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ISSUE 107
SEPTEMBER 2002

HYPER



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Mario creator Shigeru Miyamoto talks Nintendo

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TEKKEN 4



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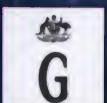
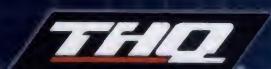
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[10 tracks]

[2 wheels]

[1 winner]



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[Official Australian Xbox Magazine]

motogp

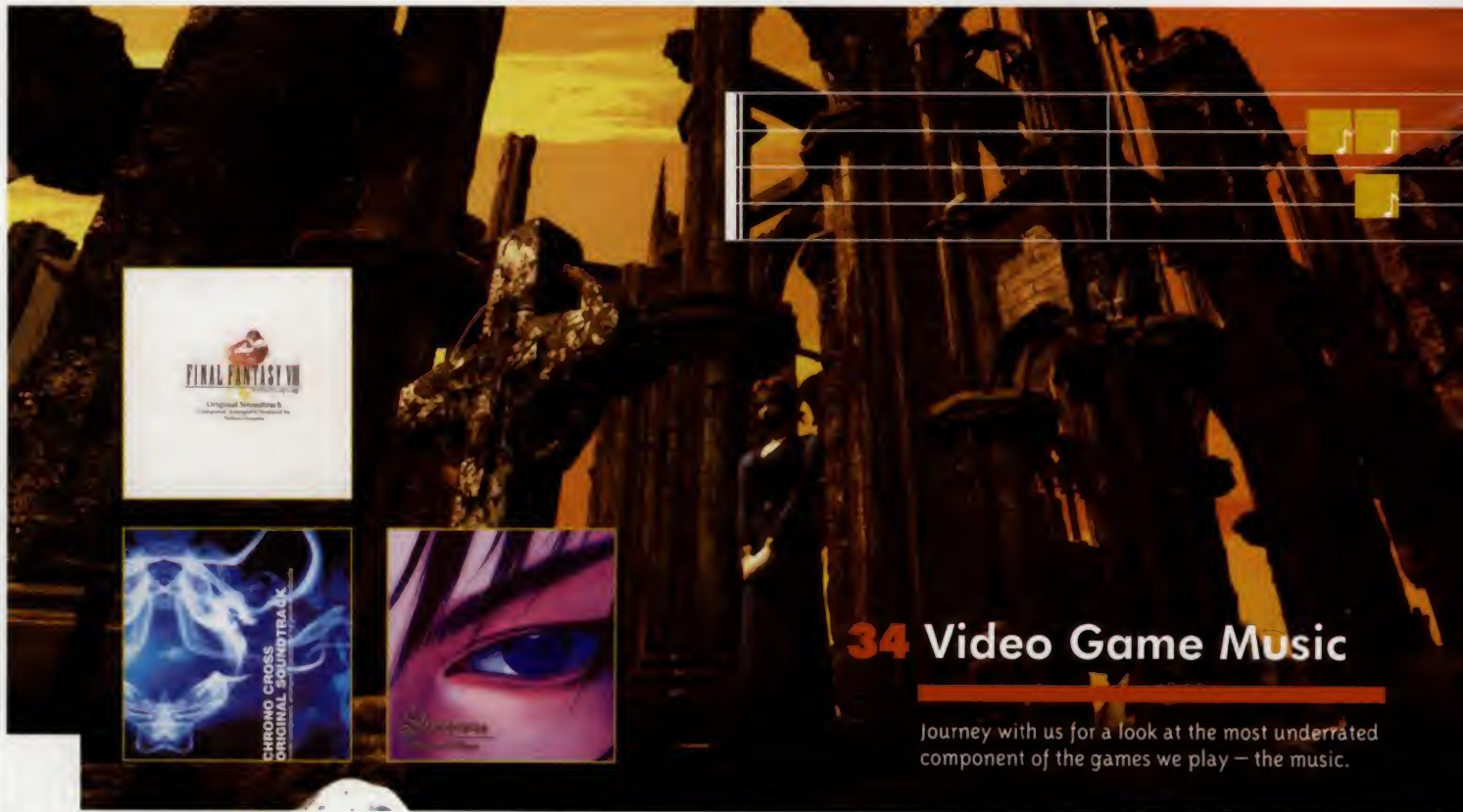
Ultimate Racing Technology

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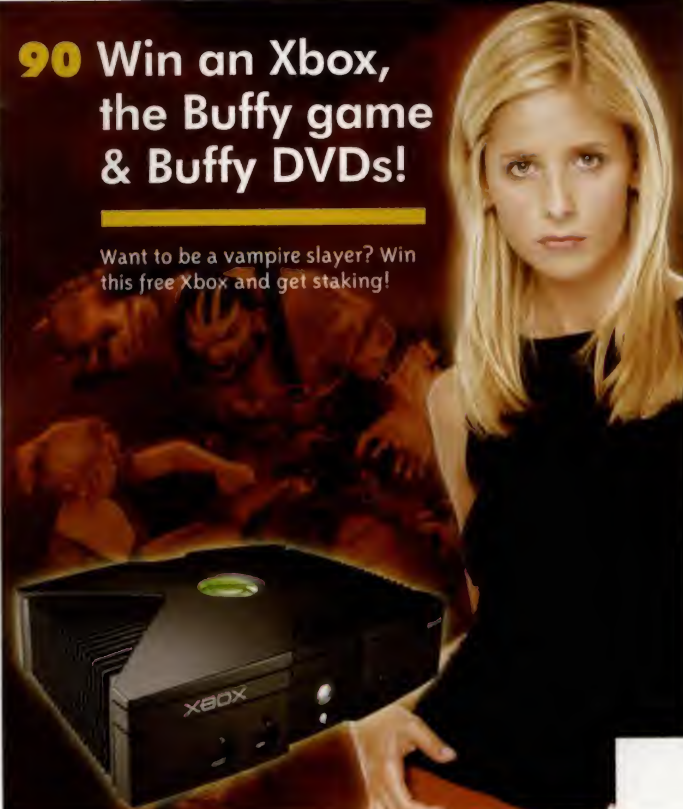


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the Buffy game
& Buffy DVDs!

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WRITE TO HYPER!

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EDITORIAL

»» When you think of world-famous celebrities, how often do you form a mental picture of a dishevelled computer programmer hunched over a keyboard in the corner of a small dark room? Not very often, right? Not at all? At the rate the gaming industry is continuing to grow and dominate our entertainment dollar, the idea that we might soon be seeing games designers in Who Weekly or New Idea isn't really that far-fetched! Paparazzi won't be clambering over the back fence at Steven Spielberg's place, but sneaking into the headquarters of Nintendo to snap Shigeru Miyamoto testing his brand new creation.



Miyamoto is certainly the first games designer who pops into my head when I think about gaming celebrity. We're honoured that he took the time to speak to us about Nintendo, the new Mario and cel-shaded Link, and you can find his wise words on page 18. Getting to see him was probably as difficult as it would be to meet any major motion picture star, and there's no way he could walk the halls of E3 without a team of minders to stop him being mobbed. They may not be household names just yet, but games designers such as Shigeru Miyamoto already command awe and respect from gamers worldwide. Maximum respect.

Eliot Fish »» Editor

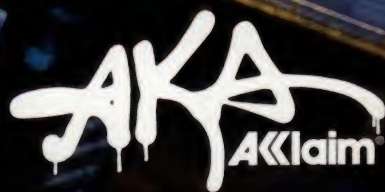


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NEWS

IN THE NEWS: Summoner 2 ■ Manifest ■ Resident Evil 0 ■ The Thing ■ Hot screens and more!

SUMMONING UP A SEQUEL

Volition Return For Round 2

One of the PlayStation 2 launch games here in Australia, Summoner, was a highly original RPG romp that very admirably attempted to provide an epic and ambitious adventure in the very early days of the Sony console. However, there were many aspects of the game that begged for

embellishment, and developer Volition seemed eager to get to work on a killer sequel that would build upon everything they learned while making the first game.

With that experience behind them, developer Volition have brought to the table a very impressive looking followup – Summoner 2. The premise appears to be an entirely new one, with the player taking the role of the Queen of Halassar whom is prophesised as the saviour of all creation. To fulfil your destiny you have to learn the ability to summon and... you know, lay waste to countless enemies. We're putting our money on Summoner 2 being a truly impressive sequel. Expect to see it on shelves in late October.



I will defeat you with sparkly evilness!



CHRONO... The classic RPG series to return?

Earlier last year, Square registered trademarks for what appeared to be a number of game titles. Amongst those names registered were Unlimited Saga and Chrono Break, indicating that there would be new next-gen sequels for both the Saga Frontier and Chrono Trigger licenses.

Just a few weeks ago, Square unveiled Unlimited Saga for the PlayStation 2, lending proof to the fact that the trademarks were indeed for upcoming titles. What



Unlimited Saga. Well, that's one down. Come on Square, make our dreams come true...

this should mean is that we will soon see another Chrono game, most probably entitled Chrono Break, which should delight any and all console RPG fans out there. Hold on to your hats, kids!

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 34 in the Subject line.



Milk almost came out of my nose.

PART
34

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Ooh big crawling thing. Kill it!

RESIDENT EVIL COUNTS DOWN TO ZERO

The Cube gets Zombified

With GameCubers getting their hands on the revamped Resident Evil 1 in September, it will be an exciting countdown (or is that up?) to the brand new prequel, Resident Evil 0 (Zero). The game will feature two new characters, Rebecca Chambers and Billy Cohen, stuck on a train crawling with zombies. Originally being made for the N64, the game has been completely re-worked for the GameCube hardware, using the same engine and effects that you'll experience in Resident Evil 1. We can tell you now, having played it through, that Resident Evil on GameCube is a must-buy. We have already begun to salivate at the gameplay improvements in Zero too – you'll be able to drop items (rather than seek out those damn crates) and switch between characters throughout the game. Choice.



MANIFEST 2002

Aug 10-11



What is Manifest, I hear you ask? It's the Melbourne Anime Festival.

In 1999, four anime clubs in the Melbourne vicinity, including Monash Anime and Comics Club (MACC), Melbourne Anime Society (MAS), Swinburne Anime Club (SAC) and Weekly Watchers of Wonderful Anime (WWWA), decided to hold an anime convention, similar to those in the United States of America. Initially, there was one screening theatre, some panels and a few traders.

This year, they are anticipating bigger and better things for Manifest 2002: Reflections. Owing to the Reflections theme, older anime, including Astroboy, Sailor Moon and Ranma 1/2 will be screened alongside newer releases in the main and alternative screening theatres. This means that they will be showing a total of more than 30+ hours worth of anime, in all three theatres.

As well as other activities there will be panels, including "History of Anime" and "Japanese Music in Anime". Moreover, they are holding some main events, including the Great Debate, an Anime Auction, Trivia Night (with prizes up for grabs), a live Karaoke and a Neon Genesis Evangelion: Death and Rebirth DVD Launch by Madman Entertainment. As always, we must not forget about the various competitions, Cosplay, Anime Fan-Fiction, role-playing, and traders who will be selling their wares during the weekend-long event.

All this and much more will be held at the Economics and Commerce Building, on the Parkville campus of the University of Melbourne, on the 10th and 11th of August.

For more information, visit: www.manifest.ozonline.com.au or Email: manifest@metva.com.au.

DIMSDALE & KREOZOT

Not every games developer out there has forgotten about the golden age of gaming. Those long, hot summer nights locked away with the Commodore-64, and the racy winter mornings under the doona with the old Amiga... we all have special memories. A couple of Australian blokes with years of development experience at esteemed companies such as Melbourne House, have taken it upon themselves to bring back the old-school style of gameplay and humour with their new company, Dimsdale & Kreozot. Not only that, but they want to make sure their games are cheap to buy – possibly no more than 20 dollars – just like the good old days!

Their first game demo, Tito the Bouncing Alien, is up at their website so you can take a look at their handiwork. We salute Dimsdale & Kreozot for their desire to bring back "the love".

You can find out more at the slightly unwieldy URL: www.gamershell.com/Dimsdale_Kreozot/Dimsdale_and_Kreozot.htm



WINNERS

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2002 FIFA WORLD CUP ON PS2

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Hyper 105

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Mitchell Booth, Mardi NSW

MOH FOR PC

Paul Elix, Snowtown SA
Ty Kahler, Chevron Is. Qld
Justin Mah, Epping NSW
Steve John, Virginia SA
Nathan Marci, Rossmore NSW

OVERFLOW

Shigeru Miyamoto has mentioned in Nintendo Power magazine, that The Legend of Zelda on GameCube will in fact be the first Link Story. Yep, the upcoming game will take place before the events in all the other games, with Link possibly being a pre-teen. It will also introduce us to Link's sister for the very first time!

No, it's not another Army Men game, but it's close. There's a new Sims expansion pack on the way. The Sims: Unleashed is all about introducing pets to your sim family. A variety of pets will be available to take for a walk, shut out at night and play with. Whoo.

Tecmo have confirmed that Dead or Alive 4 is in development for 2003. Strangely, they did not confirm for which gaming platform the game was being developed for. Did they want us to assume Xbox, or will Dead or Alive 4 go multi-platform?

Virtua Fighter 4 Evolution is set to hit Japanese arcades in August. This update to the game will include two new characters, new modes, and new moves for the current line-up. Sega are using the Naomi 2 arcade board for the game.

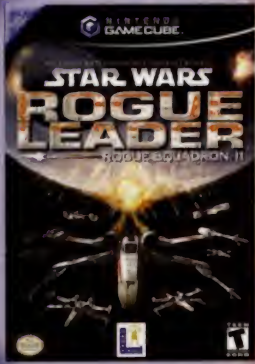
Aliens Versus Predator 3 has been confirmed, although development has not yet begun. To tide you over until sometime in 2004 when the game will probably surface, will be the AVP2 add-on pack, Primal Hunt, which will be available soon.

Microsoft has started to push the Xbox in Japan again. One item of promotion for the console is a sleek silver Xbox watch. It even comes in a special silver box. Gasp.



STAR WARS™

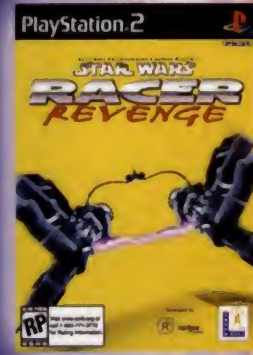
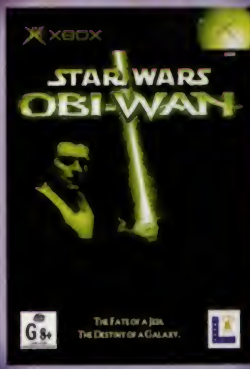
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RESIDENT EVIL 2 TO HIT SCREENS

And We Mean Cinema Screens, Mmmkay?

After the mild success of the *Resident Evil* movie, plans are underway already to produce the sequel — *Resident Evil 2: Nemesis*. Yes, it's based on the game of the same name, and will even include Nemesis himself... or is that "itself"? The news that really made us rejoice, is that the makers are keen to introduce the character Jill Valentine to the silver screen! Yay! Director Paul Anderson will bring back the surviving characters from the first film and team them up with characters from the game (yet to be cast) in an all-out action-packed sequel that will probably make it to the cinemas in 2004.



THE THING CREEPING UP...

You Know, That Thing!

Featuring all the horror, gore, freakiness and shock value of the original John Carpenter film, *The Thing* from Universal Interactive on PS2 and Xbox is creeping up on gamers everywhere.

The game will feature squad-based gameplay across twenty different levels, with the player(s) faced with annihilating Thing beasts before they infect your team mates or other innocents. The creepy "thing" is that you'll be faced with having to trust NPCs who just might be a Thing waiting to burst out and get you. This is definitely going to be a scary trip.

You can look forward to playing the Thing in October.

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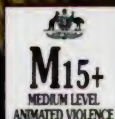
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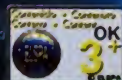
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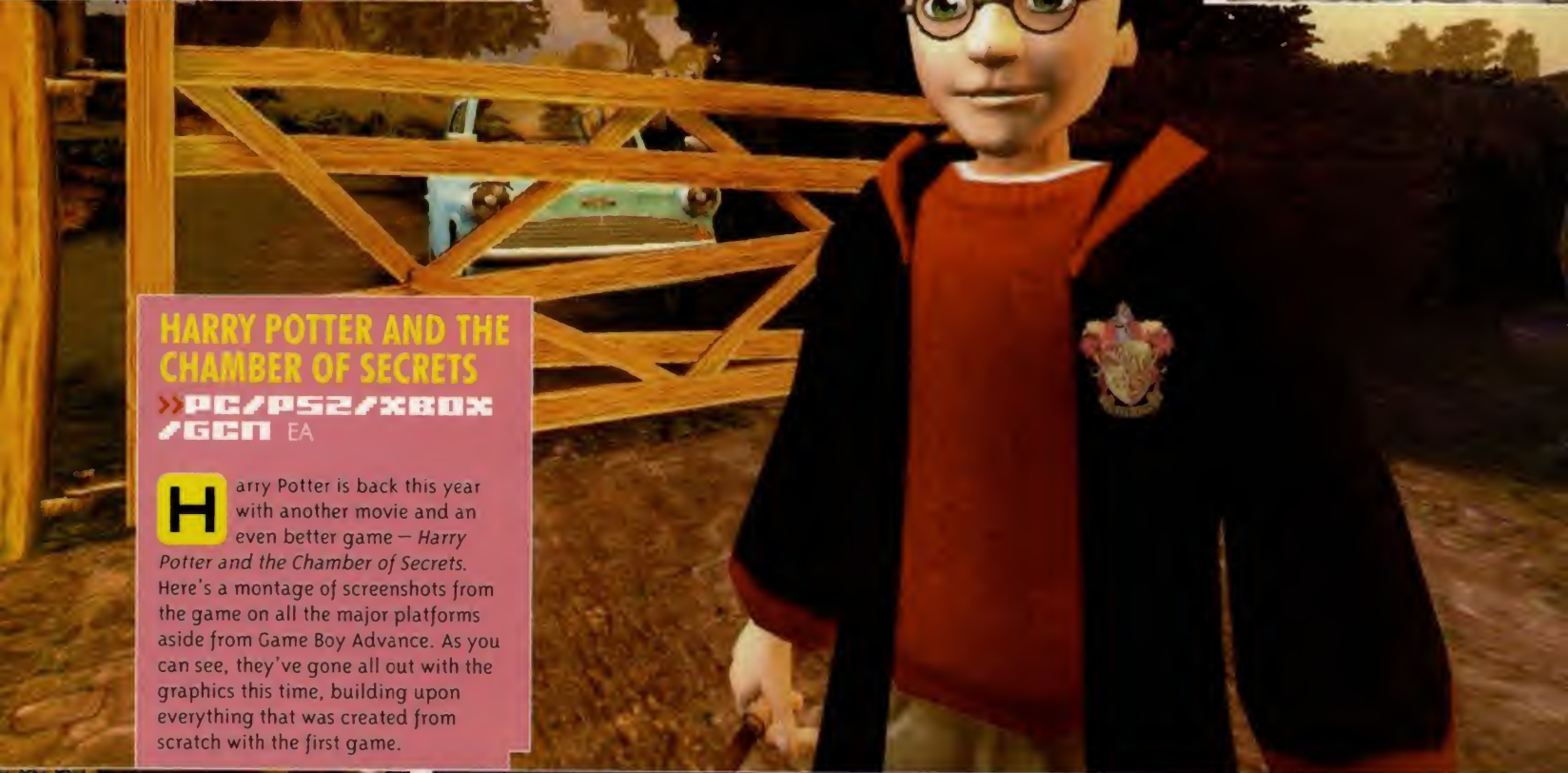


F1 2002 GC (G).



SSX Tricky GC (G).





HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS

» PC / PS2 / XBOX / GCN EA

Harry Potter is back this year with another movie and an even better game — *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. Here's a montage of screenshots from the game on all the major platforms aside from Game Boy Advance. As you can see, they've gone all out with the graphics this time, building upon everything that was created from scratch with the first game.





KAKUTO CHOJIN
 DREAM FACTORY

Dream Factory were responsible for Tobal and The Bouncer. So really, this game could go either way. It certainly looks gorgeous, so it qualifies as Eye Candy for the month. Mmmm, shiny plastic skin.

MR. MIYAMOTO

18 » HYPER



It's a-Me — Miyamoto!

Since starting Hyper magazine back in 1993, we have spoken to countless gaming luminaries, but none are so exalted or as elusive as the man who made the classic Nintendo games that we love so dearly, **SHIGERU MIYAMOTO**. At this year's E3 videogames tradeshow in Los Angeles, Hyper was honoured to be granted the only one-on-one Australian interview. Hyper scribe, **Steve Polak**, bowed his head and got to know the creator of Mario and Zelda (and his translator) just that little bit better...





Oh what a feeling... Miyamoto!

HYPER: Are you enjoying seeing all the new games at E3 this year?

SHIGERU MIYAMOTO: I always do. It is exciting to see what fresh new ideas are coming out all under the one roof each year. I might even get to see some games which aren't being developed for Nintendo for once!

HYPER: One of the most striking things about the games you are showing this year is how different some of them look – Zelda for the GameCube in particular, now it's using the cel-shading approach. Why did you go this way and do you think you are taking a risk changing the way Link looks for all of those fans of the game?

MIYAMOTO: We really wanted to challenge ourselves with something new, and the team wanted to do this as well. So, I felt we'd be able to give Link a greater sense of character and life. We wanted to make Link's face bigger and much more expressive. There are some areas where Link's face is pressed up against the wall and sort of looking around and it adds a lot of character to the game, as well as being quite funny at times.

HYPER: You have gone through many



Mario - the working class hero.

changes as a games designer and these days you have more of a role of roving producer overseeing a great many projects at once. Do you feel this broad role makes it hard to focus on individual games? Do you wish you could work on a single game more exclusively like you have in the past?

MIYAMOTO: Yes my role is much broader, and although there is room for creative involvement, there are also much bigger challenges associated with managing the teams working on different games. Although I do still have a lot of time for creative input even though I look at several games at once overseeing their development. There are a lot of cases where I am working with a director on a game and the director will come to me with problems and we will sit down and hammer those out. Or we will try and work them out by perhaps me being able to look at the problem from a different position as I am not as involved in the direct development of the project and so I can sometimes see another way around the obstacles.



HYPER: When Mario 64 was first shown at E3 years ago it was a defining moment for us, it was so mind blowing and really showed the way forward for the future of videogames. Super Mario Sunshine is also a great looking game, but more evolutionary than revolutionary. Do you agree with this and how do you feel about this idea?

MIYAMOTO: Yes Mario 64 was a real step forward for me and I loved to see people so absorbed by the game when it was first shown at E3 all of those years ago. Obviously I have to show something at E3 every year and so I show games which I like even if I don't have a game like Mario 64 to show every year.

Mario Sunshine is a game that I have had a lot of fun working on – the GameCube, makes it easier to do things I never thought possible with previous hardware. Try the game and you will find it is enjoyable and has a few fun touches – we wanted to make sure the fun of being a Mario game was a big part of this effort. There are also new functions planned, if you look at his backpack there is more



MR. MIYAMOTO

HYPER

1-001981 TOP-THE KIDS OF GAMES 1-0000

20TH ANNIVERSARY!
MARIO

SHIGERU MIYAMOTO
NINTENDO GAMES
EXHIBITOR



Pasta marinara is on the menu



Poor grammar get!

room for new devices, these are going to be fun. However we do have other experiments and other projects which I am working on which I hope to show next year. I think these will surprise a lot of people. It is important to keep fans of what we have done in the past happy too though. That is why we have been focusing on games like Mario, Zelda and even Metroid. There will be new things coming from Nintendo though and these are games I am hoping to bring to E3 next year and have a big impact on the show.

HYPER: What sorts of new things are you looking to bring to the market? Are you working with new technologies, which potentially change the nature of the games interface (like the Sony EyeToy for example)?

MIYAMOTO: You may recall a year or two ago at Spaceworld we did the 100 Marios demo and this year we are showing off the GameEye for Game Boy Advance. Those are some of the ideas we are looking to explore further and bring out some new ideas which incorporate new gameplay elements into the games which we are working on in the future. It is exciting, but I cannot say much more about the directions we are exploring. It is fun to see where we can go though.

HYPER: Nintendo hasn't joined the headlong rush towards online gaming that its rivals seem to be embracing. This makes sense in a way, as online could be an easy way to waste a lot of

money in the early development phases of the new medium. What do you think is the best way for Nintendo? Are you looking to make online games in the near future?

MIYAMOTO: One of the big challenges which is required with an online game is that there is a lot of maintenance involved in getting a game online and making sure the people playing are kept happy. The technology has to be tested and redeveloped and you also have pressure on you to make new content for the game as the online community explores what you have created. These are great challenges that I feel I'd like to investigate further, but I also want to make sure the online games I make are 'just right' and so I want to look at the area more closely.

At E3 we have a lot of games which we call communication games that do have the 'connectivity' which helps the game to be playable by many people who aren't sitting



BIO



NAME: Shigeru Miyamoto
BIRTHPLACE: Kyoto, Japan

DATE OF BIRTH: November 16, 1952

FAMOUS QUOTE: "Video Games are bad for you? That's what they said about Rock 'n Roll."

BEGINNINGS: Joined Nintendo in 1977 as an industrial design student, looking to help design stand-up arcade cabinets.

CREDITS: Creator of Donkey Kong, Mario Brothers, The Legend of Zelda series.

PRODUCER/SUPERVISED: Super Mario Bros series, Yoshi series, Metroid series, 1080, Star Fox, F-Zero, Pilotwings, Excitebike 64, Mario Kart, Kirby's Dream Land, Super Mario RPG, Wave Race series, Super Mario 64, Luigi's Mansion, Pikmin and many more.

WELL-KNOWN GAMING FACT: Mario was originally named Jump Man.

NOT VERY WELL-KNOWN GAMING FACT: Miyamoto is rumoured to have a gold tooth.

HOBBIES: Playing the guitar, gardening, building things.





Phallic imagery? Pshaw!

at the console at the same time — take Animal Crossing for example. You can take these games with you on the Game Boy Advance and do different things and have the community of the gameworld change because of new decisions and developments which occur each time a new player plays the game. This is a different kind of multiplayer game to online, but we feel it has a lot of promise and as you will see on the show floor we have thought about this a lot.

Interaction between even the Triforce Arcade boards and our other systems is another way we can explore a different kind of multiplayer gaming, where a community grows up around a game because you take the game experience with you to your friends, to the arcade and anywhere you want to and the game changes because of what you and your friends, who you are playing the game with choose to do. This is multiplayer gaming, but it doesn't use the connectivity of the Internet. Instead, we connect the different technologies directly and so avoid the problems the Internet presents in terms of speed and reliable access. With communication games we are really able to explore multiplayer and then when we are ready these games will be able to make the transition to online once we have tested the technology and come up with the right model.

HYPER: Indeed the multiplayer potential of four-player GBA Zelda is something that we really look forward to getting to grips with. The four-player game and randomised dungeons is reminiscent of the classic, Gauntlet, don't you think?

MIYAMOTO: The game is going to go in the 'Zelda' direction. Dungeons are coming up randomly, but the game will be about solving puzzles with four players and this is a key difference which makes this a Zelda game. We are very happy with the result and again Zelda is another of the games which explores our ideas about connectivity and multiplayer gaming.

I am aware of Gauntlet, but we didn't think about Gauntlet when we developed Zelda for Game Boy. It is something which people have said to us and we now go "oh I see what you mean", but Zelda is a different kind of game and when we were developing it we didn't consciously think about Gauntlet. We just wanted to make a fast fun co-operative — or as you saw by the



Peach invites Mario for some "cake".



That was the biggest pigeon...

demonstration yesterday — competitive gameplay experience which was fun and got you to enjoy Zelda in a new way.

HYPER: This year one of the biggest changes in the Nintendo philosophy of game development has been the new approach in regard to your important licenses, which are now being developed by external companies. While some of the developers — like Sega who are working on F Zero — are quite well known, there are some lesser-known outfits working on your core titles (like Metroid Prime in development by the new Retro Studios).

Do you feel this is a risk trusting the development of these very important games to others? Are you personally working with them to make sure they are successful projects for Nintendo?

MIYAMOTO: Obviously that could be a problem.

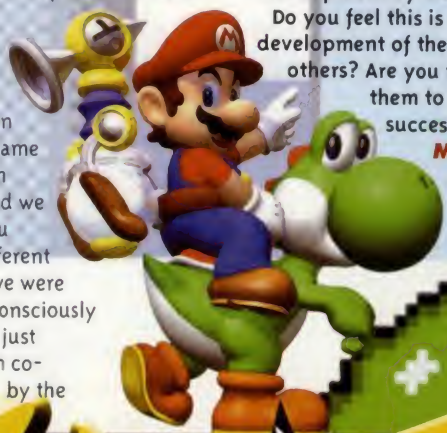
However, a lot of the games we are working on, we are

working on with second parties quite closely. Indeed, we do find that the second party developers essentially don't have the kind of insight we have with the games that we know all so well and so we work with them to make sure this is right. This is consuming a lot of my time right now, but it is very important and worthwhile as these games are the titles Nintendo has built a successful enterprise with and we care about them very much.

We need to make changes in this direction, as one of the problems with games development is that we don't have the time to train and hire new teams to work on the games we need to make.

HYPER: I see... you mean it is a necessary part of Nintendo's expansion as a developer?

MIYAMOTO: Yes. We have our established games and we want to have manpower to make them, but then we realise that we need to come up with new things and this takes up even more manpower. So instead of trying to train up massive teams to work on both established as well as new games, it makes much more sense for us to work with well-chosen partners. It





Mario goes back to his roots.



Mario's Love Boat is leaving...



SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE UPDATE GET!



As you read this, the Hyper team have got their hands on the full Japanese release of Super Mario Sunshine. Return next issue to find out everything you've ever wanted to know about the next Mario game!

just makes more sense than training vast numbers of people just for this time when we need them. We would not have enough manpower to develop these high quality games if we had to do so much training and growing internally.

If you look at the developers we are working with most of them are either partly financed by or receiving some assistance from Nintendo, so these developers are almost subsidiaries of Nintendo. In that sense it has been a way for us to expand our development capabilities and still have control over the quality of the games we make and this is very important to us.

The overall quality of our games is very important to us and Nintendo has some strong franchises and we intend to look after these while growing in other directions. This is the greatest single challenge we face today.

HYPER: You have been reported as being fond of playing the guitar a lot as opposed to spending a lot of time playing games. Does a good games designer need to play a lot of games? What makes a good game designer?

MIYAMOTO: Obviously a game designer needs to play games and I do this and it is good for me as well as usually being fun. I feel very lucky being able to return to a game we developed a while ago and to be able to enjoy it in the knowledge that it still delivers a fun experience even after being left alone for some time. Mario 64 and Zelda for the N64 are good examples here.

