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& Red Faction 2!

ISSUE 110
DECEMBER 2002

HYPER



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McRAE
RALLY 3**

Xbox rules
the racing
roost



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YOUR
MOUTH!**

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GUIDE**

You know
you want it

THE PEOPLE'S GAME

**WWE:
SMACKDOWN!**

the
top
50
games

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next

10

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HUGE PS2 LINEUP

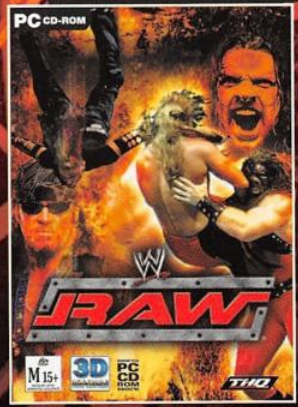
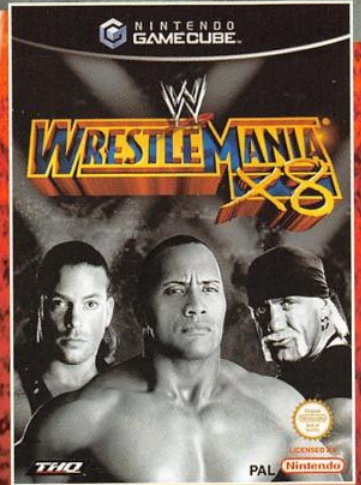
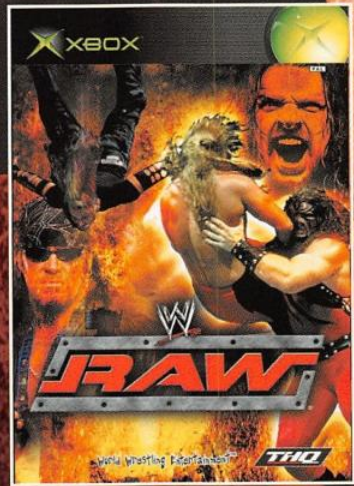
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4 • Burnout 2
Timesplitters 2 • Red Faction 2
Kingdom Hearts • Summoner 2

PC GAMING GETS UNREAL

Unreal Tournament 2003
Rollercoaster Tycoon 2



M15+
MEDIUM LEVEL
ANIMATED VIOLENCE



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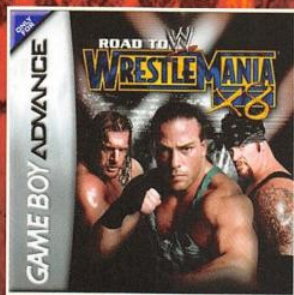
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JURNS

WRESTLEMANIA X8



Also Available



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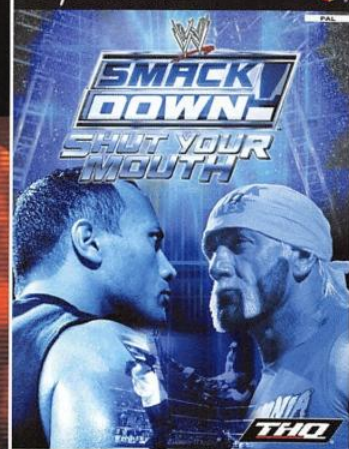
WE BRING THE WHUPPIN'



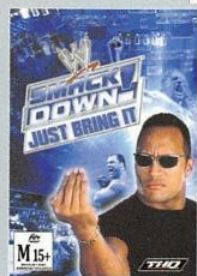
YOU BRING THE ASS!



PlayStation 2



PlayStation 2



Platinum

PlayStation 2

Also Available

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WRESTLING ARE YOU READY TO PLAY THE GAME?

TRIPLE-H
RATED
GAMING

THE ULTIMATE WRESTLING FAN'S GAME HAS ARRIVED... CAN YOU SMELL WHAT THQ ARE COOKING?



JAKKS Pacific
inc.

THQ

A promotional image for THQ featuring four WWE wrestlers. From left to right: Rey Mysterio Jr. (shirtless), Edge (wearing a patterned shirt), Triple H (wearing a red bandana and a black vest over a red shirt), and Shawn Michaels (wearing a plaid shirt). They are standing in front of a background of warm, glowing lights and a red and white striped pattern, suggesting a festive or holiday theme.

SEASONAL BEATINGS

IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT YOUR GAME IS!

This Christmas THQ gets tough with your game console. The full might of World Wrestling Entertainment™ is coming 'round your place to play rough with your PlayStation 2, Xbox, Gamecube and Game Boy Advance...

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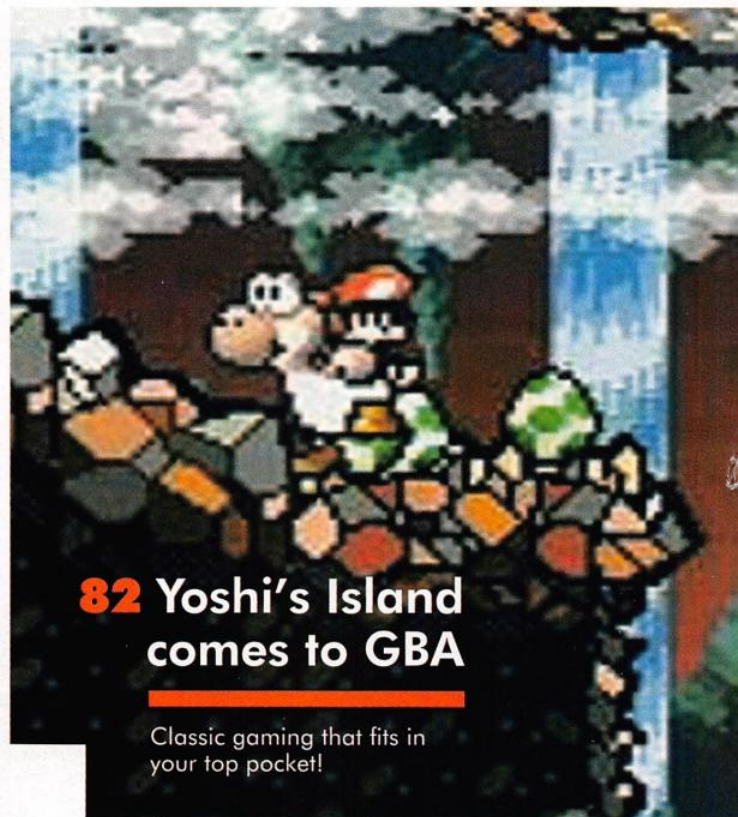


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36 The Top 50 Best Games Readers Poll

It's time for you to decide. Vote and win!



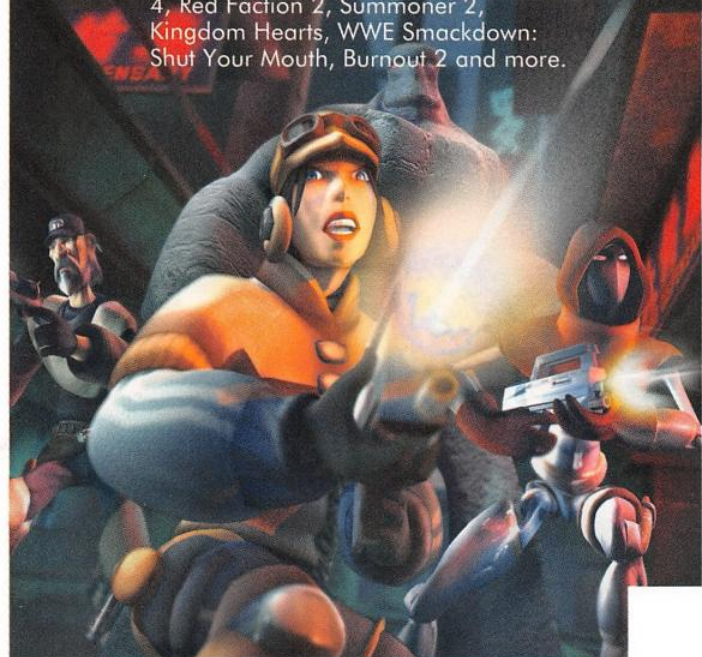
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Classic gaming that fits in your top pocket!

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We might give you one, if you subscribe...



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HYPER»»



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2002

WRITE TO HYPER!

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EDITORIAL

»» Gone are the days of sequels being nothing more than mere cash-leeching tools (well, okay, maybe not gone, but at least they seem to temporarily be at bay). All of the new instalments we received this month have turned out to be substantial improvements upon their predecessors (with the possible exception of one game in particular – but we'll let you read through the reviews to figure out which one that is). Developers really are listening to gamers – the fans of their hit in games in particular – and enhancing/improving/embellishing so that good games are getting even better. Tony Hawk now has flatland tricks, TimeSplitters 2 is bursting with options, the latest Smackdown has been designed for the hardcore wrestling fans, Burnout 2 has evolved into an even better masterpiece than the original and even Rollercoaster Tycoon 2 has upped the ante. Resting on the laurels of a successful license isn't enough these days – it seems the message is finally getting through!

Eliot Fish »» Editor

Sometimes the only way to defeat a Predator is to become one.



METROID FUSION



Out November 29. Only on **GAMEBOY ADVANCE**.



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NEWS



IN THE NEWS: StarCraft: Ghost ■ Age of Mythology launch ■ Tenchu 3 ■ Xbox launches in NZ

BLIZZARD GIVE UP THE GHOST

Give up the info on StarCraft Ghost that is!

With the buzz going around that Blizzard were about to announce a brand new game, most of the industry was expecting the inevitable announcement of StarCraft 2. Surprisingly, Blizzard chose to reveal details on their first console game in years: StarCraft: Ghost. Dubbed a "Tactical Action console game set in the StarCraft universe", Ghost is in development for multiple console platforms, most probably Xbox and PS2 (hopefully GameCube also). The player takes on the role of Nova, an elite Ghost unit with the ability to cloak, immobilise electronic devices, move at sonic speed and engage in one-on-one combat. Fans will get excited over the fact that they can finally experience the world of StarCraft in full 3D at ground level, going face

to face with the Zerg and Protoss. When faced with infiltrating an enemy compound, Nova can utilise a number of stealthy options, from climbing all over the environment (hanging from wires, climbing pipes, scaling fences) to ordering down a squad of soldiers from a battleship to storm the front gate. She'll also be able to pilot many of StarCraft's cool vehicles. And let's not forget that in the original StarCraft RTS, the Ghost unit had the ability to call down a Nuclear strike. Interestingly, Blizzard are not making this game on their own. PC games developer, Nihilistic Software (Vampire the Masquerade), are co-developers despite the fact that Blizzard have stressed that Ghost will NOT be released on PC or Mac. StarCraft: Ghost is slated for late 2003.



Looks like those Baygon Zerg baits aren't working.

StarCraft in full 3D at ground level, going face to face with the Zerg...



MICROSOFT RARE DEAL CONFIRMED

Kameo, Perfect Dark Xbox games announced

Many of you would have read the news that has surfaced since the last issue came out, confirming Microsoft's purchase of UK developer, Rare. Rare will now make games exclusively for the Xbox system, with the exception of some titles for the Game Boy Advance.

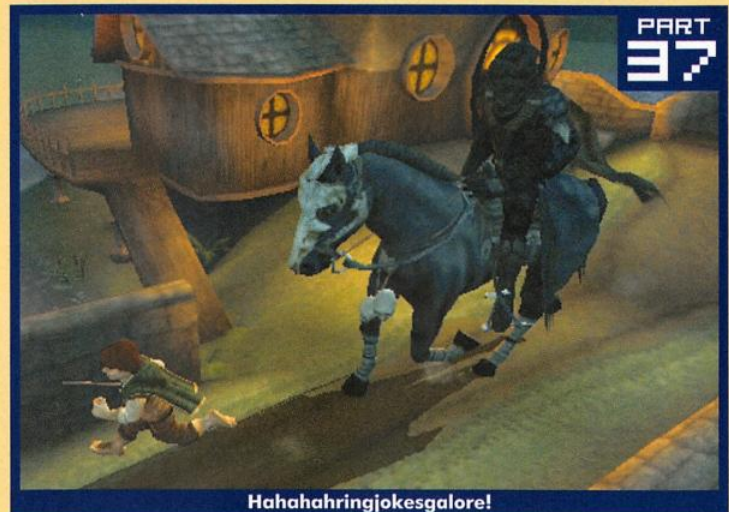
Microsoft have so far announced Perfect Dark Zero and Kameo: Elements of Power as Xbox exclusive titles that will see release within the next six months. Microsoft also has the rights to release Xbox games based on the Conker and Banjo Kazooie licenses. To address the inevitable outcry from Nintendo fans, Rare's Stamper brothers even went so far as to put up a "letter to Rare fans" on their website at www.rareware.com explaining their decision to partner with Microsoft, and why they think the Xbox will be a great platform for Rare games. As soon as Hyper has the details on the Perfect Dark sequel for Xbox, you'll be the first to know.



Word up, it's Kameo for Xbox.

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 37 in the Subject line.

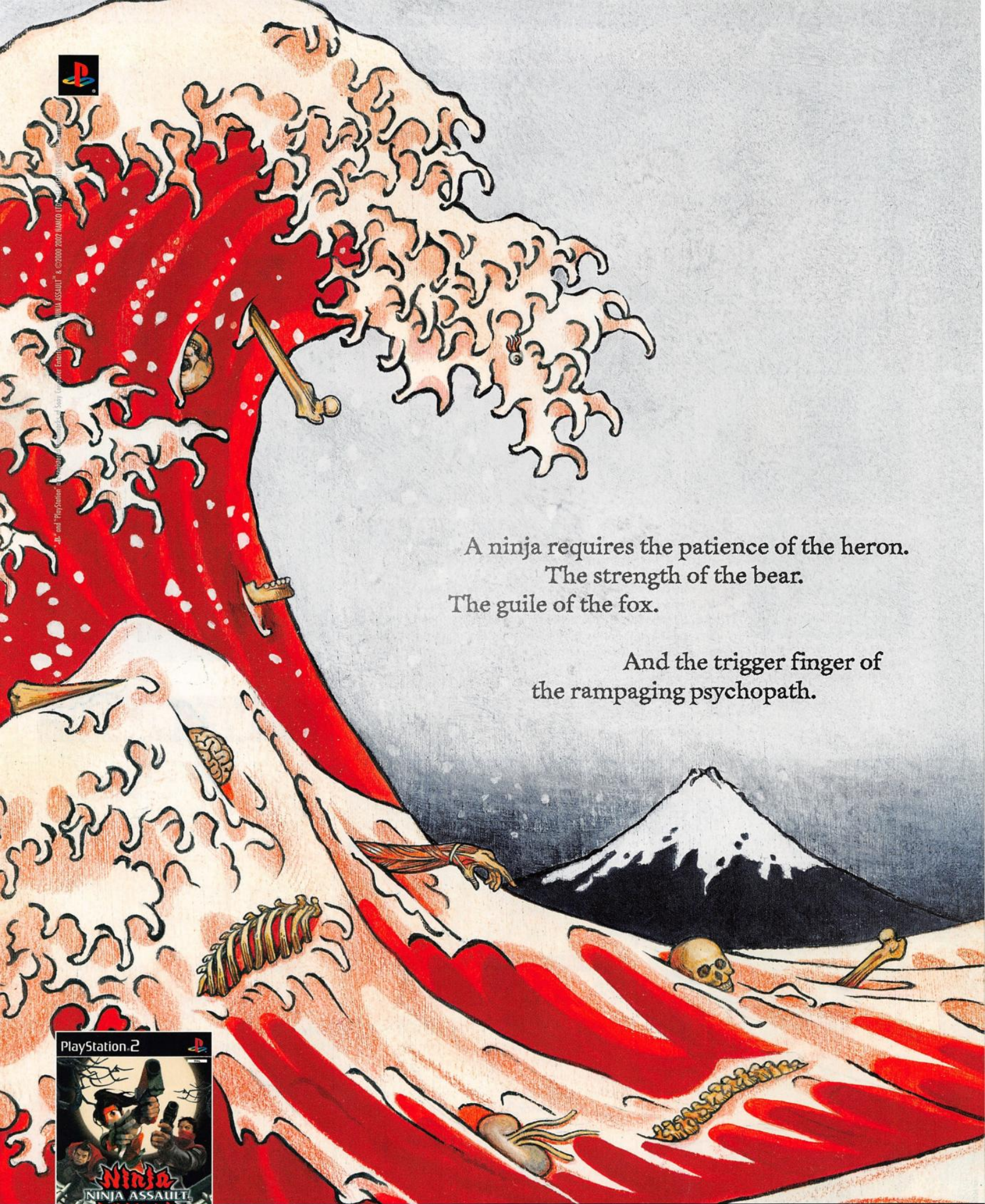


PART 37

Hahahahringjokesgalore!

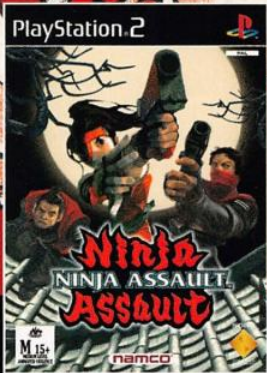


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A ninja requires the patience of the heron.
The strength of the bear.
The guile of the fox.

And the trigger finger of
the rampaging psychopath.



THE ANTICIPATION PLACE THE ADRENALIN PLACE THE EXHILARATION PLACE THE THIRD PLACE

PlayStation 2



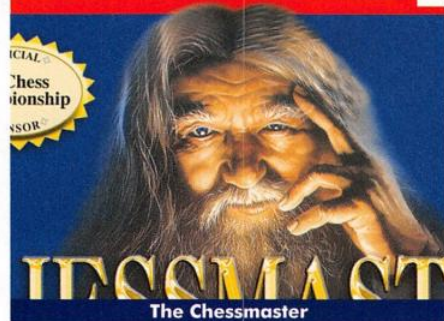
The NZ Xbox launch was a huge success... bands, food, drink and happy times.

THE ALL-BLACK XBOX

Weighty consoles almost sink island.

Well, it's been a difficult wait, but finally our New Zealand brethren can get their hands on the Xbox. Launching back on October 3, one retailer commented that they sold as many Xbox systems on the first day as they sold GameCube units over a period of four months. Certainly, the marketing team did their job well. Bands Rhombus, Panam, King Kapisi and Blindspott entertained all present at the Xbox launch party — an event which was free if you were lucky enough to get in early. We now hope the LIVE service gets up and running so Aussie and New Zealand Xbox gamers can take each other on.

WORLD'S MOST POPULAR CHESS



The Chessmaster

↑ SEPARATED AT BIRTH? ↓

Gandalf the White



Thor tries to kneecap Eliot in launch scuffle!

GOOD GOD!

The Age of Mythology launch

Hyper was present at the Age of Mythology launch at Dimitri's in Sydney to mingle with a bunch of Greek Gods, a few goddesses and a room full of strategy geeks. Mythology creator, Bruce Shelly (Age of Empires, Age of Empires II) gave a small presentation and did a demo of the game for the room, showing off just what a rich, satisfying game Microsoft have on their hands. Microsoft also announced the incredible Nutri Grain/Age of Mythology promotion that will pack a free full version of the original Age of Empires into 750,000 boxes of Nutri Grain across Australia. Go check your supermarket today.

WINNERS

www.hyperactive.com.au

GRAVITY GAMES

Melanie Higgins, Murarrie, Qld
Paul Simao, North Bondi, NSW

Hyper 108

SOCCER SLAM

George Archila, QLD
L. Monk, VIC
Jake Taylor, VIC
Lucy Fahey, SA
Romel Elegado, NSW

BLADE 2

Alex Laspatzis, VIC
Ben Pilla, SA
Eric Andritsakis, SA
G. Hopkins, QLD
Skye Harrison, VIC

HIGH SCORE

Jason New, NSW
Patrick Pigott, NSW
J.F. Boggs, NSW
C. Andrews, VIC
Tom Lennon, NSW

CONVERSE

Andrew Stokes, QLD

OVERFLOW

Sega look set to announce the Sega Classics range for Xbox. This will result in classic MegaDrive, Saturn and Dreamcast games being ported to the Xbox. We hope that the MegaDrive releases are packaged so that we get a number of good games on one disc, rather than one classic and lots of crappy filler.

Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo is coming to the Game Boy Advance in a "perfect" port, and you will even be able to battle friends over the link cable. Awesomeness.

Japanese developer, Sammy, are currently working on a PlayStation 2 game based on Akira Kurosawa's legendary piece of cinema, *The Seven Samurai*. Aside from hoping they do it justice, we hope it gets a western release! Come on, Sammy!

Factor Five (Rogue Leader) and the DivX Network have developed a DivX tool for the GameCube, allowing developers to use DVD quality video in GameCube games as highly compressed DivX files.

Capcom haven't completely ceased Resident Evil development for the PS2. Releasing soon in Japan is Network Biohazard, an online Resident Evil title for up to 8 players at a time. Once the PS2's online gaming network gets up and running in other territories, this is a game we hope will be added to our PAL library...

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CHAOS AT CAPCOM

Chaos Legion is a new 3D action RPG from Capcom just recently announced for the PS2. Capcom were even quoted as stating that Chaos Legion will be as important to them as Resident Evil, Onimusha and Megaman, which is certainly setting the bar high. The game is actually based upon a fantasy novel crawling with knights, dragons and fantastical weapons. Capcom will certainly be pushing the PS2's limits with a brand new graphics engine that not only looks superb, but promises to fill the screen with countless enemies for some truly epic action. They are also employing some famous Japanese movie talent to provide the voices, so budgets are high and expectations are big. Chaos Legion is set for release in Japan in early 2003, with no PAL release yet confirmed.



GET NUDE ON THE XBOX

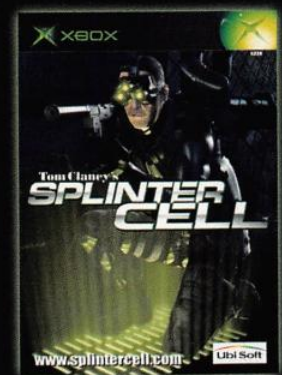
Well, if you lived in Japan, you could. Despite the title, N.U.D.E., this game doesn't stray beyond some fairly innocent flirting. Natural Ultimate Digital Experiment is a game for the Xbox designed primarily for Japan's fixation with dating games and virtual girlfriends. You communicate with the spunky young Japanese girl with the Xbox's headset communicator, asking her questions and generally getting to know her. Don't hope on seeing a local release, but fascinating nonetheless.

HOT SCREENS! TENCHU 3 ON PS2



FIRST SCREENS! CAPCOM FIGHTING ALL-STARS FOR ARCADE

Tom Clancy's **SPLINTER CELL**™



Step out of the shadows as Sam Fisher, master of espionage ...counter-terrorism's silent solution. The only agent with the freedom to go where no one else can go and do what no one else can do. Infiltrate, eradicate... and escape.



xbox.com.au

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	25	33		



POWER

SUPER MONKEY BALL 2

GCN SEGA

Who can resist the lure of monkeys? Add giant balls to the equation and we're sold! Sega recently confirmed that Super Monkey Ball 2 will soon see a PAL release, so start sharpening up those control pad skills for another round of brain taxing puzzles and skills tests – not to mention all those sweet multiplayer modes!



14 >>HYPER EYE CANDY

2-8 INCHWORMS



CRIMSON SKIES: HIGH ROAD TO REVENGE

»»» MICROSOFT

Debuting a while back on PC, *Crimson Skies* was a great flight combat shoot 'em up with a dose of Indiana Jones and Red Baron for good measure. Microsoft have been feverishly working on an Xbox version of the game will all-new fancy visuals and new missions. We can't wait for this one — it promises to be an Xbox must-buy.

THE BIG GAMES

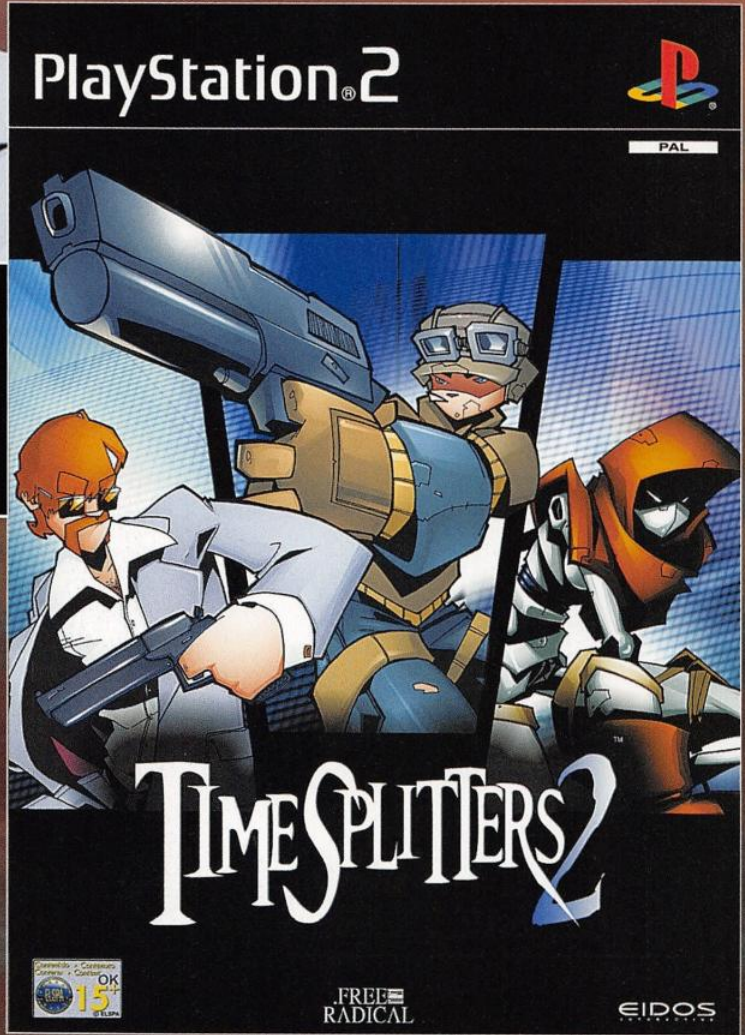


\$99⁹⁵

TimeSplitters 2 PS2 (M15+).
Features sleek animation, superb single and multi-player options, well designed, focused levels and superior action. 11064



**MENTION THIS
AD AND SAVE \$10
ON ANY OF
THESE TITLES!**



PlayStation 2



PAL

TIME SPLITTERS 2



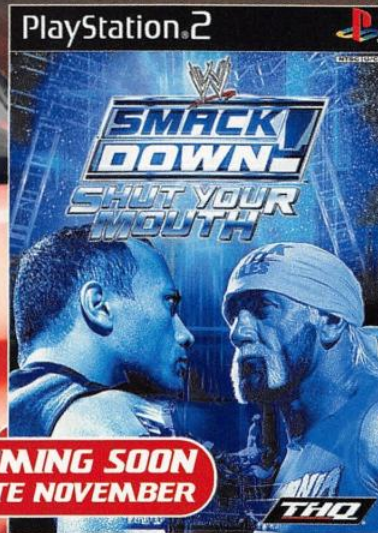
FREE
RADICAL

EIDOS



\$99⁹⁵

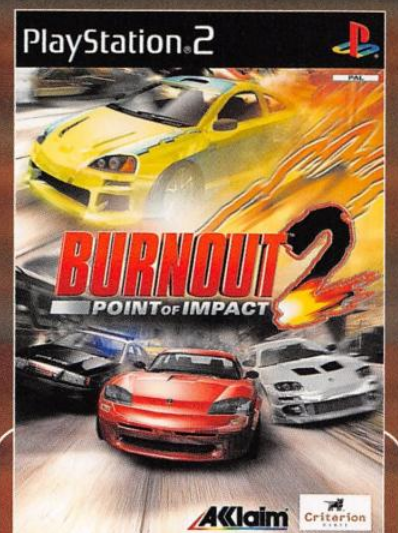
Summoner 2 PS2
(M15+), THQ90049



**COMING SOON
LATE NOVEMBER**

\$99⁹⁵

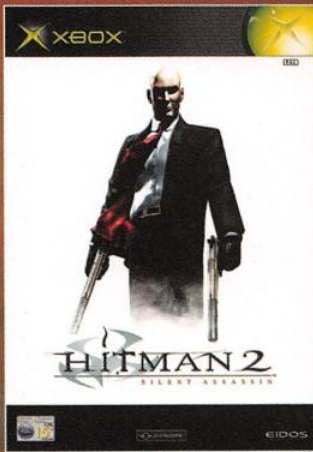
WWE Smackdown! 4: Shut
Your Mouth PS2 (M15+), THQ90056



\$99⁹⁵

Burnout 2 PS2 (M15+), 33141

XBOX



\$99⁹⁵

Hitman 2
XBOX™
(MA15+). 11060



\$89⁹⁵

Splinter Cell
XBOX™
(M15+). 1128114

**COMING SOON
LATE NOVEMBER**

PC



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Battlefield
1942 PC
(M15+). 509804



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Microsoft® Age
of Mythology
PC (G8+). MSC2835

\$149⁹⁵

Microsoft® Age of
Mythology
Collectors Edition
PC (G8+). MSC2836

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GAMECUBE™**



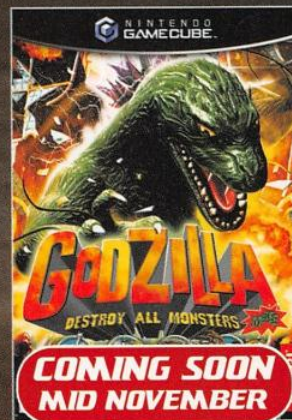
\$99⁹⁵

Star Wars: The Clone Wars
GC (M15+). 531228



\$99⁹⁵

Bond 007: Nightfire
GC (M15+). 5314593



\$89⁹⁵

Godzilla: Destroy All Monsters
Melee GC (G8+). 11102

Harvey Norman

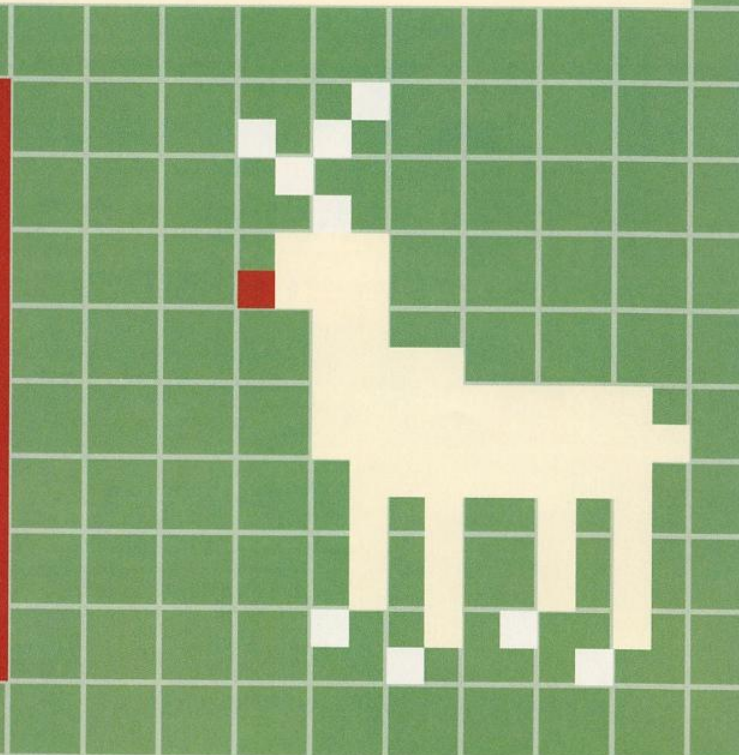
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HYPER 33 CHRISTMAS BUYERS GUIDE PART 1

Welcome one and all to Hyper's Christmas Buyers Guide. With the silly season just around the corner, it's time to start narrowing down the list of materialistic goodies that will bring joy to your holidays, not to mention enrich your life and make you a better person... maybe. Since there are so many cool games and tech gadgets out there, and because we know that you guys are into technology as well as games, we've decided to spread our Christmas love over two issues (eew!). Part 1 is a more gaming oriented guide, whereas Part 2 (next issue) will just be cool shit that will instantly raise your IQ AND make you more attractive to members of the opposite sex. No matter which way you look at it, it's all good. We should mention, however, that there are a few items that we've left out because we've covered them recently in the hardware section, such as PS2 wheels and LCD screens. Shame on you if you don't own the back issues. You'll also notice a lack of online info for the PS2, Xbox and GCN in this guide — although all the major console giants are planning on bringing online gaming to Australia, as of going to press, there is no concrete info on when, how and at what cost. The online revolution won't be here in time for Christmas. Sorry! Now, on to Part 1...



Panasonic Q-Cube

Panasonic
RRP: over \$1000

■ The Panasonic Q-Cube is the ultimate proof that you're a hardcore Nintendo fanboy. Still only available in Japan, the Q-Cube is a GameCube and a DVD player in one, and one of the sexiest things we've ever seen. It's possible to order chipped machines through retailers like Lik-Sang (which has, sadly, just been shut down by Microsoft), expanding the machine's capabilities to all region DVD and Jap/US games, but as far as we're aware, not to PAL games. Unfortunately, the Q-Cube does come at quite a price. To import a modified machine you'd be looking at well over \$1000. Matsushita (Panasonic) have also announced a new model to be released in Japan early next year, which will feature digital video recording functions. Mmm... sweet.



WaveBird

Nintendo
RRP: \$69.95

■ This Christmas, new wireless peripherals are most certainly a recurring theme, and Nintendo are leading the charge... at least in the world of console gaming. The WaveBird is Nintendo's wireless GameCube controller, and the implementation is flawless. At their pre-E3 press conference earlier this year, Shigeru Miyamoto entered the room from the rear, playing Super Mario Sunshine as he went. It really is that powerful. Through our extensive testing since, the range on this thing is incredible. Chances are your eyes will give out before the WaveBird does. We've played games from across the office and from around corners (with a helper saying "warm, warmer"!). Instead of using infrared, Nintendo have gone with RF (radio frequency) technology, so you can play from up to 6 meters away with no line of sight. The WaveBird frees your gaming experience up beautifully, plus it fits snugly in the hand just like a normal GCN controller. Combine four WaveBirds, four friends and a copy of Soccer Slam and Beach Spikers, and you have the recipe for yuletide joy this Christmas. Pants Tres Bien!



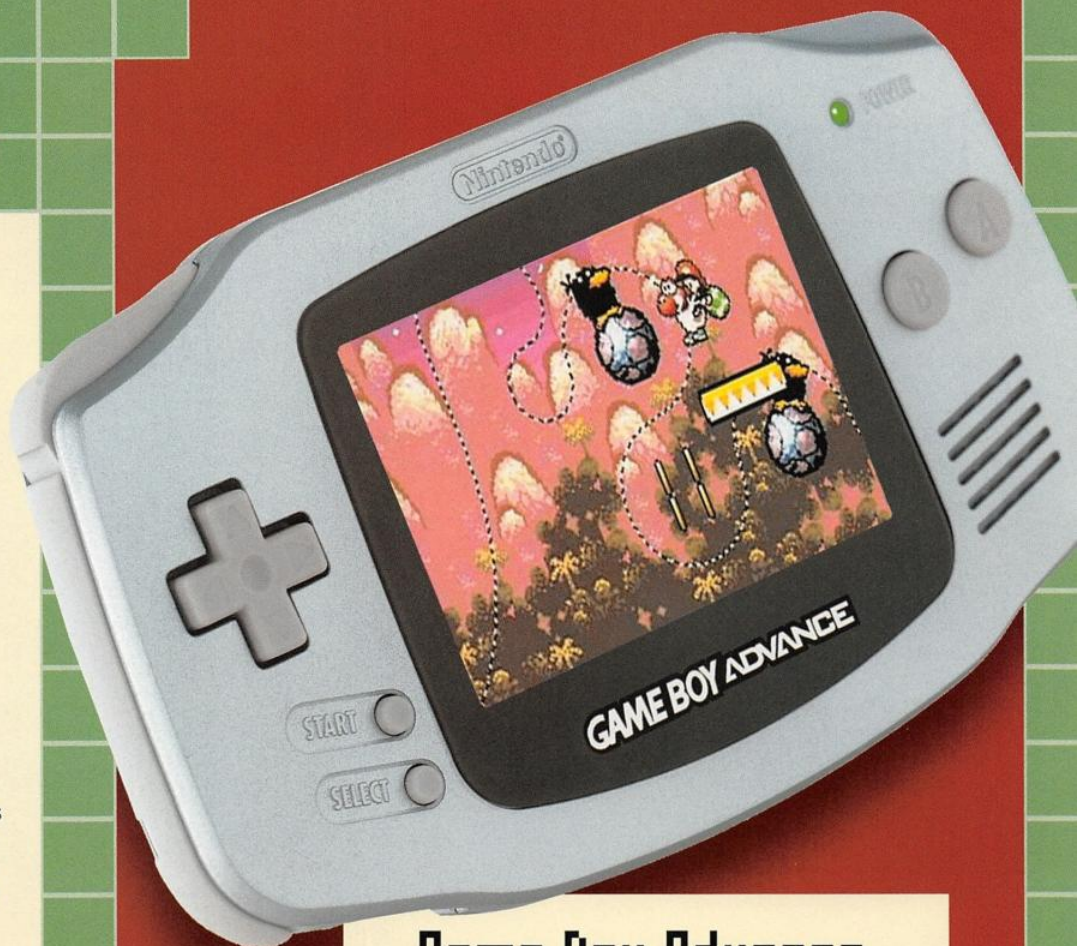
Freeloader

Datel

RRP: TBA

■ Datel's Freeloader disc sounds like a god send. It's a GameCube sized boot disc that allows you to play Japanese and US games on a PAL machine without any internal modification — thus keeping your warranty intact. Although it's a chore having to swap discs each time you play an import title, this is a cheaper solution than chipping your machine and less invasive. Like we said though, it "sounds like a god send".

Unfortunately, the product has seen month after month of delay, with rumours ranging from Nintendo refusing to master the disc through to Datel delaying release until Mario is released stateside to stay in Nintendo's good books. Whether it will be here in time for Christmas remains to be seen, but if it is, this is an essential purchase for any GameCube fan that wants the option to buy Japanese and US titles every so often.



Game Boy Advance Platinum

Nintendo

RRP: \$169

■ We have our fingers crossed that Nintendo are going to announce a redesigned GBA with new display technology for a brighter screen, but until that happens, you'll just have to be content with a new colour.

Nintendo recently launched their platinum coloured GBA, and we must say it's quite a slick looking unit. GBA is also available in Jet (Black), Indigo (Purple), Arctic (White), Glacier (Translucent Blue) and Fuschia (Translucent Red).

For the more "hands-on" readers, there's always the option to pick up an Afterburner kit. It's not the easiest thing to do (and it will void your warranty), but until Nintendo announce a GBA MK II, this is the best solution for installing a backlight in your system. We've seen the results and outside an external worm light that actually works (we haven't yet found one), this is the only way to get visibility 100% of the time. Check out www.tritonlabs.com for more info, although Triton Labs are currently only shipping to the US.

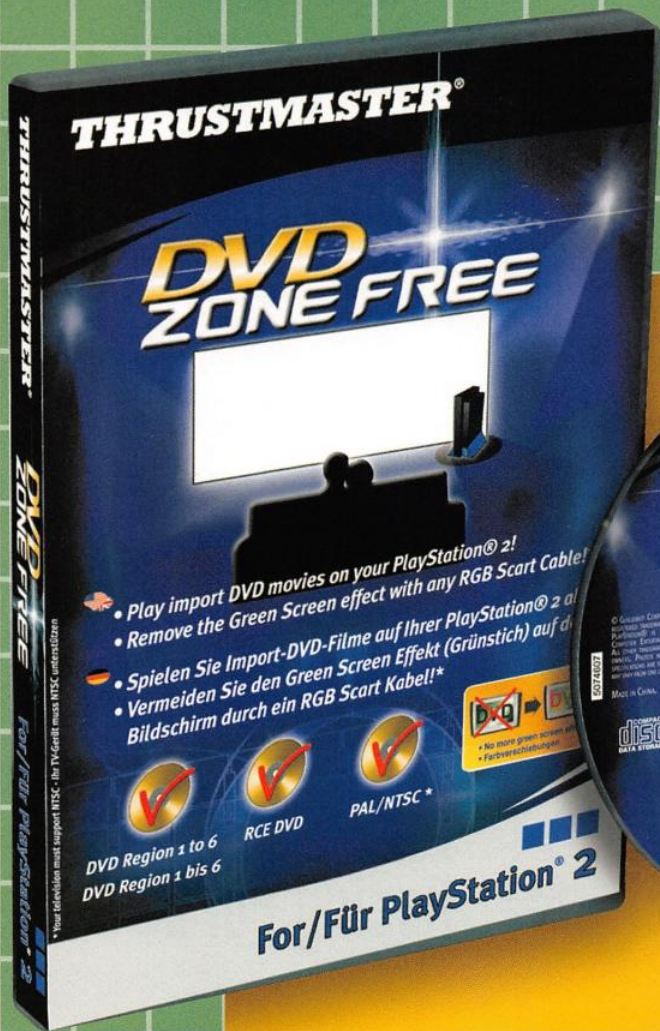


GCN-GBA Link Cable

Nintendo

RRP: \$19.95

■ For only \$20, this handy cable will link together your GCN and GBA, and the further into the GameCube's life we go, the more useful it will become. At the moment your only real linkup options are Sonic and Mickey Mouse. But from early next year onwards, the options get a whole lot more interesting. Animal Crossing will probably be the breakout title for linkup, allowing you to build and customise objects on your GBA, travel to an all new location on your GBA and even download NES games to your GBA to take on the road. Other important games that support the linkup option will be Metroid, Zelda, Final Fantasy and Kirby.



