck? I think not. I hope not.



Junk mail (but no junk mail) to jcotee@bigpond.net.au



VARIOUS I Am Sam

ZOMBA

»»Tribute albums are usually a pretty sordid affair, and generally speaking the better the artist being honoured, the more abysmal the tribute. So what happens when a few people decide to try and honour the greatest pop-rock band of all time? Exactly what you'd expect. This tribute to the Beatles, recorded as part of the soundtrack to the movie I Am Sam, has a few bright moments, but for the most part doing justice to these songs is just beyond the featured bands. Nick Cave does well with "Let It Be", Sarah McLachlan provides a nice faithful rendition of "Blackbird" and Ben Fold surprises with "Golden Slumbers", but others are better left unmentioned.



HATEBREED Perseverance

UNIVERSAL

»»Seven years ago, five guys got really pissed off and formed a band. This band toured in true indie style for a few years, trying to rekindle the hardcore spark that they felt America had let die out. Eventually, people began to notice, and when Hatebreed released their debut Satisfaction Is The Death Of Desire, the public reaction was almost as intense as the music. Now the guys are backing up with their second album, and it's as abrasive and caustic as anything could be. Front man Jamey Jasta still hasn't got the slightest hint of melody in his screams, and the band's double pronged guitar attack has only intensified.



SCORPION KING Soundtrack

UNIVERSAL

»»The prequel of the sequel to The Mummy promises to be one of the stinkers of the year, but aside from the decision to cast the WWF's "The Rock" in the lead role, the other move of pure genius on behalf of the producers was to put Godsmack vocalist Sully Erna in charge of the soundtrack. Erna proceeded to enlist some of the cream of modern day Metal including System of a Down, Rob Zombie (featuring Ozzy Osbourne), Sevendust and Nickleback. So much heavy music. How are they are going to fit it all into such a crap movie?



SIX BY SEVEN The Way I Feel Today

BMG

»»Britain hasn't had a lot to get excited about in the way of guitar rock in recent times, a fact which makes Six By Seven that much more refreshing and welcome. Sure, this isn't all hard and pumping, but even on the slower tunes like "All My New Best friends", there is an edge and intensity to the Six By Seven sound that creates a lot of excitement. When the band do blaze on tracks like "Flypaper for Freaks" it is a strange, refined and very British take on classic MC5 style rock & roll — hard, simple and melodic. And even if the tempo of "I.O.U Love" does seem to waver a little, there is still a lot to get worked up about here.



OYSTERHEAD The Grand Pecking Order

WARNER

»»So we all now the truth about supergroups — they are more often than not a one-off vanity project for the bored and privileged. Well, Oysterhead may very well be just that, but this meeting of musical minds is worth the trouble. Featuring Primus' Les Claypool, Phish guitarist Trey Anastasio and legendary drummer Stuart Copeland (formerly of the Police), Oysterhead well and truly push the limits of quirky rock groovin'. Copeland is a genius, his snare and high-hat snazz the perfect foil to Les' big bass, and Anastasio proves versatile and appropriately daring. Beautiful, if slightly absurd.

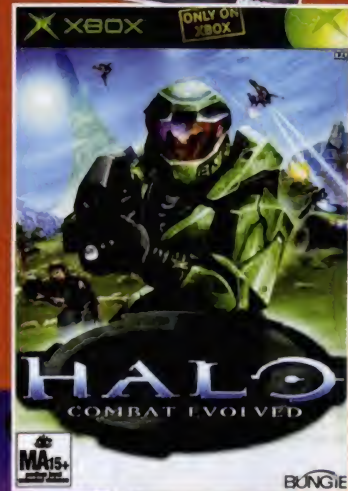


RUFF RYDERS Ryde Or Die Vol. III

UNIVERSAL

»»The latest instalment in Ruff Ryder Records' continuing Ryde or Die series, sees the label steadily returning to the glory days of several years ago, when their first compilation made such a huge impact on the back of the successes of artists such as DMX and Lox. With stable regulars like Jadakiss and Drag-on, interspersed with the next generation of Ruff Ryders, Vol. III soon becomes a showcase of top-shelf production (Switz Beats, Timbaland) and rapping (Infa-red, Fiend) talent, providing solid evidence that Ruff Ryders is in healthy shape for the future.