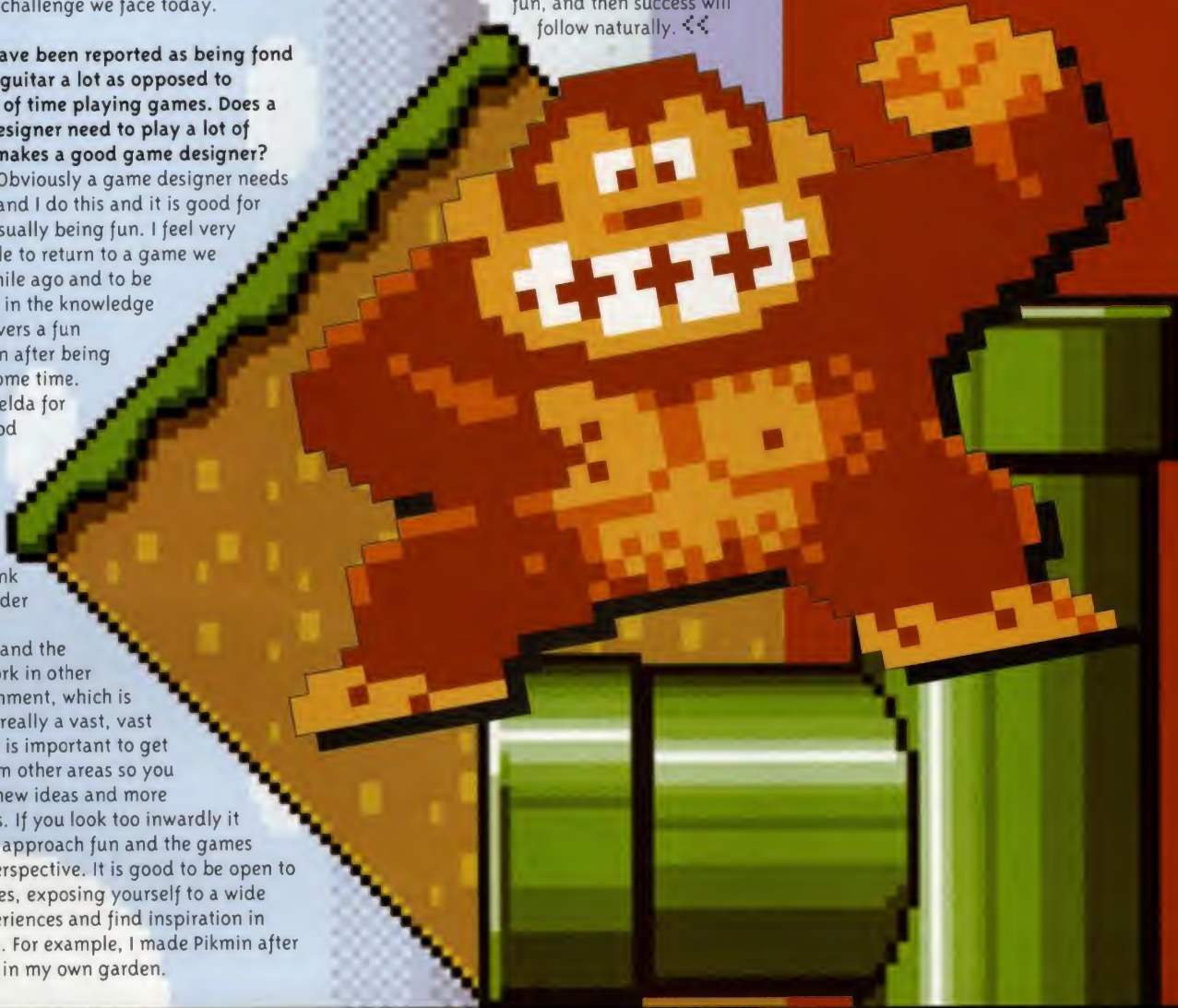
However, I also think it is important for the games designer to think about the broader world of entertainment and the ideas which work in other areas. Entertainment, which is what we do, is really a vast, vast industry and it is important to get inspiration from other areas so you come up with new ideas and more exciting games. If you look too inwardly it can be hard to approach fun and the games from a fresh perspective. It is good to be open to new possibilities, exposing yourself to a wide theatre of experiences and find inspiration in unlikely places. For example, I made Pikmin after spending time in my own garden.

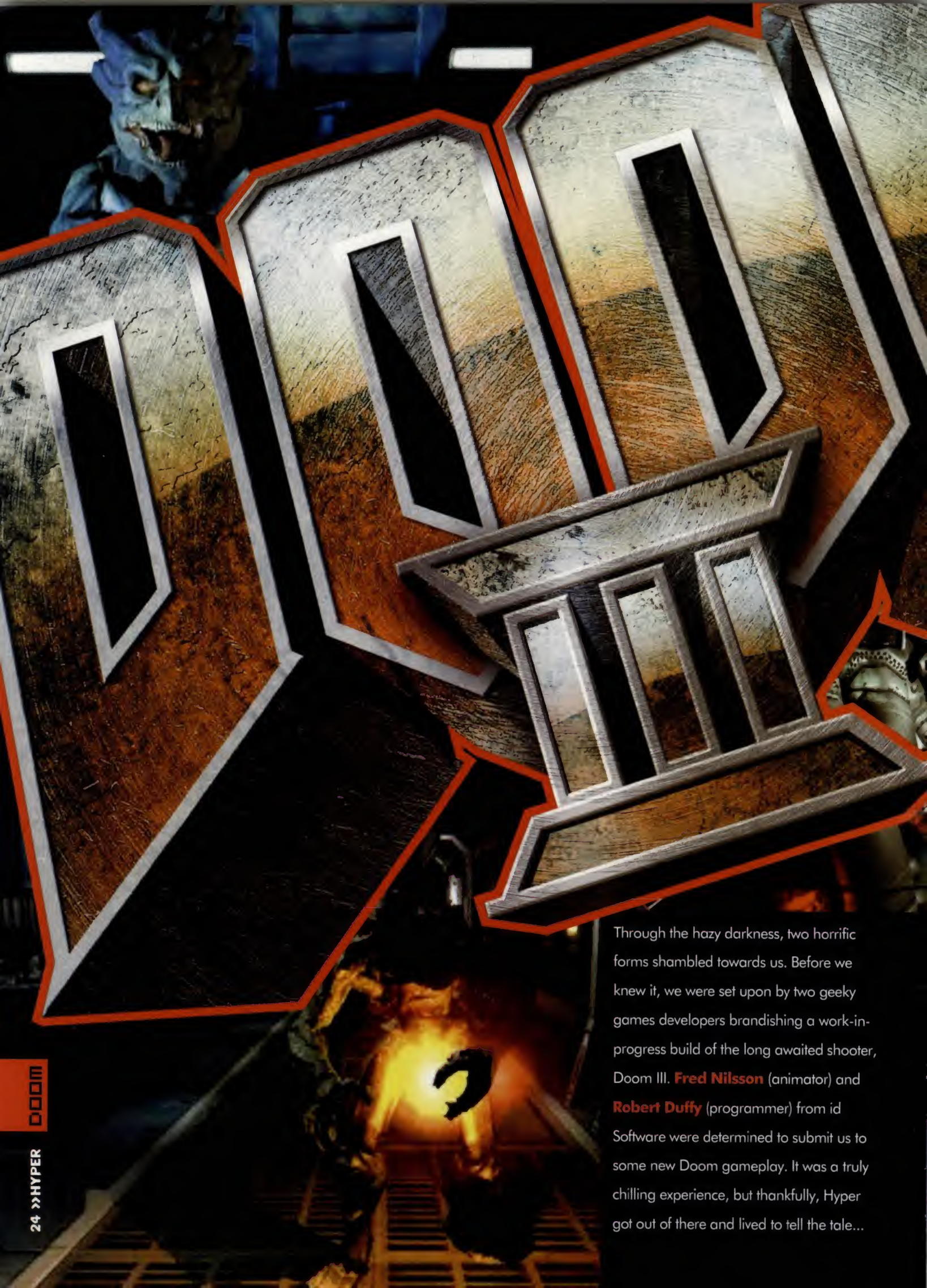
HYPER: In ten years where would you like to be?

MIYAMOTO: I think I will be making new games (laughs), but it might be fun to make something which is not a videogame, or perhaps not a videogame as we know it now. I see other creative opportunities and look forward to experimenting with them.

HYPER: Do Nintendo need to lead in terms of console sales to stay in the business?

MIYAMOTO: I think obviously if you make high quality games you will get to number one, but we don't focus on reaching number one, we don't focus on the numbers of games or consoles we sell as our primary reason for being in the industry. We want our games to be profitable, but more than that for me I want to make games which are fun, and then success will follow naturally. <<





Through the hazy darkness, two horrific forms shambled towards us. Before we knew it, we were set upon by two geeky games developers brandishing a work-in-progress build of the long awaited shooter, Doom III. **Fred Nilsson** (animator) and **Robert Duffy** (programmer) from id Software were determined to submit us to some new Doom gameplay. It was a truly chilling experience, but thankfully, Hyper got out of there and lived to tell the tale...

a world that is frighteningly real and very emotionally disturbing. In a lot of cases our goal is to make people feel like "I don't want to be there".

Nilsson: We want you to turn your lights off, crank up your sound; play the game for a couple of hours and feel really creeped out.

HYPER: So is the game more atmosphere driven or story driven?

Duffy: There is a very strong story. Something goes wrong in the base, the shockwave from hell — we're not going to divulge much more about the story. We're working with science fiction writer Matthew Costello, the guy who did *The 7th Guest* and *11th Hour*. He's been working on the story.

HYPER: Have you done much to improve the AI since *Quake 3*?

Nilsson: Oh yeah. The AI is totally rewritten. The AI is definitely cool, the monsters are scarier — they jump you! They leap away from you when you're shooting at them and dodge behind things and crawl.

HYPER: Jumping demons, yikes. Do you get disoriented when hit by a monster?

Nilsson: Yes. There's double vision, scratch marks, blood sprays and blurs. You also get knocked around when hit.

HYPER: What new graphics technology will we see in *Doom III*?

Duffy: The technology with the 3D lighting and bump mapping. We've tuned the light model — all lights are unified and give off proper shadows. So anytime a light moves the environment changes visually. We've also added an advanced animation and effects system. We can composite different effects together in real time as well as real time 5.1 sound. We've got a movie system that allows for complex cinematic sequences that merge graphics and text. We've got real time physics and collision plus kinetic rag dolling.

HYPER: What resolution textures are you using?

Nilsson: 512 x 512. But one surface can have 3 layers of textures.

HYPER: Just how good is the animation in *Doom III*?

Nilsson: It's sweet. It's fully skeletal based. I put in all the bones and animated it. I animated all the different cycles based on where you get hit which makes the character react differently. Plus the kinetic rag dolling. You're going to want a GeForce 5 to enjoy this game at its best. When you turn everything on, it's like "wow".

HYPER: Where are you taking the single game experience?

Duffy: We are trying to immerse the player into

HYPER: If knocked backwards, do you end up facing the roof and need to re-orient yourself?

Nilsson: Right now we set you back to where you were last looking but you do get knocked back.

HYPER: Does the AI react to sound?

Duffy: Yes. It can hear footsteps so you've got to be really careful.

HYPER: So will you be encouraging stealth in the game, like sneaking up behind them?

Duffy: No, monsters can hear your footsteps.

HYPER: But can you hide from monsters?

Duffy: Yes, we have complete line of sight. Line of sight is definitely included. They can't see through columns for example.

Nilsson: We're pushing the fear factor, that's our main goal.

HYPER: Will there be huge amounts of monsters coming after you, like in *Doom*?

Duffy: No. You won't see 30 to 40 but you will see 5 to 6.

HYPER: Well... Do the monsters attack each other like in the original *Doom*?

Nilsson: Right now, yes. If one monster hits another monster, they'll fight each other. There's a hierarchy of demons. If a lower end demon hits a higher end demon they will go at it. You can start them up, run away then watch the show.

HYPER: Is there any model deconstruction such as the blowing off of limbs?

Nilsson: Some of the characters we have that set up to do. We'll see if we want to do it. A lot of characters are set up for head shots. (You can blow their heads off) and in the model there are entry and exit wounds.

HYPER: Are you going for a more linear approach to ensure the player sees what you want them to, or are allowing more player freedom?

Duffy: The game is going to be very linear, very story driven. The story is going to move you through certain areas and try to really frighten the player. You'll be able to do as much exploring as you want but we are telling a story from start to finish.

Nilsson: The game will start with a series of cinematics to drive and progress the story. We introduce characters cinematically in interesting ways. We'll have these little mini-cinematics.

HYPER: Introduce characters? So, are there NPCs that will assist you?

Nilsson: No. It's like the old *Doom*. Everything's gone wrong. You're the only survivor and it's up to you to take care of business.

HYPER: Are there going to be any outdoor levels or is it indoor only?

Duffy: There will be some outdoor areas. **Nilsson:** As an example of how big a level is, a flying pan can take 10 minutes to get from one side of the level to the other. It's so large, it's massive.

HYPER: Oh... Will the plasma gun be back?

Duffy: We'll see.

HYPER: How about the multiplayer component?

Duffy: It will ship with very basic deathmatch maps. We're not focusing on multiplayer at all. We have it in as part of the functionality but *Doom III* is a single player focused game.

HYPER: How big is the *Doom III* team?

Nilsson: 20 people are working on it. **Duffy:** We're lucky to have control over it so we can work on it until we're happy.

HYPER: Have any other companies licensed the *Doom III* engine?

Nilsson: Yes. Raven have licensed it for *Quake 4*...

HYPER: Would you say that id Software has learnt a lot from other developers since you licensed the *Quake 3* engine?

Nilsson: Sure. It's always nice to see other developers using our engines; pushing different directions and game play ideas.

HYPER: So, with *Doom III*, what will be the system specs?

Duffy: You'll need at least a GeForce video card. But we're not even done optimising yet, so we can't give you minimum specs. There will be scalability within the engine.

HYPER: When's the game going to ship?

Duffy: Sometime in 2003. <<



Look, the Village People. Heh.

AGE OF MYTHOLOGY



CATEGORY: Real Time Strategy >> PLAYERS: 1-Multi >>
 PUBLISHER: Microsoft >> AVAILABLE: Late 2002 >>

WOW-O-METER



INSIGHT

24 >>> HYPER

The Age of Empires series has proved a runaway success for developer Ensemble Studios and publisher Microsoft. Total worldwide sales of Age of Empires, its Rise of Rome expansion, the Age of Kings sequel and its Conquerors expansion have surpassed ten million units. Without doubt, the real-time strategy monolith is Microsoft's most significant PC franchise.

Thus it comes as something of a surprise that Ensemble is embarking on a new venture rather than playing it safe with another sequel. That's not to say the forthcoming Age of Mythology is a radical change of direction for the studio — quite frankly, it isn't. However, it's indicative of these conservative times that eyebrows are raised at the mere fact Microsoft opted not to suffix another Roman digit to its most widely recognised title.

BRUCE SHELLEY SPEAKS

If id Software can attempt to reinvent the first-person shooter and yet still call it Doom 3, we asked Bruce Shelley, head of Ensemble Studios, why his new game isn't called Age of Empires 3.

"Well, first of all, it's not my game, it's our game, really. At Ensemble Studios, there are about 70 people in the studio. I'd say 50 of them are working on Age right now, trying to finish it. Even the other 20 or so people at the studio are working on the game. Everybody play tests the game once a week, just to give us their opinions. So it's certainly not my game, it's our game.

"What we tried to do here, when we finished Age of Kings, is make a new real-time strategy game. We thought Age 2 was very similar to Age 1, and we felt we needed to do something somewhat more different than the difference between those two. We had a lot of ideas, but the one we came up with was mythology. We thought that would be kinda cool. It's like the Age games are along one track, but Mythology is a fork heading off in a different direction. We don't consider

it Age of Empires 3 - it's something different, something new."

Okay, but why did you feel the need to distinguish Mythology from the previous Age games by giving it a different title?

"I think in terms of differentiation and innovation. Age of Empires and Age of Mythology are different because we now have this mythology element and it uses 3D. Those are big differences, and it's different from other games in the marketplace as well. But at a gameplay level, I think we innovate with things like every culture having its unique units. It's important with a major game that it is different in the way it looks, feels and its theme, and then innovate at the gameplay level."

Well, first of all, tell us how the 3D engine assists with this process of differentiation.

"One of the big things that's new is 3D technology. One of our goals was to make the real crisp, detailed look of Age 2 come alive in three dimensions - and make it better if we could. The animations are a little



"YMCA, come to stay at the YMCA"



The Animals. Rock music, you see.



"In the navy, in the navy!"



My favourite was always the cop.

better here. We can do flying units; we can do underwater units; we can do the kind of fantastic special effects that 3D makes come alive.

"The ability to make great in-game cinematics is a great opportunity too that we can use in our single-player campaign. We will introduce each episode in our single-player campaign with an in-game cinematic and take you out of the scenario with one. So the missions are all linked together seamlessly through these story clips. It's possible to go through all 30 episodes of the story without ever seeing a menu or briefing screen."

And the mythology theme?

"The other big change in the game is this mythology element. Mythology enters in two major ways.

One is we have these fantastic creatures that you can get access to. There is something like 30 mythological

creatures in the game. They change the way combat works – they have unique attacks, they're expensive but they're strong, and they're really

good against humans. Then we also have heroes. Each culture has access to creating heroes, and they're really good against the myth units. So now you have a new element: you have heroes stopping mythological units. And humans, in great numbers, are good against heroes."

What role do the gods play in the game?

"The Gods can intervene directly. You can petition the gods to interact in the game to help you. They can do something dramatic in an instant, calling down lightning or a tornado or a volcano. Something like that is an instantaneous thing that affects how the game works. If there's some character or creature that's really causing you trouble, if you have the

right god on your side, he can kill that unit for you.

"The god powers are one-time-use – you only get to use them once and they're gone from that game. But as the game goes forward and you progress through the ages, you add a new god to your pantheon. That's a new innovation.

»» If you have the right god on your side, he can kill that unit for you

In Age 2, when you chose a civilisation, all the options were determined for you. Now, we give you some ability to change and re-shape your civilisation by adding new gods to your pantheon. It takes a little bit of study and experience."

There are three races in Age of Mythology – Greeks, Egyptians and the Norse. Given Ensemble had the whole of human history to plunder for resources to flesh out its central theme, what were the deciding factors in choosing these three races?

"This is a business. If we want to be successful and stay in business then we need to entertain people. We want to sell a lot of games, so we chose something we thought would have the best recognition and help us be successful. When people think of mythology, most people, at least in the US, would think of Greek mythology and gods like Zeus, Aphrodite, and Apollo. And the Norse

and Egyptians are pretty well-known too. In America we have Thursday or Thor's Day; Wednesday or Woden's Day. There's a long tradition of Norse mythology, at least in our country."

Did you consider other cultures, say from South America or Asia?

"We thought Quetzacoatl would be too difficult for people to say [chuckles], unlike Zeus or Thor, which everyone can say. But, yeah, everyone wants their mythology in the game – Asians want Chinese or Korean mythology in there. In the end, we chose Greek, Norse and



WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

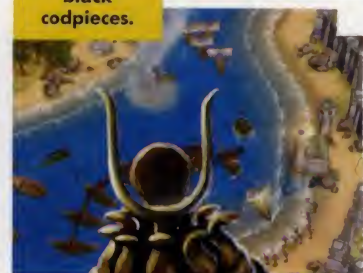
A nice easy learning curve for the Age of Empires virgins.



But the cowboy had a neat hat.



And studded black codpieces.



Egyptian since we thought they were the richest, had the most stuff we could borrow from, and the best known. They're also very well-documented. A lot of information was passed down through history. There are a lot of mythologies that we found very interesting, but they're not well-documented, as most of the information was lost. For example, we only know so much about Norse mythology because there were poems found in Iceland that were written a long time ago."

Describe some of the attributes of each race.

"Each of the three cultures are really different to play. The Greeks are the most like an Age 2 civilisation. They're pretty good at building up, they're pretty good at fighting, they gather resources in the same way; they're the most familiar.

"However, the Egyptians and the Norse are a little bit different to

anything you've seen before. For example, the Egyptians don't need wood to build buildings. The idea there is that the Egyptians didn't have lumber trees and they imported their wood from Lebanon. So they built out of mud bricks and stone, and this makes them play differently. They have more of an economic sense. They build up bigger and their stronger walls give them a more defensive disposition.

"The Norse have this cart that serves as a gathering point. They don't build lumber camps or mines, they just move this cart around the map and the villagers bring their materials to it. So they play differently, they're sort of nomadic. They can find a good spot where there's some game animals, some gold and some trees, and they can have one cart bring all that stuff together. Also, with the Norse, their soldiers build the buildings, not their villagers. So this makes them pretty aggressive. Their army moves forward, takes out some enemies and can just build a barracks right there to start creating new units right away. In a sense, they have like a steamroller effect."

What are some of the other features a veteran Age of Empires player might appreciate in Age of Mythology?

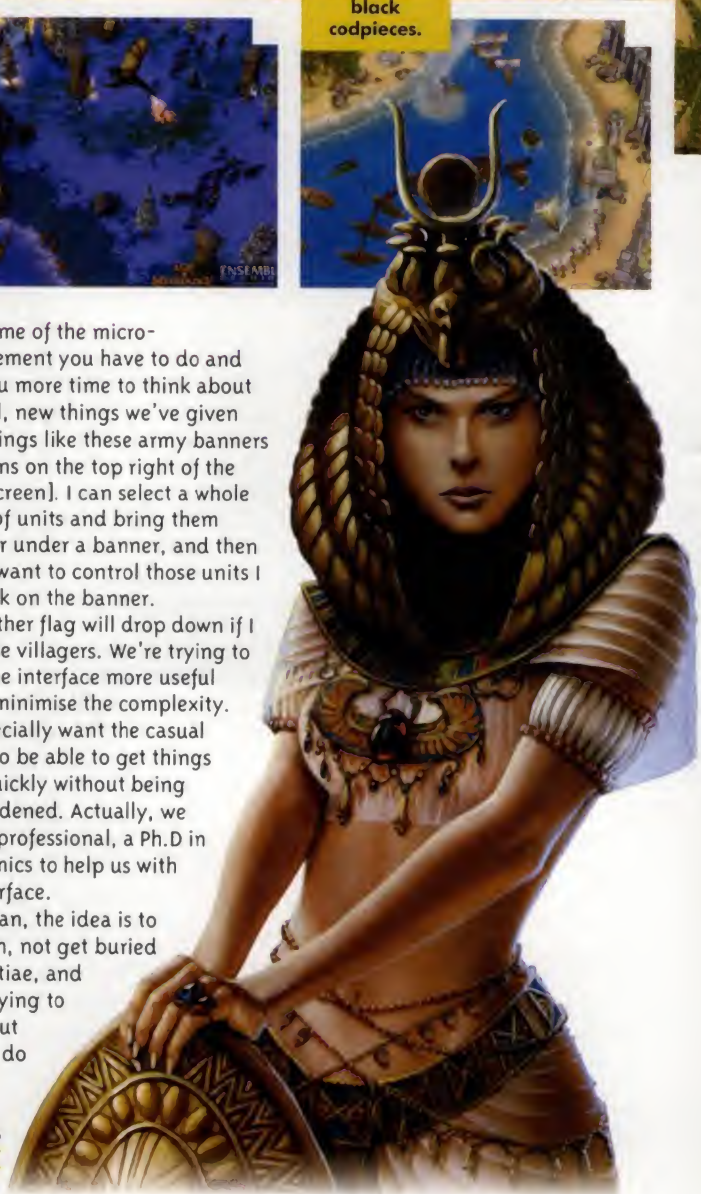
"It might be a little more complex for people. What we've tried to do is

limit some of the micro-management you have to do and give you more time to think about the cool, new things we've given you. Things like these army banners [the icons on the top right of the game screen]. I can select a whole bunch of units and bring them together under a banner, and then when I want to control those units I just click on the banner.

"Another flag will drop down if I have idle villagers. We're trying to make the interface more useful and to minimise the complexity. We especially want the casual gamer to be able to get things done quickly without being overburdened. Actually, we hired a professional, a Ph.D in Ergonomics to help us with our interface.

"I mean, the idea is to have fun, not get buried in minutiae, and we're trying to figure out ways to do that."

Amen to that. <<<



If only handlebars were in.



PC PowerPlay

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Er, maybe aim a little higher?



CONFLICT: DESERT STORM

» PS2 / XBOX / PC **CATEGORY:** Tactical Shooter >> **PLAYERS:** 1-Multi >> **PUBLISHER:** SCI >> **AVAILABLE:** Late September >>

Games recreating historical theatres of war is a long standing tradition, born out in countless strategy titles and most recently shown in Medal of Honor: Allied Assault. World War II is pretty safe territory but making a game about a war that was fought only a

decade ago? Pivotal Games are recalling the horror of the Gulf War in Conflict: Desert Storm, to be released in June of this year. Not the noblest of wars, by any means, but a good scenario to place a squad of white commandos baying to avenge their fallen... oil reserves... or something.



These spy telescopes never work.

FIRE AT WILL
Troops from British SAS or US Delta Force can be taken into the Iraq of 1990, each team comprised of a heavy weapons and demolitions expert, an infiltration specialist, a sniper and an all-round leader. But players can switch to controlling any of the team and issue orders to the rest of the troop accordingly. Group orders include "Follow Me", "Stop" and "Fire



Let's look at Jupiter's moons!



Man, you just blew up Mr. Whippy.

at Will". Individual orders allow you to position and set the behaviour of all of the team with what promises to be a surprising level of control.

Level design and enemy AI encourages the use of all four team members, making players more likely to make use of their crew than to go solo. Individual soldiers gain experience from missions and from use by the player, so there is an investment in the characters. To lose a soldier in a mission forces you to begin the next with a less skilled rookie. Keeping the team alive is of paramount importance.

This is cross-platform third person squad based action at its most accessible, perhaps by the virtue of it being a console title first. The developer, Pivotal, cite influences such as Rogue Spear and Hidden & Dangerous but this game involves no pre-mission planning and has a much more user-friendly approach.

Conflict makes use of a first person mode for some weapon fire and for the ordering of troops, but the vast majority of control

WOW-O-METER



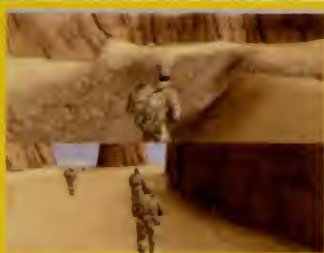
takes place in the third person. Bullet trails have been included to facilitate easy play – basically to help you figure out who's shooting at you. Mission objectives can normally be tactical in any order, creating a good level of freedom. Conflict wants to appease the action gamer as much as the fan of tactical combat.

Game environments are the urban streets and sand blown outskirts of Iraq. Pivotal is making the most of the passage of time to bring variety to a limited palette of brown and grey. As missions progress the time of day advances. Starting out on a raid of a stronghold, it may be mid-morning but by the time your team reaches the camp, it





The graphics are a little plane.



BLOW UP A BUDDY... OR TWO

»» Conflict boasts a two-player split-screen co-op mode where single player missions can be approached with two heads rather than one. Each player controls two of the team and can co-ordinate their movements together. In a world starved of co-op gaming, this is a welcome addition.

may be dusk. Environmental effects such as smoke, heat haze and shadows will also change the appearance of the world. Night goggles will be present in Conflict as missions take place throughout the day and night. Vehicles that can be commandeered and used include tanks, jeeps and even helicopters.

FLIEE IN TERROR

Conflict is being written for the PS2 and will also appear on the Xbox and PC. The game has been designed primarily with the console experience in mind. This is most immediately obvious by the controls which make use of the analog stick for movement and also directing



They've just come to say tanks.



Must be an Xbox in that backpack.



Man versus Crate. Deadly.

»» The game has been designed primarily with the console experience in mind

fellow units. An ingenious addition is the ordering reticle, which allows the player to place an allied soldier in a certain position AND set the direction they should face, with one order. Don't be surprised if PC fans make a dash for their local EBs to buy a PS2-style gamepad.

Enemy AI is clever enough to be challenging but it maintains some human flaws as well. There's nothing more annoying than a sniper you literally can't see. In close combat, the enemy will back up and look for cover, especially if he's under fire. They'll turn corners to avoid being shot and seek out help if possible. When an enemy is killed and one of his mates spots him, he'll inherit some of his dead cousin's knowledge. He may be onto your position quick. At the other end of the scale, they can be horribly flawed. If a grenade surprises an enemy soldier, he may flee in terror – maybe even running into walls or to his peril off a

ledge. To emphasise the importance of the team in the missions, the soldiers in your own squad will target enemies shooting you first.

It will be interesting to see how Conflict is received, especially considering another game the team worked on was Warzone 2100, a critically acclaimed strategy title from a few years back. Like that game, the target audience is not the mainstream, but if it meets expectations, Conflict Desert Storm will be a surefire hit. <<<



Hey Bob, let's get tanked.

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
A four-player co-op option in the Xbox and PC versions.



Who called the airstrike on KFC?



Just your typical American holiday.



Gee, I hope we can unlock g-strings

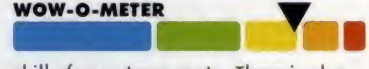


BEACH SPIKERS

CATEGORY: Sports >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Sega >> AVAILABLE: TBA

From nowhere, Beach Volleyball has exploded into the world of videogames. Someone somewhere must have had a revelation — semi-naked ladies + sports = sales. Well duh! We mentioned Tecmo's DOA: Extreme Beach Volleyball last issue, but Sega also have a game in production — Beach Spikers. It may not have the same level of eye candy as the Xbox game, but with AM2 on development duties, this one may well make up for it in the gameplay stakes.

Beach Spikers has all the gameplay modes you'd expect, including a World Tour mode, where you can earn points that can be assigned to improve the



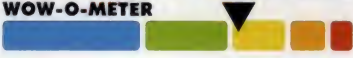
skill of your team mate. There is also going to be a create-a-player mode too, where you can choose from 50 faces or change your player's bikini, hair colour and sunglasses. Barbie eat your heart out.

While beach volleyball was a questionable introduction into the canon of olympic sports, we have the feeling that it will make a good addition to the world of videogames. Four player games in particular promise to be awesome, for many of the same reasons that tennis works so well — simple mechanics and a well defined play area, resulting in a huge potential for strategy.



EVIL DEAD: A FISTFUL OF BOOMSTICK

CATEGORY: Action >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: THQ >> AVAILABLE: 2003



Despite the immense promise that the property holds, Evil Dead: Hail To The King was a huge disappointment — clunky would probably be the most charitable way to describe it. For the sequel, THQ have recruited Vis Entertainment, the company responsible for State Of Emergency. Although somewhat similar in style to SOE — running around large outdoor environments killing stuff, A Fistful Of Boomstick actually looks like fun.

It's set after the events of the third film, with Ash's hometown being overrun by hordes of Deadites. Allegedly up to fifty creatures can be onscreen at once,

which should make for some serious fragging — especially since you can decapitate enemies and blow limbs off. Vis have implemented some reasonable controls to help Ash take on that many enemies — melee chainsaw attacks easily combo into shotgun blasts. Plus, he has an over the shoulder shotgun move for shooting Deadites coming up from behind, as well as a simple target switch button so that locking onto enemies is easy. Both Sam Raimi and Bruce Campbell are overseeing the project, so hopefully it should be true to the spirit of the films.



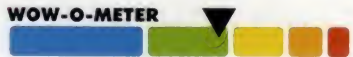
POSTAL 2

CATEGORY: FPS >> PLAYERS: 1-multi >> PUBLISHER: TBA >> AVAILABLE: TBA

You may remember the infamous Postal. It's infamous to us not because of how violent it was, but rather how utterly crap it was. Of course, a large media outcry leads to large sales, so surprise surprise, Running With Scissors (RWS) are back and making a sequel. In terms of gameplay, it looks like there really won't be any — just kill and maim anything that moves. We're all for ultra violence, but it's clear that RWS are simply trying to provoke the biggest media reaction they can and sell the game based on that. Although still early, it's also amazing just how average the game

is looking considering it's running on the Unreal Warfare engine.