DVD Zone Free

Thrustmaster
RRP: \$39.95

■ Ever wished your PS2 was an all-region DVD player? So have we, and finally there's an alternative to the expensive proposition of getting your machine chipped - which incidentally, is LEGAL in Australia! In any case, Thrustmaster have come up with a boot disc. It works in the same way that the old Dreamcast boot discs did (not that we would know). Turn your machine on with Thrustmaster's DVD Zone Free DVD in it, then when it tells you, swap over to the DVD of your choice. This is quite a nifty solution for those of you who want to import - especially since it will only set you back about the cost of a single locally released DVD.



Logitech Wireless PlayStation/PS2 controller

Logitech
RRP: \$119.95

■ Well, it didn't take long for Sony to team up with Logitech to offer an alternative to the Nintendo WaveBird now did it? Fine by us - the quicker we can be rid of those dreaded cables all over our living rooms (and work places - heheh) the better. The controller works using the same basic (RF) technology that the WaveBird does, so you have a similar range and reliability. Generally speaking, third party controllers really can't compete with those made by the console manufacturers, and unfortunately for Logitech, this is once again the case. Not only is this controller almost twice the size of a standard dual

shock, but it's quite poorly designed too - loose analogue sticks that are too close together (although the fact that they're concave means your thumbs are less likely to slip), smaller face buttons that are too close together (despite the increase in size of the unit), a badly designed D-pad, extremely awkward shoulder button positioning etc. Plus, it takes four AA batteries (as opposed to two for Wavebird) making it quite heavy, and at \$120 (\$50 more than the WaveBird!) this is a very expensive option. Even so, for PS2 fans at the moment it's the only wireless solution.



Controller Type S

Microsoft
RRP: \$59.95

■ There's little more we need to say about Microsoft's new Type S controller for Xbox – we love it and it's a HUGE improvement over the original controller (now being called "Duke" by Microsoft... these crazy corporations!). It's smaller, features a logical face button layout (as opposed to the "designed-by-a-blind-armless-retarded-madman-layout" on the original) and generally just feels better in the hand. If you're planning on using your Xbox this Christmas, get one of these babies!

Steel Battalion

Capcom
RRP: US\$199

■ Steel Battalion is for all you mech freaks who played Virtua On on Saturn with the twin joystick peripheral but didn't think it went quite far enough. We mentioned this game and its amazing peripheral setup in our E3 spread, but come this Christmas, you'll actually be able to import one.

The game itself looks very realistic indeed with excellent scale and massive destruction in the battles, but it's the custom controller that brings the player into the action the most. The controller is a 40-button behemoth, comprised of three desk panels with two joysticks, switches, buttons and dials, not to mention foot pedals for accelerating, boosting and breaking. The entire setup is meant to simulate the complexity of actually piloting a mech, and does a fantastic job of it. And believe it or not, but at \$200 US, this is actually cheaper than we thought it would be! Hopefully Steel Battalion will see local release, but there's only an outside chance, so mech freaks will have to import theirs from the States. Very very cool... and excessive!

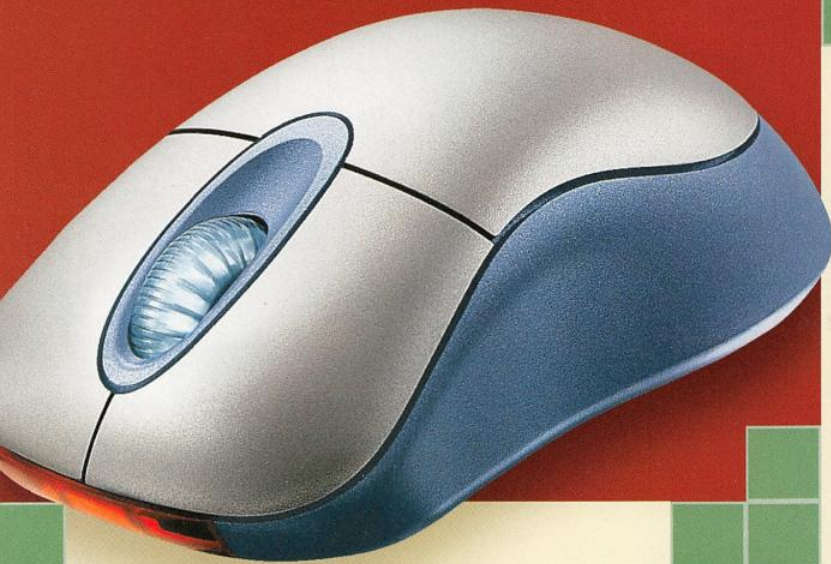


Logitech MOMO Racing Force

Logitech
RRP: \$249

■ PC racing game freaks will love this MOMO mofo. It may not be wireless, but Logitech's MOMO wheel is a very good mid-range solution for PC gamers wanting a realistic feel to their racing games. The wheel has a 240 degree range, and the steering mechanism feels very solid, so your handling is precise and realistic. Force feedback is also included, which may or may not float your boat – personally, we can take it or leave it. One of the things we most like about this wheel is that it comes with a MOMO designed manual gear stick, which definitely helps make it feel like more of a professional racing solution. Plus, of course, there are programmable buttons on the face and paddle sticks underneath. The base is also worth mentioning as it's nice and heavy and the pedals actually feel quite comfortable to use.





Wireless Optical Mouse Blue

Microsoft

RRP: \$139.95 (non-wireless is \$59.95)

■ Microsoft recently released a new range of keyboards and mice, and included in the press release was a very strange and very tenuous statement that we'd like to share with you: "Increasingly, people are viewing their mouse and keyboard as an extension of their personality, much like their mobile phone or PDA, and asking for products that will reflect this attitude". Yeah, right. I wear my custom Hyper mouse around my neck, and my keyboard has a special gangsta key to add the letters "iz" into the miziddle of wizords. Fizools.

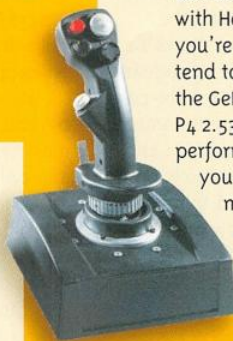
Despite the piss poor spin doctoring, we were very impressed with the Wireless Optical Mouse Blue. It's called "Blue" because it's well, blue... and silver. Presumably this is part of Microsoft's attempts to make their mice an "extension of their personality". Perhaps they misinterpreted the frequent comments that Windows made people blue... Oh the hilarity! Nevertheless, this mouse is very comfortable in the hand and the combination of wireless and optical means you can literally use it from anywhere and on almost any surface. The wireless receiver works a treat too, with little discernable lag – definitely a step up from the last generation of wireless mice. Indeed, in our UT2003 tests it performed admirably. Recommended.

HOTAS Cougar

Thrustmaster

RRP: \$599

■ Those of you who like your peripherals ridiculously realistic, and aren't afraid to pay huge sums of cash for the privilege, this one's for you. The HOTAS Cougar is the premier flight sim control solution. The design is based on the actual flight stick found in the F-16 fighter, and the feel is definitely heavy duty thanks to the sturdy metal casing. The stick and throttle lever come with 28 programmable buttons, several hat switches and adjustable resistance for all moving components.



ATI ALL-IN-WONDER 9700 PRO

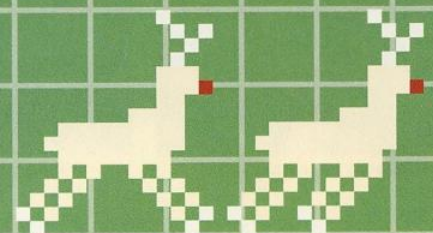
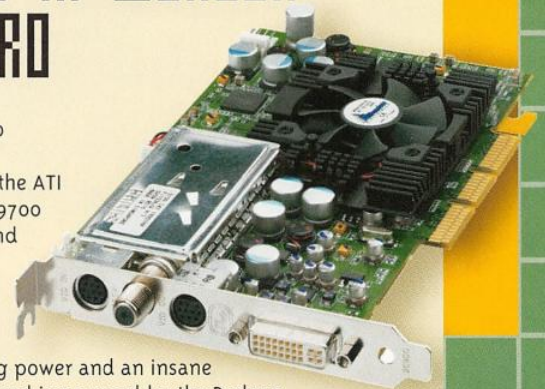
ATI

RRP: Over \$1000

■ We've chosen the ATI ALL-IN-WONDER 9700 PRO as our top end video card of choice for this Christmas. The reason for this is simple – amazing power and an insane feature set. The card is powered by the Radeon 9700 PRO VPU – the most advanced graphics chipset at the moment by some margin. The card comes with 128MB DDR memory, AGP 8X support and a 256-bit memory interface. Plus, 2 dimension memory addressing (as opposed to one), floating point colour, an 8-pixel pipeline architecture and complete Direct X 9.0 support. Amazing stuff. So that establishes that this card is absolutely top of the line as far as 3D performance and next gen features go, but what makes it "ALL-IN-WONDER"?

How about an in-built Stereo TV Tuner that functions as your own personal video recorder, allowing you to record programs to your HD? How about an RF remote for multimedia control from across the room? Then combine the remote with component output, so that you can output DVDs, DivX or video games to an HDTV or TV that supports component-in for a crisp, non-interlaced picture, and you've got an excellent DVD solution. The card also comes with a full video editing suite for full video capture and editing, and you can capture at Mpeg 2 - broadcast quality. These features come hand in hand with new technology like the VIDEOSHADER engine which uses programmable pixel shaders to accelerate video processing and improve visual quality. So even though pixel shaders are underused in this generation of PC games, at least you'll be getting some use from them in day to day apps. ATI has also developed technology called FULLSTREAM which enhances the picture quality from streaming internet video, removing blocky artifacts. And last but not least is THEATER 200 which ensures excellent picture quality for your TV broadcasts and video capture.

If you're looking for a pure gaming card, however, then our choice would go to the Hercules 3D Prophet 9700 Pro. Obviously this uses the same ultra powerful 9700 chip, but with Hercules' trademark quality in manufacturing. If you're not so into Radeon cards (nVidia's reference drivers tend to be more stable), then the current top of the line is the GeForce 4 Ti4600. Either way, you're going to need a P4 2.53Ghz or Athlon XP 2400+ to get the maximum performance out of the card. If you want to play UT2003, you're gonna need it! Our pick for "best value for money" video card is the GeForce 4 Ti4200 or the Hercules 3D Prophet 9000 Pro.





XENOSAGA: EPISODE 1

PS2

CATEGORY: RPG >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Namco >>

AVAILABLE: 28/2/02 Japan, Spring '03 US, AU & UK release unconfirmed >>

WOW-O-METER



Many of the Xenogears staff, including producer Tetsuya Takahashi, left Square after development on the original Xenogears finished. Takahashi and nearly all of the other originals formed Monolith Soft under the publisher Namco, and began work on a hushed-up Project X, rumoured to be a sequel. At the Spring 2001 Tokyo Game Show, the game was named Xenosaga by the devs, leading to all sorts of theories on how it fitted in the Xenogears universe and questions on how Monolith would avoid copyright issues with



Square if it retained obvious story elements from Xenogears.

Eventually, Monolith stated that officially it was not intended to be tied in with Xenogears.

The unofficial story is very different, and a quick glance is enough to reveal many less than vague cross-references. The Xenogears ending sequence described it as Episode V, and the 'Xenogears Perfect Works', a compendium of the Xenogears universe, places it in a six-part story. The subsequent naming of Xenosaga as Episode I and information that it too is part of a six-part story led to much controversy on how and

whether the two tie in, and the unequivocal decision by fans to call it the unofficial prequel to Xenogears. It is the "spiritual prequel" if naught else.

EPISODE I: DER WILLE ZUR MACHT

The German means 'The Will to Power', an effective summary of the theme of the game, or so says Takahashi.

Following the philosophies of Friedrich Nietzsche, he moves beyond the typical morality seen in most RPGs, and acknowledges good and evil as abstract concepts, defining each character by their actions, for which both the heroes and the villains reputedly have logical reasons. Right...

The driving sequence of Xenosaga looks to be a tonne of cut-scenes telling the tale — not surprising considering it's the first of the six episodes for the one story — and they are mostly, if not all done with in-game graphics. Visually, this looks set to surpass FFX easily, with fully 3D rendered backgrounds and higher res characters, all rendered in

real time. Xenosaga will also be the first dual-layered DVD for the PS2.

The story centres mostly about one 'Shion Uzuki' (apparently not related to Citan Uzuki, everyone's favourite sword wielding doc in Xenogears), the head of a development team constructing KOS-MOS, a very feminine android 'weapon' to be used alongside

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
How about some information on Final Fantasy XII, Square?



Anti-Gnosis Weapon Systems (AGWS, large robots typically called Mechs in our culture) for combating, you guessed it, the Gnosis. Although the

initial enemy seems to be this trans-dimensional alien race that can render itself invisible most of the time and as usual is bent on the destruction of the human race, the true enemy is humanity itself. Mankind has been divided up into two factions, and you play members of one side.

Combat promises to use a tweaked version of the original combat system designed for Xenogears, but mech combat has been toned down, with it now being possible to win the game with characters, not just your mechs. As in ChronoCross, enemies will be

INSIGHT

24 >> HYPER



It's that sexy secretary look.



VR headsets? How 1990s!



You'd better mech way for these guys.



Well, it can't be penis envy, can it?



He's been keeping an eye on you.



"Oh goody! NSYNC* are touring!"



It's a walkway, man. You walk on it.

Combat promises to use a tweaked version of the original combat system designed for Xenogears...

visible on the map and will have their own line of sight and range, but there will be monsters you have to fight, as they'll block your path. This will leave the replayability value much higher than in Final Fantasy games, as random battles won't be cropping up every few steps — well, they won't be cropping up at all. Heaven.

IT'S ALL IN THE EAR (I THINK IT'S STUCK)

Perhaps most importantly, Takahashi was able to snag the divine Yasunori Mitsuda once more (here I'd like to drop an anvil on Daniel Staines for not mentioning the greatest Japanese composer ever in issue 107's music feature, please-oh-pretty-please, Ed?) Not only that, but they hired the London Philharmonic Orchestra to perform his music, much of which is unobviously reminiscent of Xenogears. The general style is more

upbeat and action oriented than melancholy, however.

As per Final Fantasy X and Kingdom Hearts, Xenosaga will be fully voice-acted, but so far we're unable to pull out any details on who they'll be using for the English version. What we do know is that the same company that dubbed the Cowboy Bebop and Outlaw Star anime will be dubbing Xenosaga which leaves us cringing in horror, as we did with FFX. Hopefully the good music and terrible voice acting will balance out, otherwise we're praying for a subtitled Japanese version!

This time we only hope Takahashi pulls off his

grand ambition without the hiccups of the last. Xenosaga remains one of the most hotly anticipated RPGs to hit the market in the US, and should Namco choose to release it in the EU and AU, we're in for a treat. Be warned (and I've read lengthy transcripts of the translation, so I know!), if you don't have the ability to question everything,



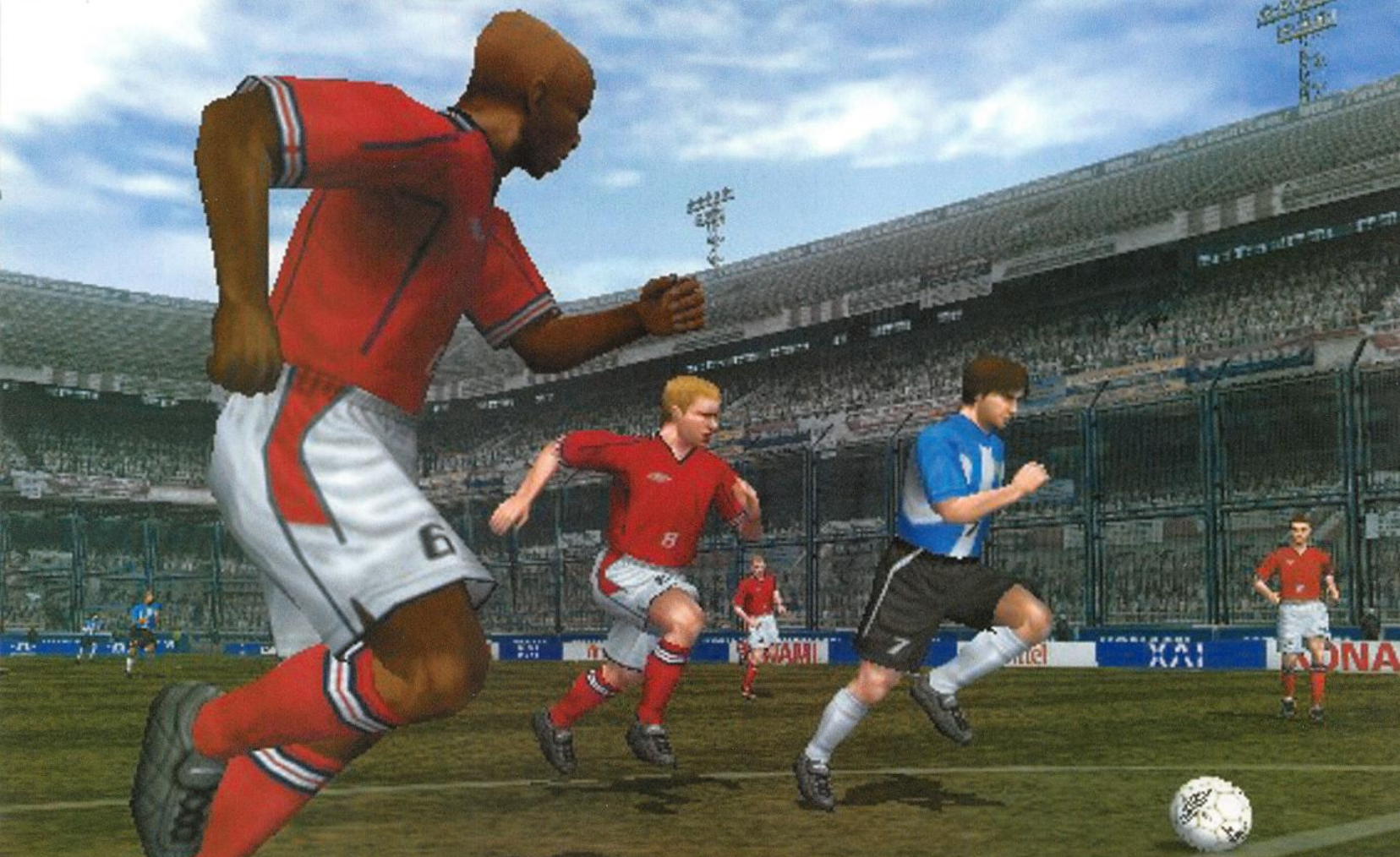
including God, it'll give you one or thoroughly irritate you. Meanwhile, make some use of your antiquated modded PSX and buy a US copy of Xenogears off Ebay if you can. You'll love it. <<<



THE BEST GAME EVER (THAT NO ONE EVER HEARD OF)

Xenogears was, in the opinion of the enlightened who played it, a masterpiece; the most bedazzling of the jewels that made up Square's RPG collection. At least the first disc was, with political intrigue, original characters, diabolical sci-fi corporations controlling a fantasy setting, betrayals and a storyline that questioned existence and the soul. The second disc proved how much of a rush job 'the best game ever' actually wound up being, as the best story elements were just thrown in our faces as a series of long cut scenes with little to no involvement from the player. Rumour has it that the game is in production again.





PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2



PS2

CATEGORY: Soccer Heaven >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >> **PUBLISHER:** Konami >> **AVAILABLE:** Now

WOW-O-METER



Pro Evolution Soccer 2, Hyper can confirm, is not a major advancement from the original. Sure, almost every facet of the game has been improved or refined, from graphics and sound, to included teams, to minute gameplay details, but the game retains a very similar feel to the original. The actual play seems a little more varied, with more half-clearances and unpredictable deflections, but most of the changes are minor ones. However, readers should worry not, as PES2 will, barring spectacular developmental malfunction, be the greatest sports game ever released.

GOOD PERFORMANCE

In terms of gameplay changes, the R2 run is slightly modified, having been made more flexible, but also less powerful. Through balls seem to have less 'lead' on them, making them more effective in tighter situations, while collisions between players also look and feel a lot more realistic, especially when players jostle. Yet, considering the unique

events that are still tumbling out of the original Pro Evo, we felt that from the small amount of time we spent getting acquainted with the PES2 preview code we only really scratched the surface in terms of the game's finer aspects.

The sequel features some neat training modes that test you on particular skills of the game. The free-kick test, far and away the sweetest, has you having shots from around the box with a wall in front of you. Instead of the goalie however, a large target 'hangs' on the goal line. You get awarded points on how close you can get to the bulls-eye. Good performance in this drill, or others involving such skills as passing or dribbling, unlocks something we are yet to discover — hey, so we need a little more practice, okay?

Any lack of skill can easily be attributed to the improvements in visuals, which have transformed our generally stern critical gaming disposition into a wet-nosed, slack-jawed mess. Sure, we might be

exaggerating a little, but graphically the game is definitely richer than its predecessor, with crisp players and kits, lush pitches and slightly more detailed stadiums. The number of animations on the whole has been bumped up significantly, making it a much more diverse spectacle, although, there's still no ref or linesman on the pitch, nor are there players in the dugouts.

GREAT NEW TOUCH

Another great new touch is how the match camera has been given an optional panning ability as the ball goes up either end. It might not sound like much, but it definitely

increases the dramatic spectacle of a match. Smarter TV-style views displaying more of the pitch should mean that we don't have to resort to

the practical, if marginally dull 'wide' camera view of the original. You can also rejoice in the run-of-the-mill commentary — at least it will be better than Pro Evo's disaster! Unfortunately, the game still



WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

An update to the roster is needed. It's about 4 months out of date!



A new training mode. Delicious!



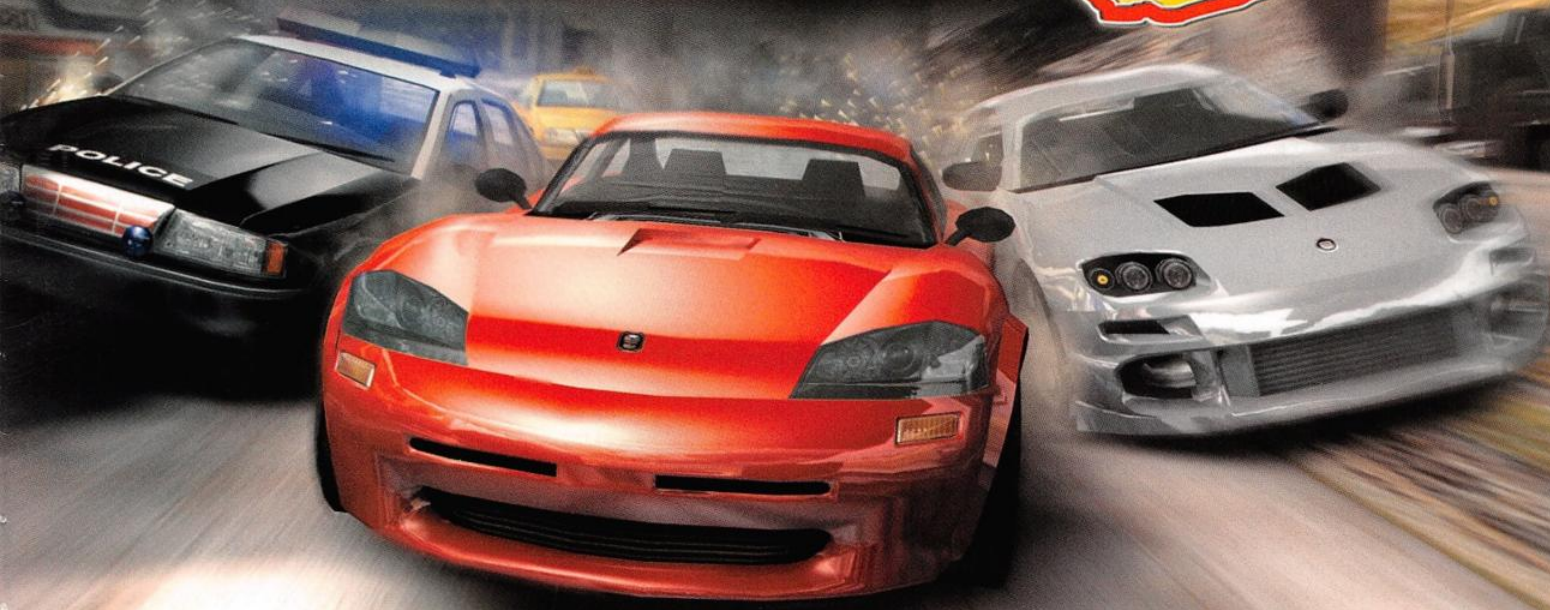
Dropping your pants will put him off.

doesn't offer non-goal replays, and there will remain players in the game — as well as club teams — with fake names. Having said that, the editing system has been reformed, as well as the Master League. PES' golden mode has gained an extra tier and a cup competition. It is now possible to loan players, and overall the management has become far more complex, with wages and player interest. Expect the definitive review in Hyper III. <<

FRONTIER ACC0093

BURNOUT

POINT OF IMPACT



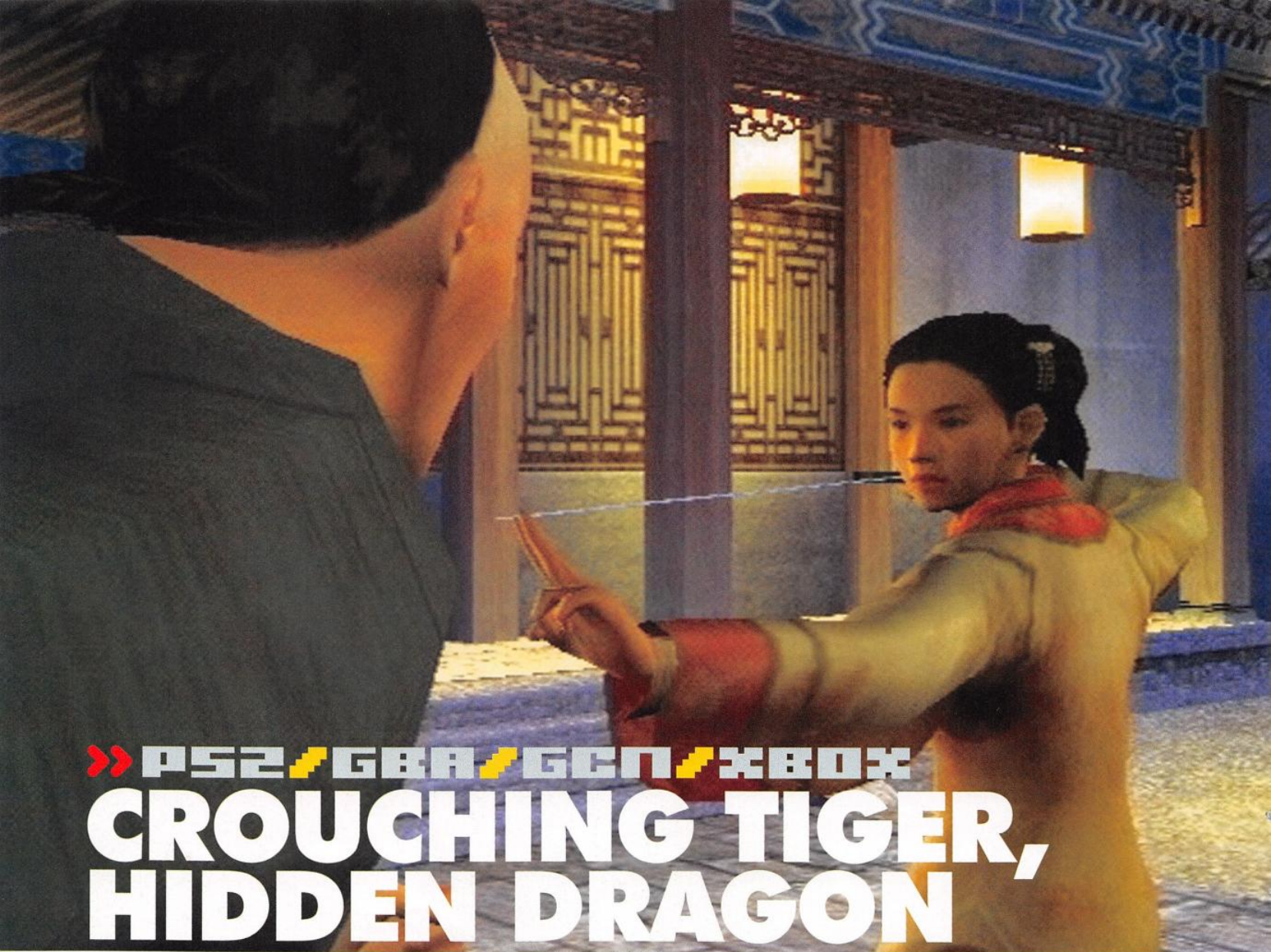
THINK YOU KNOW BURNOUT? THINK AGAIN



PlayStation®2

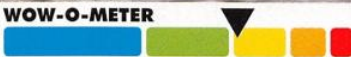
www.acclaimau.com





PS2 / GBA / GEN / XBOX CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON

CATEGORY: Third-Person Combat/Adventure >> **PLAYERS:** 1-TBA >> **WOW-O-METER**
PUBLISHER: UbiSoft >> **AVAILABLE:** TBA



Few among us haven't seen Ang Lee's box-office smash and multi-award winning *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (CTHD), the sad but meaningful tale of four Shaolin Warriors set in 19th Century China. As with most good movies, the extensive CTHD franchise has now extended to a 3D combat/adventure game under development by Genki, creators of the innovative *Bushido Blade*.

SPOUTING POETRY

Genki operates from beneath the wing of publisher UbiSoft, who are under a strict license from Sony Pictures Consumer Products to stick to the movie and novel plotline, leaving

little to no room for new scenes or diverting from the plot. Considering then that there were only a few battles in the movie, Genki has chosen to deal with this by presenting the story from three different perspectives — four if you have a GameCube. With over five epic levels per character, each divided into three segments, you first learn the story as Jen Yu (played by Ziyi Zheng in the movie), beginning by stealing the Green Destiny from a nobles compound. This first level was all that was displayed of the game at E3 earlier this year, with the usual rave reviews and odd doubts movie-to-game translations seem to inspire. Once you finish as Jen, you unlock a second character, either Yu Shu Lien (Michelle Yeoh in the movie) or Li Mu Bai (Chow Yun-Fat) and proceed through the game with a different viewpoint and objectives. Lucky GameCube owners will get to unlock a bonus character, Lo. The big boss of the game will be Jade Fox, killer of Li Mu Bai's master and Shu

Lien's fiancé, and as per the movie, it is likely that Li Mu Bai will die spouting poetry.

A WAVE OF FLAMES

Control will be handled through the DualShock 2's twin analogue sticks, the left as per usual for character movement, with the right allowing for complex combat moves, be they simple thrusts or elaborate sweeps with a flowing twist of the stick. Taking us away from the button-mashing feel of traditional fighting games (oh, how we would pray for multiplayer!) and towards a more graceful nick and slice, Genki will emphasise sword-fights and acrobatic stunts. Chains of successful attacks build up your 'chi', allowing for bullet-time or Matrix styled slow-downs of the action as you fly through the air, make otherwise massive leaps, or leave a wave of flames in the wake of your blade as you cleave through the air in the cannon ball manoeuvre. These combos are released via the other buttons and

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
We hope this is a successor to the *Bushido Blade* and *Kengo* games.



Ninja chimney cleaners at work.

will vary between characters, each armed with a different weapon and with their assortment of special moves tailored to it. With little chance for surprises in the storyline, UbiSoft says they are focusing on providing a superb gameplay experience, giving players the ability to "transcend space, gravity and the limitations of the body", and "master similar martial arts magic" from the movie throughout the game. Their intention is to cut a new swathe in the fantasy-action genre, but until we get a better look we'll stick to wondering how they plan to manage the whole swaying about in the treetops and waterfall battle. You mean we finally stand a chance to get beyond those darn paper model cut-out trees? Wow. <<<



Budget steeplechase practise.

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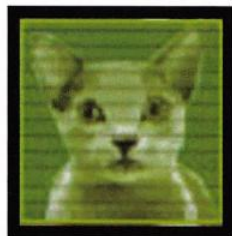
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XBOX PHANTOM CRASH

CATEGORY: Mech Combat >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: Phantagram Interactive >> AVAILABLE: TBA

The Xbox will soon be known for its incredible array of mech titles... MechAssault, Steel Battalion, and now Phantom Crash. In development by Genki, Phantom Crash is set in Old Tokyo in the year 2025 where young mech pilots duke it out in the Trash Areas. Mech duelling is called Rumbling, and the mechs are actually called Scoobees (I thought that was what you had "before" playing the game. — Ed.). The game will have a single player Tournament mode, but players will be able to take each other on in the Vs mode and online Network mode.



acquired. Look forward to sneaking about with optic camouflage, pummeling your opponents with missiles or drilling them with your Vulcan cannon. Cloaking your Scoobee actually becomes quite a large part of the tactical combat, as players attempt to play cat and mouse with each other around the environment. Whilst there's a small amount of story in the single player game, the pure aim of the game is to be "the greatest and the coolest". We like it. The game will be released in the US any day now, so hopefully we won't be too far behind.

To give yourself the edge, you may decide to build your own Scoobee from scratch with parts that you've



PC BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON

CATEGORY: Adventure >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: TBA >> AVAILABLE: Early 2003

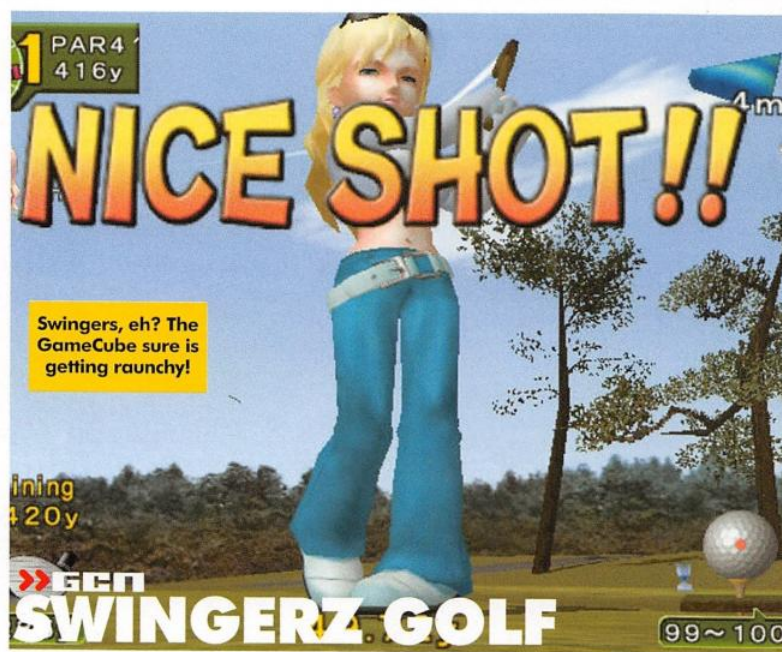
Finally, the third instalment in the Broken Sword series has been revealed.

American adventurer George Stobbard and French babe Nico will be back uncovering further Templar conspiracies as they investigate a "perpetual motion device" and stumble into the path of an order called the Sleeping Dragon in the process.

The biggest change to the series would have to be the new 3D engine, allowing players to walk around, climb around and investigate the environment in full 3D rather than just walking on and

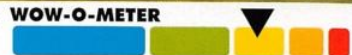


off the edges of the screen. Yep, you could almost fool yourself into thinking you were looking at the new Tomb Raider. In fact, Revolution have hinted that the whole point and click interface has been scrapped for a control method similar to that found in the Broken Sword GBA game. However, the good old adventure game tasks of item collecting and puzzle solving will still be the game's focus. We're really looking forward to this one.



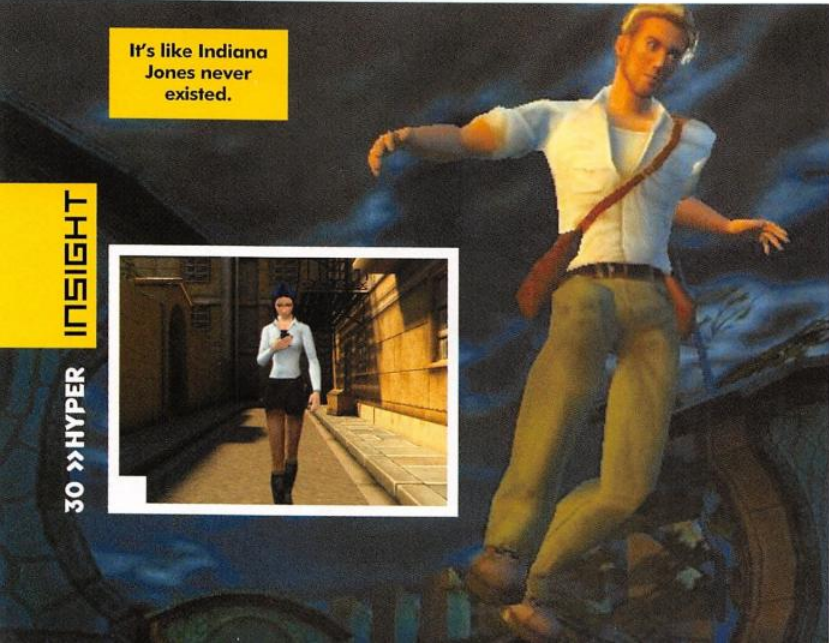
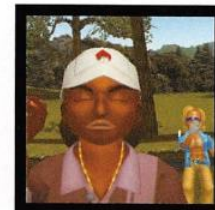
Swingers, eh? The GameCube sure is getting raunchy!

CATEGORY: Sport >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: EA >> AVAILABLE: TBA



While we wait patiently (I want it now!) for Mario (Give it to us now!) Golf on GameCube (Waaaaah!!), we'll just have to kill time out on the back nine of Swingerz Golf. This is very much a fun arcade style version of golf (actually, much like Mario Golf), dispensing with the overly serious stats and simulation and opting for more character filled craziness. You won't just be battling with the elements, but an array of loud-mouthed caddies intent on "helping"

you with their comical advice. There will be a whole host of mini-games to coincide with the tournament, stroke, match and short course play, making Swingerz Golf potentially a great party game. The game has actually been developed in Japan by Telenet and they seem to have taken some kind of "inspiration" from the PS2's Hot Shots Golf. The game is bright, cheerful and full of life, promising to bring even more light-hearted fun to the GameCube's lineup. Should be a whole lot of fun.



WIN WIN WIN

ENTRIES CLOSE DECEMBER 11

WIN THE THING!

■ Look behind you! Phew, for a second there we could have sworn there was an ancient alien life-form about to turn you into mush. Better watch your step. Trust no one. Not even us! Well, actually, you'll have to trust us if you want to win one of these Thing packs! There's one major prize, and two runners-up packs to be won, so just answer this question:

FOR
PS2

Who is the lead actor in The Thing?

Put your answer on the back of an envelope along with your name and address, and send it to: **It's a prize Thing, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016.**

MAJOR PRIZE:

The Thing game
The Thing DVD
The Thing Jacket

RUNNERS-UP

The Thing game
The Thing t-shirt
The Thing DVD



WIN TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER!

FOR
PS2

■ Nothing like a bit of Aussie-flavoured gaming to light up our day. Ty the Tasmanian Tiger is a brand new platformer from Electronic Arts, developed by Krome Studios. This is 3D platforming at its true bluest. Just think Crash Bandicoot only with more shrimps on the barbie, or something. To win one of five copies, just answer this question.

Who is Steve Irwin?

Send your answer along with your name and address, and post it to: **Ty me kangaroo down sport, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016.**



COMPS

32 » HYPER

Terms & Conditions: Entry is open to residents of Australia and New Zealand except employees and immediate families of Next Publishing Pty Ltd 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 October 29 and entries close at 6pm December 11. In determining eligibility the judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. The winner will be drawn at 9am December 12 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 the February issue of Hyper on sale January 1. 5 winners will each receive Ty the Tasmanian Tiger for PS2 (RRP\$99.95). 3 winners will each receive The Thing game (RRP\$99.95). The promoter is Next Publishing Pty Ltd ABN 88 002 647 645 of 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016

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The secrets revealed,
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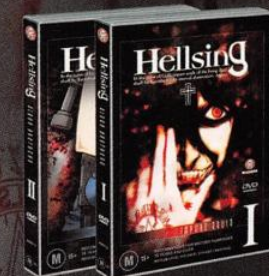
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TOP

OF

BEST GAME

READERS POLL



One of the big sticking points with any Top 50 list is deciding just how far back into gaming history you should go. Can we still compare Pac-Man with a new release such as Halo? No, we can't. The early golden era of gaming was an incredibly important time, but hey, we all know that now. We all know which games are the true classics, and which games started it all. Those particular games are in a different league now. They're not only forever in the gaming history books, but they've also slipped into the realms of nostalgia.

Even the 16-bit age of the Super Nintendo and Sega Megadrive could now be considered too clouded in fond weepy memories to evaluate objectively against contemporary releases. Can we compare Unirally to V8 Supercars Race Driver? Not really. What we've decided to look at then, is the top 50 best games of the "3D era". That is, from the birth of the Sony PlayStation to today. These are games we're still playing, still buying and that the industry is still perfecting. It could arguably be said that the 16-bit era perfected 2D gaming, but 3D games still have a long way to go. The only exception we've made to the rule is with PC games. Some slightly older PC games have made it into the nominees list as we consider them to be games that are still to this day being replicated — so why not honour those games that still rule over their third or fourth incarnation? And hell, we're in charge, so nurr.