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FORUM

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



Q. WHICH VIDEOGAME CHARACTER DO YOU MOST RELATE TO AND WHY?"

The Hyper crew revealed themselves to you all in our 100th issue: it's that Guybrush Threepwood, Parappa the Rappa and Sonic the Hedgehog bring you your monthly gaming bible. Scary, huh? But it gets worse... haven't yet read what your fellow readers think of themselves. This is truly terrifying reading. I'm not sure if it's safe to hang around the videogame magazine rack in your local newsagent anymore...

HYPER FORUM

We all have 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...

“What was your favourite game of 2001 and why?”

Responses will be printed in Hyper 105.

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.

EGO IS NOT A DIRTY WORD

Considering I'm devilishly handsome, suave, funny, and an all round ladies man, the list of characters fitting the description is extensive; Mario, Squall, Laguna. But the answer would have to be Earthworm Jim.

This Psychotic gun toting worm in a muscle suit, that I can only assume was the product of some drug induced midnight stagger through some farming town whose name contained 3 sets of double letters, had an entirely gung-ho destructive aura about him. His blatant superhero disregard for his own life and wanton destruction of enemies is what likens him to me most. I have these recurring dreams in which I have to save the world before anyone finds out, they usually involve me winning but getting no credit. It gets quite tedious after a while.

But looks wise, I would have to say Squall, I can hear everyone reading this e-mail saying, "this guy must be a real ponce", but who hasn't wanted to be the main character in an FF game? The feeling of power and the multitudes of women constantly fighting over you is a major plus. Just give Squall a square chin and a muscular physique and you've got me.

As my friend says: "You're no gun slinging bad arse mofo that saves the world every day like it's as easy as riding a bike with training wheels down a steep mountain". But it's nice to think you are.

Special
Ghettosuperstud@hotmail.com

DIE!

A Lemming, as I'm quite prepared to do anything someone tells me, including plummet helplessly to my death, oh unless instructed otherwise.

Mark Keever's
Onyourmarks@ozemail.com.au

WHEN NO ONE IS AROUND

It was about time you guys at Hyper had a topic like this. Me and my friends used to always ask who would be who in Final Fantasy VIII. Because of "majority rules", I was most related to Squall Leonhart (not Lionheart) because of my somewhat anti-social behaviour. I was always quiet, emotionless and down-right boring just like Squall. But I'm working on it and soon I'll be as energetic as Selphie Tilmitt (but without having to go through a sex change). Personally though I think I'm more like Laguna Loire because he'd always have a



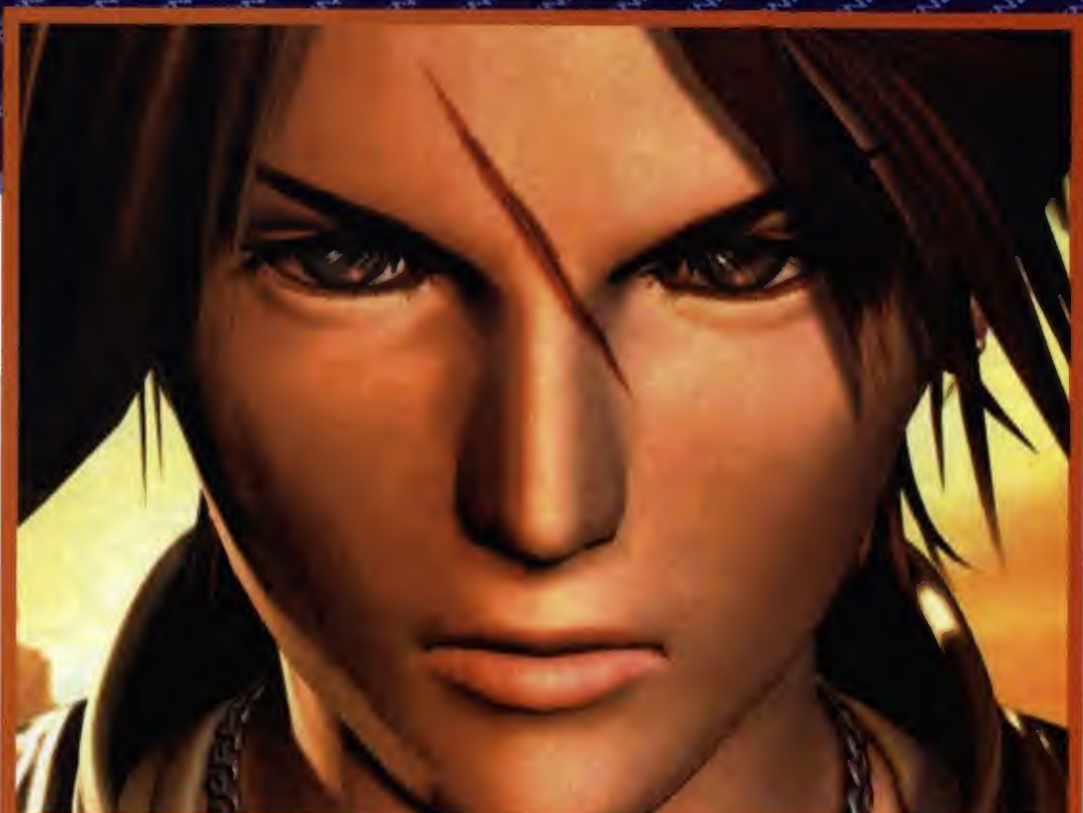
Guybrush Threepwood of Monkey Island fame.