If ever there was an indication that Postal 2 is going to be all gimmick and no gameplay, it's that the team recently motion captured Gary Coleman to appear as a character in the game. No offence to Gary (and he is a big gamer), but this doesn't exactly instill us with confidence in the potential of the game. Still, if they were to include the likenesses of a cornucopia of other B grade TV personalities for our killing pleasure, they might be onto something.



They may as well call it Boomstick of Emergency

>> XBOX / PS2 / GBA

LORD OF THE RINGS: THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

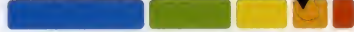
CATEGORY: Action/Adventure >> PLAYERS: 1 >>

PUBLISHER: Vivendi Universal >> AVAILABLE: October

Eased on Tolkien's books alone, The Fellowship of the Ring from Vivendi Universal promises to be something for the purists. Unlike EA's forthcoming Lord of the Rings title on PS2 that is based on the Peter Jackson films, this Lord of the Rings game contains all the deeper content from the first book of the trilogy that was cut from the cinema experience.

Three members of the fellowship are playable in the game — Frodo, Aragorn and Gandalf. Gameplay will primarily be action and puzzle based, with the appropriate character kicking in when needed — as you can imagine, the action sections will require you to wield the

WOW-O-METER



mighty sword Anduril in the hands of Aragorn, and thus Frodo will be able to call him forth when needed. Getting Gandalf to step in and use his powerful magic is also possible, but will be more "expensive" on your spirit points, so you won't always be able to rely on your more powerful allies.

The team working on the game have been quite obsessive about making sure this Lord of the Rings game is frighteningly true to the descriptions in the book, from the colour of the trees to the clothing and miscellaneous items. We're keeping our eye of Sauron on this one.



All roads lead to HYPER HQ



Gandalf searches for magic "viagra"

WOW-O-METER

DEATHROW

CATEGORY: Fighting/Sport >> PLAYERS: 1-8 >>
PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft >> AVAILABLE: TBA

>> XBOX

Forget Rollerball. Forget The Running Man. Deathrow on the Xbox is set to be the ultimate representation of deadly futuristic sporting events. Choose between one of thirteen very different teams, and then do your best to defend a small, elevated hoop by beating the crap out of the opposing team. In between the punching, kicking, tackling and general skull-bashing gameplay, you may find time to get a hold of the game disc and try to score in the opponent's hoop. Winning rewards you with stats for your player, and money to spend on unlocking teams and healing players.

When you're in possession of the disc, an indicator will turn red or green to alert you to whether a team mate is clear for you to pass it or if opposing players will be able to block your pass or shot. Winning, however, could come down to whether you're simply able to mash all your opponents into paste — that becomes a victory by default!

Deathrow will be yet another Xbox game to support custom soundtracks so you can dump your own music to the hard disk to inspire your team to victory. It's also possible that Deathrow may support online play.

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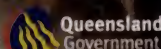
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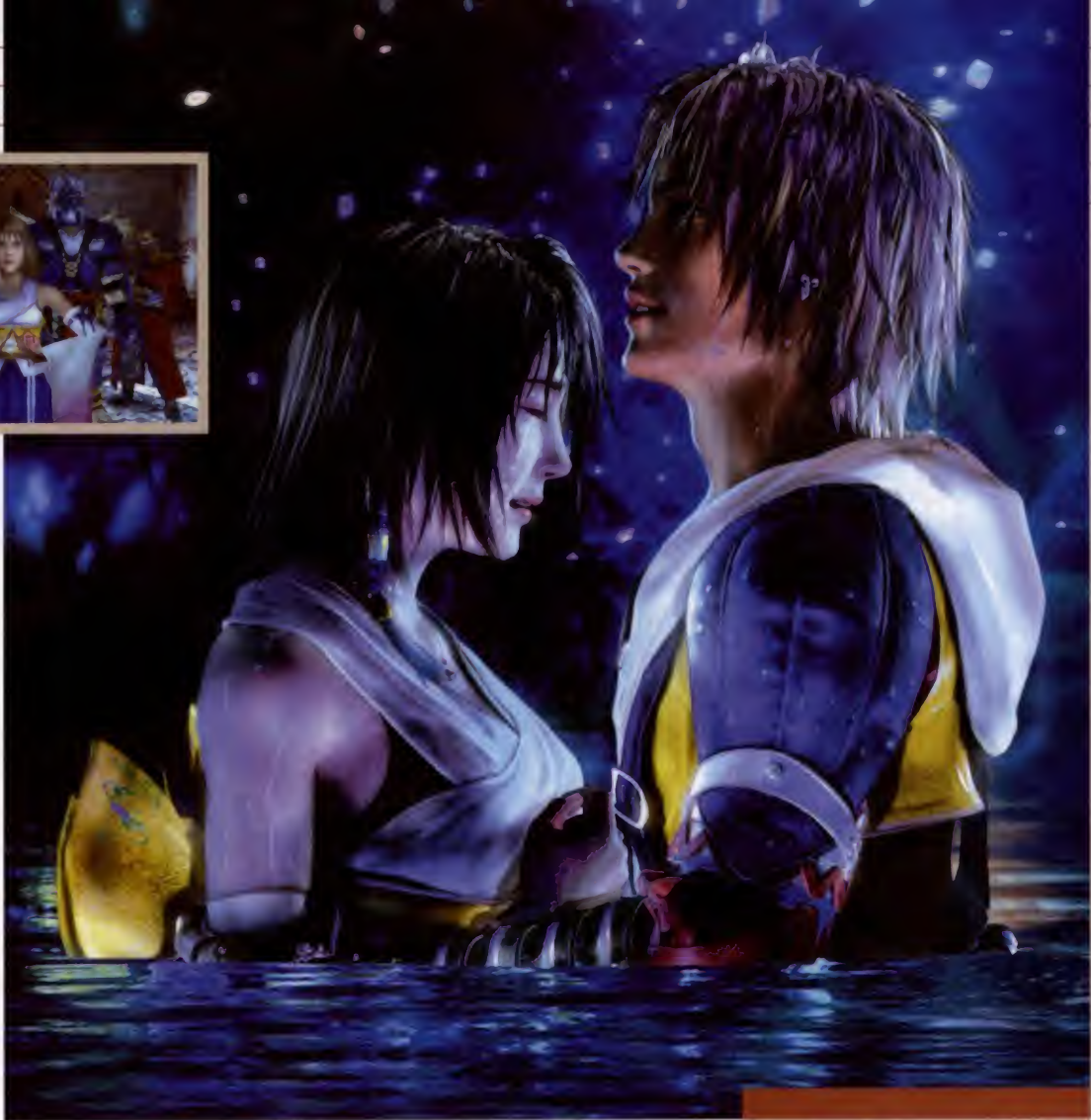
Music

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

»» DANIEL STAINES

The beauty of video games is that they are a medium that allows a multitude of artistic talents an avenue for valid expression. It is not uncommon for a modern game to run the entire gamut of creative capacity, with the input of visual artists, architects, authors, actors and musicians featuring prominently. The last of these – the musicians – are more often than not overlooked. It's time to celebrate the mood-setting, emotion-tugging, adrenaline-pumping magic that is video game music.





As this very paragraph is written, its author is listening to the haunting opening notes of *Liberi Fatali* — Nobuo Uematsu's masterful main theme for Squaresoft's *Final Fantasy VIII*. Though the game was originally released over 3 years ago, *FF VIII*'s soundtrack is an excellent indicator of just how far the genre of video game music (VG music) has come since its primitive beginnings two decades ago. The sweeping orchestral flourishes and symphonic choirs of *Liberi Fatali* don't seem even remotely related to the natty beeps and boops of a *Pac-Man* or the *Space Invaders* "soundtrack". Yet there is a link, and the history of how game music grew from repetitive background noise into a highly sophisticated and respected art form is an interesting one to say the least.

The history of game music as we know it arguably begins in 1985, with the release of *Super Mario Bros.* for the original NES. Koji Kondo's extremely catchy title ditty for Nintendo's seminal platformer remains a cultural icon to this day. It can be heard everywhere, from mobile phone ring tones to god awful techno tracks and MIDI music compilation CDs. Almost anyone who claims to be of the 'old-school' gaming variety knows how to hum the tune in its entirety: a true testament to the quality of its composition. It's almost guaranteed that at least half of you are currently playing the tune in your head right now.

Yet the *Super Mario* theme, for all its brilliance, was composed and played with hardware insanely primitive by today's standards. The sound chip for the NES was about as simplistic as they come: it could produce one noise, one sine and two pulse-wave voices, with one voice channel of 7-bit modulated sample playback. Or, in understandable English, it could produce a maximum of four sounds simultaneously. With one channel used for sound effects, it left only three for music. Tunes would only have three different sound samples available to them at any one time. Is it any wonder early game jingles were repetitive?

EVERYTHING SOUNDS RIGHT

Now, however, it is an entirely different story. The advancement in sound-chip design along with the employment of new storage mediums such as CDs and DVDs has meant that VG music can at last be infused with the power it needs to be truly engaging. The bleeps and bops of the NES days are long gone, replaced by live orchestral recordings and professionally produced studio tunes. Advancement in sound hardware has not only meant the quality of music has improved, but also the processes used by composers to make it in the first place. Making game music in the 1980s, for instance, would often entail a strong technical knowledge of audio programming techniques. Now it can simply be a matter of picking up any of the professional software sequencers available on the market and twiddling a set of virtual knobs till everything sounds right.

"Game music has been progressed with the ongoing advancement of hardware technology," says Yoshitaka Hirota, Japanese based game music composer. "All music, especially game music, depends on hardware. Today's hardware still has many things that need to be improved and, with this improvement, artists will be tested to the limits of their ability."

However, the technical and cultural advance of game music has not always been directly proportional. Hirota, who has been composing game music since the glory days of the SNES, has watched the industry and the artistic medium it represents grow considerably over the years. He has seen gaming itself become widespread in its appeal as an alternative to television and other traditional amusements while VG music, in Western countries at least, has been stigmatised as the domain of the truly hardcore. This, Hirota says, is changing.

"The borderline between game music and other popular media," he reflects, "has been blurred." Indeed, in countries such as Japan at least, the borderline separating VG music from its pop culture brethren is all but non-existent.

LEAPS AND BOUNDS

Alexander Brandon, chief composer for *Deus Ex* and its upcoming sequel, believes game music "has grown in leaps and bounds" and is well on the way to establishing itself as a respected cultural medium.

"Game music soundtracks are selling by the millions in Japan and growing significantly in Europe and the USA," he says. "Pop music stars are writing music for games. Movie composers are writing music for

Final Fantasy has some of the best videogame music to date.



Alexander Brandon

➤ Alex currently works for Ion Storm Austin and is in the process of directing the music for the hotly anticipated *Thief 3* and *Deus Ex 2*. He has been producing music since 1993.

COMPOSER CREDITS: *Deus Ex*, *Unreal*, *Unreal Tournament*, *Jazz Jackrabbit*



Top o' the pops? Not quite.



SHADOW HEARTS



yoshitaka hirota

»» Hirota has been in the game audio business for 10 years now, beginning at Squaresoft producing sound effects for classics like Final Fantasy VI and Chrono Trigger. His more recent work includes Shadow Hearts for the PS2 and Street Fighter Zero 3. His site, which all of you should visit, can be found at www.TwinTail-studio.com.

COMPOSER CREDITS:
(sound effects) Final Fantasy VII, Live A Live, Final Fantasy VI, Chrono Trigger, Mario RPG, Gun Hazard, Bhamut Lagoon, Front Mission 2, Chocobo no Fusigi na Dangeon, Parasite Eve, Final Fantasy VIII, Chrono Cross, Racing Lagoon
(composer/arranger) Biohazard 2 Drama Album "Sherry, the little fugitive" Biohazard 2 Drama Album "Ada - the Lady Spy - Lives" Street Fighter Zero 3 Drama Album
(composer) Shadow Hearts Street Fighter Zero 3

games. It's going 'public', as they say."

'Public' indeed - ever since Buckner and Garcia released their woeful Pac Man Fever in 1980, VG music and popular culture have enjoyed an interesting, if turbulent, on-again off-again love affair. Regrettable and insulting cash-ins like the infamous Mortal Kombat techno song ('Sub-Zero wins': how amazingly ridiculous) have taken their place next to excellent examples of successful cultural cross-pollination such as Trent Reznor's score for the original Quake. There are the Aphex Twin Tetris remixes, Derrick May tracks on the Ghost in the Shell game soundtrack and there are the Aerosmith SNES game OSTs. For better or for worse, the game music industry is changing and, in the process, foisting itself upon the mainstream with tenacious vigour.

"Now, it's just like any other industry - which is why I left," says Last Ninja composer Ben Daglish, with a grin. Ben, an ex-game musician who began composing in the classic era of the Commodore 64, says the popularisation gaming as a whole has entailed "less scope for individuality" for the modern VG music maestro. "When there were only 5 of us in the country doing the job, it was much more 'here's a piece of Hubbard' or 'here's a Daglish track' - now most games have teams of composers and arrangers while game styles are becoming more limited. As such, I don't even know if there will be any future stars [in the industry]."

THE IMPORTANCE OF MUSIC
 Regardless of one's opinion of the state of the industry, however, a simple and direct fact can not be denied - music is becoming an increasingly pivotal element in good

game design. Think of games like Rez, Vib Ribbon, Gitaroo Man and Dance Dance Revolution where music is the primary focus and the central gameplay mechanic. Surely the existence of such titles indicates just how powerful and important music can be to a video game? What would, for instance, a game like Silent Hill be without the creepy, sporadic wafting of reverb laden piano notes? Where would WipeOut be without its thumping dance beats and adrenaline charged rhythms? Anyone who's played Chrono Trigger knows for a fact that fighting Magus would have been totally bland without the heart-pounding battle music to go along with it.

"Perhaps music and audio isn't as crucial in some genres," comments Halo and Oni composer Marty O'Donnell, "but I believe it's a primary element in the enjoyment of the games I've been a part of creating. Gameplay, art, and audio and the engineering that brings them together are all on equal footing in terms of the game player's full immersion in the world of the game. I've been lucky so far in that the developers I've worked with understand the importance of music and audio."

On this point, Alexander Brandon concurs and comments on how difficult it is sometimes to convince traditionalist game developers of the value music can play in their titles:

"A lot of people I talk to will tell you 'yeah, music's important, sure!' because they don't want to dismiss it out of hand. But when it comes to waging war on the developmental battlefield, music often gets left behind in preference to other tasks such as visual art, simply because it's very easy to do so. It's the responsibility of people like me and my colleagues to not only convince

people otherwise, but to actually make great sounding stuff to prove our point."

Despite this increasingly important role in gaming in general, the future of game music still remains somewhat unpredictable. A lot of the 'classic' composers, Ben Daglish included, predict widespread homogenisation as VG music becomes more mainstream and, ultimately, like "any other industry". Newer composers however, such as Brandon, O'Donnell and Hirota, foresee a bright future for a medium many consider to still be in its infant stages.

"I think those who have been involved in game music prior to our generation are all great artists and all those who are currently involved in the music have chance to become stars in the future," Hirtota states. "The history of the game music industry is a short one, but it is becoming more and more interesting."

For an industry with such a short history, however, VG music is certainly not without its collection of stars and famous names. Aside from those already mentioned, the VG music greats that are on the road to gaining popular global recognition include, among many, many others: Yasunori Mitsuda, Hiroki Kikuta, Richard Jacques and





Can you see the music?



This game goes up to 11.



Power of Seven. On the flipside, the number of established popular artists that have contributed tracks to games are too many to number, especially with the recent popularity of games like Tony Hawk and Project Gotham, which feature star laden soundtracks as a main consumer draw card. Some of the big ones, though, include David Bowie, the Prodigy, Pennywise and Gorillaz.

"The historical greats [of VG music] are too many to mention, but I've got my personal favorites," Alexander Brandon tell us. "Hip Tanaka and his colleagues in Japan did some great original Nintendo and console music. Rob Hubbard and his peers in Europe also did some awesome C64 and Amiga stuff. Pluse there's people like the Fatman

Music is becoming an increasingly pivotal element in good game design

with his Team FAT, George Sanger and Brian Schmidt who've done exceptional work on the PC.

"Future stars?" he asks with a cheeky grin. "No idea, but I sure am going to put out some kickass stuff in the hopes of being one of them."

THE SOUND OF THE FUTURE

When asked about where he thinks VG music is heading as a genre, Marty O'Donnell hesitates for a moment. "It came from a humble beginning limited by technology and memory and has grown into full blown, high end production content that rivals any medium – including feature films," he says slowly. "It must continue to develop and improve in overall quality and aesthetic. If you watch a DVD in your home theatre or play a DVD game, the audio experience should be on par."

If ever there should be a guiding law for the production of VG music, that would have to be it. While game composers have gone a long way in garnering respect for themselves and their art over the last 20 years, game music still lacks the necessary popular oomph needed to truly

establish it as a widely accepted artistic medium. This, one might argue, is because game compositions are still considered by the general public to be somehow 'primitive' or 'unprofessional' compared to those produced in other genres of music. For a lot of people – gamers included – it's just 'computer noise' that can and should be turned off at the earliest possible convenience.

Advances in audio technology, however, have made opinions such as these unfounded. Up until recently, developers were justified in considering music secondary to their other concerns – limited technology almost necessitated the general awfulness of VG music's early incarnations. But, as Marty O'Donnell points out, that's all different now. Games have the technical potential to sound as good as any DVD, CD or movie – all it takes is for talented composers to realise just how important their role is and exploit their medium to its absolute limits. After all, what's life – even a simulated one – without good music? <<



marty o'donnell

>> Currently Audio Director at Bungie Studios, Marty O'Donnell became involved with the game music industry in 1997 when he produced the audio for Riven, the sequel to Myst. Most recently, he masterminded the music in Halo. His official studio homepage can be found at www.totalaudio.com.

COMPOSER CREDITS: Halo, Oni, Riven, Myth, Myth II, Septerra Core



ben daglish

>> No longer a working game-music composer, Ben Daglish worked in the video game industry from 1982 to '92. In that time, he produced music for hundreds of old school titles, including 720, Gauntlet and, with Anthony Lees, Last Ninja. The last of these being the best, in our opinion.

COMPOSER CREDITS: Last Ninja (with Anthony Lees), Way of the Tiger, 720, Gauntlet, Gauntlet 2, Cobra Ark Pandora, amongst many, many others...

EXPERT KNOB TWIDDLING

So, you wanna be a game music superstar, huh? Well, here are 5 easy steps to get you started on the road to fame:

Get yourself two things: a good software sequencer program and a cheap MIDI device. If you don't have a soundcard with direct MIDI input, you'll need some special cables too. For this example, we'll be using Reason – a fabulous (and expensive) software sequencer/synth program from Propellerhead Studios – and a cheap ass Casio keyboard we picked up at Cash Converters.

Go on the net and get yourself some samples. Most software sequencer programs come with a large library of samples – virtual

instruments, if you will – to use. However, they're generally quite limited in their scope and you'll likely want more quickly.

www.samplearena.com is a great place to start and contains a link page to a bunch of other neat online sample archives.

Learn how to use your tools. Take a look at the snapshot here of Reason. It looks bloody complicated because it is bloody complicated. A good computer music composer should be an expert knob twiddler – s/he should know every how, what and why of their preferred sequencing program in order to get the most out of it. Knowing how to play your instrument well wouldn't go astray, either.

Know what you're writing music for. There's nothing worse than game music that sounds out of place. Before composing your masterpiece, it might be an idea to



Reason - bloody complicated

play a few levels of whatever game you're composing for, or if that's not possible, read the background fiction or look at some concept art.

Write your tune. This is the hard part. It all depends on your style and the game you're doing it for. For those of you so inclined, we've uploaded a sample file to the Hyperactive website (www.hyperactive.com.au). It's far from professional, but consider: it was done by a vodka-sodden amateur in an hour and a half. Imagine what you could do!

WIN WIN WIN

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WIN A NEVERWINTER NIGHTS PACK

■ D&D fans rejoice! The long awaited Neverwinter Nights is on store shelves and keeping CD drives warm all over the country. This is the role-playing experience many D&D fans have been waiting for. Hyper and Game Nation would like to offer 5 readers the chance to win a copy of the game, with the first prize also receiving a very exclusive Neverwinter Nights jacket!

FOR PC

To enter, just answer the following question:

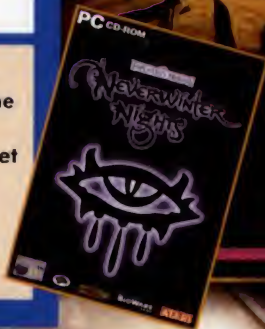
➤ Name three "official" D&D monsters.

Put your answers along with your name and address on the back of an envelope, and send it to: **The Prize Dungeon, Hyper, 78 Renwick Street, Redfern, NSW 2016.**

PRIZE INCLUDES:

- Neverwinter Nights game - valued at \$99.95
- Neverwinter Nights jacket - valued at \$300

4 runners-up will receive
Neverwinter Nights



WIN STUNTMAN

■ Stuntman is barrel-rolling onto PlayStation 2 consoles everywhere, and if it survives the stunt, we'll giveaway five copies to our dear readers — and as a bonus we'll throw in a cool Stuntman t-shirt thanks to Game Nation.

FOR PS2

To win one of these packs, just answer the following question:

➤ Name a famous American stuntman.

Put your answers along with your name and address on the back of an envelope, and send it to: **Stunt Goodies, Hyper, 78 Renwick Street, Redfern, NSW 2016.**

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Xbox Live

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It seems like only yesterday that the Hyper crew used to huddle around the TV to belt out an hour (or two or three) of four-player Mario Kart 64 each and every lunchtime. Truly, those were halcyon days. We were wide-eyed and excitable, and in our naivety, we thought that this is how consoles will always offer a different experience to PCs — actually having your opponents next to you on the couch. Well, although sitting around a telly with a bunch of mates will always be a part of console gaming, a new era is about to dawn — multiplayer console gaming is going online.

EASY FOR GAMERS

Taking consoles online will be a significant shift in the way we play games, and most probably the biggest revolution since the move from 2D to 3D graphics. This month we thought we'd take a look at Microsoft's Xbox Live service, since at this stage it's the most fully featured online plan, has the lowest barrier to entry and is also the most likely to first hit our shores in any significant way.

Xbox Live will allegedly launch in North America, Japan and Europe later this year. Thus far, only a tentative US price point and package has been discussed. The US starter kit will cost around the price of a game (US \$49.95), which will give the consumer a year-long subscription to the service, an Xbox Communicator and a copy of ReVolt (for some bizarre reason). Our deal will likely be very similar. What will make the service easy for gamers and attractive to publishers will be the fact that Microsoft will manage all

the game hosting, networking, security and billing, so developers can focus on creating the games. Of course, in addition to paying for the service, you'll also have to have access to cable/ADSL and be able to afford it. So that's a large slice of broadband-starved Australians ruled out already! We're also curious as to how much data throughput playing Xbox games online will create, given the stingy 3gig caps in place on almost all broadband services.

KEY FEATURES

Microsoft have repeatedly emphasised just how easy playing online will be through Xbox Live. They're saying it won't seem like going online, but more like an extension of the normal single-player gaming experience. Here are some of the key features:

• **Matchmaking:** One of the key components for easily finding

other players and the conditions that you want. At its most basic, you can use QuickMatch to hop straight into an online game with a single button press. It's OptiMatch, however, that will enable you to choose the level, the game type and even opponents of similar skill levels.

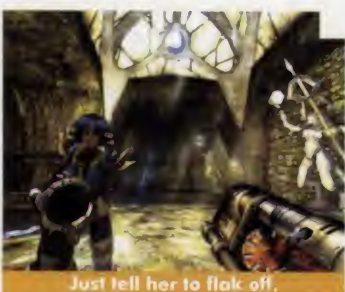
• **Xbox Communicator:** All Xbox Live multiplayer games will have integrated voice communication, so you'll be able to chat or coordinate attacks. Plus, the Voice Communicator headset comes with the initial Xbox Live package, so

everyone who's online will have speech capabilities. You'll also be able to mask your voice through a number of filters — either to simply disguise it or to make it more appropriate to the game you're playing.

Thankfully you'll also be able to mute all other players or selectively mute annoying players.



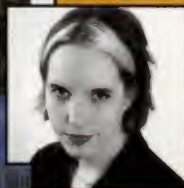
At least you'll look like a dork anonymously.



Just tell her to flak off.



MS. INFORMATION



AGATA
BUDINSKA

>>The price wars have begun. It really didn't take

very long, less than a week in fact. And all it took was a new network in the broadband pool.

The start of June brought OzEmail into the broadband market. A successful test run, competitive prices with the big boys, not a re-seller and flexible installation options made their entrance onto the field felt by every DSL provider in the country. It felt like less than 5 days before ISP's started announcing lower pricing plans and comparison sites started popping up. But what does all this mean to the humble consumer?

Basically, it looks as though there's finally some healthy competition out there, which should mean better deals for us at home. If you take into consideration dial up call costs, as well as excess rates that would give you the same downloads, not to mention the speed, broadband isn't looking that much more expensive than a 56k connection. Plus all the media attention that DSL has been getting should prompt telco's to start installing DSLAMs into more and more local exchanges, meaning more and more of us will have access to leeching wares and online gaming joy. But how long will it last? With Telstra's wholesale prices being what they are, how low can an ISP really go, and still be around in 2 years time?

On a slightly sadder note, another file sharing giant is going to bite the dust. First Napster, now Audiogalaxy. When will the senseless bloodshed end? Ignore the fact that Audiogalaxy came complete with spyware, it really was a great site for downloading all the mp3s and mpeg your HD could handle. I suggest that you all put a black band around the arm of whatever mascot you have on your monitors as a sign of respect, and keep adding them every time a file sharer dies. It's kinda like carrying a towel on May 25th.

happymealwithaj@hotmail.com



Holy truck! I guess that joke was "semi" funny.



Mech Assault promises... er, an assault of mechs I guess.



Whacked!



NFL Fever 2003

• **Gamertag:** When you first log in to Xbox Live you will be assigned a unique online ID and can choose a nick that will stay constant across all games. The Gamertag will allow Microsoft to track your performance in games and rank you against other players — both for an overall ranking and so that you can find other players of similar skill levels easily.

• **Friends list:** As you and your friends go online, and as you meet other players, you'll be able to keep a friends list — much like ICQ and other chat programs. What's cool about this system is that you can invite your friends to come and play a game with you even if they're already in another game. Basically, an icon pops up on screen and they can then find out what game you want to play and either accept or decline.

• **Downloads:** Through the service you'll have access to free or for-a-fee content downloads to the Hard Drive. This could take the form of updated rosters, new levels and characters or even extra game chapters.

THE GAMES

When Xbox Live launches in the USA later this year, there will be five games available to play online. Well, six actually, but does ReVolt really count?

• **Unreal Championship:** This is really the pick of the initial online

litter. Technically amazing and with frag-tastic gameplay to back it up, this will be the first port of call for most gamers wanting to get online and play.

• **Mech Assault:** A fun pick-up-and-play addition to the Mechwarrior series. Mmm... mech duels in fully destructible environments!

• **Whacked!:** We're not convinced that a Mario Party-style multiplayer party game will be much fun online. From our experience, trash talking is such an integral part of the experience that you really need the other players in the same room!

• **NFL Fever 2003:** We're unlikely to see this one over here, but hey, for the American market this is a necessary inclusion.

• **Midtown Madness 3:** Paris and Washington have been extensively modelled for this console sequel in Microsoft's semi-popular series. There are 50 missions in the single player game, but little has been revealed about online playmodes thus far. Racing against friends through huge environments should be sweet. Unfortunately, it looks like

it could be delayed until 2003.

There's also a decent number of other games in development from a wide range of developers. Microsoft estimate that at least 50 Xbox Live enabled games will be released by the end of next year, including several Sega Sports titles, Activision O2 titles, RavenShield and Ghost Recon, XIII and online versions of Halo, Rallisport Challenge, Amped and Project Gotham. Plus, beyond that are some huge titles like Star Wars Galaxies and CounterStrike. All up, for those with access to broadband, Xbox Live is looking very compelling. We'll bring you Australia-specific information as it comes to light.



Explore the Star Wars galaxies.

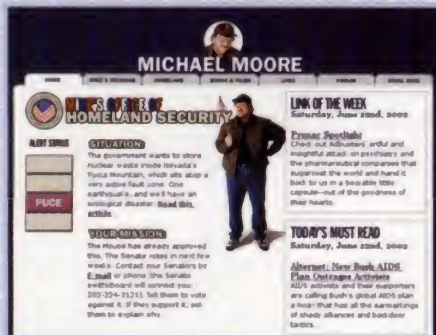
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www.michaelwinslow.com

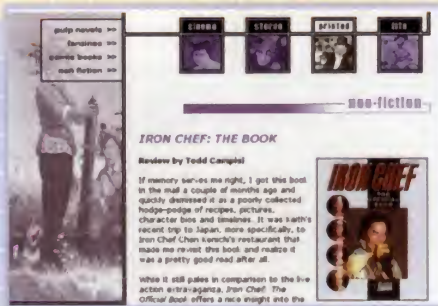
Don't remember Michael Winslow? Shame on you! He was the black guy who did all the "zany" sound effects in the Police Academy films. Of course, showcasing his skills on such a piss poor film series didn't do his credibility much good. And neither does his website really, which is a shame because he takes the artform very seriously and was very much a beat box pioneer. Funny for all the wrong reasons.



MICHAEL MOORE

www.michaelmoore.com

In this day and age of conservative chimp-like right-wing politicians cheating their way into office, and racist uncaring freaks controlling our immigration policy, the world needs a watchdog. Michael Moore is that watchdog. If you've ever seen The Awful Truth, you'll know what we mean. For acrid, intelligent commentary on the world the way it really is, Michael Moore is your man. Check out his site and get on his mailing list.



TELEPORT CITY

www.teleport-city.com

An excellent site for intelligent commentary on films, books, zines and music. The film reviews in particular will expose you to little known classics and bizarre footnotes in film history. They're consistently well written and come with huge amounts of background information about the time period, influences, actors and director.



STOMP TOKYO

www.stomptokyo.com

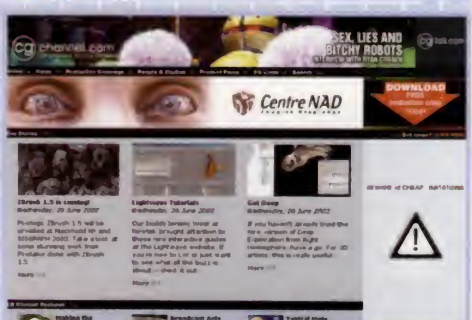
If it's B movie reviews you're after, then Stomp Tokyo is a good place to stop off. Read about Godzilla Vs Megalon... and about 20 other Godzilla films. Revel in the lameness that is Captain America. From Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein to Zombie High, Stomp Tokyo's large review archive will keep you amused.