So up to this moment in time, what are the Top 50 Best Games? Well, we're going to leave that up to you, the dear reader, to decide. On the following pages, you'll find a grand list of games that we consider to be worthy to include in a new Top 50. From that huge list we want you to pick your favourite 20 games. On the form provided, you must list these games from 1 to 20 in order of preference. The Hyper team will collate all the entries we receive and tally the points to result in an eventual Top 50, the results of which we will print in an upcoming issue. Excited? You should be! It's finally time for YOU to decide...

Fill out the following entry form, cut it out (or photocopy it) and send it to: Top 50 Games Poll, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016.



my top 20 games (in order of preference)

1. (worth 20 points)
2. (worth 19 points)
3. (worth 18 points)
4. (worth 17 points)
5. (worth 16 points)
6. (worth 15 points)
7. (worth 14 points)
8. (worth 13 points)
9. (worth 12 points)
10. (worth 11 points)
11. (worth 10 points)
12. (worth 9 points)
13. (worth 8 points)
14. (worth 7 points)
15. (worth 6 points)
16. (worth 5 points)
17. (worth 4 points)
18. (worth 3 points)
19. (worth 2 points)
20. (worth 1 point)

.....

Name:

Age:

Address:

Email:

Phone:

Gaming system(s) owned:

CUT HERE...



WINNER BEST GAME

 TEN lucky readers will each win a game for their chosen platform for submitting their Top 20 list. The ten readers will be picked randomly, so everyone who enters the Top 50 Best Games Readers Poll is in with a chance to win some prizes. Get your entry in today!

TOP 50

» HYPER 35

AND THE NOMINEES ARE:

Here is the massive nominees list. There are over 100 classic games here that the Hyper team has selected as worthy contenders, and your task is to pick just 20 to rank in order of preference. You must select games from this list. The games are listed alphabetically so as to not influence your voting. Now, get to it!



Abe's Oddysee – PSone

Advance Wars – GBA

Age of Empires 2 – PC

Baldur's Gate – PC

Banjo Kazooie – Nintendo 64

Burnout 2 – PS2/GCN/Xbox

Bushido Blade – PSone

Capcom Versus SNK 2 – PS2/Dreamcast

Castlevania: Circle of the Moon – GBA

Castlevania: Symphony of the Night – PSone

Championship Manager 01/02 – PC/Xbox

Civilization III – PC

Colin McRae Rally – PC/PSone

Command & Conquer – PC

Counter-Strike – PC mod

Crazy Taxi – Dreamcast

Dark Forces – PC

Deus Ex – PC/PS2

Diablo II – PC

Doom II – PC

Duke Nukem 3D – PC

Eternal Darkness – GameCube

Everquest – PC

F-Zero X – Nintendo 64

Falcon 4.0 – PC

Fallout – PC

Final Fantasy VII – PSone

Final Fantasy X – PS2

Freespace 2 – PC

GoldenEye 007 – Nintendo 64

Golden Sun – GBA

Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec – PS2

Grand Prix Legends – PC

Grand Theft Auto 3 – PS2/PC

Half-Life – PC

Halo: Combat Evolved – Xbox

Homeworld – PC

Ico – PS2

Interstate '76 – PC

Jet Set Radio – Dreamcast

Jumping Flash 2 – PSone

Legend of Zelda: Oracles of Ages/Seasons – Game Boy Color

Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time/Majora's Mask – Nintendo 64

Mario Kart 64 – Nintendo 64

Mario Tennis – Nintendo 64

MechWarrior 2 – PC

Metal Gear Solid – PSone/PC

Micro Machines V3 – PSone

Morrowind – PC/Xbox

Operation Flashpoint – PC

Paper Mario – Nintendo 64

Parappa the Rapper – PSone

Perfect Dark – Nintendo 64

Planescape: Torment – PC



Pokémon – Game Boy Color

Powerstone – Dreamcast

Pro Evolution Soccer – PS2

Project Gotham Racing – Xbox

Quake – PC

Quake 2 – PC

Quake 3: Arena – PC

R-Type Delta – PSone

Resident Evil – GCN/PSone/PC

Ridge Racer – PSone

Rollercoaster Tycoon – PC

Sam & Max Hit The Road – PC

Shenmue – Dreamcast

Shogun: Total War – PC

Silent Hill 2 – PS2/Xbox

Sim City 2000 – PC

Soul Calibur – Dreamcast

Starcraft – PC

Star Wars: Rogue Leader – GameCube

Street Fighter Alpha 3 – PSone

Super Mario 64 – Nintendo 64

Super Mario Sunshine – GameCube

Super Mario World – GBA

Super Monkey Ball – GameCube



Super Puzzle Fighter 2 Turbo – PSone

Super Smash Bros. Melee – GameCube

Syndicate – PC

System Shock – PC

System Shock 2 – PC

Tekken 3 – PSone

Tenchu – PSone

Tetris DX – Game Boy Color

The Last Express – PC

The Secret of Monkey Island II: Le Chuck's Revenge – PC

The Sims – PC

Thief – PC

Time Crisis – PSone

TimeSplitters 2 – PS2

Tomb Raider – PSone/PC

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 – PSone/DC/PC/GBA

Total Annihilation – PC

Tribes 2 – PC

Ultima Online – PC

Ultima Underground – PC

Unreal – PC

Unreal Tournament – PC

Vagrant Story – PSone

Virtua Fighter 4 – PS2

Virtua Tennis – Dreamcast

Warcraft II – PC

Wave Race 64 – Nintendo 64

Wing Commander III – PC

Wipeout 2097 – PSone

Wizardry VIII – PC

Worms World Party – PC

X-Com: Enemy Unknown – PC

X-Wing/TIE Fighter – PC

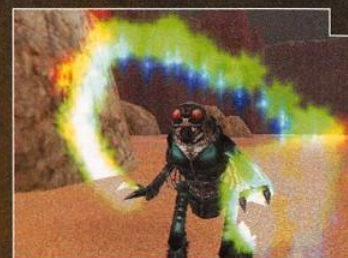
Yoshi's Island – GBA



TRAPWALL

>> ELIOT FISH

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Everquest: PLANES OF POWER

everquest.station.sony.com

Last issue we discussed the dangers of gaming addiction and illustrated the pitfalls of devoting your life to online games such as EverQuest. Well, our local EverQuest "dealer", UbiSoft, have plans to up your dosage, keep you hooked, and further destroy your social skills. Another expansion (in fact it's the fourth EverQuest expansion to date) has spawned on shelves across the country, and it's called EverQuest: Planes of Power.

EVEN HIGHER LEVELS

The main attraction to Planes of Power would be the...well, the planes of power. It's the place where the Gods of Norrath live. EverQuest veterans will have their work cut out for them across 18 newly discovered planes, kicking the arse of Gods. In fact, Verant Interactive promise that you'll "Battle the minions of Rallos Zek in the Plane of War; help Karana regain control of the Plane of Storms; overcome vile pestilence in

the Plane of Disease!" There's also the Plane of Justice, where guilty parties rot in the planar prisons; the Plane of Flame, that's crawling with fire beasts like Efreeti and the burning prince, Solusek Ro; plus the intriguing sounding Plane of Nightmares! Not to mention the awesome Aero Plane, where you sit in a seat and have your legs squashed whilst they force feed you bad re-heated food. Or something like that.

Planes of Power has been designed with the experienced EverQuest addict in mind, allowing them to progress to even higher

levels with their characters. Aside from the Plane of Knowledge, you will in fact need to be at least level 46 or above in order to enter the other Planes. However, lower level characters will not be ignored. From the central Plane of Knowledge, players of all levels will be able to jump into portals to zip around, allowing the weaker players to get around a bit easier and see a wider variety of stuff early on.

Unlike the previous expansion pack, Shadows of Luclin, Planes of Power doesn't mess with the game's 3D engine, forcing current players into a series of technical woes. Verant have actually tweaked everything and attempted to

improve upon the few mistakes they made with Luclin. As a result, they have decided not to add any new player character animations, although there are over 50 new NPCs with unique new animations. Graphically, though, they have gone out of their way to add improvements without forcing higher requirements on the user. There are some fancy particle effects, nicer textures and other tweaks that simply boils down to one thing: Planes of Power looks sweet.

NEW COMBAT MODES

You'll also be faced with around 50 new monsters, hundreds of new spells to learn, and an enhanced



If only Ozzy Osbourne was here.



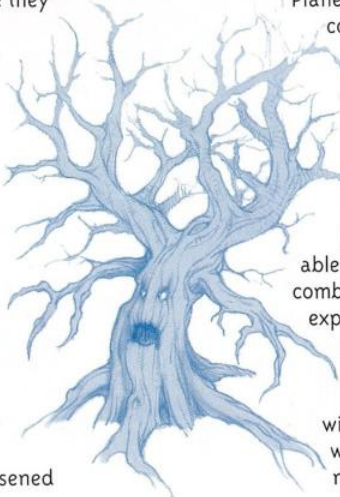
Surely she's cold in that outfit.



Let's call him Fluffy.



trade skill system. Visiting the Planes can also affect your abilities. There will be alternate advancement abilities that will only benefit players while they are visiting the new planes. For example, when a player zones into the Plane of Disease he will immediately be sick. Codral ain't going to help you in this situation. The disease will drain from your hit points and stamina and will be irresistible. By investing planar experience in planar disease resistance, this effect will be lessened



and eventually completely overcome. Another example would be a player gaining alternate advancement experience in the Plane of Water that could be spent on planar fire resistance, allowing players to endure the heat on the Plane of Fire. Players of all levels will also be able to purchase new combat modes that will expand the usefulness of their character without redefining it. Combat modes will be purchased with experience, much like alternate

advancement is now. Examples of how this works: A warrior selects an offensive stance, for the next 15 minutes he will do 10% more damage, but will be 20% less effective at avoiding or mitigating damage. So will Verant be able to top an expansion pack that allows you to storm the very land of the Gods themselves? Well, now we'll have to wait for EverQuest 2 to discover the answer to that question...



The god of Byron Bay fire-twirlers.

MS. INFORMATION



AGATA BUDINSKA

» The last time I ate McDonalds was in

Thailand in March of 2000. They had plumb sauce instead of sweet and sour for the nuggets. It looks like the next time I'll be eating McDonalds is when I walk my Sims Online character into a restaurant on the game map and order whatever the hell is on its menu.

For those of you who don't know, my game of choice is the Sims. And I was quite looking forward to the Sims Online. Notice I used the word 'Was'? How did this happen? McDonalds and Intel signed a deal to have their products built into the Virtual World that will be the Sims Online. Maybe it's a mutual deal. Maybe we'll see the Sims recommended with every Intel processor, or Sims merchandise as part of the next Happy Meal set. Or maybe not.

So what makes this deal so special? Why should I be so bugged by this? What about the Pepsi machine that you can download for the Sims? At least this is an optional extra, not built into the game itself (plus there are some great skins for it out there - including my favourite 'Diablo Cola').

I want to know where it's going to stop. Will we get pop up ads in the game (Supersize!) or scrolling Marquees with the day's special? Will your Sim's computer crash more often if it doesn't have Intel inside? Will the Sims Online become an animated chat room with ads? Only time will tell...



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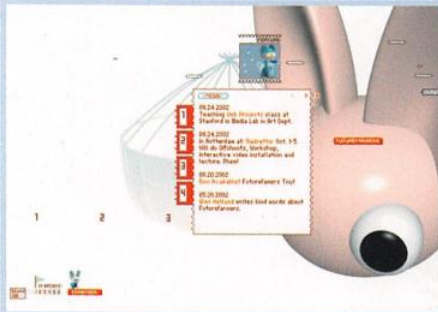
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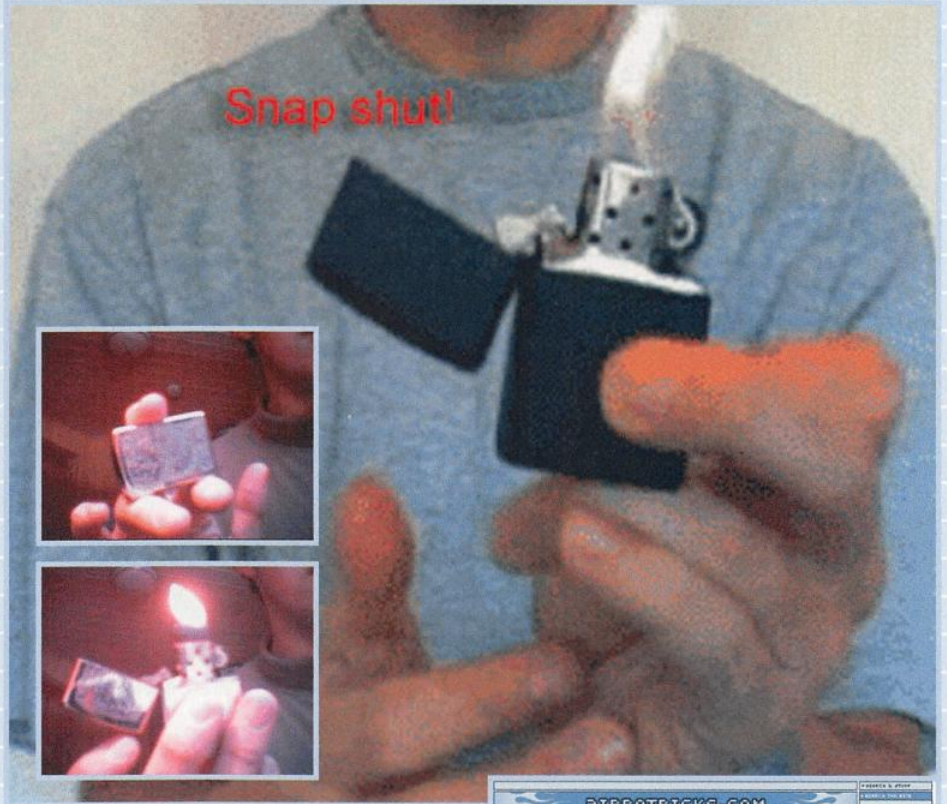
Future Farmers is a "New Media construct" specialising in investigation and development of new work. It's a collaborative of (primarily) digital media artists, who have even gone on to do work for Adobe, Levis, Lucasfilm, Wired and Swatch.



FILMINK

www.filmink.com.au

Now that the once-great local movie mag, Filmink, has ceased to be a free publication, we'll all have to stick to browsing their website instead. You'll get the latest cinema and DVD reviews, plus parts of the feature stories that appear in the current issue. Not a brilliant site, but give it a look and you may just stay a while.



ZIPPO TRICKS

www.zippotricks.com

Zippo tricks bound to impress and amaze", and indeed they are. Everyone's tried the three-finger flick or the leg-scrrape, but Zippo Tricks hosts hundreds of incredible tricks – all explained with shot-by-shot descriptions and downloadable demo movies – that'll have you pulling off amazing tricks in no time. There's a hall of fame, a trick of the month, and surprisingly, a lot of other content!



SPORTS INTERACTIVE

www.sigames.com

There's a select bunch of gamers out there who are virtually wetting their pants for information on Championship Manager 4. Like a few of us here at Hyper HQ, in fact. The official site is quite incredible, with links and downloads for every incarnation of Championship Manager, including some very special information on the next incarnation due any day now. For everything you need to know, this is the place.



HOLD THE BUTTON

www.holdthebutton.com

How long can you hold the button? Indeed! This is possibly one of the most useless web-games ever invented, so bedazzle your friends with just how little you value your own free time by sending them your results and challenge them to better your score. We're sure the originators are probably pissing themselves laughing somewhere that a magazine has actually included this game as a valid web destination... oh well.

GUESS WHO'S IN
THIS MONTHS
ISSUE OF PSW?



PSW

AUSTRALIA'S ONLY
INDEPENDENT
PLAYSTATION 2 MAGAZINE

REVIEWS

»PS2

GAME OF THE MONTH

TimeSplitters 2

Free Radical Design sure know how to keep the fans happy. This sequel is bursting at the seams...

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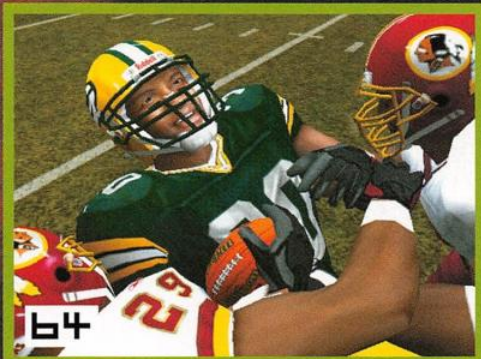
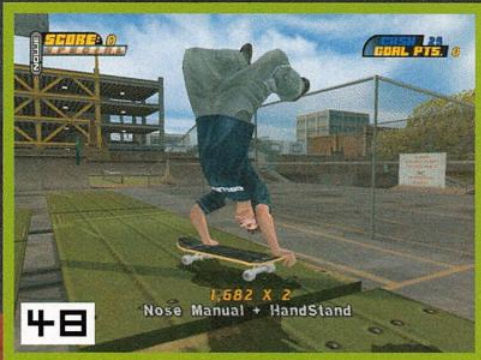
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GAME THEORY

DANIEL STAINES



Over the past two installments of Game Theory, we've undertaken a brief exploration of the issues surrounding design and technology in modern game development. Now that we've looked at the advantages and disadvantages inherent in each approach, it's time to sum things up once and for all and answer the question we began with two months ago: is a focus on design or technology more beneficial to making good games?

I'm inclined to argue that a focus on design is more likely to produce A-Grade titles at the end of the day. I say this for two reasons. One is that video-game history displays a tendency to support this point of view. Notice how most gaming celebrities are, with a few rare exceptions, primarily designers? It's definitely no accident that design maestros like Miyamoto, Kojima, Meier and Spector are the godfathers of our industry – they're the ones that produce the best games.

The second reason I'm inclined to give preference to design over technology is that good design almost necessarily entails a good game whereas good technology simply means there'll be a solid basis upon a good game might be built. Look at Trespasser for example. That game had some truly excellent physics, but it still sucked because the gameplay was never designed to take full advantage of that technology.

A focus on technology is not useless or secondary – it's just not necessarily the most important thing in gaming at the moment. As the history of our medium shows, design is and should continue to be the true focal point for game development in general. Not to sound too trite, but it's the game that matters – not the engine that runs it.

See you next month.

game_theory@whenitsdone.com

THE HYPER CREW'S TOP 5

Eliot - Editor

1. Championship Manager 01/02 – PC/Mac

"What the hell has this game done to me? Help! Heeeelp!"

2. Super Mario Sunshine – GCN
3. Pro Evolution Soccer 2 – PS2
4. Burnout 2 – PS2
5. Colin McRae Rally 3 – Xbox

Cam - Deputy Editor

1. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4 – PS2

"Flatland tricks, I could kiss you! The ultimate game for skaters all over again."

2. Burnout 2 – PS2
3. Unreal Tournament 2003 – PC
4. Rollercoaster Tycoon 2 – PC
5. Yoshi's Island – GBA

Malcolm - Art Guy

1. ICO – PS2

"If only all games were made as beautifully as this..."

2. Pro Evolution Soccer 2 – PS2
3. Gio Gio's Bizarre Adventure – PS2
4. Timesplitters 2 – PS2
5. Burnout 2 – PS2

Jackson - Hyperactive Guy

1. Pro Evolution Soccer 2 – PS2

(speechless)

2. Burnout 2 – PS2
3. Madden NFL 2003 – PS2
4. Timesplitters 2 – PS2
5. Morrowind – PC

THE HYPER SCORING SYSTEM

The Overall Score – what's it all about?

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

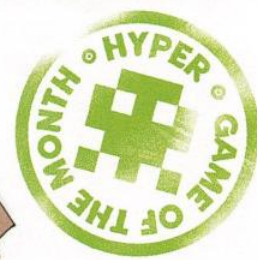


PS2

TimeSplitters 2

CATEGORY: First-person shooter >> PLAYERS: 1-Multi (link) >> PUBLISHER: Eidos >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

JACKSON GOTHE-SNAPE does the splits...



Facility and Stack, PP7 and RCP90. The golden gun. For many gamers, simply a mention of these friendship-testing entities will get the memory juices flowing, palms sweating, and those trigger fingers itching. These symbols of struggle made up what, for many, was (or even is) the original and best multiplayer frenzy — the N64's GoldenEye 007. But... GoldenEye... TimeSplitters 2... where is the link?

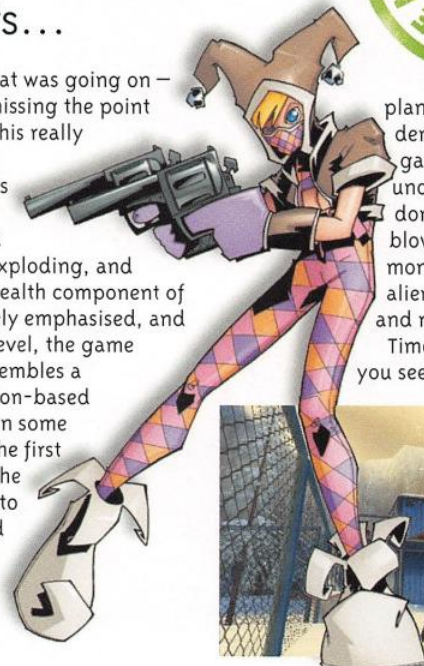
Well, TimeSplitters 2 is actually developed by Free Radical Design, a team whose heart beats to the same rhythm that drove Rareware forward in that 1990s golden era. The studio was formed after former members of the GoldenEye team felt they had unfinished business in the console shooter genre — how right they were.

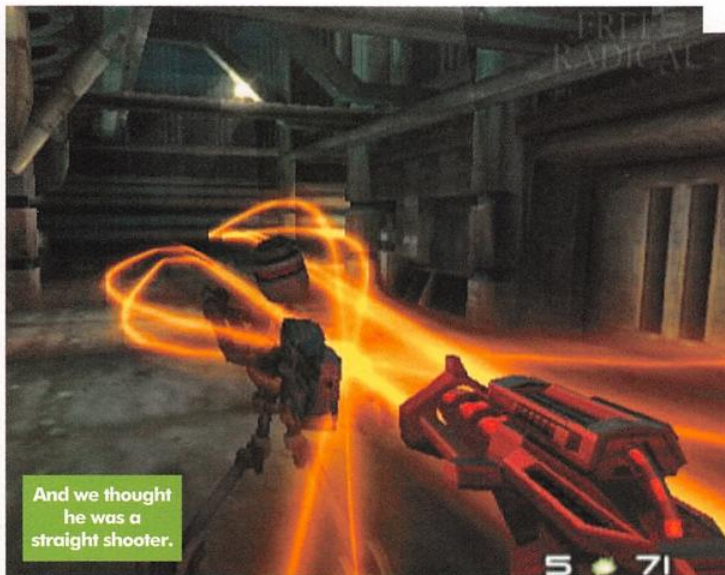
SHOOTING, AND SHOOTING Free Radical's original TimeSplitters was arguably the top launch title for PS2, and offered some tasty multiplayer action that failed to receive the widespread recognition it might have garnered had it been on a console with four controller ports. Unfortunately, the single player game reflected the time pressures Free Radical had to endure to get the title out for launch. The potential was there for all to see, and it is potential that, with TimeSplitters 2, Free Radical is definitely realising.

TimeSplitters 2 offers the player an avalanche of game types. Story mode revolves around some bad looking alien guys and a time portal, although calling it 'story mode' might be slightly misleading. Apart from the evil alien guys, we

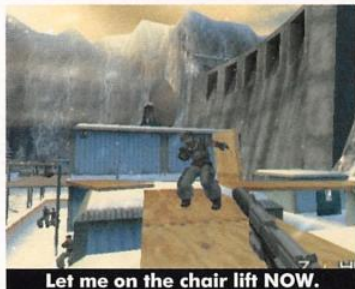
weren't sure what was going on — but, you'd be missing the point if you thought this really mattered. For TimeSplitters 2 is about shooting and killing, and dodging, and exploding, and shooting. The stealth component of the game is rarely emphasised, and with new each level, the game increasingly resembles a straight-up action-based shooter. While on some levels, such as the first stage, Siberia (the team's homage to GoldenEye), and on some difficulties a degree of stealth and

planning is demanded, the game is undoubtedly dominated by blowing away monkeys, soldiers, aliens, zombies, and robots. TimeSplitters 2, you see, is filled with





And we thought he was a straight shooter.



Let me on the chair lift NOW.



Hone your firefighting skills.



The old oven mits handicap.



That's the last time you sink the black.



Monkey was... irrepresible!

variety. The concept of time traveling has allowed Free Radical to assemble a whole range of interesting scenarios, such as a return to the Wild West, 19th-century France, Depression Chicago and on into the future, and it is a credit to the versatility of the engine and the artists that the majority of levels, in all of the game's modes, actually aesthetically work. The range of architectural environments in which to shoot shit is excellent, and although certain levels, such as 1930s Chicago, hardly convince with their intricacy, this definite variety is perhaps the game's strongest single player feature. However, even variety is often not enough. You will tire of the linearity of many of the levels, as well as the basic, repetitive objectives, and generally stupid scenarios, but it matters not, because looking at Story is only scratching the surface...

THINK SIZZLER BUFFET

Thankfully, the Story's lack of coherence and even substance doesn't detract too badly from the

game overall, this mode is simply not the TimeSplitters 2 main course one might expect. Instead, Story is simply one particular dish (and a particularly light one at that - we're thinking a delicate pasta), sitting next to the Arcade League's steak and the Challenge's roast vegetables, in the vast TimeSplitters 2 buffet. Help yourself - you decide what to eat, and when.

Arcade mode resembles Perfect Dark's Challenges, where you are set objectives in particular multiplayer scenarios, whether they are team-based, containing specific weapon sets, or with unorthodox game types such as bag tag. Three tiers of difficulty, and some challenging gold medal objectives make this mode arguably the game's bread and butter. It's likely that you'll develop some sort of relationship with the bots you battle, as you begin to recognise their names, models and relative skill - inciting passions that many bot experiences and even TimeSplitters 2's Story mode are lacking, and involving the player more deeply.

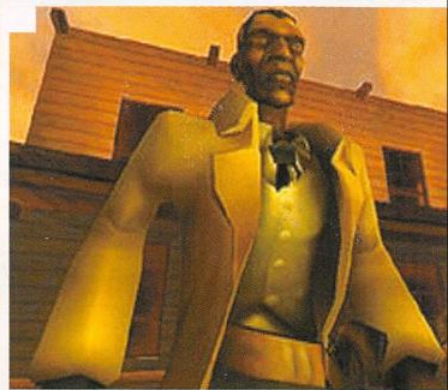
High points include wiping out a family of monkeys, and helping the Hunchback get the girl.

But wait there's more, as TimeSplitters 2's own Challenge mode somehow bonds novelty with value. Tasks such as popping heads off zombies, breaking windows, and collecting bananas are the kind of trials that are typically fun for all of about thirty seconds. However, this game, thanks to reasonable yet still challenging objectives, as well as a progressive, rewarding unlocking system, means that the variety that flourishes in the game can be appreciated. Bored of bananas? Go back and tackle an Honorary Arcade League match. You can unlock levels, characters, hats (yes hats!) etc. in every mode that may tickle your fancy at any point in time. Considering the single player is far from cerebral, and as such won't impress many of the more refined gamers, it still succeeds in

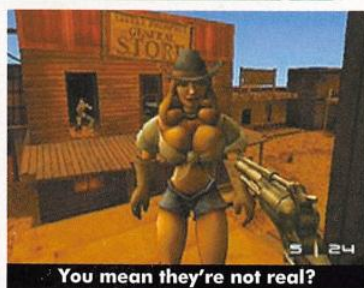
providing bucket loads of action-based first-person shooter entertainment. Who ever said quality over quantity...?

CALL THE RSPCA

That's not to say the game is devoid of quality, as Free Radical's impressively smooth vibrant engine and satisfying game mechanics generally make even the most rudimentary shooting, fun. The resulting exuberance is also aided by the apparent attitude the developers have taken to the game. Character models bring cartoons into the third dimension with some charming (and at times arousing - it gives new meaning to the terms Notre Dame) modeling, while the tongue-in-cheek names, sounds, interactivity and objectives continually toy with gamers'



God fearing Zombies! Kiiiiiiii!



You mean they're not real?

GOLDENEYE 014?

❖ For many people, Perfect Dark was not an adequate sequel for the glory that was GoldenEye 007. TimeSplitters 2 retains the flavour of the N64 masterpiece in multiplayer, so much so that many wouldn't argue with the claim that TimeSplitters 2 is the spiritual successor to Rare's original classic. Although there are similar touches, such as the life bar and lack of reload animations, GoldenEye's multiplayer, many forget, was equally supported by some superb single player missions. As such, TimeSplitters 2 offers a totally different approach, potentially having more in common with games such as Quake 3 Arena, where single player become secondary to multiplayer goodness.

expectations — there's always a surprise in store. The Free Radical gang has a sense of humour, and this game makes that obvious, for the benefit of the player's enjoyment. High points include wiping out a family of monkeys, and helping the Hunchback get the girl. About time too.

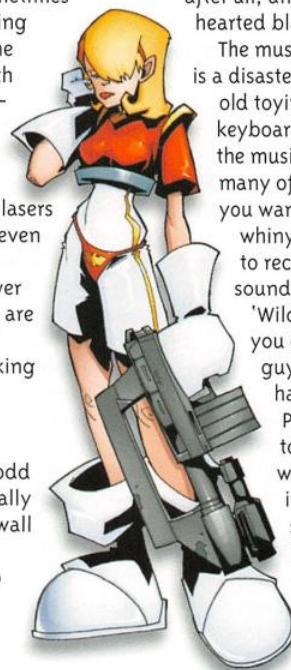
Free Radical also appears to technically know exactly what they are doing. The game runs dazzlingly fast, and although, in terms of geometry, the player models and architecture are far from detailed, the character design, colour and animation make up for any polygonal weaknesses. It is a testament to the engine that the graphics can offer such diversity in appearance and atmosphere. Watching someone explore late 20th-century Siberia you'll be struck down by nostalgia for GoldenEye's dam level. But then, coming back half an hour later and witnessing the Return to Planet X stage, you'll swear you were watching a different game, such is the game's variety in environment, colour usage, weapon effects and character design.

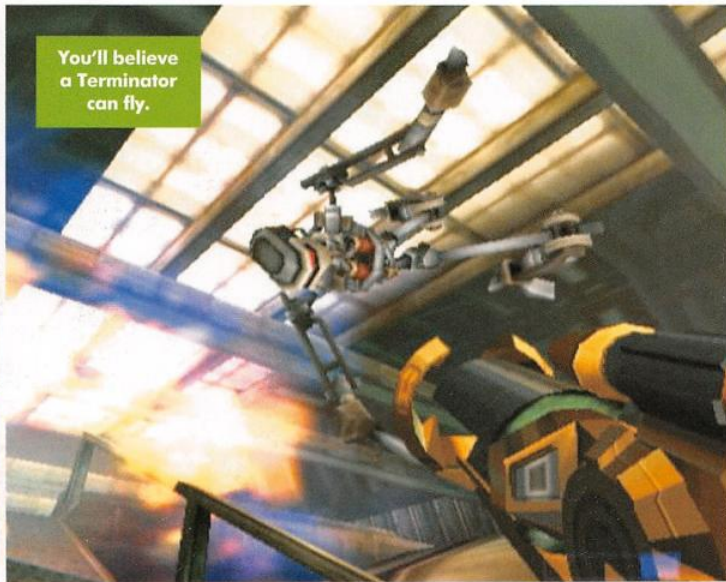
There are a few occasions where the environments get repetitive, particularly in the future levels, but on the whole, Free Radical has kept things fairly fresh throughout. The weapons, although sometimes repeated in neighbouring time periods, offer some spectacular effects, with the futuristic Sci-Fi ray-gun wreaking havoc as it rebounds around the tight corridors of the robot factory. Blue lasers ricochet everywhere — even into you — finally disappearing in a shower of indigo sparks. There are also nice touches to be experienced with breaking glass (there's even a Challenge mode in its honour), destroying watermelons, and the odd ricocheting bullet actually leaving a mark on the wall behind you. There's no blood when you kill, so for some, a degree of predatory satisfaction

might be lost, but the bloodless decision is consistent with the cartoon-like graphical style of the title, and for the vast majority will not detract from the experience. It is, after all, an all-out action, light-hearted blaster.

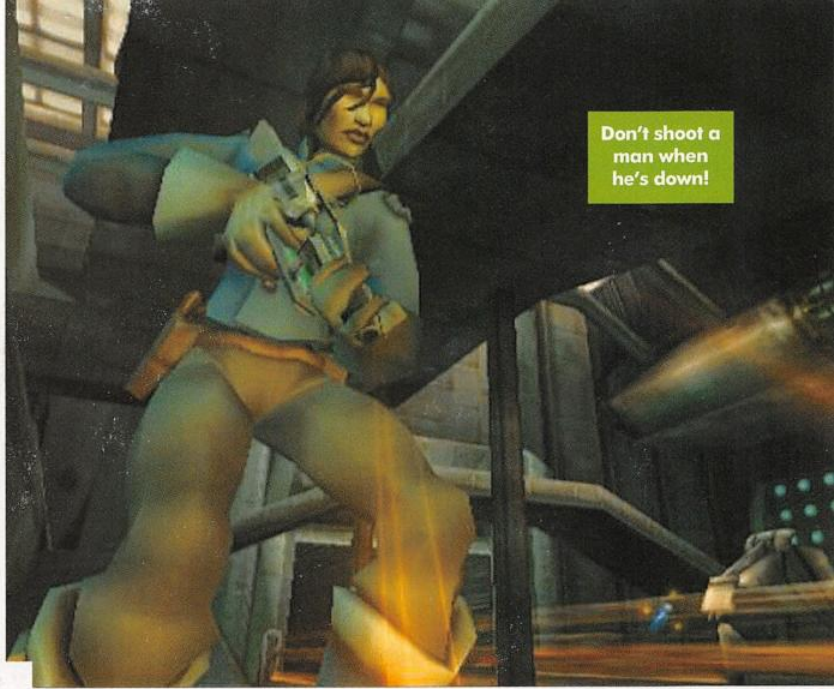
The music, on the other hand, is a disaster. Like a twelve-year old toying with his new Casio keyboard, inbuilt tunes and all, the music that accompanies many of the levels will make you want to die. The overused, whiny synth so poorly tries to recreate the 'authentic' sounds of places like the 'Wild West' and 'Future', you get the impression the guys at Free Radical are having a big laugh.

Playing the game, you too will laugh, but only with the laugh of insanity. Thankfully, the sound effects are solid, if unspectacular — but still light years ahead of the penetrating, painful music.

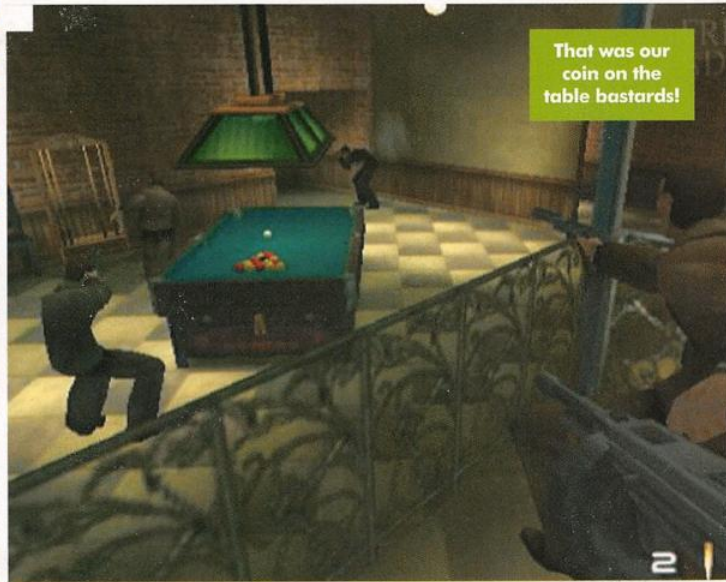




You'll believe a Terminator can fly.



Don't shoot a man when he's down!



That was our coin on the table bastards!



It's a foam party!



Dance! Dance!

UNLIMITED LEVELS

TimeSplitters 2's inclusion of a level editor theoretically means that the game will never get old (or so those marketing geniuses might have us believe). However, the game's editor suffers from the same problems as those that have plagued all those console-based tech-tools in the past. The interface difficulties in using a console control, a relative lack of memory (compared to PCs) and a necessity to find an approachable medium between flexibility and accessibility means that ultimately, you can't create anything resembling those levels already in the game.

THE VAMPIRE SLAYER ANTHONY DANZA

Ultimately however, the single player is only decent. There are nice moments, but it has all been done before. Unlocking aspirations drive the player's inevitable persistence, but taking this away, the game might become rather bland. That is, until you delve into the TimeSplitters 2 multiplayer extravaganza.

Once you have played multiplayer, Free Radical's intentions become obvious. While they have managed to create some fairly entertaining, and certainly variety-filled single-player engagements, this game is primarily a multiplayer feast. The story mode is infinitely less painful in two-player co-operative mode, but the real meat can be discovered deep within the Arcade Custom realm. 16 multiplayer levels (more than half of which need unlocking) as well as 16 multiplayer modes (similarly, better start unlocking now...) are on offer, and are, for the most part, intelligent, worthy additions.

Having a four player split-screen battle with a bunch of bots provides the **definitive console action shooter experience.**

Particularly, multiplayer modes such as Leech — where you absorb any life you take off your opponents — can reinvigorate a fading multiplayer bash, as can the implementation of powerups such as the gamers' favourite 'speed boost'.

More than 100 characters of varying body shapes are available, and each is rated in agility, stamina and accuracy. Setting up a game to your exact specifications is relatively easy, as is jumping straight into the action. Meanwhile, the standard bots offer a solid challenge, and turn a four-player multiplayer frenzy into the archetype of chaos. Interestingly, Free Radical has also included a speed option — either chilled, normal or frantic — to offer even more variety.

Having a four player split screen battle with a bunch of bots provides the definitive console action shooter experience. Words cannot explain the greatness of chucking some friends

!!! Looks like multi-tap sales will be picking up...

and bots — on frantic — into a confined area. Halo might be a more cultured experience, and it certainly is

different, in terms of pace, weapon styles, level architecture and scale, but for intense adrenalin-filled constant combat, TimeSplitters 2 is your game. Sure, single player is basic and dated, but with as much variety as the game contains, as well as the fairly practical level editor, and a truly great multiplayer facility, TimeSplitters 2 comes highly recommended. <<<



PLUS: Variety, stuff to unlock, smoothness, multiplayer zenith.

MINUS: Uninspired single player, awful music.

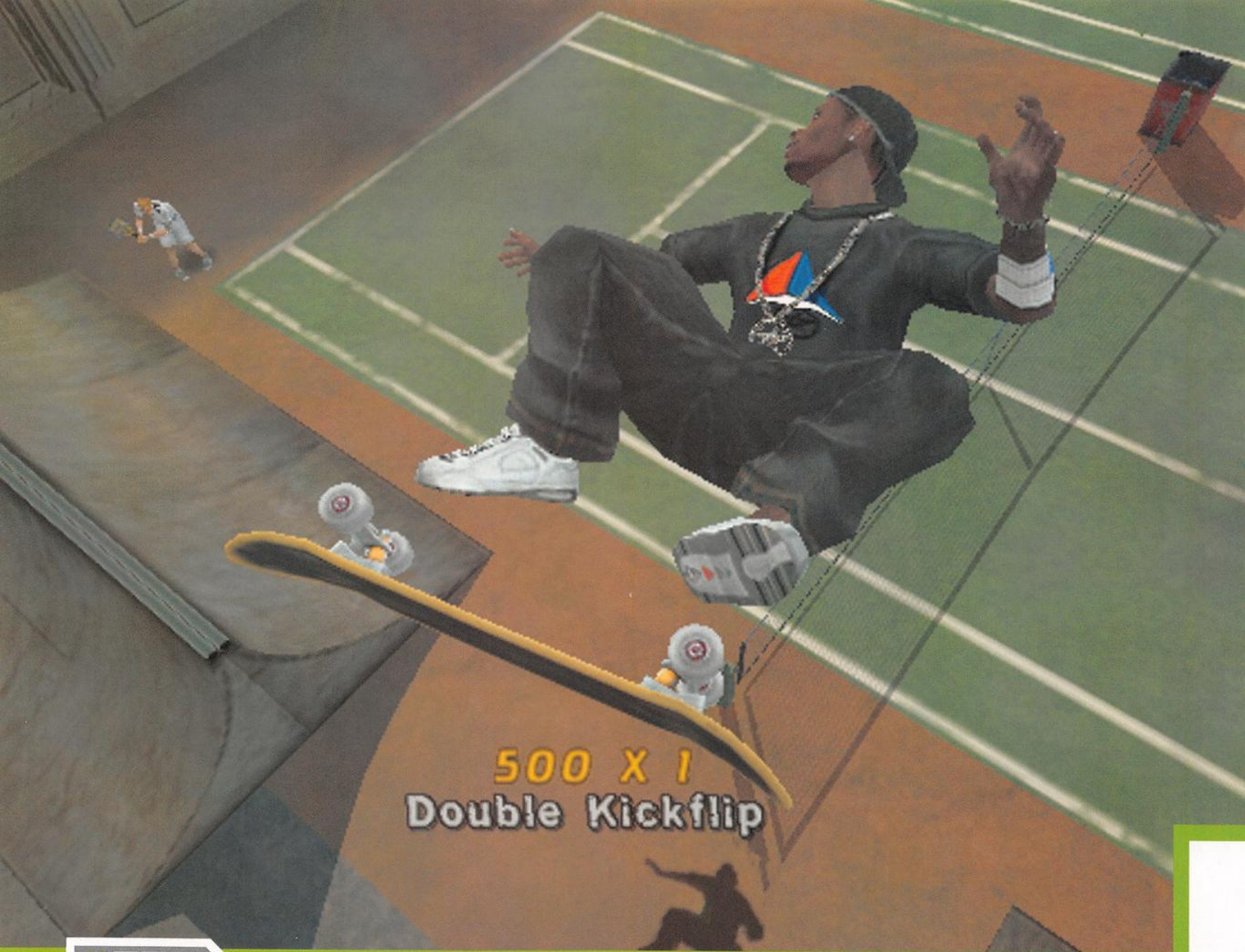
VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

91 80 91

OVERALL

91

Got friends? Get TimeSplitters 2, now.