Neo or do you really mean Keanu?



Bob makes the most of his tiny life.



Squall and his unsightly facial scarring. Ew!

personality change (from serious to funny then seriousness again) just like me when nobody else is around...

Ronald Ng
holysun_games@yahoo.com.au

THERE IS NO SPOON

Well, there's gonna be a Matrix game so I'll say Neo. Why? Well, I was once looking for an answer to the question what is this imperfection in the world? Ironically it ended when I got my SNES, go figure!

Anonyman
Haybot_of_power@hotmail.com

A MAN ABOUT A MONKEY

Monkey Island's Guybrush Threepwood is my alter ego of choice. He's a normal guy in a mixed-up world full of cutthroats and dodgy second hand vehicle salesmen. His ambitions aren't particularly well suited to his personality, his jokes are two centuries before their time, and he couldn't grow a proper beard if his life depended on it.

For both of us life is one big point-and-click adventure: highly illogical and dependent on trial and error. (Though, speaking from experience, the only place "use rubber chicken with cable" will get you in reality is the Magistrate's Court.) Finally, my control over life is as horrid as Monkey Island 4's keyboard layout.

Now if you'll excuse me, I have to see a man about a monkey.

Alastair Craig
happybob@n-chicken.net

LOOKS LIKE LINK

With Australia being such a multicultural country I'd have to say I relate to Link from the Zelda games the most. In his games he is always surrounded by or needs help from people or beings from other races, such as Gorons, Kokiris, Zoras and the Hyrulians. It is much the same where I live. When you're around a foreign person no matter how comfortable you feel or how much the same we all really are, there's always that limitation on what and how you can say things. You don't want to offend anyone. I can't wait for the time where everyone will be recognised as humans and just not a type of human. In Zelda:MM, Link uses masks to actually become part of another race. I think it would help a great deal if before you make a racial slur you stopped and thought about what the other person felt (if only we had masks). I also relate to Link because his games are some of the greatest games ever and great games make you relate to the character.

Drederik Baker
mr_bakes@hotmail.com

STARK REALITY

The character I relate to most would have to be Bob Newbie from the Sims. I live in a cramped house with a tiny TV and a slow computer. My job pays next to

nothing, my girlfriend is ugly and, probably the biggest similarity, no-one wants to talk to me.

Scott Stevenson
Crashingleg@hotmail.com

THAT COOL BLUE HEDGEHOG

I most relate to Sonic the Hedgehog and no, it's not just because of my email address, or that I'm always blue or getting into prickly situations.

I'm like Sonic because I'm always racing around like the wind. I'm constantly on the go and can't stand doing nothing for too long, or moving slowly. I hate being stuck behind slow walkers. You know who you are, heheh. I love the feeling of speed (no, not that kind of speed) and

I like to be in on all the action and excitement.

