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METROID PRIME
6 page Review

ISSUE 113
MARCH 2003

HYPER »

The Sims

Reinvent yourself on PS2
PLUS: Sim City 4 on PC!

Readers' TOP 50 best games

YOU GIVE US YOUR VERDICT! RESULTS INSIDE.

THE NEW GBA!
Nintendo come out of the dark

GAME BOY ADVANCE SP

SHENMUE 2
A whole new world inside the Xbox

MORTAL KOMBAT
"Oh my God... It's not crap!"

next

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REVIEWS: RESIDENT EVIL ZERO • PHANTOM CRASH • SHOX • DRAGONBALL Z

Karate vs. Judo vs. Kick Boxing vs. Jiu Jitsu vs.

vs.

M15+
MEDIUM LEVEL
ANIMATED VIOLENCE

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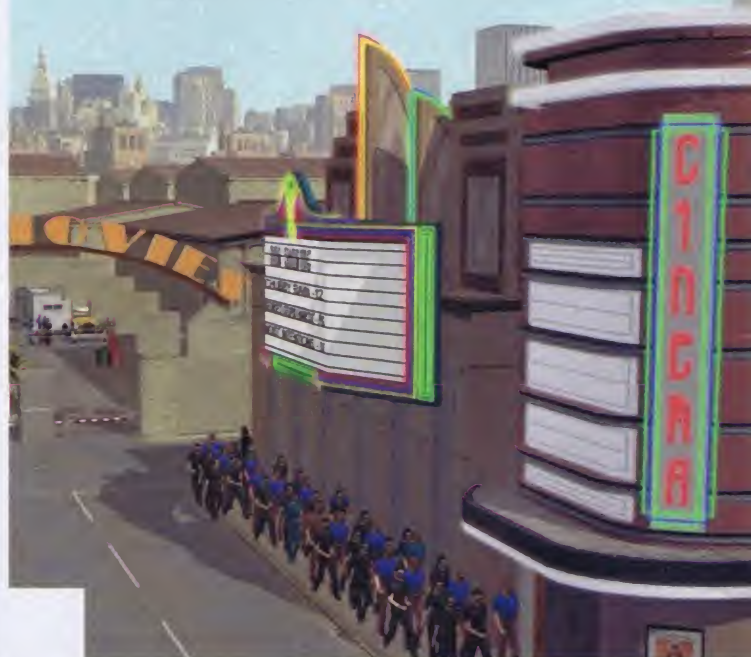
48 Game of the Month – Metroid Prime on GCN

A contender for game of the year already? Holy C-sticks!

90 Win a PlayStation 2 and a Vice City pack!

All seven soundtracks plus a host of goodies...

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>>HYPER 5

EDITORIAL

>> Videogame blues. Ever stare at your collection of games, desperate for something to play, and yet absolutely nothing looks appealing? When a barely played GTA: Vice City game is simply not enough, playing Mario just doesn't interest, and pulling out a classic like Soul Calibur just doesn't provide any thrill whatsoever? Yes, videogame blues.

What to do with this temporary gaming malaise? Usually, simply running out and buying a new game does the trick, but I propose that this is an unhealthy solution (as it can lead to the purchasing of some old crap like Simpsons Road Rage in a sad moment of desperation). And whatever you do, you must at all costs avoid the temptation to use pitiful codes and cheats to try to breathe life into your stale gaming state. No... Perhaps you just need to sit down and enjoy a good issue of Hyper to get you excited about gaming again.

Can we suggest reading the Top 50 Best Games to remind yourself why you love gaming so much in the first place... that should do the trick! Then you could swing by Reverse Engineering for a recap on those Wing Commander days. Yes, "the love" is well and truly alive within the pages of Hyper. Let it take you away...

Eliot Fish >> **Editor**

Play where you want.

Finally, a cordless controller that gives you all the freedom you've been looking for, no strings attached. The new Logitech® Cordless Controller for PlayStation® is the only cordless controller officially licensed by Sony Computer Entertainment. Performing flawlessly from 6 metres away, it uses precise 2.4GHz RF technology to give you over 50 action-packed hours of gameplay. And with all the thrills of vibration feedback, the time has come to cut the cord.
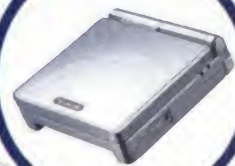
NEWS

WHAT A BRIGHT IDEA

NINTENDO SEE THE LIGHT

New front-lit Game Boy Advance

>> Well, the rumours were true. On January 8th, Nintendo revealed the updated Game Boy Advance they had been secretly working on in 2002. Called the Game Boy Advance SP, the brand new handheld solves the biggest gripe that gamers had with the first Game Boy Advance by giving the screen an integrated front screen light (it's not back-lit, but front-lit!). Now you'll never be looking for a desk lamp or attaching a crap worm light to your GBA — the screen can now be lit with the touch of a small button.

ABOUT A BOY

With the screen lit up, the GBA SP will last for 10 hours of play, and with the light off (say, when you're actually using the GBA SP in sunlight) the unit will last up to 18 hours! This extended playtime is courtesy of a new battery — a rechargable Lithium Ion battery that replaces the old AA batteries. When you buy your GBA SP, you will get a recharging unit that can get the battery back to full strength after only a few hours of recharging. No more endless cash spent on batteries!

The cool flip-top lid is reminiscent of the old double-screen Game and Watch, and will ensure that the screen is protected from scratches when the handheld is not in use. The brand new size (82mmW x 84.6mmH x 24.3mmD) also means that the GBA SP is now truly pocket-sized — small and slim enough to slide into a shirt top-pocket, making it even more consumer friendly. It will also initially come in two colours — cobalt blue and platinum silver (though Europe appears to be getting black also).

The modern styling seems to be an effort by Nintendo to make the GBA SP

>> The cool flip-top lid is reminiscent of the old double-screen Game and Watch

more appealing to an older market, as David Gosen from Nintendo Europe stated "With the launch of Game Boy Advance SP, Nintendo will be able to place their gaming expertise into the hands of new users who value outstanding design as highly as technology. There's an incredible range of games already available, and an ever-increasing number designed for players who may not have held a console since the days of Tetris. Following the incredible success of the Game Boy Advance, this is a very exciting time for Nintendo and an exceptional start to 2003."

Yes, as you might have guessed, the GBA SP is backward compatible with all GBA and Game Boy games, and features a link cable port for four-player madness and GameCube link features. The D-Pad appears to be flatter, but slightly larger, and the shoulder buttons are now more compact but slightly more raised. All reports are that the new Game Boy Advance SP "feels" like an improvement too.

We saved the best news for last, though. The Game Boy Advance SP will be available here in Australia on March 28, retailing for $200.

See that? It's Advance Wars 2 - coming soon!

TECH SPECS

- New pocket size with flip-top screen that enables an even more compact size
- **Dimensions:** 82mm Wx 84.6H x 24.3D and weighs approximately 143g
- New integrated self-contained LCD screen light
- New built in rechargeable Lithium Ion battery that enables approximately 10 hours of continual gameplay with approximately 3 hours of recharging time
- When the front light is turned off, the continual play increases to approximately 18 hours
- Three premium metallic colour variants (silver, black and blue)
- Up to 32,000 simultaneous colours
- Display Size 40.8mm x 61.2mm
- Resolution 240 x 160 dot
- 32-bit CPU with embedded memory
- Multiplayer mode for up to 4 players with Game Link cable
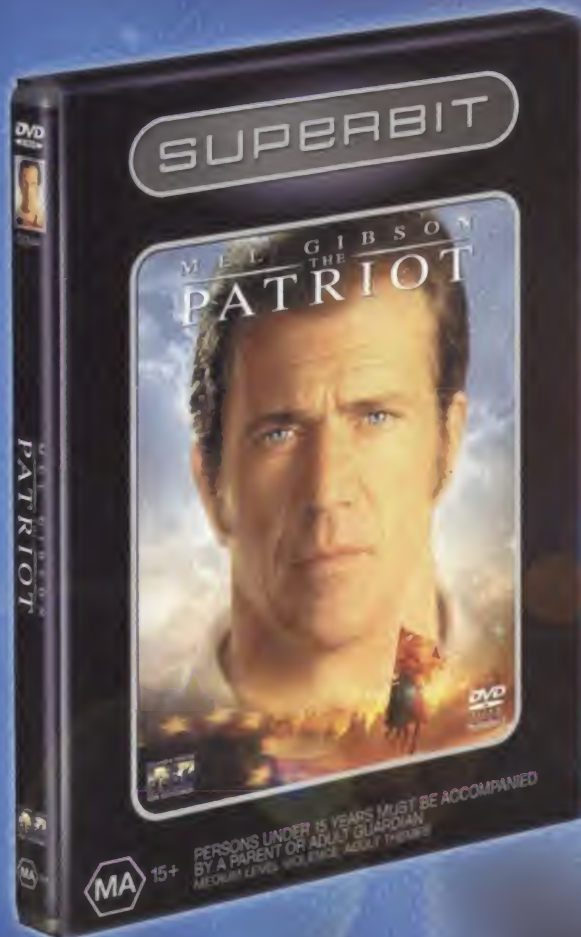- Compatible with virtually all existing Game Boy & Game Boy Advance games

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 40 in the Subject line.

PART 40

Mihihihihihihihi

SPLINTER CELL FOR ALL

PS2, GCN... even GBA!

>>> UbiSoft have surprised everyone (although we suspect the Xbox fanbase would be the most shocked) in their announcement of Splinter Cell for all platforms. Yes, the Xbox has enjoyed its small honeymoon of exclusivity, and now the game will be winging its way to everyone else on the planet too. The Hyper team have had a play of the PS2 version and we were surprised at just how good the game looks, despite the inability of the PS2 to perform many of the fancy visual effects that are enjoyed on the Xbox version. It's a wonderful thing that more gamers can now look forward to this very cool game.

The winner gets a garlic croissant!

LIMB-TASTIC!

HOOK UP WITH RAYMAN

Nintendo praise UbiSoft link-up feature

>>> Rayman 3 is coming soon to all platforms, but Nintendo fans may be the happiest out of the lot. Rayman 3 on GameCube will have a link-up feature available for use with the new Rayman game on the GBA. For starters, there's a race mode in which two GBA players actually create the racing track out of "Tetris" style blocks that result in the 3D racing track on the GameCube for two GCN players to race on. The GBA and GCN play is simultaneous! You can also unlock new GBA levels when you hook up with Rayman 3 on the GameCube. Our industry insider tells us that Nintendo were reported as saying that the Rayman link up feature was the best they had seen yet. Go you French thing!

FF12 を創る

WHOOHOO!

FIRST GLIMPSE OF FFXII

Brand new adventure in the works

>>> Square recently revealed a promotional poster for Final Fantasy XII, the upcoming brand new Final Fantasy game. With Final Fantasy XI being an online massively multiplayer game, and Final Fantasy X-2 being a direct sequel to Final Fantasy X, many gamers have been desperate for information on the next true game in the series. Final Fantasy XII, from the style of the poster, looks set to be another combination of futuristic and traditional RPG styles. The key members of the FFXII team include Jun Akiyama (Vagrant Story, Kingdom Hearts), Akihiko Yoshida (Vagrant Story, Final Fantasy Tactics, Zeliard) and Hideo Minaba (FFVI, FFIX). We hope Akiyama will use the Vagrant Story side of his brain for this one... We can't wait to dig up more info for you, just don't expect to see a release date set for this year.

>> OVERFLOW

The voice actor giving life to the DOA3 character, Zack, in Dead or Alive: Beach Volleyball, will be none other than basketball star, Dennis Rodman! But what about the girls, eh?

Nintendo confirmed that the new GameCube Pokémon game would be out this year. We have heard that a GBA with either Pokémon Ruby or Sapphire will be required in order to play the GameCube game.

EA are hard at work on *The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King* to coincide with the movie's release at the end of this year. As well as wielding Aragorn, Legolas or Gimli, gamers will be able to control Frodo and Sam.

If you want some new GBA games to look forward to this year, how about Advance Wars 2, Super Mario Advance 4, Wario Ware, Kirby: Nightmare in Dream Land, Golden Sun 2, Pokémon Ruby & Sapphire and Final Fantasy Tactics — all confirmed by Nintendo for 2003!

The Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences will be awarding Yu Suzuki (creator of Outrun, Space Harrier, Shenmue, Virtua Fighter series) a much coveted Hall of Fame award. Last year's winner was Will Wright (Sim City, The Sims).

Rambus Inc. has licensed its memory boosting technology to Sony and Toshiba, for use in unspecified technology due in roughly three years time. It's likely that the Rambus technology will be used in combination with a new microprocessor that Sony, Toshiba and IBM have planned for Sony's PlayStation 3.

Xbox Live is proving to be a big success in the USA, with over 250,000 users subscribed and Live kits outselling the PS2 Network Adapter by a whopping 86% in the first month.

A GENERATION'S FINAL JOURNEY BEGINS

STAR TREK
nemesis

RECOMMENDED FOR MATURE AUDIENCES 15 YEARS AND OVER **M** 15+
MEDIUM LEVEL VIOLENCE

PARAMOUNT PICTURES PRESENTS A RICK BERMAN PRODUCTION "STAR TREK: NEMESIS" PATRICK STEWART
JONATHAN FRAKES BRENT SPINER LEVAR BURTON MICHAEL DORN GATES McFADDEN MARINA SIRTIS MUSIC JERRY GOLDSMITH
EDITED PETER LAURITSON COSTUME BOB RINGWOOD EDITOR DALLAS PUETT, A.C.E. PRODUCTION HERMAN ZIMMERMAN PHOTOGRAPHY JEFFREY L. KIMBALL, ASC
MARTY HORNSTEIN BASED GENE RODDENBERRY STORY JOHN LOGAN & RICK BERMAN & BRENT SPINER SCREENPLAY JOHN LOGAN PRODUCED RICK BERMAN
DIRECTED STUART BAIRD
StarTrek.com

IN CINEMAS FEBRUARY 6

NINTENDO SEE THE FUTURE
More Games Confirmed

>>> To brighten up the new year for all the GameCube owners out there, Nintendo confirmed a selection of games that will be out this year: Metroid Prime (out any minute now), The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker, Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles, Wario World, F-Zero, and 1080: Avalanche will definitely have a PAL release this year. Over in Japan, Nintendo will be releasing Kirby's Air Ride, Mario Golf, Mario Tennis, Mario Kart, a new Star Fox title, Pikmin 2 and Animal Crossing 2 — some of which might make a PAL release this year also. Lots of very cool first party games to look forward to indeed!
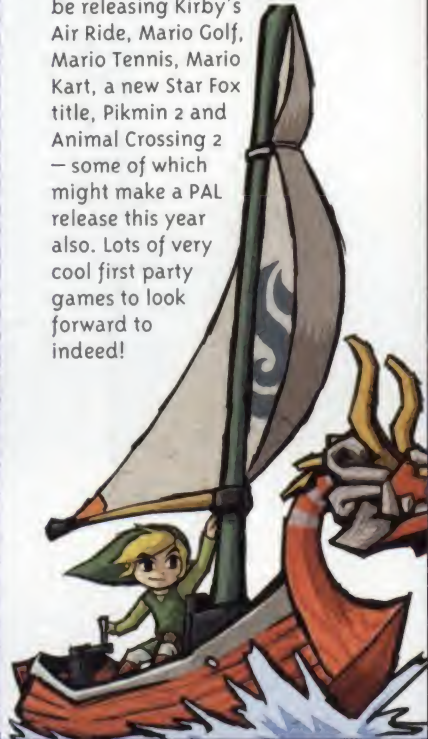
HOT SCREENS!
DINO CRISIS 3 FOR XBOX CAPCOM

NEW SCREENS!
DEVASTATION FOR PC NOVALOGIC

The World's first A.I racing game...

Total Immersion Racing has revolutionary Artificial Intelligence. *A.I.Tude* means that the other drivers on the track remember your actions, they bear grudges, they have egos and they even get angry.

And when they get angry, you'll know about it...

"One of the ... most immersive driving experiences we've ever had. Highly recommended." - 90/100
PC GameZone

PlayStation 2   XBOX   PC CD-ROM

TRUE FANTASY LIVE ONLINE
XBOX LEVEL 5 INC.

Microsoft's Japanese Xbox studio is developing this online Xbox Live RPG in conjunction with Dark Cloud creators, Level 5 Inc. The lush fantasy world that has been created looks like tackling Final Fantasy XI and World of Warcraft head on, with wizards on broomsticks, knights riding young dragons (Chocobo-style), and richly coloured forests and dungeons. With the Xbox Live headset, chatting to friends is all done by voice alone, so you can concentrate on the action with your control pad whilst still keeping track of what everyone is doing simply by yapping into your microphone. Finally!

EYE CANDY

SUDEKI

>>**XBOX** CLIMAX

W ant more RPGing on your Xbox? Then take a look at Sudeki... Team up a sorceress, gunslinger, shape shifter and swordsman, and you have a party of four that's ready to take on hundreds of ghastly foes. Microsoft promise some of the biggest RPG environments you've ever played in and "Hong Kong style real-time combat", including cool team-up attacks. Sudeki should hopefully be arriving in PAL territories sometime before next Christmas.
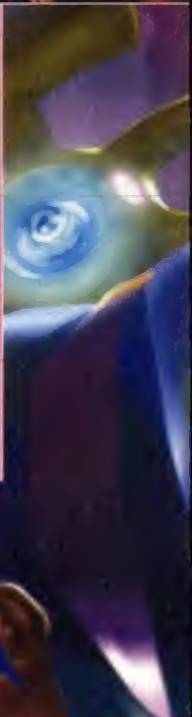
EYE CANDY

>>HYPER 15

HYPER READERS' POLL

TOP 50
BEST GAMES

Well, after several days of long and painful counting and tabulation (don't say we don't go through hell to bring you this magazine!) the results are in, and it's a good-looking list. Over the next 10 pages, we'll be bringing you the top 50 best games as voted by er... you. To make it a little more climactic, we'll count them down from 50 back to numero uno. So no peeking...

112 TO 51

The games that almost made it

50 Wipeout 2097 PSONE
DEVELOPER: PSYGNOSIS
HYPER SCORE: 95%, HYPER 38

Wipeout 2097 just scraped into the top 50, and deservedly so. Insane speed, great handling, funky futuristic design and surprising depth make this game a classic. This was the series that defined 32bit gaming as cool and helped sell a lot of PlayStations. Oh, and it had a thumping soundtrack too.

49 Sim City 2000 PC
DEVELOPER: MAXIS
HYPER SCORE: 96%, HYPER 5

Maxis have always had a knack for creating gameworlds that people (especially the mainstream) get swept up in, and the Sim City series is one of their greatest triumphs to date. Hours upon countless hours of micro and macro management on offer here... and when you're sick of it — BOOM! — it's natural disaster time.

48 Civilization III PC
DEVELOPER: FIRAXIS
HYPER SCORE: 95%, HYPER 99

Civ III represents the peak of strategy gaming. Sid Meier's series has been nothing short of epic all the way through, but Civ III brought with it a new level of maturity and balance in approach. Whether you wanted to be an out and out warmonger, a diplomat... or somewhere in between, Civ III let you.

47 Crazy Taxi DREAMCAST
DEVELOPER: SEGA
HYPER SCORE: 92%, HYPER 78

A landmark arcade title. The unique premise broke arcade racing out of familiar territory and made every game potentially different. This was paired with great design for the environments, crisp, clean and fast visuals, great handling which incorporated tricks and a fun range of mini games.
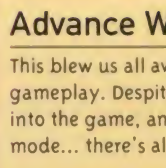
46 Advance Wars GBA
DEVELOPER: INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS
HYPER SCORE: 92%, HYPER 97

This blew us all away on release with its unbelievably rich turn-based strategy gameplay. Despite its complexity, the great tutorial system helped ease you into the game, and even when you've mastered the single player Campaign mode... there's always link-up. Fiendishly good gaming.
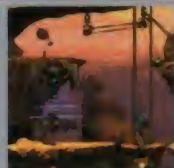
45 Abe's Oddysee PSONE
DEVELOPER: ODDWORLD INHABITANTS
HYPER SCORE: 92%, HYPER 48

In the midst of the 3D revolution, Abe spearheaded a 2D revival. Armed with brilliant design, an engaging world and unique lead character, and an emphasis on clever puzzles over traditional platforming, Abe highlighted what we've always known — it's all about the gameplay.
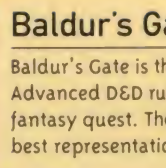
44 Baldur's Gate PC
DEVELOPER: BIOWARE
HYPER SCORE: 94%, HYPER 66

Baldur's Gate is the definition of classic western role playing. It took the Advanced D&D rule set and fully incorporated it into a wonderfully absorbing fantasy quest. The single player game was mammoth, and it's still one of the best representations of D&D ever to appear on a PC.

43 TimeSplitters 2 PS2/GCN/XBOX
DEVELOPER: FREE RADICAL
HYPER SCORE: 91%, HYPER 110

Free Radical greatly improved on the original TimeSplitters for the sequel. In addition to a reasonable Story mode (also playable in co-op) and a great Challenge mode, Free Radical backed it all up with a great multiplayer game. Fast, furious and with a huge number of game types options. Fragtastic.
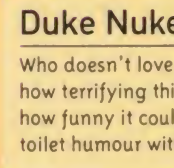
42 Duke Nukem 3D PC
DEVELOPER: 3D REALMS
HYPER SCORE: 95%, HYPER 33

Who doesn't love Duke Nukem 3D? After Doom and Doom II showed the world how terrifying this new "first person shooter" genre could be, Duke showed how funny it could be. Duke was also a true evolution of the genre, fusing toilet humour with some great level design and more advanced graphics.

41 Worms World Party PC
DEVELOPER: TEAM 17
HYPER SCORE: 80%, HYPER 93

Even if Worms 3 doesn't live up to expectations, we'll always have the 2D iterations to fall back on. From Worms 2 onwards, this is one of the most addictive games of all time. Amazingly deep strategy paired with hilarious animations and audio, and cute 2D graphics.

40
Burnout 2 PS2/GCN/XBOX
DEVELOPER: CRITERION GAMES
HYPER SCORE: 92%, HYPER 110 (ON PS2)

Until the Burnout games came along arcade racing had lost its edge. Fortunately, Burnout 2 is the embodiment of all that is wonderful about arcade racing — the blistering speed, the controlled powerslides, the relentless traffic to weave through and the adrenaline rush of boosting your way through a perfect lap.

39
Eternal Darkness GCN
DEVELOPER: SILICON KNIGHTS
HYPER SCORE: 92%, HYPER 109

Originally conceived for the N64, Eternal Darkness is a game that succeeds in fully immersing the player within a long branching storyline, utilising a well-integrated magic system and mind-bending insanity effects. A new breed of gaming.

38
Star Wars: Rogue Leader GCN
DEVELOPER: FACTOR 5
HYPER SCORE: 91%, HYPER 104

With ever improving gaming hardware comes the promise of more and more faithful recreations of some of our favourite pop culture phenomena. *Star Wars* is one such icon, and Rogue Leader is one such game. Factor 5 did an amazing job with this Rogue Squadron sequel. The wide variety of battles are bigger and more immersive than any other game based on the franchise.

37
Quake III Arena PC
DEVELOPER: ID SOFTWARE
HYPER SCORE: 95%, HYPER 77

We continue to hop on Quake III Arena semi-regularly here at the office. And each time it greets us like an old friend... wielding a rocket launcher. No other FPS has this level of depth in physics for experienced players to work with. Oh, and DM17 still rules!

36
Mario Tennis N64
DEVELOPER: CAMELOT
HYPER SCORE: 91%, HYPER 85

With so many other franchises, branching out into a tennis game or a golf game would be seen to be a cynical marketing exercise. But not so with Mario games. The reason? Because they're always so damn good! In fact, Mario Tennis is still the equal best tennis game of all time.

35
Shenmue DREAMCAST
DEVELOPER: SEGA
HYPER SCORE: 94%, HYPER 88

Shenmue was an important title for many reasons. It was part RPG thanks to large environments and lots of NPCs to talk to; it was part fighting game thanks to the 3D fight scenes; it was part mini game thanks to the Quick Timer Events; and it was part "avenge my father's death" Hong Kong kung fu film.

34
Doom II PC
DEVELOPER: ID SOFTWARE
HYPER SCORE: 94%, HYPER 12

What is there that we can say about Doom II that you don't know already? Although the original Doom was more revolutionary, Doom II cranked the action and design up a few notches. This was a truly evil game, in the best sense of the word. And who can forget the introduction of the double shottie. Good times.
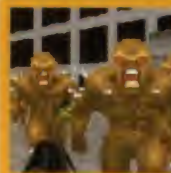
DOOM DAYS

"Doom 2 is claustrophobic friendly, as many levels are so outdoorsy you'll need a tent. Sprawling plazas, town squares, the burbs, it's all here for you to rush through in wonderment, destroying as you go. Dodge well and be swift and cunning. Inside, vast cavernous Keeps with threading tightrope mazes await. Steady balance under heavy fire is needed or a six story drop into a radioactive slime pit will result." – Ben Mansill, Hyper #12, 1994

33
Super Mario Advance 2 GBA
DEVELOPER: NINTENDO
HYPER SCORE: 93%, HYPER 104

Another landmark title here, albeit in its Super Nintendo guise, as opposed to the GBA form that we celebrate here. Super Mario World is still one of the most rewarding platform games of all time, thanks to Nintendo's impeccable combination of diverse abilities for the protagonist, creative level designs, and let's not forget - secrets, secrets and more secrets.

32
Tomb Raider PSONE/PC
DEVELOPER: EIDOS
HYPER SCORE: 95%, HYPER 39

When Tomb Raider came out, the whole world took notice. Lara Croft represented a feisty new breed of gaming icon. Forget your plumbers and hedgehogs, this girl could handle herself (not literally). Tomb Raider unleashed a new breed of 3D action adventure gaming.

31
Diablo II PC
DEVELOPER: BLIZZARD
HYPER SCORE: 90%, HYPER 84

Click. Click. click click click. Aaah, the sounds of the Diablo fiend. Diablo II effortlessly mixed lightweight (but still compelling) RPG elements with the kinds of hordes that made Doom II such must-play gaming. The moody atmosphere, polished mechanics and awesome multiplayer support make Diablo II a classic.

30 Command and Conquer PC

First came Dune 2, Westwood's hugely popular foray into the RTS genre. It wasn't until the epic battle between Nod and GDI in C&C, however, that Westwood really defined the RTS and captured the imagination of the gaming community. They refined the interface, improved the AI and crafted more compelling missions. A great game.

29 Warcraft II PC

Blizzard's games are well represented in our top 50 list, and deservedly so. Warcraft II was the game that boosted the fledgling RTS genre into the upper echelons of playability, as well as providing some of the best deathmatching ever. May the Orcs versus Human conflict live on!

28 Golden Sun GBA

SNES ports like Yoshi's Island and SMW are great, but there's nothing quite like a completely new title to make the GBA shine. And Golden Sun does just that. This is a game that, although fitting neatly into the old school Japanese RPG genre, just oozes style and design assurance. Polished through and through.

> **UT was more like a techni-colour swirl of flavours – so many sensations hitting the palate that at first it was overwhelming.**
>
> UNREAL TOURNAMENT RANKED 027

27 Unreal Tournament PC

Where Q3A was like the greatest vanilla ice cream you've ever tasted, UT was more like a technicolour swirl of flavours — so many sensations hitting the palate that at first it was overwhelming. With quality AI, innovative modes of play such as Domination and Assault, great visuals and a stack of maps, UT rocked hard.

26 StarCraft PC
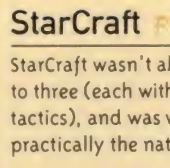
StarCraft wasn't about innovation — it simply expanded the number of sides to three (each with fundamentally different units, styles and thus potential tactics), and was wonderfully balanced. The result was a game that's practically the national sport of Korea! Long live battle.net!

25 Yoshi's Island GBA
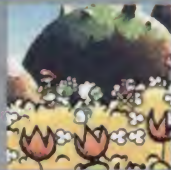
Yoshi's Island is quite simply 2D platform perfection. It has one of the most unique visual styles ever seen in the genre, charming character design and animations, a great set of abilities for Yoshi, sweet level design and as always in first party Nintendo titles, plenty of stuff to collect and secrets to uncover.

24 Banjo Kazooie N64

Banjo Kazooie took everything that was great about Mario 64 and made it er, greater. The combination of bear and bird was a stroke of genius, essentially doubling the number of moves available to the player and allowing for a greater variety of puzzles. Oh, and personality and humour ruled the day.

A Rare Bear

Banjo and Kazooie will return to the Xbox, as the characters remain the property of Rare games, not Nintendo.

23 Tekken 3 PSONE

Starting out as a pretender to the Virtua Fighter throne, each Tekken sequel became more and more its own game, and matured rapidly. By the time Tekken 3 hit, Namco had crafted one of the deepest fighters out there, and also wrung some great graphical performance out of the PlayStation. In fact, special big ups to Namco for maintaining near instantaneous load times.

22 Pokémon GAMEBOY

Although set within a conventional top down RPG landscape where you wandered around performing tasks, the catch was the fact that there were 151 pokémon to capture, train and fight, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. Undeniably charming and addictive.

21 Gran Turismo 3: A Spec PSONE

What could be more appropriate for number 21, than GT3, the game that helped the PlayStation 2 come of age? Before Gran Turismo 3 there had been impressive looking games, but nothing like this. GT3 blew all previous competitors out of the water with visuals that bordered on photo realistic, not to mention the depth in gameplay to back those gorgeous looks up.