PS2

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4

CATEGORY: Extreme Sports >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Activision >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: TBA >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

CAM SHEA gives Neversoft an A- on their report card.

Welcome to Tony Hawk mark 4. I think most fans of the Tony Hawk games would agree that the series is in need of some big changes. After two very evolutionary sequels, the shortcomings of the Career mode were rapidly strangling the life out of the game, and the level design in the third game simply didn't reach the same heights as in Tony 2 — the pinnacle of the series. Knowing all this, Neversoft have gone back to the drawing board. Have they revitalised the series, or simply aped Aggressive Inline? Or both?

there's no longer a time limit within levels, allowing you to skate around to your heart's content, with objectives activated by talking to the various people in the levels. It's a refreshing and necessary change, and one that nicely alters the dynamic of the game, giving you more freedom to simply enjoy the gameplay mechanics. And if you're so inclined you can still compete for the traditional two-minute high score by simply playing the level in the Single Session mode.

The reward system has also been revamped. In short, cash is back and Pro Points have been introduced. Each time you complete an objective you get a Pro Point, cash and often a Stat Point. You need increasing numbers of Pro Points to unlock each of the first seven levels, while the last

two can only be unlocked with cash. Cash is readily available through successful completion of objectives, not to mention spread liberally throughout the levels. In addition to levels, you can also spend your hard earned cash on hidden skaters, such as the legendary Mike Vallely, as well as 11 cheats including sim mode and big head mode, not to mention wacky clothes, accessories, decks and movies. It's a good system in general, but we would have liked to see Stat Points replaced by an experience points system. In other words, if you manual and grind a lot, your skill in those areas would increase. Next time maybe.

COOL TWEAKS

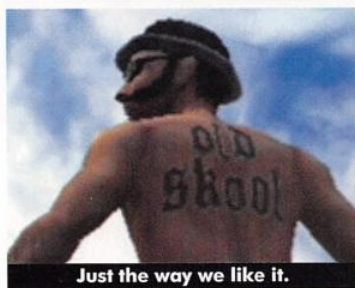
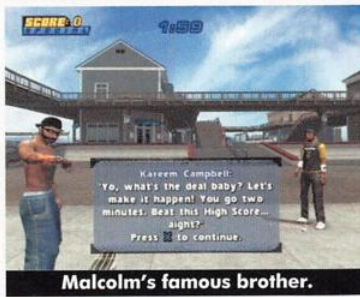
There are a surprising number of cool gameplay tweaks in Tony Hawk

4. Using L2 and R2 you can now transfer over spines and also bail out of screw-ups. Popping huge air over spines is an absolute joy, and the ability to right yourself out of a poor half pipe manoeuvre is also sweet — and opens up some new combo possibilities as you can right yourself and land in a



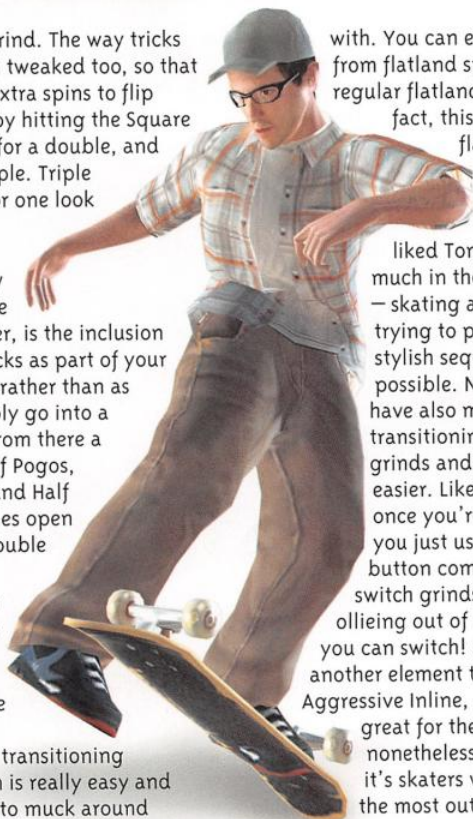
SIR GRIND A LOT

To be honest, Tony Hawk 4 does "borrow" heavily from the innovations that Aggressive Inline brought to market. For instance,



manual or a grind. The way tricks work has been tweaked too, so that you can add extra spins to flip tricks simply by hitting the Square button again for a double, and again for a triple. Triple impossibles for one look dope.

The most satisfying new addition to the game, however, is the inclusion of flatland tricks as part of your base tricklist, rather than as specials. Simply go into a manual and from there a whole world of Pogos, Anti Caspers and Half Cab Impossibles open up through double button combinations of the Square, Triangle and Circle buttons. There are stacks of flatlands and transitioning between them is really easy and awesome fun to muck around



with. You can even move from flatland specials into regular flatland tricks. In fact, this new flatland system reminds us of why we liked Tony Hawk so much in the first place — skating around trying to pop the most stylish sequences possible. Neversoft have also made transitioning during grinds and lip tricks easier. Like flatlands, once you're in a grind you just use double button combos to switch grinds. No more ollieing out of a grind so you can switch! Sure, it's another element taken from Aggressive Inline, but it's great for the gameplay nonetheless. Indeed, it's skaters who will get the most out of the

Like flatlands, once you're in a grind you just use **double button combos to switch grinds.**

gameplay changes in this edition — this is freeform skating at its best and will have you skating runs just for the fun of it all over again. Joy!

HOFF OR SCOFF, MAN?

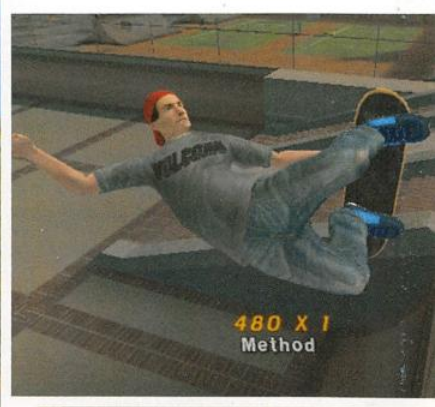
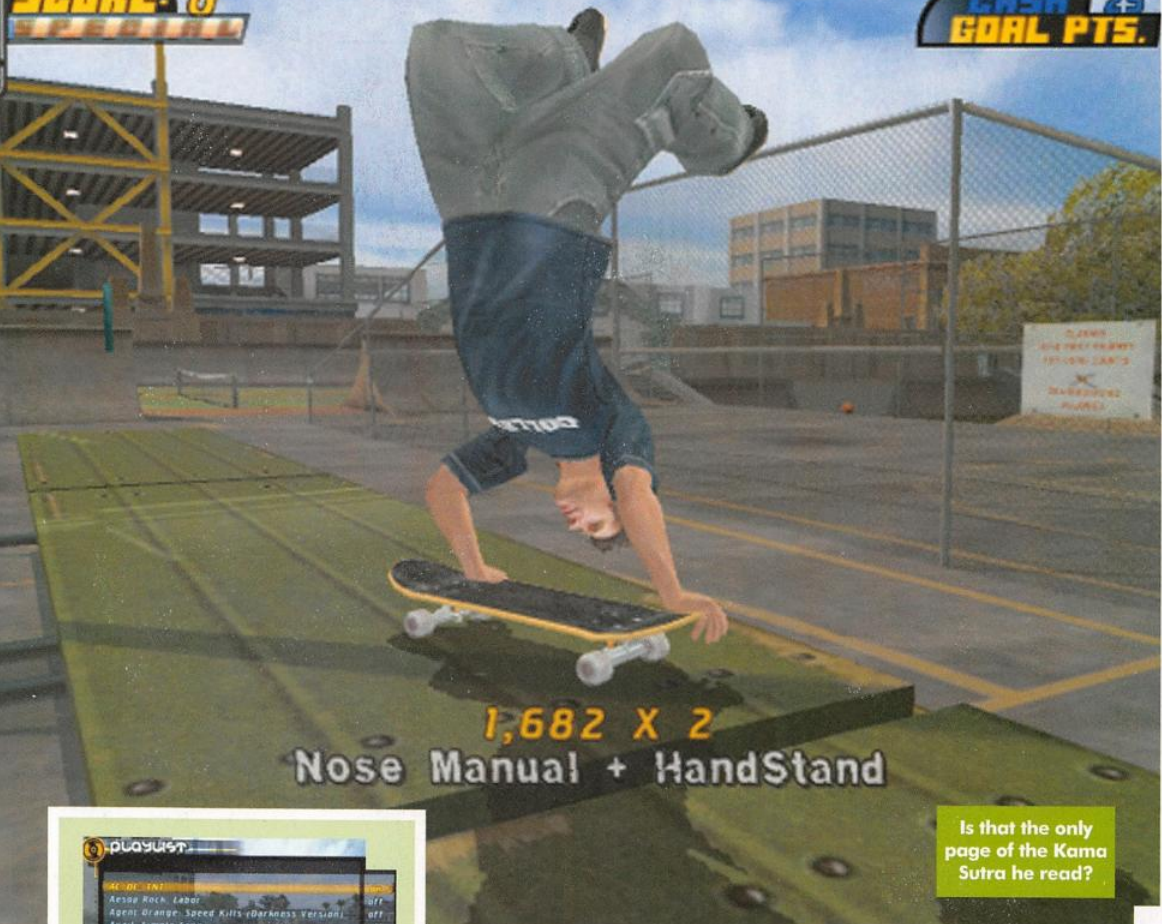
The level design in Tony Hawk 4 is, unfortunately, a little mixed. Some levels, like San Francisco and the classic Kona skatepark with its snake run and shallow bowls, are great and

packed with potential runs, while others, such as Alcatraz and Carnival, just feel messy. One positive is that there are no longer any small "competition only" levels. Instead, each level has at least one competition objective within it — definitely a more organic solution. However, we think that it's a huge cop out that the final standard level is the Chicago layout from Mat



SCORE: 0

CASH 25
GOAL PTS.



Is that the only page of the Kama Sutra he read?



I DON'T *CENSORED* GET IT

The soundtrack for Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4 is very eclectic, spanning 35 tracks; it has something for almost everyone. From classics like AC/DC's "TNT" and The Sex Pistols' "Anarchy In The UK", harder stuff like System Of A Down, and back to lashings of classic hip hop from the likes of Gang Starr, Public Enemy, Run DMC and De La Soul, it's a huge lineup. The only disappointing aspect of the music is the level of censorship. Take NWA's "Express Yourself". This was definitely the radio friendly track from "Straight Outta Compton" and was entirely free of cussing. Yet it's been cut to pieces for this soundtrack. The line "I don't smoke weed or cess" is censored, even though it's actually encouraging kids NOT TO SMOKE DOPE! Even the words Smith & Wesson have been cropped! What's up with this invasive censorship that moves beyond just swearing to making judgement calls on the content? We feel violated. Of course, this may just be for the puritanical American market (we're reviewing the US version), so fingers crossed the PAL version has no such "clean" versions of the songs.

Hoffman 2. Come on guys - recycling level designs isn't good enough! Level objectives are similarly mixed. In fact, in many ways this game could be called Tony Hawk: The Adventure Game. There are heaps of really silly goals that have nothing to do with skateboarding and just amount to very limited "puzzle" solving, such as the "Distract The Four Angry Sea Lions" objective. No, we're not kidding. Collecting S-K-A-T-E also seems even more ludicrous when someone is asking you to retrieve their "lost letters". That said, at least goals are more complex than in the last game. Remember the bully objective in the Canada level? We hated those kinds of simplistic tasks, and on the whole objectives have a little more to them this time around. Although many of the old faithfuls are back, such as high scores, there's a greater range now. They're not all great, but it's cool being taught new tricks by various pros, having to bust specific tricks as spectators call them out, and mastering new variants like collecting C-O-M-B-O in one combo.

There are also a range of mini games such as tennis and the various "skitching" and street luge objectives, which range from utterly lame to quite compelling. The coolest objectives of all, however, are the pure trick challenges, like kickflipping onto a ledge, manauling along it, then heelflipping off. Simple skate oriented objectives like these rock, and it is a shame Neversoft used them so sparingly. We would have liked every challenge to be like this, especially considering how ludicrous some of the actual objectives are. There are 16 objectives per level, and once you have 90 Pro Points you unlock the Pro Challenges, bringing





Looks like he's stuck on some chewing gum.

402 X 3 possible + Nose Manual + Manualin



Get out of here you hooligan!



183 X 1 Nose Manual

Wave ya hands in the air, like ya just don't care.



But can you juggle at the same time?



Hey Tony, your shoelace is undone.



SSX? NO THANKS.

As you would expect, TH4 has a huge range of specials, but we're not so sure how we feel about the increasingly wacky element creeping in. The Jackass was cool because hey, it's Bam and he's a madman, but some of the new ones are just lame and self-indulgent. These are influences from titles like SSX that we could do without. Even so, those that don't like them don't have to equip them.

even more depth to the game. This rectifies one of our chief complaints with the last game, and gives much greater longevity to the Career mode. Also cool is that if you screw up, you can just pause and select "retry current objective" and the game puts you back at the start of the sequence. This is an excellent, and very useful option.

VISUALLY COMM...

Tony Hawk 4 has lost some of the flat shaded look of its predecessor, and now sports more extensive texturing. The game speed has also been slowed slightly, which we think is a good thing. Animations are, as you would expect, even more varied and context sensitive than ever, and



The extra freedom in the gameplay makes this a **more than worthwhile purchase.**

the blood splatter will now spray up walls, which is a nice touch. There are some negatives though. The skaters and NPCs are pretty low poly and look quite goofy at times, and the decks themselves are far too big. Plus, some of the characters that you'll meet in the levels are just unbelievably lame and irritating, and many of the NPC animations are recycled across all the characters, making even the real life pros look like limp wristed freaks.

The Tony Hawk series has matured just enough to keep us addicted in this fourth edition, but it was a near thing. There are some common sense options that are sorely missing. Why, for instance, can't we edit together our own skate videos? This would bring the emphasis back to style and innovation in the environment, and

would be seriously compelling for skaters — especially considering the existing emphasis on unlocking videos in the game. Let us make our own vids! This feature should at least be mandatory for the Xbox version.

!!! In TH4 you can't get run over by cars any more. Thank god!

As it is, Tony Hawk 4 is still a fantastic game, and the addition of flatland and grind transitions alone make it a must-have for skaters. If you've followed the franchise, the extra freedom in the gameplay makes this a more than worthwhile purchase. And old school skaters will revel in the extensive range of flatland tricks on offer. That said, we'll be expecting big things from the next iteration. Attention Neversoft — give us a living breathing city and a proper experience points system... or we'll kill the bunny. <<



PLUS: The flatland mechanics totally make this game.

MINUS: When will we get the chance to use the online play?

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY
87 84 92

OVERALL
91

It isn't perfect, but the series is going in the right direction.

REVIEW
» HYPER 51



>> PS2

WWE Smackdown!: SHUT YOUR MOUTH!

CATEGORY: Wrestling >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: THQ >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

FRANK DRY likes the sound of sweet chin music...

Sports entertainment fans rejoice, the king of wrestling games has finally arrived in Smackdown!: Shut Your Mouth! for the PS2. The last of the first generation of next-gen wrestling games have all revealed themselves as entertaining products that are simply too shallow and short-lived. In contest, Smackdown! for the PS2 came up trumps ahead of Raw on the Xbox, and Wrestlemania on the GameCube. What Shut Your Mouth does, however, is combine the best bits of all of the aforementioned games and pulls out a few stops of its own to create not only the tightest game of the bunch, but the best wrestling experience in videogaming to date.

THE NEXT BIG THING

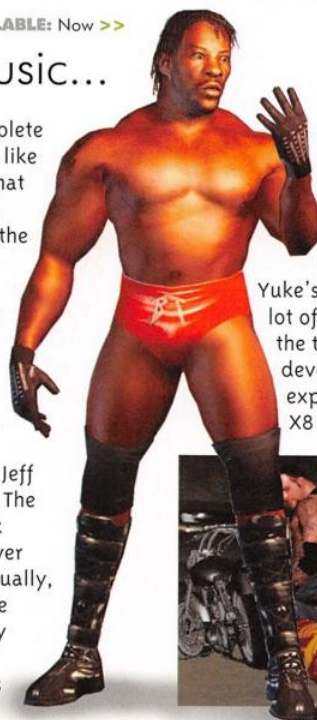
The first thing SYM has going for it

is its timeline and consistency. The game has the most up-to-date roster of all WWE games and sports the full license change from Federation to Entertainment. This helps the product in its quest for authenticity and lays out the ground work for what fast becomes the ultimate experience in the showcase and spectacle that is WWE. The game never feels like you're not a part of the action and the level of polish is unbelievable. Yuke's job on X8 was great with some stunning character models and excellent first attempts at grappling and animation, but it fell short in depth and came off as more of an arcade experience. SYM, however, is the full bag, the RPG of wrestling games, if you will. To this end, the gameplay system is that of innovation,

immersion and complete depth; it really feels like you're going after that coveted Undisputed Championship, and the game's visuals and presentation only enhance this feeling more. SYM has the highest detailed character models we've ever seen in a wrestling game; looking at Booker T, Jeff and Matt Hardy and The Next Big Thing Brock Lesnar will run a shiver down your spine. Equally, the animations of the roster are completely authentic. Scotty 2 Hotty's dance moves

are awesome, and the first time we saw Jericho's entrance we thought we were watching the real thing, seriously.

Yuke's have obviously put a lot of time and effort into the title, and the extra development period and experience gained with X8 has paid off in this,





Let's agree - no tongue, okay?



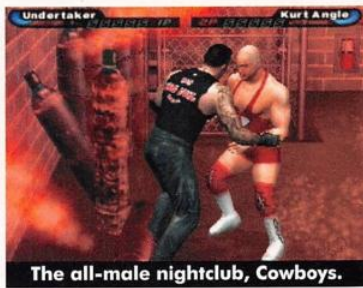
You know, your movies suck.



Scull scull scull!!



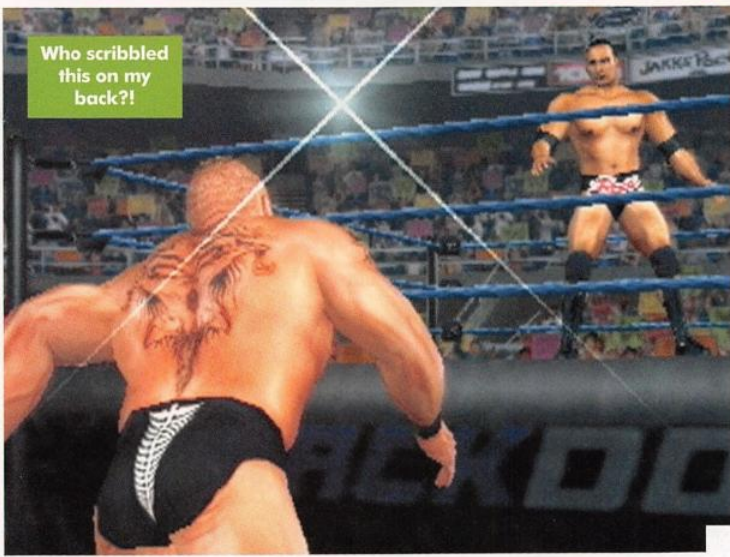
Let's go to the red light district!



The all-male nightclub, Cowboys.



Can't caption. Drooling.



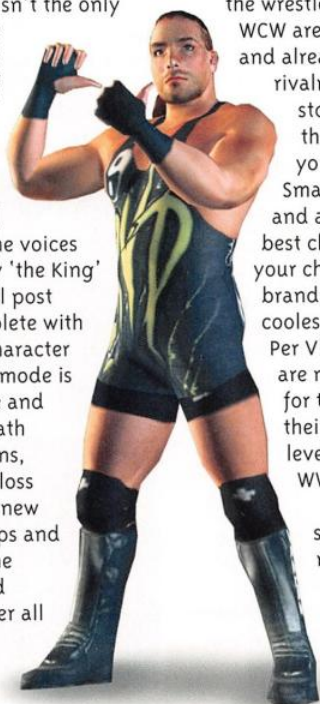
Who scribbled this on my back?!

THQ's new flagship wrestling product.

COAST TO COAST

The visual overhaul isn't the only thing that Shut Your Mouth has going for it, as the game itself represents many innovations in the field of wrestling titles. It's the first game to feature real commentary from the voices of WWE, JR and Jerry 'the King' Lawler, it has the full post merger roster, complete with proper intros and character models. The Season mode is completely accurate and follows any given path based on your actions, comments and win/loss record and as such, new rivalries, partnerships and more will become the driving force behind taking your character all the way.

The game takes



place just after Ric Flair 'bought' half of the WWE off Shane and Stephanie McMahon, which is post Invasion. What this means is that all the wrestlers from ECW and WCW are mixed into the fray and already have established rivalries, partnerships and stories. It also means that in Season mode you can take part in the Smackdown/Raw draft and attempt to create the best character manifest for your chosen brand. The brand rivalry is one of the coolest aspects, as at Pay Per Views your wrestlers are not only competing for themselves, but also their brand, opening up a level of authenticity for WWE fans.

The game itself is split into a number of modes, from Exhibition, Season and Create, as well as the usual Options menu where you can

The first time we saw Jericho's entrance we thought we were watching the real thing, seriously.

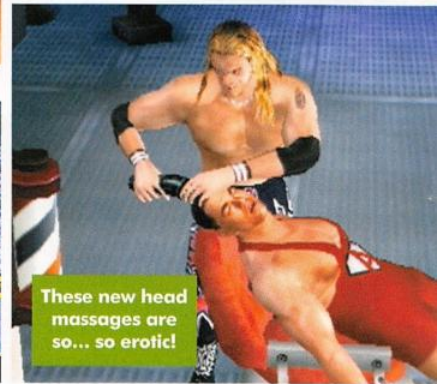
set the in-ring rules to work for what's best for you (tip: be sure to turn off the match timer, nothing worse than an untimely draw stopping you from any real match closure). The create-a-wrestler mode in the game is the most extensive we've seen on the next-gen consoles, with literally hundreds of variables for your created character. Want bushy eyebrows? It can be done. Want several tattoos? It's all in there. The

create-a-wrestler mode should keep hardcore and patient fans happy for a long time, but we suggest going through a season with your favourite superstar first, as winning matches at PPVs will allow you to choose from five unlockable items. These range from superstar outfits and arenas to hidden features for the Create mode and even secret wrestlers (Shawn Michaels anyone?!) With Exhibition, there're a ton of

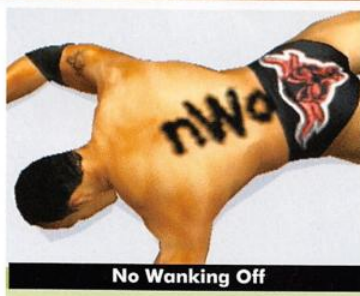




What did you say? MAN-BOOBS?!



These new head massages are so... so erotic!



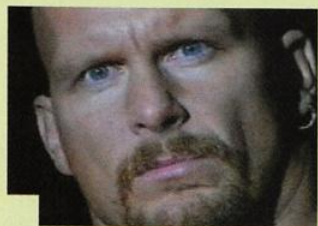
No Wanking Off



Home Improvements!



Look, it's the Scorpion King.



TO STONE COLD OR NOT TO STONE COLD

❖ With Stone Cold Steve Austin convicted of a domestic violence charge, it was unsure as whether or not THQ would keep him in the game, and from what we've been told it seems that they will remove him from the game at the last minute. Stone Cold no longer wrestles in the WWE with a number of rumours suggesting he wasn't happy with his current character direction, he didn't get along with The Next Big Thing, Brock Lesnar, and more. So, if you're a Stone Cold fan, don't worry, have faith — he's sure to pop up somewhere sooner rather than later!

jump on a ladder with the Hardy Boyz in a Ladder or TLC match. The possibilities are endless (for fans), and Yuke's have captured the essence of wrestling beautifully.

DO YOU HAVE ENOUGH RUTHLESS AGGRESSION?

The crux of the game is the Season mode, and it's here that Yuke's have gone to great lengths to capture what it means to be a part of Sports Entertainment. With your chosen character (created or an existing superstar) and your selected brand (Raw or Smackdown!) you can start your climb to the top of the industry for your shot at the Undisputed Title. Once the formalities are out of the way, your character is thrust into the arena of your chosen brand in first person mode, which is effectively the hub of the

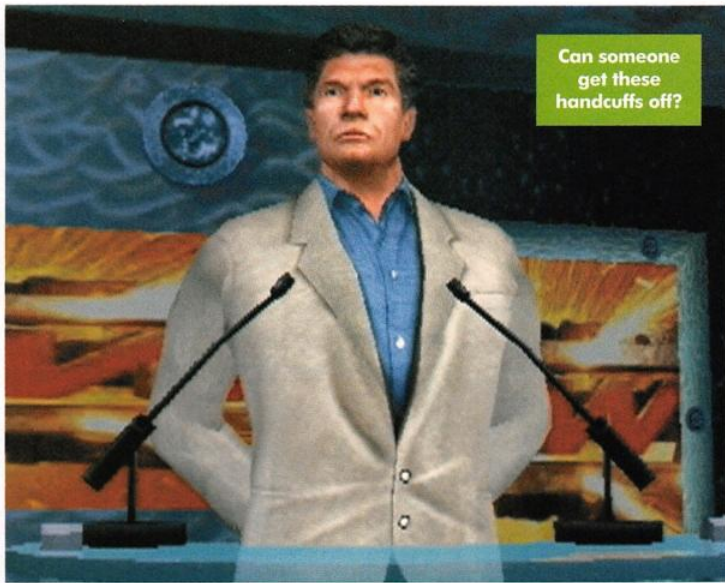


whole game. From here you can walk around and interact with context sensitive areas that prompt you with an action icon that appears on the screen. You can suss out the arena's locker room, the car park, the VIP room, the boiler room, storeroom and more, as well as run into superstars along the way. Running into stars usually starts a conversation and depending on how you respond (with a number of choices available), enemies and friends will be made.

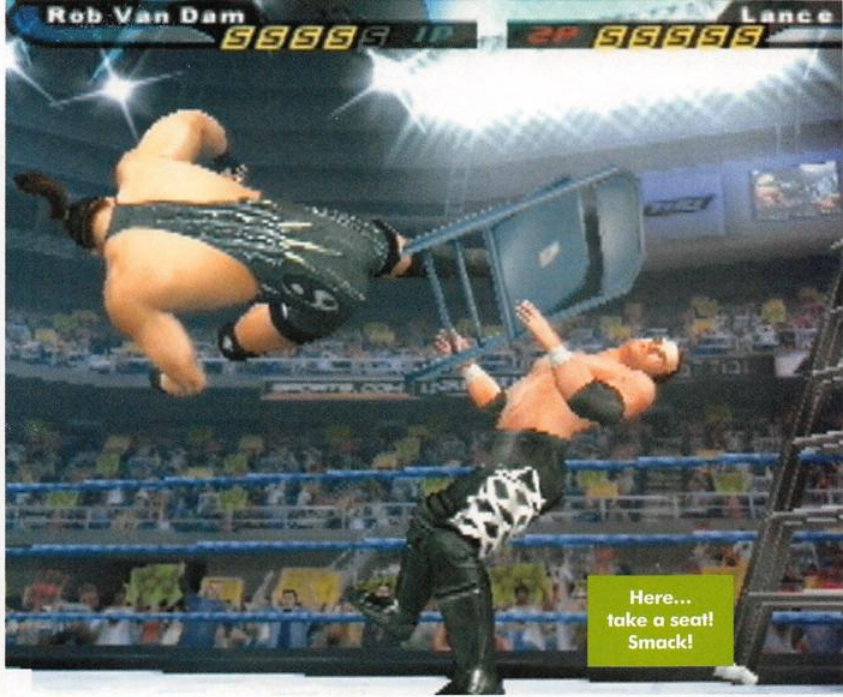
The level of freedom available to you in the hub is amazing. I discovered this when I decided to walk outside into the street. Using the context sensitive areas will prompt a beautiful in-game cut scene of your chosen action, everything is

represented this way, and the camera angles are extremely reminiscent of the WWE program, everything from entering the arena to closing doors. Walking outside was great, and to further my experiment I eventually found my way to the subway next to the arena where I jokingly boarded a stationary train, only to have it

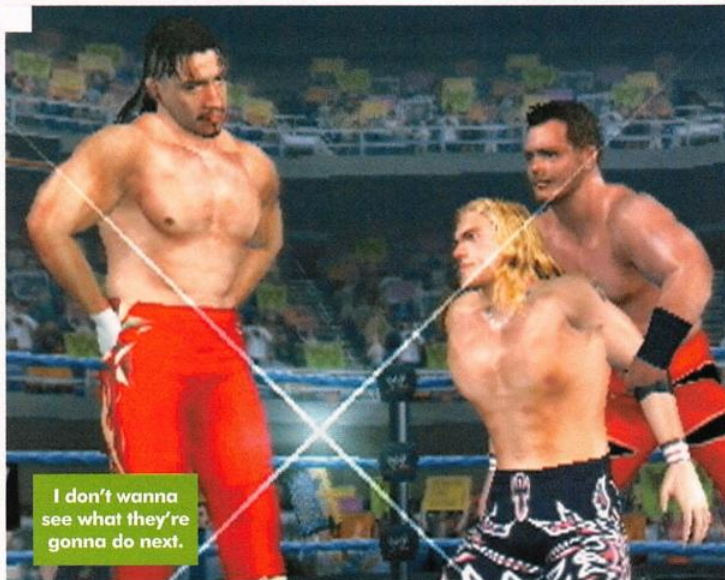




Can someone get these handcuffs off?



Here... take a seat! Smack!



I don't wanna see what they're gonna do next.



Anyone need a drink from the bar?



This one's called the Vacuum Cleaner.



I preferred him when he was in U2.



There's a Flair in there.

leave the station and take me to WWE the World in New York! Brilliant.

The Season works with your character wrestling random matches on your chosen brand, however, story progression and how you win matches will eventually determine your enemies, cohorts and future matches. This creates a path for you to find your main adversary, that one wrestler that hates you as much as you hate him (or her). You go through a regular series of matches until a PPV comes around, it's here that you really get to shine and earn your credibility as a main contender, the more PPVs you win, the more chance you have of being given a title shot.



All the wrestlers from ECW and WCW are mixed into the fray and already have established rivalries, partnerships and stories.

SHOWSTOPPING

Despite all it has going for it, the game still has some flaws. In-ring actions have a plus and a minus in character specific moves. For example, playing as Shawn Michaels in a TLC match can be frustrating. One of his signature moves is sweet chin music, and what better way to play a TLC match than by knocking your opponent against a table positioned vertically in the corner of the ring and landing a super kick to the chin to put them through the table. Unfortunately, this can't be executed. Special moves are performed when an opponent is in a specific position and you're prompted to use L1. An opponent slumped against a table isn't context sensitive for Shawn's

move, so a regular kick or punch will have to suffice. This happens with a lot of superstars.

There's also a fair bit of clipping to deal with, as a lot of the big guys seem to disappear into each other, but this has been a problem with most wrestling titles, and we're yet to see a game that can fully overcome this flaw.

However, it's easy to overlook these problems with all that the game has to offer. A reasonably good commentary track (it feels so much more like WWE with JR and Jerry the King), the lighting and atmosphere, the genre perfect music, all go together to make Shut Your Mouth the definitive wrestling game for fans. <<

!!! Frank Dry's favourite wrestler is Jeff Hardy. *mannerism*



PLUS: Incredible character models, extensive season mode.

MINUS: Clipping problems, no manual special moves.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

90 89 88

OVERALL

89

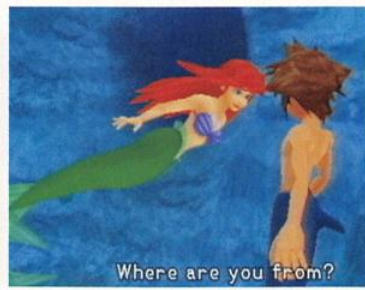
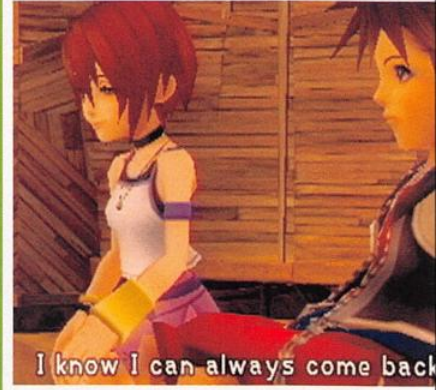
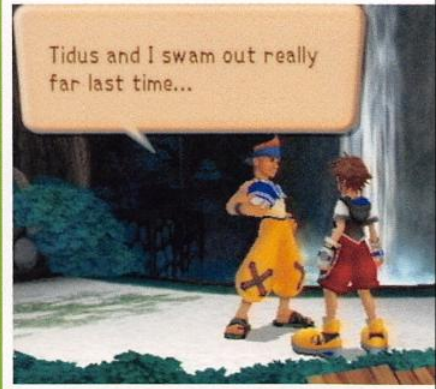
Best wrestling game ever.

REVIEW

>> HYPER 55



We hope for your safe return.
Please help the king.



Kingdom Hearts

CATEGORY: Action/RPG >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: SquareSoft/Disney Interactive >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: G8+ >> AVAILABLE: December >>

ELIOT FISH tries to awaken the child within...

Expectations have been running high for Kingdom Hearts to deliver that *creme de la creme* SquareSoft gameplay — the fact that Disney was involved being largely ignored by gamers wanting something hearty post-*FFX*. "Surely, the game couldn't be lame just because it has Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse and Goofy in it, right?" Well folks, sadly there's more Disney injected in this game than SquareSoft, in every sense. "It says SquareSoft on the box, surely that means it'll have great gameplay!" Unfortunately in this case, the company name on the box has guaranteed us nothing.

PULLING FUNNY FACES

Kingdom Hearts has turned out to be nothing but an RPG for beginners. A kid's game. Actually, we're baffled at

the emergence of all the internet reviews hailing this game as another shining triumph for SquareSoft. How did these "critics" stay awake long enough to even come to such a conclusion? Our only explanation for the glowing reviews thus far, is that gamers are in denial. They simply can't believe that SquareSoft could turn out a sub-standard RPG. I've heard of gamers persisting to play Kingdom Hearts until they've convinced themselves that they like it. The addition of SquareSoft characters to the game adds nothing to the experience other than the odd fuzzy feeling. It can't do anything to help the fact that the bulk of Kingdom Hearts' gameplay is tedious at best. Well, tedious for anyone over the age of 10. Whilst playing the game, we kept reminding ourselves

just who the game had been designed for, to save us from ripping it out of the drive and playing something else. Basically, we just weren't the intended audience. Who is? Youngsters. Kids who'll laugh at the Disney characters pulling funny faces or falling over. Sadly, that's the awful truth.

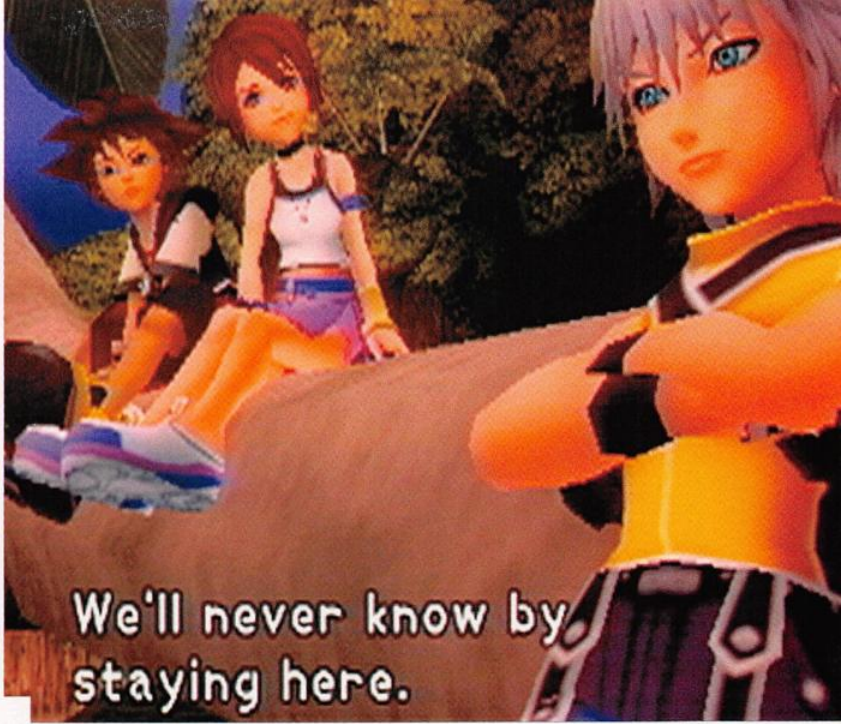
There's a certain level of charm in the animation, and the game is certainly slick, but we didn't pay good money to watch a cartoon, or learn about making friends. Young gamers might be happy to watch the goofy cutscenes (no pun intended), but more experienced players will just smile and look for the button to skip to the gameplay — of which the game is sorely lacking.



Let's get down to nuts and bolts. For starters, Kingdom Hearts suffers from serious camera problems. Most of the time, the camera feels too close in on the action, and rotating it requires you to use the shoulder buttons, rather than the ease of the right stick which is simply wasted on doubling up with the d-pad as a menu select. Rotation of the camera is slow, and it's always getting stuck on objects and walls. Battles can become a chaotic mess of attempting to keep track of your enemy, despite the handy lock-on



Satan and Disney. We should have guessed.



We'll never know by staying here.



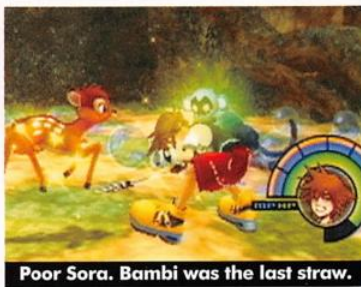
I've had nightmares like this.



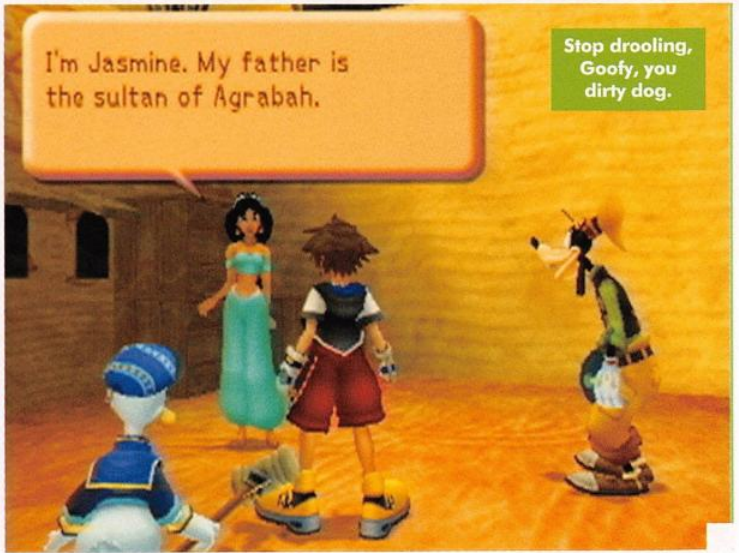
The Gummi Ship. Eat it instead.



Let's all be friends and bake a cake.



Poor Sora. Bambi was the last straw.



I'm Jasmine. My father is the sultan of Agrabah.

Stop drooling, Goofy, you dirty dog.

What may save Kingdom Hearts for some people is the pure polish to the game's presentation.

feature. At other times you'll be frustrated that you never seem to be able to see the environment from a helpful perspective.

Objectives within each level range from vaguely interesting puzzles, to downright moronic object collecting or mindless conversations. Tarzan's Deep Jungle area feels particularly pointless – you just find yourself running around, back and forth, stumbling into the required cut-scenes. Usually, after much wondering what it is you've done wrong or failed to deduce from your environment, you sadly realise all you had to do is return to the point in which you began your search, simply to trigger the next piece of story. Many of the levels suffer from this distinct lack of life, and disappointing lack of interactivity or involvement.

DUMBED DOWN

The combat tends to boil down to nothing more than a mash-fest of the attack button. Your AI controlled team mates (Donald and Goofy, for the majority of play) simply look after themselves with little involvement from the player other than equipping them with items or healing them in combat. Another problem with the real time gameplay is the menu system that is required to be used when wanting to heal yourself mid-fight. You tend to have your arse kicked as you fumble through the real-time menu trying to access healing potions or spells. What happened to the good old "pause menu" healing process? This is just one of Kingdom Hearts' many frustrating elements.

!!! Final Fantasy XII, Square! FFXIII!!!! Waaahhhhhhhhhhh!

We could probably waste more space highlighting the design flaws with the combat/camera/controls, but maybe we should just make it simple for you: Kingdom Hearts is poorly designed, and the result is a dull and frustrating game. The irony here is that whilst it's dumbed down for kids, the levels also contain some very difficult boss fights that young kids would probably have no hoping of beating. It feels like this game was designed by committee, one half arguing to make it easier (probably Disney), the other side pushing for more gameplay depth (arguably, SquareSoft). The result is a bit of a mess.

On a positive note, what may save Kingdom Hearts for some people is the pure polish to the game's presentation. The game is gorgeous to look at (aside from the absolutely horrid space shoot 'em up bits), and the story has enough charm to keep you playing to see what comes next. The animation is really the only good thing going here. Other than that, we can't recommend this game to any serious Square-loving gamer or action/RPG fan. <<



PLUS: Slick presentation, Square characters revisited.