I also rush into things, sometimes without thinking things through properly first. Oops.

I can be a little cocky at times too. I am very impatient (think Sonic tapping his foot after a few seconds and you know what I'm like) and another thing that makes me like that cool blue hedgehog is that I think Amy is SO DAMN

ANNOYING!

I want to save all the animals as well and ridding the world of rotten eggs isn't such a bad idea either! Oh, I'm also like Sonic because I'm a hero, I'm just so cute and cool and everyone loves me! *wink*

Alright, I'm going to go and grab myself a chili dog now!

Gotta speed,
Melynda Genrich (aka Sonic's greatest fan!)
Sonic_the_hedgehog_u2@yahoo.com



EW...WW...

HAHA! Too easy this one. Max Payne. Why? Well I have a similar expression when a carrot is stashed up my arse.

Ben Niedorfer
Final_flash@hotmail.com

NOT VERY NICE

I guess the one character that springs to mind would be Albert Wesker (of Resident Evil fame). Why I think I relate to him? Well, let's say that I have been known to be somewhat of a "turncoat" in my time. Just like him throughout the RE series. Plus, his slick hair and killer shades(??) put him up there with the super-villians of the videogaming world.

cheers,
Andrew Birch
Tongueofcolicabio@hotmail.com

Thanks readers for being so... revealing. — Ed.



MAIL

✉ HYPER LETTERS:

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

SEXY GAMING

Dear almighty Hyper,

You guys have created a very sexy mag which is sexy. A big congrats on the 100 issues, it's well deserved.

I have recently bought a PS2 complete with GTA3 and THPS3 and so far have no regrets. I am currently saving up for Final Fantasy X to add to my collection. I am also saving up for a Gamecube which will be sexy. Don't you think Rogue Leader looks... sexy! (Okay I'll stop with the sexys.) I bloody can't wait, just the thought of it forces me to change my gruds constantly (are you guys having the same problem, or is it just me?)

Anyway, can I ask a few questions? Thanks, I knew you'd say yes!

1. Will MGS2 be coming to GCN or will I have to buy it on PS2?
2. Can I subscribe to Hyper if I live in New Zealand?
3. Are there any Cricket games coming out that aren't made by EA?
4. What will it take for me to work at Hyper? I'll do anything.
5. When will Warcraft 3 be out? That's it for now (I'll be back!)

Sexy man

Cablack@xtra.co.nz

Dear Sexy Man,

1. MGS2 is only for PS2 and Xbox.
2. You sure can!
3. No... none that we are aware of.
4. Well you could start by sending me lots of cash... in unmarked bills.
5. The current release date is "when it's done". Probably the end of the year.

LETTER OF THE MONTH... NOT!

I have written to you, Hyper (the shepherd), because this letter has little or no chance of being published in any other magazine. Hyper's impartial journalistic standards coupled with the intelligence of its followers (the sheep) are the only place where material so subversive is given any chance of acceptance. Maximom respect to Hyper.

Do we want our children's children and their pets to grow up in a world without food? NO! Do we want our oceans to be full of ugly, slimy animals that could freak us out if they brush against us or if we catch a glimpse of them while swimming? NO! Do we want to live in a world where

we are forced to think for ourselves and develop opinions that are truly our own? NO! Do we want that shitty game that is soccer to infest oz any further than it already has? NO! Do we want to go on a desert camel safari with nobody else but other men and pour coke on our hedz when we aren't feeling sticky enough? Maybe. You see my point? I just want someone to tell me what sort of a world I am living in when I got to pay \$25 for a haircut (just the head), but then I can turn around and get a full body wax done for only \$15!

Does anybody want to be my friend? I got the uncensored GTA3. Anyone.

Denzel Washingup (your creator, devastator, terminator, mastaba, alastor, alien vs predator).

Dear Denzel,
Hyper is your friend. We understand your pain. We will continue to print freaky letters in the name of impartial journalism.