Soul Man

"Soul Calibur is proof that the next-generation of console gaming is truly upon us. It offers the best overall package we've ever seen: great graphics, great sounds, fantastic controls and battle systems..."
– Kevin Cheung, Hyper #72
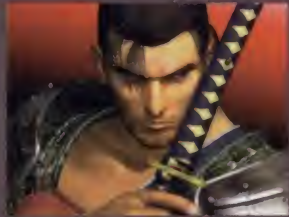
20 Counter-Strike PC

DEVELOPER: VALVE
HYPER SCORE: N/A

Counter-Strike is so addictive that it's life threatening. Scary but true. It's the classic battle - terrorists versus counter terrorists. Except the counter terrorists aren't being led by a monkey man puppeted by corporate interests behind the scenes.

19 AOE 2: Age of Kings PC

DEVELOPER: ENSEMBLE STUDIOS
HYPER SCORE: 90%, HYPER 74

Age of Kings is yet another classic in the ever-popular RTS genre. Age of Kings improved over the original in many ways, with better balance between civs and better missions. It was also a multiplayer triumph, with the Regicide mode (kill the opponent's king) in particular a Hyper favourite.

18 Soul Calibur DREAMCAST

DEVELOPER: NAMCO
HYPER SCORE: 96%, HYPER 72

We got the office Dreamcast out a couple of weeks ago just to see how well Soul Calibur stood against the test of time and were blown away... this game still rocks hard. Soul Calibur boasts exquisitely fast weapons based fighting and some of the sweetest visuals this side of Halo. Bring on SC2!

17 The Sims PC

DEVELOPER: MAXIS
HYPER SCORE: 94%, HYPER 78

Close your eyes. Forget all the crappy expansion packs and focus on the very first time you played The Sims. Chances are you were sucked into this charming microcosm of the real world, enchanted by the personality of the animations, the flexibility of building and furnishing, monitoring and urging. A very well designed slice of digital life.

16 Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 PSONE

DEVELOPER: NEVERSOFT
SCORED: 95%, HYPER 86

Tony Hawk 2 managed to take the original game and make it look average. More tricks, better animations, the addition of the manual, and much bigger and better designed levels were just a few of the drawcards. God we love that game!

15 Super Smash Bros Melee GCN

DEVELOPER: HAL LABS
HYPER SCORE: 93%, HYPER 105

SSBM simply blew the original out of the water and quickly became the ultimate Nintendo fanboy collectible. With 25 characters (including the brilliant Game & Watch man), a wealth of playmodes, almost 300 trophies to collect, sweet cartoony visuals running at 60fps and simplified yet rewardingly deep fighting mechanics, SSBM rules.

14 Deus Ex PC

DEVELOPER: ION STORM
HYPER SCORE: 97%, HYPER 81

Deus Ex is one of only a handful of games to receive the much coveted "highest score ever" in Hyper (97%), so it goes without saying that it's a very special game. Featuring a masterfully crafted plot that twists and turns, and some of the most freeform gameplay mechanics ever devised, this is the ultimate thinking man's shooter.
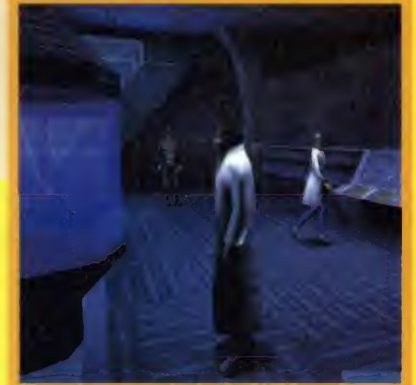
13 Half-Life PC

DEVELOPER: VALVE
HYPER SCORE: 97%, HYPER 62

Before Half-Life came along (with the notable exception of Goldeneye), the majority of first person shooters were just mindless blastfests with the only puzzle elements consisting of flipping levers and finding keys. Half-Life felt real, extremely interactive and atmospheric. A classic.

12 Super Mario Sunshine GCN

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO
HYPER SCORE: 93%, HYPER 109

Super Mario Sunshine saw Nintendo once again do their impeccably designed gameplay thang. This was a game brimming with life and vivacity, and the addition of a jetpack and vacation theme make this title much more than a simple expansion of Mario 64. A truly rewarding game, with all the personality and deft EAD gameplay one would expect.

11 Final Fantasy X PS2

DEVELOPER: SQUARE
HYPER SCORE: 94%, HYPER 103

Final Fantasy X saw the series achieve a new level of immersion thanks to amazing visuals and a first for the series — full speech. There were also notable changes to the magic system (love the Sphere Grid), the introduction of a full game within the game — blitzball, and let's not forget how cool the Aeons are. Final Fantasy X wasn't just a game, it was an event.

Mario Kart 64 N64

DEVELOPER: RARE
HYPER SCORE: 96%, HYPER 59

The N64's best games were often more than just A grade titles, they were the games with universal appeal, the games that set the standard and that brought friends together for all night gaming sessions. Mario Kart 64 may have been inferior to Super Mario Kart in some ways, but the addition of four player splitscreen racing was the feature that ensured it would become a classic title. Awesome handling, a good selection of tracks, and that irresistible Nintendo charm. We still play this one!

"One of the three of four best games I have ever played... If we had a 'fun' rating here at Hyper, MK64 would receive 100%... irresponsibly gorgeous... Yes! Yes! YES! I love it!" – David Wildgoose, Hyper #59

10

Resident Evil GCN/PSONE

DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
HYPER SCORE: 92%, HYPER 108 (GCN)
90%, HYPER 33 (PSONE)

Resident Evil took the formula pioneered by Alone in the Dark and moved it into B grade zombie flick territory. The original was scary for its time, but the recently released remake on GameCube would have to be one of the most terrifying experiences of all time. Not only did it sport amazing backgrounds, effects and high poly enemies, but Capcom have given the gameplay a workover too. We're talking new areas, new puzzles, new weapons and new enemies. A seminal PSone game and one of the most visually impressive and mature games thus far on GameCube.

"Just try using the bazooka on a zombie, it's fan-bloody-tastic!" – Amos Wong, Hyper #33

09

Perfect Dark N64

DEVELOPER: RARE
HYPER SCORE: 97%, HYPER 82

Perfect Dark saw Rare shed the Bond license and move into their own wildly imaginative sexy spy fantasy. Perfect Dark topped Goldeneye in just about every conceivable way. The single player mission (on hard) featured countless objectives per level, a truly non-linear feel, great enemy AI and a wide variety of play styles. Rare went to town on the multiplayer angle too. You could also play through the entire single player game in co-op, and the deathmatch options set the standard for all good console FPS games to follow.

"Not only does it drastically improve on everything that made GoldenEye great, but it adds so many exciting new modes of gameplay that it absolutely dwarfs the original." – Roland Flanagan, Hyper #82

08

Metal Gear Solid PSONE

DEVELOPER: KONAMI
HYPER SCORE: 93%, HYPER 65

Metal Gear Solid had it all: a compelling storyline that actually played a significant role in the game; a cool lead character; some of the sharpest graphics ever seen on PSone; memorable boss battles; and what felt like an entirely new breed of gameplay — stealth action. In Metal Gear Solid, you were encouraged to be sneaky, and environments were non-linear to emphasise this. And the use of the in-game engine for all the cutscenes worked wonders for keeping the player immersed in the world of the game.

"A true masterpiece of a game that redefines the action genre. Hideo Kojima, we salute you... One of the smartest games in a long time." – Kevin Cheung, Hyper #65

07

Halo XBOX

DEVELOPER: BUNGIE SOFTWARE
HYPER SCORE: 96%, HYPER 102

Halo — what a classic. At its heart a run and gun shooter, Halo stood out from the crowd thanks to amazing physics, a great variety of level types, unpredictable enemy AI that meant that every battle was unique, and jaw dropping graphics that are still well ahead of the console pack. Better still, Halo came packing more maps and multiplayer modes than you could point a boomstick at. Co-op through the single player game was also a joy to behold. An incredibly polished game, and more than worthy of the number six spot. To think Halo 2 is only around the corner...

"The best console shooter ever, by a long shot." – Eliot Fish, Hyper #102

06

Final Fantasy VII PSONE

DEVELOPER: SQUARE
HYPER SCORE: 95%, HYPER 49

Despite the many advances in the genre and in technology, Final Fantasy VII is still, more often than not, the measuring stick for all other console RPGs. There are several reasons for this — FFVII was the first RPG to bust out of the sprite-based top down mold of the 16bit RPG landscape and into more mature territory. It was also a huge critical and commercial success, which invariably establishes a product as a benchmark. Not only that but it grabbed the new PlayStation technology by the balls and greatly surpassed the expectations of gamers. Whether it was the amazing summon spells, the crisp FMV or the ultra-detailed backdrops, FFVII was a technical feat for its day, and presented the RPG genre in an all-new light. Most importantly however, it told a cool story. FFVII was set in a gritty cyberpunk future, marking quite a change from the pure fantasy landscape so familiar for the genre. FFVII still reigns as the king of the Final Fantasy series.

> "One of the most amazing RPG experiences the world has ever seen." – Dan Toose, Hyper #49
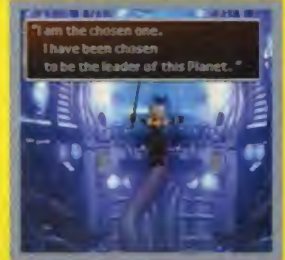
Reanimated
Despite many rumours to the contrary, you could never bring Aerith back to life. She's alive and well (and now speaks!) in Kingdom Hearts though.

Super Mario 64 N64

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO
HYPER SCORE: 95%, HYPER 41

There have been plenty of influential games and landmark titles over the course of videogame history, but very few, if any, have achieved the heights of Super Mario 64. To place it in context, Nintendo had a lot riding on this game. It was the flagship title for their new machine and a test of their new technology. It was the game that would prove whether they could take their beloved franchises from two dimensions into three. And it was an important title for the industry as a whole, during a transitional period between not only console generations, but between dimensions as well.

Fortunately, when Super Mario 64 finally arrived, it was clear that Nintendo had succeeded — and then some. Super Mario 64 was, and still is, one of the most charming games of all time. From the second you hear "it's a me Mario!" the spell was cast. Super Mario 64 was a revolution in both looks and control. It retained that classic Mario feel, but gave us huge worlds to explore and amazingly intuitive gameplay. The controls were tight, the graphics were simple but highly effective, and the fun factor was through the roof. Simply put, Super Mario 64 was a masterwork executed with aplomb (or should we say a plumber?).

> "Super Mario 64 rocks hard. It is probably the closest thing so far to a perfectly developed game." – Nino Kalogeropoulos, Hyper #41

It's a me!
The voice of Mario is a man named Charles Martinet. He's not at all Italian, but in fact an American actor who was in The Game (1997).

Legend Of Zelda:
THE OCARINA OF TIME/MAJORA'S MASK N64

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO
HYPER SCORE: 94%, HYPER 64 (OOT)
92%, HYPER 87 (MM)

Despite sharing the same graphics engine, lead character and many moves, it's quite amazing just how different, yet compelling, these two games are. With Ocarina Of Time (OoT), Nintendo took Link and the land of Hyrule into 3D with stunning results. The overworld was absolutely massive, we got to see Link grow up, we faced off against one of the coolest bad guys ever and we were able to use Link's ocarina to warp and beat puzzles. OoT was also a triumph in terms of logical design. The auto target Z trigger system worked a treat and Link was a joy to control. Fans couldn't believe just how well the spirit of the series had been transferred to a new polygonal world.

Majora's Mask was a slightly more difficult proposition for Nintendo after the triumph of OoT. How to keep the gameplay fresh after already providing such a definitive update to the saga on N64? The answer lay in story and gameplay innovation. The basic premise was that Link had 72 hours to stop the moon from crashing into the new world of Termina. Manipulating and managing time became an integral part of the puzzle solving process, and combined with the

> "Zelda is a magical experience."
> – Kevin Cheung, Hyper #64

addition of masks really changed the gameplay dynamic.

Grand Theft Auto 3 PS2

DEVELOPER: DMA DESIGN
HYPER SCORE: 96%, HYPER 99

Although the first two Grand Theft Auto games enjoyed something of a cult following, no one was prepared for just how big the third in the series would be. Sporting an all new fully 3D world, this was one of those success stories that proves that marketing isn't everything. GTA3 let the gameplay do the marketing, and it wasn't long before word of mouth turned GTA3 into one of the biggest success stories in modern gaming.

Whilst the media likes to harp on about the fact that you can run people down, commit wanton acts of mindless violence and generally run riot in a virtual world, they are, as always, entirely missing the point. Sure, random acts of violence are a big part of the fun, but it's the freedom in structure that drives the gameplay in GTA3.

It's up to you to choose how to approach missions, and it's this freedom to experiment that makes GTA3 so compelling. Plus, at any one time, there are plenty of side missions to take on, mini games to play, secrets to find, insane stunts to bust and general mayhem to enjoy. Will there be a GTA4? We're not sure. It seems

> "The longer you play GTA3, the more it continues to surprise and delight you with moments of stunning coolness." – Kevin Cheung, Hyper #99

that the follow up to GTA: Vice City will be GTA: San Andreas, so we might be waiting a while yet for a full blown sequel.

Goldeneye 007 N64

DEVELOPER: RARE
HYPER SCORE: SCORE: 95%, HYPER 50

Well well well. Who would have thought - a licensed videogame voted as the best game of all time by you, our beloved readers? Fortunately, Goldeneye is the one licensed title that stands above all others. Not only did it do the Bond license justice, but it pushed both the N64 and the FPS genre forward.

Indeed, ever since its release Goldeneye has been held up by Nintendo fans and gamers alike as the pinnacle of the FPS genre. Goldeneye was always the argument in the playground as to why the N64 beat the PlayStation. Goldeneye was always THE GAME that spearheaded multiplayer games nights. Indeed, Goldeneye STILL IS one of the best-designed, most entertaining and just plain influential console FPS titles of all time.

For a start, Goldeneye's single player game really took the genre somewhere new. Instead of a focus on inane mission goals such as "collect the key to open the door", Bond had objectives that seemed integrated into the world of a secret agent. There was a focus on gadgets, using stealth over brawn to get through sections, disabling security systems, hacking computers and so on. And some of the missions were just so memorable. Who could forget the opening dam mission? Or popping that helpless bad guy sitting on the toilet in order to get out of the vent system!

> **Goldeneye's multiplayer option really sets it above other games on the machine, especially where long-term playability is concerned**
>
> REN HOEK, HYPER 50

Rare worked hard to ensure it all came together. The controls were straightforward yet innovative, allowing you to duck and lean out from corners. The weapon selection covered all bases and even included a sniper rifle with zoom. The enemy AI, while inclined to run blindly into rooms and get stuck on doors, was still a step above all others at the time, as they'd duck, roll and sidestep out of the way. This was complemented by hilarious idle animations and the introduction of body part specific death animations — shooting an enemy in the head was an instant kill, whereas a shot in the foot would just send him hopping around for a while. It made the game all the more realistic and immersive.

Goldeneye was just so polished too. From the ability to shoot a guard's cap off, through to writing your name on a wall with a sub machine gun, the small details were there. It looked great for the time as well, with environments that felt much more solid than in other games.

Perhaps the most important touch in the single player game was Rare's inclusion of extra objectives on the higher difficulty levels. If you wanted to play through on oo Agent, not only would the guards be smarter, but you'd have a whole host of extra (and often very difficult) objectives to complete too. You were rewarded for playing through at this level too — extra characters, single player levels, multiplayer maps and cheats galore. But you had to be damn good to be able to do it.

It's the multiplayer that is the hallmark of this game, however, and it didn't take long for even the skeptics to warm to playing splitscreen. The fact that you couldn't jump, had a radar, and could simply glance at your opponent's screen to see where they were gave this game a very different deathmatch feel to the PC shooters of the time, and gamers around the world loved it. Rare also included a very good range of levels, as well as the option to choose rules and weapon sets.

Since its release, Goldeneye has gone on to attain almost mythical status. We think that in truth it's a mix of nostalgia and the game's excellence that has seen it rise to the very top of our poll, but Goldeneye is certainly worthy of accolades. It is a hugely influential game and the original thinking man's FPS. The entire videogame world is better off for the existence of Goldeneye.

SPY KIDS

Bond goes from strength to strength - now he's agent number one in your eyes! To be honest, we never would have picked it...

THRUSTMASTER 5.1 SOUND SYSTEM HOME CINEMA

Thrustmaster
Price: $399 • **Available:** Now

>> What's this? Thrustmaster are making speakers now? Well I never. It's probably quite a smart move actually, because with the advanced audio capabilities of the modern console, an affordable 5.1 setup could really be considered a peripheral. And that's exactly what we have here — an affordable 5.1 setup.

SOUND FROM ALL AROUND

This is very much a system for the layman. If you don't want to have to stress over setting up surround sound and just want something that's plug and play, then look no further. Thrustmaster have ensured that connecting these puppies to your gaming system is completely straightforward.

For both PS2 and Xbox you can run the sound into the Thrustmaster control panel via the supplied optical cable (although for Xbox you'll need the advanced AV pack to use the optical out, but that's a small additional price to pay). GameCube, on the other hand, is a slightly different story. Apparently the PAL "analogue output" on the back also carries a digital audio signal, meaning that you can plug one of the audio out RCAs into the Thrustmaster SPDIF input (they've labelled it digital coaxial) for full surround sound. On a decent DVD player you should be able to use one of these solutions too. Indeed, the trickiest part of the whole setup procedure is positioning the speakers correctly relevant to your TV and couch! It's a hard life...

Once everything's plugged in, you can press the "test" button on the remote or the control panel and the system will run through each of the speakers so you know they're all working properly. From there it's on to gameland! We tested out both the Xbox and PS2 through optical out and the difference between TV stereo sound and full surround is massive. The warmth of having sound from all around sure made a nice change for the games room!

That said, we have to make one point clear — this is an absolutely entry level 5.1 system.

MEETS THE BARE MINIMUM

This is no-frills home theater, and can in no way compete with a proper setup — even the Logitech Z-680's run rings around this setup (hence the $500 price difference). The satellite speakers do the job, but don't produce particularly exceptional sound, and the subwoofer just meets the bare minimum. In short,

You are part of the Thrustmaster alliance...

this system is good value for money, but don't expect it to do wonders. We should also mention that build construction isn't exactly this system's high point. When connecting the "G9" cable (between the control panel and sub) we found that the pins weren't quite set right — so we had to re-adjust them before they would fit. The control panel also has a habit of falling over when slightly bumped!

The look of the system is a little weird too. Where most systems are going for smooth lines and curves these days, this one is very boxy. The control panel for one looks like something from Darth Vader's personal sound system. It's not ugly, but it's not particularly stylish either. Same goes for the remote (but hey — it's nice to have!)

Overall, Thrustmaster's first entry into the speaker market is hardly exceptional, but does represent reasonable value for money. Ease of setup is definitely the big plus, so if you want cheap surround sound — check 'em out. <<

HARMAN KARDON SOUNDSTICKS

Harman Kardon
Price: $499 • **Available:** Now

>> Harman Kardon have outdone themselves with this latest effort. Their new SoundStick speakers would have to be among the most unique speakers we've ever seen, and to be honest we were really skeptical about how good the sound quality from them would be. After all, it's not often you see speaker casing made from perspex! The good news is that the SoundSticks worked a treat. The bad news is that they aren't cheap!

REMARKABLY CRISP

As you can tell from the design aesthetic, these were designed with Apple products in mind. Basically any USB equipped Apple product (such as iBook, iMac, PowerBook, Power Macintosh G3 and Power Mac G4) can be hooked up to these babies in a very straightforward plug and play way.

They're also fully PC compatible, but only certain PC users will really be able to use them. Because they connect via USB, they don't utilise your machine's soundcard. So if you have a high-end sound card such as an Audigy, it would be completely wasted through these speakers. On the other hand, if you have a laptop or an old soundcard in your PC, the SoundSticks would work a treat.

As you can see from the images, this is a 2.1 system. The satellite speakers have four vertically aligned tweeters and produce a remarkably crisp and well-defined sound palette. The sub was the real surprise though. For such a bizarre looking piece of equipment it performed really well. Obviously it's not designed to be pushed too hard, but in both music and gaming its response was noticeable and clear. We like.

That said, you're really paying for the unique design when it comes to these speakers. $500 is a lot to pay for a three-piece desktop setup, but it would undoubtedly look incredible alongside an iMac or laptop, and the looks are well backed up by excellent sound quality.

TECHNICAL SPECS:

SYSTEM:
Frequency range: 44Hz-20kHz
Power Consumption: 4 W idle, 65 W maximum
Interface: USB

SUBWOOFER:
Transducers: (1) 6 - inch woofer
Amplifier Output Power: 20 Wrms
Dimensions: 9.15" (232 mm) diam. x 10.16" (258 mm)
Weight: 4.93 pounds = 2.24 kg

SATELLITE:
Transducers: (4) 1 - inch full range per channel
Amplifier output power: 10 Wrms per channel
Dimensions: 2" (50.8 mm) diam. x 10" (254 mm)
Weight: 1.47 pounds = 0.67 kg

winwinwin

WIN RESIDENT EVIL ZERO!

FOR GCN

■ Resident Evil is back with its first brand new story since Resident Evil 3 on the PlayStation, but this time it's Nintendo fans who can leave the lights on! Resident Evil Zero has all the classic Survival Horror action and suspense that you come to expect from Capcom these days, and we have five copies to give away!

To be in with a chance to win a copy, answer this question:

>> **Name the two lead characters in Resident Evil Zero.**

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

WIN PRIDE FC!

FOR PS2
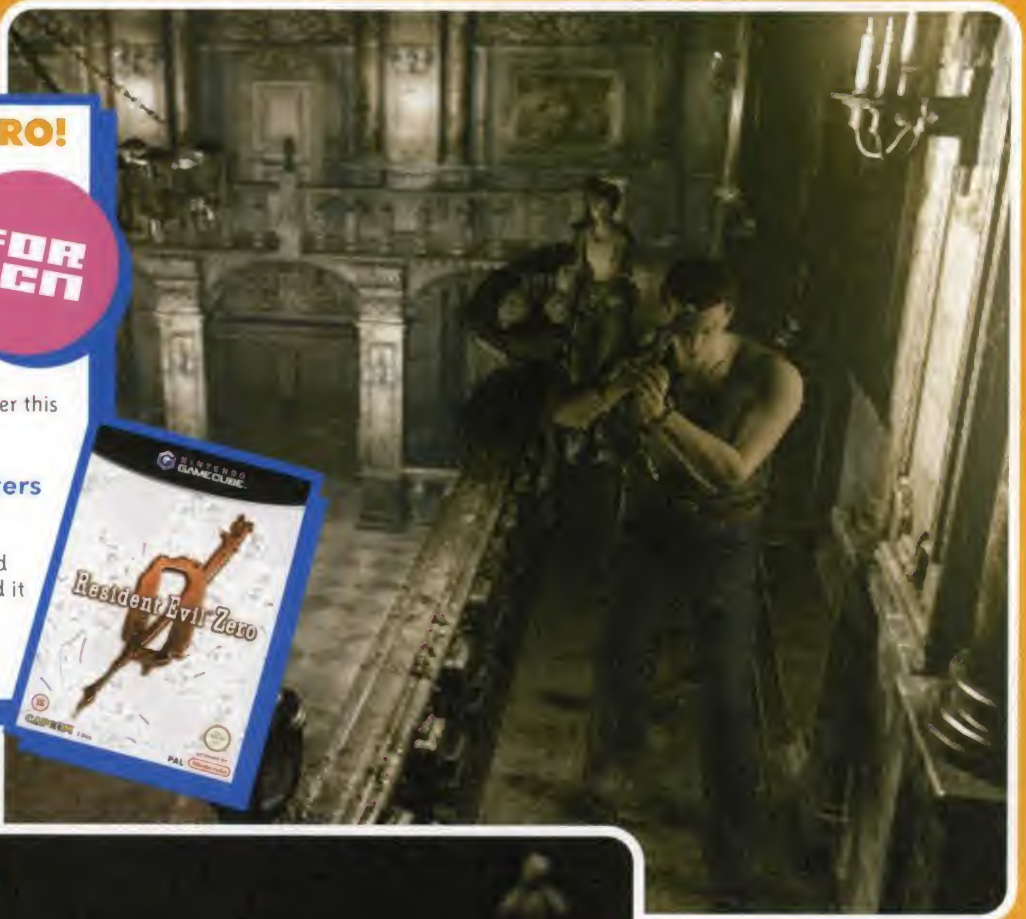
■ Got some pent-up anger you need to vent? In that case you'd better get your hands on a copy of Pride Fighting Championship before you get arrested! This is hardcore fighting — the kind of stuff they don't show on television (well, not in Australia anyhow). Use any style you choose, and win! THQ are offering five copies to Hyper readers to win.

To be in with a chance to win one, answer this question:

>> **Who was Cassius Clay best known as?**

Put your answer, along with your name and address, on the back of an envelope and send it to: **PRIZE FIGHTER, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016**. Biff!

COMPS

30 >>HYPER

Coming Soon On PlayStation®2....

Tom Clancy's
SPLINTER
CELL™
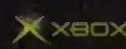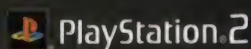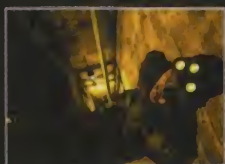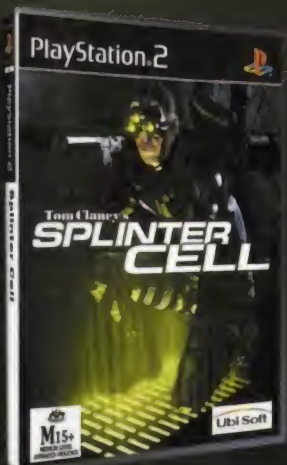
Meet Sam Fisher at: **www.splintercell.com**

www.ubi.com/uk

Okay! Get the three amigos on the set!

THE MOVIES

>> PC/CONSOLES

CATEGORY: Sim >> **PLAYERS:** 1-TBA >>
PUBLISHER: Lionhead/TBA >> **AVAILABLE:** 2003

Peter Molyneux talks to Hyper about making it big
on the silver screen… and on your computer monitor!

DA MOOFIES

This town ain't big enough... for your haircut!

The making of A Fist Full of Fists.

A trip to meet Peter Molyneux is never a boring one, and when you get him talking about something he's obviously very much obsessed with it can be quite a revealing insight into the mind of a games designer who has brought us many classics over the years. Just when some may be saying that Molyneux's creative juices must be starting to dry up a little, out pops a simple concept mixed with a few unique ideas and we have another game with that Molyneux spark of something special. So how does someone like Peter Molyneux come up with such new ideas?

LIGHTS, CAMERA...

"The luxury of owning your own company allows me a little more scope than the average person. In January 2002, I woke up in the morning and had this one thought in my mind and it

was 'the movies' — a concept for this game. I asked myself 'why has no one done a game about making movies, about running a movie studio and taking the studio from the silent era in the 1920s right up to the modern day?'"

After this inspirational moment, it was not long before the concept had been turned into code, along with a hugely detailed design document. Although there is still plenty of time before it's finished, The Movies is already looking superb.

You can imagine that putting this kind of concept into a fully functional game could be strewn with problems, but nothing seems to bother Peter or his team at Lionhead. To cut a long story short, within three weeks of Molyneux coming up with the concept, the team had been set up and they were working on the artwork. The unique thing about The Movies is that you not only make movies, but you get to build the movie studio — like the scriptwriters' offices and the movie sets (and

those sets can stay there for other segments of the game — why build a set for only one film?) You will also need to hire scriptwriters, directors, actors... Now this might sound very straight forward, but it is the quality of your actors, directors and scripts that make a movie successful, and merely having all the ingredients is not enough — you need detail, style and innovative ideas — as you would if you were creating a real successful movie! Getting the best writer as well as the best producer might be the ingredient for success, but early on you'll have to watch your meagre resources. It'll be a while before you're hailed as the next Spielberg!

But it's not just all about creating art. While your movie is being shot, you still have to carry on running the studio, hiring other scriptwriters, actors, etc. By

adjusting a number of onscreen bars/controls you can also change the style of movie that you're making as it is being shot — for instance, turning it from tame to really violent. A movie in the 1930s didn't have much violence, whilst one made nowadays has a lot, so you tinker about with different aspects of the movie making process to nail the correct approach for your target audience. Options for romantic scenes and innocent kissing to some X rated bits (sadly, you won't get to see the hot scenes getting filmed!) can also be manipulated. Will the first offer of female nudity give you a box office success or will it turn off the audience?

ACTION! VIOLENCE! SEX!

"If you build a western set and you put it down in a graveyard, complete with a jail and a bank, bog standard things,

> ✦✦ It's a question of putting the right formula together even down to creating your own film star complete with body parts ✦✦

then you try to shoot a romantic western where they are all 'lovey dovey' and they don't shoot each other and nothing eventful happens, merely a formulised movie will be created. Merely grabbing a set and a script is not enough — each will have its own influence and so mixing the wrong things will result in a rubbish film!

"Basically you decide on the genre of your film. First, you get the scriptwriter writing the film. Later on you get to buy scripts in, sort out sets, actors, etc. It's essentially Theme Park but at the movies. Obviously there is massive potential for getting endorsements. But I keep asking myself...why has no one ever done this before?" We're wondering the same thing.

Now as you read this you may be asking questions yourself like — can I edit the film? Can I have a scene where you do this and that, etc? Whilst elements of the gameplay are being chopped and changed as the game is being developed, the answers are — probably! Needless to say, with games like Theme Park under his belt the many intricacies that go into creating a total experience in an enjoyable and imaginative way without losing any realism will not be lost in this latest presentation. Molyneux is literally bursting with ideas, and it will all

come down to what makes it into the game in time. There will be a host of individual options that you can change, but cleverly the team has made sure you don't have to decide on the really fiddly aspects of the lighting and camera work but instead you make decisions on the people or "crew" who decide on all of those more tedious aspects of the filmmaking process.