MINUS: Horrid looping music, mash-fest combat, dull levels.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

87 82 65

OVERALL

70

Square really dropped the ball with this one. Disappointing.

R



Burnout 2

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

CAM SHEA still isn't burnt out...

Here's a very simple equation for this generation of gaming. Burnout series = sublime arcade racing. It's as simple as that. The Burnout games are the spiritual successors to Ridge Racer, and there are no other titles that even approach the polish and intensity of racing on offer here. Better still, Criterion have improved the sequel in every conceivable way. Bless those handsome devils!

IT'S GOLD JERRY!

The game kicks off with Offensive Driving 101, a tutorial on how to drive dangerously. It takes you through all the basics of the game — earning boost by driving against traffic, near misses, getting air and powersliding, and is quite a nice antidote to the sterile license tests of

other racers. Once you've passed the tests, the main Championship mode opens up, starting out with a Grand Prix. Come first overall on points and you'll unlock the next Grand Prix, but win gold on each course and you'll also unlock a Pursuit race and a Face Off race. Face Off is a simple one on one race, while Pursuit places you behind the wheel of a cop car in a very Chase HQ inspired mission. Simply ram the offender's car enough times before he reaches the finish line and you've unlocked that car.

Burnout 2 is paced perfectly with an excellent array of content and cars to unlock. Each Grand Prix is longer than the last, so coming first in every race becomes more challenging. And even when you've gone through the main Championship mode, there's

still an entire Custom Championship to play through, where you'll be pitted against some seriously hotted up cars... which you can subsequently unlock. Joy! Perhaps the only quailm we have is that Burnout veterans will find the going quite easy until midway through the Custom Championship where the AI ramps up a bit.

Even so, the racing is just so much fun that you won't care. The courses are brilliantly designed, and cater to the handling mechanics much more effectively than in the first game. Indeed, the handling is absolutely spot on. It's incredibly tight, allowing you to pull off some devastating weaving runs through traffic, and long controlled powerslides at high speeds. Courses vary from fanging around an airport

to icy mountain roads, ocean-side cities and blazing along desert highways. Whether it's an intense city section where you're sweeping through crowded intersections, or a quiet road where powerslides are essential for filling your boost meter, the range of environments and course types really show that the team at Criterion have both learnt from the weaknesses and built on the strengths of the original game.

BURNOUT — NOT JUST A CLEVER NAME...

The mechanics themselves are much the same as in the original, with necessary tweaks made here and there. The boost meter is now easier to fill, more flexible and even more vital for winning races. The





Never SMS your friends while driving.



BLAU IS THE WORD...

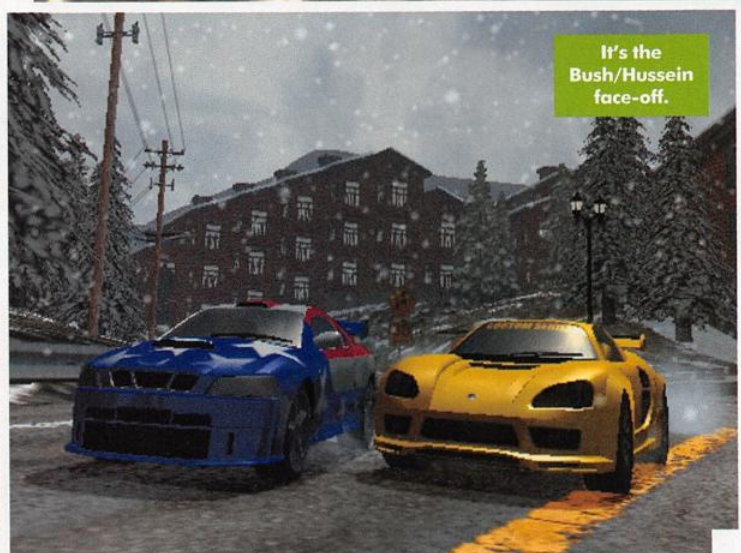
Perhaps the coolest mode in Burnout 2 is rather aptly known as Crash. This mode sets you off with a full boost meter a few hundred meters from a major intersection and challenges you to cause the most damage as possible in one accident. All the damage is tallied up and each vehicle that's involved adds in a multiplier. As soon as you hit a vehicle, the game switches to its trademark slow mo replay, panning around to all the different collisions. The chain reactions are often spectacular, with trucks jackknifing, cars getting flung into the air and buses folding like paper. So good! There are fifteen crash sites all up, each with bronze, silver and gold cash challenges. This mode is definitely more than just a gimmick - it's awesome fun experimenting with all the different ways you can set the chain reaction in motion. Better yet, you can play through this mode with up to four players, each taking turns to have a crack at each crash site, with the winner being whoever has the highest damage total at the end. Genius.



You renewed the insurance, right?



Joe's first driving lesson goes badly...



It's the Bush/Hussein face-off.

Boot this game up and you'll swear that you've just put a quality Xbox racer on.

game gets thrilling beyond any other racer - chaining together burnout after burnout, surviving on luck and twitch reflexes alone. It becomes an entirely zen experience.

One of the most striking things about Burnout 2 is just how amazing it looks. Boot this game up and you'll swear that you've just put a quality Xbox racer on - it's that pretty. It looked great in its first incarnation, but obviously Criterion were only getting started. The Renderware engine sends the action blistering along at 60fps, with beautifully detailed car models, large sections of traffic, unique scenery at every turn and some amazing visual effects. Every element of the presentation is crisp and defined, and the way the sun

reflects off the road, cars and buildings looks beyond the PS2's normal reach. The car models are simply amazing too, and the crashes - my god the crashes! The crash physics combine beautifully with car models that crumple, shatter and fall apart shockingly realistically. The crashes are a true spectacle - smoke pours from your screeching tires, bits of your car go flying creating a chain of sparks as they hit the tarmac, wheels roll off down the road and your bodywork implodes.

Burnout 2 is officially the arcade racer to beat - it takes the whole genre into new territory with white knuckle racing, a great feature set and visuals to die for. Fantastic gaming. <<<

sensation of speed when ripping into the boost meter is more imposing than ever. Best of all, if you "burnout" (use your entire meter up in one go) you're rewarded - if you drove really dangerously you may even come out of your burnout with another full boost meter. This is where the

!!! Cross traffic is a lot easier to deal with than in the original.

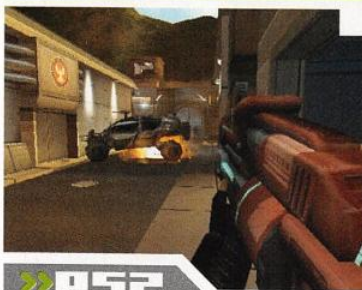
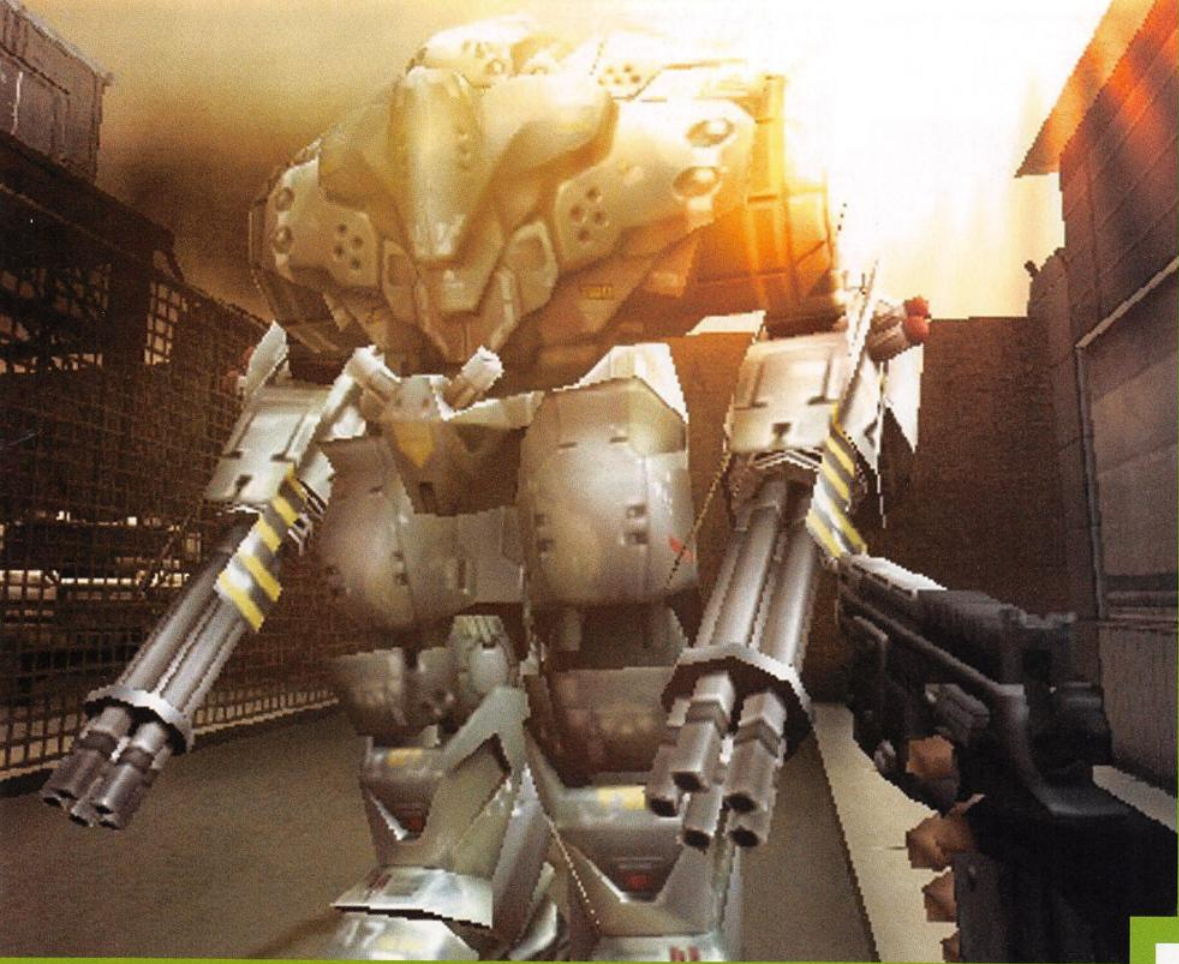


PLUS: Speed, adrenaline, powerslides. Nuff said.

MINUS: Not as challenging as it could be.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
91	85	91
OVERALL		
92		

Burnout 2 is close to the perfect arcade racer. Brilliant.



PS2

Red Faction II

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

FRANK DRY unleashes his payload.

Wou are Alias, a demolitions expert for the Red Faction, the rebels who are still trying to overthrow the evil dictator, Sopot (who looks just like Saddam Hussein). Unlike the first game, you've got a team to help you out this time. There's the stealth assassin, the sniper, the heavy weapons guy... and you. Blowing holes in walls just so happens to be your speciality, and so it should be no surprise that the game is brimming with destructible environments thanks to an all-new suped-up GeoMod engine. But does Red Faction II manage to surpass novelty and deliver a meaningful menu of destruction?

that this sequel has a predominantly more real world feel. Gone is the clinical sci-fi atmosphere, replaced by a series of gritty war-torn locations. The environments are more "normal", including military-like compounds, sewers, bridges, run-down subway stations and office buildings, but apart from this visual change Red Faction II is still very much a piece of fantasy. The war ravaged streets do help to lend the game a more believable edge (as believable as you can get for a futuristic war game), and it helps the single-player game feel more purposeful.

Much more of the stuff that you can see in Red Faction II you can now destroy. A raging firefight will obliterate columns, walls, doors and shatter surface materials to expose support beams and rafters. Yet

inexplicably, there are still sections of the same environment that won't shatter or break. Innocent looking crates or cabinets appear to be able to withstand point blank rockets whilst the wall opposite from them does not. If you can try to ignore the inconsistencies, you'll continue to have a lot of fun with the GeoMod engine. Just be aware that it's still not perfect, and that it sometimes feels quite arbitrary where it's implemented, unless it's obviously to provide the player with an escape route.

Red Faction II has graphically improved over the original Red Faction with far more detail in the

environments and far more believable level design. Slightly annoying is the inconsistent frame rate — most noticeably slower when your character is swivelling around — which can lead to nausea. Motion sickness is something this reviewer never normally has a problem with, but it seems worth pointing it out in this case. You'll be compelled to keep playing even after you feel like you might hurl, so I guess that says something about the addictive nature of Red Faction II's gameplay, but a smoother game would have improved the experience immeasurably. I guess you can't have everything.





How long was it until you saw the first crate?



I'm going to GeoMod your head, buddy.



That's one less pigeon.



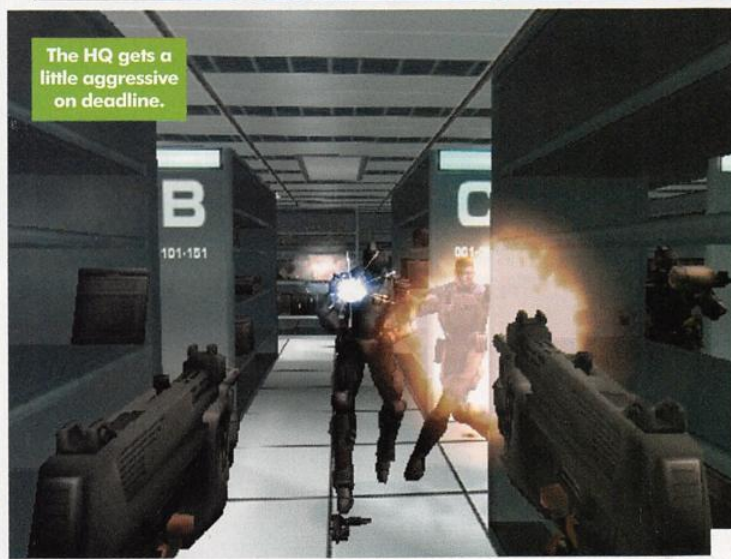
The Blau gun, our favourite!



Lots of stuff to make holes in.



Aww, my stationary!



The HQ gets a little aggressive on deadline.

Cheat your way to victory by sneaking shots through cracks or some other method other than simply duking it out fairly.

JOHN WOO COOL FACTOR

Some weapons can now be brandished in pairs, which doesn't really add anything but a John Woo cool factor to the experience. You'll probably still prefer to use the rocket launcher, or the other big guns with alternate firing options like the NICW. There are also a variety of grenades, including good old sticky mines, which are great fun to plant everywhere to see what blows. The array of weaponry is quite special, though reload times seem slower than they should be.

Most of the levels require you to "run and gun", making most of the gameplay in Red Faction II quite relentless and frantic. When you get a moment to rest, you really appreciate it, as you rarely get to

fully explore some environments due to annoying respawning enemies.

Unfortunately, game balance is still a big issue with Red Faction II. Some of the boss battles and set pieces later in the game suffer from the same problems that plagued Red Faction. The difficulty level is sometimes frustratingly high, with the only solution being to somehow cheat your way to victory by sneaking shots through cracks or some other method other than simply duking it out fairly. The battle against a sniper boss in particular, throws relentlessly powerful re-spawning enemies at you whilst you somehow have to contend with a sniper shooting you

!!! Will there be a Red Faction 3? We've heard a rumour that work has started already...

from long range. Stuff like this just doesn't make for an enjoyable challenge. You'll swear. Lots. Many of the levels however, feature some really enjoyable battles and some inventive design, it's just unfortunately peppered with lots of bad bits in-between. If you do persevere through some of the more annoying levels, you can be guaranteed to unlock lots of extras, such as game trailers, behind the scenes clips, concept art, profiles on the characters and more. So at least there's some reward for your pain. What is a bigger success this time around are the between-level vehicle sections. You'll be manning the guns on an airship, piloting a mech, guiding a tank and more — and all these bits are lots of fun.

Overall, Red Faction II survives its flaws through an enjoyable (though clichéd) plot, tonnes of big explosive battles and a reasonable multiplayer mode. A worthy addition to your PS2 shooter catalogue. <<<



PLUS: Blow stuff up. Satisfying. Epic battles.

MINUS: Frustrating. Hard on the eyes. Grimy colours.

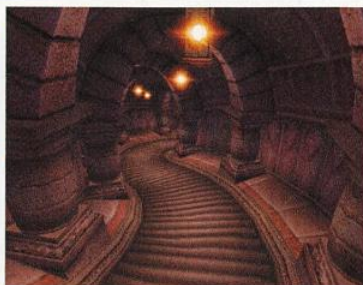
VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

83 84 83

OVERALL

83

Flawed, but a much better sequel in many ways.



PS2

Summoner 2

CATEGORY: Action/RPG >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: THQ >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

DANIEL STAINES summons up the courage for another adventure.

If there's one thing that distinguishes computer based RPGs from their tabletop brethren, it is the clear distinction between the respective styles of the East and West. Eastern RPGs consist of games like Final Fantasy and Golden Sun. They feature singularly linear narratives, heavy characterisation and disaffected loners with spiky hair and big phallic swords. Western RPGs, on the other hand, are typified by games like Baldur's Gate and Ultima. They sport non-linear plots supported by fairly generic characters and lots of weapons with the word 'Slaying' in their name. For all intents and purpose they are a completely different breed of game to their Eastern brethren, making it easy for

anal pedants like myself to categorise their game collections into neat sub-divisions of these two general types. And this is where we come to the problem that is Summoner 2.

EAST MEETS WEST

Given that Volition is an American based studio, one might quickly assume that this sequel to the PS2's first decent RPG could be easily seen as a Western style RPG. The characters are, after all, quite boring and the extensive background fiction absolutely reeks of Middle Eastern flavoured, D&D inspired mythology. But then one sees the three-at-a-time party system and Final Fantasy style side-quests and begins to wonder whether or not it is better viewed as

an Eastern RPG that was simply developed by Westerners. It's quite a quandary — if Chrono Trigger goes to the right of your RPG shelf and Morrowind goes to the left, where does Summoner 2 go?

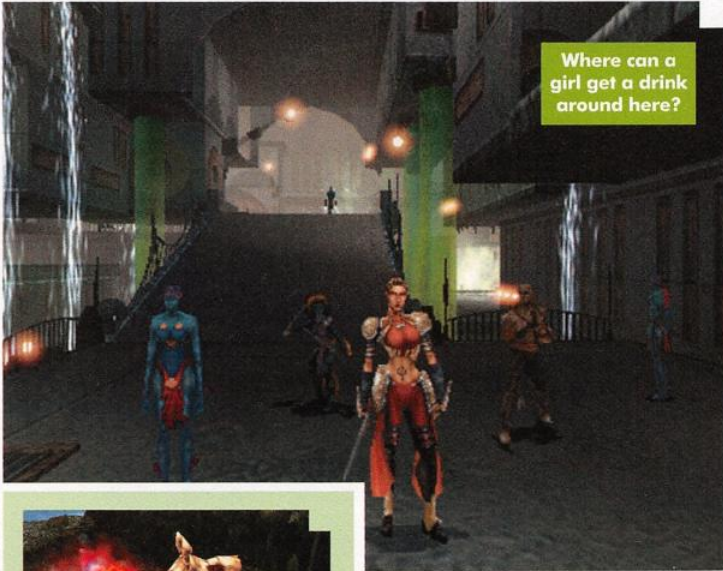
Well, let's be practical about this. Instead of calling Summoner 2 an Eastern RPG or a Western RPG, let us instead put it in the middle and say that it is simply a 'good' RPG — because that, after all, is precisely what it is. While they have almost shamelessly employed an engine that looked dated two years ago, Volition has been wholly successful in crafting a fantasy experience that is both expansive and extremely addictive.

This isn't a game that'll grip you straight away, but once it does it's almost guaranteed that you won't

want to put it down until every little side-quest has been completed and every single item has been found. Other considerations — important considerations — simply fade away as one relentlessly pursues a myriad of entertaining, well constructed side-quests that never fail to complement the thrust of the game's main narrative. Have to go to a job interview or family member's funeral? Sure, sure — right after you get to the end of this dungeon and find the sword you're looking for.

UNLIKE ANYTHING ELSE

Of course we exaggerate, but you get the point: Summoner 2 is bloody addictive. Why it is so can essentially be explained by



Where can a girl get a drink around here?



SUMMONER OR SHAPECHANGER?

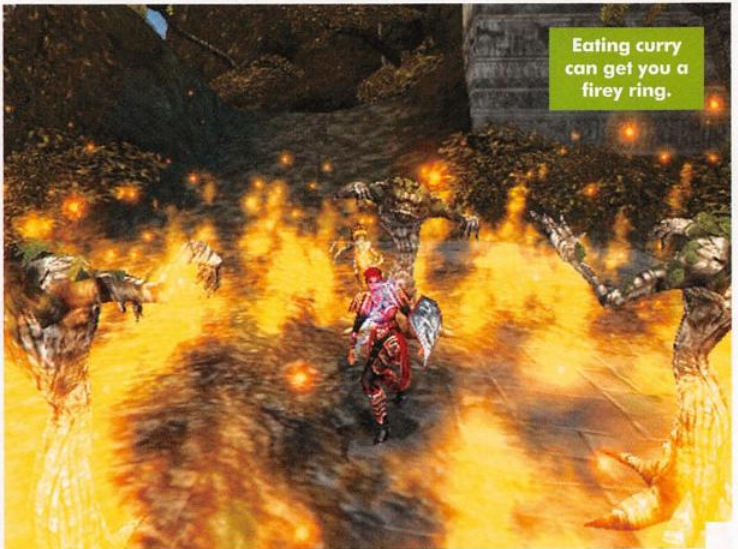
Given that the game is called Summoner, you'd expect that a big part would be, you know, summoning stuff. Not so. Unlike the original, the protagonist in Summoner 2 does not actually summon monsters as much as turn into them. Why Volition chose to make this seemingly useless change is beyond us. Probably something to do with marketing. It always is, you know.



It's just a rush of blood to the head.



Excuse me, I've been summoned.



Eating curry can get you a fire ring.

referring to two facets of the game's mechanics that combine to make it enjoyable in a highly intuitive and fluid way. The first facet, the vast number of excellent side-quests, we've already talked about. The second facet is the game's party mechanic that, like the original, allows players to control one of three party members at a time while the other two are handled by the game's superior selection of AI scripts. What makes this so entertaining is that one is able to switch between party members dynamically by pressing the R2 button, thus opening a wide variety of Commandos 2 style 'on-the-fly' strategic options for the attentive gamer.

It is entirely possible, for example, to set your fighters on melee combat AI to distract guards while you employ your thief character to sneak by and reach an objective point unhindered. That's not a particularly original gameplay mechanic, granted, but Summoner 2 (like its predecessor) excels in the way it combines these

You won't want to put it down until every little **side-quest** has been completed.

individual and unoriginal component parts into a seamless whole that is quite unlike anything else available on the PlayStation 2.

Now, before you rush out and buy Summoner 2 on the basis of this glowing review, there are a few flaws you should probably know about which may or may not have a direct bearing on how you perceive the quality of this game. First of all, the sound is utterly unforgivable. Unlike the original, the score is completely forgettable and the effects sound as if they were lifted directly from a generic RPG soundbank CD. In addition to this is the fact that, while generally enjoyable, the simplistic real-time

Remember to listen for Aliens star, Lance Henriksen, in Volition's other sequel, Red Faction 2!

combat system featured tends to become a bit repetitive and tedious after awhile. It's not enough to get upset about, but it does lack a certain strategic oomph many of us have to come expect in an expansive RPG such as this. You attack, you block, attack, block... and so on.

But yes, aside from that and a few quibbles with the previously mentioned dated graphics engine, Summoner 2 is a superior title that continues the success of its predecessor in fine style. If you're looking for a PS2 Action/RPG to waste away a few rainy weekends, then Summoner 2 is definitely worth picking up — even if you do have to rearrange your game collection to fit it in... <<<



PLUS: Highly addictive, excellent side-quests, strategic party system.

MINUS: Dated engine, dodgy sound, can be repetitive.

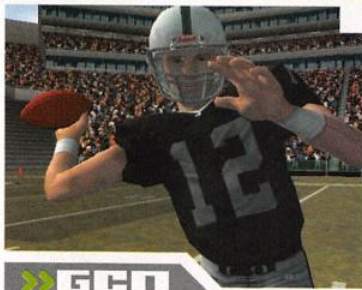
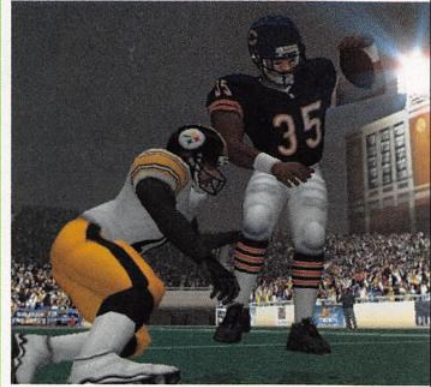
VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

75 75 90

OVERALL

85

A truly excellent RPG hindered only by a few minor flaws.



»» GEN

Madden NFL 2003

CATEGORY: Sports >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: EA Sports >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

ANDREW BULMER loves to tackle other men.

Madden is a top sporting franchise due in part to the millions of fanatical NFL followers in the US, but also because it genuinely gets better every year. Madden 2003 carries many significant changes over 2002, the biggest of which is the depth in franchise mode, but alongside that, the animations are a lot more fluid and the defense has undergone a fair whack of tweaking so that now... now you can understand what the hell is going on.

THE KICK IS UP...

For some, the biggest hurdle for Madden is how complex the game is, and for many, the depth that it offers will never be fully explored. The nuts and bolts of the offense have remained fairly standard for

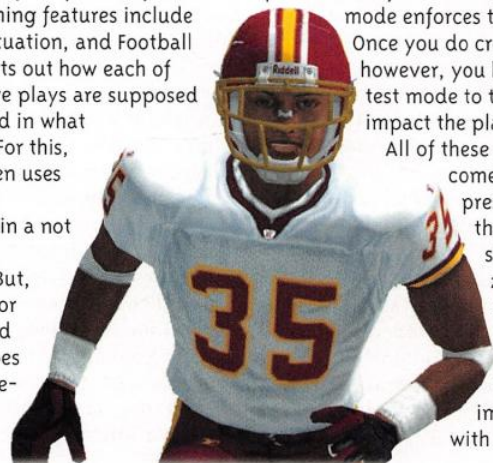
some years — snap the ball and throw it to the open man denoted by a symbol hovering halo-like over their head. What has been an enigma for many has been the intricacies of the defense, something the developers have come around to fixing. Now, instead of feeling like a fish out of water you can view the defensive positions before the snap and the assignment of each player is shown, whether it be man-to-man or zone coverage or a blitz. For those looking to get more involved in Madden, this is a perfect addition and allows you to understand the overall strategy a whole lot more.

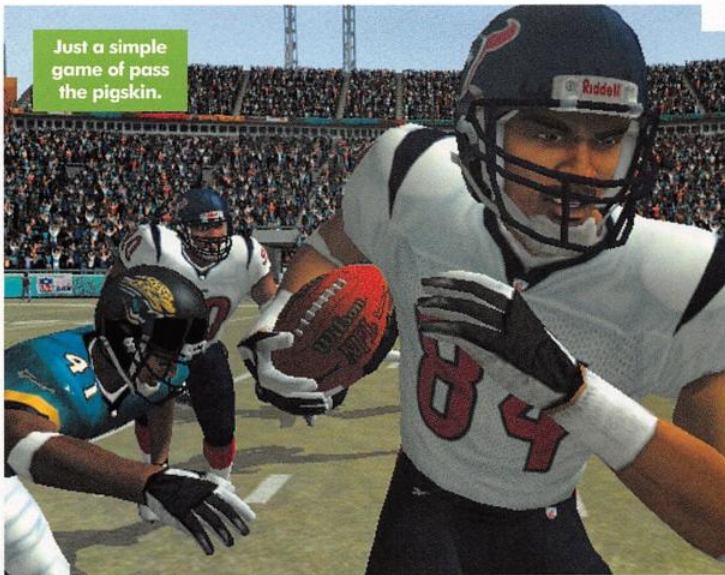
Among other new features is the mini-camp, basically a way to practice particular skills such as pass defense, tackling, throw accuracy, kicking and running. By completing

the challenges in mini-camps you can earn Madden Cards which can be used to unlock players, stadiums, and during a game to increase a player's stats for a period of time. Some returning features include practice, situation, and Football 101 which sets out how each of the offensive plays are supposed to work, and in what situations. For this, John Madden uses his expert knowledge in a not so expert voiceover. But, the award for biggest nerd addition goes to the create-a-play section

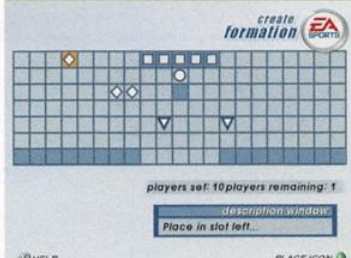
that is expertly designed and easy to navigate, so a basic knowledge of the game is enough. You can only design plays inside the legal parameters of the rulebook and the mode enforces this for you. Once you do create a play, however, you have a ready test mode to try out the impact the play has.

All of these additions come with a presentation that is a lot slicker than 2002. The stadiums as a whole have undergone improvement with better





Just a simple game of pass the pigskin.



The bingo mini-games are awesome.



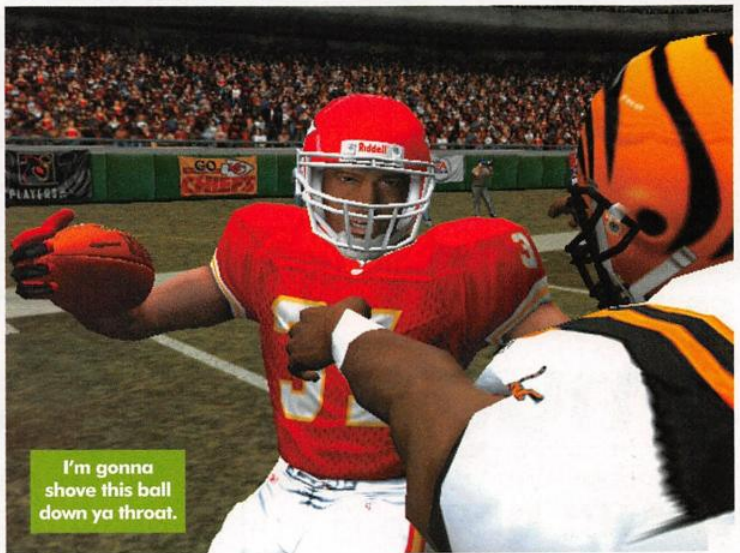
Hula hoop showdown.



Hut Hut Hut!



Just dack him in the locker room.



I'm gonna shove this ball down ya throat.

ground textures and the crowd has actually been given movement this year. The sidelines feature players and officials, but to a large degree they are static, although scenes between plays will show the coach trying to pump up his players and players will also celebrate after a big play or do a little happy dance after a touchdown.

AND IT'S GOOD!

The on-field movement is extremely fluid, with fantastic tackle animations and the articulation of the players limbs certainly a highlight. But given that this is a contact sport, it's not uncommon to see a head disappear into a torso, or one player run through another during the after play celebrations. Another limitation comes with the AI which is often too slow to adjust to play developments, particularly with blocking.

This year we have a new announcer in Al Michaels who replaces Pat Summerall. While the commentary does a great job, it does falter in places. For instance, playing as the Los Angeles Rams

The award for biggest nerd addition goes to the **create-a-play section** that is expertly designed

(before they moved to St. Louis) they were referred to as St. Louis. At other times, comments just don't fit to the game situation. You also have sideline commentary for injury updates and various other spiels, and the refs will talk at an inaudible level for penalties and challenges. Outside of the speech, the crunching tackle sounds are there in all their bone-jarring glory.

Madden 2003 gives you a franchise mode that enables you to go through the draft and pick your own players for your favourite team with an option to turn the salary cap off, or you can create your own player and draft them or just create an entire team from scratch. The ins and outs

of the season are numerous but the ability is there to control everything bar the colour of your player's underwear. For NFL geeks, the standout of intricate customizations and interactions will have you busy for weeks.

While there are definite graphical improvements, the biggest leap comes in the depth of play, which is a big appeal for NFL nuts. The mechanics of gameplay are based in a very similar mould to 2002 but with a greater ability to change coverage and call audibles and hot routes. The gameplay will hold significant differences to those who take the time to explore it, but for others it will play very similar to 2002. <<

!!! Don't forget you can get Madden on every platform. It's all good.



PLUS: More depth than if Johnny Mcdeep fell down a deep well in depthville.

MINUS: AI has its limitations.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

84 80 90

OVERALL

88

Something NFL fans can really sink their teeth into.



The biggest coke spill I've ever seen.



No, deliver the crack, don't smoke it!



Looks like they're doing a burnoff.

>>GCN

Smuggler's Run: WARZONES

CATEGORY: Action Driving >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: Take 2 >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

FRANK DRY can't wait to grow up and run drugs.

The smuggler's life is a glamorous one I'm sure, but while *Smuggler's Run* has always alluded to a nefarious lifestyle, something quite different emerged. Rockstar has perhaps improved in its ability to shock the public with the smash hit *Grand Theft Auto* and the upcoming iteration *Vice City*, but *Smuggler's Run* emerged as not a corruptor of morals but a slightly under-rated, fast paced driving game. Sorry, no free publicity for you Rockstar.

RUNNING GUNS

Warzones is the Gamecube port of *Smuggler's Run 2: Hostile Territory* for the PS2, so if you're the lucky owner of both systems, please stop reading now. Not to say that this is a bad port — far from it. This is one of the best ports to/from a Nintendo platform I've seen, a great omen for the Gamecube to disown its N64 family heritage. We're still counting the good games on that system on one hand.

For those completely in the dark about *Smuggler's Run*, here's the lowdown. You are a smuggler. You

must pick up contraband that has been carelessly left by suppliers and return it to your base before the army/rivals/addicts turn up. This takes place through four countryside locations around the world: Russia, Winter Russia, Eastern Europe and Vietnam. Harking back to the good old days, the campaign story is a flimsy, khaki green smock that fails to mask the truth: this game has nothing to do with drugs, it's Capture the Flag in cars.

Yes, the story is woeful. But that's not a problem, we're used to that. The problem is that the missions themselves are so repetitive and unimaginative. When helicopters drop the loot and you have to race against the coppers to collect it and then return it to some arbitrary point on the map, that feels very much like racing against a rival gang to collect loot and take it to an arbitrary spot. Even when there are creative variations (lead the army into a trap! Or chase that spy!), the true simplicity of the

game emerges: it's a motorised game of follow the arrow.

BUT DON'T YOU LIKE THIS GAME?

Well, yes I do actually. The reason being the driving model and physics in conjunction with the terrain make for highly exciting play. The game moves quick, it has an admirable draw distance and there are detailed textures in the foliage and buildings whizzing by. The feeling of motion, although action pseudo-realism, is compelling and the added extras of environmental effects in rain and snow make for a wonderfully vibrant world.

The charitable explanation is that the single player is simply a training ground for the multiplayer, which is the real star. With a swag of different cars and various countermeasures (read: weapons) to use, and four huge maps (I mean HUGE), there's certainly enough to warrant a purchase, even if your interest in racing is passing. And chances are, if you own a GCN, that's the case. <<<

!!! Multiplayer spans One-on-One to four-player team games.



PLUS: Fine physics, competent visuals, great speed, good action.

MINUS: Single player is repetitive and uninspired.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

80 70 85

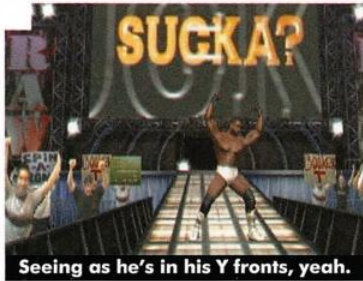
OVERALL

82

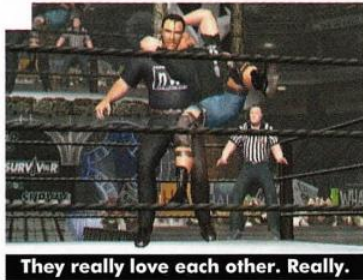
A strong title if only for its multiplayer possibilities.



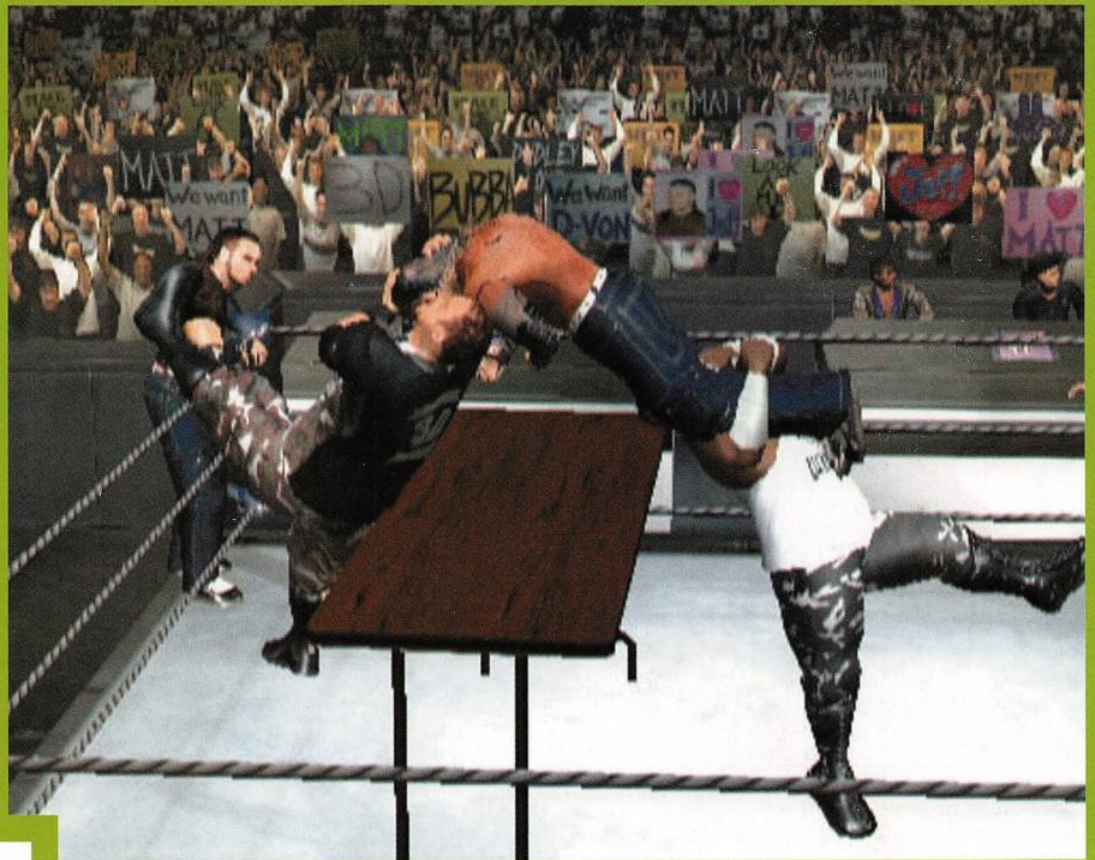
Just bite his nipples off!



Seeing as he's in his Y fronts, yeah.



They really love each other. Really.



GCN

WWE Wrestlemania X8

CATEGORY: Wrestling >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: THQ >> PRICE: \$99.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

STEPHEN FARRELLY wants the latest WWE game to have HLA.

Poor Hyper seems to have become a Mecca for wrestling over the last few months. While Eliot and co. can handle the game aspect of the sport, the real-life thing is lost on them. Which is why I've been called in to give some 'expert' advice on the GameCube's incarnation of Sports Entertainment (that and Frank Dry was too busy playing Smackdown!).

In the mix of what's available across all systems, you could probably say that the Smackdown series is the better game at the moment, and that's purely a case of gameplay depth. However, the GameCube WWE title, *Wrestlemania X8*, is a fun game that no GameCube owning wrestling fan should overlook.

IF YOU SMELL....

Yuke's have done a bang-up job with what time they had, and while I sadly miss any inclusions of commentary, story-lines and a more in-depth season mode, the absolute arcade feel of X8 can't be denied. The game is fast, fun and at times furious, and varying play modes

make it one of the most fun multiplayer titles on the GameCube map, despite only being for two players.

Wrestlemania is definitely a cut above *Raw* on Xbox, which, while having some surface polish, lacked any real value in the visual department compared to X8 and *Shut Your Mouth*. Yuke's character models are top-notch and their huge animation library goes a long way to making this product very authentic. It does feel like you're wrestling with your favourite superstars. However, this is actually a shortcoming. The title - in the grand scheme of things - is too far behind the current developments of Sports Entertainment, and I'm sure Frank Dry will agree that one of the biggest things fans want out of wrestling games is up-to-date wrestling rosters, story-lines, character models, intros and music. X8 falls short in most of these categories. No Brock Lesnar? Jeff Hardy with long hair? D-Von still a part of the Dudleys? It just doesn't

!!! Though it says WWE on the box, it says WWF in the game.

fit, even in a romantic sense where a player may want to experience a team-up of old, or a wrestler that has since left the biz.

HARDCORE AS NINTENDO

X8 offers the choice of a number of different game settings - Exhibition will allow you to choose your match of choice or you can attempt to go after the Undisputed title, the Intercontinental title, Tag titles and more. You can even create a fictitious belt to go after, but in the end, the game loses the appeal of reaching these goals as there're no

stories to go with them. No character building and as such, a shallow experience.

But gripes aside, the title is FUN to play, which is a good thing, and because of this, fans shouldn't simply turn the other cheek. Wrestling fans are as hardcore as Nintendo fans, and X8 goes hand in hand with this relationship. Investing in the title will reward fans for sure, but if you're a casual gaming fan you may want to hire first. <<<



PLUS: Fast-paced arcade play, first GCN wrestling title.