STOP RIPPING ON JAR JAR

Dear Hyper,

This topic has been on my mind for a long time now and I need some answers. Why do you people at Hyper hate Jar Jar Binks? Why must you insist on ripping on him in your magazine? Jar Jar Binks is an important character in the Star Wars universe and I don't understand the fact that you are all (or most of you) SW fans and still continue to loathe him. I understand that everyone is entitled to his or her opinion but I think that Jar Jar has had enough, even if he is a CG character. I have watched *The Phantom Menace* more than thirty times and it gets better everytime. The point I'm trying to make is that Jar Jar Binks is here to stay so instead of bagging him I think its time to live with him and let him be.

Also on a bright note, I would like to say that Ms. Information's columns are great, she speaks the truth especially the last one about the net not being interesting or exciting as it once was. Keep up the good work.

Thanks,
Steven
Steven_m@hotmail.com

Dear Steven,

Jar Jar did not contribute to *The Phantom Menace* in any way shape or form other than to step in poo and fall over a lot. We don't really hate his character, but rather, he symbolises everything that was wrong with that film. His pointless antics transformed the *Star Wars* universe from a realistic, believable one, into a silly, gormless one. Lucas may as well have put Barney the Dinosaur in. It's just our opinion.

LORD OF THE RING-A-DING-DINGS

To Hyper,

First thing I'd like to say is thanks for giving Tolkien and Lord of the Rings the respect it deserves. So many games have been influenced by it, and I'm pissed off that no one says anything about it. I've so far seen games with orcs, rangers, elves and others that Tolkien created. Even gollums and hobbits! Using them in a non-LOTR game is more than plagiarism, it's sacrilege! Good to see you telling people about it, and also good to see that there'll be some LOTR games coming out.

Another thing I'd like to say is that I've got a Mac. My friends tease me about this, asking what games are released on it, and I just say all the good ones, but in reality only the biggest sellers do, and then they're priced twice as much as the PC version. It sucks.

I've also got an N64. How come the PS2 is out, and there's still new PSX games coming out, but the GameCube's not going to be released until May 17th and there's been no new '64 games out for months? I reckon the Mac and N64 must be the two most abused platforms around. Anyway, that's all I've got to say.

Scott Stevenson.
Crashingleg@hotmail.com

Dear Scott,
PSone games are still coming out because A) there are roughly 89 million PlayStations sold worldwide, and so far only 24 million PS2s; and B) you can play PSone games on the PS2, so they know gamers might be tempted to buy them even if they don't have an old PSone. Capiché?

CAPTION THIS!

PART 28 WINNER

Our winning caption this month comes from Matt Lawrance (mattlawrance87@hotmail.com) One of many that had us a-guffawing.



"Hey! It's Woo Lun, the travelling kung-fu breast examination monk!"



Daniel McGregor stunned us with this great art!

XBOX ONLINE

Dear Hyper,

Here are some questions that I know you'd love to answer!

1. Because of the Xbox's build in Hard Drive do you think that The Sims Online will ever make a jump to console gaming?
2. Do you think that a game will ever score 100%?
3. Why the big delay with Final Fantasy X?
4. Can you give me an idea when FFX might be released?
5. How long will it take after the Xbox's release until we can play online?
6. Is it true that you can get an add-on to GT3 A-Spec with all new cars?
7. Is there a reason why Australia gets everything last?!?

Thanks Guys!
Chris Dowling

Email Address withheld

1. It's very possible, but we have no official word on it happening.
2. No, nothing is ever perfect.
3. We're guessing it's that Sony wanted to ensure there was a big

title mid-year to keep the PS2 propped up after Metal Gear Solid 2. So they delayed it. Now they need a big game for Christmas...

4. June or July is all we know at this stage.
5. Theoretically, you could start playing online the day you buy it. If you have a net connection, there's a way of playing Halo online through a hub on your PC. Check out www.gamespy.com for details. For officially supported online play, we're still waiting on Microsoft's Australian online strategy to be revealed. There are quite a few online Xbox games on the way.
6. You can in Japan, but we don't know if it will be released here.
7. We're a small market in comparison to the US, Japan and Europe. More money can be made elsewhere.