But does Molyneux himself understand the basics of the filmmaking process? "The theory behind Theme Park was this: do a simulation and only simulate the bits that the general public really know about. Like you didn't worry about where all the sewage went and where the chips came from. All you worried about was where the rides were and where the hamburger stands were and how much you charged people and that's the same with the movie theory. You don't worry about the fact that you've got a best boy and a dolly, and those things we see in the credits but haven't got a clue what they do. You worry about the stars, the directors and the sets — because everyone knows that they are real core things that make a movie. I still to this day would struggle to tell you what a producer does! I kind of know it's something to do with money but I don't know whether they have

influence on sets or actors, etc. The great thing about 'The Movies' is that everyone knows the progression. They know it started with the silent era, went to the black white era, went to the talkies, then to colour, then finally to the spectacular blockbusters. There's no unnecessary explaining to do."

STAR POWER
Ageing star actors will even continue their careers past their prime, and understanding who could be a liability or still a star attraction is up to the player. You can dress them in any clothes or costumes you wish, not forgetting that all these decisions cost money. Can you believe that you can even build a plastic surgery unit to give ageing stars a good makeover to get a few more films out of them? Far fetched? Well... just look at Hollywood.

Whilst the actual footage and what you will get to see of the film is still being decided, every film you make will get saved to your hard disk, and you'll even get to trade your movie

trailers with friends. Although it may be hard to get your head around the way the concept is being executed in the game, you really only have to think of the way Peter created titles like Theme Hospital and Theme Park to appreciate the amount of thought that will be going into The Movies. In terms of game features, this could far outweigh any of Molyneux's earlier sims.

"Initially, The Movies will come with a list of defaulted themes — seven in all — but the list of clever ideas and realistic events included could go on forever. One very important question that we needed to ask ourselves was: how do you quantify a successful film when you are playing the game? We talked a lot about this. We have one big formula to determine how successful

Make watchable *Star Wars* prequels!

The new "Clint Westwood" film is underway.

Lights! Camera! Cocaine! Action!

a film is. If you look how successful war films are after say the Vietnam War then you will see they were not that popular. Movies after World War II were very successful because we won. If you do a movie on the same set again and again it will be less successful. If you put the wrong actor in the wrong movie, again, it will not succeed. We have a massive formula, a little like what went into Theme Park. When the movie is being made you can read what the critics are saying and you have awards ceremonies, etc. It's a question of putting the right formula together even down to creating your own film star complete with body parts — re-invent a new Marilyn Monroe if you wish! You can negotiate to bring in a famous star for a part or use an unknown actor by utilising your scouting network and turn them into a star. Pressures on an actor/actress will also be taken into account if their film fails, and alcoholism or drug dependences could even be a problem you may need to deal with. A large entourage could also be associated with an actor — and all this will end up costing you. These are only some of the parameters implemented in the game."

It sounds like Peter Molyneux's The Movies could itself be a real blockbuster in the making. <<

>> SHAKIL 'SHAK' AHMED

The MUD

Text addict? Like your games to be full of gratuitous text? Fulfil your textual desires!

timeless realm. A sense of decency and decorum prevails, and a feeling of kinship with those who, like you, seek their destiny in The Land. There are exits in all directions, each of which leads into a wisping, magical mist of obvious teleportative properties...
*look
Elizabethan tearoom.
This cosy, Tudor room is where all British Legends adventures start. Its exposed oak beams and soft, velvet-covered furnishings provide it with the ideal atmosphere in which to relax before venturing out into that strange, timeless realm. A sense of decency and decorum prevails, and a feeling of kinship with those who, like you, seek their destiny in The Land. There are exits in all directions, each of which leads into a wisping, magical mist of obvious teleportative properties...
*west
Beaten track near cliff.
You are at the end of a rough track. There is a dangerous cliff to the west marked 'Lovers' leap'.
*west
As you approach the edge of the cliff the rock starts to crumble. Hurriedly you retreat as you feel the ground begin to give way under your feet!
*leap
You are splattered over a very large area, or at least most of you is. The rest of your remains are, even now, being eaten by the seagulls (especially your eyes). If you'd have looked properly before you leaped you might have decided not to jump!
Persona updated.
Would you like to play again?

Shite, better break out the GeForce 5.

R ight now you're probably thinking one of three things: (a) Pfft! (b) Wassat? Either of these two leaves us with a choice — to beat you around the head with a red herring, or to show you where to go to learn the folly of your ways (or really EARN that pfft and perhaps an extra F or three for emphasis, you Britney's Dance Beat [GBA] lovin' fffreak!). Oh, or (c) — you're already too busy playing a MUD to

really pay any attention to the issue in your hands. And there's a large chance your marriage is in ruins and you've forgotten everything about the outside world (except for your Hyper subscription, it seems), because the 'plain text' worlds of MUD take you far, far beyond the limitations of any of today's 3D graphical online games, calling upon that most magnificent and sublime of human capacities — the imagination.

The acronym stands for Multi-User Dungeon and was the 1979 brainchild of Roy Trubshaw and Richard Bartle, but that's beside the point. There are a host of other acronyms for MUD variants out there, MOOs, MUCKs et al, but they can be hard-boiled down to the same old thing, MU* or MUD. This is not a history lesson — just us putting the long hard miles trawlin' through the thousands of MUDs out there (in all sorts of strange places too - *www.tigerden.com/ infopage/muck/index.html* - but you really don't want to know!) to skim off and serve up the cream of the crop.

"You haven't lived til you've died in MUD!" - *MUD1* aka *British Legends*

That was the first slogan for the first MUD, and in its current incarnation as British Legends, it's still the best for people who like beginnings, those wishing they'd lived in the hippy 60s, or anyone else seeking either a mildly confusing or an enlightening spiritual journey. There is no class, race or clan system, and your

LegendMUD via Cup-O MUD

Seafood currently residing at Storage

What would you like to do now?
----
[1] Enter the game
[2] Return to the main screen
[3] Enter a full description
[0] Exit LegendMUD

Your choice? Type 'look faq' for some answers to common questions

Der Phoenix
This is the large common room of Der Phoenix, the local inn. Several tables are set up around the room, and there are chairs set in front of a large fireplace. Behind the long counter is hanging a large painting depicting a glittering red and gold bird surrounded by ashes.
[Exits: n s]
A directory board holding both news and 'welcome' information stands here.
Erich is here, wiping the bar.
Seafood has entered the game.

(HP:20/20 MA:100/100 MV:100/100);
You hiccup in his face - how rude!

(HP:20/20 MA:100/100 MV:100/100);
You wave happily.

(HP:20/20 MA:100/100 MV:100/100);

Hardcore text, baby. Hot text all day and night!

character is defined by your actions in a magical, unique world. An attempt to summarise it in the one line "Drop pretty stuff in swamp to gain xp, become arch-wizard and dominate game!" just doesn't do it justice.
Visit: *www.british-legends.com*

"The world the way they thought it was" - *LegendMUD*

With an original setting that covers three different eras (ancient, medieval and industrial) and their various stages, intricately interwoven such that you can even time travel within the same location between eras, Legend shows the world as the populace of the time

believed it to be. Magic requires learning arcane syllables pronounced in the right grammar and syntax, not pre-programmed macros, character moods can be customised to display your temperament as you speak, and you can pilot a wide variety of

You won't be waiting for it to load...

MU* YOU TOO.

>> It goes without saying that you're not going to need a beefy PC to run a MUD. First off, you'll need a telnet client. Although you could just use the telnet proggie located in your default OS directory or even run a number of MUDs through your browser, you'd be happier with a MUD client tailored to your system and the pro bono advantages they provide. For Windows, we recommend zMUD, available at *www.zuggsoft.com* while for Mac users we recommend Rapscallion, available from *www.rapscallion.cok.uk*. Unix fans should grab TinyFugue from *tf.tcp.com/~hawkeye/tf/*

LINKS

Click. Aaaugh! Curious? (Not necessarily in that order...)
discworld.imaginary.com
www.skotos.net/games/eternal-city
forsakenlands.org
www.mud2.com
www.activeworlds.com

You want me to caption these??

Malcolm, you're being cruel!

vehicles across time. Legend was also one of the first classless games on the net, with a wide variety of skills and abilities for developing your character — and you can even build and furnish a wide range of housing, from a cottage in Sherwood forest to a Spanish villa in Viceroyal Peru. Legend is renowned for its helpful and more mature audience and has won numerous accolades.

Visit: *www.legendmud.org*

The #1 MUD on the net - *Achaea: Dreams of Divine Lands*

The fantasy MUD Achaea downplays the traditional monster bashing culture that most MUDs revolve around, and instead orbits around player vs player themes,

be they combat, politics or even economics. Not all need participate in the larger scheme of things, while it is possible to rise to the occasion, be elected and flaunt your influence over worldly affairs and global dynamics. This doesn't detract from the combat system, though, which is incredibly realistic, providing afflicted 'states' depending on where the damage is done (e.g. a concussion). The 'honors' system leaves your character marked for particularly difficult achievements, and you can even get engaged and married (with the elaborate bloodline system, they might turn out to be a distant cousin!), settling down to your own little shop and a customisable house. You can move in three

dimensions, be it underground, branch to branch or flight, tailor clothing and a complex weather system can impair your vision during a blizzard (among other things!). One amusing automated feature of Achaea is that the more intoxicated your character is, the less intelligible your speech becomes. Achaea has staff who work on it full time, and while a few aspects of the game require purchasing credits with it being possible to have something increase or decrease in value, they don't really interfere with gameplay. Achaea has been ranked as by far the #1 most popular and most recommended MUD all over the web for quite a while now.

Visit: *www.achaea.com*

FREE, AND NOT 'JUST WORTH EVERY PENNY'.

>> How's MUD in your eyes now? Blinked, checked them out and still not convinced? Pffft. Visit www.mudconnect.com for a list of some of the other most popular MUDs out there. Read up on how MUDs are the backbone of online gaming and discover that the underdog is still commercially viable and can bring the millions rolling in at *www.mud.co.uk/richard/ edgapr98.htm* or even inspire a host of PhD thesises online, one at *juggle5.50megs.com/WORK /publications/thesis/Thesis.html*. If you're truly a lost cause, just head to *www.tecmogames.com/home/ doax/doax.html* (go there anyway!). We still love you. Now where'd I put that red herring...

Win Stuff ! Visit http://realgamer.com.au for details

are you
a
realgamer?

realgamer.com.au

AGATA BUDINSKA

>>Dear readers, by the time you read this, I'll be gone.

Where? Let's just say it involves lounging around on some beach in South East Asia, probably enjoying some local food and drink, and not doing much with computers for a while. Don't get me wrong, I'll probably be sitting in an Internet Café every morning, reading my email before I've ordered my breakfast, but the computer won't be mine and there will be no games. No, not even a GBA. I'm going cold turkey.

I came to realise today that cold turkey will mean no Popcap. I first spotted this site as an ad at PVP Online. Since then? Alchemy, Candy Train, Noah's Ark, Bookworm – let's just say I've played enough of these games that I'm starting to dream about them (this hasn't happened since my unholy addiction to Yoshi Tetris on Game Boy). This could also be because I'm playing them right before I go to bed. Let's hope that's it. But as most Internet café's in the area that I'm going to charge about a dollar for 5 minutes, I doubt I'll be able to justify it. Plus I'll probably be too busy having healthy outdoor fun to worry about it. Should do wonders for my RSI.

I'm quite impressed with myself at this one. Preparations are in hand, meaning my Neopet's will be booked into the Neolodge so that they don't starve, and I'm removing myself from every mailing list that I'm on (this should hopefully ensure that important messages get through). My vacation message is ready and I've even organised for Season 7 episodes of Buffy to be stockpiled for me until my return. I just need to find someone to water my chilli plant and pay the cable bill for me and I'll be set.

Am I forgetting anything?

No?

See ya!

Links

MIDDLE EARTH MAD-LIBS

www.barrowdowns.com/MadLibs.asp

>> If you ever enjoyed those create-a-story games at school where each person would write a line of text and fold the paper over, then you'll no doubt enjoy something as silly as these Mad Libs. The idea is to enter a selection of nouns, numbers, verbs, adjectives and so on, which will then be threaded into a particular passage from one of the *Lord of the Rings* books. The results are sometimes hilarious, sometimes bizarre, but endlessly entertaining. See what you can come up with.
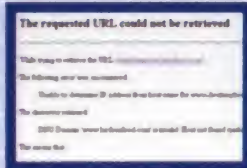
Something's Not Right Here... We tried all month, but we just couldn't seem to log on to this website! Ahh well, another day...

BOB FROM ACCOUNTING

www.bobfromaccounting.com

>> Bob From Accounting is another satirical news site, along the lines of The Onion or The Chaser. It's not quite as clever as The Onion, or as biting, but still makes for an entertaining read. Some of the recent stories that cracked us up included their coverage of Winona Ryder's shoplifting trial, and the story about the "good for nothing kid" that becomes reviled by his entire town after failing to call 911 when his mother collapsed. Worth a look.

NEW HYPERACTIVE FORUMS

forums.networknext.com/hyper

>> For those of you who don't know it, Hyper has a website at www.hyperactive.com.au. Recently we had a new forum installed and we encourage all regular readers of Hyper to come and join in the fun discussion. Choose an avatar and jump right in. The Hyper crew also make regular appearances, so you might just get those questions answered.

SIM CITY 4

simcity.ea.com

>> Seeing as this game will undoubtedly become an all-new obsession for a lot of you, we thought we'd better direct you to the official site where you can find out more info, get some tips and hints and get in touch with other Sim City 4 fans.

SUPPORT THE REBEL ALLIANCE

ZONE OF THE ENDERS 2:
THE SECOND RUNNER

WOW-O-METER

Y ou might remember it better as the game that came with the demo of Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty, even though it was the other way around. The hype praised it, but nowhere near as much as MGS2. You briefly took a look at it, but your mind was on MGS2. And then the sleeper that was Zone of the Enders was largely forgotten as the high expectations piffled out and gameplay lasted at most seven hours. The concept was brilliant, the dream an ultimate mech experience. While it had easy and simple gameplay, multiple endings,

stunning graphics and eye candy all about as most everything was destroyed about you in the heat of battle, its dreams of glory were cut short by irritating and undeveloped characters, poor localisation, few enemy types and repetitive gameplay, even for the brief duration of the game. We were given a taste of something that could've been, and of what might be.

AND NOW IT SEEMS IT IS
We were barely introduced to a beautiful story of our future, where mankind has spread through the solar system thanks to a mysterious

element known as Metatron, terraforming Mars and setting up colonies on the Jovian satellites that marked the "end of the world," and thus are inhabited by 'Enders'. Earth retains its influence, but it's only a matter of time before the people revolt, led by an organised guerrilla force, Bahram.

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE: Well, how about a demo of Metal Gear Solid 3, Mr. Kojima?

Bahram's attempt to steal an experimental orbital frame (mech, i.e. giant robot) was thwarted by a young lad named Leo Stenbuck, as he found himself the unwitting pilot of the 'Jehuty'. However, the twin 'Anubis' fell into the hands of the Bahram commander Nohman, and the final confrontation saw Leo retreat. Returning to the story two years or so after we left off, we find Leo has

INSIGHT

Pilates for robots.

Careful of that low flying doodle...

Futurama: Zone of the Benders

We shouldn't have had that cone of the enders.

You know, I had this pic in my captioning exam...
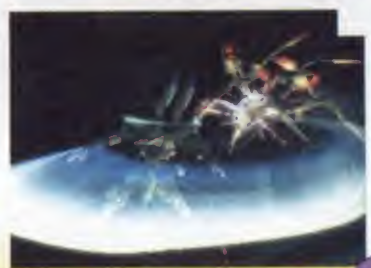
Argh, I've been "framed"!
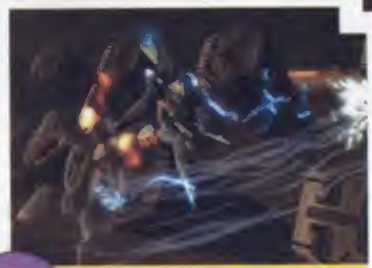
Now we need a 3rd runner.

>> Two years or so after we left off, Leo has hardened a little and is no longer the central character of the story.

hardened a little and is no longer the central character of the story. Nohman is making progress with plans of destroying all life on Jupiter, and is now overseeing the development of an invincible new super weapon design named Aumaan. Our most unlikely of heroes this time is a miner, an ex-soldier by the name of Dingo Egret (eh?) who stumbles onto death's door during a Bahram raid while mining on Callisto — along with that same old orbital frame Jehuty, buried beneath the ice. His only means of survival turns out to be the frames onboard life-support that supplements his ruined heart and lungs, and unable to leave the mech, he becomes an involuntary member of the UNSF war effort against the Bahram forces.

Aumaan can only be moved by the will of Anubis and its twin counterpart, Jehuty. Which,

incidentally, has an onboard computer named ADA, programmed to self-destruct at the core of Aumaan. With what seems to be a complete pilot to mech fusion, Dingo looks set for the role of tragic hero, and a not-quite-dead Viola makes a comeback in the sequel, as does Leo.

HANDY DOODLES

The English voice acting heard so far seems to be high calibre stuff (a first for a Japanese game), and the lip sync is done almost perfectly. The music is goosebump-worthy, and sounds like a solid improvement over ZoE. You won't just be seeing more of the same fantastic animation from the prequel, for the graphics engine has been fine-tuned with effects such as toon-shading on smoke clouds, flickering and moving glows along energy flow lines on frames varying depending on damage and

situation, and mist trails along the tips of airborne frames. It also looks to be faster paced than the first ZoE as well.

Gameplay has been enhanced and is no longer a simple affair, for you can now lock on to multiple enemies at once (eye candy!), swing a held enemy about and throw it any way you please along with a host of other options — tear off a wall and use it as a shield, with dynamic environments. A host of sub weapons have also been added that augment your attacks, be they cannons for anti-capital ships, homing lasers, energy mines, teleportation devices or whatnot.

To avoid the failings of the first game, Konami have replaced the director, scriptwriter and game designer, though the artists and Kojima have stayed on. Gone is the limited mission design, and scenarios are much, much larger than

before, and the game moves from Callisto to Mars, moons and artificial satellites.

While the first game had only three different types of generic enemies and five different bosses, ZoE: The Second Runner has at least thrice that, with a set of raptor like orbital frames introduced as well as a host of transforming mecha.

Amusingly enough, the mechanical designer Yoji Shinkawa's been using frame designs he concocted up back in his school days — we'll have to refrain from commenting on the fact that the cockpits on some of the new frames are locked in the, er, not so general area of the groin. At least it shows that those doodles come in handy at some point. «

You can download trailers from the official website at http://www.konamijpn.com/ products/zoe2/english

CALL OF CTHULHU:
DARK CORNERS OF THE EARTH

>> PC/XBOX CATEGORY: First Person Horror >> PLAYERS: 1 >>
PUBLISHER: Headfirst Productions >> AVAILABLE: Winter 2003

WOW-O-METER

"We eventually found him (Jack) by following the sound of his screams – I'd never heard anything like that before, and I hope I never hear anything like it again. When I first saw him lying there, I couldn't believe what I was seeing. I've never seen a human being so drained of life, yet still breathing... he just kept chanting some strange words over and over again. It took three of us to subdue him enough to carry outside." — **Robert Armstrong, oral history 1939.**

oosely based on H.P. Lovecraft's stories of a transdimensional evil lying dormant beneath the Earth, the "Cthulhu Mythos" and the Chaosium's award-winning PnP RPG "Call of Cthulhu", Headfirst's Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth (DCotE) tells the beginnings of the tale of Jack Walters, a 1920s private eye. Driven by an experience he can't quite recall and strange dreams of peculiar creatures and vast alien cities, he

heads off to Innsmouth to search for a missing youth. DCotE recreates what happened, based on the writings in Jack's journal discovered in 1924.

EVIL BEASTIES TO OBLIVION
Although it might blend in game elements from Soldier of Fortune, Alone in the Dark, Clive Barker's Undying and a little Eternal Darkness, and then seem to steal story elements from a hundred others, DCotE will in fact be the first video game to fully acquire all legal rights to use the Cthulhu name. Many other games have strong Cthulhu Mythos references (Quake 2, Resident Evil, Alone in the Dark, X-Com) but have failed to obtain the copyrights, and Lovecraft has been ripped off a plenty. It's about time he's done the honour, and it seems Headfirst Productions are very serious about getting it right.

The game begins with a setting akin to Lovecraft's "Shadow over Innsmouth" story, and no doubt Jack learns of the ancients who ruled Earth

before humanity, the minions who toil away in preparation for their return, and the "gold for hybrid children" trade the residents of the small town of Innsmouth struck with the Deep Ones, as they plan to awaken Cthulhu. With sixteen levels in four locations ranging from a mansion atop Massachussetts cliff, the town of Innsmouth, a city of the Deep Ones to a final battle at sea, DCotE may very well call from several of Lovecraft's short stories.

The two most unique features about DCotE are the sanity system and the lack of a visible HUD.

Although Eternal Darkness introduced a few hallucinations and other half-hearted attempts at persuading you that you were going nuts, DCotE takes it a step further. What Jack sees, hears and reads affects him, and you know you're going nuts when you hear mysterious voices, suffer visual impairments or hallucinate — mistaking shadows or friends for enemies. It also includes incidents relevant to the character you pick,

The Hyper HQ mansion.

I've *got* to remember that password for God Mode!

Looks like they'll cancel the cricket in this weather...

There's my creepy neighbour, Mr. Wigglebottom.

>> Many of Lovecraft's monsters will be faithfully recreated, but... there won't be one around every corner.

where hiding in small places while being stalked by a hybrid may induce claustrophobia and relevant effects. Fortunately, it can be restored finding a sanctuary or introducing evil beasties to oblivion.

THE DARK TRUTH

Not so forgiving is the health system, and missing HUD. Without on screen indicators, it becomes necessary to pay a little more attention to your surroundings and any peculiar limps in your gait, lest you miss the fact that you broke your leg and are leaving a followable trail of blood behind. Break an arm and shooting becomes inaccurate, along with spots of blood left on touched objects, while getting wet and staying in a cold area gives you the shivers from hypothermia. Bleeding

wounds must be tended to before the reaper looms, but fortunately there will be a host of 1920s medical devices in game to help heal most injuries. No magic health or armour packs, though. To check remaining ammo, you'd either need count bullets fired or to check the loading chamber on your gun, but apparently Headfirst has implemented a secondary screen that can be called up with some of such information.

To keep the game interesting time after time, Headfirst have included a system of Mythos Points that will reflect Jack's level of knowledge. The more points you score, the more bonuses you can access, be they the dark truth about Cthulhu or additional items. That, and the game will probably have

multiplayer capability, be it death match or co-op. There are three other characters that you may be able to choose from at the beginning of the game, and no matter which you choose, the others will continue their investigations. You'll also work with a squad of marines at points, and a wide array of weapons will be available, both of the 1920s and of more mystical origins, along with a few spells. Many of Lovecraft's monsters will be faithfully recreated, but as per the books, there won't be one around every corner, helping to create an air of suspense.

Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth promises a rich, interactive environment that encourages you to approach with your own style of gameplay, 10,000 polygon character models for realistic expressions and a detailed damage system. It will purportedly run just fine on a Pentium III 500Mhz, 32MB video card compliant with Direct3D or OpenGL, though higher-end systems will really bring out the beauty of this creepy epic. <<

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
How about a free copy of his book in the game box?

A NOT-SO-DARK TRUTH ABOUT CTHULHU

>> The Cthulhu Mythos is often incorrectly attributed as being Lovecraft's creation. Although he did indeed create the first stories of the sleeping evils, Cthulhu and a host of other rather frightening nasties in his Necronomicon and other grimoires, the term "Cthulhu Mythos" (invented after Lovecraft's death) was coined to cover the popular work of writers inspired by the superficial elements of his fiction such as the alien 'Gods', the magical grimoires and the fictional New England towns. In fact, on the rare occasion Lovecraft did relate his Cthulhu featuring stories, he called it his "Arkham Cycle." The Cthulhu Mythos and Lovecraft's work are actually two very different phenomena. Oh, and no one really knows how to pronounce 'Cthulhu' — Lovecraft could never make up his mind. Some say kuh-THOO-loo, Coo-loo, kt'hoo-lhoo, K-lütl-lütl and koot-u-lew, while Lovecraft claimed Khlûl'-hloo in 1934 and Cluh-luh in 1936, with varying views on how to grunt the syllables.

Oh, and despite writing his first story at the age of six and a host of short stories and articles for magazines, H.P. Lovecraft never published a book.

RISE OF NATIONS

CATEGORY: Strategy >> **PLAYERS:** 1-8 >>
PUBLISHER: Microsoft >> **AVAILABLE:** 2nd Quarter 2003

WOW-O-METER
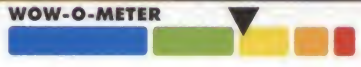
T he chasm between RTS and turn-based strategy games is as roomy as ever. Turn-based strategies have been trying to up the tempo of their games since the beginning, but people still play them in a sort of dazed stupor. By contrast, Warcraft III is as frantic as it gets, adrenalin and whatnot spilling all over. But games tend to a monochrome, rushing style of play. And never the twain shall meet. That is, until Brian Reynolds of Civilization II fame, comes to the party to make a new strategy title, hoping to combine the pace of RTS with the broader scale of its turn-based cousin. This is Rise of Nations.

Snow way out of this one, chaps.

GRAND BATTLES

The game is first and foremost a multiplayer experience and so naturally it favours the real-time camp, promising fast-paced, grand battles (think Age of Kings). The single player campaign features a turn-based mode that allows players to plot strategic movements on the world map, including negotiating alliances, attempting to gain strategic positions, gathering tribute funds and such. Essential details more suited to the planning stages of a game. However, the broader issues of strategy that Reynolds has sought to introduce to RTS gaming have little to do with freedom from time restrictions.

Resource management is not a matter of stockpiling lumber and gold, or moving to a new mine between skirmishes in Rise of Nations. There's a wide variety of resources that can be plumbed like Spice, Oil, Horses, Gold, Wood, Metal, Food, and even Knowledge.

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:
If it's addictive as Alpha Centauri and Civ II, we want counselling!

Micromanaging peasants and infrastructure is as important as directing troops in battle. The resource Knowledge cannot be bought or traded but it is pivotal to a nation's growth. It is based on the number of scholars present in a nation's universities. Rise of Nations calls on players to plan their resource accumulation in line with where they're heading, which directly affects not only what peasants do but what structures are built and how towns are managed. Elevating usually secondary matters to the forefront of the player's mind is central to Rise of Nation's unique take on strategy.

REALISTIC WAR

Rise of Nations features tangible national territory. The borders of a nation are very real because when an enemy force crosses into your nation, their units receive attrition damage - nations defend themselves. There are ways to minimise this damage but in the game, this helps to simulate

Hyper readers versus the world!

realistic war efforts. When you do invade an enemy territory, it will be for a specific purpose: capture a city, destroy a building or even expand your own territory.

There are 18 civilisations to lead into battle, each with particular traits and at least four unique special units, a similar concept to what we've seen in the Civilization series. With a 2D/3D engine that promises expansive zooming to offer a view of the vast regions, Rise of Nations makes some impressive claims. We've only covered the absolute basics and as soon as some final code hits the Hyper mailbox in the future, expect the low-down on (what could be) the next big thing in strategy. <<

Total
SCREEN

FEBRUARY 2003
ISSUE #02

The Year of Leo
FAME, MONEY, POWER
and two new films

GANGS OF NEW YORK
budget

"Violence an option"

Jack Nicholson
"Sometimes at night I get scared"

Robin Williams
Goes psycho in One Hour Photo

Rules of Attraction
Behind the Scenes of the wildest teen film ever

REVIEWS: Chicago, Spy Kids 2,

ON SALE NOW

The Osbournes
Growing up in public

next

SILVERCHAIR
Making Diorama

REVIEWS

REVIEWS

»GCN

GAME OF THE MONTH
Metroid Prime

This debut from Retro Studios is now the prime
reason to get a GameCube!

Review Index

46 »HYPER REVIEW

GAME THEORY

DANIEL STAINES

>> What does the expanding trend towards realism in games tell us about the state of the industry today and what does it entail for the future of our medium? Is the pursuit of a perfectly replicated reality a praiseworthy undertaking or perhaps the sign of a stagnating lack of innovative creativity? The issue is not as silly as it first appears. After all, if developers can convincingly copy the world we live in, then why on earth should they bother to create new ones for us to play in?

Take graphics for example. Over the past decade or so, various developers have ceaselessly strived to make their games look increasingly lifelike. Characters now consist of thousands of polygons and hundreds of frames of motion-captured animation. Landscapes feature suns that shine real-time volumetric lighting upon countless individual blades of bump-mapped grass blowing gently in the wind. It's all so gorgeous, so breathtaking so... so... utterly bloody boring.

If I want to see flawlessly realistic looking people meandering about a flawlessly realistic looking world, then I'll open the blinds and look out my goddamn window. I'm not saying that realistic visuals are necessarily tedious, but rather that powerful graphics technology can and should be utilised to create worlds the likes of which we never have and likely never will see outside of our television screens. Why make yet another urban cityscape or dank industrial corridor when you could be crafting a surrealist nightmare void that would make Dali grin with glee? Games should be made in which players are confronted with and forced to think about the worlds that they are interacting with.