MINUS: Lacks depth, old roster, limited create-a-wrestler.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

82 79 78

OVERALL

78

Arcade fun that lacks the needed depth.

REVIEW

>>HYPER 67



Colin McRae Rally 3

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

ELIOT FISH tries to stay awake at the wheel.

It's been a long wait for Colin McRae Rally 3. We've downloaded the endless video clips, read all the previews, tasted the demo at E3 and ordered several pairs of brown undies especially for its release. Now that we've finally got our hands on the full-blooded game, calmed ourselves down and loaded it up, we're wondering whether Codemasters forgot to include a game here.

BARREN WASTELAND

Let's get one thing straight. Colin 3 has superb car handling, a gorgeous damage model and some very interesting Rally stages. However, this game is completely devoid of life. The main menu is a barren wasteland of game options. You can choose to race a Championship as

Colin in his Ford Focus, or you can select to race a single stage and set your best time (although stages are not available until you unlock them in the Championship). And that's it. In the face of a new era in Career modes (Pro Race Driver, V-Rally 3), Colin McRae Rally 3 is shamefully dry and lifeless.

If we remember correctly, Colin 1 and 2 had game options such as the rally school challenges, time trials (against your own 'ghost'), arcade rally against other cars, an interactive pitstop which let you allocate time to each repair needed and, well, lots of other bits that made the games engaging and fun. Colin McRae Rally 3 has removed all of these and replaced them with nothing. Nada. Even the replays at the end of a stage are featureless —

you can't change the camera angle, you can't stop, rewind or even save your replay. It's mind-boggling. We waited two years for this?

There are only three camera angles to choose from in-game: an external chase-cam, the driver's view and a bonnet cam. The Championship doesn't even let you choose a different car to the Ford Focus, even though you can race other cars in the Stage Select mode. Even if you unlock another Ford rally car after struggling through all three seasons, you still can't choose to use it in a new Championship. You can't even select to play on Hard or Very Hard difficulty the first time you play through. Actually, while we're on the subject of unlockables... as you race the Championship you unlock parts for your car — parts

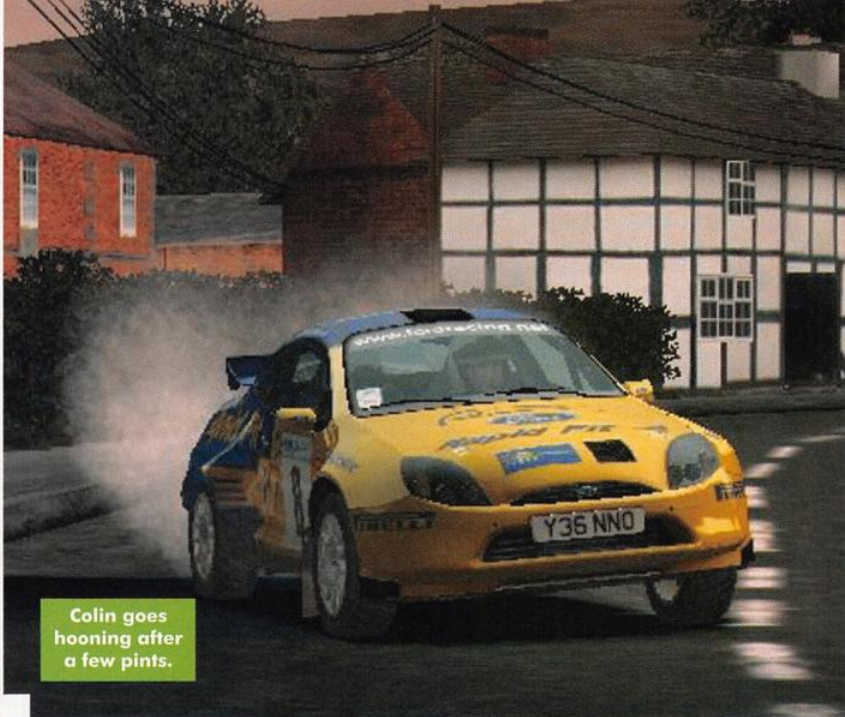
that are actually pretty necessary to race the next stage, such as special tyres for snow. It's almost like the game is saying "Congratulations, you unlocked a steering wheel". You wouldn't be able to race the stage without it. Other extras that you can unlock include a few videos (read: ads) for other Codemasters games — including a video of Colin McRae Rally 3 gameplay (don't ask) — as well as intro videos for



"Can we pull over for a pee, Colin?"



Colin goes hooning after a few pints.



GATHER ROUND FOR XBOX TREATS

❖ To rescue Colin 3 to some extent, this Xbox version comes with four-player split-screen play (which kind of adds the "arcade mode" fun that's missing from the game, although you don't race together on the track). This is exclusive to the Xbox version, the PS2 only allowing for 2 player. We should also mention that the Xbox version does look quite better than the PS2 version, with higher-res textures and some nice anti-aliasing. Other than the visual tweaks, and 4-player on the Xbox, the games play the same.



It's a summer's day in England...



"Long 4 past the cardboard trees."



"Which way Nicky? Nicky? Wake up!"

We feel sorry for Nicky, as we sent him to hospital quite a few times I'm sure.

each of the stages (that you can see simply by playing the stages for the very first time). Where are the bonus stages, and true rewards?

SENSE OF CONTROL

So, let's get back to the basics. The racing experience in Colin 3 is exceptionally good, as we now expect from this license. The car models are beautiful, and when they start to fall apart, they look even better. You can shred your tyres, pop your windows, lose parts of the chassis, doors fly open, the boot flaps about... it's great fun to watch. However, the damaging is probably not punishing enough — you'll almost never have to retire, and you'll never not be able to get over the finish line unless you purposely keep ramming

!!! V-Rally 3 has an awesome Career mode, if that's what you're looking for.

your car into rocks.

Hopefully, though, a damaged car isn't something you'll see too often. Mastering these stages (across eight countries) takes some serious

perseverance. The cars feel great to drive, and you can really feel the performance shift on different surfaces, — from tarmac to snow, gravel to dust, the rally

racing feels great, and the sense of control is even more refined if you stick with Manual.

This is paired with some truly exceptional sound. The Xbox delivers a 5.1 ear-fest, and you can hear the gravel crunch, the tyres skip and squeal, the engine backfiring, the snow get turned into slush and even parts of the car jiggling and shaking about when

you're playing from the driver's view. Nicky Grist's guidance is good, although he never breaks from pure instructional speech, unlike a few other rally games that have to co-driver occasionally yelp "Where are you going?" or "Look out!" Actually, we feel sorry for Nicky, as we sent him to hospital quite a few times I'm sure. Even after rolling the car down a mountain, he was saying "long six, tightens". I think we gave him brain damage.

Anyway... solid rally racing and brilliant atmosphere almost doesn't bring Colin 3 over the finish line this time. It feels like Codemasters are simply relying on the name, without putting in any effort to deliver variety or value for money. The lack of features, lack of options, lack of play modes and restrictive Championship play is utterly disappointing. If you want a brilliant sim to pull off the shelf every now and then, Colin 3 has the gameplay. But you'll badly want another more entertaining rally game on that same shelf. <<



PLUS: The best rally driving model on the market. Interesting stages.

MINUS: Barren of gameplay options. Some pop-up.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

89 93 89

OVERALL

83

A restrictive rally game with very little meat on its bones.

REVIEW

>> HYPER 69



Lord of the Rings: THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

CATEGORY: Action/Adventure >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Vivendi Universal >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: PG >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

JOHN DEWHURST asks Dude, Where's My Ring?

While EA have made a Golden Axe Returns to Middle Earth action title that will feature Liv Tyler attacking Sean Bean with her breasts, Vivendi managed to secure a license with Tolkien Enterprises for a game based on the books. Here we have the Xbox version, as distinct from the PC and PS2 version — also published by Vivendi, using the same source material but by a different developer entirely. Confused? You should be.

SADNESS AND GRANDEUR

The authenticity is the core selling point of the game. No Hollywood actors' heads or voices, no cinema logo on the front, just the blessing of Tolkien Enterprises. If you're like me, this conjures visions of some

pure and lost country untouched by Hollywood; of a game Tolkien himself would've loved. Imagine a text laden, highly visual feast that captures the quaint misunderstanding of the Hobbits in the wider world, that honoured characters like Tom Bombadil and Glorfindel, that caught the sadness and grandeur of it. Well, this game is not quite that.

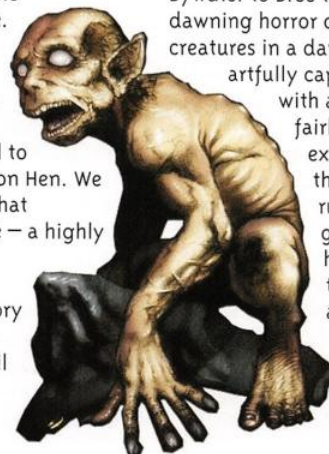
Firstly, Fellowship of the Ring is an action game with adventure elements. The storyline, the characters and their needs and aspirations have had to be neatly folded and trimmed to fit into the action/adventure mould. This is why you find Frodo running around amongst hordes of giant spiders looking for moon lilies to give to Goldberry, when he was well and

truly under the care of Bombadil, at the same point in the book. It means that crates in hobbit's houses can be smashed open to gain power ups and such, when Frodo had barely held a weapon when he set out from The Shire.

The Fellowship of the Ring game progresses in a series of missions from Hobbiton to Rivendell to Moria and finally Amon Hen. We see a replication of what occurred in the movie — a highly selective abridged version of the story. Only this time, the story spends time with Old Man Willow, Bombadil and Goldberry, and events at the Barrow

Downs, as well as with Elrond in Moria and so on.

A great deal of the opening of the game follows the journey of the hobbit quartet from Hobbiton to Bywater to Bree to Rivendell. The dawning horror of the four little creatures in a dangerous world is artfully captured, a battle with a Barrow Wight a fairly frightening experience. In fact, there's far too much running away from giant spiders and howling ghouls for this to be appropriate for very young kiddies. If there's one thing I hate, it's spiders...





"...and you have my... er, horn."



RUN PAST IT! IT'S NOT AN RPG

❖ When battle serves only to weaken your health and yields nothing more, is there any point in fighting? If Fellowship of the Ring is anything to go by, a stand up fight is for the stupid not the brave. In some sections of the game, health is so hard to come by and requisite items so heavily guarded that the best option is to not fight but simply run past approaching enemies. No wonder RPGs have replaced action/adventures for the combat hungry – in those games battle serves a purpose.



Strider waits for Frodo to wipe his ring.



Pull your finger out, Frodo!



"This ain't Kansas anymore, Frodo."

This is probably the single biggest problem with **Fellowship of the Ring**: Repetition.

ATMOSPHERE OF FEAR

The three playable characters are Frodo, Aragorn and Gandalf. Frodo is the star of the opening sections of the game. He's a thief character and he makes use of the One Ring to elude enemies. Too much use of the Ring causes Frodo to succumb to its power. The thing is, without the Ring you spend most of your time blocking attacks from wolves, spiders and bees. That is, unless you simply run right by them, something quite possible except when faced with the quicker four legged enemies.

The game really captures the atmosphere of fear and pursuance well. While the riders are pitifully easy to get away from most of the time, their presence in cutscenes and the artful use of music and

sound effects bring to life some chilling sections from The Lord of the Rings. The sound and music, together with some beautiful-looking levels, make the game a class act, even when the action becomes repetitive.

This is probably the single biggest problem with Fellowship of the Ring: repetition. It's an action game with a few basic mission objectives. Stifling in its linear path, the characters and their abilities become the focus of attention. But there's very little you can do with them, besides action, use lembas or a mushroom to heal them and repeat.

Gandalf and Aragorn provide some variety in play – Aragorn has a greater palate of attack

possibilities and Gandalf can use a host of spells with which to assail the enemy. But the style of play is basically the same for all: there's one path to travel, fight or run past the enemies. Combat plays out – with far too little variation – the same way every time.

Thankfully the controls are effortless. Logical mapping to the triggers and camera controls to the left analog stick (with camera correction on the inward press of the stick – lovely) make the game amazingly accessible. I worry about the use command on the black button for non S-Controller users (I worry for them regardless).

Taking the Tolkien epic and transforming it into a linear hack and slasher – however accomplished – will never satisfy the literate fans. Officialdom maybe isn't all it's cracked up to be. Nonetheless, this is a strong if basic action title with superb visuals, a compelling atmosphere and competent controls. It's definitely worth a look. <<<

!!! If you think you've seen Frodo Baggins around Sydney, it's just Jackson from Hyperactive.



PLUS: Lovely visuals and sound, great controls.

MINUS: Not a lot of depth to play, repetitive.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

85 88 70

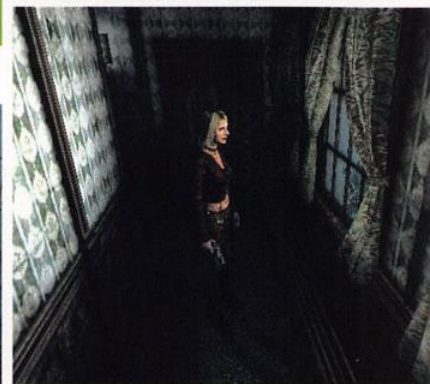
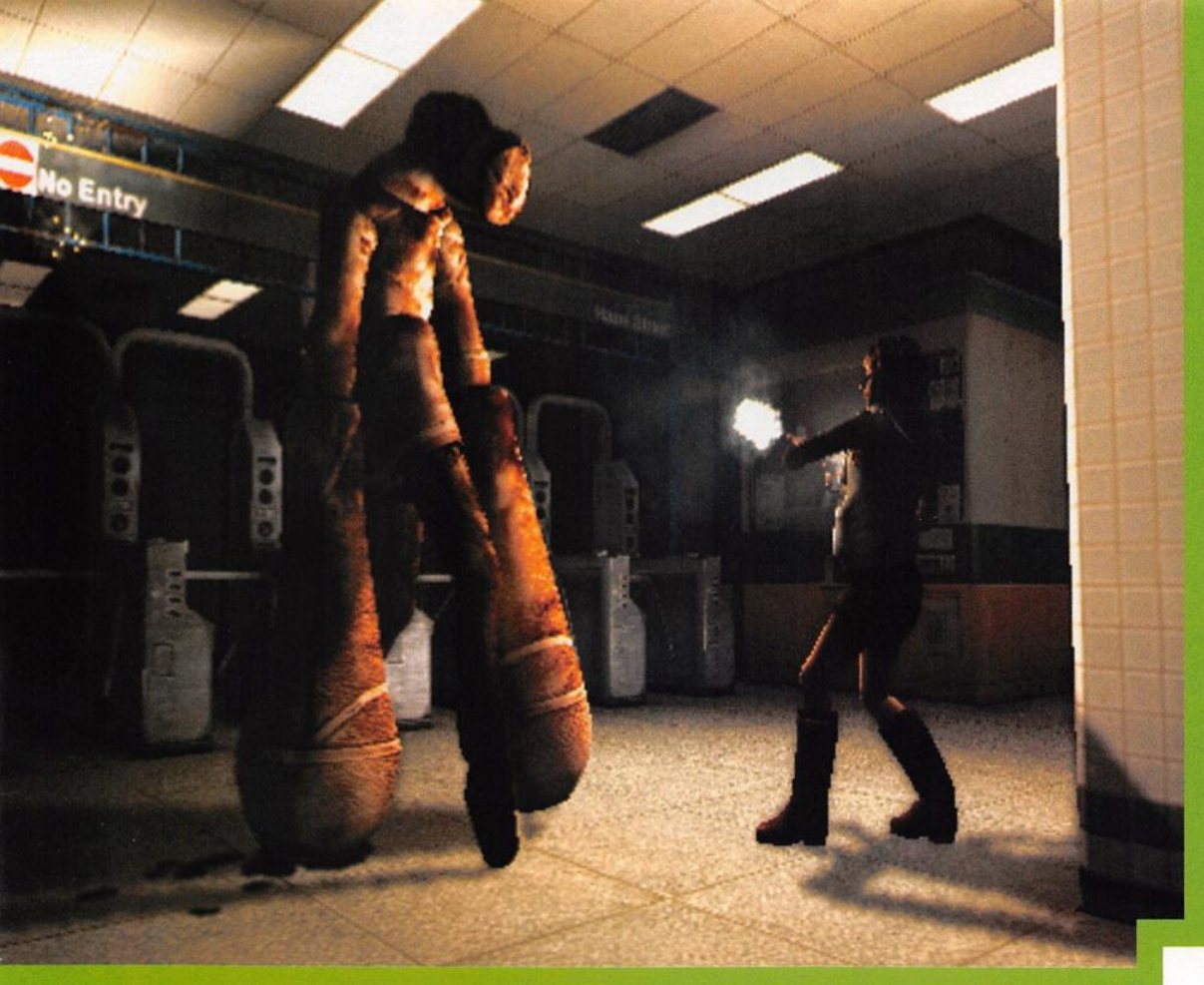
OVERALL

75

Authentic but aimed at entry level gamers.

REVIEW

>>> HYPER 71



>> XBOX

Silent Hill 2: INNER FEARS

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

LOUISE ALEXANDROU can't stay silent any longer...

Already released on the PS2, Silent Hill 2's port to the Xbox is essentially the same game, plus a hot graphics booster injection to keep you running. This port features the sub scenario, 'Born From a Wish' in which you play as Maria, the sultry yet utterly demented girl you found in the park in the original. The game is still smothered in ambience, almost literally, and coupled with the Xbox exclusive option to turn off the grainy effect from the beginning, this is the best version of Silent Hill 2 available.

'dance' club, and describes Silent Hill as being full of monsters and voices her wish to find a companion to quench her loneliness. For this reason, it is recommended that you play through as James first. In fact the game asks you very nicely to.

The variance between the two gameplay modes is slight; Maria will use different weapons throughout her search for a friendly face, the first of which is a pretty nasty meat cleaver. If you time it just right, Maria can swing the cleaver on the fly and hack through any threatening creatures. Unfortunately, in terms of puzzle solving, Maria's quest doesn't really boast anything fresh. While her path is different and will allow the exploration of other buildings not accessible otherwise, the same sort

of item pick-up-and-use method applies. That said, you can tweak her puzzle difficulty setting between four levels to challenge yourself (as in the main game), if you really need the ego boost.

The most immediate difference you will notice in this Xbox port is related to the visuals. The option to switch off the grainy effect with the Cinematic Noise Filter was not available in the PS2 version until

you'd finished the game, and turning it off certainly adds to the look of the environment. Textures and details that seemed incredible before are exquisite in the cleaned up mode. All the blood, brains and teeth mashed across the road become a whole lot clearer, and the odd shiny mannequin creatures are more unsettling than ever.

The abundant use of volumetric fog also warrants a mention; there's

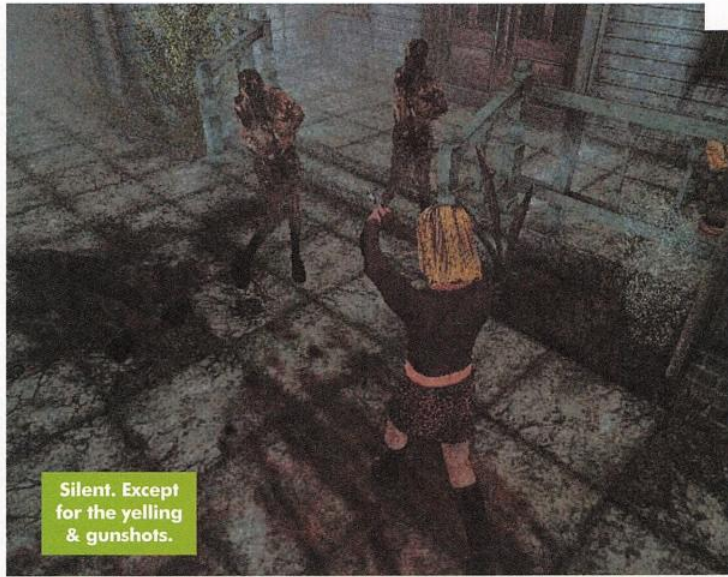


REVIEW

72 >> HYPER

SWING THE CLEAVER

Unlike James Sunderland, Maria's little sub adventure begins with literally no introduction to the story. She sits in a chair, in a room, in a



Silent. Except for the yelling & gunshots.



Maria's tupperware party was a flop.



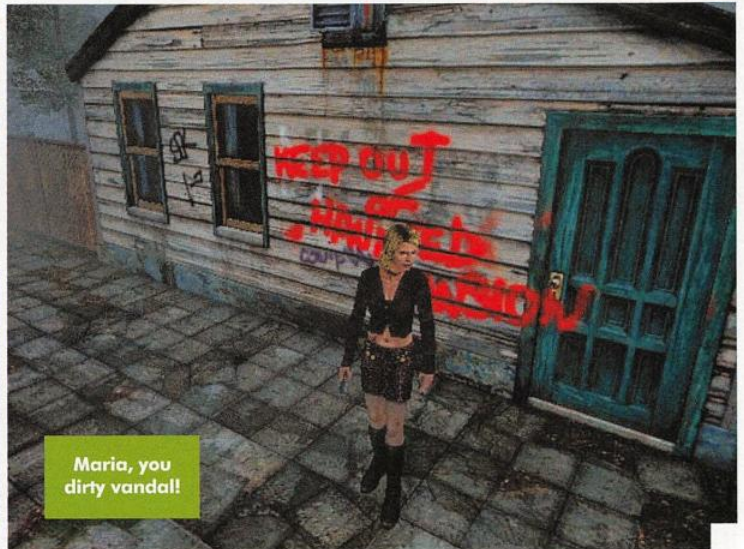
It's just you me and that bed, baby.



Hello darkness my old friend...



Beam me up Scotty! Shit, wrong game!



Maria, you dirty vandal!

Inner Fears will provide you with a spine-tingling, **psychologically horrifying** experience.

a whole lot of it all over the town. But it's over-use in the game in no way detracts from the experience. Instead, it makes all that running around just that much creepier, as it tends to hang in the air, obscuring your surroundings. Seemingly, all the running around is taking your character nowhere, despite the shrieks and wails that can be heard approaching and falling behind. Atmospheric lighting techniques are



also breathtaking. A simple shopping trolley or even your character's own reflection can cast a shadow that's nothing short of chilling.

MANNEQUIN FLESH

The in-game camera system can take quite a lot of getting used to. If it's your first time playing, the constant angle-switching camera will give you the irrits. But for all intents and purposes, it's a necessary part of the real-time environments, which are a welcome change, standing strong against the pre-rendered equivalent in Resident Evil.

The sounds you will experience in this Xbox version of the game are truly something, and cannot be

described as anything less than freaky-deaky. In all seriousness, the horrific sound effects of Maria's meat cleaver slashing through what we could imagine to be live-mannequin 'flesh' could not be any more creepy. The game also features a unique kind of soundtrack. In certain areas — usually when exploring a building — smooth, slow beats reminiscent of Portishead strike up. It's a creative and welcome touch, and a nice change from every other videogame on the market that seems to be stuffed with hard guitar rock.

While the Xbox port of Silent Hill 2 does not lay claim to a whole new bunch of monsters, weapons or even a different storyline, the extra features makes this the best choice if you're itching to get your hands dirty in this franchise. Silent Hill 2: Inner Fears will provide you with a spine-tingling, psychologically horrifying experience guaranteed to spook you out and make you smile at the same time. <<

!!! Silent Hill 3 is well into development and we should see it early to mid 2003.



PLUS: Play as Maria, smooth soundtrack, grainy effect option.

MINUS: If you already own the PS2 version, don't bother.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

88 87 85

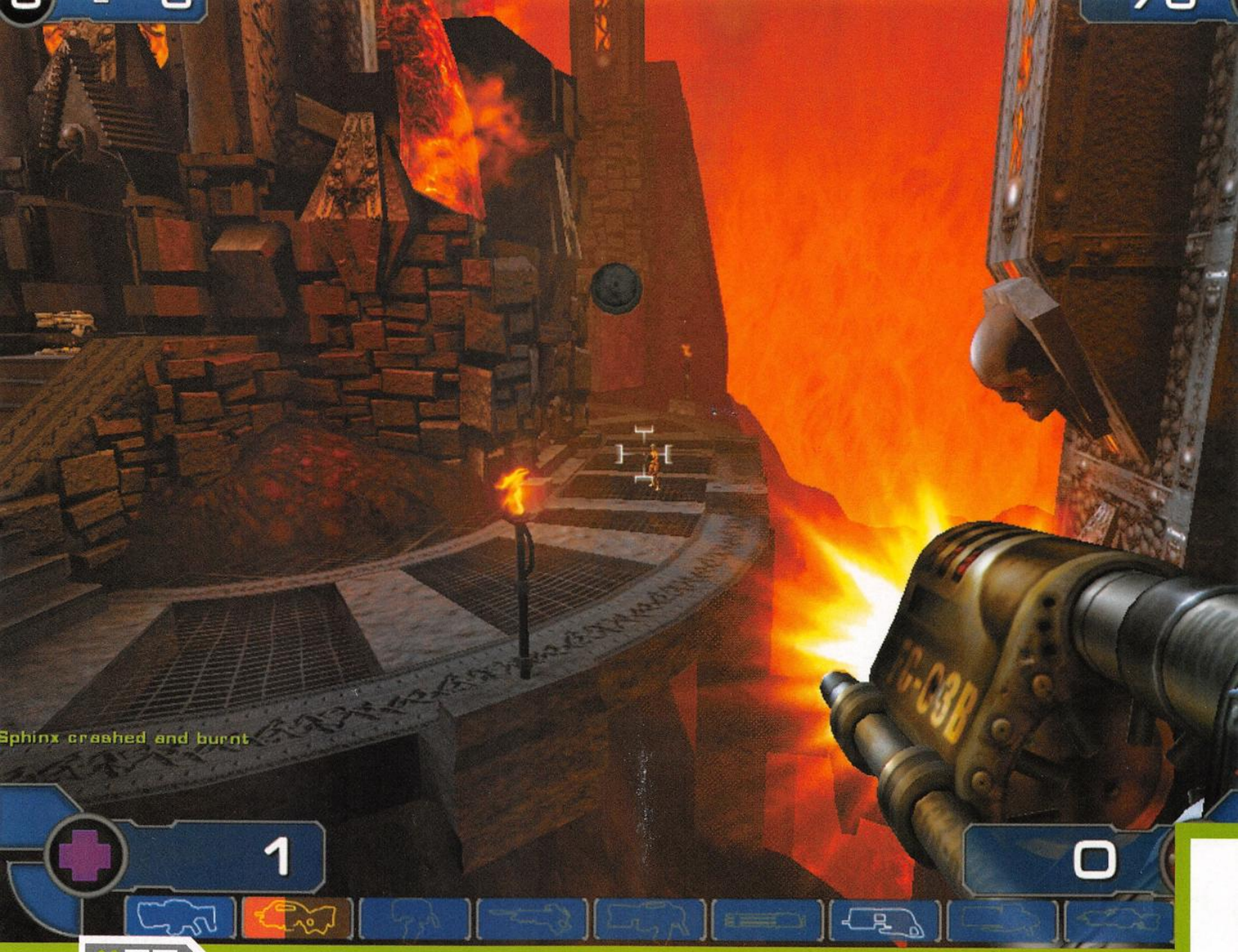
OVERALL

87

Quality survival horrifying.

REVIEW

>>>HYPER 73



Sphinx crashed and burnt



1



PC

Unreal Tournament 2003

CATEGORY: First-person shooter >> PLAYERS: 1-Multi >> PUBLISHER: Infogrames >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

CAM SHEA fights another epic duel with Lord Seafood...

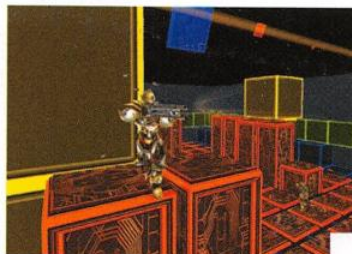
Three years ago, the First Person Shooter developed primarily for online play was a new concept. Quake 3 Arena and Unreal Tournament went head to head for the title of deathmatch king, accompanied by massive hype. These days, things have changed. UT 2003's competition doesn't come from another straight shooter, but instead from the increasingly popular trend towards more realistic and tactical online FPSs like Battlefield 1942. The choice this time around will simply be what style of game you would prefer to play. Fortunately, for those of us still revelling in the simple pleasure of fast-paced fragging, UT 2003 won't disappoint.

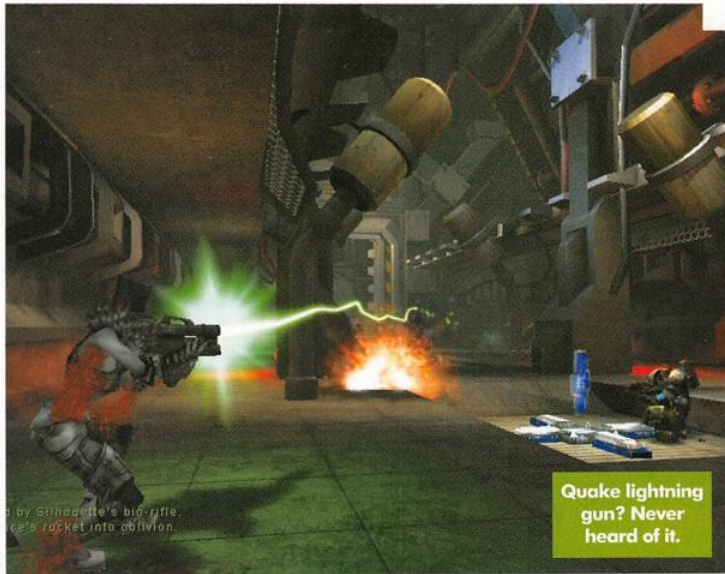
NOTE THE CONSPICUOUS ABSENCE OF ASSAULT MODE

The angle that the game takes is future death sports, with the players fighting for their survival against, and alongside, hardened criminals and uber-powerful aliens. Thus, the single player game is presented as a tournament ladder with qualifying rounds, team drafting and even player transfers. Each bot comes with his/her own stats in the areas of Accuracy, Aggression, Agility, and Team Tactics (which actually affect performance), and in the team modes, each can be assigned varying roles such as offence and support. Although this game is at its best against human opponents, it's still comforting to know that when Telstra broadband goes down again, UT 2003 sports cutting edge bot AI.

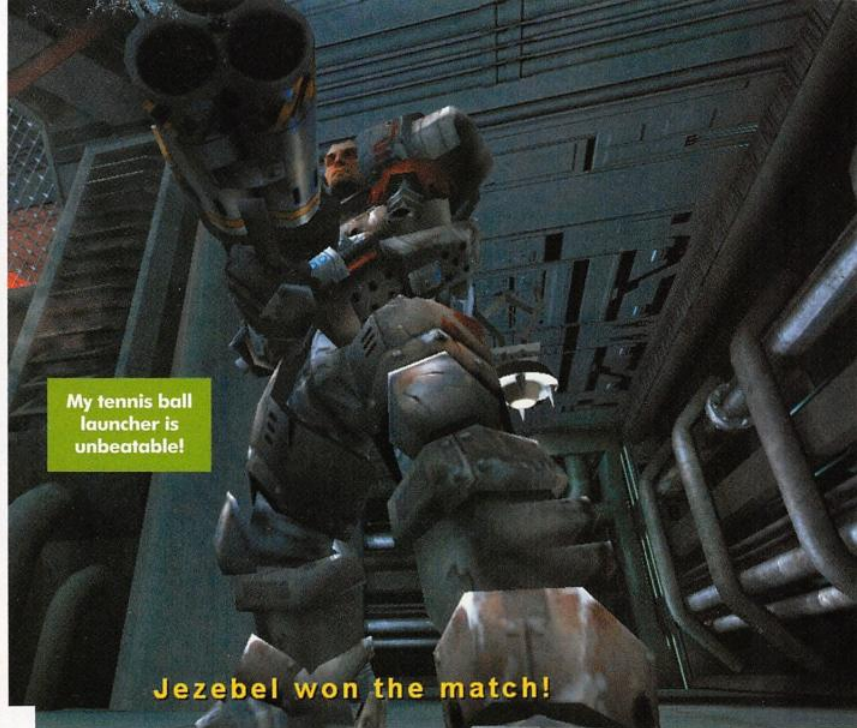
Playing against the bots on the higher difficulty levels is a challenge indeed. Most refreshingly, however, as the bot AI ramps up, it's the way they move around the map, evade attacks, utilise features like double jump, pick up health and use appropriate weaponry that improves — not just their accuracy. Thus, you rarely feel too cheated by the bots, which is a nice change from Nightmare Q3A bots.

UT 2003 doesn't really have that many gameplay modes, but taken as a whole they mesh together very nicely to form a cohesive whole. There are five main modes - standard Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, Capture the Flag, and the two newbies - Domination 2.0, and





Quake lightning gun? Never heard of it.



My tennis ball launcher is unbeatable!

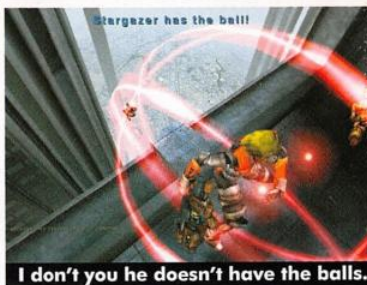
Jezebel won the match!

ENOUGH WITH THE ATTITUDE!

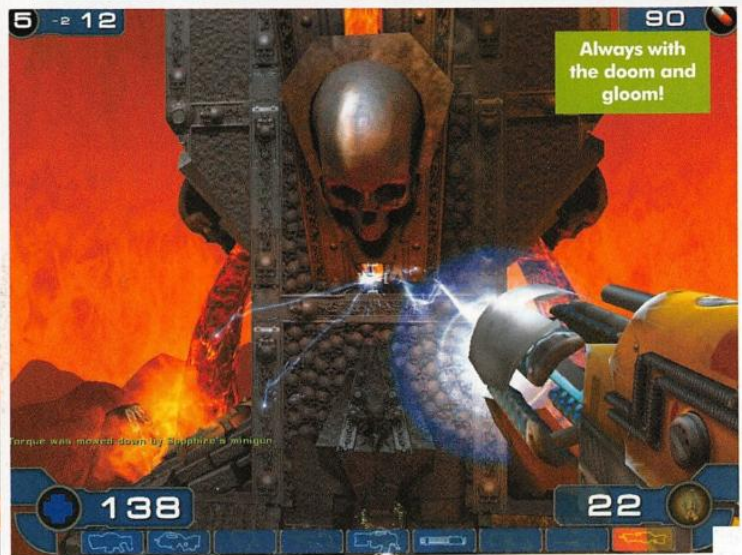
❖❖ UT 2003's audio package is very hit and miss. The music is bland, while the weapon effects are quite good. It's the voice acting, however, that really annoys. For a start, the bots are constantly mouthing off with comments like "Die You Whore". Surely there's enough of this kind of abuse when playing sore losers online? Fortunately it can be turned off. The announcer too is bloody awful – booming at you in his cheesy "action film voiceover" way, and is way too loud in the mix. Unfortunately, the announcer serves a useful purpose in game modes like Double Domination, informing you when you have both control points etc, so it's really irritating that you can't turn him down.



Insert your own sound effects here.



I don't you he doesn't have the balls.



Always with the doom and gloom!

Bombing Run. Domination 2.0 replaces Domination from the original, and your team now needs to hold two points (at opposite ends of the map) for a full ten seconds to score. It's less frantic but still a nice twist on the original and a lot of fun in multiplayer – although people seem to either love it or hate it. It's Bombing Run, however, that is the star new player in UT 2003. This takes the future sports theme that permeates the game and runs with it. Literally. It's basically deathmatch meets soccer. Teams battle for control of a sphere and attempt to fire it through the opponent's goal. The catch is that when you have the sphere, your weapon automatically switches to the Ball Gun, effectively making you helpless. However, the Ball Gun allows you to fire the sphere forward, as well as to lock on to team mates and pass to them. As you can imagine, team coordination is vital to



Believe us when we say that this game **looks so good on a top spec machine** that the cost of upgrading is almost worth it.

success. This mode is destined to become a classic, as the potential tactics are almost limitless, and combined with mutators like quad jump this mode is very special indeed. The modding potential has us frothing at the collective mouth already too!

EWOK FRAGFEST

There are around 50 maps altogether and they're of a high standard overall. There's a nice combination of indoor and outdoor, normal gravity and low gravity, and a great range of themes. There are some really outstanding maps, like Plunge, which is a new take on an old UT classic, featuring three towers and low gravity; and the surreal

twilight of Tokara Forest – a huge map that feels like an Ewok fragfest thanks to the paths up and around the gigantic ancient trees. Other maps have been heavily influenced by the likes of Quake and Doom. Inferno for

one is like a homage to id Software – a gritty gothic dungeon surrounded by the fires of hell, with skulls and other nasty imagery embedded throughout. Although not every map is a stone cold killer, many have unique and creative twists to enjoy, and as a package UT 2003 is very solid.

In gameplay terms, UT 2003 feels like a marriage of Q3A with the original UT. Not just in some of the level designs, but in the pacing too.

!!! UT 2003 keeps track of a huge number of player stats, such as number of head shots and most preferred weapon.

ning.
ket into oblivion.
y's rocket
ket into o

HOLY WEAPONS BOXOUT BATMAN!

❖ The weapon line-up in UT 2003 consists of the Redeemer, Ion Painter, Lightning Gun, Rocket Launcher, Flak Cannon, Minigun, Bio-Rifle, Link Gun, ASMD Shock Rifle, Assault Rifle and Shield Cannon. Your default weapon is the Assault Rifle – a very handy machine gun that doubles as a grenade launcher in secondary fire. UT veterans will be pleased to hear that the Flak Cannon, Rocket Launcher and ASMD function much as they did before. The Link Gun fires laser pulses in its primary fire, and funnily enough, a Quake 1 style lightning stream in secondary. Whereas the Lightning Gun replaces the sniper rifle and is very much the rail gun of the piece, complete with a very slick and powerful zoom mapped to its secondary function. Run out of ammo and you'll be dropped back to the Shield Gun, a shield/gauntlet melee weapon that can actually be useful in some situations, much like the Bio-Rifle. All up, it's a decent selection once you're settled into the rhythm of the game. Something a little more revolutionary might have been nice, but the tweaks to the weapons do make for a tighter game. We should also mention the Translocator. It's a nifty utility that allows you to throw a disc then teleport to it. This small addition opens up a whole new host of strategies and a brand new learning curve to climb. Whether people will like the extra strategies and difficulty that the Translocator brings to online play remains to be seen, but we think it's very cool.



You must need good deodorant to fight in those.



Here's some advice: move.



Missed me by *that* much!



It's a good hybrid, and given the absence of Quake 4 means the game should appeal to a wide cross section of the deathmatch community. Giving the game its own unique flavour, however, are a number of small but interesting tweaks. The double jump has been introduced for getting to hard to reach spots and also for increased hovering in the low gravity environments. You can also dash in four directions (W, S, A, D) by double tapping in that direction – although we ended up turning it off, after accidentally dashing sideways off Plunge one too many times. In addition to health, double damage, shield and other powerups scattered throughout

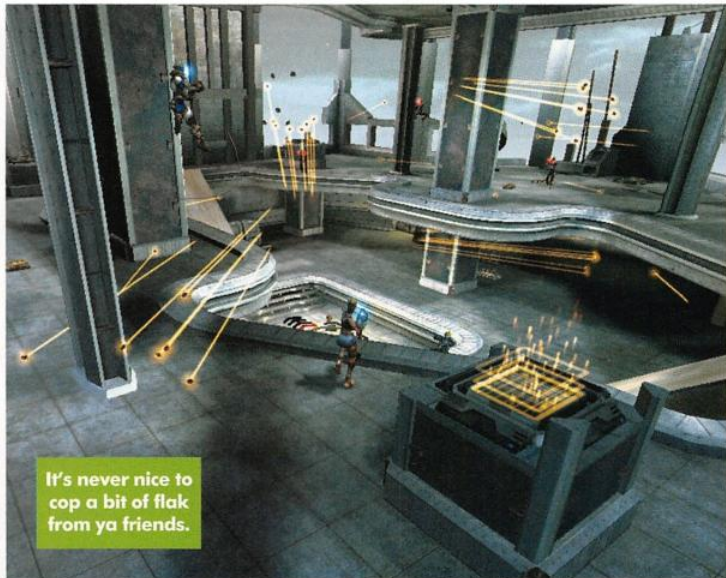


the maps, there's also an Adrenaline system. It can be collected in pill form or earned through dominating play, and once you have enough you're able to activate one of four special moves – Speed, Berserk, Invisibility and Booster by entering in a four tap code.