NO FUDDY-DUDDY

Dear Hyper,

I must tell the public how distressed I am at many peoples' reactions to the re-editing of Grand Theft Auto III. Now, I'm no fuddy-duddy, I'm a 22 year-old man who

SOMETHING MORE EXTRAORDINARY

Hello there Hyper crew

Through the many years I have been playing games, I have loved to the death, the sheer enjoyment of games. They are my passion. I don't know what it is really. I've always been drawn to the endless wonder that each game brings. Why I play them so much? I really couldn't tell you. When you're playing it's like nothing else matters, you're immersed in the game and that's all there is. Just you and the game. No worries, no crap that life throws at you day in, day out. It's the only real place you can really escape that makes you feel a part of something more extraordinary than the life you're conditioned to be a part of. Anyone that doesn't feel the passion for games would simply think that it is just a part of entertainment, something to kill our boredom. But there is something more than just 'something to do' in games. It is so very hard to explain, unless you know the passion. I've lived with it ever since I played my first game, from the word 'level' appeared, I was hooked, and forever will be as far as I'm concerned. This passion grows every day, and will keep on ticking to the day I die. The future in games is going to be one hell of a fun ride.

Unsaturated Toad

toadljkinghippi@hotmail.com

P.S. Hyper, you are the only true source of reliable game info, and will continue to be my guide to the future. Keep up the great work fellas.

Dear Unsaturated Toad,
Your simple ode to that special something about the escapism of gaming touched a very special place in our freaky hearts this month. For some people, gaming is just something to kill boredom - like you said. But for the rest of us, it's so true that losing yourself in a favourite game means so much more than just wasting time. There are magical gaming worlds out there that we've all visited - be it Hyrule, Gaia or Amn - that are almost as real to us as our everyday lives. Sob.



You've won an exclusive 360 Modena Racing Wheel for PC! Replica of the wheel in a Ferrari 360 Modena.

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<http://au.thrustmaster.com>
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is a passionate gamer. My point is, it appears that Rockstar have really overstepped the line.

The selfish responses in issue 101 were a real eye-opener. "(Our) voices need to be heard, not this constant 'won't someone please think of the children' bull crap." Now, I accept (not understand, but accept) that some gamers feel the desire to have lots of blood and guts in their games. But when people kick up such a stink because one scene was removed from a game (and rightfully so, in my opinion - I can't believe it got past the censors in conservative America!) and the game is no worse for it, I begin to worry.

I just thought I'd offer the other side of the coin. I understand that GTA3 is a well-made game and many older gamers will want to play it. The fact is though, younger gamers with no sense of restraint will want to play it just as much. And stupid parents will let them. Working in a video store, you have no idea how

many parents rent "Conker's Bad Fur Day" for their kids, and when I advise them that it's unsuitable for young ones, their response is "Oh, I don't give a shit." It's sad, it really is. And if you find the act of picking up cyber-prostitutes and then killing them ENJOYABLE, I think you have issues, and I really worry for the Australian population.

P. Jenkins.

Email Address withheld

Dear P. Jenkins,
State of Emergency on PS2 is going to make you even more upset then... that game truly is objectional, but probably more so because of the lack of true gameplay!

HYPHER HISTORY

Dear Hyper lads,

I won't spend the whole time kissing your bum, but your mag is ok. I just got the last Hyper, but I happen to have the first, like, 20 issues ever

MAIL

made! I'll tell ya, things certainly have changed. I would just like to know a few things because I have jeez, like an interval between issue 25 and 99! So I'd like to ask some questions:

1. How did you ditch Stuart?
2. How did Eliot Fish become editor?
3. What happened to the cheat section?
4. ARGH! I don't see a cheat section, guys!

Phew. Thanks now I got that off my chest. OH YEAH, and Caption This is the best addition to anything I've ever seen since they added graphics to games.

Thanks a lot, guys,

boX-b0y

ratsarse@cyberspace.org

Dear boX-b0y,

1. We didn't ditch him, he left of his own accord! He found some greener pastures.
2. I was in the right place at the right time (i.e. hanging around Hyper HQ for a good 6 years).
3. The dog ate it.
4. Yeah, okay you're right! Guilty as charged! We ditched it a few years ago, because frankly, it's easy to grab cheats off the internet, so we'd rather put those pages into offering

you some exclusive content like Hyper Forum and Hypervision.