Think about it in terms of visual art – is a photographically realistic painting somehow inherently 'better' than a more abstract work? Of course not. Abstract representation allows us to see our world in a way reality prohibits and it is precisely this kind of representation that gaming needs more of. Let's get creative again.

game_theory@whenbitsdone.com

HYPER CREW TOP 5

Eliot - Editor

1. Pro Evolution Soccer 2 – PS2
"A brand new year, a brand new master league..."
2. The Legend of Zelda – GameCube
3. Sim City 4 – PC
4. Grand Theft Auto: Vice City – PS2
5. Championship Manager 01-02 – PC

Cam - Deputy Editor

1. GoldenEye 007 – Nintendo 64
"After a landmark victory, I had to go back to rediscover this classic."
2. The Legend of Zelda – GameCube
3. Metroid Prime – GameCube
4. The Sims – PS2
5. Shox – PS2

Malcolm - Art Guy

1. Super Mario Sunshine – Gamecube
"I finally bought a Cube after seeing the new Zelda."
2. The Legend of Zelda: – GameCube
3. Metroid Prime – GameCube
4. Rogue Leader – GameCube
5. Pro Evolution Soccer 2 – PS2

Frank Dry - Reviewer

1. Impossible Creatures – PC
"Stick this bit here... Frankenturtle!"
2. Metroid Prime – GameCube
3. Altered Beast – MegaDrive
4. Soul Calibur – Dreamcast
5. Splinter Cell – Xbox

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!

Metroid Prime

CATEGORY: Action/Adventure >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** Nintendo >> **PRICE:** $TBA >> **RATING:** TBA >> **AVAILABLE:** March >>

KOSTA ANDREADIS enjoys being a woman again.

I n 1999, Nintendo announced that they finally had a new Metroid game in the works. Development on the title, however, was to be handled by an American team called Retro Studios. Many fans of the series were immediately sceptical about an American developer being left in charge of the beloved Metroid franchise, especially with news that Retro intended to take Metroid's traditional 2D gameplay and transform it into a 3D first person game.

However, like The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time on the N64, Metroid's transition into 3D is seamless. Retro Studios' Metroid Prime features a superb 3D engine, astounding level design, impressive art direction and provides a remarkably immersive and innovative sci-fi experience.

PRIMED AND READY

The Metroid series dates back to the mid 80's, where players first took control of bounty hunter Samus Aran in an adventure that featured complex level design, a dark and moody atmosphere, and technology that took the NES to new heights. The franchise spawned two sequels, one on the Game Boy and another on the SNES, with the latter featuring some truly inspired gameplay mechanics and design that still hold up well today. Super Metroid (94% in Hyper #8) was in many ways a masterpiece, and has certainly served as a blue print for Metroid Prime, although the story in Prime is set shortly after the original Metroid on NES and is in fact a prequel of sorts to Super Metroid.

The introductory sequence of Metroid Prime sees Samus Aran investigating a distress signal originating from a space station orbiting the planet Talon IV, where the nomadic Space Pirates have been conducting genetic research using a mysterious element known as Phazon. It's here you'll come to grips with the basic controls and gameplay style, with the bulk of the game taking place on Talon IV's surface.

Historically the Metroid series isn't known for its complex storylines or cinematic values but with Prime and even Metroid Fusion on GBA, story plays a big part. However, the execution is far from conventional. There aren't any story driven cut scenes, narration, or any speech for that matter, instead you'll uncover the complex story as you immerse yourself in the role of Samus Aran. As the game predominately takes place from the viewpoint of your Power Suit's visor, you'll constantly be using the scanner to discover more about your
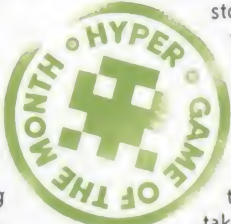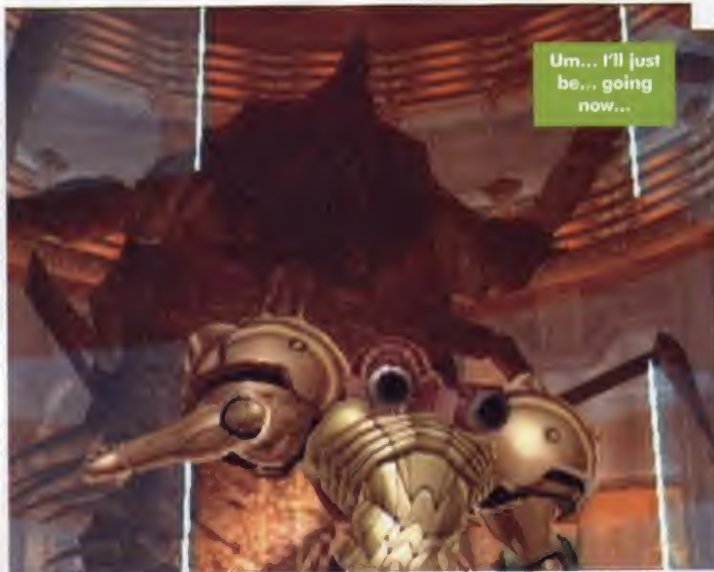
Um... I'll just be... going now...

I said roll over or no doggie treats!

Use ⊙ while holding ⊙ to strafe around enemies.

Hey, mind if I call you Sam?

"And Aran, Aran so far away-e-ay"
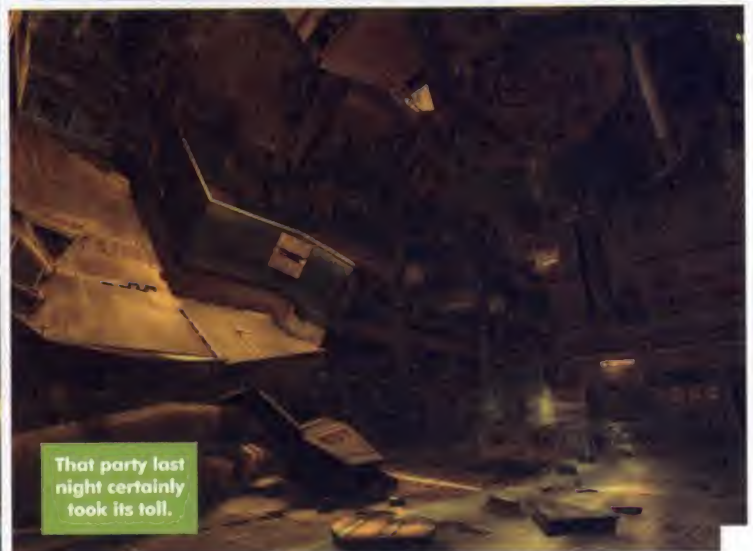
That party last night certainly took its toll.

The bosses are **remarkable in size, animation and detail**
and in typical Nintendo style, glow red momentarily when they take damage

surroundings, the creatures, and as a result, piecing together the story. It works remarkably well and puts you in full control of exploring not only the planet and its inhabitants but also the pace at which you unravel the plot. It's like piecing together a puzzle from the various bits of information you collect and it works extremely well.

BLOWING STUFF UP
Gameplay takes place in a first-person perspective, with third-person elements used on occasion. There's a lot of shooting, but gameplay in Metroid Prime is very different to a first-person shooter like Halo. Nintendo has stated on more than one occasion that Metroid Prime is a first-person adventure,

not a shooter, and that there's more of an emphasis on exploration than on blowing stuff up (though there's a lot of that to do too). If you try and play Metroid Prime like a shooter, you'll surely be disappointed. This is a game that is all about taking it slow, paying attention to your surroundings and taking note of all the information that you can get your hands on.

Samus' Power Suit is a technological marvel, giving you various abilities, most of which have to be slowly acquired through discovery. The controls themselves are very different to those in most first-person shooters, with no sign of the now conventional dual-analogue

!!! One of the lead designers on Metroid Prime was on the Quake III team.

setup. Instead, players will move with the control stick, aim with the R-trigger, jump with the B-button and lock-on to enemy targets and objects with the L-trigger. Locking on to enemies changes the controls slightly and gives the battles in the game a quasi-Zelda feel, with the targeted object being the focus of attention, allowing you to circle strafe around it via the use of the control stick. Firing your beam weapon is done with the A button, and if you have the charge-beam upgrade holding down on it will provide a much more powerful blast. You begin with the standard Power Beam, but later on you'll find the electrically charged Wave Beam, the immobilising Ice Beam and the molten energy of the Plasma Beam. Players can change their beam weapon at any time via a simple flick of the C-stick in the direction that corresponds to the weapon of choice.

As in previous Metroid titles, battles take place with various creatures of all sizes that usually

follow simple predefined patterns. Beetles will attack anything that get within their small proximity and attack their prey with a quick and effective charge, whereas Space Pirates will almost always attack aggressively and charge from distances. As a result, the enemy AI

A MAP TO THE HEAD
>> The places to explore in Talon IV are huge, but luckily the 3D Map provided in Metroid Prime is extremely useful in locating where you are or where you need to head. Complex as it looks; the map is an integral part of the game and one you'll need to come to grips with if you plan on completing the game within one lifetime.

Man, I need new contact lenses.
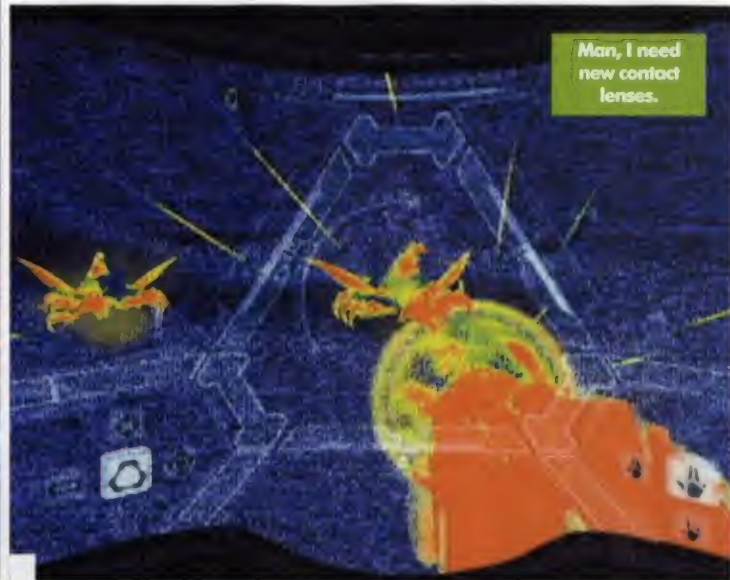
SWITCHING TO THERMAL SCANNER

>> The default view from Samus' Power Suit is the combat visor, and it's the one you use to see things as they appear. Next up is the Scan Visor which allows you to scan various objects and add them to your log book, which can be viewed at any time. During the course of the game Samus will acquire two more visor additions: the Thermal Visor and the X-Ray visor. The Thermal Visor lets you pick up enemy heat signatures which come in handy when tackling enemies with cloaking abilities. The X-Ray Scanner gives you X-Ray vision allowing you to see hidden pathways and even the bone structures in Samus' hand.

isn't terribly complex, and there aren't any squad-based dynamics or any of the advanced routines seen in most shooters today, with the focus clearly on action. However, the way the AI is programmed is definitely intentional as it helps to link Prime with the Metroid games of old where in order to dispose of an enemy or boss you had to learn its attack pattern and fight accordingly. Another intentional decision was to have enemies re-spawn after you leave a room or area, which although sounding like a dated concept, means that the inevitable backtracking through earlier areas keeps you on your toes at all times.

THAT'S A PRIMO METROID

Rain-soaked forests, icy peaks and caves, lava-filled caverns, industrial and scientific installations... the variety and differentiation of the environments to explore in Metroid Prime is impressive. Platform jumping in games played from the first-person perspective has always been frowned upon, but somehow it all works well in Prime. Maybe it's the way Samus slightly tilts her head down to view where she is about to land or the lack of pure precision jumping, but it

works smoothly and never becomes a problem. Vertical travel is virtually as easy as horizontal, and when you get the Space Jump upgrade it becomes a breeze.

Samus can acquire virtually all the abilities seen in previous Metroid titles, the most notorious of which, the Morph Ball, is pulled off in spectacular style. With a seamless

Sam is having a ball, it seems.

Buttcheeks of pure steel.

transition to a third-person perspective, the Morph Ball has many abilities, such as the Boost Ball that allows Samus to traverse up a half-pipe. There are Morph Ball specific areas that play out from a side-scrolling perspective allowing for a great mix in gameplay styles, and with the re-introduction of the Spider Ball, Samus has the ability to attach her Morph Ball to magnetic tracks allowing for some creative puzzles and areas to explore. There's a lot of backtracking in Metroid Prime, but with save stations and elevators placed at strategic locations things never get too complicated. Backtracking — something that is usually used as a cheap way to extend the life of any

> Samus can acquire virtually **all the abilities seen in previous Metroid titles**, the most notorious of which, the Morph Ball, is pulled off in spectacular style

game — is embedded into the design of Metroid Prime, allowing for further exploration and the discovery of numerous secrets in abundance. With large environments such as these, a special mention has to go to the intricate and intuitive level design. You'll never come across an area that feels like it's merely there to bridge a gap between two more important areas, and consequently, the world of Talon IV becomes almost entirely believable.

EXPLODE IN GLORIOUS RUBBLE
The artists and designers at Retro Studios are exceptionally talented and thanks to a robust 3D engine

the world is brought to life in vivid detail, most of which is breathtaking. No detail is too small for Retro Studios, and in Metroid Prime there's no such thing as a flat wall or surface. Pipes, crevasses, decals and many other elements adorn every corner of each room and the amount of detail shown makes almost any other game look bland in comparison. The sandy environment of the Chozo Ruins is a prime example of the perfect blend of technological advancement and artistic vision. The ruins are wonderfully detailed and textured and thanks to an incredible particle and lighting system, dust blows, light creeps around corners and

REVIEW >>HYPER 51

RETROSPECTIVE

>>In its early days, Retro Studios looked like an extremely promising prospect for Nintendo: state of the art facilities, talented artists and designers from various fields, and upwards of five titles in development simultaneously. Unfortunately, the excitement was short lived and Retro Studios, over the course of a few short years, saw extensive employee cuts, managerial changes, and a complete buy-out by Nintendo. From five titles in development to just one, Nintendo stepped in and took charge of the now relatively small and troublesome development team and shifted complete focus onto the development of Metroid Prime... and what a happy ending.

some walls explode in glorious rubble. The environments are very much alive; plants blow in the breeze, rain falls and lightning brings light to darkened skies. The interaction of your visor with the environment is gorgeous, with raindrops hitting its surface, steam fogging up your display, and sometimes you can even see a glimpse of Samus' reflection when there's a bright explosion.

Each area in the game is both visually and artistically different and creatures themselves look and react differently depending on their environment. Some of the creatures will be familiar to those who've played the older Metroid titles, and the impressive attention to detail

It could be described as space-age **ambience with some dirty bleeps and beats** that work remarkably well in creating the mood

has thankfully been translated to Talon IV's inhabitants. Enemies animate well and usually die in spectacular fashion — sometimes in an explosion of green goo that sprays onto your visor. The bosses are remarkable in size, animation and detail, and in typical Nintendo style, glow red momentarily when they take damage. Finally, Samus herself looks amazing in her

impressively modelled Power Suit that should bring a smile to the face of any Metroid fan. Amazingly, it all runs at a pretty steady 60 frames per second and there are only a few very brief moments of slowdown that will go almost unnoticed.

PHAZON AND ON AND ON
Kenji Yamamoto who scored Super Metroid returns to score Metroid
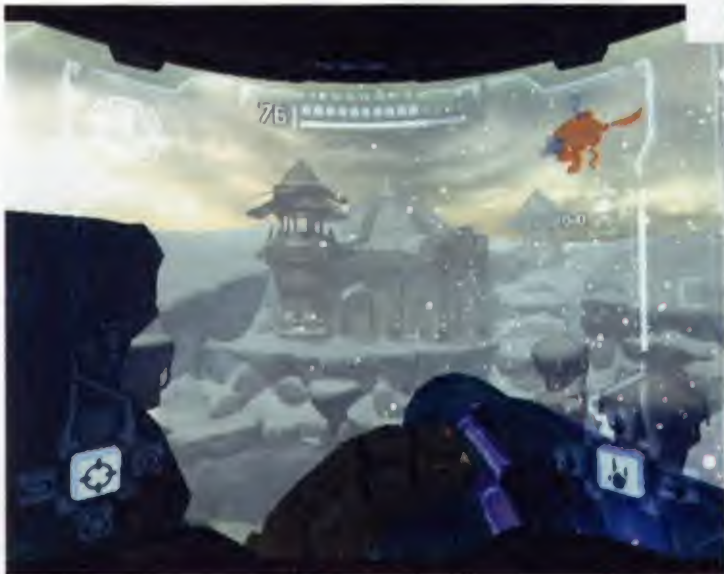
I should have called Flick months ago.

And then God made Sammy.
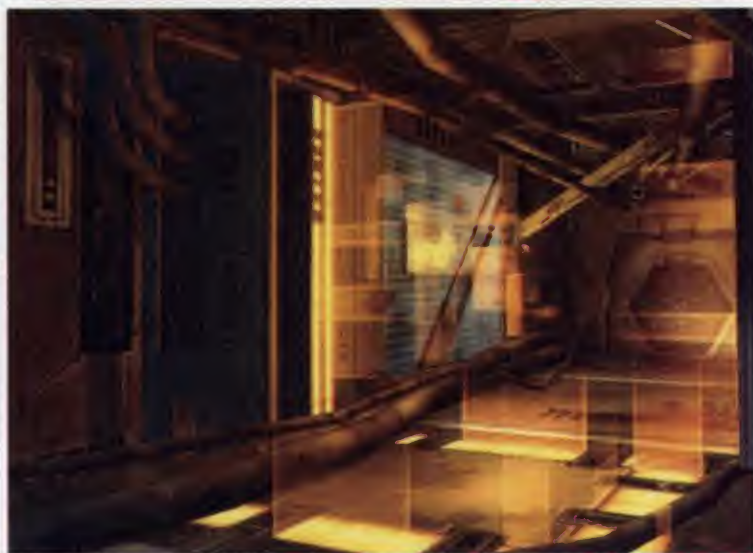
Prime and whilst some recognisable themes and fanfares have returned (albeit remixed), the score is mostly new and wonderfully crafted. It could be described as space-age ambience with some dirty bleeps and beats that work remarkably well in creating the mood and setting the atmosphere. Although MIDI in nature, it holds up remarkably well against standard Redbook audio, and the use of various sounds, chants and unconventional beats give the soundtrack an almost alien feel. Sound effects are equally impressive with ambient noises, the sound of your footsteps on metal, and the garbled shrieks of enemies all coming across perfectly. There are a wide variety of sounds effects

and almost all are of the highest quality thanks to the Dolby Pro Logic II support. If you have the proper set up at home, you'll definitely get the full benefit of the detail, variety and clarity of the sound on offer here.

With Retro Studios' troubled history it's a wonder they managed to release a single product, yet alone one of the finest examples of interactive entertainment today. And that's exactly what they did with Metroid Prime, a game that features unmatched art direction, intuitive control, and expansive environments, all in a totally immersive single player experience.

!!! Retro Studios now have the largest motion-capture studio in the world.

There are literally too many things to list here and you're better off discovering them for yourself, so in a way, it's almost impossible to describe why this game works on so many levels. Everything feels natural, from the pacing to the level interaction to the backtracking. The game is both huge and difficult, with at least 20 hours of solid gameplay on offer, and for those of you game enough to tackle Prime without the use of hints (they're enabled by default) you can expect to spend countless additional hours with the game. Beating Metroid Prime can trigger one of three endings depending on how many upgrades you've collected and how robust your log book is (measured in a percentage), with the prize being a chance to get a glimpse of Samus sans Power Suit — hey, it wouldn't be Metroid otherwise! Is Metroid Prime a masterpiece? Arguably so. It's easily the best game on GameCube, and an experience that no one should miss out on. <<

PLUS: Intuitive exploration, amazing level design and astounding attention to detail.

MINUS: Controls feel awkward.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
96	95	96

OVERALL

96

The most impressive 2D to 3D transition since Zelda on N64.

Resident Evil Zero

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

LOUISE ALEXANDROU hates public transport...

Like the Final Fantasy series, Capcom's Resident Evil franchise has a strong following of hardcore players. It's this following that has second guessed and prodded at every conceivable plot developed in the Resident Evil universe, and it's this following that sparked Capcom's interest to tie up a lot of the loose ends left throughout Resident Evil's timeline. This naturally brings us to Resident Evil Zero, a prequel to all that we know of the evil Umbrella Corporation, the T-Virus, Raccoon City and the infamous mansion incident. Indeed Resident Evil Zero is where the shit hit the fan.

ONE AND ONE IS ZERO?

Resident Evil Zero (RE0) is set in 1998, when tough rookie cop Rebecca Chambers and the S.T.A.R.S. Bravo team are forced to crash-land near Raccoon City somewhere in the Arclay Mountain area. With the team split up, Rebecca seeks refuge from the rain in a run-down train seemingly filled to the brim with dead people. Her safe state of mind doesn't last long when the dead start becoming suspiciously undead, and she crosses paths with ex-Navy SEAL, Billy Coen, an escaped convict locked up for murdering 23 people. Rebecca isn't too impressed with the idea of teaming up with a killer but she's left with little choice, and the strange duo is formed. It's here where the ultimate strategic kickback of this game begins; Rebecca and Billy have to work in sync with each other, utilising each other's strengths and abilities to progress through the rabid, zombie infested locomotive. For instance, Billy is hell

strong during combat and can move heavy objects, while Rebecca is weak defensively but can both understand chemicals, and combine items.

The possibilities between the two are incredibly useful for adding a real tactical element to the gameplay mechanics. Often, it will require both Billy and Rebecca to solve a puzzle and to rescue each other from danger. The control options are great; you can control the two simultaneously and switch between them using the start button. With both of them working together you can control the secondary character with the C stick. When they are close, you can trade items between them. You can also opt to leave one behind and take the other. The character left behind will remain where you left them until you switch back.

All these controls and gameplay ideas are necessary throughout the game, there are tons of tight situations that just wouldn't be possible for our rookie girl without the tattooed, shifty looking escapee, so learning to work together is very necessary.

As a character, Billy is a refreshing change to the good-boy serious attitude of the Bravo Team men. Not only does he look uber-tough with his multitude of tatts, but the handcuffs hanging from his wrist are a constant reminder of how dangerous he really is. He also has a witty, dry sense of humour and a direct manner, which works well with
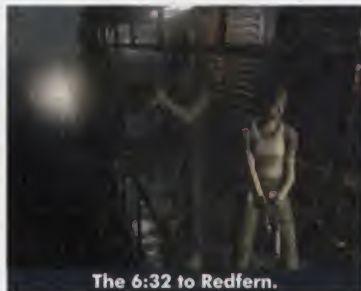
The leftovers from the fridge are alive!

The one who farted is gonna get it...

Rebecca finds the Death Star beam.

The 6:32 to Redfern.

What do you mean "trick or treat"?

Get back to work you lazy dogs!

Looks like we'll have to do our homework later...

You find yourself straining forwards, trying to **push through the wind and rain** that is swallowing the train.

Rebecca's seemingly tough stance.

Another major difference in REo is the ability to drop items at your leisure. Between Billy and Rebecca, 12 items in total can be carried, which is a scarce amount at best. There is no such thing as item boxes. Instead, items are left wherever you may stand when you drop them, ready to be picked back up when and if you need them again. A much needed feature of the map is the marked locations of each item you leave behind. In Resident Evil 0, item management is paramount.

TIED WITH A BOW

It almost goes without saying that we all expected some beautiful, incredible graphics and immense attention to detail in Resident Evil.

All of this was stunningly delivered, double wrapped and tied with a bow. Now Capcom has pushed this game just that little bit further, as REo is a little darker than its sequel, but runs on pretty much the same technology that Resident Evil did. The lighting effects are second to none, with the visual impression of a speeding train in heavy rainfall from the inside just superb. Again, the details are what really make this game shine. One of the many outdoor scenes features Billy and Rebecca clambering across the top of the speeding train with the rain whipping their faces and the screaming wind forcing them backwards. Even though you're sitting in your lounge room,

!!! Resident Evil 4 will be coming this year exclusive to the GameCube.

controller in your hand, you find yourself straining forwards, trying to push through the wind and rain that is swallowing the train, to safety. The FMVs are really something to write home about, with more in this game than there was in the remake.

There are really only a few (old) problems with this game that picky gamers are likely to hold against it, the main one being the awkward control scheme that has been in use for over ten years. Some gamers admittedly do not have a problem with the set up, but it would have been good to see Capcom have a bash at revamping them for REo. Fortunately, Resident Evil 4 is set for a definite change, which for some gamers can only be good news.

Capcom's Resident Evil Zero is certainly a story based game. It serves to tie up the loose ends that the remake awoke in us all, leaving us scrambling for explanations and further storyline. A must buy for all Resident Evil fans and GameCube owners alike. <<

PLUS: Classic Resident Evil gameplay, no more item crates.

MINUS: Same old slow clumsy controls. A tad difficult.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
94	89	85

OVERALL

87

Another mesmerising survival horror experience.

>>PS2
The Sims

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

CAM SHEA fails to get a life…

The Sims is the biggest thing to happen in PC gaming ever — at least if sales are an indication. It has become a phenomenon of Pokémon proportions and whether you love it or loathe it, it's impossible to ignore. We've already seen four or more (we've lost count) expansion packs, plus the whole shebang is going online, in what could spawn an unprecedented explosion in mainstream online gaming.

KILLED YOUR SIMS ON PURPOSE

Up until now, that's all been the domain of the PC gamer. But inevitably, the large and lucrative console market becomes too enticing to be ignored, so now it's the PS2's turn to get the Sims

treatment, and the result is refreshingly entertaining. Maxis have done a fine job with this port. Not only have they made The Sims nice and console friendly without losing any of the elements that made the PC version great (aside from downloads and user customisations of course), but they've given the graphics a much needed overhaul, and included an all new gameplay mode.

The essence of the game is exactly as it was on PC. Your task is to look after your sims - keep them happy in all key areas, rise through the ranks of your chosen profession, buy new stuff for your house and live a rich social life. The Sims is at its core a strategy game, with time management and prioritisation the most important skills to master.

However, the appeal comes not from commanding great forces against a well-armed nemesis, but from forming an emotional attachment with virtual humans in the most mundane of settings — a normal household.

The problem with the PC version of The Sims was that after a while the appeal of micro-management faded, and like normal life, gave way to monotony. Once you'd renovated your house, landed a good job, killed your sims on purpose a few times and tinkered with all the options in the game, it became boring. You wouldn't know this from the continued popularity of the title and its mind numbing expansion packs, but that's about the size of it.

FIND YOUR OWN PLACE

Maxis knew that this sort of open-ended gameplay wouldn't be enough for the console crowd, so they made a very smart decision and incorporated two main single player modes — "Play The Sims" and "Get a Life". The former is old faithful — choose or build a house, create or pick some sims to live in it, then go for it. This is the vanilla flavoured sandbox mode that we've been talking about. There are no fixed goals, with the player driven

TUNING

>> Interacting with other sims works in much the same way as before. Simply select the sim you want to talk to and a list of options will pop up – these change dynamically depending on a number of factors. Building up a friendship can be a tricky business, as other sims can be fickle at times. Checking out another sim's character traits can help determine whether they're playful and would like a tickle, or whether you should be a little more reserved. Common sense will also take you far – going in for a grope straight away almost never works. Interaction with other sims is a big part of the game, and there's nothing quite like finding that special someone – telling a joke, having a dance, flirting a little, then going in for the snog.

Quietly, the pinball machine plotted...

This house looks way too healthy for my liking.

I think the covercharge was too high...

"Sometimes I feel like life is just a game"

Oh the neighbours will looove her.

CREATE A SIM

PERSONAL   BODY   DONE

FACE STYLE
HAIR/HAT COLOR
◄ MAKEUP STYLE ►
EYE COLOR
ACCESSORIES

⊗ ACCEPT   △ BACK

>> You start out as a broke teenager living with **your nosy and demanding mum.**

by a desire to keep their sim happy and make them successful.

The Get a Life mode, on the other hand, gives The Sims a more goal-oriented structure (you can actually beat it), and is a more than welcome addition to the game. You start out as a broke teenager living with your nosy and demanding mum. Naturally you're keen to get the hell out of there, but in order to do that you need to borrow money from your mum, which means buttering her up by helping out around the house. The goals are pretty basic, such as fixing the TV, and help to ease newcomers into the logic of the gameworld. Achieve the objectives and it's off to find your own place.

Now you can get a job and enjoy the independent life (don't answer the door when your mum drops around)... only the house you've moved into was completely trashed by the landlord's daughter during a party so there's a lot of cleaning and fixing to be done. Beat the new set of objectives and it's off to share accommodation and beyond. The Get a Life mode has ten separate locations for you to progress through, each with their own set of objectives and unique brand of challenge.

You'll have to get promoted at work, raise your skills, throw parties and make new friends, kit out your pad with funky new items and

so on. As you achieve goals in this mode, you'll unlock extra goodies for the house, as well as new playmodes for the game. Simply put, Get a Life mode brings much needed pace and variety to proceedings, and is a hugely important addition.

Indeed, in many ways it's an essential addition – from both a gameplay standpoint and a longevity one. On PC, The Sims was really open-ended – you could

SAVE GAME HASSLES

>> Better give your memory card a serious clean before going into this game. Individual save games in either main play mode are 1.3MB each. It's not much fun to fit out a house and play for a couple of hours only to be to told that you don't have enough space to save (or even access to an in-game memory card manager), but we can completely understand why the saves are so large – there's a lot to keep track of in this one!