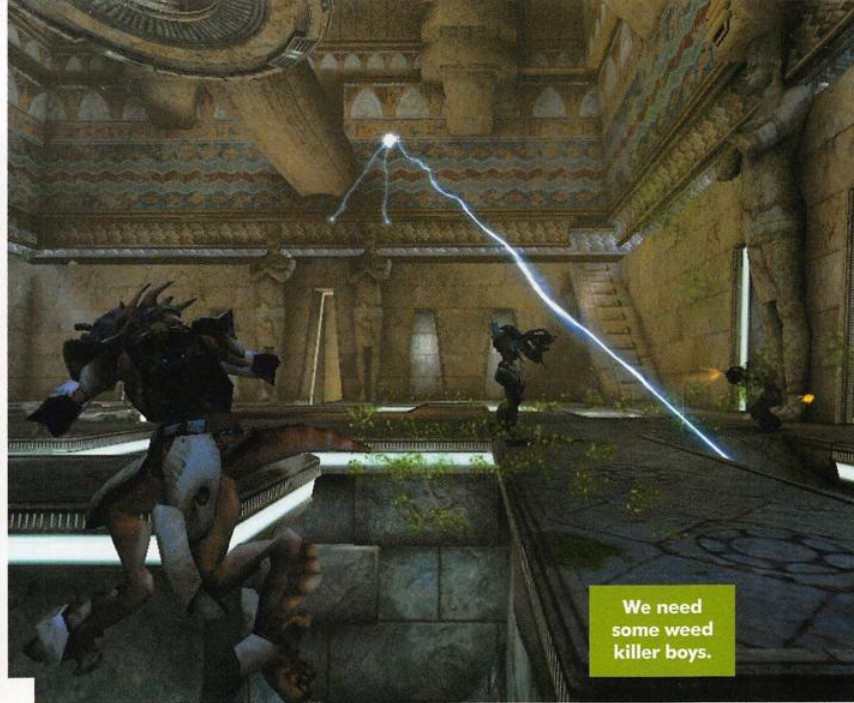
MUCH HYPED

UT 2003 runs on the much-hyped Unreal Warfare engine, and the results are very impressive. This is a gorgeous looking game with great lighting effects, crisp character models, stupidly high textures, great water effects (on the two or so levels that have water!) and plenty of incidental details like knee high grass and mist

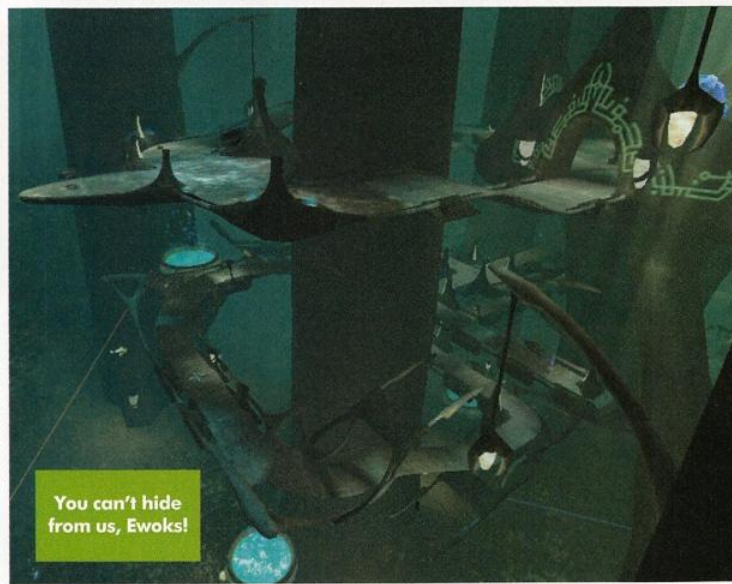
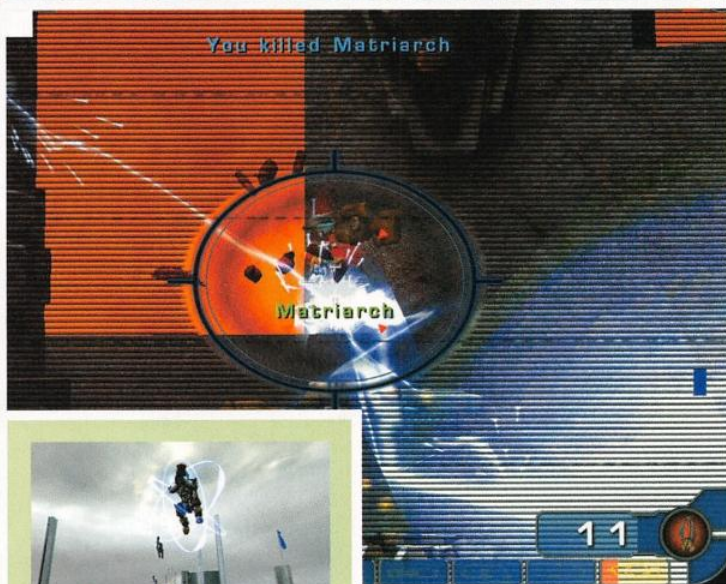
outdoors, and gritty industrial pipes, grates and ventilation fans indoors. The sheer level of geometry on display in some of the levels is breathtakingly complex, and combined with 32bit colour and sweet real-time lighting this is one impressive looking game. Player animations are also very cool utilising a rag doll skeletal system for deaths so players hit the ground and



It's never nice to cop a bit of flak from ya friends.



We need some weed killer boys.



You can't hide from us, Ewoks!



MUTATORS

❖ One of the most endearing aspects of UT 2003 are the mutators that are available to you. These are rule tweaks that you can enable when you're setting up a game, and basically make UT 2003 feel like it ships with the first round of mods already in the box. BigHead, for instance, is a variant where players' heads swell up depending on how well they're doing in the game. Others are more established, like Zoom InstaGib (instant kills with modified sniper ASMDs) and Vampire (hurt your opponents to heal yourself). There are 12 all up, and some of the maps only come into their own once you throw in a mutator or two. Antalus (the forestry map from the demo), for instance, becomes a completely different (and much more entertaining) experience with QuadJump and LowGrav.

Although not every map is a stone cold killer, many have **unique and creative twists** to enjoy, and as a package UT 2003 is very solid.

roll just as you would expect. Unsurprisingly, you'll need quite a beast of a box to run this game properly. We're talking GeForce 4 territory here people. And believe us when we say that this game looks so good on a top spec machine that the cost of upgrading is almost worth it. Even so, the game does scale down well, so those of you with older machines will still be able to get a reasonable frame rate, just say goodbye to frills and say hello to 800x600.

By naming the title 2003 and equipping it with a sports theme, it looks as if Epic and Digital Extremes may be planning to go the yearly update route. Although this title can survive on the gorgeous visuals,

number of maps and inclusion of Bombing Run, if indeed there is to be a yearly update, we'll be expecting more innovation from the next one.

!!! UT 2003 is officially a contender for "worst intro ever". Sports Entertainment? Give us a break.

For now, however, UT 2003 is one of those games that you just can't help but love. It may not be as cerebral as some of the other online shooters at the moment, but it's every bit as much fun. <<<



PLUS: Compelling action, some sweet maps.

MINUS: High specs required, lacking innovation, no Assault.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

93 79 90

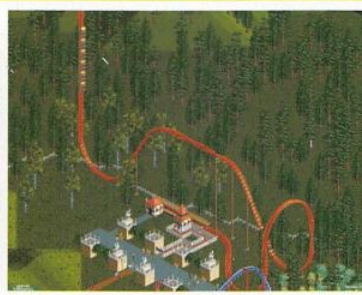
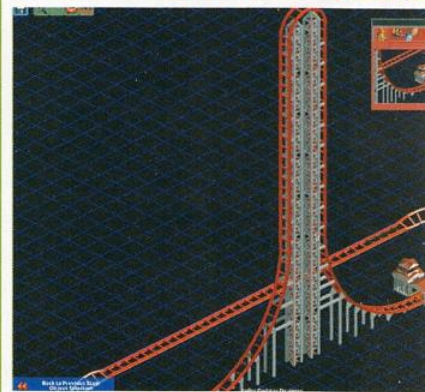
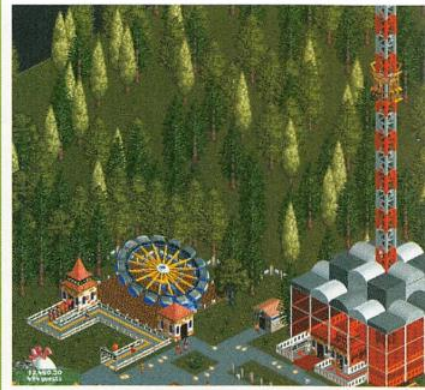
OVERALL

91

Looks like Unreal Tournament is back in a big way.

REVIEW

» HYPER 77



PC

RollerCoaster Tycoon 2

CATEGORY: Sim >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Infogrames >> PRICE: \$89.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >> REQUIRED: PII 300, 64MB RAM.

After years in RCT Anonymous, **CAM SHEA** is back on the wagon...

The original RollerCoaster Tycoon is three years old now and has certainly proved its mettle in the marketplace. We're talking somewhere in the vicinity of five million copies sold now, boosting this game well into the upper echelons of PC game sales. Refreshingly, however, RollerCoaster Tycoon is not just a commercial hit, but a great game too. And most amazing of all is that a single guy — Chris Sawyer, created the entire game. Who says the days of a lone designer creating a hit game are behind us? Well, we do actually, but Sawyer bucked the trend and made a hugely compelling title.

TWISTED THEME PARK

Now, finally, after two expansion packs, the sequel has arrived. At

first glance, RollerCoaster Tycoon 2 (RCT2) is entirely underwhelming. Where one might be expecting a sparkling new 3D engine, we find a tweaked version of the engine used in the original. We're still stuck in an isometric world with sprite-based everything, almost identical graphics and a disturbingly familiar interface. So what has changed? What makes this a true sequel?

RCT2 has upped the ante in just about every feature set. There's something like double the number of base rollercoaster types, placing this game firmly on the cutting edge of rollercoaster technology and design — the options are truly awesome. Rollercoaster freaks look no further! There are also a range of other new rides, new themes, a heap of new food, drink and souvenir

stands, and even great new building options like a first aid building where sick guests can get fixed up, and ATMs so that guests don't have to run out of money.

And let's not forget the inclusion of a Scenario Editor and a Rollercoaster Designer. The Scenario Editor essentially gives you the same tools that Chris Sawyer had to design your own custom park challenges. This is an excellent addition that ensures that you can truly tailor the game to your own twisted theme park related desires. The Rollercoaster Designer is also a godsend. It takes you outside the constraints of an actual game, placing you in a simple grid-based world where you can design and tweak existing rollercoasters to your heart's content. Then, when you're

done, import it back into the game and build it in your parks.

Rollercoaster Tycoon 2 has no campaign mode; just a whole heap of park-based challenges for you to tackle in any order you see fit. Fine by us. Another cool new feature is the inclusion of the official Six Flags license, so the game includes digital recreations of five Six Flags parks from around the world (including California's Magic Mountain).

DEEPER GAMEPLAY

The tweaks to the graphics engine have also allowed for much larger parks, from 128x128 tiles all the way up to 256x256, with upwards of 5000 people in them, which is a very welcome change. You can also run the game in much higher resolutions — up to 1280x1024 in fact.



Roll up, roll up!
Ride the
Barfmaster!



Underground/Inside View
Remove Base Land
Remove Vertical Faces
See-Through Rider
See-Through Scenery
Invisible Supports
Invisible People
Height Marks on Land
Height Marks on Ride Tracks
Height Marks on Paths



Oh look, it's Jurassic Barf.



Mummy, buy me a Barf Burger.



Time to clean
the toilets...
sigh.



The Magic Barf 2000, a gem.

WORKER BEES

❖ Many options remain unchanged from the original game. Your range of PR options are very much the same, from a full scale advertising campaign for the park or a particular ride, through to discount entry tickets and free food or drink – all at different costs per week. Keeping your park in the public eye is very important, so don't forget PR exercises! You can also research new rides, stalls and attractions, designating how much money per month will go into research. Also carried over from the original is the ability to hire staff – mechanics to inspect and fix rides, handymen to keep the park clean, entertainers to err... entertain the punters, and security to keep the hooligans quiet. One nice change, however, is the more user-friendly setup for designating areas for each worker to patrol – the area is now highlighted in blue and it's much easier for you to ensure blanket coverage.

Redesigning the game from the ground up... would have **been a massive undertaking.**

Unfortunately, all this does is distance you from the action. Even playing at 1024x768 means that the closest level of zoom isn't quite close enough. Bit of a catch 22, eh? The animations on the rollercoasters are undeniably slick (helped along, of course, by the realistic physics), but all in all RCT2 just looks several years out of date.

We can definitely respect Chris' decision to stick with the old engine, however. After all, redesigning the game from the ground up with a new engine would have been a massive undertaking that may or may not have worked, and fans want deeper gameplay options more than new graphics. It should also be said that this means that the game will run well on just about any hardware config.

!!! The interface can be a little clunky, so learn all the shortcut keys!

We would have loved to be able to ride the coasters though, and there are some major problems with the current presentation. The lack of a 3D engine means that you'll still be struggling with awkward and misleading perspectives, and will end up wasting a lot of time

trying to connect bits and pieces together. Building towering rollercoasters is also quite frustrating – you definitely have to work around the many limitations of the perspectives.

When all is said and done however, Rollercoaster Tycoon 2 is a horrifically addictive game – combining the vicarious thrills of outrageous rollercoasters with an excellent range of micro-management options. Just don't expect a true sequel. <<<



PLUS: So damn addictive!

MINUS: It's basically the same game all over again.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

72 80 91

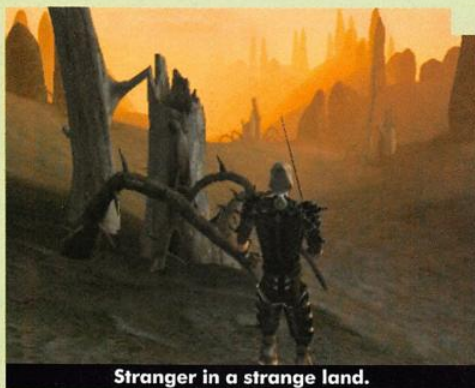
OVERALL

86

Same old, same old, but damn does it taste sweet!

REVIEW

» HYPER 79



Stranger in a strange land.



XBOX

Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind

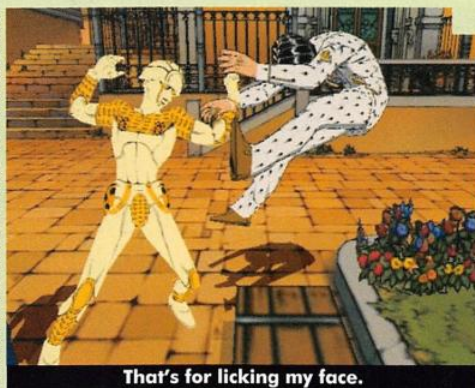
CATEGORY: RPG >> PLAYERS: 1 >>
 PUBLISHER: Bethesda Softworks >> PRICE: \$99.95 >>
 RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

For a game that has been touted as something one either loves or hates with a passion, I find myself surprisingly blasé about Morrowind. Several key defects, which are perhaps inherent in games of such a massive scale, cripple Bethesda's third Elder Scrolls title quite significantly and relegate it to the 'good but not great' category of ambitious video game milestones.

The biggest of these key defects is the fact that a very large proportion of one's time in Morrowind is spent talking to generic characters about generic topics that receive generic replies with no real purpose at all. This, as you can probably imagine, makes for a lot of repetitive 'click-through' conversations that do little but consume time and make the player inclined to ignore everything NPCs say. Furthermore, since the NPCs don't really 'mean' anything to you after a while, Morrowind loses a significant portion of its role-playing luster and ends up feeling more like a world exploration game than anything else.

Aside from that and a few niggly combat issues, though, everything's peachy. Given that it's a direct port of the PC original, it's no surprise that the Xbox version of Morrowind delivers some decidedly tasty audio/visual treats. The game's monsters, for example, are impressive in the way they reproduce age-old fantasy paradigms with an attractive sheen of artistic creativity. Ditto for the sound — it's all cliché, but it's cliché done well.

Ultimately, Morrowind is a fine game with a few flaws. Fans of the genre would definitely do well to check it out. — **Daniel Staines**



That's for licking my face.



PS2

Gio Gio's Bizarre Adventure

CATEGORY: Fighting/Action >> PLAYERS: 1 >>
 PUBLISHER: Capcom >> PRICE: \$79.95 >>
 RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

As the title may suggest, Gio Gio's Bizarre Adventure is rather odd. Based closely on part 5 of the long-running manga by Hirohiko Araki, Jo Jo's Bizarre Adventure, it follows the exploits of a bunch of incredibly androgynous lads as they travel Italy protecting a young lass named Trish. At least, we're pretty sure that's roughly the plot. Maybe. Let's just say Gio Gio's starts off with a guy using his tongue as a lie-detector before disappearing into another plane of existence by way of a zipper. And it only gets stranger from there.

Presented in a mix of 2D comic strip and cel-shaded 3D cut-scenes, Gio Gio's is basically a beat 'em up. Combatants in Jo Jo's universe employ psychic manifestations of themselves, called Stands, in order to smack each other senseless. Understanding how to effectively use each character's Stand and exploiting opponents' weaknesses forms a major part of fighting, so much so that each battle takes on a compelling puzzle element. Points are awarded for uncovering these secrets and revelations, unlocking extra story arcs and art galleries.

One thing that Gio Gio's Bizarre Adventure does extremely well is re-create the manga it's based on. The strangely sketchy graphics, the frequent references to Western pop music (the appearance of a Stand named White Album had us in stitches) and violence are all faithful to the strip. Unfortunately, very few will be able to appreciate this, and even if you can there's a nagging feeling that Gio Gio's Bizarre Adventure has way more style than substance. What style, though! — **Malcolm Campbell**



Don't let those bubbles bobble, or something.



PS2

Super Bust-A-Move 2

CATEGORY: Puzzle >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >>
 PUBLISHER: Taito >> PRICE: \$49.95 >>
 RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Bust-A-Move (not to be mistaken with any of those dancing rhythm games) will continue to be one of the cutest puzzle games you can get your hands on. All your favourite characters are back — Pukadon, Mog, Miss T and Catch, to name a few. There are also a couple of new oddities to add to the mix — Fungila and Katze. But the characters are largely irrelevant. Whomever you choose is still, after all, just turning a crank — a slave to the mysterious bubble machine! It's the devious coloured bubble puzzles that are the true star of this game.

Bust-A-Move 2 has an improved Story mode — with cel-shaded cutscenes and character speech no less — and more single player puzzle mode and versus mode madness to have you fixated well into the night. What looks all cute and cuddly, is in fact an evil concoction of diabolical tricks and traps. You can now use the shoulder buttons to make fine tunings to your pointers movements, which really helps to nail those seemingly out of reach cracks. You can also build your own crazy puzzles in the edit mode.

If you hadn't already got your dose of Bust-A-Move from the Dreamcast, the arcade or even the SNES, then the improved presentation and new crazy puzzles in this PS2 sequel is definitely worth a look-in. Oh, and did you know it's coming to the GameCube with a four-player option? — **Frank Dry**

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
85	85	80	80

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
86	83	79	83

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
70	72	84	80

ARCADE

>>TIM LEVY

Initial D Arcade Stage

SEGA

Debuting in 1996, 'Initial D' was originally a Manga created by Shigeno Shuichi which featured the main character, Fujiwara Takumi, who developed superior driving skills using his slightly worked Toyota 1986 AE86 Corolla to deliver tofu made by his dad around the 'AKINA' mountain region since the age of 13. Bulk tofu, with its weak unstable nature, has to be kept in water. This fact has led Takumi to develop some top-notch sideways drifting techniques that keep his lack-lustre old car flat around corners - thus keeping the water from spilling into the back of the car and keeping the precious unadulterated tofu safe from harm. In his spare time, Takumi likes to humbly embarrass various rival car racing gangs with fancy names such as the Akina Speed Stars, Night Kids, Red Suns and the Emperors by defeating them in thrilling illegal road races on some of Japans nicest pieces of bitumen.

RIVAL GANGS

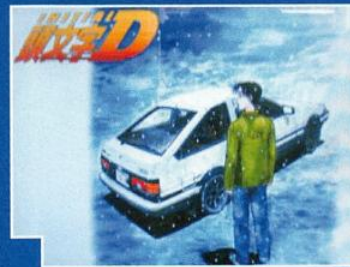
The story has spawned a 39 episode anime series (a blend of cell, 2D & 3D CG animation) and the manga is currently serialized in Japan in the weekly 'Young Magazine'. In addition, 24 volumes have been released so far in Tankoubons (graphic novel) form by Kodansha.

Popular Manga interest aside, Initial D is a very good street car racing game with a revolutionary new addition to the arcade genre which adds a new dimension to replay value. Initial D cards (see pic) can be purchased for \$2 from the game cabinet itself. After selecting your Toyota, Nissan, Honda,



Mitsubishi, Mazda or Subaru vehicle and finishing your first race, you are awarded 'tuning' points which enable you to upgrade/customise your vehicle with better wheels, spoilers etc... This customisation is critical if you are going to race some of the better rival gangs on the hardest courses. The upgrades and your track record are stored on the card and alas, you can only have one car per card - so if you are a modern Japanese car buff, you will more than likely want to 'own' and race several different cars.

The 4 roadways you can race on are typically well manicured Japanese country roads ranging from beautifully undulating and wide to hectically steep and narrow with lots of hairpin comers. All roads are challenging enough to want to master them all and can be tackled at day or night or up or down hill.



TUNE AND SCREECH

Two modes of play are available - The manga-esque 'Battle Mode' where you compete one on one against rival gangs of various ability and the solo 'Time Attack Mode' which enables you to enter your fastest time 'online'.

Although either automatic and manual gear boxes can be selected, it would have been nice to have a clutch or double H gate 6 speed manual gearbox. The steering itself is suitably realistic and heavy with small undulations of the road being able to be felt.

The graphics are not overcomplicated and work well but it is annoying to see 'pop up' in this day and age. The sensation of speed is well realised by the game, with all tracks being able to be seen clearly at all times, including nighttime. The exhaust tune and screech of tyres

also lends to an immersive arcade experience though we are still waiting for the day that head phone jack sockets become standard.

Initial D Arcade Stage has proved to be hugely popular and it is not uncommon to have to tell game hogs to "be kind and share the game or we'll pour thickshake down your back. See the irony game hog??? Thickshakes are made of hog fat... you fat hog!!!blughhh" Or if you are slightly more adult or if the game hogs are too big - just dib-a-dob them to the arcade assistants. But either way, if you are a fan of Japanese street race cars then this IS your game and it must be played.

OVERALL

8.5/10



COM-OP

>>HYPER 81

Yoshi's Island

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

Yoshi's Island came out on the SNES back in 1995, and to say we loved it would be a massive understatement. Yoshi's Island wasn't just fun — it redefined the genre, thanks to inventive and always varied gameplay and a fresh visual style. Now it's back, and in fine form on GBA.

The game stars the Yoshis in a quest to carry baby Mario back to his brother Luigi and to defeat the evil Magikooopa Kamek. Not that the plot matters of course, but having players control Yoshi with baby Mario on his back is certainly a neat twist. Taking a hit means that instead of dying, baby Mario floats off in a bubble and a timer begins to count down. If you get to him in time, play continues as per normal. If not, he's swept away and you have to start the level again.

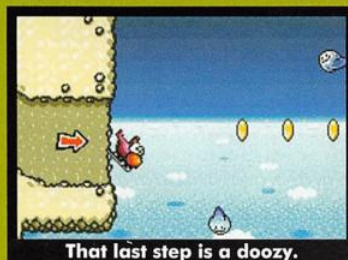
The most innovative idea, however, is the egg projectile system. Yoshi can consume enemies and either spit them out as an attack, or pop them out the other

end as eggs. Yoshi can have six eggs trailing behind around him at any one time, and can fire them in almost any direction thanks to a great aiming system. The ability to shoot eggs means that puzzles are no longer just about getting to things, but shooting them too. Hard to reach red coins can be shot down, question marks hang in the air and there are numerous puzzles based around banking eggs off walls.

Yoshi can also flutter jump and butt stomp, but the hijinks don't stop there. At certain spots, Yoshi can transform into a mole, a helicopter, a submarine, a car and a train, not to mention use watermelons as machine guns, flame throwers and ice rays, pick up Super Stars that allows you to play as Mario and run up walls and along ceilings, and even ride a dog named Poochy!

So yes, that's a baby riding a dinosaur riding a dog — those wacky Japanese!

Complementing the gameplay mechanics are some of the most engaging and varied 2D platform



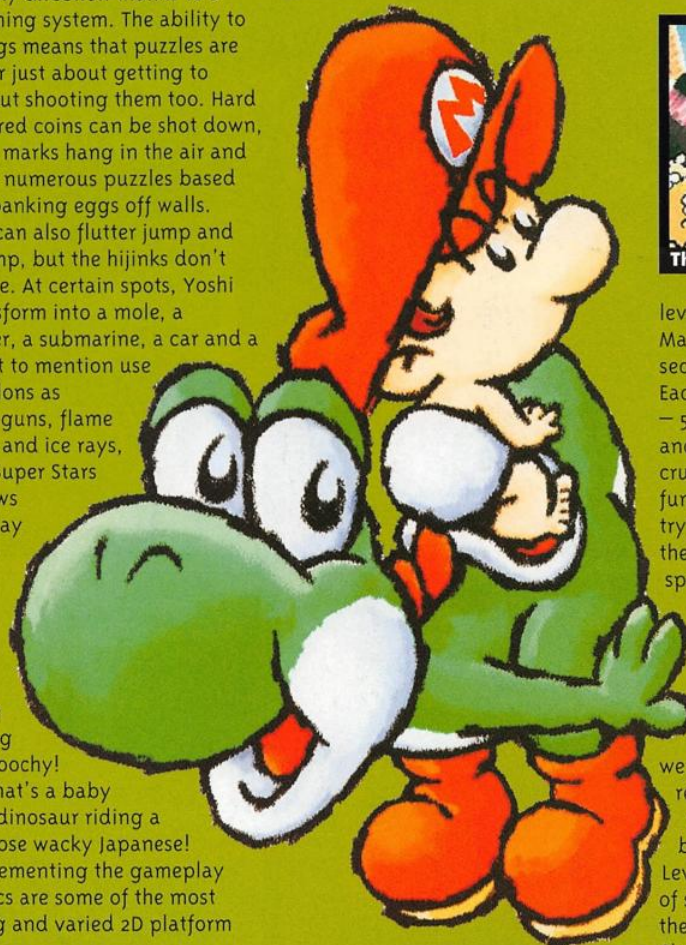
That last step is a doozy.



The Little Platformer of Horrors.



The world's biggest popcorn stash.



It's a Chicken McNugget farm.



levels ever designed. Just like Super Mario World, it feels like there are secrets to be discovered everywhere. Each level has a litany of collectibles — 5 flowers, 20 red coins, gold coins and stars. It's easy enough simply cruising through the levels, but the fun (and difficulty) comes from trying to collect everything and end the level with 30 stars. And as a special reward, getting 100% on each level in a world unlocks a new GBA-only level.

The visuals were absolutely awesome back in the day and are just as impressive now — Nintendo's graphic designers went wild. The whole game is rendered like a kids crayon drawing, and is dripping with both style and impressive variety. Levels frequently have several layers of scenery and interactions between them. For instance, on one level Chomps jump from the distant background to the path Yoshi is on, gorging huge holes in it.

Yoshi's Island wasn't only an aesthetic masterpiece but a technical one too. It utilised the FX2 chip, and the designers incorporated a host of cool 3D effects, such as walls that fell forward and rotating 3D barrels. The game also impressed with huge bosses that morphed and stretched, and some nifty transparencies. All these visual elements have been brought to GBA flawlessly, with the exception of the tripping effect in "Touch Fuzzy Get Dizzy" which is rather disappointing.

Although Yoshi isn't all that long (48 base levels), it's packed full of so many cool gameplay elements, collectibles and mini games that it's hard to fault. Plus, the soundtrack is a killer. Best 2D platformer ever? We think so. — Cam Shea

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
90	90	93	93

»»GBA

Turok Evolution

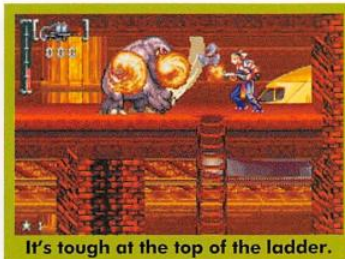
CATEGORY: Side Scrolling Shooter >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Acclaim >>
PRICE: \$79.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

Turok Evolution stunk. At least for this reviewer, it was a huge disappointment, filled with woeful design decisions, terrible AI, bad level design and average graphics. Fortunately, Turok Evolution on GBA has nothing to do with its console cousins. This is a new game developed from the ground up by RFX Interactive, and it's not half bad dagnabbit. Think Contra meets

Metal Slug and you have a good idea what to expect from Turok on GBA. Let's get one thing straight though, not only does Turok Evolution on GBA have nothing to do with the other versions, it has little to do with the series as a whole. Change the main character and you've got a completely different game, with a very tenuous link to dinosaurs. The meat of the game is



Best. Shotgun. Ever.



It's tough at the top of the ladder.



running from left to right shooting anything that moves. You choose from two characters Tal'set and Djunn, but functionally they're identical. There is a huge lineup of over the top weaponry to pick up throughout the game, including missile launchers, flamethrowers, machine guns, and so on, with the coolest being the shotgun. This is the biggest and most ridiculously bone shredding shotgun blast ever.

In addition to side scrolling action there are also some Cabal style levels where you're running back and forth at the bottom of the screen shooting at enemies and avoiding their fire. The game as a whole looks quite reasonable — the animations are smooth, although still way below the quality of the Metal Slug series, and there's a good variety of enemies. Unfortunately, the gameplay is pretty messy — enemies that spawn around you and leaps of faith in particular get very frustrating. - Cam Shea



Wait, Turok, that's not Yoshi...



I think that's a clue.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
80	79	70	77

»»GBA

Duke Nukem Advance

CATEGORY: FPS >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: Take 2 >>
PRICE: \$79.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

We've already reviewed a couple of titles from Australia's Torus games in our GBA section (Jackie Chan and Space Invaders), but Duke Nukem Advance would have to be their biggest and best product to date — this is yet another step forward in coding the GBA hardware.

Duke Nukem Advance is very much in the mold of Duke Nukem 3D, but Torus have created the "story" and levels from scratch. That said, fans of the classic PC title will be at home here, with enemies like pig cops and many familiar weapons (hello Shrink Ray!) returning. There are 19 missions all up, taking Duke



Save those beer kegs, Duke!



Er, nuke 'em, Duke.



Is this the Alien Workshop, then?



from Area 51 to Egypt and several other unlikely locations (such as Australia!), with objectives that range from rescuing babes taken captive by the aliens through to timed escape missions. It all boils down to familiar run and gun gameplay, but this is fine by Duke fans and is executed very solidly.

The game engine is hugely impressive too — fast and loaded with frills like textured floors and ceilings. Torus have even taken the time to try and give levels atmosphere through pseudo lighting and plenty of destructible objects, not to mention including the ability to jump, and to look up and down! The control system has been well implemented and generally the action is fast and fun. However, there are a few niggles such as the way the pig cops duck

down to shoot which looks, from any distance, like you just killed them. Unfortunately, there's not much in the way of Duke speech, due to cartridge limitations, and the more adult humour (or lack thereof) from the PC classic have been dropped — no more strippers, taking a leak or swearing. Even so, come get some! - Cam Shea

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
81	80	84	85

HARDHELLO

»»HYPER 83

COLECOVISION



1932: Big famine in the Ukraine. Foiled bank robbery in Minonk, Illinois.

And Maurice Greenburg, a Russian immigrant establishes Coleco, the Connecticut Leather Company to distribute leather products to shoemakers. By the early '50s, her son Leonard had created a leather-cutting machine and the company began selling leather craft kits. Towards the end of the decade, they had built a plastic-forming machine, and the company entered the plastic-wading pool (I have no idea what that is). Somehow, Coleco wound up in the toy business, and went from there to releasing a string of home videogame system models, the Telstar units, before coming up with a console that dedicated more memory to graphics than any other machine on the market, and one that we spent many happy hours playing as a child.

PUTTING THE SOLE IN... OKAY, OKAY, NO GOOFY PUN THEN

Boasting "arcade quality" with its "third wave" console system, the ColecoVision was announced in June 1982; a cartridge-based system not only toting superior 8 bit graphics with a resolution of 256x192, 32 sprite capability and 3 tone channel sound, but also support from a growing Japanese game company: Nintendo. It broke into the market with its first million sold in record time and shook the thrones of the Atari 2600 or Atari VCS and Mattel's Intellivision (first and second wave). Six months earlier, Coleco had signed a contract with Nintendo, licensing their very hot arcade hit 'Donkey Kong' to be the ColecoVision pack-in, and in 1983 it topped sales charts. Much of its success was attributed to the arcade classic.

What really made the ColecoVision stand out was its introduction of two radically new

concepts to the home console industry — an expandable hardware system, and the ability to play games from other systems. Refreshed coin-op games made up most of ColecoVision's product line, the high-end graphics of the console allowing for the production of near-arcade quality games. It soon had more cartridges than any system save the Atari 2600, and with the 2600 converter, it still has more games than any other system of the era. This expansion kit led to a few nasty lawsuits between Atari and Coleco, but in the end, the courts surprisingly ruled in Coleco's favor, which led to Coleco putting an exact clone of the Atari 2600 out as the Gemini game system.

Coleco was also infamous for not releasing advertised cartridges, including many of those shown in the catalog that came with the console, but did have a host of extra hardware and controllers released to



BRING 'EM OUT IN THEIR WHEELCHAIRS, BOYS...

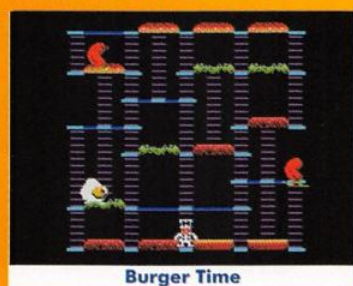
» Donkey Kong gave ColecoVision a foot in the door and the occasional headache with a legal mess with Universal over King Kong rights, and was a perfect port of the arcade original, except that Kong was on the wrong side of the first board. Mario hadn't even been named back then.

Spy Hunter was another favourite on the system. The task was to drive a car that could take out enemy cars with gunfire, and change into a boat when it hit the water.

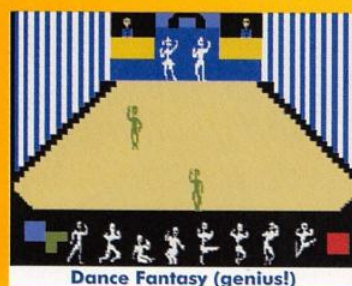
Sega licensed everyone's much-loved Frogger to the ColecoVision, and it was reputedly yet another perfect port. Who can forget the art of crossing the road without getting squished by a passing motorist.



Bongo



Burger Time



Dance Fantasy (genius!)

DOWN



HIGH-END STATS ;)
Resolution: 256x192
Bits: 8
CPU: Z-80A
RAM: 8K
Speed: 3.58 MHz
Video Display Processor:
 Texas Instruments TMS9928A
Video RAM: 16K (8x4116),
 Sprites: 32, Colors: 16
Sound: Texas Instruments
 SN76489AN; 3 tone channels,
 1 noise
Cartridge ROM:
 8K/16K/24K/32K

compliment it such as the Atari adapter, turbo modules, steering wheels, gas pedals and gear shifts. Contrary to popular belief cited from Electronics Magazine at the time, an irritating 12 second delay before the game select screen showed up was caused by an intentional loop in the system BIOS for the title screen (advertisement and a trademark/copyright notice bypassed by later games), not by an imagined Pascal emulator running on a quirky assembly language.

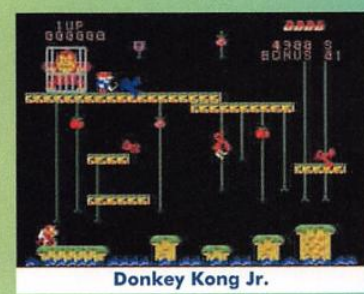
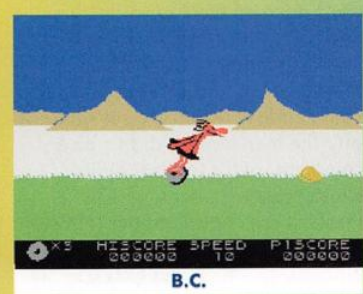
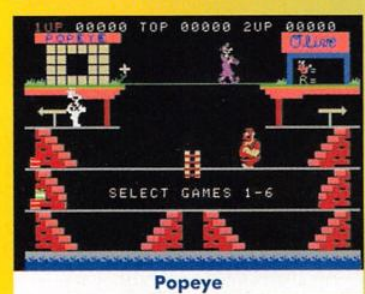
ANOTHER ONE BITES THE CABBAGE PATCH

Its success shocked the industry, and Coleco's stock rose from 6.875 to 36.75 in one year. Sales had nearly tripled in 1981-82 up to \$510 million US, and its net income shot up 420% to \$40 million US. In June, 1983, Coleco unveiled its ADAM computer with everyone's favorite gorilla displayed on it, and Atari,

owner of the computer rights to DK, threatened to sue Nintendo for breach of contract. Nintendo threatened to sue Coleco, who only had the DK rights for video gaming, but Coleco just shrugged it off explaining that although ADAM was a computer, it was really a souped-up Colecovision.

Sadly, the 'Great Crash' had the ColecoVision walk the same path as many others without a solid base in the videogame 'shake-out' of 1984. A whole sixty percent of all Coleco ADAMs were returned as defective, and Coleco suffered. With too many products on the shelves from numerous publishers, many third-party companies went out of business, and their heavily discounted inventory led to companies still in business losing money over unsold stock. The ColecoVision was discontinued as of that year, and even the Cabbage Patch Dolls couldn't keep them going.

In 1985, Telegames picked up where Coleco left off, putting out new titles, and in '88, they released the "Personal Arcade" ColecoVision clone several years after Coleco stopped production of the ColecoVision. It was compatible with 95% of ColecoVision cartridges, but used different joystick wiring, so any cartridge made specifically for the other Coleco controllers was rendered unplayable. That same year, unable to recover from the disastrous Adam, Coleco filed for bankruptcy with most of its catalogue going to Milton Bradley and Parker Brothers and CBS Electronics buying out the Coleco rights. They had sold more than 6 million ColecoVisions in just two years, even with the market crash, and many believe that if it wasn't for that, Coleco would have gone through the '80s as the system of choice. Oh, and in April 1994, Telegames lost all of their Personal Arcade stock to a tornado. Just the way the chips fall. <<<



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REVERSE ENGINEERING >>> HYPER 85

DVD

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 are out of 10.

BY CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON



Apocalypse Now Redux

UNIVERSAL, R18+

Don't let the Latin fool you: "Redux" does not mean "Reduced", it means "Redone".

If you aren't familiar with the original *Apocalypse Now*, let's be brief: Francis Ford Coppola's epic adaptation of Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness*, transferring it from Africa in the 1880s to the Vietnam War, won the Palmes D'Or at Cannes in 1979 and instantly established itself among the great American anti-war movies, next to Kubrick's *Paths of Glory* and *Dr. Strangelove*. Martin Sheen played Willard, sent upriver during the height of the war to assassinate Marlon Brando's Colonel Kurtz, an American General whose "unsound methods" — his complete insanity — require his "termination, with extreme prejudice."

At its heart, the film is an adventure. Willard travels upriver with a PT Boatful of young, unidealistic enlisted men on a highly secret mission, surfing,

whoring, and killing along the way. Ultimately, he confronts Kurtz, a charismatic and powerful leader gone mad, and according to his brief, assassinates him. In the meantime, Willard himself uncovers the madness of war, and of mankind itself.

The \$35 million this film originally cost would equal about \$200 million today, and it shows. Rarely do you see such an epic anymore. The DVD of *Redux* enlarges the scope. Coppola, twenty years after his film debuted, decided to reinstate an extra 49 minutes of previously unseen footage, along with an entirely new sound mix, to create *Apocalypse Now Redux*.

Coppola wants you to take this new version as the "perfect" one. It makes a great film more complex while not necessarily making it better. At well over three hours, *Redux* is for purists: for example, the deleted "French Plantation Scene" is half an hour of fascinating discussion on the origins of the

Franco-Viet war, but doesn't move the action forward an inch. In contrast, extra footage of Brando as Kurtz does wonders, making his character more sane, or at least more ideologically sound, and increases the strength of the film's anti-war bite.

The transfer is glorious, in 2:1 ratio, and you should turn up the incredible sound as loud as you can take it. The extras are alright but should have been better: an interview doco with the members of the PT Boat, including the then-fifteen year-old Lawrence Fishburne as "Clean"; a cool but way-too-short doco on the *Redux* version; and, best, the original, apocalyptic "Kurtz Compound Destruction" footage, with and without commentary by Coppola. It's a HUGE pity the man himself didn't do a commentary for the entire film, which remains, unequivocally, a masterpiece. — Christopher Johnson

MOVIE: 9 **EXTRAS:** 6



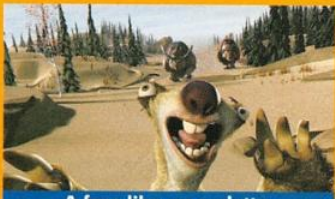
Surf's up, boys!



"Cut! Cut! There's blood on the lens."



From this to King Koopa in Mario Bros.



A face like an omelette.



Sometimes being nosy helps.

Ice Age

FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT, G

W here are the jokes for anyone over six? Of all the CGI feature films of the past half-dozen years, *Ice Age* is most strongly aimed at kiddies and kiddies alone.

The predictable and excruciatingly sentimental tale of a huge, noble Woolly Mammoth accompanying a short, ugly, annoying Sloth (a pairing that's a cliché of the genre and feels like a *Shrek* rip-off) has too few action



Eliot, Cam and Malcolm. But who is who...?

scenes and far too much unfunny, ponderous dialogue. What clever jokes there are come almost entirely in the first five minutes, cruelly raising false expectations.

Rather than attempting to resemble traditional animation, *Ice Age* looks — I'm sure deliberately — just like a (very high quality) game. So much so, you'll be reaching for your controller. This gives the characters less heart and soul than those of *Shrek* or *Toy Story*. The

only interesting character is a Sabre-Toothed Tiger (voiced by Denis Leary) who (ulterior motives obvious!) accompanies our heroes. Leary's voice suits the character, much more so than Ray Romano's as the Mammoth — quite monumental miscasting! John Leguizamo goes overboard as the lisping, parasitic Sloth — no match at all for Eddie Murphy's ass in *Shrek*, but essentially exactly the same character.