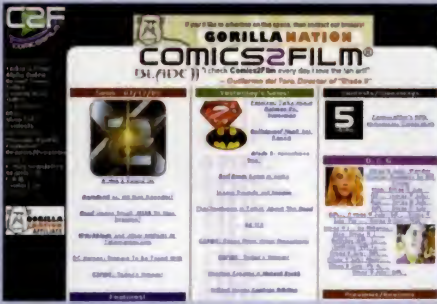
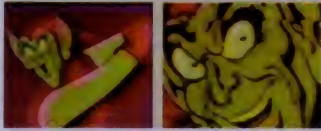


CG CHANNEL

www.cgchannel.com

For all you budding 3D animators out there, CG Channel provides a range of news, opinions and interviews about the latest software, companies and films. On the site at the moment are behind the scenes looks at Spider-Man and Blade II. For interviews with CG artists, software tutorials and links to trippy CG shorts, this site is a must. Most of the features require registration, but it's simple and free.





COMICS 2 FILMS

www.comics2film.com

>> With the success of films like *X-Men* and *Spider-Man*, there are now an amazing number of comics making the transition over to the silver screen. If you want to keep tabs on all the latest news and rumours across all these projects Comics 2 Films is the site to visit. Bring on *The Hulk*!



ARROW IN THE HEAD

www.joblo.com/arrow

>> For all you gore mongers out there, *Arrow in the Head* is a pretty decent horror film review site. The content tends to be amusing, well informed and passionate, and reviews are broken down into sections so you can get a feel for what Arrow thought about all the different elements, such as Acting, Gore and T&A. *Arrow in the Head* is also notable for its innovation of "Mistress of the Week". Sexy women and horror films? Sweet.



COMING SOON

www.comingsoon.net

>> As you can tell, we're on a real film trip this month. To complete the lineup, however, we can't go past *Coming Soon*. Not only is this site a great reservoir of up to the minute film news, but it's also the place to go for the latest trailers. Better still, the gateway page for each trailer also features all the relevant information on the film as well as a concise plot summary.

real

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REVIEWS

»PC

GAME OF THE MONTH

Warcraft III

It's a blizzard of orcs and humans across the gaming landscape - The Reign of Chaos has finally arrived...

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HYPERR»

All console games are tested on the Samsung Plano CS29A200 TV.

SAMSUNG
ELECTRONICS



GAME THEORY

DANIEL STAINES



» Given that games are arguably the most diverse medium on the planet, their value as media can be appraised on a variety of different levels. For instance, one could quite easily assess the merits of Final Fantasy X on an aesthetic level without ever actually playing the game. It is entirely possible to evaluate Quake III's gameplay without giving John Carmack's lovely curved surfaces the slightest amount of consideration whatsoever. It would be remiss of a games journalist to do either, but for community technophobes such arbitrary distinctions often prove very useful indeed.

As was mentioned in a previous installment of Game Theory, when American Judge Stephen Limbaugh ruled that games were not capable of expressing "anything that could possibly amount to speech", he based his decision on film footage and not on playing the games themselves. While it is indubitable that such footage would have given the good judge a reasonable base upon which to criticise those game's respective aesthetic qualities, his grasp of their underlying gameplay remains highly suspect – despite the relative simplicity of the titles involved.

This highlights a widespread failing of many 'concerned citizens' in their appraisal of our preferred medium. Judging a game based solely upon what can be divulged from watching it is an inherently faulty platform of criticism because it unduly distorts the importance of appearance in gaming generally. A concerned parent watching their child play Quake, for example, might erroneously conclude that the game's primary focus is to sully our minds with an evil mixture of guns, gore and Satan. However, as the child who's actually playing the game might tell you, violence and gore are secondary concerns to the competition that takes place within that context. It ain't what you shoot, dad – it's the way that you shoot it.

This fundamental point needs to be grasped by game legislators if they are to have any claims to critical legitimacy at all. To do otherwise in matters of policy is not only lazy, but potentially fatal to gaming as a medium and legitimate cultural pastime. Put simply: it is not good enough.

game_theory@whensitsdone.com

50



53



63



74



81

THE HYPER CREW'S TOP 5

Eliot Fish – Editor

1. Final Fantasy X – PS2
"Okay, so this game has taken over my life... Must. Kill. Dark. Aeons."
2. Pikmin – GameCube
3. Super Smash Bros. Melee – GameCube
4. Morrowind – PC
5. Soul Calibur – Dreamcast

Cam Shea – Deputy Editor

1. Buffy The Vampire Slayer – Xbox
"Best. Game. Ever. Hehheh."
2. Grand Theft Auto 3 – PS2
3. Super Smash Bros. Melee – GameCube
4. Halo – Xbox
5. Mario Tennis – Nintendo 64

Malcolm Campbell – Art guy

1. Warcraft III – Mac
"Choppin' wood and diggin' gold. Welcome back old friend."
2. Final Fantasy X – PS2
3. Tekken 4 – PS2
4. Buffy – Xbox
5. Soul Calibur – Dreamcast

David Wildgoose – Reviewer

1. Grand Theft Auto 3 – PS2
"100% complete. Now I never have to play it again."
2. Pro Evolution Soccer – PS2
3. Project Gotham Racing – Xbox
4. Super Bust-a-Move – PS2
5. Deus Ex: Zodiac – PC mod

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!

REVIEW

» HYPER 45



PC/MAC

Warcraft III: REIGN OF CHAOS

CATEGORY: RTS or RPS or... >> PLAYERS: 1-12 >> PUBLISHER: Blizzard >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: G8+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >> REQUIRED: PII 500, 128MB RAM, 3D card

It's raining chaos according to **JOHN DEWHURST**.

The Burning Legion will soon be the guys you love to hate. This army of flaming demonic spirits is the race that you can't use on Battle.net and can't use in the campaign game. Warcraft fans may only look forward to a throttling by their insane power — super powerful NPC units that make the Burning Legion the ultimate villains in the Reign of Chaos.

Their inclusion is as good a sign as any that Blizzard has continued the proud tradition of providing amazing gaming for both the solo campaigners and the inter-networked gamers. These fiery abominations plummet to the Warcraft Earth from the skies and in a stunning animated prelude interrupt the ever-raging shenanigans of the Orc Hordes and

the Human Alliance. Distant trumpets, bloody battles and dramatic antics aplenty are the meat and bones of Warcraft III.

SECRET FORMULA REVEALED

It's been a long time since Warcraft II, but this is the land we know. Orcs and Humans are still hacking at each other in dirty helmets. Base construction, resource hoarding, simple interface, isometric view and free online Battle.net service are all conventions reproduced. Much would be familiar to the stereotypical strategy gamer if said person was plucked out of the mid 90s (ratty Pearl Jam haircut, The Crow t-shirt and moody demeanour intact) and dropped in front of a demo of Warcraft III in 2002. This stunned mullet (or the high schooler sporting

such a haircut) would have three questions: "What? 3D?!", "What? Four races?!" and "What? Layne Staley's dead?!".

There are two obvious sources of change to the Warcraft vision. The first is the 3D. Now don't be fooled. Yes, it's a lovely 3D engine but it doesn't change the game — AT ALL. The camera can be moved on one axis: from an overhead view to a lower pitched overhead view. No rotation, no flying to the far corner of the map, no zooming in to look at a Night Elf's assets. The 3D is, in truth, a red herring. Blizzard have done what the makers of games like Conflict Zone should have done and cut most of that free roaming camera crap out. In fact, Warcraft III presents the game world in much

the same way as its prequel. The 3D makes the game pretty but that's its only purpose. Far more moving and important is the full orchestral soundtrack.

The second source of change is





the most pivotal: Starcraft. The strong storyline of the campaign, different play styles and ease of online play are just three obvious features. Just as Starcraft learnt from Warcraft, the reverse is now true – accessible with a strong interface, logical research trees, the frantic pace and unit personality are some of the elements of the game and it's all owed to Starcraft.

Blizzard already made the game with three races, Warcraft III is the game with four... or five if you like the story. The traditional opponents of Lordaeron are the Alliance of Humans, Dwarves and Elves and the Horde of Orcs and Wolves. These two camps are joined in the fray by the shadowy Night Elves, a mysterious

and ancient race; and The Scourge of the Undead, an army of wizards and ghouls that hate everyone except The Burning Legion. The Demons of the Burning Legion are the masters of the Scourge and sent them into the world to prepare for the demon's return.

REJOICE IN DIVERSITY

The four races have noticeably different strengths in units. Many even perform entirely different functions to their apparent counterparts in other races. Even the structures – while performing roughly the same tasks – are unique to their origin. From the spiked barricades of the Orcs (that "attack" assailants), to the units of the Night Elves that can physically uproot themselves and move or defend themselves, the variety between races is strong.

The Alliance is the vanilla flavoured team, a good all-round side with an answer to most threats. For example, their peasant workers can be rallied to take up arms and defend the town if under attack.

Now don't be fooled. **Yes, it's a lovely 3D engine** but it doesn't change the game - **AT ALL**

They have good magic and ground units and fair air units. The Horde is the melee side - providing strength in numbers of furious hand-to-hand units like the basic Grunt but little in the way of air units. The Humans and the Orcs are similar to their previous incarnations.

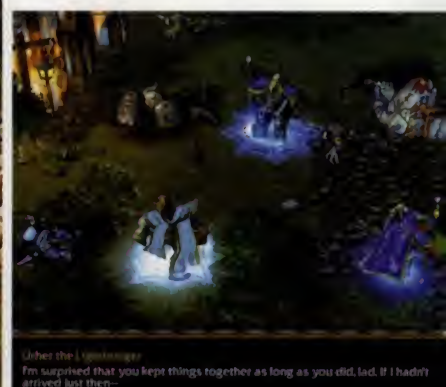
The strengths of the Night Elves are their elusiveness, with invisibility for many units at night time, and the ability to attack from a distance: strong ranged attacks and aerial combat. Their melee units tend to be stronger individually, more expensive and thus are fewer on the battlefield. Night Elves are one with nature so they are also more efficient in their environment. The lumber they collect for use in production does not destroy trees - which means lumber is a fairly limitless resource.

The Scourge of the Undead is the coolest side because they are all evil magicians or dead bodies. Ghouls are their basic combat unit and while they're not the strongest, they rely on support from Necromancer, who can raise the dead bodies of the fallen - ally or enemy alike - to bolster the forces. The bigger units of the Scourge are fearsome. The Abomination is a bloody great tank and the meat wagon is a siege weapon that can do good damage.

HEROES R US

But even Starcraft's influence only goes so far. The biggest change to the Blizzard style is a shift away from mass producin' and tank rushin'. There is one important unit on the battlefield - the Hero. Warcraft III is distinct from Starcraft because of Heroes. You can produce





Uther the Lightbringer
I'm surprised that you kept things together as long as you did, lad. If I hadn't arrived just then--

Does a Dread Lord have dreadlocks?

Aramachus
Level 7 Dread Lord

Armor: 6	Speed: Fast
Damage: 25 - 29	Range: Melee

625 / 625
77 / 475

2.4 2.2 1.9



I'm sorry for eavesdropping, Master but...



Gee, is that kid human or orc? Ugh.



Sir, it's the dreaded Ozzy Orcbourne!



Is that rain of chaos, dad?



You like Bob Marley, Mr. Dreadlord?

Calm yourself, Prince Arthas, I am Tichondrius, U'Gee Ma?Ganis, I am a dreadlord but I am not your enemy. In truth, I've come to congratulate you.

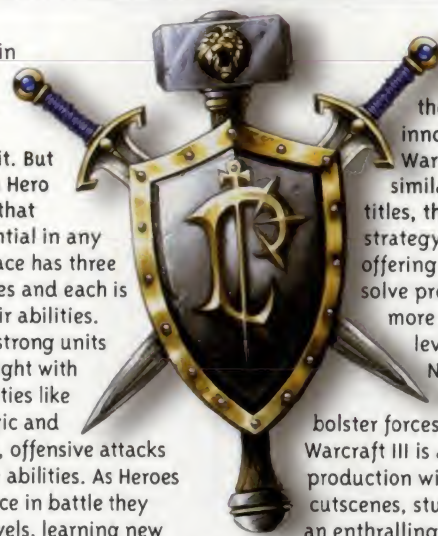


PICK ME UP

Heroes can do many things. Deliver their lines too loudly and too proudly. They can choose magic spells to aid the cause and hurt the enemy. They can also pick up items left by the powerful and dead. Creeps are NPC units that lurk around maps. They are basically treasure chests that deliver experience for the Hero as well as items that can be stored in the inventory of a Hero. These could be stat improving magic items, or health potions, mana potions or others. While the power of items is permanent or on-going, potions can be pulled out at pivotal moments to bolster a weakened Hero.

far less units in Warcraft III and the Hero is a truly expensive unit. But the benefits a Hero brings mean that they are essential in any game. Each race has three types of Heroes and each is unique in their abilities.

Heroes are strong units in their own right with powerful abilities like offensive magic and healing spells, offensive attacks and defensive abilities. As Heroes gain experience in battle they advance in levels, learning new spells and gaining greater hit points, etc. Heroes can turn the tide of battle by keeping allies alive, and neutralising strong opponents by just cutting a swath through the frontline. Heroes are also the stars of the campaign and as a result, some marketing genius christened the game a Role Playing Strategy (but why?!).



!!! This just makes us that much more hungry for World of Warcraft, the online RPG.

A smaller combat focus is the real innovation in Warcraft III. Despite similarities to past titles, this is a new strategy experience offering fresh ways to solve problems and more avenues to leverage power: NPC units can be bought to bolster forces, for one. Warcraft III is a first rate production with beautiful cutscenes, stunning music, an enthralling if hackneyed story and more of that lightning fast Blizzard play that we love. Heroes, a pretty engine, stunning audio and above all, diversity brings fresh appeal to an established game style. Warcraft III is mass market, high quality and good value. The whole package. <<



PLUS: Huge variety in play. Great campaign and good shelf life.

MINUS: Story's a bit predictable... anything else?

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

90 95 94

OVERALL

94

The classic series reborn. Try it, like it, and thank Hyper.

WIN

AN AMAZING WARCRAFT III PACK!

■ To celebrate the long awaited arrival of the beast of an RTS/RPG that is Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos, Hyper would like to offer readers the chance to win something very special.

Thanks to Vivendi Universal and Blizzard, we have five cool Warcraft III packs to give away. Each pack contains a very cool Warcraft III action figure that is exclusive to this competition, a tasty Warcraft III t-shirt and a copy of the staggeringly good Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos.

To enter the comp, just answer the following question:

➤➤➤ **Name all the playable races in Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos.**

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

PRIZE INCLUDES:

- 1 x Warcraft III game – valued at \$99.95
- 1 x Exclusive Warcraft III figure – valued at \$49.95
- 1 x Warcraft III t-shirt – valued at \$44.95



Terms & Conditions: Entry is open to residents of Australia and New Zealand except employees and immediate families of Next Publishing and its agencies associated with the promotion. Only entries completed with these terms and conditions will be eligible. Entry is by mail only. Competition begins 9am 30th July and entries close at 6pm September 11th. In determining eligibility the judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. The winner will be drawn at 9am September 12th at Next Publishing Pty Ltd 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016. Prizes must be taken as offered and are not redeemable for cash. The promoter is not responsible for misdirected or lost mail. The winners will be notified by mail and results published in 109 November issue of Hyper on sale October 2nd. 5 winners will each receive Warcraft III (RRPS99.95), t-shirt (RRPS44.95) and action figure (est. RRPS49.95). Total prize value is <\$974.25>. The promoter is Next Publishing Pty Ltd ABN 88 002 647 645 of 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016.



>> PC

Neverwinter Nights

CATEGORY: RPG >> PLAYERS: 1-Lots >> PUBLISHER: Infogrames >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: June >> REQUIRED: PII-450, 128MB RAM, 1.2 GB HD space

DAN TOOSE prefers to play games by night anyway...

Canadian developers Bioware have won over the PC RPG community in recent years with the brilliant Baldur's Gate series. Their ability to bring the pen and paper game of Dungeons and Dragons to life has been without equal. Neverwinter Nights moves on from Baldur's Gate, making the transition from 2D to 3D visuals, and also from 2nd to 3rd edition D&D rules. Gone is the critically acclaimed Infinity engine, replaced by the ultra-impressive Aurora engine. Why is this so important? Because the new engine gives Neverwinter Nights varying merits as a stand-alone single player game, a multi-player game, and as a tool for RPG enthusiasts to craft their own adventures.

THE WAILING DEATH

Neverwinter, one of the largest safe havens in the Forgotten Realms setting is not quite so safe anymore. A plague dubbed "The Wailing Death" has forced the city into quarantine, as no conventional clerical healing seems to have any effect of curing the disease. Lady Aribeth de Tylmarande, Paladin of Tyr has issued a call for all would-be-heroes to train at the Neverwinter Academy, in the hopes of a champion arising that can find a cure for the plague before it wipes out the entire city.

Things start with character creation, and it immediately becomes apparent that Bioware were not afraid to break away from certain elements of their ultra-popular Baldur's Gate series. For starters, gone are the days

where you could just re-roll your ability scores till you got something you liked. All characters start with a set number of points to spend on their stats, so being particularly strong in one area comes at the expense of another.

The main differences lie in the 3rd edition rules, where characters of any race can play as any class, and multi-classing is handled by simply choosing to advance in a different class when a new level is earned. There are limits and conditions, but as a whole, this is a much more robust system, and allows the player far more freedom





Looks like he has an axe to grind with you



These blue light discos suck!



Stranger in a strange land.



Red spirals of deathness!



Thank heavens for my +4 undies!



Caught in a golden shower



It ain't gonna turn you into a superhero...

to develop their character as they'd like.

Thanks to a heavenly interface, *Neverwinter Nights* plays like a dream. The left mouse button selects basic actions, while the right produces a pop-up radial menu system that suits itself to anything the player clicks upon. For example, clicking on your character shows options for using their abilities, as well as performing actions such as emotes (bow, wave, salute, etc). Of course, there are also the standard inventory, character, map and journal panels, which can be brought up without taking up the whole screen. Like in *Baldur's Gate*, the player can hit pause to make decisions about what actions to take.

A GOOD SLAP IN THE HEAD

Unlike *Baldur's Gate*, the player only has one character directly under their control. The option to take a

henchman along is a constant throughout the game, and there's always the option for spell casters to keep familiars or summon monsters to help out. Basic orders can be given to these followers, such as guard me, heal me, stand your ground, etc. You can also set tactics with your henchman, such as whether to use melee or ranged weapons, how close to your character they should stand, and at what level of damage they should heal you.

For all their usefulness, the henchmen sometimes suffer from rather questionable AI. For example, Tomi the halfling thief will race towards any trap he spots in an effort to remove it for you. That's great most of the time, but sometimes it means he'll go right ahead and open a door to remove a trap he somehow sensed in a nearby room, which may be full of aggressive monsters.

Anyone in a rush to criticise *Neverwinter Nights*' visuals either has a direly crapulent PC, or simply needs a good slap in the head. The 3D engine that drives *NWN* allows the user to swing the viewpoint

Powerful items worth thousands of gold pieces are just sitting there for the taking

around, zoom in or out, and adjust the camera relative to the ground. This makes it that extra bit more versatile than *Dungeon Siege*, which is the only other RPG that *NWN* bears any real resemblance to. This versatility of camera control is a godsend, because it provides a clear, and in many ways cinematic view of this gorgeous RPG.

While the 3D models for the characters and creatures throughout *NWN* aren't really detailed enough to be that impressive, nor their texturing that flash, the way they are animated brings them to life wonderfully. Whether it's swinging a weapon, weaving a spell, ducking under your enemy's blade, or performing any one of the countless number of actions available in *NWN*, the animation is always top notch.

What really makes *Neverwinter*

Nights send jaws dropping are the lighting and shadow effects, which are realistic enough to highlight just how much better they could have been all these years. Each light source can cast a realistic shadow off both the environment, and also the creatures within. Running past a torch mounted on the wall will produce a perfectly animated shadow that grows and shrinks appropriately as the player moves further or closer relative to the light.





BETTER WITH FRIENDS

»»Where *Neverwinter Nights* really has the opportunity to shine is as a multiplayer experience. Besides playing through the single-player adventure with a bunch of friends, or getting nasty with various PvP (Player vs. Player) settings, *NWN* comes with two features that give the owner the opportunity to get as much out of it as they want.

The relatively easy to use Toolset feature allows the user to create everything from small maps with a few monsters, right through to full-length adventures. It should be pointed out that some understanding of scripting and basic programming is required to make anything besides mindless monster-hack sessions. Adventures without the Stone of Recall will certainly keep gamers on their toes, and make for more intense gaming moments.

The brilliant touch however comes in the form of the DM Client, which allows someone to take control of the gaming world on the fly, and run the game much like a DM would in a traditional pen and paper game. This client boasts the same sort of easy to use interface the players use, so there's no need to be a total computer boffin to run a game.



Words can't do the effect justice, anyone who calls themselves a gamer should see this one running.

SHARING THE WEALTH

Neverwinter Nights also features texture packs for 16, 32 and 64MB video cards, so zooming up close shows amazing detail for those with the hardware to do it. Atop all these textures are gorgeous effects such as shiny water, grass and banners that bend and sway in the breeze, misty spray from waterfalls, dynamic weather, and a ton of transparent spell effects help top things off to bring the world to life.

The sound scape is as equally impressive as the visuals, with a fantastic musical score throughout the game, and brilliantly crafted ambient sound effects. The cries of plague victims echo through the streets of *Neverwinter*, and the rowdy bustle of happy drunkards fill the taverns.

While the gaming engine of *Neverwinter Nights* bears few points to fault, the way the single-player adventure has been put together is

another story. Any RPG fan will testify to the fact that finding all the useful items in the game is a must. In most games in this genre, magical items are either found on the mangled corpses of your enemies, or in places that took some exploration or effort to discover. Unfortunately, in *Neverwinter Nights*, containers such as chests are in abundance everywhere, and almost all of them contain potions or gold. Further into the game, powerful items worth thousands of gold pieces are just sitting there for the taking. Even when you're heading through areas regarded as slums, there are chests out on the street that contain items worth more than the owner would earn in a year.

On top of that, no one goes to stop you taking their loot from right under their noses, and it has no effect on your alignment. Thus a paladin can go about looting the homes of the innocent with no repercussions. Dumb.

As the game progresses, the player ends up acquiring so much extra cash that they can easily





Where did Joanna Dark come from?



Ever seen a grown man naked?



I've got you cornered now, evil crate!



Man, lay off the steroids will ya?

afford to buy the best magic items that the storekeepers have to offer, which in some cases are the best items your character can use at the time. All this just detracts from the sense of accomplishment.

FEARLESS ADVENTURERS

There's little sense of true danger in *Neverwinter Nights* unless you crank up the difficulty, thanks mostly to the Stone of Recall that the player is handed as soon as they start the adventure. This magic item allows the player to teleport back to the nearest temple of Tyr, even when in the middle of combat. Once healed up, they can return to the point they came from for a small fee.

The only real danger comes from monsters that can incapacitate your character and stop them from using the Stone of Recall. Simply making this device unusable around hostile monsters altogether would have fixed all of this.

The player can also rest pretty much anywhere they want, which heals the character and followers up to full hit points, even without the

There's little sense of true danger in *Neverwinter Nights*, **unless you crank up the difficulty**

aid of a cleric to cast healing spells. For this reason there seems little reason to play as a cleric, nor to bother bringing one along as a henchman. However, each of the six hirelings available in *NWN* come with their own sub-quest which helps encourage the player to adventure with them all at some point through the game.

Fortunately, the storyline in *Neverwinter Nights* is genuinely entertaining, with enough twists, turns, and sub-plots to ensure that anyone who starts the game will want to finish it. There are heaps of optional quests to complete, and doing so will keep even the swiftest gamers busy for countless hours.

There's a lot of griping in our review of *Neverwinter Nights*, but

that's really just because for the most part, the game is such a joy to play that what problems are there really stick out. *NWN* is lots of fun as it is, and will only get better over time. With people already creating adventures for folks to download and enjoy, *Neverwinter Nights* will no doubt go down in history as a true classic. <<

!!! Let's hope Bioware ramp up the difficulty in *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*



PLUS: Amazing lighting. Great multiplayer opportunities.

MINUS: Single player campaign lacks challenge.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

95 92 82

OVERALL

84

A great RPG that will improve at the hands of its players.





Grand Prix 4

CATEGORY: Racing sim >> PLAYERS: 1-Multi >> PUBLISHER: Infogrames >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >> REQUIRED: PII 400, 16mb video card

JACKSON GOTHE-SNAPE goes looking for Penelope Pitstop.

Goeff Crammond's Grand Prix series is truly a dynasty when it comes to PC gaming. The original Grand Prix and its first sequel were the defining PC racing games when the genre was still in its infancy in the mid-nineties. However there was talk of an overthrow of the king, as the hardly groundbreaking Grand Prix 3 and GP3: Season 2000 were released over the last couple of years ago into a market overflowing with F1 games. Grand Prix 4 is therefore a pivotal title for the series, which perhaps symbolically will also be released for the Xbox. Can his majesty maintain pole position...?

TRADING MIKA FOR MARK

Grand Prix 4 is structurally very similar to its predecessors, despite the new but hardly-improved menu system.

This a no-frills racing game, dedicated to providing an essential F1 experience. Thus the use of the 2001 season data is certainly disappointing, considering GP4's main rival, F12002 from EA Sports, offers the new season's statistics and liveries. Individual carshapes have however been included, and it is nice to see F1's Mr. Nice Guy Mika still around, even if it means that Aussie media-darling Mark Webber is missing.

Out on the track, the competent carshapes epitomise the tone of the visuals. The game still retains the dated graphical feel of GP3, including those ugly in-game massages, although there have been some nice features implemented, like an animated pit crew and marshals, a raised cockpit view, heat haze and an interesting 'visor-cam'. The tracks

are vibrant in terms of objects and colour – Monaco is truly splendid – but the actual textures are fairly dull, with the road in particular lacking the necessary detail to create that desirable sensation of speed. The generic cockpit and wheel definitely need attention, while the cars are almost unnaturally shiny.

Unfortunately, the decent visuals demand a dominant PC to run satisfactorily. The situation is almost laughable, to the point where you might wonder if there is a problem with your PC. F12002 dominates GP4 in terms of efficiency – in GP4 it's a chore trying to squeeze a playable, fair-looking visual set up out of a mid-level machine.

Engine noises are good, particularly gear changes, while the pit radio noises are novel, if

inaccurate. Be prepared to be told to 'watch out for debris' after you lose your own front wing and tyres in a shunt. There's also a 3D audio option for those that demand it.

THE TOKEN GPL REFERENCE

Jumping into the car and whipping out a few laps will initially be very straightforward, thanks to some very generous default driving aids. Steering and throttle help, for those that seek only white-knuckled racing competition, are quite well implemented, striking a balance between input and guidance. Nonetheless, these aids are a travesty for dedicated sim-racers, who will no doubt rush onto the track with perhaps only the newly introduced launch control, which unfortunately reeks of 'afterthought'.



The world-famous Alec Jax, eh?

Riding with alec jax 22



He's just asking for it.



Bugger this, let's do donuts.



Where's the service around here?



Gee, I wonder who sponsored this...



This car comes with a PlayStation.

What becomes apparent about the driving model is its similarity with GP3, which in turn was heavily influenced by GP2. Those quick on the old uptake would be correct in thinking what we have here is a game built upon ancient foundations. Geoff Crammond's team seems to have rested on its mid-90s laurels, as each subsequent release becomes more and more dated. It does allow for an enjoyable racing experience, and it has certainly evolved from previous releases, but lacks a lot of the subtlety more dedicated sims, such as Papyrus' NASCAR and Grand Prix Legends games, or even F12002 offers. In GP4, the improved AI provides some exciting racing (apart from perhaps some exaggerated slipstreaming and the traditional first corner traffic jam), which will please all but the most demanding of sim-fans. There are perhaps a few criminal oversights that should have been fixed, such as the lack of drive through penalties, and a questionable tyre wear/fuel load performance skew, but they are fairly minor.

Thanks to its prehistoric origins, no other game comes close to offering the keyboard playability of the GP series.

Where GP4 gets it right is in its broad appeal. The drivability of the race car, even without aids, will encourage all but the most incompetent drivers. This makes GP4 ideal for those who don't have the time to dedicate to a hardcore simulation, or those casual players who use a joystick or keyboard. Thanks to its prehistoric origins, no other racing game comes close to offering the keyboard playability of the Grand Prix series. If only the game were to offer features the savvy gamer demands, such as online multiplayer and a more intricate force-feedback experience. Nonetheless, that widespread appeal means that GP4 is an excellent introduction to racing

games, particularly for those with high-end machines. Features such as intelligent driving aids, as well as involving telemetry and car setup features (apart from conspicuous absence of suspension modification) cater for almost all but the pickiest racing fans. Perhaps what is best about the Grand Prix series is its loyal online following. Within six months one should be able to download patches and user-made upgrades that not only offer new carshapes, liveries and data, but also track and cockpit graphics, and TV-style presentation mods. Although fans should consider F1 2002 before splashing out, GP4 will please the majority. <<

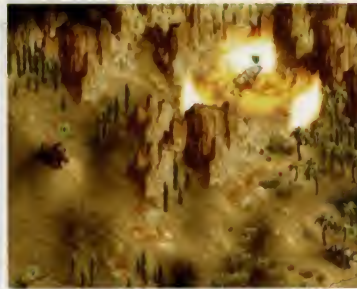
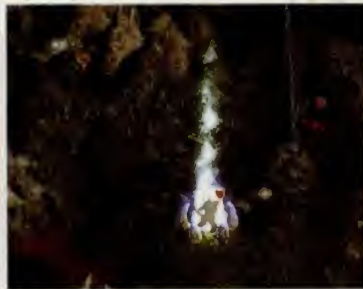
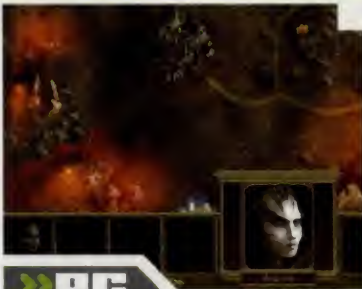
!!! Check out the goings-on at www.grandprixgame.com



PLUS: Good AI, broad appeal.
MINUS: Demanding hardware requirements.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
81	84	85
OVERALL		
84		
Geoff, we yearn for an overhaul.		

REVIEW >> HYPER 55



>> PC

Age of Wonders 2: THE WIZARD'S THRONE

CATEGORY: RTS >> PLAYERS: 1-8 >> PUBLISHER: God Games >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: TBA >> AVAILABLE: Now >> REQUIRED: PII 300, 64MB RAM

DANIEL STAINES sits upon the reviewer's throne...

Though it generally suffices for most difficult games, the term 'steep learning curve' simply doesn't cut the mustard when talking about Triumph Studio's Age of Wonders 2. The 'curve' part of 'learning curve', you see, implies a gradual, almost gentle gradient — something that one can ascend with a little oomph and tenacity. There is definitely nothing of this sort in AoW 2. From the moment the strangely unhelpful tutorial is dispensed with, players are faced with a sheer cliff of difficulty that must be overcome before any meaningful progress can be made whatsoever. The climb is arduous, frustrating and long, but ultimately worth the perseverance necessary to complete it. Hard work yields rewards.