All-girl hot-tub action! Well, we tried.

02:52

Big Brother eat your heart out.

Beckham entertains some guests.

Oh no, he opened the Ark! Don't look!

IT'S A KITSCH KIT

>> One of the most compelling aspects in The Sims is the level of customisation at your fingertips. Not only can you create your own sims from scratch (from a somewhat limited palette) and change their appearance to some extent in-game (buying a dresser gives you the option to change into other clothes, and putting a mirror on top allows you to play with make-up, hair style or sunglasses), but your surroundings are completely flexible. Given enough money you can literally do almost anything. You can create your entire house from scratch if you want, or build an extension, create an outdoor entertaining area or simply change the wallpaper. The options for decking your house out are extensive too – there are just so many items to buy, ranging from the essentials (bed and toilet) through to purely decorative options. Buying more expensive items isn't just a status thing either. A more expensive bed, for instance, will recharge your sim's energy and comfort levels faster. Thus, you're able to get essential things like eating and sleeping done faster, giving you more time for socialising and raising skills.

download new items, wallpapers and other goodies online, or you could design them yourself. Much of the game's longevity lay in the amount of creative control at the user's fingertips. Obviously, the move to PS2 severely limits the potential options – you're stuck with the content on the disc and that's it. Fortunately, the addition of the Get a Life mode more than evens things up.

A LITTLE AWKWARD AT FIRST

So we've established that The Sims on PS2 is more of a "game" than it was on PC, but now comes the all important question – how easy is it to control and how well has the interface been adapted? After all,

the PC version was beautifully designed, with all necessary options easy to access and a logical system throughout.

As you might expect, the interface has been tweaked from the PC version to allow for easy access via the Dual Shock. You can still bring up the same info at the bottom of the screen – mood levels (hunger, bladder, social, fun, hygiene, room, energy and comfort), friend stats, character traits and skill stats. Each one corresponds to a different direction on the D-pad so to bring up the relevant screen simply push in the correct direction and hold it for as long as you need it.

The face buttons control selecting

actions, cancelling actions in queue, snapping the cursor back to your sim, and raising and lowering walls (it's much easier to see what's going on with the walls down, but it's much easier to build with the walls up). The shoulder buttons are used to pause and speed up time, as well as to switch between controllable sims in the house.
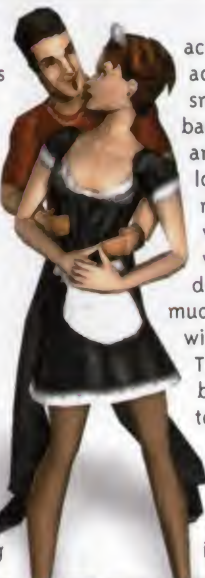
And you're not getting a toilet. Bwahaha!

No one wanted to talk to the yellow stick.

Another victim for our experiments.

"Honey, there's a yellow stick in the kitchen..."

You'll have to get promoted at work, raise your skills, **throw parties and make new friends**

The left analogue stick is used to move the cursor around the house and the right is used to zoom and pan. Using the cursor feels a little awkward at first, and you'll never be able to move as fast and decisively as you may like, but after some practice it feels natural enough. Objects that can be interacted with become highlighted when the cursor moves over them, and a nice touch Maxis incorporated is to give you a choice

between two or more items/objects if the cursor isn't wholly on one. Select the one you were aiming for and the normal set of options come up. All up, the controls work surprisingly well, and it won't be long until they're second nature.

AN ALL ROUND STELLAR JOB

Although The Sims won't

!!! When creating a character, don't bother wasting any of your points on neatness – they are more valuable elsewhere and you'd be surprised how much time can be wasted cleaning up. Just hire a maid!
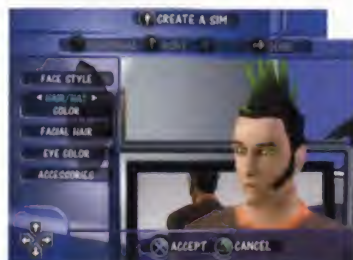
win any awards for its visuals, this version certainly looks a damn sight better than it did on PC. The game runs on a new 3D engine, so out go the sprite-based characters and fixed perspectives. You can now pan all the way around and zoom in and out as little or as much as you like (although we would have liked to be able to get just a tiny bit further in). Characters are polygonal now and look very nice. Indeed, the game as a whole looks very nice, although movement around your house could be smoother. And despite the move to 3D, the animations are as hilarious as ever, and the visuals as a whole have lost none of their charm. Maxis have really done an all round stellar job with this port. This is definitely worth checking out if you've never played The Sims on PC, as there's really no game like it - it's fascinating from both a voyeuristic point of view and a gaming one! The ultimate example of art imitating life. <<

PLUS: New graphics and a great new gameplay mode.

MINUS: Definitely not for everyone.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
80	83	88

OVERALL

86

If only all PC to console ports were this good!

Battle Engine Aquila

CATEGORY: Mech Shooter >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >> **PUBLISHER:** Infogrames >> **PRICE:** $89.95 >> **RATING:** M >> **AVAILABLE:** Now

BRETT ROBINSON revs up his battle engine…

B attle Engine Aquila's storyline has about as much substance to it as Dubya's rationale for a march on Baghdad, but in a game of this type, simplicity is the key. As a result of dramatic climate change, the Earth-like planet of Allium has been transformed into a *cough* water world of sorts. The planet's population is confined to a handful of islands, and on the Ampeloprasum Archipelago the Forseti and Muspell races are attempting to wipe each other out of existence. As a brash young bloke named Hawk Winter, it's the player's enviable duty to pilot the Forseti military's powerful new experimental weapons platform, a Battle Engine codenamed 'Aquila'.

WIN THE WAR

The Aquila is a sleek and agile, quadrupedal beastie with the predatory appearance of a praying mantis, and enough firepower to quash the slightest doubts about its capabilities. At the touch of a button, the Aquila transforms from an arachnoid instrument of terrestrial carnage into a fast, manoeuvrable aircraft capable of taking on airborne adversaries and raining fiery death on any ground units unlucky enough to pass beneath its targeting reticle.

Powerful as it is, though, the Aquila does have a number of limitations. For all its advanced weaponry and high-tech systems, the Battle Engine isn't so omnipotent as to allow the player to single-handedly defeat the enemy and win

the war. Whilst the player does have the capacity to influence the outcome of every conflict, at no time is any meaningful victory achieved without a significant amount of backup. That backup — which consists of hundreds of armoured vehicles, ground troops, fighter aircraft, bombers, capital ships, amphibious craft and dropships — is integral to the player's success. But equally worthy of praise is the

game's extraordinary AI, which drives a virtual world in which logic prevails.

This unusual system grants the player the freedom to make informed strategic decisions, while at the same time imbuing the game's conflicts with a distinct air of authenticity. As an example, the player is tasked with ensuring the survival of key personnel stationed within a Forseti base. In the

REVIEW

The Trade Federation Gungan hunt.

Er, this button is labelled "capuccino"!

EVILUTION?

>> There are 26 missions to complete in Battle Engine Aquila, and the game's longterm value is boosted by over 100 performance-based unlockable bonuses. These include character and unit profiles, cut scenes, production artwork, and Evo missions. The latter are excruciatingly difficult variations on the standard missions, and conquering them all will take an eternity. Completing all of the Evo missions will allegedly unlock a whole new game mode, but that's one rumour the Hyper crew isn't intent on confirming.

Great shot kid, that was... one.

"Today, we take Naboo!"

Gungan picnic ground is history, sir.

> These **open ocean missions** are among the most challenging and enjoyable...

opening seconds of the mission, the player succeeds in downing an approaching Muspell dropship before it can distribute its payload of hover tanks. Consequently, the enemy's coordinated armoured assault fails to penetrate the Forseti base's outer defences, which in turn allows friendly ground forces to launch an effective counterattack. At this point, it's important to realise that unit actions aren't pre-programmed, and that scenarios like the one above regularly unfold independently of the achievement of mission objectives. Therefore, if the player elects to let the aforementioned dropship land safely, and instead demolishes a Muspell tank production facility, these actions and their consequences produce vastly different overall results.

SUCK ALL THE FUN OUT

Battle Engine Aquila's island settings present some unique logistical and operational challenges. Because islands can't accommodate unlimited quantities of military hardware, it's rare for either faction to have all the necessary equipment on hand, so many of the missions involve clearing the way for incursions into Muspell territory, or repelling enemy assaults until support units arrive. The Aquila is also called upon to escort the Forseti fleet on trips to neighbouring islands, and these open ocean missions are among the most challenging and enjoyable.

All is not perfect in the world of Lost Toys' creation, however; the game does have a number of faults.

!!! It's good to see the Xbox isn't hogging ALL the mech games. Geez!

Battle Engine Aquila's graphics are crisp, if a little low on detail, and its weapons effects are terrific, but players of the PS2 version will experience slowdown on numerous occasions. Given the number of units embroiled in each battle, this is hardly surprising, and in single player mode the slowdown is actually quite tolerable. Unfortunately, more serious framerate issues and a considerable reduction in visual clarity suck all the fun out of the PS2 version's promising multiplayer modes. We haven't had a chance to test the Xbox version, but it's reasonable to assume that it doesn't suffer from the same problems. The rendered cut-scenes, too, are disappointing; the dialogue is insipid, the voice acting is uninspired, and the animations are almost embarrassing to watch. In most regards, though, Battle Engine Aquila is a winner, and the game sets some lofty new standards for both the Mech and Shoot-em-up genres. <<

Shox

CATEGORY: Arcade racing >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: EA >> PRICE: $99.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now

EA Big making a good game? **CAM SHEA** is shoxed…

As you probably know, there's no love lost between the Hyper crew and EA Big. It's not that we have a problem with their brand of high octane, attitude-laced games (such as SSX Tricky and Freekstyle), since we're as fond of arcade style games as anyone. It's more that their back catalogue has seen them make the same mistakes over and over, leaving us wondering whether they cared about gameplay at all — or just flashy frills. Fortunately, EA Big have picked up their act somewhat for Shox, and the result is an entertaining arcade racer.

SHOXING REVELATIONS

Shox is not what you would call a wildly original game. It sports simplistic rally handling, much like any one of a number of competing titles. What makes it interesting, however is its somewhat unique structure. There are four championships/car classes — compact, sports, turbo and power. You start out with a single car in the compact class and race circuit-based courses in a field of six. Coming in near the top is necessary to unlock the next course, but it's the "Shox zones" and money system that bring a little more depth to the title.

You see, sections of each course act as mini time trials. Once you enter a Shox zone, a bar pops up on screen indicating how much time you have left to get to the end of the zone. Get there really quickly and you're rewarded with a gold grade. Next is silver, then bronze and finally no reward if you're too slow. These zones serve two purposes. First

of all, it's an extra challenge within the races that help ensure there's always tension (which is heightened by an increasingly frantic beeping). Secondly, the higher the grade the more money you're rewarded with - and you're going to need money in Shox. Your total is tallied on the fly, with cash subtracted for hitting walls and a bonus based on place at the end.

Cash is used for acquiring new cars (which become available when you win races), but there are a couple of ways to get them. You can either pay an absolutely exorbitant amount to buy a new car outright or you can pay a lot less to "gamble" on winning the car in a one on one race. Beat your opponent and the car is yours. Fail and the price to enter is halved (and so on until you win).

These races are quite short and your opponent gets a small head start, so it often takes a few attempts to win — forcing you to keep racing in the championship to earn enough money to try again. We would have liked slightly longer one on one races, but overall the money system is a good one, as it means that even if you don't place, at least you'll have a little extra cash to add to the pile marked "gambling benjamins".

"Oh no, I'm getting Italian Job flashbacks."

"Pull up to the bumper, baybee."

HOLY SHOX BATMAN!

>>The slo-mo jumps are a completely bizarre addition in Shox. Each course has a single jump that sends you into slow motion when you launch off it, while the camera cuts to various cinematic shots. We have no idea why EA Big decided to do this though, as the jumps they've chosen are no larger than any of the others, which makes highlighting them a little pointless and unremarkable. Wow! I'm two meters off the ground! And from a gameplay perspective, cutting back to normal speed as you hit the ground is very offputting.

GOLD
$1210
In them thar hills!!

$0
Did you put new Shox on that car?

I'm dreaming of a white rally...
$325

Jumps of any height **can have unpredictable results**, like your car flipping or rolling.

A SHOXING DISCOVERY

All this adds up to a compelling structure for the game, which is fortunately backed up by some very competent arcade racing. The handling is simplistic but well suited to the game,

and although there's really nothing here that hasn't been done before, the pieces come together well enough to carry the game.

Sources of inspiration for this game's visuals aren't hard to pick. Some sections look lifted straight out of Ridge Racer or Sega Rally. Some of the environments (such as the rock walls) are very blocky with

obviously fake shadowing. Then again, the more colourful and open sections (such as down by the beach) look very nice indeed. It's a bit of a mixed bag really, and won't give Burnout 2 any headaches, but the frame rate is quick enough that it's not a major problem.

!!! Music in the game was provided by the UK's Global Underground label.

Some of the issues we have had with other EA Big games have resurfaced in Shox, but to a lesser extent. There are a few edges that jut out a little onto the track that are capable of stopping you completely – these really should

have been ironed out during playtesting. Many of the "Big-isms" we've come to expect are also in the game, such as an announcer that shouts at you and slow motion jumps. The biggest issues in Shox, however, come from glitches in the physics and collision detection that disadvantages the player. Jumps of any height can have unpredictable results, like your car flipping or rolling onto its side for no apparent reason. This wouldn't be so bad, except that opponent AI is quite brutal – they have some serious catchup logic so it's virtually impossible to build any kind of lead. There's nothing worse than nailing most of the race only to find yourself facing the wrong way after a seemingly innocuous jump – especially since the courses are quite long.

Despite these quibbles, Shox is a hard game to put down. The combination of fast, powerslide laden handling and a rewarding and somewhat unique game structure make it well worth a look. <<

PLUS: Excellent lightweight arcade racing.

MINUS: Has problems that could have been ironed out.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
83	76	77

OVERALL

82

Not revolutionary, but so addictive you won't care!

SCORPION

HAPKIDO   MUAY T

SUBZERO

TAE KWON DO   TANG

KATANA   TA

SHANGTSUNG   SCORPION   SUBZERO   CYRAX

BROAD SWORD   TAE KWON DO   TANG SOO DO

Mortal Kombat: DEADLY ALLIANCE

CATEGORY: 3D Fighting >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >> **PUBLISHER:** Midway >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** MA15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now

FRANK DRY can't believe the overall score either.

W e have to hand it to Midway, they're particularly brave to want to resurrect their old dog of a fighting game series, Mortal Kombat. Memories of fatalities, babalities, animalities, and bitchslapalities had thankfully almost been utterly forgotten, but now it's all been resurrected in this next-gen re-working, Deadly Alliance. Strangely, Midway have broken from tradition, as Deadly Alliance is not crap.

SLIGHTLY DISTURBING
Gone is the shuffling, crab-like gameplay of the earlier Mortal Wombat, sorry... Mortal Kombat games. Say hello to a brand-new, spankingly smooth 3D engine. This means that — gasp — gameplay can take place in three dimensions. This

also means that the fighting mechanics have been pulled to bits and reassembled to take advantage of the fully 3D characters and arenas. But before we tackle the fighting system, let's see how they've ditched the old digitised 2D characters. All the new 3D characters look fabulous — animations are excellent, detailed and smooth, and even small details such as the flapping of clothing give the game real life and personality. You can see that Midway have quite obviously used Soul Calibur as their inspiration in this regard — even the swords have those glorious light trails. The frame rate is high, movement is fluid and the controls are responsive — so, Deadly Alliance gets off to an unexpectedly great start. Slightly disturbing though, are the huge spouts of blood that seem

to gush out of the screen every time you get the odd punch into your opponent's face. The gratuitous nature of the splatter tends to detract from the otherwise slick visuals.

Many of the older characters have vanished (suck on that Liu Kang), with a host of new faces taking their place. The character designs range from "very cool" to "lame", so no matter what there should be someone here that you take a liking to. Interestingly, you'll have to play through a few characters before you really get a feel for whom you prefer, as each character has two different stances/fighting styles and also a weapon that can be pulled out for some chopping and slicing (or poking and thrusting). In fact, some of the complex combos

QUAN CHI — SCORPION

T-ANG-SOO-DO

Here comes yesterday's lunch... Blurrch!

SHANGTSUNG — SUBZERO

Here, I'll freeze that wart off for you.

T-AI

BLIND KENSHI — SCORPION

SNAKE — HAPKIDO

Look at my manicure, darling.

SNAKE — TANG SOO DO

He doesn't take criticism well...

Eat my dust! *cough*

HAPKIDO

He was about *this* high, and real cute.

Sonya's perfume spoils the moment.

Sadly, one of the more disappointing aspects of the game are **the new fatalities.**

require switching between stances, so in terms of depth of play, there's quite a lot to master.

KAN'T SPELL

The fighting is fairly dynamic, especially with the ability to switch to a weapon when your opponent is (hopefully) not expecting it, and the approach that has been taken with each character delivers a decent amount of variety between them, rather than a stock-standard combo template being applied across the board. As you might have guessed, most of the moves still rely on tapping the d-pad in certain directions with button combos — so forget about wanting to play with the analogue stick. A strange addition to the gameplay is the introduction of an impaling move where you can

permanently lodge your weapon in your opponent's torso so that they eventually bleed to death. Really, it's probably a bit too cheap, especially when there's no way of pulling the damn thing out — you've just got to be lucky enough to know when to avoid it. The CPU AI also has a habit of being ball-tearingly aggressive in the latter stages of the single-player game, which gives rise to frustration and an unwillingness to continue. If you've got friends to play this with you, we would say that you're in for a better time.

Aside from the typical Arcade and Versus modes, is the Konquest mode (can't Midway spell?) in which you can earn Koins (sigh). When you begin the game, you can create

!!! The highest scoring MK game in Hyper was 88%!

your own arcade style character profile (remember NBA Jam anyone?) which you can load whenever you play in any of the modes. This profile keeps track of your successes and Koin total. Earning Koins gives you access to bonus concept art (or is that Koncept Art?), costumes, characters, arenas, and more karaaazy secrets.

Sadly, one of the more disappointing aspects of the game are the new fatalities. Sure, they're not all that important in the grand scheme of things, but when they've been such a prominent part of Mortal Kombat up to this point in time, it's disappointing that they are as weak as they are. Each character only has one, and the animated sequences aren't all that interesting.

Maybe it was our low expectations for this new incarnation of Mortal Kombat, but overall, Deadly Alliance has turned out to be an exceptionally easy to play and entertaining fighting game. Who would have thought? <<

PLUS: Fluid visuals, decent number of characters.

MINUS: AI is cheap, impaling is cheap, Midway can't spell.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
85	79	80

OVERALL
81

Have they turned this series around? It seems so.

"Kameha... OOF!"

He's always chasing tail that boy...

Looks like he's "screwed".

Dragonball Z: BUDOKAI

CATEGORY: Fighting >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Bandai >> PRICE: $89.95 >> RATING: TBA >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

ELIOT FISH checks his balls for dragons.

Unfortunately, here at Hyper, we've never really "appreciated" Dragonball Z. But hey, who are we to argue with "the kids"? The show is incredibly popular, and even if we'd rather be bathing in some industrial strength acid than watching the thing, we can still learn to enjoy a game based on it. In that case, is Dragonball Z: Budokai really a game worth ripping the shrinkwrap off? Or is it just a piece of memorabilia for the fans to collect?

EASY LEARNING CURVE

Budokai is a very easy to pick up and play fighting game featuring all the characters from the TV show. The mechanics are dead simple — there's a punch button, kick button, guard button and range "ki" attack button. Combinations of these with the d-pad can unleash special moves for each character, and as you play through the story mode the game slowly teaches you the combos to make for a nice easy learning curve. There's no crouch and no jump, but battles can (obviously, if you've seen the TV

show) make their way up into the air (although it still plays out very much on a 2D plane). As a result, the fighting never gets terribly complex, and it's more about remembering the combos needed to obliterate your enemy rather than using clever tactics and whittling them down in health. Seeing as the audience for Dragonball Z is predominantly young, it's probably fair enough that they wanted to keep the fighting mechanics somewhat straightforward. There won't be any 100 page Virtua Fighter style move FAQs for this game. In fact, just hammering the punch button can get you a surprisingly far way into the game.

PUNCH THEM IN

All the trademark attacks from the show have made it into the game (the furious burst attack is somewhat amusing — once initiated, you can just mash the controller in a frenzy to try and unleash a flurry of unstoppable attacks) and one of Ginyu's attacks is even called

!!! The PAL version we played had the Japanese voice cast!

Parmesan Shower. One of the game's big problems, besides the simplistic mechanics, is that control response is simply too slow for what's meant to be a fast-paced fighting game. Perfectly timed attacks simply aren't executed when you punch them in, and it results in a pretty frustrating and annoying fighting experience. Trying to pull off an attack string to open up a combo sometimes feels nearly impossible in the heat of the action, and somewhat pointless when a few simple punches or kicks will take off a similar amount of your enemy's health.

The story mode progresses just like episodes of the TV show and some of the cutscenes are hilarious. It's almost guaranteed that fans of the show will love the game purely for the way it entertains you with well-animated story scenes with all the over-the-top theatrics of the show. There's lots to unlock, and even an edit mode for the special moves, so fans will be kept busy. The rest of us might want to wait for Soul Calibur 2... <<

PLUS: Charming presentation, lots of depth for fans.

MINUS: Problematic fighting system, unresponsive controls.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
77	75	68

OVERALL

69

Fans will enjoy this one despite the flawed fighting game.

Quick, put the "kick me" sign on him.

3:42.12

Tanks for the help.

He's the Gary Coleman of dragons.

GCN / >>PS2

Spyro: ENTER THE DRAGONFLY

CATEGORY: Action/Platformer >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** Vivendi >> **PRICE:** $89.95 >> **RATING:** G8+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

BRETT ROBINSON knows what it's like to be horny.

Enter the Dragonfly is the fourth game in the popular Spyro series, and it's the first Spyro title to be developed for the current generation of consoles. This time around, the trusty dragonflies that serve as companions for all dragons have been kidnapped, and Spyro — being the altruistic little fella that he is — has volunteered to rescue them. Fortunately, Spyro has managed to keep a firm leash on his own trusty dragonfly, Sparx, so he's by no means alone on his important quest.

COLOURFUL AND SIMPLISTIC

Spyro begins the game with a new power: Bubble Breath. It's a fairly innocuous one, and it doesn't have the destructive potential of his trademark Fire Breath, but it's what he needs to save those dragonflies. Over the course of the game, Spyro will also learn to cough up blasts of icy air that turn enemies into solid blocks of ice, as well as crackling bolts of electricity which toast bad guys and activate mechanical devices. Spyro's mates will teach him a new hover move, too, and this

will give him a little extra height at the end of long glides.

Spyro's world is colourful and simplistic, and it's populated with a host of endearing critters. The geometric design of the environments ensures that younger players won't have a lot of difficulty navigating from start to finish, but older gamers will undoubtedly be frustrated by the extreme linearity of the levels. Hundreds of jewels are scattered throughout each world, with the obvious goal being to collect as many of them as possible. Some jewels are stashed within breakable earthenware pots, or situated on easily accessible ledges, but most sit in plain sight, just waiting for an enterprising young dragon to snap them up. There are plenty of mildly threatening bad guys for Spyro to battle, and of course there are the elusive dragonflies to capture, but Spyro's

core gameplay will probably wear thin very quickly indeed.

VERY YOUNG GAMERS

!!! Unfortunately, Stewart Copeland didn't do the music.

A number of mini games — which see Spyro participating in races and piloting numerous vehicles — offer temporary respite from the drudgery of the jewel collect-a-thon, but unresponsive controls all but ruin the vehicle-based challenges. This is especially disappointing as the UFO flying segments, which involve the transport of wayward cattle using a tractor beam, could have been a lot of fun.

Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly isn't by any means a terrible game, but because it adheres to an established (and stagnating) formula, it's also little better than mediocre. In many ways it's perfectly suited to very young gamers, but unlike similar titles — Ty, Ratchet & Clank and Sly Raccoon spring to mind — few aspects of Enter the Dragon will appeal to older players. Strictly one for the kiddies, then. >>

REVIEWED ON:

PLUS: Straightforward and forgiving gameplay.

MINUS: More of the same, inexplicable framerate problems.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
71	74	68

OVERALL

67

Setting the franchise on a downward Spyrol.

Shenmue II

CATEGORY: RPG >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** Microsoft >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

FRANK DRY reviews the best crate lugging sim ever.

Shenmue was a classic of the RPG hybrid genre, and introduced us to Yu Suzuki's most ambitious development plan yet. He envisioned a series of Shenmue games, telling his epic tale in its entirety. Shenmue was chapter one of sixteen, but with the decline of the Dreamcast, the prospects for the series slowed right down. Shenmue II was made for the system, but only released in Japan and Europe, leaving American and Australian fans rightly upset.

Now that Microsoft have picked up the rights for Shenmue II on Xbox, however, everyone gets to experience chapters two to four... in slightly enhanced form no less.

SIGNIFICANT LOCATIONS

Shenmue II picks up right where the original left off, with Ryo arriving in Hong Kong. It's not absolutely necessary to have played the original game, as the Xbox release contains a second DVD - "Shenmue: The Movie", devoted entirely to telling the events of the first game. It's basically a very, very long sequence of cutscenes, but it's certainly a nice touch. It's the story that very much drives this game, and despite some minor diversions, Ryo is pretty intent on the task at hand in Shenmue II — finding Lan Di and avenging his father's death.

Hong Kong has a very different flavour to Ryo's Japanese hometown. Gone are the quaint little streets, and in their place is a maze-like cityscape, comprised of bustling marketplaces, speeding cars, skyscrapers and heaps of different and distinct quarters. It's a little overwhelming at first, but Sega have ensured that it's always easy to establish where you need to go or who you need to talk to. Plus, you can buy maps of each quarter and even place marks on them to keep track of significant locations.

As in the original game, the story is advanced through copious numbers of cutscenes — at times it feels like there's one around every corner, and you just wish the game would let YOU play. Gameplay will also be familiar to Shenmue fans, with an interesting mix of RPG, adventure and action. The action sequences are once again broken down into Quick Time Events (QTE) and real-time fighting. QTEs are action sequences that require you to input on-screen cues as they pop up — much like a modern day Dragon's Lair. Given the amount of normal FMV in this title, they're a good way to ensure you don't OD on non-interactivity, and are definitely an improvement on those in the first game. The real-time fight scenes are like a scaled down Virtua Fighter and are great fun. Ryo has heaps of moves at his disposal and often has to fight off several guys at once. Plus, you can level up moves - the more you use an attack, the more powerful it becomes.

Another significant gameplay element is the acquisition of money. Ryo is forced to spend time each day

Look out, it's a dance off!

Dad, tell me the story about Lord Seafood again.

Ohh, my moustache fell off again.

Now this is how you perform CPR...

Better than Bad Taste Grocery.

I lost my arms in a mowing accident.

Ryo meets the A-Team for the first time.

Ryo has heaps of moves at his disposal and often has to **fight off several guys at once**

earning money in order to pay for board, information and assorted trinkets. Money can be earned through pawnshops, gambling or working. The first job he's able to get is a gem for fans of videogame cliches, as it's literally lugging crates! It's also one of the more boring mini-games ever devised, and has Ryo stuck working with the most incredibly annoying guy. It's a bit of a shame that you have to waste so much time pissfarting around and not getting on with the adventure at hand, but we suppose it's simply in line with the premise of this series being a simulation of living, not just adventuring.

CARROT UP HIS DATE
AM2 have created a wonderfully vibrant set of locations and a large cast of unique characters that help make Shenmue II's gameworld feel truly alive. However, although the Xbox release is a step above the Dreamcast's graphically, with better lighting, richer colours, and a better model for Ryo, it doesn't really push the Xbox much. AM2 could have worked hard and blown us away, but as it stands the graphics are nice, but a little dated. Character models are still horribly low poly (when you see a shirtless guy stretch you'll know what we're talking about) — although the detailed face mapping makes it excusable, and Ryo still walks like he has a carrot up his date. The controls haven't been adapted terribly well either. Pinpoint turns on the D-pad are frankly impossible and the dual sticks go completely to waste (you

can either use both sticks to look around, or both sticks to move, but not one for each).

We should also mention just how awful the voice acting in this game is! It's natural to assume that there will be problems, but sheesh, it's like AM2 let the work experience kid and his friends dub all the voices. Not everyone is terrible, but for every character that is voiced okay, there's one that sounds like a creepy child molester or a young guy trying to sound like an old lady. It's a pity they went to the effort when everyone will just want to turn it off and read the subtitles. And why not include the option of the original Japanese dub? On the other hand, the score is brilliant. Looks like the WEK wasn't in the day they recorded that.

As a whole, however, Shenmue II is a must-have for fans of the original. It's a great continuation of the story, backed up by a wealth of mini-games, some great fight scenes and an impressive simulation of a living, breathing, fully interactive world. ‹‹

!!! ●●● Will we ever see Shenmue 3? Stay tuned to Hyper for any news.

PLUS: Quirky blend of gameplay elements.

MINUS: Xbox port could have been meatier.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
83	70	82

OVERALL
85

An excellent sequel with better pacing than the original.

Phantom Crash

CATEGORY: Mech Action >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: Phantagrams >> PRICE: $99.95 >> RATING: M >> AVAILABLE: Now

BRETT ROBINSON is the phantom reviewer. Spooky.