STEALING AND SEQUELS

Dearest Hyper crew,

You guys have a great mag and congratulations on passing 100 issues. There is one thing I want to mention, and that is, that stealing sucks. One of my friends went to this website that has all these fun online games on it and he stole them and put them on his own website. And now he is going to steal more games from another site.

I want to ask a few questions:

1. When do you know when your subscription is about to end?
2. Now that GTA3 has been re-released on PS2 is it going to be released for Xbox or PC?
3. Will there be a sequel to Max Payne?
4. Will you ever bring back the Hyper CD?
5. Do you reply to all the emails you receive?
6. When will Sam and Max 2 for Xbox be released in Oz and will it be released for PC?

Thanks guys

Unrealsteve

Unrealsteve@yahoo.com

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HH4



Dear Unrealsteve,

1. You'll be sent a reminder.
2. It's coming to both Xbox and PC.
3. We're not sure about this one. There are indications that it's happening, but we'll believe it when we see it.
4. Yeah, maybe. If you're good and eat your greens.
5. I read every single one, but couldn't possibly find time to reply to them all. Sorry!
6. The game is still early in development, so we probably won't see it until mid to late 2003. At the moment it is Xbox exclusive, but we're pretty confident that it'll be released for PC shortly after.

MOBILE MADNESS

Firstly, congrats on #100, it was great!

In #99 you had the welcome return of the Hardware section, in #100 you had mention of a planned mobile phones feature or something thereof,

and way back in #87 you had that kickass Xmas Buyer's Guide (with those funky Nomad Jukebox MP3 players).

I was wondering if you could have something on MP3 Players in an upcoming ish, because the stores around where I live don't tend to stock any. I don't really want to end up buying something which is essentially a piece of crap. Is the Nomad STILL the best thing out there?

Thanks for your time!

CK

cyberknux@hotmail.com

Dear CK,

If you have a Mac and OSX, we would heartily recommend the Apple iPod as the best portable MP3 player around. If you don't, then Nomad is a safe bet, but you can get newer models now with more storage space. Don't get anything that uses Flash memory cards, that's our monthly tip.

The Official Australian Games Chart

Compiled by Inform in association with AVSDA

TOP 10

PlayStation 2 Games Over \$50

W/E 2 March 2002
RETAIL SALES

| | | | |
|----|---|---------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | ◆ | Grand Theft Auto 3 | Adventure |
| 2 | ▲ | Gran Turismo 3 | Racing |
| 3 | ▲ | State Of Emergency | Adventure |
| 4 | ▼ | Ace Combat Distant Thundr | Simulator |
| 5 | ○ | Tekken Tag Tournament | Action |
| 6 | ◆ | Cricket 2002 | Sports |
| 7 | ▼ | Max Payne | Action |
| 8 | ○ | Headhunter | Adventure |
| 9 | ▼ | Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 | Sports |
| 10 | ◆ | Devil May Cry | Action |

TOP 10

PlayStation Games Over \$40

W/E 2 March 2002
RETAIL SALES

| | | | |
|----|---|----------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | ▲ | Harry Potter | Adventure |
| 2 | ▼ | Monsters Inc | Adventure |
| 3 | ◆ | Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 | Sports |
| 4 | ▲ | Who Wants To Be A Millnre? | Family |
| 5 | ▼ | Syphon Filter 3 | Adventure |
| 6 | ◆ | FIFA 2002 | Sports |
| 7 | ▲ | Digimon | RPG |
| 8 | ▼ | Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 | Sports |
| 9 | ◆ | Spiderman Enter Electro | Adventure |
| 10 | ◆ | 20 Games Pack | Compilation |

TOP 10

Game Boy Games Over \$40

W/E 2 March 2002
RETAIL SALES

| | | | |
|----|---|--------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | ◆ | Pokemon Crystal | RPG |
| 2 | ◆ | Harry Potter | Adventure |
| 3 | ◆ | Monsters Inc | Adventure |
| 4 | ◆ | Pokemon Silver | RPG |
| 5 | ◆ | Pokemon Gold | RPG |
| 6 | ▲ | Pokemon Yellow | RPG |
| 7 | ▲ | Zelda: Oracle Of Ages | RPG |
| 8 | ▼ | Zelda: Oracle Of Seasons | RPG |
| 9 | ◆ | Pokemon Red | RPG |
| 10 | ◆ | Pokemon Blue | RPG |