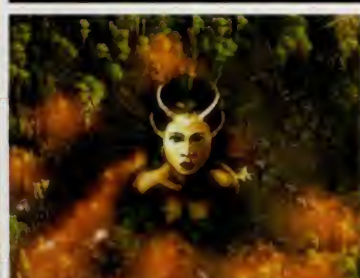
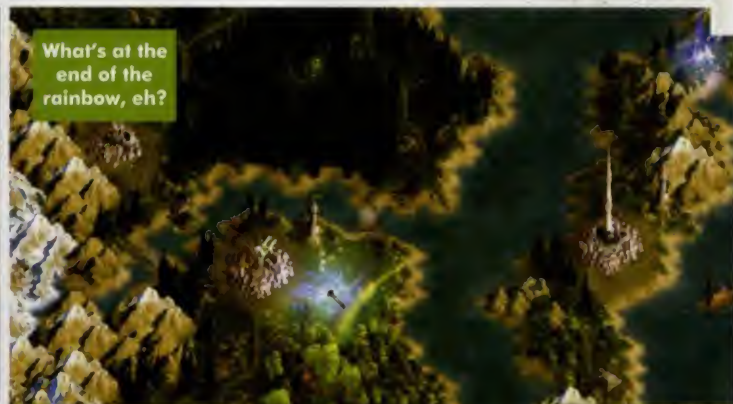
REPEATED FAILURE
And you better believe that there'll be plenty of hard work to be done. Unless you're some kind of strategy super-brain or have had the pleasure of experiencing the critically acclaimed original, you'll likely have more than a bit of trouble with your initial forays in AoW 2. A cursory glance at a few online help forums immediately gives one a good idea what they're in for, with subject headers such as "the first mission is impossible" and "how do I play this game without enduring constant, humiliating defeat" being disturbingly common. In most cases, these threads reveal a pivotal point that has to be grasped if any enjoyment is to be gleaned from AoW 2 at all: that it is not a real-time strategy title.

Attempting to play this game like Red Alert or Starcraft will end in repeated failure. Hoarding resources and building armies of cheap grunts for an inevitable rush will result in swift defeat quicker than you can say 'I'm a tactically impotent, grunt rushing retard'. The primary strategic focus of AoW 2 is aggressive, and thus the sacred 3 E's (not E3: that would get us sued) of turn-



based strategy gaming — exploration, exploitation and extermination — must be employed if success is to be achieved. A quick conquest of enemy towns and resources is top priority throughout a majority of the game's many, many missions and defensive minded players will often find themselves coming off second best because of their style of play — particularly online. Whether or not this entails that AoW 2 has inherently unbalanced gameplay is debatable. Ultimately, we think it

What's at the end of the rainbow, eh?



Let me guess - Mother Nature?



Man, I need a street directory bad.



Holland, famous for its chocolates.



Pac-man must be around here...



It's that new comedy film, Dome Alone.

makes for a more focused and enjoyable experience. The frantic expansionist rush to control all of a given map's pivotal resources and towns is an enjoyment exclusive to games such as these and is employed extremely successfully here. While defence does eventually have to be taken care of, it's often a peripheral concern that can be dealt with by simply setting up a few structures and units in the production queue and letting your town AI deal with the rest. Happily, micro-management is definitely not a part of the AoW 2 experience. There's no finding a green square to put a turret, no vast and complicated technology tree and, thank god, no anal resource management.

STRATEGIST'S DELIGHT

There are two basic types of resources: mana and gold. Mana is used to fuel spellcasting and research, gold for structures and units. In both instances, harvesting is simply a matter of finding a source, moving a friendly unit on top of it and letting the goods roll in. The

Quick conquest of enemy towns and resources is top priority

simplicity of this system makes it very easy for resources to change hands quickly and greatly increases the number of tactical options available to a discerning player. For example, one might choose to concentrate on quickly attacking an enemy's towns in order to control their means of production or, instead, take over resources guerrilla style and starve them to death economically. So while success in AoW 2 does indeed rely on a certain level of aggressiveness, there are enough choices available within this style of play to alleviate any repetitiveness that may result from it.

Unfortunately, there are few downsides to AoW 2 that definitely merit a mention. The game's audio/visual presentation, for one, is nothing short of appalling. Though a marked improvement on the original, AoW 2's 3D engine looks

amazingly bland – especially now that Warcraft III has just been released. Drab models and textures that blur terribly upon zooming in are par to the course and are only equalled in their general shoddiness by what is arguably the worst set of sound-effects to come out of a turn-based strategy game since Ancient Art of War. We realise that good graphics and sound are not really a pivotal feature for games like this, but still – did they have to be this bad?

Probably not, but we can forgive Triumph Studios this relatively minor mistake because AoW 2 is one of the best turn-based strategy games ever released. If it weren't for its insanely difficult learning curve, we would've undoubtedly given it the Big Rubber Stamp. It is a hardcore strategist's delight. <<

!!! Want more info? Just surf to www.ageofwonders.com. Simple!



PLUS: Streamlined resource and unit management.

MINUS: Insane difficulty. Dodgy presentation.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

65 62 90

OVERALL

85

Excellent strategy gaming that may be too hard for some.

REVIEW

>>> HYPER 57



PS2

Tekken 4

CATEGORY: Fighting >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Namco >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: September >>

BRYCE MCDONOUGH lays the smack down on Namco...

For children of the PlayStation generation, the Tekken series has always been synonymous with cutting edge graphics and unsurpassed gameplay. When it comes to 3D fighting games, there are very few which have managed to really make an impression - and the sheer popularity of Tekken over the years has spoken volumes for its playability and pure enjoyment factor. In arcades around the world, the battle for supremacy between Virtua Fighter 4 and Tekken 4 was always going to be an interesting one, and now that they have both come home to the same console, Round 2 is about to begin.

THE DEVIL GENE

Tekken 4, sadly, was not quite the arcade mega-smash Namco and

Tekken fans around the world were hoping for. In fact, the word 'flop' seems significantly more accurate, as machines sit deserted in otherwise crowded arcades. Machines initially ordered with high expectations have been relegated to the small unit in the back corner with the broken stick, and in some cases disappeared completely. The situation isn't quite so dire in the golden land of Oz, but the level and volume of competition simply doesn't compare with Tekken 3 or Tekken Tag, even in their later stages.

So how did Namco, one of the world's most respected game developers, de-popularise the most successful fighting game series since Street Fighter 2? And now that the game has made it to the PlayStation 2, is it a good conversion, an

improved package, or an inferior mockery of our hardware? Yes, yes, and no.

In true Tekken style, the intro movie sets the scene for the story, although for the first time ever it is simply a port of the intro from the arcade version. A few extra scenes have been slipped in to introduce us to the new characters, but there are no other changes, and the Mishima family cycle once again dominates. Not that it matters much - the storyline in

Tekken has always been one of the better ones out there.

When it comes down to it, it's irrelevant, but better this time nonetheless.

Time has moved forward two years since Tekken 3 (TTT and Tekken Advance hold no place in the story). Heihachi, obsessed with his plans to splice his own genes with that of Ogre's,





Paul, the human shaving brush.



Underarm odour saves the day.



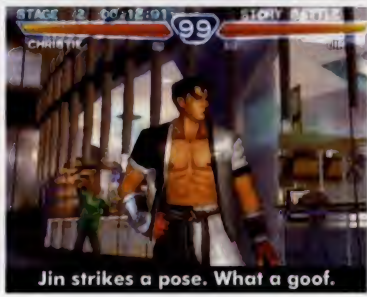
Here kitty, kitty...



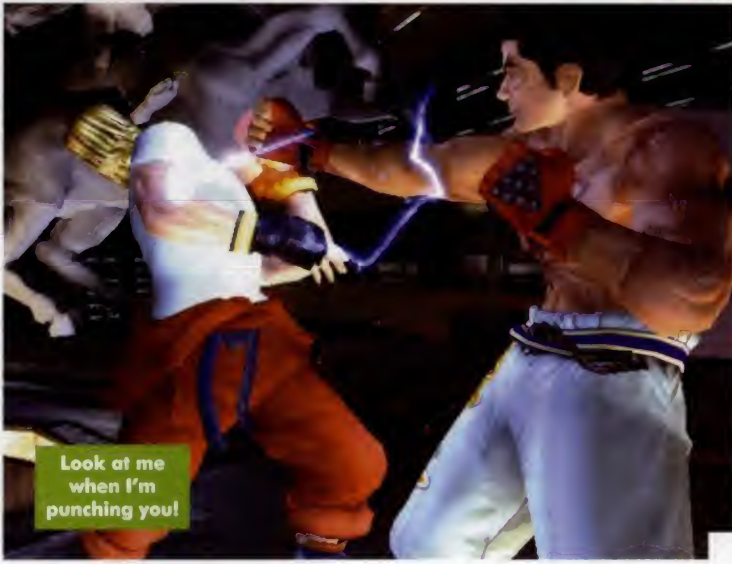
"Wanna build sandcastles?"



If you don't stop flexing, you'll pop.



Jin strikes a pose. What a goof.



Look at me when I'm punching you!

finds that the procedure requires a third and final part - the devil gene. After the third tournament, Jin was mortally wounded by Heihachi himself, and then took flight in devil form, however he is nowhere to be found (no one ever thinks to look in Brisbane). His research brings him to an old photograph of Kazuya's burnt and torn body, his own son he had thrown into a volcano after the second tournament. Of special interest was the small wings protruding from his back - he had sold his soul to the devil and perhaps still carried the gene.

Heihachi learnt the remains had been recovered by a bio-gene company, G Corporation, and organised an attack on their research facilities to steal Kazuya's remains. Only one problem - he isn't dead. Kaz makes short work of the infiltrating force and escapes. Knowing it's the best way to draw him out, Heihachi holds the Fourth Iron Fist Tournament, with the Mishima Zaibatsu as first prize.

Many old characters return to the fray, each with their own

motivations, and a few new faces pop up for good measure. Overall there isn't a huge amount to complain about here, although there are some glaring omissions from the cast. On top of that, after the huge cast of 35 or so for TTT, 20 characters is a big step down, even clocking in under that of Tekken 3. On the upside, the repetition factor is low, with every character noticeably different. Even Jin, Heihachi and Kazuya are all decidedly different, and no one else has brought along relatives this time (...or have they?).

SWEET AS SUGAR

Graphics aren't everything, or so they say. Well, that's true, but they are an important part of any game, and of the overall presentation and impression as well. On this front, Tekken 4 may well be the most beautiful game on PS2 thus far - or at least for 3D fighters. The character models are smoother than 16 year-old scotch, and much larger than ever before. In sheer size on screen, the normal characters now take up nearly as much space as the

Although the models and backgrounds are rendered in **three flawless dimensions**, there is a very cartoony aspect to them

oversized characters in the past, which makes their presence on-screen that much more impressive.

The level of detail on the characters is high, perhaps more so than VF4 (except for the faces) and definitely more colourful. In fact, that is perhaps the defining point. Although the models and backgrounds are rendered in three flawless dimensions, there is a very cartoony aspect to them. Bright - almost gaudy - colours dominate the palette. Gone are the washed-out colours we thought we were sentenced to for the life of the PS2. Namco have proven once again they know what they are doing and have led by example. Animation is also crisper than ever before, with a lot of the standard moves getting a

makeover. Whether they were motion-captured or not, they look a lot better. So far things sound about as sweet as sugar candy, and to be perfectly honest, the presentation of Tekken 4 is close to flawless.

Gameplay advancements in Tekken 4 take quite a different tack, though still change the playing field as much as ever before. The most noticeable difference, and definitely





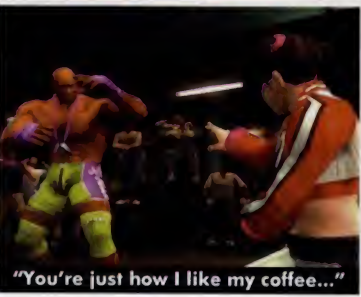
"Pluck my eyebrows? Why you... you...!"



Human cyborg relations?



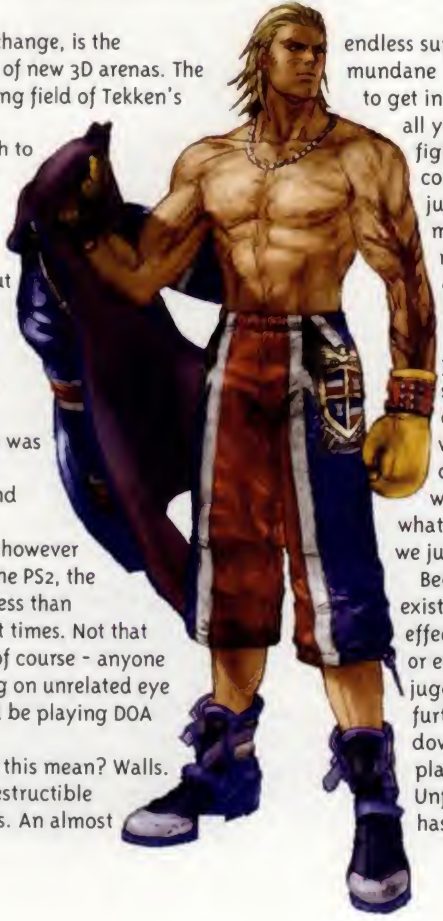
Ooh, I hate getting my socks wet.



"You're just how I like my coffee..."

the biggest change, is the introduction of new 3D arenas. The infinite playing field of Tekken's past is gone forever, much to the joy of far too many under-educated journalists out there. The separation between the playing field and the backgrounds was never really noticeable and definitely unobtrusive, however with TTT on the PS2, the illusion was less than convincing at times. Not that this matters of course - anyone concentrating on unrelated eye candy should be playing DOA anyway.

What does this mean? Walls. Obstacles. Destructible environments. An almost



endless supply of mundane 'realistic' things to get in your way, when all you want to do is fight. It means wall combos instead of juggles, movement restrictions, and downright frustration at times. Not the frustration of someone who doesn't know what they are doing either - we know exactly what we're doing... we just don't like it. Because the existence of walls effectively doubles, or even triples, the juggle period, further toning down has taken place. Unfortunately, it has now got to the

point where a guaranteed ground hit is far preferable to a mid-air hit. Why do a move which regularly does 20 damage if you only get 40% of its value? Drive them into the ground and do a ground hit worth all 15 of its damage - your finisher just doubled in effectiveness. What does this translate to? Longer, more complex and challenging juggles are virtually of no use whatsoever. Outside of combo exhibitions, the range of juggles you are likely to encounter are even more streamlined than in the days of Tekken Tag.

LOOKS REALLY COOL

The Just-Frame system is good, however not utilised enough - all characters should have several. The new just-frame moves require perfect timing, but have much more desired results if performed correctly... such as additional damage, completely safe recovery, and sometimes even unblockable properties. Usually accompanied by a pretty blue trail or spark, you'll need to spend some time searching

if you want to find them. The impact of sidestep in Tekken 3 was immeasurable and created a fantastic 3D playing field. This time around, the sidestep has been taken to its next logical uhh... step... with the sidewalk. The ability to jump straight up has been sacrificed for the sake of 'true' sideways movement. Tap up or down, and your character will take an evasive step to the side as before. However, keep your finger on the button and your character will begin to circle the opponent in that direction. If your opponent has the same idea, then you will circle each other, which looks really cool. If you are both holding the same direction, then you simply walk in tandem into





the foreground or background. Not quite the same level of freedom as the 8-way run of Soul Calibur, however at its most basic level, the movement here is easily accessible and quite effective.

The position change complements this well, allowing you to grab your opponent, and without doing any damage, simply swapping positions with them, or pushing them any direction you desire. Next to a wall this is particularly desirable, as the wall stun then allows guaranteed hits.

Gameplay options are plentiful, and should keep you busy for quite some time. Regular Arcade is relegated to the second spot, as Story Battle sits at the top. The same as Arcade, however the character's background story is introduced along with a sequence of sketch art. The art is generally of typically high Japanese standards and the voice-over guy makes sure you don't miss anything by reading along. At the end of it all, character specific endings kick in. Impressively, these are done with the game engine (with a little help from a filter or

two to make things look even better) and crap all over the lame Tekken Tag Tournament afterthoughts.

THE FORCE OF TEKKEN

Alongside Arcade is a collection of fighting game options - Time Attack, VS Battle, Team Battle, Survival, Practice. On top of Practice, there is a Training option where you must complete a certain amount of your character's moves as quickly as possible.

Perhaps coolest of all is the Tekken Force mode, similar to that found in Tekken 3, but much, much better. For those who don't know, Tekken Force dumps you in a 3D environment versus a seemingly endless supply of drone characters, followed by a 'boss' at the end of each level. This one is definitely very cool and will keep you entertained when you're on your own.

In fact, that's probably what Tekken 4 does best - works well as a one player game. Whilst the

drawcard of being a fighting game means competitive play, the additions to the PS2 version mean that when there is no one else about, there is still some fun to be had.

Tekken 4 is still a decent game - it is only that as the next in the Tekken series, it had so much potential, and failed to supply so much of what Tekken players love. The joy and rewards of juggling have been removed in favour of a poking 'slug-fest'. Luck plays a much higher factor in any level of versus play, and short of wall combos, the new system doesn't offer much else to really be 'figured out'.

At least we can take pleasure in the inclusion of a 60hz option for the PAL market. After so many years, we have finally been given a console version equivalent to that in our arcades - which makes it that much more fun. For this reason alone, anyone who has ever been a Tekken fan should consider adding this to their collection. <<<

!!! The fashion sense in this game is horrendous! Just check out Heihachi's gear...



PLUS: Does anyone ever get sick of beating up their friends?

MINUS: One of the weaker Tekken games. Terrible music.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

92 55 82

OVERALL

85

Ha-Ha-step the night away, with Joey Tekken's latest opus.



PS2

GT Concept 2002: TOKYO - GENEVA

CATEGORY: Racing >> PLAYERS: 1-2, link-play >> PUBLISHER: SCEI >> PRICE: \$69.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

JACKSON GOTHE-SNAPE leaves this one for dust.



Gran Turismo is a name that is almost universally revered by gamers around the world. The original concept was quite simple. By attaching the consumer's ideal game structure, to a solid, rewarding driving model, and to genre-leading graphics, Polyphony Digital (PD) succeeded in selling in excess of 25 million copies of the series. Perhaps more telling however has been the respect the series has earned from car manufacturers.

There has been collaboration between PD and these manufacturers over the last year or so to demo virtually all of the cars shown at industry trade shows. GT Concept 2002 Tokyo-Geneva is effectively GT Concept Tokyo, recently released in Japan, updated with extra cars for PAL territories.

A FORGETTABLE CONCEPT

The "Tokyo-Geneva" represents the origin of the included cars - many were featured in the most recent Tokyo and Geneva motor shows. If at this point you're thinking that the game will resemble GT3 with the addition of some funky concept cars, listen hard. GT Concept 2002 Tokyo-Geneva is, in relative terms, a farce. It is a more expensive, inferior product to GT3, and one that will not escape exposure of its true nature. Let us begin with a comparison of numbers. GT3 offered more than 150 cars - as it was, around a third of that offered in Gran Turismo 2 - and around twenty tracks. GT Concept 2002 offers around 100 cars and six tracks - as well as the now standard course reversals. Apart from this, the game features near-invisible

improvements in graphics, and inaudible aural upgrades. Most criminal however is the withdrawal of GT3's tuning and purchasing systems, with very little taking its place.

However, it may be best to put aside GT3 comparisons for a moment. 100 cars is certainly a wealth in its own right. There is both novelty and desire bound within the game's car list. One may select the dinky Ford Ka, a fictitious Mini Cooper S tourer, or the supposedly cute Toyota pod, which is featured in its own unlockable race mode revealing its 'expression' capabilities. On the other hand, included are some elegant beasts such as the Jaguar XKR and the Aston Martin Vanquish, as well as everything in between. Rally cars, race cars, PD's dream cars and the

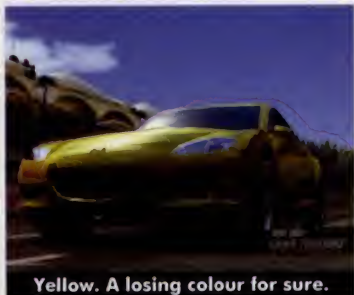
famed concept cars are all available, suiting almost everyone's tastes.

Each car looks beautiful out on track, with magnificent reflections, surrounded by intricate and varying tracks. There are supposed to be marginal improvements in the graphics over GT3, but the team at Hyper HQ struggled to notice many at all, in a comparison of the two games racing on Midfield Raceway - apart from some different advertising. Nonetheless, GT3's visuals remain the system's yardstick, to which GT Concept's graphics unsurprisingly measure up. The sounds too, retain that GT3 flavour, particularly in their variety.

MISCONCEPTION

The game offers a very basic arcade structure. Each track requires you to

We head to Japan, in search of Bryce



Yellow. A losing colour for sure.



See? The yellow car is last.



Now that's a winning paintjob.



"Pull up to the bumper, babe"

Well, that's just silly.



complete a license test, involving simply a regular lap in a particular car, and offers both Amateur and Professional level single races (and ultimately an Ace mode when all is unlocked), with five other cars on the track. Success will see you gain access to more cars, and at different points in your progression, unlock features such as the aforementioned pod race.

Although nicely visually represented, succinctly displaying the game's demands, the structure's utter simplicity is thoroughly disappointing. There are no championships, and the car reward system is both straightforward and excessively generous. GT3 players will have no trouble unlocking everything well within ten hours. The rally mode returns, but only via one track, and starts to frustrate as you compare its sterile, wide-tracked style of play, to that offered by the range of quality rally titles now available for PS2.

The car purchase and tuning systems, arguably the finest features of the GT series, are sorely missing from the game. The abundance of

The abundance of rewarded cars, together with the lack of tuning options means the player's intimacy with the vehicles is lost.

rewarded cars, together with the lack of tuning options means the player's intimacy with the vehicles is lost. This also impacts on the driving model, as a lot of the subtlety in racing goes unnoticed, as the player, through this loss in intimacy, doesn't identify each car's handling quirks.

Furthermore, it is time Sony pulled out their wallets and offered some good ol' fashioned car damage. As seen with the recent example of Project Gotham on Xbox, the old excuse of the manufacturers not allowing their cars to be damaged in the game just doesn't cut it any more. The AI too, could be a little more dynamic. It is, after all, an imaginary racing environment. It is clear that with GT Concept,

Will there be a GT4?
Is Eliot the Hyper pinball champ?

Polyphony Digital intended to offer a less intimidating, more accessible experience. In that regard, the game is successful. Yet GT3, through its license tests and progressive gameplay, could not be accused of being menacing. The series producer,

Kazunori Yamauchi, has been quoted as saying: "I've wanted to release a 'lighter' version of Gran Turismo all along, and that was my excuse to [make GT Concept]." Excuse indeed. Sure, this version has newer and funkier cars, but there is no excuse for purchasing this title when GT3 is available for twenty smackers less. The greatness of Gran Turismo has truly diminished. <<



PLUS: Plenty of cars, that top GT look and feel.

MINUS: Too short, no purchasing or tuning, sterile racing.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

91 90 69

OVERALL

64

One for collectors only.

REVIEW >> HYPER 63



Prisoner of War

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

DAVID WILDGOOSE is a prisoner of Hyper HQ. Muahaha!

Qf all the game concepts I've encountered throughout my years as a games critic, none has ever struck me as quite as utterly bizarre as this one. Sure, the idea of root vegetable strategy (Pikmin), giant kung-fu fighting cows (Black & White), or a monkey in a ball (Super Monkey Ball) might seem strange to an outsider, but veteran gamers would hardly bat an eyelid. Yet the conceit of Prisoner of War is so thoroughly left-field it not only has had us scratching our heads in bewilderment, but simply beggars belief it was green-lighted by Codemasters' marketing department.

FLUSHED OUT

The central premise is this: you play an inmate captured by the Nazis at the height of World War II and

interned in a prisoner of war camp in the German countryside. Throughout the game you must observe a daily routine. Three times a day you assemble with your fellow prisoners for a roll call, your absence at which commences a camp wide search until you're (usually) flushed out of your hide-hole. In between, free time, exercise, and meal breaks fill the hours of each day during which you're confined to specific areas of the camp. So you trudge around the muddy yards, chatting and playing dice with a host of other beleaguered POWs, kowtowing to the German guards, and eating bowl after bowl of gruel. It's not exactly inspiring stuff, is it? Chances are, then, that hatching an escape plan might cross your mind...

THE PLAN IS HATCHED

Inevitably, escaping forms the central thrust of the gameplay. The only remaining question is: how? This is where your fellow prisoners, particularly the veterans, come in handy. Some are only too ready to offer advice on evading the patrolling guards, on the most viable route out of the place and the tools you'll need to succeed; others will reveal even more pertinent information given the right incentive (i.e. currency).

So you chat to the eclectic mix of inmates — they're all drawn from various European countries, while the hero himself is American — and collect various objectives. For

instance, you may have to sneak into a particular building and steal a crowbar you'll need later on. Or you'll have to spend some time gambling to accumulate currency through a small selection of mini-games (throwing dice, tossing stones at tin cans, etc). It passes the time, you know.

Once the plan is hatched and the necessary equipment at your disposal, it's time to execute the daring deed. Here, Prisoner of War plays like a fairly clumsy imitation of Metal Gear Solid. There's the third-person over-the-shoulder perspective. There's a radar on-screen that shows the guards in your immediate vicinity and view





They don't even allow Hyper subscriptions



The new PS2 boredom simulator.



KOMMANDANT
Good morning gentlemen. It appears you are all present and correct. Dismissed.

Well that was easy enough.



That prankster is deflating tyres!



Ooh, rats on toast again.



Stop, or I will fire!

Er... I'm just doing chin-ups, really!

Utility Compound

cones indicating the extent of their vision. You can lean against buildings and peer round corners. You can throw stones or tap on walls to distract guards. You can crouch down low in an effort to hide. You can use items such as binoculars (to monitor guard patrol routes) and boot polish (to further disguise yourself at night). You can conceal yourself and crawl around under buildings and vehicles. In fact, just about the only thing you can't do is eliminate the guards by shooting them, knocking them out or incapacitating them in any other fashion.

ONE FALSE STEP

Reason being, Prisoner of War is all about stealth and cunning. It's a game for the patient gamer and the patient gamer only. There's no action; indeed, if you do encounter some action, it can only mean you've screwed up and the Germans have shot you in the leg. Instead, it's all about careful planning and avoiding confrontation.

In a sense, it's also a puzzle game. By chatting to the other prisoners, you formulate the escape plan. And by

If you do encounter some action, it can **only mean you've screwed up...**

that I mean, there is only one escape plan — you must do what they instruct you to do. Sure, you can sneak around off your own bat, checking out the various buildings (and collecting any valuables within), but you'll do so to no immediate end. The goal may be to escape, but the game objectives are only those handed to you by the other prisoners. As such, completing said objectives is a trial-and-error process. There's only one way to do each one, and until you perfect it you won't progress, no matter how many possible alternative actions you can imagine.

This makes the whole game somewhat formulaic. You start at one camp, chat to the prisoners, complete your objectives, then move onto the next camp and repeat the process.

You might imagine it could become

frustrating, particularly on some of the longer objectives, when one false step means restarting all over again. Yet, like GTA 3, Prisoner of War has a fairly forgiving save/continue method, whereby if you are caught

where you shouldn't be, the game continues with only a minimal penalty — essentially, you're dumped back to your

living quarters stripped of your contraband equipment. It's not enough of a disruption that you'll constantly be reloading savegames, which is a blessed relief in my books.

Bizarre concept aside, Prisoner of War forms a reasonably unremarkable game. It's pretty good all round, but rarely scales great heights. If the concept of Metal Gear crossed with Hogan's Heroes appeals, you just might like it. <<<

!!! Go rent The Great Escape for inspiration. Top film.



PLUS: Novel idea backed by solid stealth gameplay.

MINUS: Somewhat repetitive and lacking in excitement.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
70	65	75
OVERALL		
74		

A conventional game wrapped in a bizarre concept.



Laying the smackdown on yo grass.



Wimbledon's elite "poo" court.



That's one funky baseline.

PS2

Pro Tennis: WTA Tour



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

CAM SHEA learns how to lob... over and over...

With WTA Tour, Konami have essentially provided us with a tutorial on how NOT to make a tennis game. In fact, we're not even sure what category to place this one in. The dull visuals, slow pace and lack of flair indicate that it's not an arcade game, but then again its lack of any discernable strategy and poor AI mount a strong argument that it's not meant to be a sim either. Perhaps we'll just throw this one in the bad game category... and leave it there.

SOME HIDDEN BUTTON

WTA Tour features a fill in the blank list of modes — Tour, Exhibition and Tournament. So far, so average. The player lineup is good though, a veritable who's who of women's tennis. Hop into a game however, and you'll find that WTA's gameplay is a completely messy affair. For a start, you have no fine control over your player's movements — it's simply not built into the game. Tap left or right and the player takes a significant hop in that direction. Bad game, bad! Next up we have the extremely limited stroke play. You

have the usual assortment of buttons — slice, topspin, flat and lob, but the actual shot you perform seems to be more dependent on your positioning relative to the ball. Most of the time you'll end up hitting low lolly pop lobs to the opposition. Either that or fully-fledged lobs. You'll swear that there's some hidden button that you don't know about.

Compared to a game like Slam Tennis, where each type of shot is clearly illustrated by different animations and a different end result, WTA's strokeplay looks and feels utterly generic. The range of animations Konami bothered to put in this game is poor — you'll see the same swing animations over and over again, and guess what? If there isn't an animation for the shot you're trying to play, the game just throws in a different one or you miss the ball entirely. For example, if you're not well positioned and the ball comes in at your feet, chances are your player will simply take a normal swing... about two seconds after the ball has gone past.

GO FOR A SMASH

There is nothing instinctive about the gameplay here — no point saving desperate lunges and quick athletic reactions, just glitchy, dull rallies. You can't even work your opponent around the court then look for a winner. To make matters even worse, it's often hard to judge the ball's movement so you can position yourself correctly. Combine this with the clumsy inertia laced control and lack of stroke variety and you have a forgettable game.

The AI in WTA Tour is quite poor as well. The number of times during doubles we saw both CPU players go for a smash and generally get in one another's way was embarrassing. Still, tennis games

are usually more fun in multiplayer, and WTA Tour is... but only barely. It's simply too hard to get a decent

rally going. Multiplayer games are characterised by mysteriously missed shots, a huge numbers of lobs, no fluidity and a definite lack of strategy. This is a drab, awkward game. Give it a miss. <<<

!!! Mario Tennis for GCN can't come soon enough.



PLUS: Serving is quite well implemented.

MINUS: Pity nothing else is.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

73 67 65

OVERALL

62

Virtua Tennis' inbred semi-retarded cotton picking cousin.



PS2

Men In Black II: ALIEN ESCAPE

CATEGORY: Shoot 'Em Up >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Infogrames >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: M >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

ELIOT FISH is still trying to forget his last alien abduction...

Bad memories of various movie to game conversions came to mind as soon as *Men In Black II: Alien Escape* beamed into the office. Various "action/adventures" over the years, based on films, have attempted to provide the player with interactive scenes from the film but usually always fail to deliver any kind of playable game in the process. We've seen enough of those.

To our delight, *Men In Black II: Alien Escape* is a no-holds barred shoot 'em up. The movie's plot has been thrown out the window, and in its place is a fun, crazy, almost Doom-like blast 'em game.