I n a refreshing break with 'tradition', Phantom Crash doesn't force the player to endure yet another convoluted tale of intergalactic disharmony. Instead, the game offers the more credible and intriguing concept of mech combat as a globally televised spectator sport. Colloquially known as Scoobees, Phantom Crash's remotely piloted vehicles participate in intense battles in the abandoned sectors of Old Tokyo. Scoobee pilots, or Wireheads, are rewarded with cash for kills; a system so simple that Lawsie's descendants will undoubtedly grab a piece of the action.

SCOOBEE DOOBEE DOO

Less simplistic is Phantom Crash's gameplay, which is wonderfully deep. The player begins the game

with a generous allocation of New Yen, which can be used to purchase a lightweight, middleweight or heavyweight Scoobee from one of the three major manufacturers. The different Scoobee types have their own distinctive styles, and offer varying degrees of manoeuvrability and durability. Exiting their dealership of choice — after being treated to the memorable parting words, "Thank you for shopping. Next coming to the store!" — the player is free to jump head first into Phantom Crash's combat proper.

Participating in combat — called 'Rumbling' — for the first time is literally a baptism of fire. The player is first presented with a list of the day's Rumble events, which take place in the sectors of Shinjuku West 3, Shibuya Valley 2, and Tokyo Aqua

409. These events occur either during the day or at night, and are often classified according to the proficiency of the participants. After selecting the event they wish to compete in, the player has the option of choosing the gate through which their Scoobee will enter the sector. A short loading time later, the battle is on.

As the entrance/exit gate opens and the player's Scoobee steps into the sector, it's not uncommon for 15 missiles and a storm of bullets to make their presence known. Averting a premature end to the proceedings, an on-board Repulsion Shield absorbs any incoming fire, but its comforting embrace is fleeting, and all too soon the player is left solely responsible for their Scoobee's welfare. The experience is

akin to that of a young bird induced to flying by parents that push it out of the nest — the likelihood of success is minimal, but the learning process is nevertheless thrilling.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of combat in Phantom Crash is its pace, which borders on frenzied; the most heavily armoured Scoobees move with surprising alacrity, and the insectoid lightweight models flit across the battlefield like wasps on speed. With competitors constantly succumbing to sustained fire, and a steady stream of fresh competitors entering the sector, the battles seem to rage on for hours. Missiles streak through the air, leaving exhaust trails in their wake,

Eat swerving smokey things, fool!
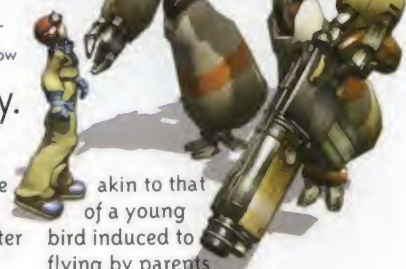
WANT SOME CANDY?

>> Every Scoobee is outfitted with an Optical Camouflage unit that, for a limited time, renders it invisible to the naked eye. Activating the OC will effectively break an enemy's missile lock, and OC units remain active when weapons are fired, but they aren't indestructible; a couple of hits will temporarily knock them out. Like just about everything in Phantom Crash, OC units come in several different flavours. Some allow the player to remain invisible longer, others are more resistant to impacts, and still others recharge at an increased rate. The strategic implications of this technology are manifold, and a Scoobee in the process of 'cloaking' is truly a sight to behold... or not behold, as the case may be.

So what can your Scoobee do? :)

She's got legs, dugadugadugaduga...

Hidden resentment is purged.

Missed me by *that* much.

Bullets ricochet off every surface, smouldering piles of wreckage litter the cityscape...

and their thunderous explosions reverberate through the arena. Bullets ricochet off every surface, smouldering piles of wreckage litter the cityscape, and floating camera platforms broadcast the action to the salivating masses. If the player survives this gruelling test of reflexes and endurance long enough, the sector champion enters the fray. Victories over champions are extremely hard-won, but they yield medals and sizeable quantities of New Yen, and bring the player one step closer to attaining Area Ranker status.

EXPLOSIONS ARE MEATY

The degree of Scoobee customisation possible in Phantom Crash will leave smug Battletech fans aghast. In fact, it's conceivable that the player's Scoobee will spend

as much time in the mechanic's shop as it will in combat. Given the astounding selection of legs, bodies, arm weapons, shoulder weapons, upgrade modules, paint jobs, stickers and extras on offer — and in consideration of the fact that it's possible to configure the performance of individual components — that's not at all surprising.

What is surprising is the unprecedented effort that has gone into Phantom Crash's music. Every track comes courtesy of real life Japanese groups and composers, and the styles range from grunge to classical, from ambient to jazz. At the game's dedicated music store, the player can preview individual tracks, read the artists' bios, and purchase songs for a nominal fee.

These tracks are automatically transferred to the player's personal jukebox, and can be listened to during battle, while tinkering in the garage — any time, really.

Considering the size of the game's sectors, and the swarms of Scoobees that fight within them, Phantom Crash's graphics are quite impressive. Animations are fluid, explosions are meaty, and the tremendous variation in the sizes, styles and colours of the Scoobees certainly keeps things interesting. On the negative side, though, the HUD is a bit too conspicuous, and the slight blur to the visuals makes fighting at night more difficult than it should be. Like a number of other titles published by Genki — Kengo and Tokyo Xtreme Racer, in particular — Phantom Crash probably won't appeal to those with a limited tolerance for repetition. But for mech-heads who can appreciate innovative design, Phantom Crash offers a unique gameplay experience that should not be missed. <<

!!! Rumours abound of an add-on disc that will feature new arenas, new Scoobees and weapons, and Xbox Live support! We can only hope...

PLUS: Fast-paced and addictive gameplay. Insane customisation.

MINUS: May be too complex and repetitive for some.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY
81 94 83

OVERALL

80

A mech tweaker's wet dream.

Robotech: BATTLECRY

CATEGORY: Mech combat >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >> **PUBLISHER:** TDK >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

MALCOLM CAMPBELL does more battling than crying.

bout a billion (okay, eight) years ago, when the N64 was called the Ultra 64, Gametek announced the development of Robotech: Crystal Dreams, a space combat game set in the popular Macross universe. The crowds went wild, fans of the TV show drooled over the (obviously pre-rendered) screenshots and the godawful pop warblings of series heroine Minmei returned to the top of the charts. Well... maybe a slight exaggeration, but anticipation was high. Unfortunately the game was never released, crushing many gamers' hopes of flying alongside Rick Hunter and Roy Fokker in Skull Squadron.

Fast forward to present day. TDK releases Robotech: Battlecry, hoping gamers jaded by countless mech games and innumerable mech anime will still jump at the chance of piloting a Varitech fighter. Zentraedi bandits at twelve o'clock, Captain Fokker!

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

Forgoing any attempt to incorporate the soap-opera like story from the series, Vicious Cycle have made Robotech: Battlecry purely about blowin' stuff up in mechs. Not that there's anything wrong with that, but as we've pointed out before, the Xbox isn't lacking in that department. And much like the recently released Gun Metal, Robotech's gameplay centres around the the mech's transforming capabilities. Each of the Varitech's three modes has different strengths. The Fighter mode is fast and armed with missiles and decoy canisters,

perfect for space combat while the Battloid is more maneuverable, ideal for urban warfare. The Guardian mode serves as a mix of the two — missile capable but easier to control. Using the d-pad to quickly switch between them looks great and is tactically necessary in some cases, but for the most part missions are completed using one mode exclusively.

The missions themselves are initially fun and diverse. You might be dogfighting in space surrounded by the Zentraedi fleet in one, then sent on a land-based search and rescue sortie in the next. There's nothing revolutionary, but just enough good bits in each to keep you playing. The space combat missions involving the huge Zentraedi capital ships are particularly cool. However,

there's a definite sense of quantity over quality here, with more than forty slight variations on the dogfight, streetfight, search and retrieve and escort/defend themes. By your tenth escort mission defending helpless and often stupid AI you'll be ready to throw something. This frustration is compounded by some very difficult objectives, often preceded by lengthy and energy-sapping though slightly easier sections, meaning the "Replay Mission" button gets a good workout.

Unlocking the bonus Varitech fighters, paint schemes and multiplayer maps can be a daunting

Oh. Hey. Er, I can hear my mother calling.

Spaghetti rockets away! Whoohoo!

When do we get to snipe crates?

Shut your fokking face, Uncle Fokker.

"I'm bad, I'm bad you know it, whooo!"

The kids'll love this Xmas tree!

Oops, I "accidentally" shot down Jake.

Even better, the crescent shaped explosions from the series pop up everywhere...

task as well – many of the gold, silver and bronze medals require completing levels multiple times. The two-player split-screen deathmatch itself is passable but never reaches the intensity of a Macross Plus style dogfight, mainly due to the limited handling of the Varitechs and mildly confusing targeting system.

BOLOGNAISE MISSILES
Supposedly, the developers of Robotech: Battlecry are great fans of the Macross saga, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the presentation. Making a game based on an anime gives you a grade A license to go nuts with the cel shading, and Vicious Cycle have done so in style. The texturing and effects have a distinctly 1985 look –

thick black outlines and bold colours are the order of the day. Even better, the crescent shaped explosions from the series pop up everywhere and the destruction of your Varitech results in a very retro sprite-based explosion. Even the mission briefing and menu screens look nicely dated. Perhaps the most important visual element though is the spaghetti trail missiles, a trademark of the series. Firing off a salvo of these lovelies in Battlecry looks fantastic. They twist and turn toward their target, hitting with a satisfying orange explosion, or spinning away, accidently taking out a skyscraper you were meant to be protecting.

The music and sound effects are

!!!! A few missions see you sniping munitions crates. That's right, you SNIPE CRATES. Brilliant!

commendable also, particularly the use of the original voice actors from the TV show. Unfortunately the most often heard voice is that of the character you play, hotshot rookie Jack Archer. He's an annoying bugger who constantly boasts of "taking these guys to school" in between frequent impressions of Michael Jackson's "Whoooo!".

Despite the criticisms raised in this review, Robotech: Battlecry is a fun mech combat game with plenty of moments that recall its animated inspiration beautifully. It will definitely appeal to Robotech fans who thought all the story and character development in the TV series just got in the way of a good mech fight. Others with (maybe unreasonable) hopes for The Ultimate Robotech Experience may be disappointed, but a sequel, reported to be in the works, may deliver something closer. Until then, there's a lot here to keep aspiring Varitech pilots very busy. ≪
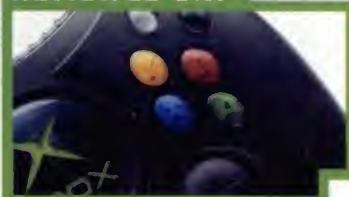
Something tells me his leg is bleeding.

Too much plastic surgery I think.

Come on, strike a pose!

Kakuto Chojin

CATEGORY: Fighting game >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >> **PUBLISHER:** Microsoft >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

CAM SHEA thinks Joey Tekken would be crying tears of rage...

akuto Chojin started out as an Xbox tech demo, and that's what it should have stayed. Despite being developed by Dream Publishing (which includes a few Dream Factory team members), Kakuto Chojin is an utterly generic, cringe-worthy fighting game. Those of you who had your fingers crossed for a spiritual successor to the bootylicious (it's in the dictionary — go look it up) Tobal games will be mighty disappointed. This one's worse than The Bouncer.

UP AGAINST A WALL

The core of a good fighting game lies in its fighting mechanics. While Kakuto Chojin has some value on the surface, it's not long until you realise just how shallow the system is. Moves are simple and generic, cheap hits will get you far and the environment plays no role — you can't slam someone up against a wall no matter how hard you try, the occasional ring-outs look incredibly glitchy, and the inclusion of a run button is just plain mystifying given how small the arenas are. Where are you going to

run, and how can you get a strategic advantage in a flat, walled area? It all feels frightfully behind the times next to the current 3D fighting kings.

Ironically, beating the game with a character unlocks an alternate set of moves, but you can only choose one fighting style or the other, completely ruining any chance the game had for satisfying play. This is definitely a fighting system for casual gamers.

SURPRISINGLY UNCOOL

This may not be so bad except that the character lineup makes the average mechanics a hundred times worse. Imagine our surprise to find a character based on Bruce Lee, a character that practices capoeira, a huge Thai kickboxer, a Brad Pitt look alike, a retarded S&M clown and generally some of the worst outfits seen in a fighting game since Heihachi donned a diaper in Tekken 4. For a game developed in Japan, the character selection is surprisingly uncool.

Every aspect of this game feels either recycled or completely devoid of personality. Compared to DOA3 this game's visuals are laughable. Even the admittedly high poly characters are an eyesore. They're detailed, but they look artificially shiny and unreal; like plastic toys fighting. That said, the frame rate is nice and quick, animations are reasonable and the slow motion kills occasionally look good.

The nail in the coffin, however, is that Dream Publishing even cut corners on play modes. Survival Mode and Practice Mode both have only the most minimal of options, and Story Mode has all the storytelling prowess of a packet of gum (and an oh so satisfying scrolling text reward for beating it). There is absolutely no meat to enjoy on this rotting gaming carcass. It's bare bones all the way.

Sadly, in the end, Kakuto Chojin is an utterly forgettable game that will only appeal to newcomers to the genre. <<

!!! Kakuto Chojin has a Battle Royale multiplayer mode where up to four people can duke it out.
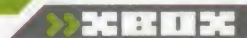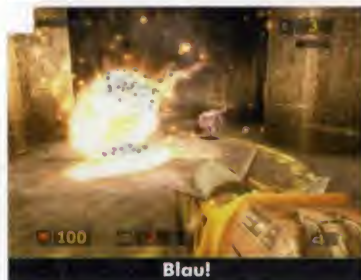
PLUS: Beat up Brad Pitt.

MINUS: Completely no frills.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
79	73	56

OVERALL

55

This game desperately needs a personality transplant.

Go ahead. Make my day.

Blau!

If only I had a BFG.

Serious Sam

CATEGORY: FPS >> PLAYERS: 1-4 >> PUBLISHER: Gotham Games >> PRICE: $89.95 >> RATING: M15 >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

BRETT ROBINSON takes his gaming seriously...

I n 2001, Croatian developer Croteam unleashed its bargain-priced first-person shooter, Serious Sam: The First Encounter. The game and its now famous lead character quickly attracted a legion of fans, and the sequel, Serious Sam: The Second Encounter, introduced players to a number of new environments, weapons and enemies, while retaining the killer gameplay that made the original such a hit. Combining the two PC versions into a single game simply titled Serious Sam, the Xbox incarnation brings a number of minor but welcome refinements to the series, and is certain to attain a rank among the console FPS greats.

DEVOID OF COMPLEXITY
Given the level of precision afforded by a PC's mouse and keyboard setup, Serious Sam translates remarkably well to Microsoft's processing powerhouse, with responsive controls augmented by an unobtrusive auto-aim. To Croteam's credit, the Xbox version's crisp, bright and simple graphics — a trademark of the Serious Sam franchise — are an improvement over those of

the PC versions, particularly when it comes to character animations and weapons effects. In addition, humourous animated cut scenes now entertain the player between missions.

When it comes down to it, though, Serious Sam's distinctive visuals are mere window dressing for its phenomenal gameplay, which is fast-paced and refreshingly devoid of complexity. First, Serious Sam equips the player with a selection of weapons diverse enough and destructive enough to put the most militant redneck's arsenal to shame. Then the game throws scores of different creatures into the mix, all of whom are eager to rip Sam's head off. Granted, the creatures that infest the game's 36 levels aren't especially clever, nor are they completely impervious to a few well-placed shots, but they have one ENORMOUS advantage: numbers. Enemies in Serious Sam don't attack in packs of five and six, or even in mobs of ten and twenty — in this game they literally attack by the hundreds! The sheer intensity and relentlessness of

!!! For the squeamish, 'Hippie' mode substitutes flowers for blood, and replaces gibs with pieces of fruit!

these assaults is mind-boggling, and conquering Halo's infamous Library level sometimes seems like a walk in the park by comparison. Fortunately, Serious Sam's protracted battles aren't endless, and powerups like health, ammunition and lives are plentiful.

JUST PLAIN FUN
For those with a hankering for some multiplayer action, Serious Sam offers both cooperative and deathmatch play in split-screen and system link modes. Supporting up to four players, deathmatch mode is a pleasant diversion, but it is the game's two-player cooperative mode that will hold the interest of most players.

Ultimately, Serious Sam's refined gameplay may be a little too simplistic for some, and its above-average difficulty level may prove intimidating for others, but gamers seeking a first-person shooter that's challenging, unpretentious and just plain fun should look no further than Croteam's latest effort. <<

PLUS: Frenzied action. Amusing cutscenes. Great co-op mode.

MINUS: Earlier levels not as interesting as later ones.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
80	85	86

OVERALL

84

An outstanding FPS and an excellent PC-Xbox port.

State Fair

3/1/24

Hyperville

Oil Power Plant

Select A My Sim

Sim City 4

CATEGORY: Sim >> PLAYERS: 1-TBA >> PUBLISHER: EA >> PRICE: $89.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >> REQUIRED: PIII 500, 128 MB RAM, 3D card highly recommended

ELIOT FISH creates his very own Redfern… and then obliterates it.

s the gaming world has been pelted with Sim titles, Sims expansion packs and Sims this and that, a wise few have been quietly biding their time for the return of the game that started it all. For some, Sim City remains the best incarnation of any sim game; its fine balance of sandbox gameplay and economic management still holding up over time as the most addictive and satisfying blend ever devised for the genre.

We've had to wait a bloody long time, but now that Sim City 4 has finally bolted from the gate, can the heady gameplay of connecting water pipes satisfy a whole new audience?

PICK AND CHOOSE
The biggest change to Sim City this time around is the introduction of

playable "Regions" — as opposed to one giant landmass where you build one big sprawling city. Regions have to be loaded separately from the world map, and can connect up until you're literally controlling multiple burgeoning cities. Load up a neighbouring Region, and you'll see your road or rail poking over waiting to be connected to something. What this means, is that you'll never be slaving over a huge and unwieldy megalopolis, as each Region is a fairly manageable size (although you can pick and choose small or large regions on the world map).

This is the first time in the series that we've actually been given the option to build and maintain all of the neighbouring cities as well as

our starting city. Of course, you can just concentrate on the one small Region if you desire and let it develop into a high density, high tech city, but the purpose of the Regions is to get the player to develop more than one city and eventually have those cities trade services and workers which helps to take your cities to greater heights. Build a large agricultural community in one Region, and try to encourage a dirty, highly populated commercial district in the neighbouring Region. There are

naturally, many different ways of piecing it all together. This really extends the longevity of the game, as you'll usually want to start a new neighbour for your city before your first city has even progressed very far, as juggling the two will give you access to cool neighbour options.

As in all Sim City games, you'll need to make sure the zones you build are supplied by power and water — the most basic necessities for

REVIEW

Okay, so here's oh-so-sunny Redfern...

Take that South Sydney! Muahahahaha!

Hyperville, a sprawling mass of mediocrity.

Small Shops
Low Wealth Commercial Services
Crime Rate: Low
Customers: Low

"I think there's someone in the yard..."
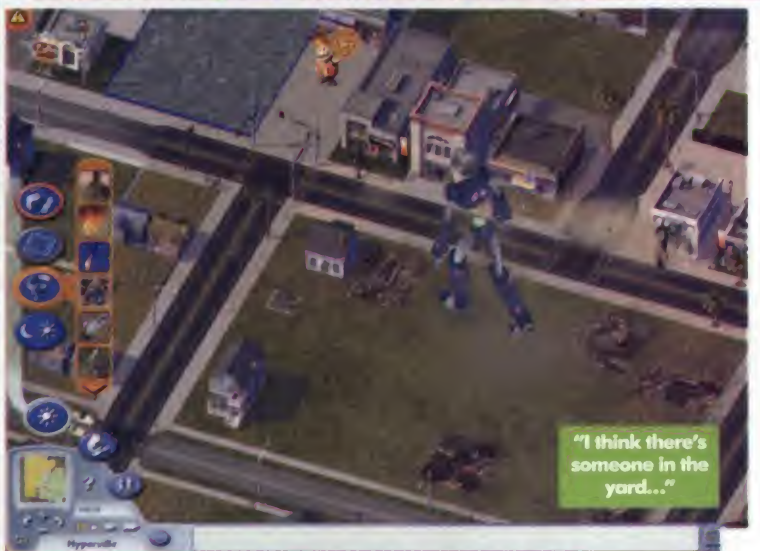
Unleash a volcano in the city streets, **a swirling tornado, meteors, a giant robot attack**...

development. Luckily, in Sim City 4, any zone by roadside will be powered, as long as the powerstation has road access. You will however, still need to build the water system. But these fiddly jobs have been made a lot less troublesome in Sim City 4, and you'll never have the problem of not being able to join up a series of pipes or subways because of the terrain. Everything this time around is a lot more user-friendly, with lots of tool-tips and an interface pulled straight from The Sims.

GIANT ROBOT ATTACK
New God tools allow you to terraform a Region before you start building in it. You can create mountains, valleys, lakes, grow forests, spawn animals, flatten it all or pepper it with mesas — there's the real opportunity here to be creative and completely remodel the world map to suit the cities you want to build. Make a huge lake with an island in the middle, or your very own Mordor-like mountain range — and then try to build on it! Once you begin building on a Region, however, you'll lose most of the God options for it, so you have to plan your landmass carefully first. There's even an auto-align edges tool so you'll never be out of whack with your neighbouring regions.
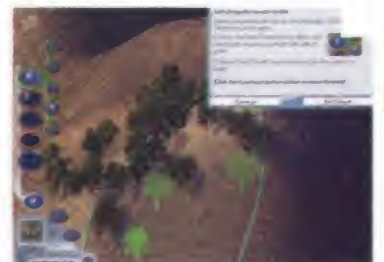
You'll still be able to smite your populace with disasters whenever you feel like it, which is nice. When you get sick of developing a city, just unleash a volcano in the city streets, a swirling tornado, meteors,

a giant robot attack and more. It's the best way to trash a city that has gone to pot anyway, and much more satisfying than just pressing a delete button...

In fact, all the pleasures of past Sim City games remain intact with number four in the series, but with an even greater level of detail on offer. Just take a closer look at your city as it grows, and you'll see cars zooming the streets and sitting at traffic lights, workers welding in buildings as they get built, people walking in and out of their houses, kids getting air on half-pipes in skate parks, people playing tennis on courts and further amazing levels of detail that you probably wouldn't expect to see. This is by far, the most lively and entertaining Sim City yet. Some of the structures you can build are really quite amusing, and you'll be inspired to get to the point where you can build some of the really amazing reward buildings, just so you can observe the great visuals that will be on offer. All this detail however, does have a price...

STAY IN THE BLACK
You wouldn't imagine this game to be much of a resource hog, but Sim City 4 seems to be quite hungry for processing power. When zooming into your city, the game draws greater levels of detail, which can really start to chug your system. It all starts out okay, but the game runs noticeably slower the more you build. To give you an idea, we reviewed the game on a PIII 733 with 256MB of RAM and had to wait a few seconds for the game to draw in details when zooming and even when waiting for menus to pop up or close. Luckily, you can turn off quite a few of the details, and lower a few graphics sliders to try to gain some performance. It's a shame

Sophia Spumoni lives here
Where's water? Look out your window!
Old Bathtub

Sophia Spumoni
▸ Sophia Spumoni Wonders Where's Water
▸ Sophia Spumoni Happily Hums 'Hi Ho' Over New Job
▸ Sophia Spumoni Fumes for Fire House
▸ Sophia Spumoni Says Commute "Like Sunday Drive"
▸ Sophia Spumoni's Workplace Water-Free

The Rolling Range
Sophia Spumoni Happily Hums 'Hi Ho' Over New Job
Sophia Spumoni Has New Digs

Where we lock up Army Men designers.
Hyperville

George Bush's garden shed.

The NEW post-Redfern Hyper office.

Now THAT is a backyard pool.

Just beneath the flight path...

really, because there are some lovely shadows, effects and lighting on the variety of building types, as well as clouds and fog that really add atmosphere to the experience. If you've got a beefy PC, then you're in for a real treat.

There was a reason why Sim City 2000 was such a hit, and why it remains a favourite with many gamers, despite the release of Sim City 3000. The gameplay was simpler, cleaner, quicker and fun. 3000 over complicated the process a bit, and Sim City 4 continues to try and add even more depth to the gameplay. For starters, the three zones — residential, industrial and commercial — are now split into low, medium and high density layers. You'll start out building low density residential, and then as your city becomes more attractive, demand for medium and high density accommodation will grow. Thankfully, you can re-zone the

!!! You can go online with Sim City 4 and play a co-op region game with other Sim City freaks!

higher density zones over the top of the lower density ones without losing those sims. This way, your city starts out looking like a very open, sprawling farming town, but once the money starts rolling in (and the population increases), the people will want to start building up instead of out. Progress is slow, but if you're patient and really work on balancing the spending on your utilities and how much you build, you'll see definite growth and hopefully your budget will stay in the black. You'll be up all night tweaking here and there, determined to just see through one more change...

Whilst there may well be many instances of frustration and confusion — especially when the manual and in-game tutorial are far too simplistic to offer any kind of guidance — there is now a greater depth of play in Sim City than ever before. Invest the time in it, and you'll discover that a few months of your life have ticked by and you didn't even know it. ≪

MOVING HOUSE

>> Sim City 4 allows you to move in your sims from The Sims to the houses of your choice in the residential zones of your city. If you don't own The Sims, you can create and move in the sims that are on offer in-game. These sims will make comments on the city and mention their likes and dislikes which you can choose to pay attention to if you're looking for tips on what to improve upon. You still get to choose their look, star sign and name, giving you a more personal insight into the city of your creation. A novelty, sure, but a nice touch.

PLUS: Lovely graphics, insidiously addictive gameplay.

MINUS: Needs a PC with decent specs, lots of trial and error.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
89	82	92

OVERALL

92

Sim City – it's back in a big way!

REVIEW

Sir, Bjorn Borg is on the viewscreen.

Ensign, is it getting hot in here?

Screw this, I'm off to the holodeck...

STAR TREK: Starfleet Command III

CATEGORY: Strategy >> PLAYERS: 1-16 >> PUBLISHER: Activision >> PRICE: $89.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >> REQUIRED: PIII 450, 128 Mb RAM, 3D card

DANIEL STAINES looks great in uniform.

I wanted to like this game so bad that it made my teeth hurt. I don't how that's physiologically possible and I suspect it has something to do with the copious amounts of (capital c) Coke I've consumed over the past couple of days, but that's not the point. The point is that I loaded up Starfleet Command III in the full expectation of a highly enjoyable Star Trek brand space combat simulator. What I got, however, was an extremely tedious Star Trek brand space combat simulator that offers little innovation and even less enjoyment.

ANOTHER SMALL DENT
The basic goal of Starfleet Command III is to fly your ship(s) around open space while shooting seven shades of space dust out of any vessel that isn't of your particular allegiance. In the single player campaign, this basic imperative is thinly veiled by a collection of rather repetitive missions that ostensibly have you completing a wide variety of different tasks but all end up boiling down to the same essential objective described above. This wouldn't be a crippling problem

if Starfleet Command's combat was actually enjoyable, but unfortunately that simply isn't the case and the game suffers severely because of this.

Assuming you're playing the game on the fastest speed setting, a typical combat encounter in Starfleet Command will see you and an enemy ship circling about and shooting each other for at least forty minutes or so. Play it on lower speed setting and you could possibly sit there for hours. I'm not exaggerating — that's ONE fight with ONE ship that may take HOURS to complete. Call me impatient, but isn't that a little long for an interstellar dog fight? The emphasis on pseudo-realism in this game is certainly appreciated, but five minutes is simply too long to wait for a weapon to charge up. Especially when you know that it's going to do nothing but put another small dent in an energy shield you've been trying to destroy for the last half an hour. It's all just way too drawn out to be enjoyable.

UTTERLY MEDIOCRE
Another flaw worth mentioning before we bang the final nail into

Starfleet Command's coffin is the game's utterly lackluster audio/visual presentation. Aside from Patrick Stewart's (Captain Picard) excellent voice acting, Starfleet Command's graphics and sound are utterly mediocre in almost every way. Music is repetitious, sound effects are dull and the vessels are blocky and uninteresting regardless of which race they come from. Occasionally there'll be some interesting stellar backgrounds to gawk at, but they're nothing one couldn't see on one of the numerous space screensavers available for free on the net.

To put it quite bluntly, Star Trek: Starfleet Command III is not a very good game. Its missions are repetitive, its combat is tediously long and uninteresting and its audio/visual merits are few and far between. Although some aspects of the game (such as the non-linear mission structure) do seem quite promising, they are sadly not strong enough to make this title anything but one for the really hardcore Trekkies out there. A shame, really. <<

!!! Patrick Stewart has a head that is both bald AND pointy. How cool is that?

PLUS: Patrick Stewart, non-linear mission campaign.

MINUS: Repetitive, tedious combat, poor audio/visuals.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
65	70	65

OVERALL

67

Tedious strategy gaming best left to devout Trekkies.

Get lost you space skitchers!

Did I take a wrong turn back there?

These new dual shower heads work a treat!

>>PS2

Defender

CATEGORY: Shooter >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >>
PUBLISHER: Midway >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >>
RATING: G8+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

When a game as classic as Defender gets re-made in 3D and you virtually hear nothing about it until the game's release, you can tell that something's probably gone wrong. The original arcade classic was an adrenaline-pumping shoot 'em up of epic proportions; a game with such memorable sound effects and side-scrolling alien mayhem that to be ambitious enough to want to update it for the next-gen consoles is a courageous and admirable feat, but a task that many developers probably wouldn't want to face.