The (few) action scenes are good fun, as is the scene when we watch the Dodo birds cause their own extinction. Masses of features include director commentary, tonnes of making-of chapters, deleted scenes and a snatch of historical information. The littlies will love it, but it's a true shame they didn't include some more jokes for anyone else. — Christopher Johnson

MOVIE: 5 EXTRAS: 8

Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory

WARNER BROTHERS FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT, G

W illy Wonka and the *Chocolate Factory* (1971) is insane. Try the plot: Young dirt-poor Charlie wins a 'magic ticket' and infiltrates a bizarre chocolate factory run by a demented bug-eyed freak and his crew of moralising orange dwarfs who methodically kill four greedy children.

The new "Warner Bros. Family Entertainment" DVD release is also insane: a superb extras package bracketing a substandard rendering of this amazing film in 4:3 format. The insult to the film is incredible. Like *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* this film has been boxed in "for the sake of the children"; do they think the children are so stupid?

Willy Wonka is one of the most freaked out, trippy big budget pictures ever made. Kids get drowned, pecked to death and shrunk to nothingness as Gene Wilder's brilliant and nutsoid Willy Wonka educates Charlie on how to

rise above television, gum, and greediness to become a millionaire, amidst mind-blowing sets, whacked-out songs and, yes, orange dwarfs.

The film itself is unbelievably entertaining and a true, brilliant oddity of the early seventies. The DVD extras are great, including a contemporary doco including footage of legendary Roald Dahl, the author, and a later doco which reviews the entire production process, including interviews with all the main child actors and an examination of their current lifestyles (they all became accountants!) They all get together — with Charlie! — for a commentary too. Gene Wilder pops up in both documentaries and, like the legend he is, lambasts the child actors as being "little brats"!

It's a great, insane movie. See it despite its 4:3 rendering, and watch the extras. — Christopher Johnson

MOVIE: 9 EXTRAS: 7



Willy hands around the LSD.





You see, I want to stick it up something...



From this to The Nutty Professor...



A couple of bosom buddies.

Beverly Hills Cop

PARAMOUNT, RATED M

Banana. Tailpipe. These two seemingly unrelated objects helped make *Beverly Hills Cop* the top-grossing R-rated (US) movie ever. Who can forget Eddie Murphy's classic scene of distracting Detective Rosewood and Sergeant Taggart with a "late supper" and then sliding three bananas (supplied by a very camp Damon Wayans) into their tailpipe?

Of course, we all know that BHC was so much more than that. It's also Eddie's best work — by far — and it's the film that made him the most bankable brother in Hollywood. The plot is very standard (Eddie's friend gets capped, Eddie tracks down killers), but it's the "fish out of water" humour of smart-arsed Detroit cop Axel Foley in plastic Los Angeles that takes BHC up a notch.



Special mention must also go to everyone's favourite character from the BHC series, Serge, played by Bronson "Balki" Pinchot (aaah sweet Balki — Ed.). He steals every scene he's in, and when you're sharing screen time with Eddie Murphy, that's not an easy thing to do. The extras are fairly skinny, except for the trailer — it must be one of the longest trailers in the history of umm, trailers. — **Tony Montana**

MOVIE: 7 EXTRAS: 3

Dogtown and Z-Boys: the Birth of Extreme

COLUMBIA TRISTAR, M15+

Skaters take note — this is essential viewing. This DVD documents the explosion in skateboarding innovation that turned it from a fad into a fully blown sport.

Narrated by Sean Penn and directed by Stacey Peralta, *Dogtown* is an intimate look at one of the most influential skate crews of all time. It all started in a rundown area in Santa Monica, Los Angeles. A crew of 12 hardcore surfers known as the Zephyrs took to skateboarding and completely reinvented it in the early 70s. This was an intense, highly competitive crew — if you didn't perform and have your own unique style you were out.

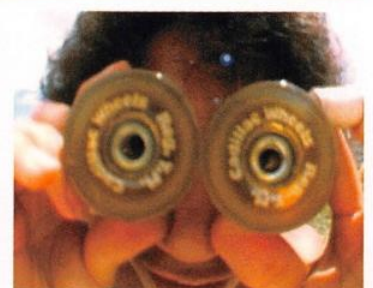
They took to skating the banks at schools in the local area, skating them like they would ride a wave.

They developed a new style that was low to the ground and soon they were doing Bertelman slides. These guys were soon living for skating. In fact, they single handedly invented pool skating (and by extension, vert skating) when, one summer, California had the biggest drought on record. Pools across the state were drying out, so the Dogtown team started skating them. The story of how they found pools, drained them (with water draining equipment) and skated them illegally while keeping an ear out for sirens is amazing.

The Z-Boys were pioneers, with such names as Tony Alva (founder of Alva skateboards), Jay Adams and Stacey Peralta (who went on to form the hugely successful Powell Peralta skate company and bring together the Bones Brigade) among their ranks. *Z-Boys* is very well compiled too, with a vibe reminiscent of some of the classic Bones Brigade videos, thanks to plenty of quick cutting and a diverse range of source material. — **Cam Shea**



Well, at the time he looked cool.



"...that was how I broke my legs."

MOVIE: 8.5 EXTRAS: 5

ANIME

Robotech: the Macross Saga

BOX SET
12 episodes per box

CATEGORY: SCI-FI/MECHA • PRODUCTION COMPANY: HARMONY GOLD • LOCAL DISTRIBUTOR: MADMAN/AV CHANNEL

In the 1980s, Macross was rebadged 'Robotech' after Harmony Gold took Macross, Mospeada and Southern Cross, and repackaged them for Western consumption. These days, however, most anime fans prefer to show their respect for the series by calling it by the name it was originally given.

JUST BEYOND PLUTO

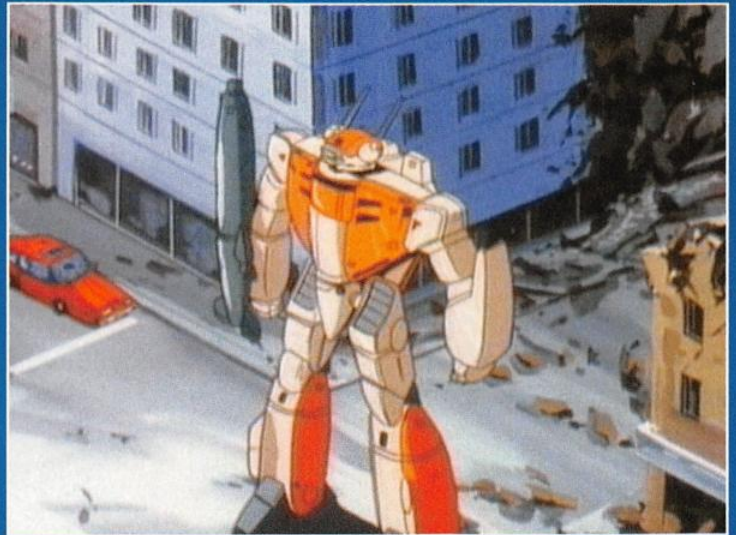
Macross was, for its time, a wonderfully original tale. A derelict alien ship crashlands on the island of Macross, and the human race decides to learn from the alien technology and incorporate it into its own. They even learn how to fly the ship, which they name the SDF-1 (stands for Super Dimensional Fortress, in case you're wondering). Before long, however, an armada of alien vessels (the Zentraedi) attack them. Clearly of different origin to the SDF-1, it becomes obvious that the invading Zentraedi forces are intent on taking the SDF-1 for themselves.

In order to prevent any further danger to the earth — and in the heat

of battle — the humans decide to take the SDF-1 away from Earth using its space-folding technology (read hyperspace). Unfortunately, without ever having tested the technology before, they end up taking themselves, the SDF-1, and the entire island of Macross with them to a point just beyond Pluto. After a massive rescue effort and finding their bearings, the citizens of Macross embark on the long journey home, continually dogged by Zentraedi attacks.

Unlike Battlestar Galactica, the Macross saga is about more than just transforming veritech fighters and laser guns. In its heyday, it won praise for its philosophical exploration of war and culture. The script writers never held back — numerous figurehead characters died in battle, and even the final return to earth is a daunting if sobering reminder of just how short-sighted most American cartoons are.

Ignore the Westernised self-congratulatory extras — this is a DVD set you want to own just for the purity of the series.



This fringe is itching my eyeballs.



Now where did I leave my scalp?

ANIMATION: 7 PLOT: 9 OVERALL: 10

The Original Transformers

SEASON ONE BOX SET

CATEGORY: ACTION/MECHA

PRODUCTION COMPANY: SUNBOW PRODUCTIONS

Ah, the Transformers. Like Robotech, it was another classic cartoon series, though it was driven by slightly more transparent commercial motives. Japanese toy company makes transforming robot toys, licence is given to Americans to make cartoons out of them, and voila — you have one of the most popular cartoon series of this generation that, to this day, grown men will continue to swear is better than the Pokemoned rubbish that's currently screening on morning cartoons. And they'd be right in saying so too.

No fancy CG tricks, no yelling of what attack they're about to

perform before unleashing said attack — back in the 1980s, the Autobots and Decepticons blasted the shit out of each other every chance they got, and that's all that mattered. They got bigger, too, with the introduction of the Dinobots and later the Constructicons.

Sadly, no one has had the smarts to pick up Transformers for a local release, and this four-disc DVD box set is only available on import in region 1. It's a priceless collection, even if it's aged quite badly compared to Robotech. Every frame of animation has been wiped clean, and the original mono soundtrack has been remastered into full Dolby Digital 5.1.



Even robots do it doggie style.



One can transform into an Xbox.

ANIMATION: 7 PLOT: 7 OVERALL: 8

HYPERRIVISION

»HYPER 89

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FORUM

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

Q. THE GREATEST ARCADE GAME I EVER PLAYED WAS...?

There's nothing quite like stumbling across a dusty old classic arcade cabinet up the back of your local arcade and reliving those golden memories of the day you first played it. Except now it costs you about 1000% more for a credit. But it's worth it, right?

And how about the games that qualify as new classics – the arcade machine that stuns passers-by with its unique new interface, graphics or – gasp – even gameplay? It's time to delve into the opinions of our lucky monthly selection of readers...



HYPER FORUM

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

“What is your opinion on Microsoft's purchase of Rare?”

Responses will be printed in Hyper 112.

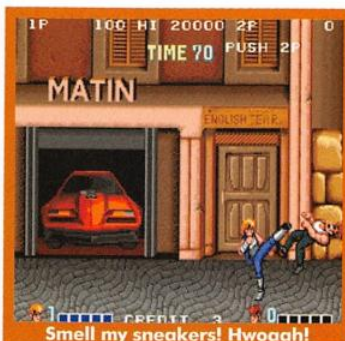
E-mail: FREAKSCENE@NEXT.COM.AU with Hyper Forum in the subject line, and the topic of discussion at the top of your response. Please note that very long contributions may be edited.

THE BUSTY BLONDE

Hello Hyper,

There are many great arcade games like Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Mortal Kombat, Street Fighter 2 and Afterburner, but without a doubt the greatest arcade game of all time was Double Dragon. In its day, I was about eight and I remember going to the corner deli before school and spending all my money playing this great game, only to return after school to start all over again, with the money I had taken from smaller children.

There was nothing better then playing all the way through with your best mate only to end up fighting to the death for the honour of getting the busty blonde who was ready and waiting. Not to mention the crowd that had gathered to watch.



If games like these were to be re-released on Xbox or PS2, I would be first in line to get these great classics.

RODney...

THE BLOODIEST GAME

Being a big ex-beat 'em up arcade buff I would have to put Time Killers on the top of the list for the title of 'Greatest Arcade Game Ever'. For the uninitiated, TK was a SF2 style slash 'em up where warriors from ages ranging from prehistoric times to the grim future would chop each other to bits in by far the bloodiest game I've ever encountered. The unique controls in TK lent you the use of each individual limb plus your head to use in combat. For example you could left kick, use the sword in your right hand or head butt your opponent when up close and personal.

You would need each attack button too because your warrior would often be short on limbs leaving you kicking and head butting in desperation to defeat your dismemberer. Some of the warriors included a caveman, knight, street punk with chainsaw and a humanoid praying mantis. Each warrior had their own unique weapons and special attacks plus

they each had a special frenzied attack where at the right time they could slice and dice their foe to pieces!

Mr. S

MASSIVE PRICE HIKE

The greatest arcade game I ever played was Midnight Resistance. While I'm sure that the majority of gamers out there are about as familiar with this game as they are with the Dreamcast (sadly), this game was the love of my life at the age of 12 and will always hold a special place in my heart.

Why? Well, even though this game appeared shortly after the massive price hike in arcade gaming from 20 cents to 40 cents, there is something incredibly special about a game where you can pay 40 cents, and then spend the next HOUR finishing it on that one credit. An hour's enjoyment for 40 cents is truly magical... that and the hoards of people who crowded around to watch me do it. This is what the movie About A Boy should have been about! Alas, prices have since gone up, and longevity has since gone down (how long does it take to finish Tekken for example??). Sigh.

Tony Angwin

CLOCKED THE GAME

Dear Hyper,

As a child (I'm now 16) I never visited arcades often and my last visit was over 4 or 5 years ago. I went a few times though, mostly for birthday parties. I remember one party, I strolled around the place looking for a game to play. Bored with everything else, I noticed a small machine that was standing right next to the stairs. The title said "Soul Edge". I approached it, called the attendant over and got him to punch a few credits in. I picked a girl named Seung Mina and entered the game. Before I knew it, there was a crowd of my friends behind me and I was facing some huge pirate dude. My friends gave me encouragement and I won. I couldn't believe that I'd clocked the game the first time I'd ever played it. I have no idea what difficulty it was on, or how many other people had done it, but for me it was a big deal. It also drew attention to the game which spent the next hour of the party being played by someone. So for me, clocking Soul Edge for the very first time was my greatest arcade experience.

Jason

THE MOST ADDICTIVE

Hyper,

Sup, I'm an Australian reader from Australia (comedy, get it!) I read your mag over all others (feel privileged, extremely privileged) and to answer "The greatest arcade game I ever played was..." well there are numerous ones. Of course I could simply say Street Fighter, or Sega Rally, but no, these are the great games of arcade, they were born into it. The game which I have to say was simply the best I have ever played, the most addictive, the Greatest would be... PAC-MAN!!! This little yella fella has given me hours of enjoyment and I know he still will in years to come. So, yes he is a born arcade identity, but he has touched me in a special spot - my heart - and I know he will touch my grandchildren's hearts when I bring



Goodness gracious great balls of...



Blanka eats his very first fireball.

out my arcade machine (yes a real one) I bought for quite a price. But it was worth every penny!

Lain More

ONE HUNDRED LEVELS

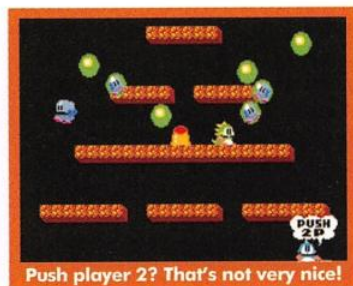
Arcades are too expensive, and I'm a poor little boy, but out of all the ones I know the best (and somebody there must agree) is none other than the Taito classic, BUBBLE BOBBLE! One hundred levels of super addictive gaming fun. Jump, bubble-blow, pop, kill bullies, collect fruit, die and lose a credit, and if you're good: win and save Bub and Bob's pixelated girlfriends. And that incessant bleeping music that is good for the soul.

If I could find a real working arcade machine of this masterpiece I would get it in a second.

Ghatto the 'Real Gamer'

FUN AND FRANTIC GAMEPLAY

"WELCOME TO NBA JAM!" NBA Jam truly was the best arcade game ever. Sure there were many great arcade games but nothing could beat NBA



Push player 2? That's not very nice!

Jam. This game could attract onlookers like no tomorrow. It may not have looked all that pretty, but it got the job done, and it didn't matter what everything looked like, it was what it was all doing. Players with big heads would be running around the court and jumping 20 metres up into the air to do spectacular looking dunks. This is what people wanted to see. The players had many different dunk animations, and each one would bring a "whoa" from the crowd.

This game had very fun and frantic gameplay mechanics, and people loved it. Players would be taking shots every 10 seconds, pushing over members of the other team and laughing their arses off as they played with their friends.

No other arcade game matched the fun that was to be had from a game of 4-player NBA Jam. And who could forget the insane commentator. He was one of the most memorable things about the game. NBA Jam was also successfully ported to both the SNES and Megadrive which enlarged its already huge fanbase. Was there any better arcade game? I think not. Cheers,

Thomas Grey-Parkinson

IT MIGHT LOOK WEIRD

I'd have to say DanceManiaX. I've never had more fun at Timezone when I'm playing DanceManiaX. I love the music, it's all great!! Dancing with sensors had never been more fun! Even when people give weird looks at you while you're

dancing, it's still a hell lot of fun! I love trying new tricks on the game. I tried playing it with one hand, with my foot, etc. It might look weird, but it's bloody fun! And don't forget the Japanese commentators on those dancing games! They make me wanna dance even more! Whoo!

Andhika

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

I have been almost everywhere and played some really great arcade games. I tried out the famous Pole Position, Double Dragon and all that old school stuff. And of course, I definitely tried out the new kids on the block, Tekken, Sega Rally (the new 'more realistic' version) and Virtua Fighter, just to name a few. But the arcade game that made me skip school for a day or two, that made me realise that you can actually learn more at the arcades than at school, that corrupted my life, that ruined my reputation and that literally messed up my life is none other than Street Fighter 2! You wouldn't believe the hours AND MONEY (I sometimes starved myself at lunch just to keep the lunch money for SF2!) I spent playing this game! It is just so "addictive" and "Fun", which are two things that are seriously missing in today's modern games. I always had to come back for more! Sadly, the arcade in my area shut its doors, so no more SF2 for me. But I will still cherish all those loving memories of my time spent with Chun Li, Ken and Ryu down at the arcades. HADUKEN!!

Anthony Palmer

MAIL

✉ HYPER LETTERS:

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

MARIO, SUPERSTAR

Hey Everyone at Hyper,
First, THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU!!!! Your INSIGHT in Hyper 108 (the preview of Super Mario Sunshine) made me buy the game and I have had hours of enjoyment since. Anyway, after my friend and I had been playing Super Mario Sunshine for a few hours the day it came out, we flicked on the TV and spotted the commercial of the Yoshi's Island game on Game Boy Advance. I don't know if you guys have seen it but it gave my friend and I a good chuckle and we thought back to some other Nintendo commercials. Super Mario Advance 2, Super Smash Brothers Melee, Super Smash Brothers... the list goes on. This got us thinking about an ad for Super Mario Sunshine. First (in a deep corny voice) "THIS IS HOW NOT TO PLAY THE GAME" comes on the screen. Then it shows a wall. Several kids come running up and try to perform the wall jump (unsuccessfully of course) and end up in a pile a few meters down the track. Then the camera zooms into a dog, painted green with a bright red saddle and a kid jumps

onto its back. The kid gives the dog an apple the whips out a hose from behind and yells "Take that evil Goop!" spraying his little sister's finger painting. Then it shows a kid with two Super Soakers strapped to either side of him. He pumps them up and then braces himself and pulls the trigger. Obviously the tank's empty and the kid goes nowhere. It then shows several kids trying to perform the spin jump, making fools of themselves as they do. The corny voice comes on again. "THIS IS HOW YOU PLAY THE GAME!" And then goes on to show clips of Mario performing several different moves with FLUUD etc. Well those were our thoughts. Do you know if there will be a commercial for it or not? And I'm not sure if you guys have seen any but Japan gets way better commercials than we do. Anyway, thanks guys, keep up the good work, I buy your mag every month.

From,
Yoda_Rulz

*Dear Yoda Rulz,
Nintendo have always done TV advertising for their big titles, so*

chances are there's already a Mario ad on TV as you read this. Look out for the upcoming Metrod Prime TV ad too - that promises to be something quite outstanding, featuring a real-life Samus in full costume. The ad was even filmed here in Sydney!

XBOX COMES ALIVE

My name is Tom and I'm an Xbox fanatic. I have been collecting Hyper magazines since Issue 102 and read every section on Xbox back-to-front.

Since heard about Xbox LIVE I have been scanning your magazine for something about it. I have a birthday coming up at the end of this year and I heard that Xbox LIVE is coming out at about the same time. I know that you guys have a busy schedule could you please answer the following questions so then I can have an idea on what I want for my birthday.

1. When is the exact date Xbox LIVE releases in Australia, how much will it cost to have it and what will I need to run it?
2. How much will the headset communicator cost and will the games cost more than the usual price tag?
3. What are some of the games coming out for Xbox LIVE?

4. Are you guys going to review the Xbox LIVE and the games for it soon?

Well, thanx for reading this and I'm already waiting for next month's issue,

CYA!

Tom Gillespie

*Dear Tom,
Xbox Live is launching soon in the USA only. Currently, Microsoft Australia has not announced local Xbox Live plans, other than that it will definitely launch here at some stage.*

1. Hopefully, early 2003. There are no pricing details yet. You will only need your Xbox and a phone or cable socket in the wall!
2. The games won't cost any extra. There's no pricing on the headset for Australia yet.
3. You'll be able to play MechAssault, Unreal Championship, Ghost Recon and more.
4. We'll review it as soon as it becomes available in Australia,

rather than basing opinions on the US set-up.

ARTY WINNERS

Hey Hyper,

Something that's been sorely lacking in Hyper lately is a good competition.

Not that I'm complaining about your wonderful prizes (btw, cheers for Beetle Adventure Racing!) but the requirements to enter. Where have all the art and literature comps gone? I haven't seen an art comp since the one for Alone in the Dark 4! It would be great to see something like this each issue, just one art or literature comp a month would keep me happy. I can never be bothered entering the "answer this bleeding obvious question" comps, cause I know my chance of winning is up to a blind grab in a bag of 13 trillion other entries (or something to that number). So how about it? This way you'll have plenty of readers art to fill those ugly white gaps in the letters section (?) and I promise to be one of those entries. I hope you guys consider this cause its something I, and I'm sure plenty of other readers, have wanted to see monthly for ages.

Cheers for listening,

GOATSE

*Dear Goatse,
We appreciate that art comps are fun to enter (if you're talented with a pen and pencil), but to be fair to all we've decided to not run them lately. You see, the same bloody readers who are great illustrators always enter and always stand out as obvious winners. To make the comps fairer on all readers, arty ones are currently on the backburner. Literature comps, now that's another question... Watch this space. Well, not this space, but the comps page.*

RARE ON THE BOX

Dear Hyper,

I am writing to express my opinions on the recent selling of Rare by Nintendo. At first I dismissed the rumors as mere pish posh, Nintendo couldn't possibly want to sell Rare as their long running track record is a guarantee that they will come up with goods sooner or later. But when it was

CAPTION THIS!

PART 35 WINNER

The winning caption this month comes to us courtesy of Hyper reader, **Leigh Ulpen**. Oh, how we laughed. It narrowly beat out **Ian Burton**'s mafia joke...



"Poor Jimmy always got stage fright at the Centaur urinal"



Darryl Leech likes speed lines, which is fine by us.

announced officially that Nintendo had sold its 49% share to Microsoft I just had a total brain spasm. Half the reason I bought a Cube was due to the fact that I knew (at the time) that Perfect Dark o and Kameo Elements of Power would just totally kick arse. Of course, both of these are now exclusive to Xbox. The blow was softened by the news that Nintendo had kept the rights to Donkey Kong and Starfox and that Rare would still be developing for GBA. I'm still mighty pissed though — Perfect Dark was (in my opinion) the best of the bunch, and the worst thing of all was that Nintendo's reason to sell was because Rare only accounted for 1.5% of their profits last year and it was purely a business decision.

What they didn't account for was Rare's upcoming titles which could have boosted sales dramatically. Nintendo's shortsightedness partnered with a renewed interest with Xbox, I have decided to purchase Xbox when the next Rare game comes out. The only things stopping me from selling my GameCube are Metroid Prime, Mario Sunshine and all the upcoming Squaresoft games.

I am sorely disappointed with Nintendo's decision and I believe it will result with Microsoft gaining an upper hand.

Jack

Dear Jack,
Just goes to show that you can't assume anything in this industry. At least there's Star Fox, eh? We've also heard rumours of Microsoft buying another high-profile games company.

OLD (S)C(H)OOL

Dear Hyper,

I've come to talk about one subject. Old-school gaming, and where it has gone to. Morrowind is probably the only recent old-school type game, whilst more than 90% of today's games are 'innovative and new' (That's debatable! — Ed.).

That's not a bad thing, but if the gaming world is like me, they'd want something old fashioned, to bring back sweet memories of playing D&D at your kitchen table, or defeating FFi's Garland by 'knocking him down'.

The closest things I have to old school games are Golden Sun (barely), Doom Advance (classic FPS), The Longest Journey (point and click adventure), and a non-functional Castlevania 1 gamepack.

The best news that you, Hyper, has granted me is that there will be ports on the GBA. Thank the lord, as they will stimulate my old-school addiction. Can you give me the names of any good old-school games coming soon?

Read ya later,
Luc666

Dear Luc666,
Well, Yoshi's Island recently got released, and soon you can wow to the wonders of Doom II, Boulder Dash, Lost Vikings, Rock'n'Roll Racing and a few more Nintendo classics and Bitmap brothers games.

GOOD OLD FASHIONED QUESTIONS

Dear gaming pros,

I got a whole truckload of questions that would love to have answered so I'll cut to the chase and get down to business as u already know that you're the best mag out there:

1. How many Lord of the Rings games are there gonna be, and what consoles are they gonna be on?
2. How good are the graphics of the PC Deus Ex compared to what's on the market today?
3. What's the highest rating you've ever given a game and what was it?
4. Which in your opinion was better GTA3 or Metal Gear Solid 2?
5. What happened to your music reviews section?
6. Is GTA3 ever gonna be released for the Xbox?

GAMES JOURNALISM

Greetings to the Gurus of the Games!

I was just curious as to how I could get into the whole game reviewing biz. (Mostly because I think it would be EXTREMELY FREAKING WONDERFUL to be able to play games for a living!) I thought I would try asking you guys first, as everyone knows the large amount of arse that Hyper kicks. I would kill for the opportunity to do what you guys do (then perhaps sell the bodyparts of the corpse on the black market, well see how things go). How did you get such wonderful jobs? Or would that be delving too deep into the mystical arts of the game reviewer for a mere mortal like myself?

As many people have asked similar questions to this in previous issues, I would like to point out before you smite me with your magical controllers (kinda like Thor's hammer, except with buttons and a d-pad) that I would just like to know what I would need to do what it is that you do. And I will try to perfect my coffee making skills, but I doubt they will be able to fulfill your superhuman expectations :P

Goodbye, Greatest of Gamers!

Paul

Dear Paul,
You have to sell your soul to the Devil. It sucks. But hey, you get free games. Not only that, but you need to get out there and get writing experience. Get a job as an office assistant and work your way up. Review games for street press. Do a course. There really are many ways of getting a job in the industry, but it will always come down to your natural talent as a writer. Work on it.



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

Don't forget to include your contact details in your letter.

THRUSTMASTER®

<http://au.thrustmaster.com>
Wheel valued at \$99.95.

7. How come u guys have never mentioned a Flight Simulator game? Come on, they aren't that bad.

8. What's the best soccer game u guys have seen?

MangyMutt

Dear MangyMutt,

1. Vivendi have LOTR games for Xbox, PS2, PC and GBA. EA have games for PS2 and GBA. Plus there will be many more in the future!

2. Deus Ex still stands up as one of the best PC games you can buy, regardless of how the graphics stand up. It may not be the prettiest game on the market any more, but is that really so important?

3. No game has ever scored higher than 97%. Those that scored 97% include Half-Life and Deus Ex.

4. GTA3.

5. The dog ate it.

6. We bloody well hope so!

Eventually, we think.

7. We review most of them when they come out! Microsoft's Combat Flight Sim 3 will be next.

8. Pro Evolution Soccer. But Pro Evolution Soccer 2 is about to be released, so we suspect that will take its place.

9 YEARS!

Hey Hyper,

Congratulations on issue 108 as it means you guys have been going for 9 years now. In issue 120 — your 10th year celebration — are you going to do something extra than your usual really cool magazine, like a special bumper issue or maybe a list of all of your favorite games that you have played over all those years? Even games dating back to the Nintendo.

Anyway you are doing a great job on this awesome mag. Keep up the good work.

From Blastaii

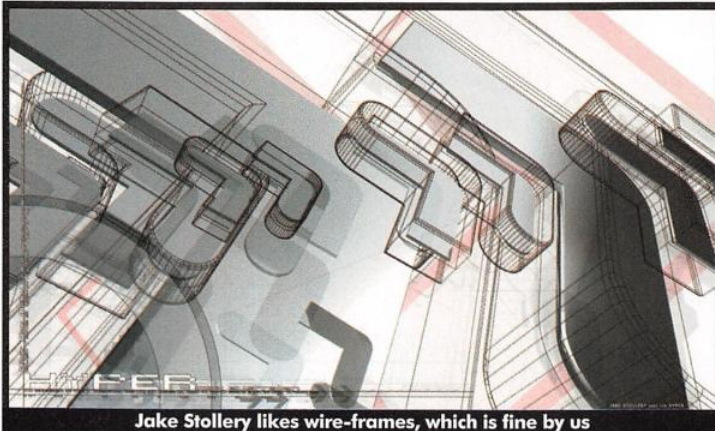
Dear Blastaii,
Gee you make us feel so... old. I'm sure the 10 year anniversary will be something special!

ADVERTISING SUCKS

Hi there people,

First of all, congrats on a great magazine.

I recently bought myself a copy of Battlefield 1942 and am very



Jake Stollery likes wire-frames, which is fine by us

impressed, but I have one major quibble. As soon as I opened the box I found pamphlets advertising other games! Give me a chance I thought. I just outlaid \$80 for a new game and the first thing EA does is advertise other newer ones. It doesn't stop there either. On the back of the actual CD case is an ad for a MoH expansion pack. This is not the first time this has happened either! For me, this spot is supposed to have some cool shots of the game you just bought, not some other unrelated game. The same goes for the back of manuals.

I remember when I got MS Flight Sim 2000. I thought wow, 3 CDs - big game! It turned out that the last one was almost entirely extras in the form of trailers and the installer was one continual ad for other games. All of these big companies seem to advertise in their games for their games. Give us a chance to play one before throwing another at us for once! Or is that a bit too extreme?!

Complete change of topic: Why is the original Quake regarded as such a good game? I'll agree it was good, but I would hardly call it the best game of all time (Deus Ex/Mario/Zelda for me). Sure, it was revolutionary and had stunning graphics, but in the end shouldn't it come down to gameplay? And if so, why is it regarded as such a classic? BTW: Great top 100 in issue 100.

Cheers,
Julian (aka Cellfor)

Dear Cellfor (aka Julian),
There is no escaping advertising. Enjoy your games whilst in-game advertising has still not been fully exploited! THEN you'll have something to moan about. Now, as for Quake, this is something that we need to clarify. It was primarily Quake's multiplayer that was so incredible. The single player game was actually kind of dull. But the deathmatching was quite

simply, amazing. This is thanks to the amazing 3D engine and physics model they created.

STUNTMAN & CHRONIC

(lots of loud clapping and applause)

Congratulations Hyper, thanks to your brilliant magazine, you've saved me once again! I am writing this letter to say "good call" on your review of Stuntman. I had been studying and watching this title for a long time - eagerly awaiting its release. Luckily, I got to your October issue, before I got to Stuntman. After reading the review - I put my money back in my bank, saving all but \$6 - so I could hire the game instead.

One word will certainly be raising its ugly head throughout this letter - OVERHYPED (actually I dunno if that's 2 or what hehe). But yes, Stuntman (in my eyes), was very overhyped. To me it seems like a stripped down version of Driver, but with better graphics and some jumps. Now even though they've got the same creator, something needs to be realised - the Driver series has gotten OLD OLD OLD.

Anyways, I just seem to be spending more time thinking of what could have been cool - instead of what is cool - about this game. It's far too touchy, way too much time is spent staring at the loading screen but the WORST part about it is - there is NO freedom, whatsoever. We are living in the times of Grand Theft Auto III! CMONNNN PEOPLE!! hehe.

Anyways - the point of this letter is to say - thank you very much for good advice, over-hyped gaming is starting to occur all too often nowadays and THANK F**KING GOD for Rockstar Games (who I'm sure have made SOME mistakes but have always made it up to us somehow :P).

Waiting eagerly for GTA: Vice City,
Tony Montana - Political Prisoner.

Dear Tony Montana,
Sorry we couldn't bring you a GTA: Vice City review this issue. But if you're good, we'll have one for you real soon (although you can probably safely go buy it anyway, based on what we've seen so far).

THIRD TIME LUCKY

Hey there Hyper.

I am an avid reader and subscriber, aspiring journo and fully-fledged gamer and just want a few questions answered in your oh-so-sweet magazine.

1. Will Hyper ever be bound like PC Powerplay, or will it always be stapled together?
2. What game has had the highest rating ever?
3. And the lowest?
4. What were the main features/reviews in the first edition of Hyper?
5. Why not have hardware reviews every issue? That is one of the best parts in the mag.
6. What are your thoughts on having a subscriber only section on hyperactive, it would be rather sweet, and an incentive to subscribe?
7. Have all the contributors/writers at Next Gaming got journalism degrees, or are they naturally excellent writers?
8. How come my Hyper always comes a few days later then I can buy it in the newsagent?

That's all for now!

Peter

Dear Peter,

1. It would be nice wouldn't it?
2. Please refer to a previous letter this issue for that answer.
3. Ah-ha! The lowest, I think, was about 4%. The game has been utterly forgotten, as it should be. However, recently, we gave 7% to the woeful version of NBA Jam on GBA.
4. We had an awesome feature on Virtual Sex, reviews of Street Fighter II Turbo on SNES and Megadrive and a hilarious "cough" article proclaiming that the 3DO could be the future of games (Ho ho! Okay, I feel sick now).
5. We'll try to keep it as regular as possible from now on. Next Issue?
6. No way. Keep websites free!
7. We're all naturally talented. You should see what Malcolm can do with a ping-pong ball. Incredible.
8. The recent lateness with Hyper subscriptions was a temporary problem. Subscribers will always get their mag the same week it hits shops.

BRACKETS & CRATES

Hey you... hmmm,

Anyway, enough of the awkward silences. My mum told me never to talk to strangers so my name is Shaun and your name is (Enter name on dotted line so it is like you are saying your name). There we go, now I can talk about what I want to talk about.

When I was reading your review of xXx on GBA you were saying that it took only 3 seconds to reach the first crate on the first level and this got me thinking. Seeing as you have an extremely unhealthy obsession with talking about crates and also how just about every game has a crate of some sort in it, I think that you should have the "Time To Crate" as a permanent thing in the reviews next to things such as the Developer and Release Date.

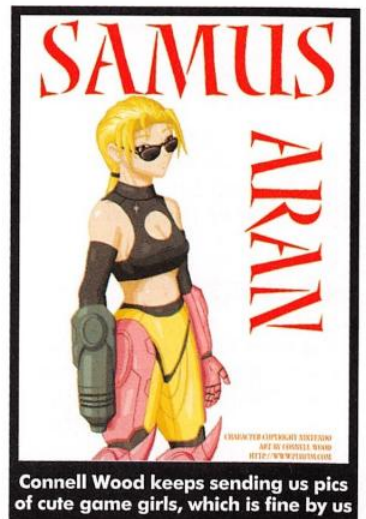
You could have it abbreviated as TTC so that people who haven't noticed it in the xXx review or haven't read my letter ("cough" Put my letter in your mag *cough* *cough* sorry phlem in the throat) don't know what the hell we are talking about (I just want to be part of the gang) it would be like MMORPG (or whatever the hell it is) (What does that stand for anyway?), or I33t (what does that mean?)

Sorry you must think I am strange but I am just very, very, lonely. (Go The Sketch Show). So anyway I just think that TTC would be a cool idea and it should satisfy your cravings for crates so you don't have to go play Crash Bandicoot.

All my love,
Shaun

Dear Shaun,

MMORPG stands for Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing game. I33t is I33t speak for "elite". Glad we could help. The "TTC" idea is a smashing one. Look for it soon!



Connell Wood keeps sending us pics of cute game girls, which is fine by us

The Official Australian Games Chart

Compiled by Inform in association with IEAA

TOP 10

PlayStation 2 Games Over \$50

W/E 6 OCTOBER
2002 RETAIL SALES

1	▲	V8 Supercars	Racing
2	▼	AFL Live 2003	Sports
3	▲	Grand Theft Auto 3	Adventure
4	▼	Tekken 4	Action
5	▼	Conflict Desert Storm	Action
6	◆	Medal Of Honor: Frontline	Action
7	⊕	Madden NFL 2003	Sports
8	▼	Stuntman	Simulator
9	⊕	Jak & Daxter Precursor Lgcy	Adventure
10	⊕	Final Fantasy X	RPG

TOP 10

PlayStation Games Over \$40

W/E 6 OCTOBER
2002 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Lilo & Stitch Trble In Pards	Adventure
2	◆	Stuart Little 2	Adventure
3	◆	Maximum Action Pack	Compilation
4	◆	Harry Potter & Philosopher	Adventure
5	◆	Digimon Rumble Arena	Action
6	▲	Barbie Explorer	Adventure
7	◆	Delta Force Urban Warfare	Adventure
8	⊕	Who Wants To Be A Millnaire Family	
9	▼	Final Fantasy Anthology	RPG
10	⊕	Scooby Doo Cyber Chase	Adventure

TOP 10

Game Cube Games Over \$40

W/E 6 OCTOBER
2002 RETAIL SALES

1	▲	Super Mario Sunshine	Adventure
2	◆	WWE WrestleMania X8	Sports
3	▼	Resident Evil	Adventure
4	▼	Super Smash Bros: Melee	Action
5	⊕	Turok Evolution	Action
6	◆	Luigi's Mansion	Adventure
7	▼	Sonic Adventures 2: Battle	Adventure
8	▼	Pikmin	Action
9	▲	Rogue Leader	Action
10	▼	Bond 007 Agent Under Fire	Action

TOP 10

Xbox Games Over \$40

W/E 6 OCTOBER
2002 RETAIL SALES

1	▲	WWE Raw Is War	Sports
2	⊕	The Thing	Adventure
3	▼	Halo - Combat Evolved	Action
4	◆	Buffy The Vampire Slayer	Action
5	▼	Conflict Desert Storm	Action
6	▲	Blade 2	Adventure
7	◆	Turok Evolution	Action
8	▼	Madden NFL 2003	Sports
9	▼	Bruce Lee:Quest The Dragon	Action
10	⊕	Commandos 2	Strategy

TOP 10

PC Games Over \$30

W/E 6 OCTOBER
2002 RETAIL SALES

1	⊕	The Sims Unleashed	Strategy
2	▼	The Sims Deluxe	Strategy
3	▼	Battlefield 1942	Action
4	▲	WarCraft 3	Strategy
5	▼	Medieval Total War	Strategy
6	▲	The Sims Vacation	Strategy
7	▲	The Sims Hot Date	Strategy
8	▼	Mafia	Action
9	▼	AFL Live 2003	Sports
10	▼	Icwind Dale 2	RPG

TOP 10

Game Boy Advance Games Over \$40

W/E 6 OCTOBER
2002 RETAIL SALES

1	⊕	Yoshis Island: SMA 3	Adventure
2	▼	Dragonball Z: Legacy Goku	Action
3	▼	Super Mario World Adv 2	Adventure
4	▼	Lilo & Stitch	Adventure
5	▼	Stuart Little 2	Adventure
6	▼	Mario Kart Super Circuit	Racing
7	▲	Sonic Advance	Adventure
8	◆	Harry Potter & Philosopher	Adventure
9	▲	Golden Sun	RPG
10	▼	Jimmy Neutron	Adventure

TOP 10

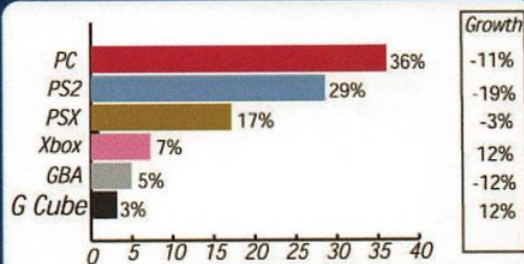
All Full Priced Games

W/E 6 OCTOBER
2002 RETAIL SALES

1	⊕	The Sims Unleashed	PC/MAC
2	⊕	Super Mario Sunshine	GameCube
3	▼	V8 Supercars	PlayStation 2
4	▲	The Sims Deluxe	PC/MAC
5	▼	AFL Live 2003	PlayStation 2
6	▲	Grand Theft Auto 3	PlayStation 2
7	▼	Tekken 4	PlayStation 2
8	▼	Conflict Desert Storm	PlayStation 2
9	◆	Medal Of Honor: Frontline	PlayStation 2
10	◆	Lilo & Stitch Trouble Pards	PlayStation

MARKET WATCH All Games by Platform

AUG 02 vs SEP 02
RETAIL SALES



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

inform

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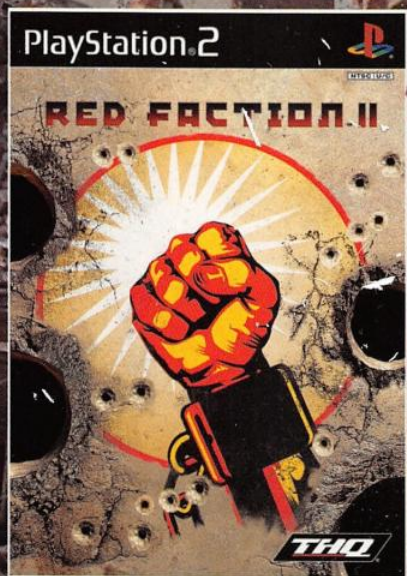
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