DOUBLE TROUBLE

Agent Kay and Agent Jay (not really looking like their movie counterparts) are equipped to the teeth with some super-hot weaponry in this game. Each character carries three different weapons that can power up to varying stages, transforming them into homing, spread and area weapons of intense firepower. If you get slammed by some alien attacks, you drop

consecutive powerups for the weapon you are using, leaving you only a few seconds to pick them up again and keep your gun at maximum strength — the whole powerup concept is like old-school scrolling 2D shooters. The appeal of *Alien Escape* is thus much the same: dodge, shoot, dodge, obliterate, get powerup, yell etc.

The variety in enemy types is good. You have the usual grunts who keep their ground and shoot at you, but then there are the charging aliens who try to run you down, and the sentry types that have deadly attacks if you linger in their line of sight. There are also small robotic drones that bomb you, tougher versions of the grunts, and more. Not to mention the bosses.

CLASSIFIED INFORMATION

To inspire you to continue playing, *Alien Escape* has a host of unlockables. For starters, there are different game modes to unlock, as well as information on the making of *MIB II* and profiles for all the

aliens and characters in the game. There's even a survival mode that pits you against a relentless horde of cannon-fodder aliens to see just how long you can hold out.

The controls for the game are quite simple, with the shoulder buttons supplying the very handy left and right strafing movements that you will use incessantly to stay alive. Our only gripe is that the way the camera lurches around when it rotates tends to sometimes be disorientating, and seems to induce motion sickness. If you're the kind that sometimes finds 3D games get your stomach churning, you

may find the camera movements a little hard to bear. But aside from the imperfect controls, there's never a real problems negotiating the large, multi-tiered levels full of alien cannon fodder.

Alien Escape is not a brilliant game, but it's definitely above average for the usual movie-to-game action title. There's enough trigger-happy shooter play here to keep most gamers happy, just don't expect anything much deeper. <<

!!! Rumours abound that there will be a *Men In Black 3*.



PLUS: Relentless shoot 'em up action. Arcade style gameplay.

MINUS: No mid-mission continue points.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

83 80 75

OVERALL

77

You don't need to be a fan of the film to enjoy this one.

REVIEW

>> HYPER 67



XBOX

Buffy the Vampire Slayer

CATEGORY: Beat 'em up >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: EA >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: August 16 >>

CAM SHEA needed a Buffy game like most people need air to breath...

Euffy the Vampire Slayer could so easily have become another victim of the prevailing paint by numbers approach to licensed videogames. After all, the show has all the ingredients for a stock standard licensed game — lots of action, lots of action with the undead and supernatural, and seriously gorgeous women. Thankfully, Buffy on Xbox is anything but a typical licensed game.

ICING ON THE CAKE

In gameplay terms, Buffy is an out and out action game from start to finish. Fortunately, developers The Collective knew that this wouldn't be enough to satisfy fans. Buffy freaks will tell you that the show is character and dialogue driven, with

the amazing fight scenes being the icing on the cake. A Buffy videogame simply could not represent the license authentically without an emphasis on story and character interaction. Thus, The Collective came up with the basic storyline, then recruited Chris Golden and Tom Sniegowski — authors of many of the Buffy novels and comic books, to provide the dialogue, help polish the story and ensure the game's consistency with the mythology and the time period. The result is an interactive Buffy experience.

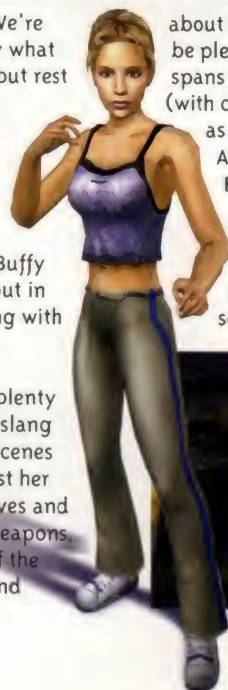
The game plays like a lost episode (or two) from season 3, a classic time in the Buffy continuum. All the major characters were still around — including Buffy, Angel, Cordy, Willow, Xander, Giles and Spike, and the comic interplay between

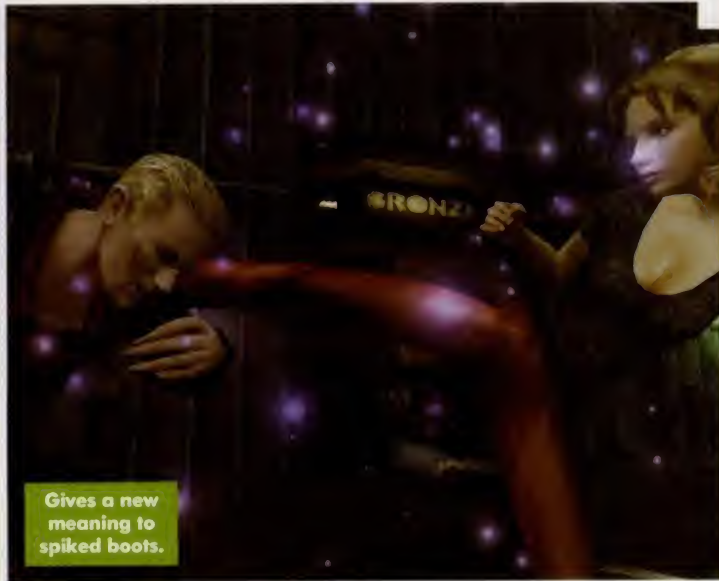
them was at its peak. We're not going to give away what happens in the game, but rest assured the scenario is classic Buffy fare.

The story is advanced through cutscenes within missions and in the library after missions. Buffy fans will dig hanging out in the library, and chatting with all the members of the Scooby Gang, as the dialogue is laced with plenty of quintessential Buffy slang and jokes. The library scenes also allow Buffy to boost her abilities, learn new moves and occasionally get new weapons.

Of course, the bulk of the game takes place out and

about in Sunnydale, and fans will be pleased to hear that the game spans all the classic Buffy settings (with one or two exceptions, such as Spike's Factory). The library, Angel's mansion and The Bronze are all immediately recognisable, and the attention to detail is admirable. The high school even includes the dramatic setting where Angelis killed





Gives a new meaning to spiked boots.



This'll make a handy toothpick later.



But does she listen to Slayer?



Buffy has balls, but not that kind...



This is for fouling on the black!



How romantic, Buffy...



Buffy gets straight to the point.

Miss Calendar. Great stuff. Fighting in such familiar settings is very cool, as is exploring The Collective's fleshed out Sunnydale. Other settings include the docks, catacombs, an industrial factory, a submerged church, and even locations outside Sunnydale entirely.

AMAZINGLY FREE FORM

Buffy is a completely linear game in a level progression sense. Although areas often seem quite open, there is usually only one way to go, with alternate paths only leading to secrets or items. Doors unlock and lock to guide you along the correct path, and puzzle solving is almost non-existent. It would have been good to have seen more open level designs, but since the focus is almost entirely on action and story development, it's kind of nice letting the game set a constant pace for you. Plus, the key point with Buffy is that moving from section to section might be linear, but the fighting is anything but. The

combat in Buffy is incredibly well implemented and really establishes a new high watermark for the beat 'em up genre.

The foundation is incredibly simple. X is punch, A is kick, B is jump and Y is used for actions, picking up weapons and for your finishing move. Movement is free roaming, but you can auto-track enemies by holding down the right trigger, and lightly hop in different directions using the B button. From this simple setup comes refreshingly fast and deep combat. The combo system is amazingly free form – allowing you to immediately start stringing together flowing attacks, and seamlessly mixing punches, kicks, leaps and throws. Buffy also has a "Slayer Power" meter, which is used to fuel a whole host of special moves that are executed Matrix-style.

Of course, there's also a huge array of vamp dusting weaponry too. Buffy's primary arsenal includes stakes, a crossbow, holy

An accurately thrown stake or fired crossbow bolt can dust a vamp instantly.

water, hellfire, a modified Super Soaker and the double bladed Reaper Wing. Each weapon feels unique, and is useful in its own way. Of course, the environments are also littered with potential weapons – pool cues, rakes, shovels, baseball bats, sledgehammers and more. Mmm... there's nothing quite like crushing a vamp's skull with the sledgehammer. A whole host of other possibilities are built into the level layouts too. You can throw a vamp through a boarded up window into the sunlight, into the wood jutting out from a dumpster, into fireplaces, into explosive barrels, off rooftops, and so much more. Creativity is definitely rewarded in this game. The potential for memorable fights is epic, and your opponents are largely worthy of the challenge.

STAKES IN THE HEAD

The Collective have put together some very compelling AI – enemies actively hunt you, are able to leap huge distances to get to you, pick up weapons to use against you and attack in numbers. However, they're also realistically fallible, and combined with the freedom in mechanics and options, the result is remarkably organic-feeling fights. Against the smarter enemies every fight is different – sometimes you

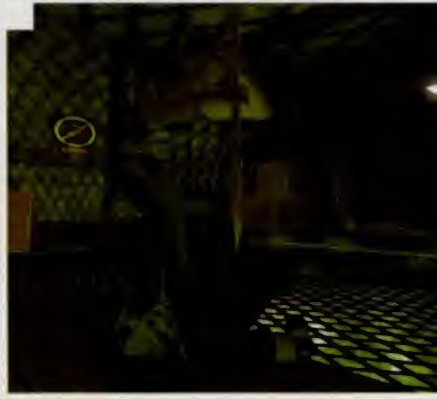


!!! Rumour has it that Anthony Stewart Head could be next in line to play Doctor Who. Woo hool



Virtual Buffy almost does it for us.

Yes, that's a holy water super-soaker. No joke.



You really should floss.



If only I'd brought my dustbuster.

WHAT'S THE STORY BUFFY?

» All the speech in the game has been recorded to great effect by the actual actors... with the notable exception of Sarah Michelle Gellar. The lack of the real Buffy is a shame, but fortunately, The Collective found a Sarah-like to record her lines and she does an excellent job - coming very close to sounding like SMG. As you'd expect, Buffy busts out witty one liners regularly throughout the game. Some might say too regularly, as hearing the same lines over and over does tend to grate. It's a shame that the development team didn't complement the new lines with an extensive selection from the show to ensure minimal repeats. Putting aside the in-game quips, the dialogue in the cutscenes and at the library between missions is excellent, and completely in keeping with the tone and humour of the show.

can be fast and efficient, other times the victory is hard fought. Enemies run the gamut from vamps, zombies and hell hounds, to spiders, supernatural entities and demons, each with its own unique AI. A really refreshing element to the combat is that your enemy's life bar is only an indicator. An accurately thrown stake or fired crossbow bolt can dust a vamp instantly. By the same token, even after you've worn down a vamp's energy bar, unless you stake, decapitate or burn him, he'll keep getting up and coming back for more. Indeed, we've had vamps with two stakes in the head and crossbow bolts stuck all through their body still coming at us. Very cool.

As you can no doubt tell, the combat in Buffy is great fun - even euphoric at times. The fluidity and speed in combat towards the end of the game has to be seen to be believed. You'll be bombarded by several enemies at once, and be fending them off from all sides. The fight scenes are deliciously over the top - you'll send enemies hurtling across the room and slamming into

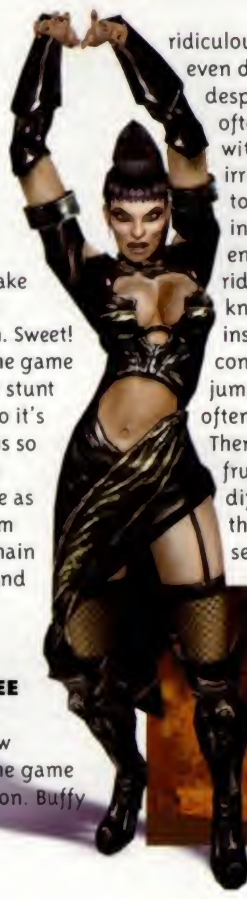
walls. It's tempting to play through sections over and over, simply to try different approaches. The more you experiment, the more entertaining the game becomes and the deeper it gets. Just wait until the first time you stake a vamp in front and then behind in the one motion. Sweet!

All Buffy's moves in the game were captured using her stunt double from the show, so it's no wonder the fighting is so stylish. Of course, kudos must go to The Collective as well for creating a system where so many moves chain together so seamlessly and sync in with the environment so well.

THE POWER OF THREE YEARS AGO

That said, there are a few annoying elements to the game design we should mention. Buffy takes fall damage from

ridiculously small heights and can even die from a high fall - despite the fact that she can often fight on zero health without dying. Also irritating is Buffy's inability to swim. Sure, she drowned in an inch of water at the end of season one, but it's ridiculous that getting knocked into water spells instant death, especially considering enemies can jump back onto dry land, often with rejuvenated health! There's nothing more frustrating on the harder difficulty levels than to slog through a long, tough section, only to get





Buffy does the electric boogaloo.



Knee-deep in the dead, you could say.



Buffy's so hot. Boom-fish.



Want to play frisbee?



"I am the lord of all hellfire!"



Do you like your stake well-done?!

knocked into the water and have to do it all again. Some of the level design also lacks finesse – bottomless pits should be banned, and the game has one too many platform elements later on.

As great as the combat looks, Buffy isn't exactly a shining example of the power of the Xbox. Although sporting decent models for the characters, the game's Slayer Engine is not without its faults. For a start, texture detail ranges from quite good (especially some of the more grimy industrial locales) to plain awful. And where are the hardware supported visual effects? It's rather strange seeing a quality Xbox game that doesn't employ effects like bump mapping and pixel and vertex shading. Buffy certainly could have been a whole lot prettier.

Perhaps the most disappointing aspect of Buffy's visuals, however, is the lighting. Although we can't expect Unreal Warfare quality real-time lighting from a game that has



All Buffy's moves in the game were captured using her **stunt double** from the show...

been in development for well over three years, Buffy's engine is rather primitive. For a start, all environmental shadows are simply painted on to surfaces. In other words, a dark corner is simply a corner painted black – shadows are completely static and Buffy has no interaction with them. It definitely drops the immersion-o-meter down a few notches. Layered on top of this are pseudo real-time shadows for Buffy and other characters. Buffy casts a realistic looking shadow, but again, The Collective have taken some major shortcuts, utilising imaginary light sources, as opposed to actual real-time lighting.

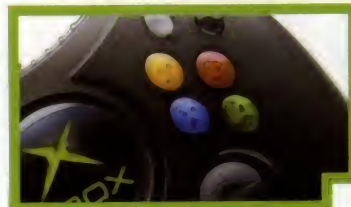
Despite the issues with the engine, Buffy is still a good-looking game.

Combat looks spectacular and the cast have been captured very well, with Buffy in particular sporting an expressive face and an eerie resemblance to the Buffy of season 3. The levels are nice and atmospheric too, and some are downright pretty – we especially liked the glow of late afternoon realised in Angel's mansion.

Overall, Buffy comes close to being the perfect TV to videogame translation. The storyline fits the universe perfectly, the dialogue is delivered in the inimitable Buffy style, the fighting mechanics are incredibly versatile, and the replayability is very high. The Collective have definitely achieved their goal with Buffy on Xbox – this is like playing through a lost episode of the show. Brilliant fun for Buffy fans and gamers alike. <<



It's almost certain that there will be a second Buffy game. Chris Golden and Tom Sniegoski have even said they have a killer idea for the storyline!



PLUS: Awesome fighting mechanics, freedom, storyline.

MINUS: Not enough Bronz. Willow's breasts are too big!

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

86 87 89

OVERALL

90

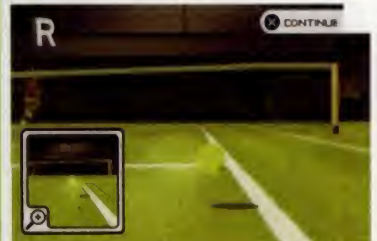
A great 3D beat 'em up, with a story to boot.

REVIEW

>> HYPER 71



Imagine the ball is Damir Dokic.



Eyeing the opponent's balls.



Mixed doubles. Rowr!



Slam Tennis

CATEGORY: Sports >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: Infogrames >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

FRANK DRY throws a tantrum and smashes his racquet...

There has been a rash of tennis games lately, from Next Generation Tennis to WTA Tour Tennis and now this Infogrames-flavoured shot at the title, Slam Tennis. It's a bit of an itchy rash, slightly inflamed, but we're sure it will soon pass. Anyhow, mixing up a bunch of real-life tennis players with some fictional ones, Slam Tennis is a truly schizophrenic gaming experience. Is it simply a double fault?

GAME SET MATCH

The single player game consists of a choice between arcade play, exhibition match, challenge mode or the gruelling championship. Arcade lets you choose a player and hop right in and play a point-based series of matches, whereas the other modes require a more serious approach to play. Challenge mode is an interesting diversion which apes Virtua Tennis almost exactly, but doesn't have the same kind of long term appeal. The championship is where you'll spend most of your time, if only because the game becomes so staggeringly difficult we

doubt you'll even bother to finish it.

The buttons on the Xbox pad are set to a normal shot, slice, top-spin and lob. This works quite well, and depending on your body position, momentum and how far you're pushing on the analogue stick, there are a variety of very realistic shots which can be played. In fact, there seems to be more subtle animation in the players in Slam Tennis than there has been in other tennis games. If you're just short of returning a powerful shot, you won't just miss it, but you'll see your player lunge, or strain to get their racquet to the ball. Sometimes you may even clip it and send it harmlessly into the net. This is certainly one of the most responsive and better-looking tennis games around.

ON YOUR TOES

The controls are very responsive and games can play out quite quickly, so you'll learn to really be on your toes and figure where your opponent will logically play the ball based on their position on the court. This brings us to a point of criticism. It seems that

if you're beating the CPU quite solidly, it will start to cheat. That is, we've seen the CPU return shots at ridiculous angles compared to the animation of how they're hitting the ball. You can see they are going to hit straight down the line, so you get in position, but the ball will fly out at an impossible angle. It's moments like these that you'll grit your teeth and wonder why you're bothering.

The game seems to ride a fine line between offering a realistic simulation of the sport, and an exaggerated arcade style of play. There seems to be a lack of balance here that ruins the level of enjoyment. For instance, challenge matches are frustratingly difficult, and do not

allow for any error in your play. They should probably lose the realism for a bit more arcade style fun. In fact, the championship matches are gruelling in their difficulty.

With a bit more playtesting and tweaking, Slam Tennis could have been a brilliant title. It has all the ingredients to be a killer tennis game, but just falls short. <<

!!! This game improves in multiplayer mode, so grab some friends for more fun.



PLUS: Realistic ball and player physics. Plays well.

MINUS: Too hard - to the point of anger and misery.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

82 81 80

OVERALL

79

A great tennis engine, spoiled by poor game design.



Mums taking their kids to school.



Monster truck or monster ego?



Meh. I prefer the six-wheel drive.



XBOX

4x4 EVO 2

CATEGORY: Off Road Racing >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Take 2/GOD >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: G8+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

STEVE POLAK comes alive for the four-wheel drive...

For once I get to review a racing game I actually have some experience with in real life. You see, I own a 4WD, and unlike the legions of Toorak tractor and Bondi Bus drivers who never let their 4WD get off the bitumen, I actually take the thing off road for a hoon often enough to not give a shit about the duco being scratched by the bush.

Having done it in the real world, it was time to look at off-road action Xbox-style, in this very American game (well, there are heaps of yank tanks in it).

OBVIOUS PROBLEMS

There are two sides to 4x4 EVO 2. There is the more conventional race mode and then the mission-based campaign where you have to overcome the odds to help people, as you hurtle through the bush delivering relief supplies to isolated towns in the wilderness.

The straight racing mode is okay, but has a number of obvious problems. For a start, the camera perspectives are disappointing. The bonnet view is standard, and the action feels fast enough, but given the undulating nature of the terrain you

never get to see enough of what is coming up ahead to really feel like you have enough time to react. The behind car view suffers from similar problems as the hulking off-roader you are driving takes up too much of the screen. This leaves you with the most useful view, the long range Micro Machines inspired overhead angle which gives you a very workable perspective on the action, but the view is from so far overhead that the driving doesn't feel very immediate and the action just looks plain slow.

Altogether, the racing is not that inspired, and the courses don't offer a lot of differentiation handling-wise. The game encourages you to take short cuts and cut inside the track lines, which ends up as more annoying in the long run. It's as if the tracks are to some extent irrelevant, as they certainly don't offer any handling or speed advantages — which they probably should.

COMPLETELY STUCK

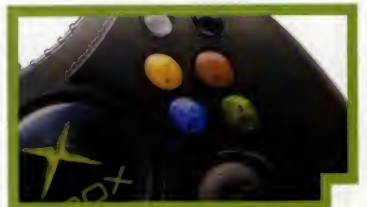
Speaking of handling, there seems to be little discernable difference

between the 4WD and 2WD trucks, and even worse, sometimes you just get completely stuck in the landscape and have to reset the friggin' thing! As a result, the frustration meter gets pumping pretty quickly.

So, whilst the racing isn't really worth the price of admission, the missions are a slightly different story. The idea, at least, is a good one. You have to use your ability to "boldly go bush-bashing" to get to remote places, help people and explore the terrain. The camera problems are less of an issue in this mode, as the chase view works better when you can stop

and have a squiz before launching yourself over a hill-crest. With some interesting terrain and more advanced handling dynamics this mode had more potential to provide a decent play. But when it comes down to it, you feel like Russell Coight (or worse) and the missions are farcical at best. It's simply too easy to get lost and not achieve your objectives.

This is unfortunately way too bogged down by its many failings to be worthy of your time. <<



PLUS: Good idea - pity about the execution.

MINUS: Poor camera, poor handling, long loading times.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

55 50 30

OVERALL

42

Disappointing off-road "action".

REVIEW

>> HYPER 73



Lost Kingdoms

CATEGORY: Adventure/RPG >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Activision >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: M >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

KELLY STARR knows how to play her cards right...

Developed by From Software, makers of the PS2 titles *Evergrace*, *Armoured Core* and *Eternal Ring*, *Lost Kingdoms* is the story of a princess called Katia, whose world is slowly being consumed by a mysterious black fog that destroys everything in its path. When the fog reaches her castle, her father sets off to discover the truth behind the black fog, and leaves Katia with the task of protecting the powerful but mysterious Rune Stone that is stored in the castle treasury. When Katia finds the Rune Stone, an old woman named Gurd appears, telling her that the power of the Rune Stones is the only thing that can hope to defeat the evil fog, and that it is now up to Katia to collect all five of them and embark on a journey to save the world.

ALL HANDS ON DECK
Those who possess a Rune Stone have the power to command the cards, and it is with this power you must learn to fight in order to survive. While you will meet several other characters who will help you along the way and get snippets of the story between levels, the gameplay is the main focus, and the story is not as prominent as one may have expected.
Battles are fought with cards, which you will collect as you progress through the game. Each level is fought with a deck of 30 cards, and the deck you assemble may make your task easier or more difficult depending on how well you choose your cards. There are 101 cards in total, and each one has different powers and elements. New

cards can be found in treasure chests, obtained as bonuses at the end of levels, bought at the card store and caught in battle by using a capture throw on your opponent. You can also duplicate and upgrade cards between levels at the card shop if your cards have gained enough experience points, and this will be necessary to gain stronger cards for the higher levels.
When randomly transported into a battle scene, four cards from your deck are selected at



random, though if you find you have nothing good in your hand, you can always dump a card to get a new one. A different button on the controller represents each card, so using the cards during battle is easy and straightforward, leaving you more time to think about what sort of card to use and to collect the magic stones that give your cards their power. Run out of stones and your cards will drain their power from your hit



Hit me. Argh, no I mean like in Blackjack!



Looks like he wants to play "poker".



Come on, ante up you cheapskate.



Ha ha, oh you're such a card!



Hey, ever played 52 pick up...?



Look out or I'll deck you.



points; run out of hit points, and it's all over for you in that level.

The game is fairly linear, though you have the option of visiting the card shop and several other places between levels if you wish. Side quest levels can also be opened by talking to the right people, and offer you a little more choice about where to go next. The levels

You have the option of visiting the card shop and several other places between levels...

themselves are small, although in addition to battling monsters and finding cards there is also some light puzzle solving involved, with cards available as rewards for people who take the time to fully explore the environment.

SHOW ME YOUR DECK

The graphics in Lost Kingdoms are nice, but nothing spectacular. From Software have done a nice job in using the various graphical features in their first Gamecube attempt, with some nice dust and lighting effects, and no noticeable faults in the environment. The sound is nothing special, with some nice background music, and a few different sounds for the attacks that are used. Although there is only the

occasional voice sample, the original Japanese voices have been left in, which is a big plus, as games like Evergrace were ruined by terrible English voice acting.

In addition to the single-player game, there is also a multiplayer battle feature to test your card skills against your friends. Using cards you have collected throughout the game, each player can load their deck and battle it

out against each other to see who is the ultimate Poké... I mean Rune Stone master.

If you are expecting an in-depth RPG, you may be disappointed. But if you are looking for a nice adventure game with a few unique features, then you may be quite impressed with Lost Kingdoms. <<



NEVERENDING GAME

>> Fans of the 1984 movie, *The Neverending Story*, may notice that the story shares some similarities with Lost Kingdoms, namely the black fog seems to resemble 'The Nothing' from *The Neverending Story*; a fog that swept the land, destroying all in its path.

!!! Don't forget Magic the Gathering Online for PC, coming soon...



PLUS: Unique gameplay, original Japanese voices.

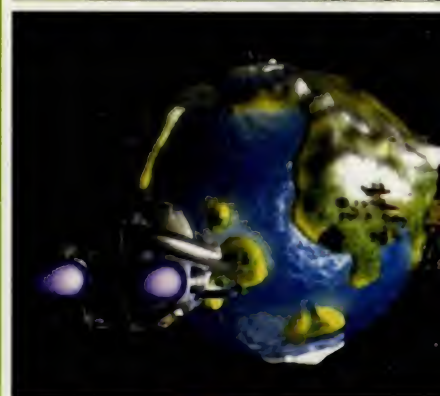
MINUS: Shallow story, linear plot, won't take long to finish.

VISUALS 70 SOUND 70 GAMEPLAY 86

OVERALL

84

Not the RPG we've been waiting for, but very worthy.



ZooCube

CATEGORY: Puzzle >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: Acclaim >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

CAM SHEA looks puzzled...

Here at Hyper, we're all for innovations to the puzzle game genre. However, the best puzzle games, by their very nature, are based around simple mechanics that fit together so elegantly that surprisingly deep gameplay is born. ZooCube is an attempt to use that basic rational but within a radically new presentation.

TWO OF EVERY ANIMAL, EH? Most puzzle games don't really need a story, but this one is so odd that some explanation is required. A dastardly villain by the name Dr Buc Ooze (now that's a porn star name if ever we've heard one!) has transformed all the world's animals into odd-shaped blobs, and it's up to you to bring them back to life. To do this, you must use a device called

the ZooCube — essentially a six-sided dice in the center of the screen that you rotate with the analogue sticks. Animal parts float in towards it from six directions and you must lock them into one of the six sides of the cube. To recombine an animal, you must simply put two identical parts next to each other on the same face of the ZooCube. This then clears those shapes. Of course, you'll occasionally make errors or be forced to double or triple up on shapes on each side, and this is where the game becomes more testing — quickly spinning the ZooCube as the shapes fly in trying to pair animals. Fortunately, you can also cycle the order of the animals on each side so as to line up the correct animal on the outside. You also have access to three smart

bombs per round that will destroy one layer of shapes on all sides, perfect for when your ZooCube is getting stacked out of control.

The further into the game you get the faster the shapes start coming in and the more animals get introduced into the mix. There are 36 in all, so you can imagine how hectic it can become. To help you keep on top of things, you can lock animal parts into a trajectory as early as you like, allowing you to rotate the cube and focus on the next piece. Locking in pieces also has the advantage of allowing you to pick up bonuses that will give you rewards such as extra smart bombs or faster rotation for your cube.

Point acquisition is another big

factor in ZooCube. You can earn points in a number of ways. Progressively larger bonuses are given for having all sides with one, two, three or four pieces, so if you're confident and want big points you can risk letting your ZooCube stack dangerously high on all sides, then try to clear it before losing out. This is relatively challenging because if you have more than five shapes stacked on one side it's game over. You can also collect the bonus-coloured balls that are released for clearing one of the ZooCube's sides.





Can you make me a turtlephant?



Pigs in Space



Four player boredom, hurrah!



A degree in biophysics helps.



Old Nintendo had a farm, ee-ee-ohh.



Jurassic Park eat your heart out!



PIGO

KNOCKOUT THE BLIND!

»»There are a few other modes to explore in addition to the basic single player game - Blind, Knockout and Knockout Blind. In Blind mode, all the shapes are flat shaded so you have to identify them based on geometry alone, which gets quite difficult considering how many there are. The Knockout variants simply throw you into the game with an already stacked ZooCube.

All these modes can be played with up to four people in multiplayer. There's even a two player cooperative mode where you can (and must) send pieces to the other person's side to get through. Putting aside the increase in difficulty that inevitably comes from shrinking down the action to fit multiple ZooCubes and incoming pieces on screen, these modes are still less than compelling.

There are also secret levels that can be accessed through speedy animal husbandry.

Collect a set and you'll be rewarded with big points. Of course, there are also secret levels that can be accessed through speedy animal husbandry.

AT LEAST IT'S NOT BY WISDOM TREE...

This all sounds like the recipe for a great puzzle frolic right? Well, unfortunately ZooCube isn't anywhere near as intriguing as it sounds. The simple act of combining like with like just doesn't have the depth of other puzzle games where you can strategically look to chain together attacks. If we were more into getting high scores, ZooCube may have been fun, but on the strength of the basic gameplay it falls flat.

Puzzle games are never really expected to have revolutionary

graphics, but ZooCube struggles to meet even basic expectations for a next generation game. The static backgrounds cover the usual themes,

but are really just average window-dressing. The sense of 3D space isn't at all convincing and overall the game's presentation

is definitely lacking. It's the audio that will drive you mad though. Successfully pairing up parts results in a comical animal noise, so once you start getting proficient the game sounds more like Old MacDonald's Barn Adventures than a video game.

ZooCube is by no means a bad game, but there are just so many other amazing puzzle games on the market that it's very hard to recommend. Give us Devil Dice or Pokemon Puzzle League any day. <<<

!!! ZooCube is also coming to GBA, but there are no connectivity options.



PLUS: An interesting attempt at a 3D-puzzle game.

MINUS: It doesn't really gel into a compelling whole.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

60 58 63

OVERALL

62

ZooCube fails to captivate, but at least tries something new.



Looks like you, dear reader, are the bogey.



PS2

Lethal Skies

CATEGORY: Air Combat >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >>
 PUBLISHER: THQ >> PRICE: \$89.95 >>
 RATING: M >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

One minute the skies are crimson or deadly, the next minute they're lethal. Whichever way you look at it, if you're cruising the videogame heavens, you're looking for trouble. Before you know it you've got multiple bogeys on your rear (you really shouldn't wipe them there) and you're just out of chaff.

Lethal Skies continues the very Japanese tradition of the modern jet fighter, mission-based videogame. This style of game always seems to get developed over in Japan — where they continue to be hugely popular — but it's rare for this genre to really be welcomed with open arms in the action game saturated western videogame market. Well, if you're up for it, Lethal Skies is quite a good dogfighting romp.

There's an option to follow a mission-based story mode, or simply tackle some progressively more difficult dogfight challenges. Naturally, the meat to the game is in the mission mode, where you take the role of the "ace", accompanied by two wingmen (well, actually, one is a wingwoman) on a series of skirmishes set in a possible future world scenario. New York is partially underwater, the whole world is at war, and the Dave Letterman show is STILL on TV — that kind of thing.