Okay, so what we've got here is essentially the Defender concept, but in third-person 3D. The result is a game that is nothing like the Defender that we know and love, but a fairly solid action game on its own. You're still rescuing people (who humorously still hang onto the wings of your spaceship), and you're still blasting aliens with smart bombs, but this really just comes across as a generic space shooter.

Differences in this 3D remake include the option to choose from a variety of different ships with varying strengths and weaknesses, buy upgrades and play with a huge number of different weapons. This is because missions now involve many more tasks than just hammering the aliens by slapping the shoot button. You'll be escorting other ships and dropping tanks off to control ground forces and so on. They've done their best to make it feel as if you really are taking part in some big alien war on some alien planet somewhere. Defender is just a bit too unexciting to really bother with. There's some co-op play, and the game is quite challenging, but... Zzzzzzzz. — **Frank Dry**

>>PS2

Hot Wheels: Velocity X Maximum Justice

CATEGORY: Racing >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >>
PUBLISHER: THQ >> **PRICE:** $89.95 >>
RATING: G8+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

Ever since I was a tacker, Hot Wheels has been the training ground for reckless youth with greedy eyes on passing Skylines: fast cars, fast stunts, inelegant aerial stunts and piles of attitood. There's probably a cable channel somewhere on the planet that runs the adventures of young Max Justice, the high school student star and questionable role model in Velocity X. The main game follows his journey to save his kidnapped father, a Hot Wheels scientist, from the clutches of ubiquitous Bad Guy and his cronies.

Do I sound bored? Well, that's cos I am. The missions are unimaginative standards: Kill-the-NPC-cars, beat-the-time-limit, race-this-other-car. There's a pacey, impressive animated prelude that gives way to crappy mission briefing screens littered throughout the game.

The driving is fast if not realistic, offers the use of weapons to dispatch enemies and the chance to drive vertically up the sides of buildings and even upside down. Time limits aim to put the pressure on but with an arrow directing you through levels, you're left wondering what there is to actually DO. This is the kind of bland, two-tone gaming that 8 year-olds will lap up. Anyone with even a cursory experience of driving games would do much better elsewhere. Likesay with Burnout 2. — **John Dewhurst**

>>XBOX

Metal Dungeon

CATEGORY: RPG >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >>
PUBLISHER: Xicat Interactive >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >>
RATING: M >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

Metal Dungeon is a Japanese-made RPG set within an enormous research facility that employs a unique — if somewhat impractical — security feature; the central computer continuously randomises the facility's internal layout, thereby making infiltration extremely difficult and escape from its confines practically impossible. Thus, much of Metal Dungeon's gameplay consists of exploring the maze-like installation and fighting the biomechanical creatures that populate it. The player can issue limited Attack, Defend and Use Item commands, but the turn-based combat is for the most part automatic. Imaginative character designs had the potential to make combat in Metal Dungeon quite riveting, but a limit of one attack and one defend animation per character — coupled with the fact that equipping new weapons and armour has no effect on the appearance of characters — sees combat rapidly become tiresome.

The concept of a facility with a fluctuating internal layout is indeed a fascinating one, but the end result is a series of levels that seem identical. Because there are only minuscule variations in each level's wall textures, exploration and navigation are excruciating. Worse still, players who temporarily withdraw their team to base camp for healing (a necessity in many of the tougher levels) will find the level they were exploring freshly randomised on their return.

Metal Dungeon may well be a godsend for RPG addicts in dire need of a fix, but even those desperate souls should ensure they've got an Amulet of Resist Tedium (+64 Enthusiasm, -4000 Lethargy) handy. — **Brett Robinson**

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
83	75	67	**69**

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
75	68	60	**69**

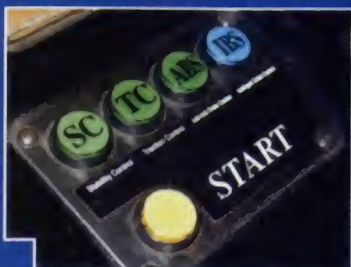| VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
64	61	56	**59**

REVIEW

Ferrari F355 Challenge

SEGA

For most people, actually being able to afford a Ferrari F355 is one thing, but to be able to actually race one of these uninsurable stylish hunks of high powered metal on a racing track is something else altogether.

With most casual arcade gamers unable to afford even a Ferrari key-ring, we must thank Sega for bringing out a Ferrari racing sim that enables us to have a cheap glimpse into an unforgiving high octane death defying motor sport. And how unforgiving this sim can be.

DE-TUNE THE REALNESS

If you were to choose the 6 speed clutch-driven gearboxed Simulator mode at your very first attempt, using the term "steep learning curve" would be inappropriate — there is no curve, it's an 89 degree straight line up! Fortunately, the boffins at Sega realised this and have allowed the player to de-tune the realness and select various degrees of... let's call it, unsimulation, which should enable you to keep your car on the track at least the majority of the time.

For a start, you can select novice mode (auto gearbox) or intermediate mode (semi-auto). On top of that, you have buttons which enable you to toggle AI in the form of stability control, traction control, anti-lock braking and intelligent brake system. The intelligent breaking system lowers you to the correct speed for each corner, and is it is highly advisable to use the IBS upon your first game just to witness the appropriate speeds for different types of corners. Otherwise you will find yourself doing a lot of driving in the sandpits.

After choosing your level of "unsimulation", you can then choose the degree of difficulty in regards to track assistance. In training mode, a corner's suggested speed/angle is signposted, as well as having the racing lines highlighted.

BACKSIDE TRACKSIDE

Once you have mastered the controls and speeds after several games, you will be able to appreciate the game on a higher level and take part in races on one of the seven authentic race courses which include Motegi, Suzuka, Monza and Long Beach.

Although the graphics are not spectacular, the 3 screen set up really immerses you into the game and makes you realise what a difference having your peripheral vision catered for does. On top of the graphics is the awesome sound which is transferred via 2 speakers located in the head rest.

If you are successful at this game, no doubt you would be able to take your backside trackside and utilise these skills with the real deal. After all, the game is licensed by Ferrari as the definitive F355 simulator. This really is one for the Ferrari fans. <<

Seconds later the arcade threw him out...

COIN-OP

OVERALL

8.5/10

Earthworm Jim 2

CATEGORY: Platformer >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** Vivendi >>
PRICE: $79.95 >> **RATING:** G8+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

Nostalgia can be a funny thing sometimes, as it can play havoc with your sense of proportion about things. Take my recollections of Earthworm Jim 2, for example. Back in the 16bit days when Shiny unleashed this tripped out annelid creation on the gaming world, I was neither an EWJ freak, nor a hater. I played both EWJ one and two, and enjoyed them for their surreal nature, not to mention the litany of bonus mini-games contained within what could have been a straight platformer. My memory of the second game was that it was even more in your face and zany than the first, but otherwise didn't change the formula too much.

Now, sentimentality can sometimes lend one's memories a rose coloured hue, but surely the game wasn't THIS BAD back then! In fact, I'm sure it wasn't. What we have here is yet another 16bit port that has been given the quick and nasty treatment by a greedy license owner. On the surface it looks quite faithful, but it's not long before the bugs (such as glitchy enemies) start popping up, the slowdown kicks in and you try to save your game only to find the password system doesn't seem to work — or when it does you've got next to no health.

Looking beyond these admittedly major issues, EWJ2 hasn't aged all that well anyway. When it was first released the sheer insanity and variety in the missions was impressive. From wacky game shows and gallons of snot, to farm animal puzzles (even more than in the original) and baby carrying ants, it was all very John K and a nice change. Nowadays however, the limited view distance (necessitating many leaps of faith and damage

Bacon for breakfast. Mmm.

Jim goes cow tipping.

How did he worm his way out of that?

from off-screen) and confusing nature of the scenery (what can be interacted with and what can't?) are less forgivable. And only nine levels? Forget about it. **Cam Shea**

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
67	64	53	53

Tomb Raider: THE PROPHECY

CATEGORY: Platformer >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** Ubi Soft >>
PRICE: $79.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

Tomb Raider: The Prophecy marks Lara Croft's third appearance on a Nintendo handheld. The first two titles were on GBC and surprisingly playable side scrolling adventures at that. With Ms Croft's move to far superior hardware, the cartoony graphics have made way for a grittier look and more faithful TR gameplay.

The game is viewed from a fixed three quarter perspective — side on but also looking down, and the camera tracks Lara as she moves through the environment. It's an effective solution that has allowed for quintessentially Tomb Raider level design - expansive environments with lots of climbing, jumping and exploring to enjoy. Height in

Lara's gone to the dogs, I reckon.

Well, maybe she's hanging in there...

particular is used to great effect. The presentation is not without its problems though. Optical illusions abound thanks to the viewing angle and very samey textures, making it easy to misjudge the heights of ledges.

Controls are well implemented, and Lara can do pretty much everything you'd expect — jump, run, grab onto ledges, climb, shimmy, slide down poles and so on. The classic TR feel has been captured well. You'll find leaping across huge gaps and only just making it as fun as always, and Lara's animations are one of the game's strongest points. In combat, she can lock on to enemies, allowing her to strafe and even backflip while still firing, and enemies range from the usual innocent wildlife that Lara always slaughters through to more mystical foes like wizards, ghosts and skeletons.
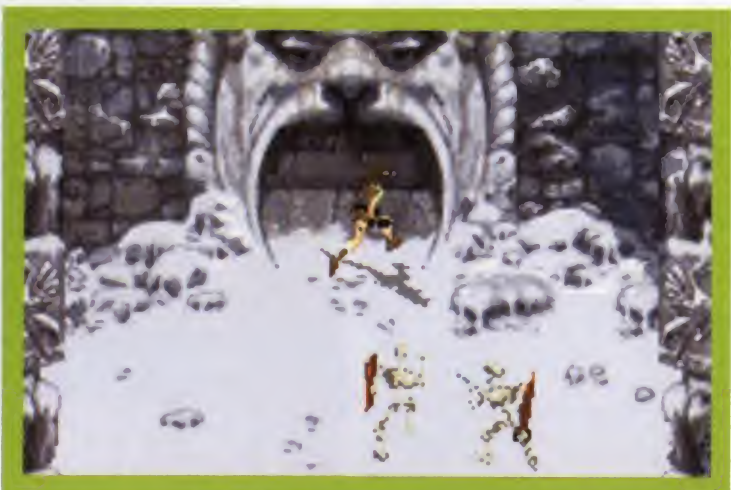
The Prophecy will undoubtedly satisfy fans of the franchise with its faithful blend of exploration and combat across 28 levels. Other gamers may get a little tired of the ever present lever switching puzzles, bland looking levels, repetitive combat and large amounts of backtracking. **Cam Shea**

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
80	81	81	81

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4

CATEGORY: Skating >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >> **PUBLISHER:** Activision >>
PRICE: $79.95 >> **RATING:** G8+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

o we even need to review this one? By now you should all know what to expect from the latest pint-sized Tony Hawk companion, and unsurprisingly Vicarious Visions haven't let us down.

For those not in the loop, the Tony Hawk GBA games present the world of skating from an isometric perspective, and do a remarkable job of staying faithful to the superb gameplay of their console cousins. Unfortunately, the limitations of the format mean that no matter how proficient it is, it's still a scaled down version of the real deal, and therefore has questionable appeal for anyone who has played it on console.

This is, once again, the case. The range of levels that have survived

Ouch! Where'd that tree come from?

Now, how'm I gonna land this?

You'll need a new spine soon...

the cartridge cut are College, Alcatraz, Kona Skatepark, Shipyard, Zoo, and London. As expected, Tony 4 on GBA does away with time limits within levels, allowing you to learn layouts at your leisure. Simply hit L to talk to pedestrians and get challenges. These include collecting "skate", "combo" in one chain, high scores, lost items, helping out utterly stupid people who're stuck in similarly stupid predicaments, pissing off an elephant and so on. You know the drill. The good news is that there are stacks more objectives than in Tony 3, and you can cancel or retry objectives on the pause screen, which keeps the gameplay nice and streamlined.

The new moves have been pulled across too, so you can now spine transfer and bust flatland tricks. The option to bail out of a poorly

aligned vert manoeuvre is particularly handy on GBA, as you're far more likely to line up incorrectly given the perspective. Nothing much has changed visually — this one is still ahead of the pack, and the skater animations are excellent. Another minor evolution, another highly playable game. **Cam Shea**

SCORE 2704 · WORLPTS 0
FS BOARDSLIDE 4608

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
83	80	86	83

Driver 2

CATEGORY: Driving >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** Infogrames >>
PRICE: $79.95 >> **RATING:** TBA >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

he Driver games were among the first to explore the notion of wide open city landscapes and mission-based driving objectives, all set to a gritty storyline. Although the second one was pretty sucky, both titles were important in the evolutionary process, which is why it's probably

not that surprising to see Driver 2 pop up on GBA.

One would assume with a game of this nature that a top down 2D perspective would be the only way to go, but developers Sennari Interactive have had a crack at doing it in 3D, and it's nowhere near as bad as we were expecting.

"And then they stole my toupee"

Worst. Park. Ever.

Okay, that's a small improvement.

You once again reprise the role of undercover cop Tanner (no, not Danny, DJ, Michelle or Stephanie), with 30 driving based missions to tackle. They're all basically one of the following (usually with a time limit): get from A to B; tail someone; avoid the cops; ram an enemy car into submission. The two cities (Chicago and Rio De Janeiro) are quite large and boast a decent amount of traffic, pedestrians and miscellaneous stuff to run over (no piles of crates though). You can even get out and jack other people's cars, revealing Tanner's new waif look. Or is it stick figure theatre?

Given that this is running on a GBA, Sennari have had to keep things very basic - the environments are bland and non-descript, and the sense of speed is pretty much non-existent, but at least it's smooth enough to be playable. There's also a fair bit of pop up, but hey, that's just being faithful to the PSone title

right? Sennari have also used an old trick to save resources — the "damage" and "felony" meters intentionally take up a fair bit of space at the top of the screen, reducing the dimensions of the in-game graphics. Despite overcoming many technical hurdles, however, Driver 2 just isn't playable enough to recommend. **Cam Shea**

Damage · Felony

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
65	44	57	60

ALERT

Wing Comm

MAN, YOU SHOULD DO THAT IN THE PRIVACY OF YOUR BEDROOM...

THAT'S OKAY. I LIKE THE SILENT, ROPEY TYPE.

Kitten in my sights
Pummel cat with laser guns
Now Kitty litter

(my first haiku)

'T was a bittersweet treat to see our glorious Luke Skywalker grow into a Meister of the Force, and the *Star Wars* saga end. With no knowledge of a future *Episode One* to satiate our appetite years later (and if we had known what was in store, George Lucas would've been found beaten to bits with fluorescent rods a long time ago) we slavered for the return of our environmentally-friendly light-bulb wielding irrepressible youth, let alone any sci-fi flick. With the genre booming, we were just itching for decent space sim games. LucasArts took up the opportunity a little too slow, releasing X-Wing in '93 — a whole three years behind Origin Systems first in the Wing Commander series — and that's three years too late to own the hall of fame.

[BELOW]
HYPER RIDES
WING COMMANDER
TO SUCCESS!

PIXELATED BLISS

The first person space dogfighting experience that was Wing Commander surpassed most competing products in the market at the time, revolutionising the industry and paving the way for a whole host of space sims. Sure, you've heard it all before you say — the amazing graphics, music, sound, whatever. 3D graphics hadn't quite made their niche yet, and in-game graphics consisted of colorful sprites that scaled according to their distance and exploded in multicoloured pixelated bliss. But what Wing Commander did best was story. Kudos to Chris Roberts, the mastermind behind it, for the plot progression and rich characters that set the stage (Christopher Blair, Admiral Tolwyn, Maniac, Angel, Paladin and the legendary Kilrathi Colonel "Hobbes" Ralgha) made the game all the more personal an experience. It got to the point where it wasn't uncommon to shed a tear if you lost a wingman, returning to the Tiger's Claw to their empty chair

I TOLD YOU TO STOP THAT! YOU'LL GO BLIND!

THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE, EVEN FOR A COMPUTER! ER... SORRY.

DO I GET TO SIT ON YOUR KNEE, BIG BOY?

I'M CALLING THE POLICE. THIS IS DISGSUTING!

ꟼander

>>Shakil "Shak" Ahmed

and a KIA by their name on the killboard. They weren't much help in combat situations in the original Wing Commander, but chatting to them between each mission, seeing them grow and get past interpersonal conflicts really made you feel like you were part of the story.

Set in the year 2654 (how do they work out these exact dates, anyhow?) amidst a raging battle with a fuzzy feline race that don't take kindly to patting, you begin your epic career as Christopher Blair, a Terran Confederation spacefighter pilot on board an interstellar carrier called the TCS Tiger's Claw. You learn soon enough that the alien 'Kilrathi' are not your average bunch of pussies, with no concept of surrender or defeat in their culture hampering any negotiations between the races. Caught in the thick of things, day after day gets spent defending the innocent, protecting the fleet, and going on the offensive against a vicious and merciless enemy. The campaign culminates in a desperate mission through a minefield and heavy opposition to destroy the secret starbase of the Kilrathi High Command, reminiscent of *Star Wars*.

The story did not end here, though, and the game was obviously only the opening chapter of the saga. '90-'91 saw Wing Commander: The Secret Missions released, with an ultimate weapon of Kilrathi origins devastating hundreds of thousands of civilians. Secret Missions 2 found the enemy declaring their personal Jihad against humanity, and the infamous Kilrathi warrior 'Hobbes' defecting to join the Terran cause. Ancient biblical type prophecies of doom abound, and the Tiger's Claw is destroyed while you're off on duty. Fans were left hanging, until Wing Commander II: Vengeance of the Kilrathi ('91) brought us back to an older Blair and reunited him with his lover, Angel, and pet/defector/wingman, Colonel Hobbes, as they fought to clear his name.

GREAT SHOT, LUKE... ER, BLAIR!

Wing Commander consistently redefined "state-of-the-art" entertainment, and broke new ground when it blended Hollywood filmmaking and computer entertainment in Wing Commander III: Heart of the Tiger. An older Mark Hamill finally returned to the stars, taking up the role of Blair; Malcolm McDowell took on the role of Admiral Tolwyn; and they couldn't have cast a better hotshot Maniac than Thomas Wilson (that's Biff from Back to the Future). With four CDs of full speech, an interactive plot with multiple endings, two romances, numerous betrayals that really take you by surprise and over three hours of video (not to mention the best looking gameplay and 3D space combat thus far), Wing Commander III received numerous accolades it rightly deserved. Real actors playing out cinematic cut-scenes soon became the trend, with Command & Conquer following suit. The game ended with the destruction of the Kilrathi homeworld, or if you failed enough missions, the destruction of Earth.

In Wing Commander IV: The Price of Freedom, released early '96, the battle with the

Kilrathi had ended, but civil war had begun to threaten the integrity of the confederation. This time, the enemy is from within, with a breed of super soldiers and elite craft making up a particular Admiral's personal army.

The final installment of the series came as Wing Commander: Prophecy, with the return of an ancient race referred to as the Kn'thrak in Kilrathi prophecies uniting the two races in a desperate bid for survival. The protagonist changed to a young lieutenant Casey, nowhere near as likeable as Blair. WC: Prophecy was followed by Secret Ops, a free (yes, free!) download over the net that continued the story.

The games sparked a series of novels, a poorly produced animated series and eventually a movie directed by Chris Roberts that went out with the same blaze of glory as Waterworld for failing to meet fans' expectations. Although there haven't been any further releases since then, many consider it only a matter of time before Origin looks at the still-popular series and does something further with it. Fans are guessing the next step will be Freelancer, the epic space game Chris Roberts has been working on for Microsoft. The setting hasn't been milked dry just yet. <<

Pussy in your Pocket

Astoundingly, Wing Commander: Prophecy has been announced for the Game Boy Advance. Soon we'll be battling those evil aliens, chatting to our wingmen and wingwomen, and enjoying all that classic Wing Commander space combat gameplay on Nintendo's little handheld. Who would have thought it would ever be possible?!

DVD Reviews

I think he wanted a vodka & orange.
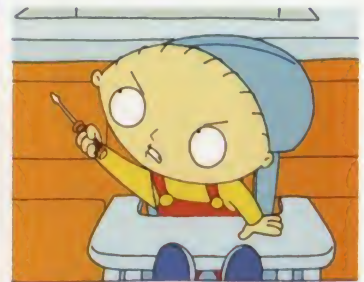

Just your average American family.

Watch me balance this slug on my lip.

Family Guy SEASON 1 (IMPORT)

FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT, MA15+

From the twisted mind of Seth MacFarlane, Family Guy is acerbic, anti-PC comedy at its best. Like The Simpsons, Family Guy revolves around the antics of a family — the Griffins. Unlike The Simpsons, however, the Griffin family is anything but nuclear. The most intelligent and well-groomed (in both senses of the word) member of the family happens to be the dog Brian, who also has a soft spot for

hard drinking ("hey bar keep, who's leg do you have to hump to get a dry martini around here?") and in a later season, cocaine. Then again, baby Stewie is also something of a mastermind... but more in the criminal sense than any other. Indeed, Stewie is constantly scheming to not only kill Lois (the mother) but to take over the world. Stewie alone makes this show worth watching. Rounding out the cast is son Chris (voiced by none other than Seth Green), oft overlooked daughter

Meg, and the focal point of the family, the father Peter.

KILL OFF WILLIAM SHATNER

Family Guy takes the style of post-modern intersubjective comedy pioneered by The Simpsons and raises it to a whole new breakneck level. This is The Simpsons on PCP - fast-paced and raw, with cutaways and flashbacks flying thick and fast. As an example, the second episode alone has references to Star Trek, Roadrunner and Wile E. Coyote, Chips, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, NYPD Blue, The Wonder Years, Scooby Doo, The Wizard of Oz, Alf, Lost in Space, Gilligan's Island, I Dream of Genie, Bewitched, 90210, The Creature from the Black Lagoon and Batman - all in 22 minutes! They even find time to kill off William Shatner! Good times.

There are literally NO extras — not even a commentary track, which is a

real shame as it's the commentaries that are the best part of The Simpsons and Futurama DVD releases and we'd love to get an insight into the show from MacFarlane. Hopefully the US release (mid-2003) will rectify the situation, but until then there's really no point getting the episodes on DVD (especially given the average transfer quality). Regardless of what form you watch it in, Family Guy is a must-see animated comedy. **Cam Shea**

MOVIE: 8 EXTRAS: -1

HYPERVISION

Death to Smoochy

WARNER, MA15+

Death to Smoochy is a black comedy focussing on the depths of depravity in children's television, and is as dark and surreal as it is funny. The film follows the chronic downhill spiral of ex-children's show host Rainbow Randolph (played with great lunacy and surprising ferocity by Robin Williams) and the focus of his considerable venom - his replacement Sheldon Mopes, aka Smoochy the rhino (played by Edward Norton). Mopes is a naïve and principled young man who soon discovers that behind the psychedelic colours, dancing midgets and silly songs lurk mobsters, corruption, violence, revenge and amoral exploitation. Imagine Pee Wee's Playhouse with execution killings and you're on the

When I said "give him the dick..."

right track.

Death to Smoochy was written by Adam Resnick (Dave Letterman and Larry Sanders show writer), and directed with a deft touch by Danny DeVito. Extras include commentary by DeVito, a behind the scenes montage, additional scenes, outtakes, trailers and a whole host of stills galleries. Critics seem to either love or hate Death to Smoochy, but we think it's a classic. **Cam Shea**

MOVIE: 8.5 EXTRAS: 5

The Hyper team launch the new season of Hyper TV.

Waiting for Guffman

WARNER BROS, M15+

Waiting For Guffman is set in Blaine, Missouri and is the story of a theatre production put on to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the town. The director, Corky St. Clair (played by Christopher Guest) hires a ragtag group of locals who soon dream of taking the production to Broadway. Waiting For Guffman is yet another film in the mock documentary style that Christopher Guest has made his own. In other words, we're talking a tight production schedule (29 days) and almost completely ad-libbed dialogue from the entire cast.

The result is very silly but quite touching. Christopher Guest is hilarious as Corky St. Clair, once again underlining his range as an

actor (from British rocker in Spinal Tap to a loveable hick in Best In Show through to the hugely effeminate Corky). The rest of the cast perform admirably too, and will be instantly recognisable to fans of Best In Show and Spinal Tap.

This DVD comes with a reasonable selection of extras. There's a commentary track by Christopher Guest and Eugene Levy (although not done in character — anyone who has listened to the Spinal Tap commentary where the cast actually do the commentary AS Spinal Tap will know how classic that can be), a whole bunch of deleted scenes (they did crop the film down from 60 hours of footage!) and the theatrical trailer. **Cam Shea**

MOVIE: 7 EXTRAS: 6.5

The Sargeant Pepper fan club never really took off.

"The boy has, but you can show me..."

Flying High

PARAMOUNT, M

What's slower than a speeding bullet, and able to hit tall buildings at a single bound?" Yep, that was one of the tag lines. The film that announced the holy comedic trinity of Zucker/Abrahams/Zucker is still one of the funniest ever made, and the best comedy of the 80s. Originally titled Airplane in the USA, this is a non-stop cavalcade of sight gags,

"Please, no more folk music! Argh!"

puns and just plain stupidity that established the template for spoof movies. "Have you ever seen a grown man naked?"

Robert Hays is hilariously po-faced as Striker, a haunted ex-fighter pilot forced to land a boeing after food poisoning decimates the flight crew and passengers. Julie Haggerty is just as good as his willowy old flame. The directors provide a hilarious commentary. **Tim Lee**

MOVIE: 8 EXTRAS: 6

Reign of Fire

BUENA VISTA, M

London bridge has fallen down, fallen down...

Matthew tries to make up for The Wedding Planner.

Twenty years into the future and dragons have emerged after millenia lying dormant to scourge the earth with fire. Quinn (Bale) is responsible for protecting a last bastion of humans from the highly evolved and intelligent beasts. Into his midst comes cocksure Yankee military man Van Zan (McConaughey) with a foolhardy plan to destroy the dragons' king at his lair in London.

You've probably heard how crap this film is. That's an idea we don't want to dispossess you of, because coming to Reign of Fire expecting the worst, you actually find a film that isn't half bad - which is only to say it's only half good. All of this, of course, is on the proviso you've been waiting for a high concept, post-apocalyptic cum medieval dragon film with tons of meaningless action, grunting dialogue, fire and tip top production design.

Christian Bale is fairly brooding and ineffectual as the reluctant hero with his own dragons to face. Matthew McConaughey steals the show as the blustering Seppo who walks in to save the day and unleashes hell. A film as spectacular and substantial as a burst of flame. **Tim Lee**

MOVIE: 4 EXTRAS: 5

Neighbours DEFINING MOMENTS

RAJON, G

For anyone who grew up in Australia in the 80s, Neighbours: Defining Moments will be an embarrassing but sentimental walk down memory lane. Who can forget the cultural phenomenon that was Scott and Charlene's marriage?

By definition, i.e. "soapie", Neighbours is not great television. In fact it's very bad, occasionally painful television. But it's hard to not feel at least some nostalgia watching Kylie, Jason, Guy et al. before they were megastars. If nothing else the glorious 80s fashions and hairstyles should provide diversion. In the "Harold and Madge" episode 6 separate mullets can be counted in a single shot. A fleeting and guilty pleasure, but amusing and slightly sentimental nonetheless.

For die-hard Neighbours fans all fifteen episodes on these two discs will be essential viewing. For everyone else disc one, comprising five episodes from 1986-1988, is the place to start and end, and that quickly.

The DVD is an ordinary transfer of a show that hardly had the highest production values to begin with. But you will want to crank up your amp and sing along to Angry Anderson's awesome 80s power ballad "Suddenly" which accompanies Scott and Charlene's nuptials.

There's also a stills gallery - only worth a look for the hilarious photo of Jim Robinson (Alan Dale) clutching his chest in the throws of a heart attack. Now that is acting! **Tom Scott**

MOVIE: 7 EXTRAS: 6.5

"Scott, I think there's a small mammal crawling up your neck."

The real Kevin Bacon is still funnier.

Malcy designs the latest Hyper cover.

John Safran's Music Jamboree

MADMAN, M15+

It seems that John Safran has finished rummaging in other people's rubbish (Ray Martin's to be precise) just long enough to produce a series that is articulate, creative and always humorous. In his exploration of music in its various forms, and the music industry and the influences it holds, Safran has put together a diverse collection of material that's often as clever and enlightening as it is silly — just take a look at his hilarious Footloose dance recreation or the 3AW pills scam and you'll see what we mean. Other segments see guest artists including Magic Dirt, TISM and 1200 Techniques rework well-known tunes through a variety of world instruments (sometimes better than the original release) and the music mole, who provides some insight into the politics of the music industry. Other highlights include Safran's reminiscing over his days in the cult band 'Raspberry Cordial', his exploration of links between Beck and scientology, and his creation of new cult band 'Jew Town' to rival Christian rock. A decent range of extras are also included, the best being Safran's original Race Around the World application video. Like everything else on this two DVD set, it's classic. **Ella Band**

Ancient artifacts #113: The glow stick.

MOVIE: 8 EXTRAS: 4.5

ANIME

Hyper Police

CATEGORY: FUTURISTIC ACTION/COMEDY
PRODUCTION COMPANY:
MEE/KADOKAWA/NIPPON COLUMBIA

With the reputation of the hardest, most chiselled gaming critics in Australia, Eliot and the Hyper crew might be somewhat mortified by having any association, unintended or otherwise, with this offbeat comedy series. Set in Earth's distant future, a series of human-made disasters has led to the rapid proliferation of hybrids — people who are half-wolves, half-pigs, half-horses, half-lizards and so on. Pure-bred humans are actually an endangered species, and there's even a law in place to protect them.