TOP 10

N64 Games Over \$40

W/E 2 March 2002
RETAIL SALES

| | | | |
|----|---|----------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | ◆ | Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 | Sports |
| 2 | ◆ | Conker's Bad Fur Day | Adventure |
| 3 | ▲ | Pokemon Stadium | Action |
| 4 | ▼ | Pokemon Snap | Family |
| 5 | ◆ | Zelda: Majora's Mask | RPG |
| 6 | ▼ | Perfect Dark | Action |
| 7 | ▼ | Donkey Kong 64 | Adventure |
| 8 | ▲ | Pokemon Puzzle League | Family |
| 9 | ▼ | Banjo Toole | Adventure |
| 10 | ▼ | Star Wars Battle For Naboo | Action |

TOP 10

PC Games Over \$30

W/E 2 March 2002
RETAIL SALES

| | | | |
|----|---|-----------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | ○ | C & C Renegade | Strategy |
| 2 | ▼ | Medal Of Honor Allied Asslt | Action |
| 3 | ▼ | The Sims Hot Date | Strategy |
| 4 | ▼ | The Sims | Strategy |
| 5 | ▼ | Harry Potter | Adventure |
| 6 | ◆ | Civilization 3 | Strategy |
| 7 | ◆ | Return To Castle Wolfenstrn | Action |
| 8 | ▲ | Sid Meier's Sim Golf | Sports |
| 9 | ▼ | Empire Earth | Strategy |
| 10 | ▼ | The Sims Collectors Ed | Strategy |

TOP 10

Game Boy Advance Games Over \$40

W/E 2 March 2002
RETAIL SALES

| | | | |
|----|---|--------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | ◆ | Mario Kart Super Circuit | Racing |
| 2 | ▲ | Harry Potter | Adventure |
| 3 | ▼ | Super Mario Advance | Adventure |
| 4 | ▲ | Golden Sun | RPG |
| 5 | ▼ | Monsters Inc | Adventure |
| 6 | ▼ | Spyro Season Of Ice | Adventure |
| 7 | ◆ | Wario Land 4 | Action |
| 8 | ◆ | Advance Wars | Strategy |
| 9 | ○ | Robot Wars | Action |
| 10 | ▼ | Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 | Sports |

TOP 10

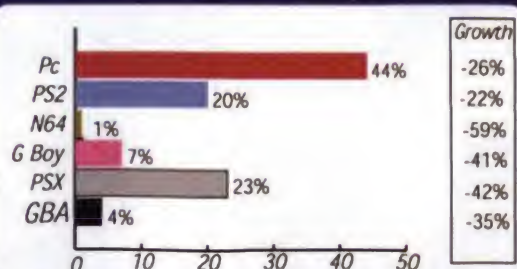
All Full Priced Games

W/E 2 March 2002
RETAIL SALES

| | | | |
|----|---|-----------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | ◆ | Grand Theft Auto 3 | PlayStation 2 |
| 2 | ▲ | Gran Turismo 3 | PlayStation 2 |
| 3 | ▲ | State Of Emergency | PlayStation 2 |
| 4 | ○ | C & C Renegade | PC/MAC |
| 5 | ▼ | Medal Of Honor Allied Asslt | PC/MAC |
| 6 | ▼ | Ace Combat Distant Thundr | PlayStation 2 |
| 7 | ◆ | Harry Potter | PlayStation |
| 8 | ▼ | The Sims Hot Date | PC/MAC |
| 9 | ▼ | Pokemon Crystal | Game Boy |
| 10 | ○ | Harry Potter | Game Boy |

MARKET WATCH All Games by Platform

Feb Vs Jan 2002
RETAIL SALES



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

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STAR WARS EPISODE II ATTACK OF THE CLONES

Anakin goes bad, Mace Windu kills stuff and Yoda gets out his lightsaber...
We've got the exclusive inside look!

ALSO REVIEWED: Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast and Jedi Starfighter.
PLUS! Nintendo GameCube hits Oz. Our launch guide and first reviews!



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Ghost to Glory

PlayStation®2 

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