Controls are intuitive, and whilst the handling of the jets feels a little tricky, it's probably quite true to the actual physics involved. The action usually involved locking on to targets and letting loose with missiles, whilst using your machine guns where possible to save on your valuable payload. Not as visually sweet as Deadly Skies on Xbox, but in some ways the gameplay feels more dynamic. Worth a look. - **Eliot Fish**



Can you adjust their "simulation" skill?



PS2

LMA Manager 2002

CATEGORY: Strategy/Management >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >>
 PUBLISHER: Codemasters >> PRICE: \$79.95 >>
 RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Football management games form a genre that are the epitome of what most of us would think of as a strictly PC gaming experience. Rather than being in the thick of the action, these management games see most of the player's time spent making careful decisions, based almost entirely upon spreadsheet-like reports. LMA Manager 2002 makes a very appropriate move to help liven things up and provide a gaming experience that at least looks less like work, and more like a game of football.

Instead of just spending hours gawking at stats (which you'll still be doing if you're at all serious about winning), the player can see how their squad performs by watching them play. The option to direct your team from the dugout during the course of a whole game is there, as are options to simply watch the highlights, or receive a debriefing in plain old text.

LMA Manager 2002 is quite comprehensive in regard to the number of teams and players it covers. The 17,000 players from 722 clubs seem more than adequate to reproduce the huge scope of the transfer market. However, the Dutch league has been omitted, which seems an oddity considering the rest of the major European leagues are present.

With the ability to offload duties to other members of staff, things only really become as in-depth as the player would like it. Fortunately, LMA Manager 2002 does boast the sort of depth most PC football management titles do, and that makes it an easy game to recommend to any PS2 owner who thinks they could teach Sir Alex Ferguson and friends. - **Dan Toose**



Grinding Yoshi's tongue...



PS2

Winter X Games Snowboarding 2

CATEGORY: Extreme log-riding >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >>
 PUBLISHER: Konami >> PRICE: \$89.95 >>
 RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

ESPN Winter X Games Snowboarding 2 (or EWXGS2 for short) is very much a game from the Amped school of thought, aiming for a blend of arcade play and realism. Perhaps its most notable feature is the career mode, where you can create your own boarder and take him/her from bumbling newbie to pro. You'll receive emails about events, buy your own gear and clothes, and raise your stats little by little. Those of you willing to give this game a go will enjoy this mode, but keep in mind it's a long road to the top. You'll spend many hours struggling with substandard skills and paying large medical expenses from trips to the hospital. No really.

Outside the career mode, things are a little more straightforward. Slope Style is the most entertaining of the game types, featuring a mix of kicker ramps, bowls and rails strewn across branching paths down the mountain. Unfortunately, X Games just doesn't have the finesse or craft in gameplay to compete with the likes of Amped, coming off as a poor imitation. Course layouts are quite gimmicky, relying more on wacky shaped rails and bouncy crates, and less on freeform design. The controls feel quite glitchy at times, and the rail and ollie mechanics certainly could have been better designed. The camera mechanics are really off-putting too, constantly panning to more "cinematic" side angle views, instead of staying behind the boarder where it should be. X Games looks reasonable, sounds reasonable and feels reasonable, but there's nothing here that hasn't been done better elsewhere before. - **Cam Shea**

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
79	75	70	73

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
73	55	90	88

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
83	85	74	72

ARCADE

>>TIM LEVY

World Kicks NAMCO

Unless you have been lost in the Amazon jungle or hanging out at Repashna for the past few months, you have more than likely heard of The World Cup and probably the winner of the Golden Boot - Ronaldo. Prior to Ronaldo scoring the highest amount of goals in the 2002 World Cup, he championed another version of soccer in his youth called Futsal. Originally from South America, Futsal is played 5 a side in a court usually the size of a basketball court. As the scale of the field and goals are much smaller, the kicks per minute ratio (KPM) is far higher than usual soccer, which often makes for a higher scoring and more exciting game than its bigger full-size brother. Better still, the game of Futsal has been translated very well to a multi-player arcade football game with an innovative and unique kicking system.

SWEAT INDUCING FUN

Ever tried playing a light gun game without a light gun? Ever played a football sim without a football? Of course. It is what we have come to expect from the console games. But what makes World Kicks so unique is that there is a giant padded "kick



button" at the bottom of the machine. The controls are very simplistic and highly intuitive. One large joystick controls the player's running and kicking direction, one button for switching between players and the kick pad for kicking/passing/shooting and tackling. Most impressively, the ball sized kick pad is sensitive enough to register your kick strength. Therefore, if you don't put enough power into that pass, then your opponents can intercept - too much power and the ball will fly pass the intended target. Before you know it, you will be passing the ball up the field with a few small kicks and then shooting at goals with a hefty kick. All this kicking can be very tiring, especially if you are playing by yourself. So to solve this dilemma of working too hard, you can play with 2 players against the computer, which changes the game's dynamics - you can make some amazing plays as you jockey for position to do a backwards scissor kick to shoot for goal. But it gets better, playing 4 player on one machine or linking 2 machines for a massive 8 player game is hours worth of sweat inducing fun. The only problem is the amount of noise that is generated from these machines from all the kicking - and that isn't to mention all the oohhs and ahhs from the missed opportunities and the jubilation from scoring a hard earned goal.

POTENTIAL AND ATMOSPHERE

Another fun element to the game is the tackling. The computer ref seems to be quite lenient which



Nothing like kicking someone's balls



allows for some hard tackling (often from behind). Maybe a punch button could have been included. When you are playing an 8 player game, it would give all the other players who aren't on the ball something constructive to do.

There are 20 international teams to choose from, with some of the characters being suspiciously similar to real players (e.g. the French goalkeeper looks like 'Bald As' Bartz). But choosing one team from another seems to only have nationalistic/aesthetic value. No matter which team you choose, you will always play against up to 4 countries when versus the computer.

Although this game hasn't

reached Australia yet, arcade owners may realize the \$\$ potential and atmosphere a game like this may add to their arcade, especially now that the Australian public has had a renewed interest in soccer. Another interesting note is that the game of Futsal has the highest growth rate in any sport in the world at the moment, as it can be played year round in any weather due to the fact that it is often played indoors. With any luck we will see this game in Oz very soon.

OVERALL

9.5/10



Gremlins: Stripe Vs Gizmo

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

Will this industry ever learn? Was the lesson of ET on 2600 all in vain? Apparently yes, because Gremlins on GBA is the perfect example of everything that's wrong with licensed gaming. We've had to suffer crappy side scrolling licensed platform games for so many years now that it really is disturbing that games like this keep rolling off the production line.

In this "game", you can choose between Gizmo and Stripe, each of which has his own set of clumsy levels to work through. The setting is Christmas in Kingston Falls and regardless of which character you choose, you'll be wandering around picking up Christmas presents. You see, Stripe wants to steal all the children's presents, whereas Gizmo wants to stop Stripe from doing this,



so he err... steals all the presents too. Whatever. It all translates into one of the most infuriatingly dull games we've ever played. Gizmo is equipped with the ability to curl up into a ball and shock any Gremlins he comes across, then zap them with his flashlight to melt them. Stripe, on the other hand, has an interesting approach to take on the Mogwai. Presumably the game takes place after midnight because Stripe likes nothing more than to force any Mogwai he comes across to eat a custard pie, turning them into Gremlins! Ho ho ho - it's classic comedy and nefariousness in one! Again, whatever.

Of course, we know that this game isn't exactly aimed at the hardcore gamer. However, the idea of a kid getting stuck with a lame game like this over something like Super Mario World is chilling. - Cam Shea



VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
66	68	35	37

Spy Hunter

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

The return of the arcade classic Spy Hunter on PS2 last year wasn't exactly unexpected, nor was it particularly innovative, but it was a fun arcadey romp. Of course, not content with simply porting the game to GameCube and Xbox, Midway have now brought Spy Hunter to the GBA. The basic principles behind the

console version have been carried across - you have a primary objective and set of secondary objectives for each mission, and the gameplay is a mix of shooting, exploring and collecting. Rather than emulating the old arcade game with a top-down view, Spy Hunter places you behind the vehicle with a Mode 7 presentation.

The game spans eight missions all up, which is really about eight too few. Despite multiple objectives, there's nothing particularly exciting about the gameplay - shoot stuff, run over stuff, mission complete. It is cool that you can backtrack to ensure you complete all your objectives, but there's nothing too compelling here. The visuals are pedestrian, with only the occasional small rises and frequent multiple paths setting this game apart from those that have come before. There are also water-based sections of each level, although the difference between driving on land and on water isn't exactly noticeable. The game is also a little unforgiving - in parts you'll be fired on from all sides with no way to defend yourself. All up, Spy Hunter does some things right, but it's too short and too mediocre to get the Hyper thumbs up. - Cam Shea



VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
74	72	68	69

Breath of Fire

CATEGORY: RPG >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft >>
 PRICE: \$79.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Breath Of Fire (BOF) on GBA is a port of Capcom's classic SNES RPG. The game tells the story of Ryu and his quest to save his people - the White Dragon Tribe - and the rest of the land from the clutches of evil. BOF is an old school RPG through and through. Presentation is top down and there's a world map to traverse filled with random, turn-based battles. Along

the way you'll meet seven other characters who will join your party, each with their own backstory, strengths, weaknesses and unique ability. Ryu, for instance, has the ability to umm... fish. Wolf man Bo can take the party through wooded areas on the world map, Ox is handy for opening up new paths, and... you get the idea.

Although the storyline is standard



RPG fare, it's interesting enough and the game is quite long. You can have four characters in combat at once, and as you'd expect, fighting with the right lineup, leveling up characters and gaining new spells and abilities is one of the driving factors of Breath Of Fire. Those of you that enjoy this style of game will definitely dig it here - particularly when Ryu learns how to transform into various dragons during battle. Very cool. Being a SNES port, Capcom haven't really updated much in Breath Of Fire. It still looks quite good, but alongside games like Golden Sun, Breath Of Fire definitely comes off second best. But hey, it's almost ten years old. About the only new thing that Capcom added in was the ability to link up with a friend and trade items between the two games. Worth a look for die hard RPG fans.

- Frank Dry

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
75	70	77	74

Jonny Moseley: Mad Trix

CATEGORY: Extreme Sports >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: 3DO >>
 PRICE: \$79.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

What the... Could it be? A game from 3DO that doesn't have the words "army" and "men" in the title? Wellity, wellity, wellity! We would say that it's about bloody time, but after spending some time with Jonny Moseley, maybe 3DO should just stick to Army Men games. At

least that way we won't be disappointed. Hehe. Jonny Moseley: Mad Trix is yet another entrant into the extreme sports genre, except now that skateboarding, snowboarding and even wakeboarding have all been taken, we're down to extreme skiing. It's not like skiing isn't extreme or



anything, it's just that it's not usually one of the sports that comes to mind when thinking about the canon of extreme sports. Regardless, if the gameplay is there, the sport is largely irrelevant, right? Unfortunately, the gameplay isn't there. Nor does the game live up to its subhead - Mad Air. Mad Attitude. Mad Trix. Instead, poor old Jonny Moseley (who won gold in the freestyle mogul event in the 1998 Winter Olympics) comes off as yet another under-cooked attempt to cash in on this burgeoning genre. Mad Trix isn't a terrible game by any means, it's just that the controls are a little loose, your vision of the course is almost non-existent, chaining tricks together is severely limited and there's none of the freedom of games like Tony Hawk.

One feature we did like, however, was the jump system - the longer you hold down B the higher you jump, so coming off a ramp there's a nice effect of your skier coming out of the screen at you. This system allows you to do multiple tricks in one jump, but it also means you'll often launch miles into the air off flat ground by accident. Messy. - Cam Shea

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
62	65	60	61



Soul Blade & Soul Calibur

»» DAN TOOSE



Weapons based fighting games have not been particularly popular compared to their fisticuff counterparts. If you're going to look into this particular sub-genre of gaming you need look no further than Namco's brilliant "Soul" series, namely Soul Blade (Soul Edge in Japan), and Soul Calibur. The former only graced the PlayStation, and the latter, hailed by many critics as the best produced fighting game to ever grace a console, was a Dreamcast exclusive. If not owning a PSX or Dreamcast is your reason for never having checked out Soul Blade or Soul Calibur, then you've been denying yourself a sublime gaming experience.

With Soul Calibur 2 coming to

PlayStation 2, Xbox and Gamecube, now is the time for all console gamers to look back to the stage of history, and understand just what Namco did for console fighting games in years gone by.

SOUL BLADE

Welcome to the Stage of History

»» There was an established format for fighting games in days gone by, where all you ever got in your home console version of any fighting game was an arcade mode, a versus mode, and maybe if you were lucky, a practice mode. This was an area that Namco were determined not to become complacent in, and Soul Blade was the first console fighting game to point out just how lazy previous arcade-to-console fighting game conversions had really been up to that point.

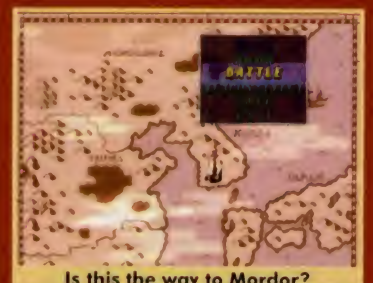
The real problem with a lack of variety in modes was that those playing solo had little else to do other than finish the game with all the characters, and thus most avid gamers finished new fighting games the day they got them. Soul Blade pro-actively addressed this issue by offering a sort of quest mode, called Edge Master mode. Tobal No.1 had introduced a quest mode, although it broke away from the one-on-one

combat, and was an acquired taste.

Edge Master mode sent us travelling around the world, attempting to overcome our opponents with specific conditions having to be met for success. For example, victory might only be possible by winning within a certain time limit, or using certain moves to damage your opponent, such as throws, or hitting them while they're not in contact with the ground.

The incentive? Each of the ten main characters had eight weapons to collect, with each weapon featuring different stats, which had a serious effect on how they performed in action. This added extra depth, as certain weapons worked better in some situations than others.

To encourage players not to just sit there and block, a meter showed how much more punishment their weapon could take from absorbing blows before it would break. Soul Blade also featured sidestepping,



Is this the way to Mordor?



and also parrying, which made it one of the deepest fighting games around in terms of defensive capabilities.

Even Soul Blade's more traditional arcade mode featured an improvement that encouraged the player to take an active interest in the goals and personalities of the various characters who were duking it out to get their hands on the evil Soul Blade.

If you don't like the ending of a game, that's usually tough luck, but Soul Blade gave the player the chance to change all that. As the various endings played out, the player could enter moves at a sort of junction in the cut-scene, which gave a different, and generally more favourable outcome.

The ending for the katana-wielding Mitsurugi, was virtually a bonus round, where the player would have to duel against an enemy with a rifle. The scene was played out in a first-person view, and the player had to dodge a shot, close on the coward, and cut straight to the point so to speak. You earned a different ending, and learned more about the characters as a result.

Some people criticised Soul Blade for its lack of characters relative to games like Tekken 2, which of course has gone on to be notorious for having pairs of duplicate characters. Besides delivering what were ground

breaking visuals at the time, Soul Blade put the idea in our heads that fighting games could feature far more than what we were used to.

Namco would soon prove that this was the way things would be in the future...

SOUL CALIBUR

The legend will never die

➤➤ Soul Calibur, the sequel to Soul Blade graced arcades and wowed everyone with its visuals, but the Dreamcast version looked that much better that it was to become a system-selling masterpiece. It was the first time ever that an arcade game looked remarkably better on a home system, which was great news for gamers, but bad news for arcade owners who will testify that the arcade industry is now in serious decline.

Like its predecessor, Soul Calibur pushed the genre forward, in more ways than one. Eight-way free movement was a significant gameplay adjustment, so we were starting to see the fighters circle each other in a realistic manner. Games such as Virtua Fighter 4, and Dead or Alive 2 and 3 went on to adapt the same technique. This free movement, combined with an

enhanced parrying system made it clear Soul Calibur wasn't just the best-looking game to date.

To really ensure that Soul Calibur left its mark in the minds of gamers, Namco expanded on the idea of Edge Master mode with a new Battle Mode. The basic premise was the same, travel to different locations and win battles with unusual victory conditions. This time around, points were awarded, which could be spent on unlocking a plethora of funky artwork, and a myriad of game features. Detailed character bios and motion captured katas only further served to suck people into the story and develop favourite characters.

While not everyone could justify getting a Dreamcast for Soul Calibur, come next year when Soul Calibur 2 hits all three platforms at once, the only valid excuse for not wanting to see the next stage of 3D fighting game history will be stupidity. <<



USE ENGINEERING

»HYPER 83

Open Your Eyes

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!

All scores out of 10



Open Your Eyes (ABRE LOS OJOS)

AV CHANNEL, RATED M

Uanilla Sky, the American version of this film that was remade by Cameron Crowe (*Almost Famous*) and which starred Tom Cruise and Penelope Cruz, was a total and utter cinematic disaster. *Open Your Eyes*, however, is a clever and unusual piece of work that is much more provocative than Crowe's. (Probably due to the fact that Tom Cruise couldn't be provocative if he tried.) Directed by Alejandro

Amenabar, the young Spaniard who was also responsible for the excellent *The Others*, *Open Your Eyes* is a film that essentially questions the idea of reality. It is the story of Cesar, a selfish and ego-centric womaniser who is enticed by an ex-lover to join him in her car. Once inside, she puts her foot down on the accelerator and sends the car hurtling into a wall. When Cesar awakes, his face is horribly disfigured and he is under interrogation for murder. *Open Your Eyes* then proceeds to play with the minds of both Cesar and the viewer, making for an interesting and unusual film.

MOVIE: 7 EXTRAS: 4



No really, it's me, Michael Jackson.



Let me introduce my new boyfriend, Woody.

Beautiful

AV CHANNEL, RATED 15

Beautiful, directed by Sally Field (her first film), is supposed to be a satirical send-up of beauty pageants. It also wants to be a feel-good chick flick with an empowering quasi-feminist message. Unfortunately, it isn't either. Instead, *Beautiful* is a poorly constructed, badly written and genuinely ill-conceived film that also happens to be more misogynistic than feminist in its treatment of women. Minnie Driver plays Mona, an annoying and utterly self-obsessed girl who has devoted her life to winning beauty

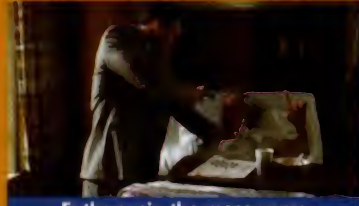
pageants. She also has a 7-year old daughter, but because women with children are prohibited from entering beauty competitions, Vanessa has never been told who her real mother is. Predictably, there's a tedious and cringe-worthy "moment of truth" at the end when Mona becomes (very unconvincingly) overwhelmed with love for her daughter and decides to be honest with both her and the pageant's audience. Stomach-churning stuff.

MOVIE: 3 EXTRAS: 3

Guarding Tess

MAGNA PACIFIC, RATED MA

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of penning this review is admitting that *Guarding Tess* is quite an enjoyable film. Although it bears many resemblances to the Oscar-winning *Driving Miss Daisy* (both films focus on the developing relationship between an older woman and younger man), *Guarding Tess* is thoroughly watchable in its own right. This is due mainly to the chemistry between the two leads, Shirley MacLaine and Nicholas Cage, who both turn in remarkably good performances. Admittedly the plot isn't particularly exciting - MacLaine plays Tess, the widow of the last US President, and Cage is cast as Doug Chesnick, the Special Agent whose assignment is to protect her. The growing friendship between these two mismatched characters is engaging and gently



Euthanasia the messy way.

funny, and if you're still not convinced, maybe this little piece of information should do the trick: the writer/director of *Guarding Tess*, Hugh Wilson, was also responsible for the first *Police Academy* film.

MOVIE: 6.5 EXTRAS: 1



Nicholas still drinks to forget Face/Off



"I'm sorry, God knows about the 'thing' with the Alsatian."

Chances Are

COLUMBIA TRISTAR, RATED PG

Although we recently gave Robert Downey Jr a resounding thumbs up for his performance in *Wonderboys*, all praise is now retracted on the basis that he actually agreed to appear in the appallingly bad *Chances Are*. If ever there was a film with a flimsy and convoluted premise, then this is it. It begins with a young couple, who are about to be married. Soon after, Louis (the husband) is hit by a car and killed. A ridiculous "heaven scene" ensues, showing Louis lining up for his just deserts with all the other newly-departed souls. He begs one of the officials to let him return to earth, and is given details of several babies about to be born - enabling him some choice in the particulars of his reincarnation (groan!). He comes back to earth as



Er, mum, we were just.... studying!

Alex (Robert Downey Jr), and when he meets his wife some 20 years later, memories of his previous existence come flooding back. Painful and dull.

MOVIE: 3 EXTRAS: 0

Peggy Sue Got Married

COLUMBIA TRISTAR, RATED PG

Francis Ford Coppola may have become famous for directing films like *The Godfather* and *Apocalypse Now*, but during the eighties he was also responsible for making *Peggy Sue Got Married* - a gentle and poignant comedy starring Kathleen Turner and Nicolas Cage. Turner plays Peggy Sue, a 42-year-old woman who reluctantly attends her high school's 25th reunion. She collapses whilst there, and when she awakes, finds herself back in 1960 in her teenage body. The problem for Peggy is that she retains her adult memories, so returns to her adolescence with full knowledge of what her future holds, such as the



That Maths teacher is so dreamy.

unhappy breakdown of her marriage to teenage sweetheart, Charlie (Cage). *Peggy Sue Got Married* had the potential to be a very different (and poor) film, but under Coppola's understated and skillful direction it manages to be both a funny and bittersweet lament for lost youth and innocence. Worth checking out.

MOVIE: 7 EXTRAS: 1



Cage may love the camera, but the camera certainly doesn't love him...



The Slim Shady Show

IMPORT ONLY, RATED MA

What happens when you take *South Park*'s crude animation style and mix it with Eminem's warped sense of humour? *The Slim Shady Show*, an animated series which focuses on the three faces of Em (the geek, Marshall Mathers; the headkicker, Slim Shady; and of course, Eminem himself), and the adventures his homies get up to.

Slim's crew are a very strange bunch. There's a gay guy (Ken Kaniff), an alternate chick (Sue), a massive black guy (Big D), and a Cam look-alike (Dave - who's also a hardcore pot-head. Draw your own conclusions).

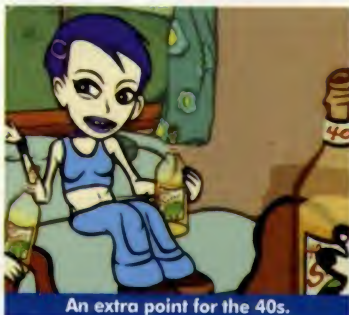
This DVD consists of eight episodes of *The Slim Shady Show*, and almost every episode features a celebrity beatdown. Disses are dosed out to Matt Damon, Ben Affleck, Leonardo de Caprio, Joey Lawrence, Screech from *Saved by the Bell* and the entire cast of *South Park*, just to name a few.

Every joke in *The Slim Shady Show* is poking fun at either the music industry, America or is just there to gross you out. As for extras, there's an interesting but shallow making-of featurette.

MOVIE: 8 EXTRAS: 2



The Fat Albert Show this ain't.



An extra point for the 40s.



Say hello to my biggish friend.

Scarface

COLUMBIA TRISTAR, RATED R

Scarface is probably the quintessential gangster film. Okay, okay, we realise that this isn't exactly a new release, but it's such a classic - as well as being packed with loads of bonus features - that we figured we'd review it anyway. Inspired by the 1932 Howard Hawks film of the same name (which was about Al Capone), Brian De Palma's version is the story of Tony Montana. Montana (memorably played by a young Al Pacino) is among many of the Cuban immigrants to arrive in Florida in the 1980s. The film charts his prolific rise up the ranks of the cocaine mafia (the coke-snorting scenes in this film are definitely world class), and, of course, his ultimate downward trajectory. With a screenplay by Oliver Stone, and



Al is forced to watch *Scent of a Woman*



Eh, it's been a dog day afternoon!

great performances by Pacino and Michelle Pfeiffer, *Scarface* is powerful, engrossing and gloriously excessive. Bonus features include a 50 minute behind-the-scenes documentary and as well as out-takes and production notes. Say hello to my little friend!

MOVIE: 8 EXTRAS: 8



I guess they didn't restock the fridge in his trailer.

ANIME

Berserk

CATEGORY: FANTASY/ACTION • PRODUCTION COMPANY: NTV/VAP

Breamcast owners who were smart enough to import their games will recognise the name 'Berserk'. It's the 3D Golden Axe game where the guy ploughs through dozens of warriors in a bloody rage with a sword that's just as tall and wide as he is. Yeah — 'that' game.

FIGHTING TALENT

Based on the highly revered original manga of Kentaro Miura, *Berserk* tells the story of a young wandering mercenary named Guts. He's taken in by the Band of the Hawk, an elite mercenary group that works its way into acceptance from the kingdom of Midland, thanks in no part to the

amazing fighting talent of Guts, his comrade in arms, Caska, and the strategy of his leader Griffith.

Somehow, the events of Gut's journey will culminate in a bloody battle between himself and Griffith, the conclusion of which is actually shown in the very first episode. It's strikingly brutal, complete with horses being cleaved in half together with their riders. However, the subsequent episodes that show Guts' and Griffith's development from young mercenaries into feared warlords is both riveting and compelling, delving into themes as dark as child abuse and schizophrenia. This is a series you simply won't be able to put down.



ANIMATION: 7 PLOT: 9 OVERALL: 10

Love Hina

CATEGORY: ROMANTIC COMEDY • PRODUCTION COMPANY: PRODUCTION IG

Love Hina is the funniest romantic comedy to hit the anime and manga scene since *Ranma 1/2*. It has all the classic ingredients: a nerdish, timid protagonist, whom most Japanese teenage males would find some empathy with, surrounded by several attractive young women, and a stubborn inability by said protagonist to carry on an ordinary, social relationship with those women.

HAPPILY EVER AFTER

The protagonist in question is a 21 year old Keitaro Urashima, desperate for a girlfriend, also a three-time failure in gaining entry into Tokyo University. He continues trying to pass the entrance exam in the hope

that he might meet up with the girl he made a promise with 15 years ago — a promise that if they meet up at Tokyo University when they grow up, they'll live happily ever after.

But now he's been kicked out of his parents' house, he finds a new roof over his head in the form of Hinata Apartments. It's owned by his grandmother, but now she's has bestowed management of the establishment upon him. Hinata Apartments also happens to be an all-girls dormitory.

Some of the residents are opposed to his presence; others are more charitable to his quest, yet all are somehow won over by Keitaro's heart of gold. There's Naru Narusegawa, the profoundly myopic beauty who's also studying to get into Tokyo University; Motoko Aoyama, an upper-class girl whose lineage goes back to a legendary samurai family; and Su Kaolla, a slightly loopy foreign exchange student. There are a few more, of course, but all you need remember is that those who are

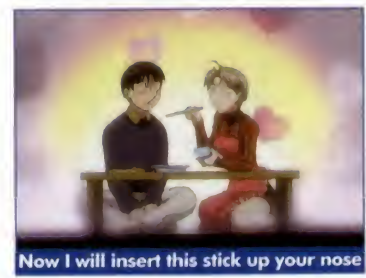


allegedly of legal age are incredibly well endowed.

Love Hina maintains a decent level of hilarity throughout, with many moments of priceless situation comedy. Those who've read the manga may be disappointed with the creative license that's been taken to the introduction of the characters. If you've never read it before, though, rest easy knowing that the anime makes slightly better sense.



ANIMATION: 9 PLOT: 7 OVERALL: 8



Now I will insert this stick up your nose

THE NINTENDO PERSONALITY QUIZ



Is your life driven by the desire for gold coins? Or is your wardrobe full of gaudy ties? Maybe you prefer to munch down on a basket of bananas every time you get home? We think it's time you took the Nintendo personality quiz to find out once and for all, which Nintendo character you really are...

1 My favourite food is...

- a) Mushrooms
- b) Bananas
- c) Anything but mushrooms
- d) Beer
- e) Anything, as long as it was or is alive

2 First thing in the morning, I like to...

- a) Check the toilet is working
- b) Pick lice from my hair
- c) Stare at the sun with wide eyes
- d) Wonder where I am and then go back to sleep
- e) Wake everyone else up

3 My favourite music is...

- a) Repetitive and annoying to others
- b) Jungle beats
- c) Top 40
- d) Old school rock
- e) Metal

4 When it comes to work, I am...

- a) A leader
- b) In it for the money
- c) In desperate need of guidance
- d) Work?
- e) The one who takes all the glory

5 You've just spent 20 hours rescuing the princess in a video game and now she's off to bake you a cake. Do you...

- a) Watch the credits and hope for more
- b) Turn off the game, disappointed
- c) Join in the fun by baking your very own cake
- d) Vomit
- e) Smash the console and burn the house down



6 When I dream, I dream of...

- a) Flying
- b) I don't dream
- c) Family and friends
- d) Nightmares
- e) Causing pain to small creatures

7 In the future I would like to be...

- a) Self-employed
- b) A pro-wrestler
- c) A hand-servant
- d) Laid
- e) Released

8 My favourite drink would be...

- a) Something fizzy
- b) Juice
- c) Water
- d) Your shout
- e) Oil

9 My favourite movie is...

- a) Super Mario Bros.
- b) King Kong
- c) The Care-Bear Christmas
- d) X-Rated
- e) Godzilla

10 My ideal partner is...

- a) Wealthy
- b) Attractive
- c) Friendly
- d) Driving
- e) Blind

11 My favourite person at Hyper is...

- a) Malcolm because he's creative
- b) David because he works hard
- c) Eliot because he's the boss
- d) Cam, because he's cool and that's what matters
- e) Phil, because he calls the shots

12 I like to wear...

- a) Something practical
- b) Not applicable
- c) Hawaiian shirts
- d) Drinking shoes
- e) Black

13 My worst habit is...

- a) Over-eating
- b) Burping
- c) Speaking too softly
- d) Falling over drunk
- e) Smoking



HOW TO TEST

>>BRETT ROBB

14 My idea of a good first date is...

- a) Having one at all
- b) Not too much talking
- c) A movie
- d) Third base
- e) Love is for saps

15 A book is...

- a) Good for information
- b) Square
- c) Something to be cherished
- d) Not as entertaining as a magazine
- e) Kindling

16 In school I was...

- a) Loved by all
- b) A sports hero
- c) Laughed at
- d) Absent
- e) The bully

17 When I've finished reading Hyper, I...

- a) Give it to someone else
- b) I collect my precious Hyper!
- c) Cry because it's over for another month
- d) Stick it on the pile next to the can
- e) Write letters to Eliot pointing out the mistakes

18 My mode of transport is...

- a) By animal
- b) Four Wheel Drive
- c) Bike
- d) Public transport
- e) I walk

19 When I go out you'll find me...

- a) In the midst of things, checking the place out
- b) Dancing like crazy
- c) Cowering
- d) At the bar, on the bar or beneath the bar
- e) Bouncing

20 This quiz has...

- a) Been entertaining
- b) Distracted me
- c) Made me think hard
- d) Confused me
- e) Wasted my time



RESULTS

Score your answers and add them up for a grand total.

- a = 4
- b = 3
- c = 2
- d = 1
- e = 0

You are...