SECRETLY IN LOVE
Law enforcement is supplemented by many privately run companies of bounty hunters. The focus of Hyper Police is on Natsuki Sasahara, a scatter-brained cat-girl employed

by a cash-strapped company. Hyper Police don't really focus on Natsuki's exploits in nailing the miscreants who plague the fair city of Shinjuku, but rather on her relationship with the other protagonists in the series. There's her sempai, a wolf-man who's secretly in love with her, even though she accidentally shot him in the head; and there's the nine-tailed-fox-woman, who was caught trying to earn her ninth tail by taking a bite out of Natsuki's fanny. It's a bizarre collection of situation comedy, much of it sex-based, all of which is set up by the unpredictable futuristic circumstances in the series.

Hyper Police isn't as immediately funny as finer classics like Photon Earth or Dragon Half, but its unusual blend of themes and genres (bounty hunters, mutant segregation, love triangles, future settings) has the potential for some lasting value. This could be a series worth investing in.

Man Power: The Anime.

It glows when Ox are nearby.

| ANIMATION | 7 | PLOT: | 7 | OVERALL: | 7 |

I My Me! Strawberry Eggs

CATEGORY: COMEDY
PRODUCTION COMPANY: IMM!
COMMITTEE, PIONEER

When a man of clearly heterosexual orientation is driven to dressing up as a woman, you have the ingredients for what ought to be comedy gold. Rumiko Takahashi understood this when she turned Ranma Saotome

into a girl every time he touched cold water; and in some ways, the adventures of Keitaro Urushima at the girls-only Hinata Lodge are very similar.

MEN ARE USELESS
In I My Me! Strawberry Eggs, Hibiki Amawa dresses up as a woman to secure a job at a local high school where the headmistress enforces a strict "men are useless and cannot be teachers" policy. Hibiki's aim is to teach the man-hating neo-feminist that men are, in fact, capable of compassion and understanding (as well as to pay his landlord). Incredibly, his disguise is so immaculate that he's got everyone fooled. Many of the male students even think he's hot. Better still,

he's the PE teacher of the school (think change-room hilarity).

Unfortunately, I My Me! Strawberry Eggs has been cocked up by an attempt to give the story a serious treatment. Hibiki actually takes consideration of his moral dilemma, takes to his job of teaching in earnest, and is always mindful of his goal of teaching the headmistress a lesson in gender politics. Here's a free tip for Pioneer and everyone else involved in the production — when viewers are sucked into a world of unlikely circumstances, it's not a good idea to bring them back to earth. We want the comedy to follow through. We want more misplaced fake boobs, more panty humour, blood streaming from nostrils, and more accidental homosexuality. Give this one a miss.

Hey, I can sell this in Tokyo for heaps.

80s fashion can only live on in cartoons.

| ANIMATION | 6 | PLOT: | 4 | OVERALL: | 5 |

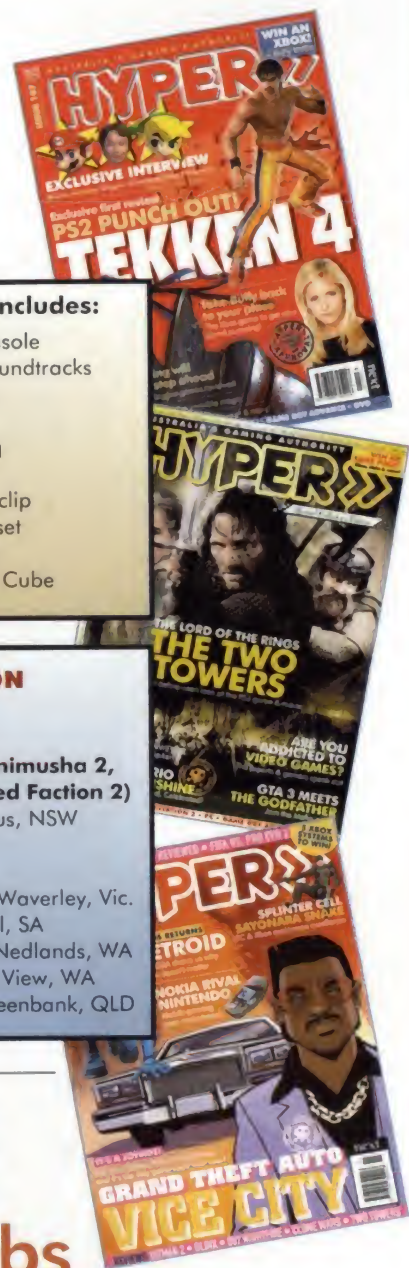# Subscribe to HYPER for your chance to win a PlayStation®2 & GTA: Vice City bundle!

SUBSCRIPTIONS

FORUM

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

Q. IS NOT HAVING AN R18+ CATEGORY REALLY THAT BAD?

What now feels like an age-old debate – the push for an R18+ category – reared its ugly head again recently with the emergence of BMX XXX and the censoring of all the naughty bits, the trimming of GTA: Vice City and the snipping of The Getaway. But amidst all the uproar, has anyone ever stopped to wonder whether an R18+ category would really make any difference to the kind of games we really want to play? Here's what you had to say on the matter of whether an R18+ category is really that important or not…

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 favourite PS2 game to date, and why?"

Responses will be printed in Hyper 115.

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

YES AND NO

So, you've finally put the question out there. Is not having an R18+ Rating for games here in jolly old Australia really that bad? Well, it is and it isn't. So far we haven't really suffered for it. Soldier Of Fortune was the first real offender, and that managed to slaughter its way onto our shores uncensored with the MA15+ rating. That is, convince your parents to buy it for you because it's only a game ("it's not real, mum") and then have fun blowing people away ("hooray, dismembered arms for everybody!"). And who can forget GTA3, pure gaming genius: except for the ability to pick up ladies of the night (during the day as well). No, that can't happen. So they took it out, along with a few other things and re-released it. With the MA15+ rating.

Boohoo. People complained. However, the things that were taken out had no real impact on the gameplay, which is what you buy a game for. Not the whores, the gameplay. Trust me. The new problem is BMX XXX, but from what I hear the gameplay is inferior to Dave Mirra BMX 2, so it's not really worth it except for the voyeurism. Which is not what you buy games for.

Gameplay is worth $100, two rounded collections of breast-shaped polygons are not (Yes, there is a secret message there that DOA Extreme Volleyball had better have gameplay up there with Beach Spikers). My point here is that the ratings only apply to content. Things like nudity, violence, swearing; these don't have any real effect on the game other than a novelty appeal. You can't put a rating on real gameplay, and that's why I don't think that not having an R18+ category is that bad at all. And if a game comes along that needs to be R18+, then developers like Rockstar have shown us that they're willing to make sure we see their game anyway.

If all else fails, import. It might be more expensive and more trouble, but if the game is really worth it then you'd do it. Gameplay is the core of games, and good gameplay is for everyone.
Steven McKenzie

WHAT A JOKE

Is not having an R18+ category, really that bad!? Of course it's bloody bad. It means that we Aussies miss out on heaps of extra cool stuff. Hell, not even

If only they'd tried a little harder, they could have got this game banned!

They probably should have censored the gameplay too.

New Zealand is forced to have censored versions of games and that's reason enough. I mean, just look at GTA: Vice City, that's the obvious example. I'm not sure on the full details, but I've heard you'll be unable to own a certain club & a cut scene will be edited, but that may not be all. There's even talk of being unable to dismember people with the chainsaw.

Sure, some of this may sound a little sick, but c'mon, the rest of the world gets it, why should we miss out? Why should we be different? If we want our society to be individual, we should do it in a way that won't piss any of us off.

I'll tell you one thing, if there's one rating category for games that there should not be, it's PG. Think about it. It stands for parental guidance. As if there's any parents out there who'll watch a kid play a game, just because the OFLC recommends it. What a joke.

One final point. I think I remember a couple of years back, a poll was done and the average age of gamers was about 22 years old. As I see it, the average age has increased since then because many of those that were under 18 are now past 18 and it seems that there are a lot less kids interested in games these days.

Thank you for listening,
Vinny Valentino

AN EXCUSE FOR PERVERTS

To tell you the truth, I hate the idea of not having an R18+ category. I enjoy sex, violence, horror and bloody gore as much as the next nerd, so I have always hated the fact that Australians didn't get BMX XXX or the uncensored version of GTA 3. Having an R18+ rating opens up new opportunities and game

designs for games. More violence, more gore, MORE SEX! Our world can be portrayed even better in video games, if a new R18+ category is introduced.

BUT after looking at this topic and carefully thinking about my response, I realised that we have lost the purpose and meaning of games. Why the hell do people even think of making games like BMX XXX? It is totally bloody useless. If you want porn, pay $70 less and buy yourself a porn DVD that's got even better stuff in it.

MA15+ is enough if you ask me. I can't see how violence can get any more brutal than Halo or Mafia, or any other related games. I don't see how horror games can or should get scarier than Resident Evil (GCN), or Silent Hill 2, or Project Zero.

Games are games. We play games to escape reality. Sex is not needed in Video Games. It is just an excuse for perverts to easily pick up porn from normal retailers.

Violence is good enough. I believe that until graphics reach photo realism, where people can easily relate what they see on a screen to the real world, I believe the ratings now for games is enough. So bottom line is, Sex is not necessary in games. Violence, well, don't you think we've a good enough dose of blood and body parts flying around already?

From the voice of
God's Hitman

CRAPPY SEX SCENES

Any game that falls into the R18+ category probably does so because of content that has absolutely no relevance to the gameplay. Sex? Well, there's never been any interactive sex in a game, so who cares about a

stupid cutscene if we still get the game playable and intact. Surely restricting the developers to non-sensationalist content is forcing them to come up with decent gameplay, rather than just trying to market a game on crappy sex scenes or over-the-top gore, which is probably what the market would be flooding with if an R18+ category was available. Frankly, I fail to see that we're missing out on anything with our current classification system.

Cheers Hyper,
Joe "Goo" Allen

AM I SICK?

Hey Hyper,

I think the lack of a category for adults in gaming is just a joke. Games have been going strong for more than 20 years now, and some of us are well into their 30s and just might happen to want the odd game with sex and violence. Just like I enjoy renting out the odd hot movie (am I sick, or just honest?) to get a perve on some action, I believe I should be able to play a game like BMX XXX purely for the fun of unlocking some strip scenes for the silly thrill of it all. I'm an adult, I should have access to stuff like that if I want it, regardless of how f***ed the game is. Oh, whoops, I said f***k — better edit out my letter!
Brainthrob

POLYGON NUDES

Yo Hyper,

Is the lack of an R18+ category all that bad? Well... it's true that there should be an R category, even an X category, for all the gamers out there over 18, but I don't think we're missing out on anything at all. Until games have life-

like graphics, what's the point in lame polygon nudes and poorly depicted violence? I don't get off on seeing two pink cubes humping each other. It's just a waste of time anyhow.

Youse are the best mag on the planet,
CaRnAgE

COMPLETE CRAP

G'day guys. This is just complete and unadulterated crap. I am a 20 year-old that has played games most of his life, and now that the majority of games that appeal to me have adult connotations and themes, the games are being censored! Sure the edited content may not be that important to the overall experience, but if you can see a young woman get slashed with a bread knife at the cinema at 15 and see sex in prime time on SBS when you're old enough to operate a remote, and hear every four letter word uttered under the sun if you're within ear shot of the Sopranos, then what's wrong with a bit of tit, prostitution, blood and language in a hundred dollar piece of what's essentially animated interactivity? That over used lame excuse of games "being more interactive that other forms of media" just doesn't wash.

There needs to be change and unfortunately I just don't see that happening. This is just the beginning of a much larger debate of today's government's continued fear of an Australian Columbine, which has already happened, in a university no less, and had nothing to do with games.

P.S. EVERYONE SOULD SEE BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE.
Anonymous

Hey buddy, want to buy a... shhhh... video game?

MAIL

SLAP IN THE FACE

To the peeps at Hyper,

I was talkin' with a friend the other day about Elite and Frontier and we were wondering why there aren't any good new versions of this type of game (or are there?).

After our talk I had a look round on the internet and found rumours of an Elite 4 but couldn't find any solid info. I was wondering what info you guys had on the issue.

I'm also wondering why LucasArts haven't made such a game in the *Star Wars* universe (how cool would that be?). I mean, do they need someone to slap them in the face and say this game would rock or what?

Anyway, thanks 4 readin'.

OneT

Dear OneT,
Microsoft's Freelancer for PC promises to be just the game you're looking for. Also, the MMORPG, Star Wars: Galaxies, will get an expansion a few months after release that allows space travel which might solve the latter half of your letter. As for an Elite 4 – it has been in development for some time,

but there's no indication at this stage whether it's a project that will ever see completion...

AM I HOT OR NOT?

Dear Hyper,

You and me go way back to the bygone days of yore when Eliot was writing reviews for 'Super Pinball - Behind the Mask' for the SNES... and I can safely say that his contribution to the quality of the mag has somewhat improved since '95. Anyway the point of this is not to reminisce but to ask a single question:

In Daniel Wilks' review of X-men: Next Dimension, why were there 6 screenshots of Phoenix and not a single caption about how hot she was? I know it's like shooting fish in a barrel (no offence E) but I found it quite unnerving to say the least...

In 7 years I've never been compelled to write in, but dammit I want answers! Otherwise 'grats on an ever improving mag.

Michael White

Dear Michael,
We went back to Daniel to find out

just how hot he thinks Phoenix is for you: "I'd give her a 7".

SEGA SCENTED

Dear Hyper dudes,

Please put my letter in your mag or self-destruction will take place! Okay, cool we've got that sorted out. Now I'd like to ask you a few questions (and they're NOT stupid!) Well I hope they're not anyway...

I'll let you decide on that one. Okay here goes:
1. Why didn't you put Shenmue II for Xbox in your top 25 games for 2003?
2. Do you think if Nintendo bought Sega they would have a better chance in the console wars?
3. Are there any plans for a Jet Set Radio Future sequel? (crosses fingers)
4. Is the Matsushita 'Q' ever coming to Australia, because they look awesome.
5. What are your personal top 5 Dreamcast (R.I.P) games?

Okay, they're all my questions! Cheers,

Professor K

Dear Professor K,
1. We didn't think it was quite exciting enough to be in the list.
2. Well, it sure wouldn't hurt.
3. We haven't heard anything to suggest so.
4. Panasonic have no plans to release the "Q" in Australia. Sob.
5. 1) Soul Calibur, 2) Crazy Taxi, 3) Jet Set Radio, 4) Virtua Tennis, 5) Shenmue.
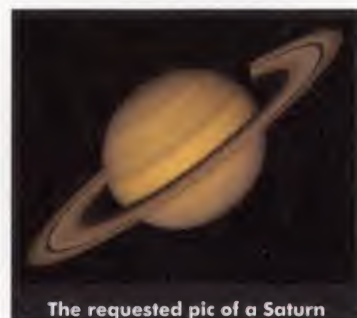
The requested pic of a Saturn

BITCHSLAP RAPPIN

Dear Hyper,

Call me crazy but I've been finding myself playing my SNES and Megadrive more than my GCN and PC lately. Classic games such as Secret of Mana, FF5, Phantasy Star 3 and (of course) Chrono Trigger have been taking up my time all month. These games still hold their own against newer games (and they are better than 90% of the trash that is out there now!!!) What I'm trying to say is give old skool gaming a go cos 16 bit gaming is still cool! Now on to some questions:
1. Who would win in a fight between Mario and Sonic?
2. When is FF: Crystal Chronicle coming out for the Cube?
3. I've heard so much about the Saturn, but I still have not seen a pic of one. If it's not too much trouble, could you please enclose one???
4. Is Capcom VS SNK 2 for GCN any good?

Thanx 4 your time!!!

KINGPIN

P.S. With your bitchslap rappin

CAPTION THIS!

PART 38 WINNER

Despite all the "time to die" entries, **Peter Richter** of Mount Annan in NSW sent us this winning caption…

Bond confuses his enemies by changing their shirt colour.

Legend Of Zelda

James Reid has been fantasising a little too much...

Ari Gibson brings us two groovy Samus pics.

and your cocaine tongue you get nuthin done!!!

Dear Kingpin,
1. Mario would flush Sonic down the nearest S-bend.
2. There is no PAL release date yet.
3. See the pic on the left!
4. It's a great game, but you'll need some kind of arcade stick to fully enjoy it on the Cube. The Cube controller doesn't have a great button layout for that kind of fighting game. As a result the game's controls have been dumbed down a little for the controller.

PS3, XBOX 2 ETC.

Dear Hyper,
I have been reading your mag for a few years now and it's probably the best multi-format mag ever. Now my questions:
1. What do you recommend: DOA3 or Tekken 4?
2. I went to the shops and bought Hyper issue 111, and it came with an issue of PSW, how come?
3. When will they fully stop making PSone games?
4. Do you think Nintendo and Microsoft would release another console when Sony releases PlayStation 3?
5. Is Sega GT on Xbox any good?
Thanks for your time,
Terence Lamb

Dear Terence,
How's Philip by the way?
1. Dead Or Alive 3.
2. Looking a gift horse in the mouth, eh??
3. When people stop buying them!
4. No, they'll just let Sony have the whole games market to themselves. Of course they will! Xbox 2 is already in development, and Nintendo will probably do another console despite what people say – they've virtually confirmed that fact.
5. Yes, it's addictive and fun, but a little lacking in depth.

A LESSON IN FEAR

Dear Hyper (you da best!),
I'm writing this to express one of my views for why video games are not bad for kids, especially violent games. I was reading an article on the Internet which told parents not to buy Burnout 2 for their kids, they said it was because the game forced them to drive dangerously and might have made them want to do it for real.
To me, this game is the reason I don't want to drive dangerously, because it shows you just how risky it is to go around a corner too fast or what will happen to you if go though a red light. The game is so realistic that it's like a teaching program you would show at a school or something. For this reason, I would recommend Burnout 2 for anyone going for their driver's licence.
What do you think of my views?
Rowan Wigginton

Dear Rowan,
Gamers understand that games are just fantasy, it's a pity that no one else does. As far as we're concerned, Burnout 2 is an awesome game that should be played. If anything, it'll frighten you into driving safely!

A LITTLE OFF TOPIC...

Dear Mr. Fish and his lonely hearts club band,
Greetings to you all down at Hyper, I hope you can find it in your hearts to answer these questions:
1. What would you say are the 5 best Simpsons episodes? I would have to go with Homer at the bat, Last exit to Springfield, Lisa's Substitute, The Springfield Files and Homer's Barbershop Quartet with big ups to 22 Short Films About Springfield.
2. Do you like Seinfeld?
3. Have you guys ever seen Adult Swim?
4. I have an idea for Hyperactive.com.au or for an upcoming issue of Hyper. I think you

guys should put a list of every game ever given a big rubber stamp of approval or the game of the month and what score it got. There are times when I want to know what Goldeneye or Super Mario 64 got but I can't because I don't own those particular issues. A list like that would be an invaluable resource. Please take this into consideration.
Well, thanks for your time,
Jonathan M

Dear Jonathan,
1. Let's see: Homer Goes To College, Simpsons Spin-Off Showcase, 22 Short Films About Springfield, HomR, You Only Move Twice, HomerPalooza, Trilogy of Error, Homer the Great, Viva Ned Flanders, Whacking Day,
Deep Space Homer, And Maggie Makes Three, Team Homer, The Cartridge Family, Lisa Gets An A, Thirty Minutes Over Tokyo, Little Big Mom, The Great Money Caper, I Am Furious Yellow, Weekend At Burnsie's. Okay?
2. We worship it. Curb Your Enthusiasm is funny too.
3. Yeah, they swim just like children, only better. Er... yeah we have. ;)
4. As we've been published for about 9 years now, a list of all the big rubber stamps would probably take up the whole magazine! At least you can see the Goldeneye and Super Mario 64 scores in the Top 50 feature this issue.

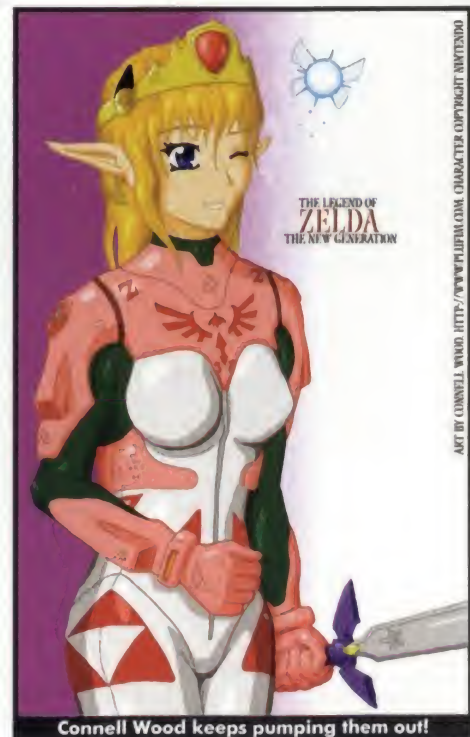Darryl Leech takes us inside his head for *The Two Towers*.

have recently noticed a new Half-Life mod called Natural Selection which indeed may have a weird-arse name but it contains some of the best multiplayer teamwork action ever. It is a first person shooter with Marines and Aliens; but there is a twist, both sides can build and one player from the Marines is the commander of the team, who plays the game in RTS view. Now this is something I've dreamed of all my life... unbeatable unit... AI.

When playing games such as Starcraft or Red Alert, I get so frustrated that even though my guys are getting shot at, they do no move, use teamwork, fall back when needed. As the Half-Life engine ages, Natural Selection could be much better if produced as a game itself with a brand new 3D engine. It would be a killer first person shooter with 32 players on 32 players and with the strategy involved, I think it might just be the best multiplayer game yet.

Thanks for listening, just thinking aloud.
Lujman

SPYWARE WOE

Holy dudes at Hyper,

First off great mag, but more to the point, there seems to be a trend where online companies will take it upon themselves to install a horde of spyware and advertising files onto your hard drive without your consent and make it impossible to uninstall. Some bastard companies, not naming any in particular, cough *gator* cough, broadcast your IP address all over the net, record and distribute your personal information and (this one I hate the most) create an endless supply of pop-ups encouraging you to visit pron sites or make a profession out of online gambling.

They are even getting to the point where they are evading firewalls to put this shit into your system, this practice has taken away from the original sharing ideals of the internet and replaced it with commercially driven propaganda aimed at taking your money. So in short, all companies distributing spyware can get frucked.

Peace out.
MG

Dear MG,
We feel your pain. You can download many different types of spyware killers – just search Google for "Spyware killer". Ad-Aware is pretty

good, although chances are your system will never be 100% clean.

MEMORIES, LIKE THE CORNERS OF MY BEHIND

Hey. I was looking through my old Hypers... did you realise that the PS2 was supposed to come out in 1997? And the PS3 in 2003? And an update again in 2011? Woah! I have to say, I did love the old design of Hyper... bring back the over-use of émigré fonts, please! Matrix script and inline, keedy sans, triplex and the lo-res collection... mmmmmmmm, tasty. And things like devoting an entire two page spread to a preview of Pilotwings on the N64 when one of those pages was no more than a huge screenshot. It looked beautiful...

Whatever happened to the Hypermart? I don't remember the day it died. You should print a page full of the old ads that never got published. That could be... interesting. And the pen pals! How many of those poor boys ever found girlfriends? One? Two? You should write to those kids and find out whatever happened to them... that would be cool.

"People's lives affected by subscribing to Hyper - subscribe now!" Surely, at least one of them found true... true what? I actually

saw a girl posting an ad. How many replies did she get from horny nerds? Did people ever actually send photos of themselves? (I'll send a photo of myself... eww!) All this pen-pal fun got me thinking: it would be a lot easier now for people to do the pen-pal thang with mobiles or e-mail. It would take minimal organisation... well, at least a shitload less than writing a real letter.

You should regularly (like once a year) have some kind of hardware/how to buy a PC guide like you had once — that helped me out a lot when I was getting my first one. It was delicious!
Bill

Dear Bill,
If I could just dissect your ramble for a minute... well, the PC guide is something that we'd definitely like to do in the future, so stay tuned.

NATURALLY

Dudes at Hyper,

First things first, kick arse magazine, Hyper shits on every other game mag any day. Now to why I'm sending this email. I

Dear Lujman,
Well, there you go, you learn something every day. To be honest, I hadn't heard of it. But for anyone who is interested, you can find out more information at the website: www.natural-selection.org – according to those guys, NS 1.0 has been downloaded 300,000 times!

Connell Wood keeps pumping them out!

The Official Australian Games Chart

Compiled by Inform in association with IEAA

TOP 10 — PlayStation 2 Games Over $50
W/E 5 January 2003 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	GTA: Vice City	Adventure
2	▲	LOTR: Two Towers	RPG
3	▼	The Getaway	Adventure
4	▼	Kingdom Hearts	Adventure
5	▲	Harry P Chamber Of Secret	Adventure
6	▼	WRC 2 Extreme	Racing
7	◆	VB Supercars	Racing
8	▲	Ratchet & Clank	Adventure
9	◆	Bond 007: Nightfire	Action
10	✪	Dragonball Z:Budokai Fghtrs	Action

TOP 10 — PlayStation Games Over $40
W/E 5 January 2003 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	H Potter Chamber Of Secret	Adventure
2	◆	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	Sports
3	▲	Treasure Planet	Adventure
4	▼	Digimon World 3	Adventure
5	▲	Tomb Raider 3 & 4 Clctrs Pk	Adventure
6	◆	Lilo & Stitch Trouble Pards	Adventure
7	▲	Digimon Rumble Arena	Action
8	▲	FIFA 2003	Sports
9	▼	World Rally Champ 02 Arcade	Racing
10	▼	Stuart Little 2	Adventure

TOP 10 — Game Cube Games Over $40
W/E 5 January 2003 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Mario Party 4	Family
2	▲	Bond 007: Nightfire	Action
3	◆	Starfox Adventures	Adventure
4	▼	Super Mario Sunshine	Adventure
5	▲	Super Smash Bros: Melee	Action
6	▼	Harry P Chamber Of Secrets	Adventure
7	◆	Medal Of Honor: Frontline	Action
8	◆	Need For Speed Hot Prsuit 2	Racing
9	✪	Resident Evil	Adventure
10	◆	Sonic Adventures 2: Battle	Adventure

TOP 10 — Xbox Games Over $40
W/E 5 January 2003 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Adventure
2	▲	Medal Of Honor: Frontline	Action
3	▼	H Potter Chamber Of Secrets	Adventure
4	▲	Blinx	Adventure
5	▼	Bond 007: Nightfire	Action
6	◆	Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	Strategy
7	◆	LOTR: Fellowship	Adventure
8	◆	Project Gotham Racing	Racing
9	▼	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	Sports
10	✪	Halo - Combat Evolved	Action

TOP 10 — PC Games Over $30
W/E 5 January 2003 RETAIL SALES

1	▲	The Sims Deluxe	Strategy
2	▲	The Sims Unleashed	Strategy
3	▼	H Potter Chamber Of Secrets	Adventure
4	◆	Age Of Mythology	Adventure
5	▲	The Sims Hot Date	Strategy
6	◆	The Sims Vacation	Strategy
7	▲	WarCraft 3	Strategy
8	✪	Medieval Total War	Strategy
9	▲	Battlefield 1942	Action
10	▼	LOTR: Fellowship	Adventure

TOP 10 — Game Boy Advance Games Over $40
W/E 5 January 2003 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	H Potter Chamber Of Secret	Adventure
2	◆	Zelda:Link to Past/4 Swords	RPG
3	◆	Dragonball Z: Legacy Goku	Action
4	▲	LOTR: Two Towers	RPG
5	▼	Game & Wtch Gllery Advnce	Compilation
6	▼	Yoshis Island: SMA 3	Adventure
7	◆	Mario Kart Super Circuit	Racing
8	◆	Super Mario World Advnce 2	Adventure
9	◆	Metroid Fusion	Action
10	✪	Wario Land 4	Action

TOP 10 — All Full Priced Games
W/E 5 January 2003 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	GTA: Vice City	PlayStation 2
2	▲	LOTR: Two Towers	PlayStation 2
3	▼	The Getaway	PlayStation 2
4	▲	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Xbox
5	▼	Kingdom Hearts	PlayStation 2
6	▼	H Potter Chamber Of Secrets	PlayStation
7	✪	H Potter Chamber Of Secrets	GameBoy Adv
8	▲	The Sims Deluxe	PC/MAC
9	✪	The Sims Unleashed	PC/MAC
10	▼	H Potter Chamber Of Secrets	PC/MAC

MARKET WATCH — All Games by Platform
Nov 02 vs Dec 02 RETAIL SALES

Platform	Share	Growth
PC	32%	46%
PS2	31%	96%
PSX	16%	56%
Xbox	9%	79%
GBA	8%	69%
G Cube	4%	76%

(scale: 0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40)
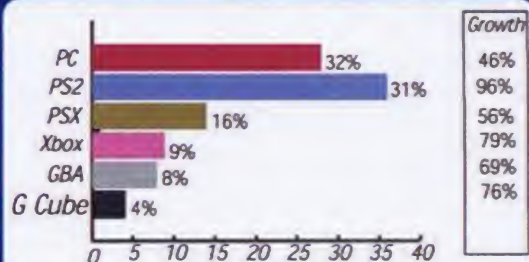
Legend:
- ✪ New Entry
- ◆ Non Mover
- ▲ Up from last week
- ▼ Down from last week

**balls-up,
babe fest
or both?**

Dead or Alive: Beach Volleyball

Hyper 114 >>
On sale March 5

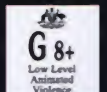new weapons   new powers   new enemies