0 - 20 Bowser

You're cruel and self-absorbed. Slimy, manipulative and not altogether bright. When someone ticks you off, you take something they want by force and dangle it above their heads like a carrot. Those around you are in fear of you and you often confuse that with respect. Wake up or live a sad and lonely existence, drowning in the molten lava of discontent.



21 - 45 Conker

You're not a bad person. You just like to have a good time and sometimes that gets you into trouble. You're a party animal of the highest order. Impulsive and more often than not quite entertaining. Hopefully you'll mature and settle down some day, but in the mean time live it up... at least we can all look down upon your unconscious, twitching body and thank the good lord that we're not as pathetic as you.



46 - 60 Toad

Quiet, shy and honest, you try not to draw attention to yourself which can often lead people to believe you're boring... which let's face it, is probably the case. I mean, come on! Live a little would you? Stop kissing up to your friends/teacher/boss and get a backbone. Life isn't all sunshine and lollypops either, wake up and smell the burning flesh and get out of that dream world you're living in. Other than that, you're quite pleasant...



61 - 70 Donkey Kong

Athletic, charismatic and generally friendly, people gravitate towards you and your chiselled good looks which more than makes up for your lack of grey matter. The women swoon and the men line up to shake your hand. Even if you're not the best man for the job, you're probably going to be the one who gets it even if you do smell like a combination of banana and urine... stinky.



71 - 80 Mario

You're a star. A hero. But you're modest too. A positive outlook on life, you treat everyone as an equal. You're also an honest and legitimate person. A family person. You look out for your friends and you trample your enemies underfoot. You have a goal and you strive to achieve it. We simply cannot heap enough praise upon you... unless you warped here you cheating bastard!



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FORUM

✉ **HYPER FORUM:** 78 Renwick St. Redfern, NSW 2016 Australia
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Q. ARE YOU HAPPY WITH YOUR NEXT-GEN CONSOLE? WHY OR WHY NOT?

Most of us have now had the pleasure of tasting the next-generation delights of the Xbox, GameCube and PS2, so we've opened up the Hyper forum for readers to squeal with glee or bitch and moan. Here's a selection of what you guys and gals were thinking this month...

Current king of the hill... the PS2



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...

? "Which is your favourite part of Hyper magazine and why?"

Responses will be printed in Hyper 109.

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.

THE SOUL STILL BURNS

Hi Hyper guys,

To answer your question, I would have to say, yes I am happy with my next-gen consoles. I have been playing video games for too many years than I can remember and have owned consoles from Atari, Sega, Nintendo and Sony so I like to think that I have a bit of experience in what are good consoles. My next-gen consoles are Dreamcast, PS2 and Xbox and I am very happy with all systems.

The PS2 has newbies like MGS2, FFX and GTA3 as well as SSX and GT3. The Xbox has Halo and RalliSport Challenge. But why am I happy I hear you ask? Because of things like pretty graphics, amazing sound (speech in FFX makes such a difference) and of course, great gameplay. By the way I still consider the Dreamcast a next-gen console (it was just ahead of its time). I have yet to see a fighting game better than Soul Calibur in the gameplay, graphics and sound department.

Thanks,
Andrew Ivens :
aivens@au.ibm.com

THUMBS UP THE BOX

Hi, I recently got my Xbox and I am happy with my decision to go with Microsoft. The main reason our

family got it was because our parents wanted a DVD player. Halo was my fist purchase and I think it's a great buy although there is one problem with the Xbox, it can't play VCDs and if you put it in it will simply reject it. This is not a huge let down for Microsoft because games are way more important. Although if you have parents that are interested in watching VCDs from overseas you can't watch any movies. (We'd like to point out that many DVD players do not include VCD playback by default. VCD playback is an "extra" feature for most stand-alone players. — Ed.)

Visually I think it is the best console yet. The console seems as though it is powerful but games are the important matter. Am I the only one in the world that finds the Xbox controller comfortable? I was fairly surprised when I read in issue 102 that the Japanese described it as holding two potatoes but I am a bit upset about the button layout. So far so good although I do not think Microsoft are going great financially.

Microsoft publicised their console well unlike Sega, which is good news though I have not seen one commercial for it on TV. Excluding TV ads it was very well advertised elsewhere. To buy or not to buy that is the question. Overall, I say yes.

Mathan Sathiyamoorthy

CUBIST

Dear Hyper,

The reason as to why I am happy with my GameCube is simple. Super Smash Bros. Melee.

Although I am also the proud owner of Super Monkey Ball and Rogue Squadron, Super Smash Brothers has given to me hours of pure fun. Fun that can - and has - been shared with the whole family. Kirby, Peach, Zelda, Ganon, Link, Samus etc. the cast of characters are phenomenal each with their own idiosyncrasies and attributes that give the game a unique touch of magic that rubs off onto the player. It is rare in our household that four people can get together and engage in a multiplayer game that can cause so much mayhem inside and outside the television. Insults fly regarding Peach's promiscuity (giving new meaning to the phrase "Peach has got it!"), Link's sexuality and Zelda's split personality (I think the phrase "you psycho, wh're bag was used in one session"). Controllers are pulled out (which is why I'm anticipating the Wavebird), people deliberately walk in front of the television and the deletion of KO records are all signs of good fun that have been had with this game through the console that is the GameCube. This is why I am happy with my console, so happy

PLEASE NOTE: From the next issue of Hyper onward we will not be printing email addresses in the Forum and Mail Sections, UNLESS you specifically ask us to.

that throughout the years to come I will be blessed with games like Smash Brothers that will entertain myself, family and friends. Cheers to Nintendo and the GameCube and forever will you provide games for everyone to enjoy and quarrel over!

Right now I am off to play Smash Bros.! Have at you Peach! Curse you and your lousy umbrella!

Martin Schluter

WHAT ABOUT STORY?

Am I happy with my next-gen console? Yes and No. The idea was good, but it didn't work out properly. In the case of the PS2, Sony wanted to let the developers do a better job, and express themselves. That was good. But as a result, too many game programmers focused on the graphics and sound too much, and forgot about things like storyline, characters, and so on. Take, for example, Baldur's Gate : Dark Alliance.

It had great graphics but was too short, and lacking a storyline. This is just my opinion, however, so I might be wrong.

Nepence Erutuf
Nepence@yahoo.com.au

OBSELETE?

Hello Hyper, my name is Sam McMillan, I am a long time subscriber. I think the next generation consoles are good and bad, I will start with good: Because the gameplay, visuals

and sound are getting better. But the bad side is the two consoles I have got are, PlayStation 1 and Nintendo 64, meaning that they stopped making games and stuff for them because of the next generation consoles. Now that gets me a bit mad. The question is: Will this keep happening? So when I finally get the money for a GameCube will there be a GameCube 2?? And then I will have to sell my GameCube to get the 2nd GameCube?? I think this is the order of events for the rest of the lifetime on earth. And so we call games like Grand Theft Auto 3 the best visuals and sound and look at Alex The Kid as crap, in about a year we will think of GTA3 as crap. The only gaming system I can depend on is my good old computer!! Thanks Hyper for your time and ink on this letter, keep up the great mag!!

sammy69
horny_2323@hotmail.com

BRING ON PS3

Hell yeah! I own a PSone and a PS2, and there's a big difference between the two consoles, the PS2 is a HUGE improvement from its predecessor. The move from 32 bit to 128 bit meant switching from lame, blocky graphics to near life-like polys, switching from VCDs to the glamorous DVD, and offline to online (gaming) in the future. Almost all the classic PSone games are now being improved on PS2 like Metal Gear Solid, Gran Turismo and Tekken. But I've got to admit, some next-gen games don't even come near to the longterm playability of

some old PSone games, so I sometimes bring out these games and play them on my PS2, that's another 'plus' for my next-gen console! I love it! Bring on PS3!

Anthony Palmer

BOXING CLEVER

Dear Hyper,

For your question as to whether I am happy with my next-gen console (Xbox), I must say that I am (I mean, if this is the first generation of games, what will second and third be like?). However I reckon a more appropriate question would be "WILL you be happy with your next-gen console?". All the consoles are now released, and the initial launch statistics seem to indicate that we have a pretty even keel in respect to consumer base for developers to build on.

So it all comes down to a question of whether or not the upcoming releases will be of enough quality to satisfy the masses and justify the purchase of a next-gen console in the first place.

With a very nice upcoming release list including games such as Project Ego, Panzer Dragoon Orta, Unreal Championship, Duality and Phantom Crash to name a few of the better known ones, I reckon that Xbox users will find that a future of quality games is assured.

Cheers guys,
Ender

HAPPY WITH THE CLASSICS

I am a proud owner of an Indigo colored GameCube that I preordered and received on May 17th.

Why am I happy with my purchase? Well mainly because Nintendo realise that the ones that

are buying their console are fans and thus bring out classic remakes. I am 19 years-old and have been a Nintendo fan every since the original NES, so it's only natural for me to be excited about games like Mario Sunshine and the upcoming Zelda.

Also for all those who think Nintendo is too "kiddy" they can just keep wasting their breath because it doesn't affect us fans. Bring on the Resident Evil remake!

Peter Pap
drpappa@hotmail.com

FUN AND GAMEPLAY

Hi guys. I've got both an Xbox and a GameCube and I have to say that neither really live up to all the hype. I'm a huge RPG fan, and neither really have anything to offer in that genre of game. Sure, the consoles are probably capable of groundbreaking stuff. But most of the games are pretty lifeless and leave a lot to be desired. Maybe it's just me but I'd sometimes rather the old SNES or Megadrive, yeah the graphics are a laugh compared to the next-gen consoles, but the games focused on fun and gameplay. These days everyone's too worried about making their game the prettiest of all, and no one really puts that much effort into gameplay. I guess I'll just have to hold out for Project Ego for Xbox. Or maybe "Celda" for GCN.

And another thing, Microsoft suck cause I still haven't gotten my two free games and free controller.

Cheers,
Katrina



For some, Nintendo is the only one.



Developing a hardcore fanbase...

MAIL

✉ HYPER LETTERS:

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

MUSIC TO OUR EARS

Dear Hyper,

A letter in Hyper 97 got me thinking. It got me thinking about something I've thought for a long time. It got me thinking about music. Sweet, sweet music. Music in games is often a mixed bag. It's either good, or it's not. Granted, there are games with music quality in between, but generally the music is either memorable, forgettable or kind of goes unnoticed. Yet, just as said in that letter, it plays a huge role in games. It sets the scene. It gets our hearts pumping. Most importantly, it can be one of the reasons to remember a game. Long after Chrono Trigger has come and gone from my gaming playlist (many, many times, mind you) the music remains on my Winamp playlist. I used to sit and just listen to the music in Zelda: Ocarina of Time, watching the sun set over Hyrule Field.

Many developers seem to forget about music, leaving it not overly bad, but as an obvious afterthought. Of course gameplay should come first, but I personally

believe that music can at time immerse you further into a game and lodge it further into your memory than even the most stunningly beautiful graphics. Developers like Square, Rare, Nintendo and quite a few more have always served us with memorable tunes that live on even after the game lies dormant on the shelf, waiting to be pulled out for one more play, and perhaps just one more listen.

Steven McKenzie

*Dear Steven,
Good timing with your letter! I bet you're glad we did a small music feature this issue. Just recently I've been playing Final Fantasy X and appreciating its brilliant soundtrack. There are some truly memorable moments in that game thanks to the beautiful music.*

MMMMM BREAD

Hey Hyper: A few of questions:
1. What Xbox sport game is best in your opinion?
2. If you had \$100, and you already

owned Halo, DOA3, PGR, and hate JSRF, what game would you buy?

3. When will Unreal Championship be released in Australia?

4. When will Metal Gear Solid X be released in Australia?

5. If you came across another \$100, what game would you get next?

6. Will Jedi Knight II be released on Xbox?

I recently had a massive LAN party and played 16-player Halo. Foon-tastik, but having a LAN party ain't easy.

By the way, I owned. For a while. A little. Stop looking at me like that. Alright I didn't own. Taking out a bitch sniper in the hills is bloody hard, especially if you don't know where he is, and when he's got a rocket launcher as well, and he's got active camouflage.

Anyway, if you answer that that'd be kewl. Thank you Hyper!

You Stole My Bread

P.S. Can any of you guys skate? Can you skate well? Go on do a kickflip.

*Dear You Stole My Bread,
I ain't touched no one's buns, okay?*
1. *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3.*
2. *I'd hold onto your \$100 and wait for a few really good games to get released. For instance...*
3. *Unreal Championship will be out around October.*
4. *It'll be called Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance, and there's no release date. But we think it'll be pretty soon (maybe this year).*
5. *You a Buffy fan at all?*
6. *Crazier things have happened.*

BLITZBALL

Hey dudes at Hyper,

I am having a lot of trouble in FFX. I can't beat that goddamn bird that is blocking the entrance to Besaid. Can you give me any tips because I need to get into the temple to get Anima. Anyhow, I have a good idea for a game: I reckon they should make a Blitzball game because it is cool. Here are some Q's if you may:

1. Will there be an Unreal Tournament 2?
2. Will there be more games for the N64 or have they stopped making them?
3. What score did FF7 get?

4. What score did Red Faction for PC get?

Well that's all from me.

Seeya,

Doug

Dear Doug,

That bird is one of the optional bosses - it's called Dark Valefor. You don't need to beat it to finish the game, but if you really want to then you're going to need to really level up your characters to the hilt and get them their ultimate celestial weapons that are hidden around Spira (which is an epic task in itself!). Dark Valefor has 800,000 hit points!

1. *Yes, it's called Unreal Tournament 2003.*
2. *They've stopped making them now the GameCube is out.*
3. *Gee, that was a long time ago. I think it was about 94%. Can anyone correct me?*
4. *We didn't review it on PC... take that as you will.*

NOT TOUGH ENOUGH

Dear Hyper,

I'm new to your magazine, I've only bought 4 issues but already I think it's cool. A couple of days ago I got my old Sega Master System 2 out and realised that the graphics suck, the gameplay is cool, but it's actually quite hard to finish a game. The recent games on the next-gen consoles are of average difficulty, like MGS2. A real hard game is something like Alex Kidd on Master System. I just can't finish it. On PSone, games such as Final Fantasy are long but are very easy. I think game developers should make games a lot harder.

Adam D

Dear Adam D,

It's true that the 8-bit and 16-bit days had games that were ridiculously hard. Those were the days when developers couldn't do much with the graphics in their games, so they concentrated on deeply challenging gameplay. Of course these days, everything has become quite homogenised, and you really have to be careful where you spend your money. One of the problems with the game industry becoming such a profitable beast, is

CAPTION THIS!

PART 32 WINNER

This month's caption comes from Ashley Bourne of Queanbeyan in NSW. We suspect it's that stupid world cup ball that keeps going over the top.



PLEASE NOTE: From next issue onward we will not be printing email address in the Forum and Mail Sections, UNLESS you specifically ask us to.



James Reid must be looking forward to *The Two Towers* no doubt.

that some games publishers even worry that if their games are too hard, gamers won't return to buy the sequels. There are still some tricky, and well-made, games around, there's just more crap to wade through too...

DOUBLE MYSTERY

Dear Hyper,
I have been playing games since Noah was a boy. I would like to know about a game I got to play once on an Amiga. Now this might seem strange, but if anyone knew it would be you lot. It was called "Deutros" or something like that. I started to play it but never got to finish it. Have you heard of it? Would it be on normal PC format? Any info would be appreciated.
Thanx.
(no name supplied)

Dear reader,
Yes, indeed there was an old game called *Deutros* (Greek for "green" did you know) on the Atari ST. Take a walk on the wild side, or at least do an internet search, and you might come up with something.

RELEASE DATE MANIA

Well I'm a 13 year-old gamer who's in a bit of trouble. I'm planning on buying a GameCube soon because of the buyers guide and reviews in Hyper so far and am just wondering a few things. (If you can't answer the following release dates with the correct date could you please give an estimate).

1. What is the release date for *Metrod Prime* on GameCube?
2. What is the release date for *Mario Sunshine* on GameCube?
3. What is the release date for *Star Fox: Dinosaur Planet* on GameCube?
4. What is the release date for *Kingdom Hearts* on PlayStation 2?
5. Will there be any hope of having *Final Fantasy XI* here in Australia considering the lack of broadband?
6. Have RARE got any great games planned for the Cube?

Thanks in advance Hyper team, keep up the great work with the mag guys.

From,
Corin

Dear Corin,
1. There is no solid release date yet (probably early 2003).

ATARI MEMORIES

Hey Guys,
I felt the need to tell the world of my latest find. An unused ATARI 2600 (Inr. colour). And with *Space Invaders* no less. YEEHAW! This baby doesn't quite look the same on my flatscreen as I remember, but that isn't the point. The point is, I hope the current crop of up and coming gamers are appreciating the hardware as much as the software. I myself have not met a console I didn't like. Granted I mainly play PC games now in my old age (I'm 25) But I still own and play a lot of consoles from all eras. While on the subject I'd like to say that I love the GameCube and haven't stopped playing *Wave Race Blue Storm*. Anyway, I just hope the gamers out there are appreciating a console's differences rather than bagging them possibly just because somebody else owns one.

Two questions: I've been reading Hyper and PC Powerplay for as long as I remember and I still don't know what the 133+ club is, and what is vapourware? Also, I can't remember if you've already done an ATARI reverse engineering (consoles not XE). If not could you?

Keep up the fantastic work,

Winter

Dear Winter,
Last question first - yes, we did an Atari 2600 Reverse Engineering a while ago. You mean you don't buy every issue of Hyper? Shame!
As for Vapourware - it basically refers to a game that is hyped by a developer but never gets released (*Duke Nukem Forever* is slowly becoming Vapourware). And if you don't know what the 133+ club is, then I guess it means you're not a member. It's kind of like *Fight Club*, mmkay? I can say no more.



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Wheel valued at \$99.95.

2. Hopefully, in time for Christmas.
3. Er... hopefully in time for Christmas!
4. ...Christmas!
5. Yes, it will get released here early-ish 2003.
6. Plenty. A new *Donkey Kong Racing* for instance.

PERFECT SCORE

To Hyper,
Your mag is da best. I gotta GameCube and a PC and I'm glad I'm able to buy the one mag for these two consoles.
Now I've finished with that, let me tell you about the Tomos theory (named after me). I have read many times that you guys refuse to give a game a perfect score (100). I find it impossible to have a perfect score when it's impossible for a game to reach it. How can a game not be perfect, how can you guys say a game has faults, what if the developer does his 100% best to create the game?

Note: I give you my permission to send me a free game.

Signed
TomRock

Dear TomRock,
I'm not exactly sure what you're getting at, but the fact remains that even the most brilliant game will inevitably have faults, regardless of how tirelessly the developers have worked on it. Who knows, one day we might get our hands on a game that changes our opinion.

BLAH BLAH BLAH

Hey Hyper guys,
Great mag, you are legends of gaming blah blah blah.
Now I have a few questions mainly concerning the wonderful Xbox.
1. Will GTA3 ever come to Xbox? I have heard that Sony has the official rights to it but if so, how come it's (as said on the Nintendo site) confirmed for GBA?
2. If and when will Xbox Live be hitting Australia?
3. I REALLY want a Controller S (the Jap one), but there are no import shops where I live. Will the Controller S be released locally?
4. I heard that Microsoft is planning to unveil the Xbox 2 around the time of the next World Cup, and is



Daniel Kiley is still "dreaming".

planning to release it as soon as 2006. If so, I wonder will my beloved Xbox be obsolete?

5. Is Halo 2 confirmed or just a rumour?

6. DOA3, JSRF or Max Payne?

Cheers,

The legend know only as Bob Knobler

Dear Bob Knobler,

1. GTA coming to the other consoles will inevitably happen, we're currently trying to get more information from Rockstar games.

2. We can probably expect it to take off in 2003.

3. Yes, as far as we have been told, later this year.

4. Any rumours you hear on Xbox 2 are complete bogus at the moment. Microsoft probably haven't even decided themselves!

5. It's not confirmed, but we think they've started work on it.

6. Tough call... each game has its strengths and weaknesses, so there's no clear winner. Do you want a fighting game, skating game or shooter? That's the only way to decide!

SHOOT IT ALL DOWN

Hello Hyper dudes, great mag.

I have a few questions to ask you.

1. I have all the Half-life games and have nearly finished them. Which first person shooters should I get now?

2. Are there any cel-shaded first person shooters on the PC? If not are they making any?

James Thom

Dear James,

1. Deus Ex, Thief, No One Lives Forever, System Shock 2, Serious Sam...

2. There is one being developed now called XIII (Thirteen), which will be

published by Ubi Soft. More on that in an upcoming issue.

SELF-ESTEEM

Hey Hyper,

First of all great mag, you guys give us all the latest news on games while making it entertaining to read unlike some gay mags. I'm saving up for either a purple monkey dishwasher or a subscription to Hyper.

In magazines for Nintendo or Sony, all they do in the letters section is bag the other consoles, it just pisses me off

that they can't accept all consoles. But hey, if they wanna deprive themselves of some great games that's their deal.

Anywayz, I've been doing a recent poll on MSN messenger where people vote on their fav console. PS2 is kicking a lot of ass, GameCube is a healthy second and Xbox has... an embarrassing low amount of votes.

Mmkay, question time.

1. I own a PS2 and will own a GCN very soon, reckon it's worth getting a GBA? I need to know if the connectivity thing actually has some use.

2. Did u know if there's a nekkid patch for The Sims on the net?

3. What's the release date for Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance? I reckon it looks wicked kool.

4. Have you ever reviewed an online game called Runescape? It's no Everquest but I can't afford any online games so I enjoy it (it's free).

5. Please... tell my friend Jen that Pokémon, Monster Rancher, Dragon Warrior and anything similar to those are all GAY!! She's 15 and thinks all that shit is 'cute'.

Well that's about it, hope I didn't bore ya too much!

Plz publish this cuz it's my first write in ever and if u don't... I won't be able to sleep at night and my self-esteem (ahem?) will be crushed.

Ryz "Reach For The Sky Punk"
P.S. FFX is sweet! Rikku 4eva!

Dear Ryz,

1. Well, GCN connectivity aside, the GBA has a great library of games already so we'd say yes!

2. You dirty, dirty boy.

3. MK:DA "cough" will hit consoles possibly at Xmas, but there is no set release date yet.

4. No we haven't, but if you're enjoying it then that's a good

indication is it not?

5. Actually, those games are all pretty good. Different strokes for different folks.

GAMECUBE PUBERTY

Hey people at Hyper,

I'll skip the suck-up-for-the-moderna-wheel act and get straight to business.

A lot of people at my school go on about the Gamecube being too kiddy... shame on them.

For example, freakin' scary games such as the RE remake, REo, Metrodroid Prime, and "mature" games, Rogue Leader, Spider-Man, Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem, The Hobbit, LOTR, (cue drool, mmmhmm), Clone Wars (don't tell me that doesn't get your blood pumping), the 2 X-Men games, XIII and many more. And crap games? I think not. PS2 - fighting for its life (good games, but...).

Xbox - mad system, but the weight... struggling. GCN - coolest games, lightweight, upper hand of the Gaming War.

I'm Kent Brockman and that's my two cents.

Struggling to get copies of Hyper,
Bob "Kent" Man.

Dear Bob,

You just have to remember that it is your two cents. GameCube is genius, but it doesn't suit everyone's taste. Also, it hurts to admit it, but the GameCube has just as many crap games as the other consoles. But certainly, Nintendo have relaxed their "family-only" policy in terms of allowing more mature third-party games through which is a good thing.

GRAPHICS OVER GAMEPLAY

Hi,

I bought my PS2 in January and since then have also got FIFA 2002, Metal Gear Solid 2 and Gran Turismo 3. I have noticed one trend with all these games, while the graphics are breathtaking, the gameplay is on par at best with games I had on my PSX. GT3 is GT1 with better graphics. FIFA 2002 is a fall back with in every department from previous efforts. The storyline for MGS2 is painful, annoying and tempts you to burn the game rather than complete it. Is this the way gaming is heading? Where looks are more important than ability? Do the developers realise that if the game has a

storyline that keeps you glued to the screen you don't give a shit if the graphics aren't GT3 standard? The only hope we have is another game as impacting as Final Fantasy VII or Metal Gear Solid to be released, to make the developers realise what the public want, so let us pray, before it is too late...

Liam

Dear Liam,

It'll always be this way. Technology improves faster than game developers can come up with interesting new gaming concepts, so the push is always to make the games look better and better first and foremost. It's looks that get the average Joe interested in the first place, whilst gaming connoisseurs like us move on to appreciating the depth of play and story. There will always be someone out there trying new gaming concepts though - Miyamoto continues to strive for something unique (just look at Pikmin), as does Peter Molyneux (Black & White, Project Ego), Warren Spector (Deus Ex) and a few other great game designers. Don't give up hope, as there are amazing games just around the corner.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Hey people at Hyper,

I was just wondering, when are they really going to start thinking about console names? Seriously, what originality do we have here? PlayStation, GameCube, Xbox, Game Boy Advance, Nintendo 64? Now what the hell is that?

Sometimes I feel weird talking about different consoles to friends. All the names are so tacky and thoughtless, the only originality is the X and the Boy. I think old consoles had good names, if only I could remember some now.

It would be so much better if we had some new console names that really stand out. Get rid of the obvious words like the brand name, and box, station, cube, play, game. That's all I really have to say, except the usual excellent mag etc.

See Ya,

Jordan Miller

Dear Jordan,

Why didn't you offer us some examples? Y'know, the "Hyper Entertainment System" or something. Personally, we're still waiting for the Okama GameSphere.

The Official Australian Games Chart

Compiled by Inform in association with IEAA

TOP 10

PlayStation 2 Games Over \$50

W/E 7 July 2002
RETAIL SALES

1	▲	Grand Theft Auto 3	Adventure
2	▼	Medal Of Honor: Frontline	Action
3	▼	Spider-Man: The Movie	Adventure
4	◆	Vampire Night	Action
5	◆	Final Fantasy X	RPG
6	◆	Smash Court Pro Tournament	Sports
7	◆	V-Rally 3	Racing
8	◆	Metal Gear Solid 2	Adventure
9	◆	FIFA 2002 World Cup	Sports
10	◆	Deus Ex	RPG

TOP 10

PlayStation Games Over \$40

W/E 7 July 2002
RETAIL SALES

1	▲	Harry Potter & Philosopher	Adventure
2	▼	FIFA 2002 World Cup	Sports
3	▲	Monsters Inc	Adventure
4	▲	FIFA 2002	Sports
5	▼	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	Sports
6	▼	Final Fantasy Anthology	RPG
7	◆	Who Wants To Be A Millnaire Family	
8	◆	Peter Pan	Adventure
9	◆	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	Sports
10	◆	Scooby Doo Cyber Chase	Adventure

TOP 10

Game Cube Games Over \$40

W/E 7 July 2002
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Pikmin	Action
2	◆	Super Smash Bros: Melee	Action
3	◆	Bond 007 Agent Under Fire	Action
4	▲	Spider-Man: The Movie	Adventure
5	▼	Rogue Leader	Action
6	◆	Luigi's Mansion	Adventure
7	◆	Sonic Adventures 2	Adventure
8	◆	FIFA 2002 World Cup	Sports
9	○	Simpson's Road Rage	Racing
10	▼	Lost Kingdoms	RPG

TOP 10

Xbox Games Over \$40

W/E 7 July 2002
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Halo - Combat Evolved	Action
2	▲	Spider-Man: The Movie	Adventure
3	▼	Bond 007 Agent Under Fire	Action
4	◆	Project Gotham Racing	Racing
5	▲	RalliSport Challenge	Racing
6	◆	Dead or Alive 3	Action
7	▲	Moto GP Ultimate Racing	Racing
8	▲	Max Payne	Action
9	○	Crash Band: Wrath/Cortex	Adventure
10	▼	FIFA 2002 World Cup	Sports

TOP 10

PC Games Over \$30

W/E 7 July 2002
RETAIL SALES

1	○	WarCraft 3	Strategy
2	○	Neverwinter Nights	RPG
3	◆	The Sims Vacation	Strategy
4	▲	The Sims	Strategy
5	▼	Grand Theft Auto 3	Adventure
6	▲	EA Sports V8 Challenge	Racing
7	▼	Soldier Fortune 2: Double H	Action
8	▲	The Sims Hot Date	Strategy
9	▼	Grand Prix 4	Racing
10	○	Star Wars Galactic: Cln Cmp	Strategy

TOP 10

Game Boy Advance Games Over \$40

W/E 7 July 2002
RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Dragonball Z: Legacy Goku	Action
2	▲	Super Mario World Adv 2	Adventure
3	▼	Spider-Man: The Movie	Adventure
4	◆	Star Wars EP 2	Adventure
5	▲	Harry Potter & Philosopher	Adventure
6	▼	Mario Kart Super Circuit	Racing
7	▲	Crash Bandicoot XS	Adventure
8	▼	Sonic Advance	Adventure
9	▼	Super Mario Advance	Adventure
10	○	Golden Sun	RPG

TOP 10

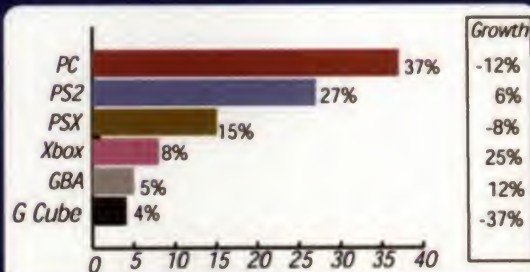
All Full Priced Games

W/E 7 July 2002
RETAIL SALES

1	○	WarCraft 3	PC/MAC
2	○	Neverwinter Nights	PC/MAC
3	◆	Grand Theft Auto	PlayStation 2
4	▼	Medal Of Honor: Frontline	PlayStation 2
5	▼	Spider-Man: The Movie	PlayStation 2
6	▼	Vampire Night	PlayStation 2
7	◆	Halo - Combat Evolved	Xbox
8	▼	Final Fantasy X	PlayStation 2
9	▼	Pikmin	GameCube
10	○	Spider-Man: The Movie	Xbox

MARKET WATCH All Games by Platform

May vs June 2002
RETAIL SALES



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

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Next Issue:

SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE

We play through the whole game and tell all!



PLUS: We review Resident Evil (**GCN**), Stuntman (**PS2**), Unreal Tournament 2003 (**PC**), Conflict Desert Storm (**Xbox**), AFL Live 2003 (**PC**) and much, much more.

Hyper 108 >>>
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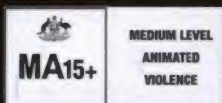
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Resident Evil

pure

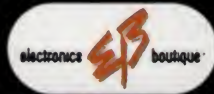
terror

cubed.

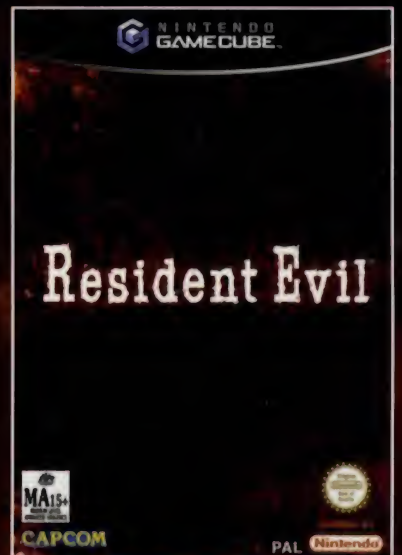
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