WIN A PLAYSTATION 2 & COOL DEF JAM PACK! PAGE 90

MOBILE PHONE GAMING: IS IT GETTING ANY BETTER?

SHINOBI Sega's ninja hero debuts on PS2!

ISSUE 115
MAY 2003

HYPER »

C&C: GENERALS
Now it's the world versus America

HE'S COMING... AND HE AIN'T HAPPY!

HULK
HIDE YOUR PS2, XBOX, GCN & PC!

RACING EVOLUZIONE
Design your own hotrod and then race it!

HOUSE OF THE DEAD 3
From arcade hit to living room spook-fest!

next GAMING

METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE
Re-test your skills!

STAR WARS
Knights of the Old Republic
The Dark Side beckons

REVIEWS: RAVEN SHIELD • WILD ARMS 3 • NBA STREET VOLUME 2 • CONTRA

the **game** engine.
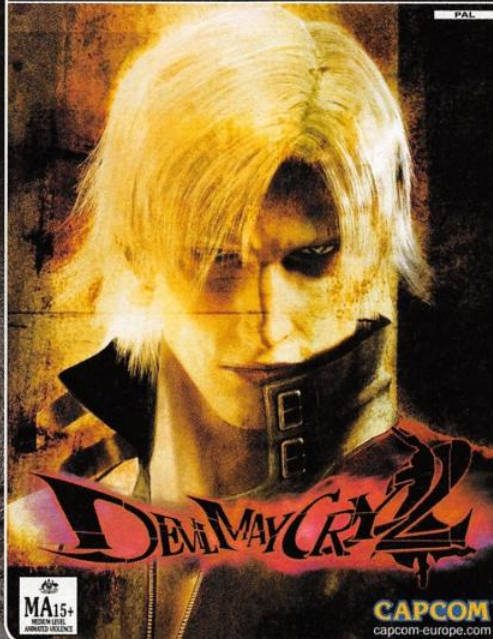
available now, so start your engines.

CONTEN

Sony Ericsson

CONTENTS

NTS

46 Game of the Month – Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance on Xbox

Solid Snake sneaks his way onto the Microsoft Xbox – who would have thought it?
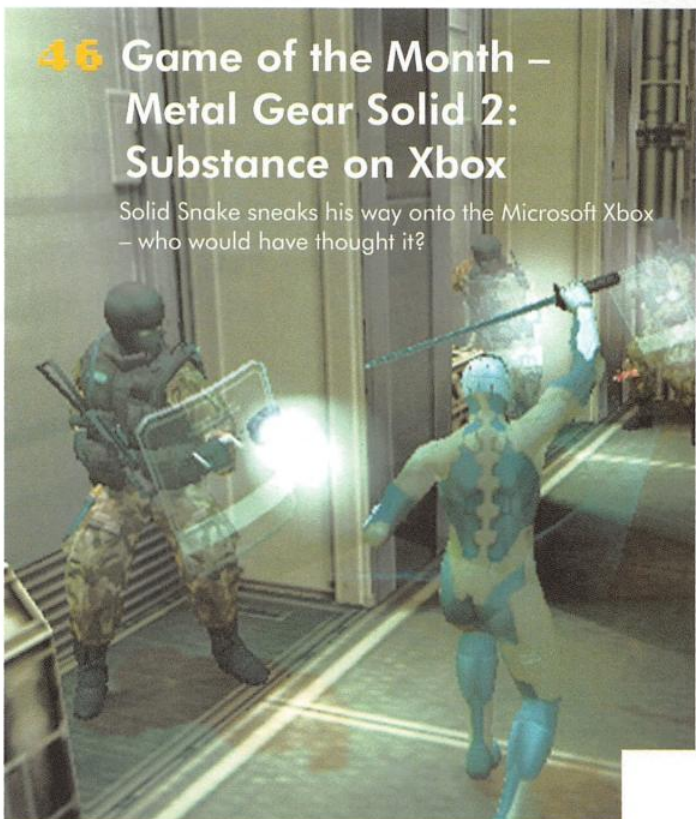
90 Win a PS2 with Def Jam Vendetta!

Just subscribe to Hyper this month!

54
Panzer Dragoon Orta

62 Shinobi

REVIEW INDEX

74 C&C Generals

CONTENTS

>>HYPER 5

6 »HYPER EDITORIAL

EDITORIAL

>> As a number of teetering towers made up of PC game boxes threaten to collapse on top of me as I write this, my mind turns to the issue of videogame packaging. Why, oh why, are we still getting PC games shipped in ludicrously large cardboard boxes, when all that they contain are small CD cases and a game manual that could be printed in a small CD booklet?

Even more offensive, is when you pop open a large cardboard box only to pull out a shrinkwrapped DVD case with the game inside. Why not just stock the DVD case on the shelf in the first place? It saves space, allows the store to display more stock, less packaging is better for the environment, and it's certainly easier to carry home.

Whilst a small nostalgia-driven voice in my head will be sad to see the big fat PC box vanish into the pages of history (ahh the smell of a new game!), I think it's about time game packaging was more environmentally friendly (hey, why not recyclable plastic casing?)… and less dangerous for me to stack here on my desk!

Eliot Fish >> **Editor**

NEWS

SUPPORTED GAMES

>> There are many games out now or on the way before LIVE launches that will offer multiplayer support, or downloadable content. Here's the big Hyper list of games that we know will offer you some kind of extra content through Xbox LIVE! More games will be added to this list as we get closer to the launch of LIVE.

Unreal Championship
MechAssault
Whacked!
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon
MotoGP
CounterStrike
Star Wars: Galaxies
Splinter Cell (DL content only)
ToeJam and Earl III: Mission to Earth (DL content only)
Brute Force (DL content only)
Midtown Madness 3
Capcom vs SNK 2 EO
Star Wars: The Clone Wars
Moto GP 2
NHL 2K3
NFL 2K3
NBA 2K3
NFL Fever 2003
MX Superfly

A BROADBAND BOX

XBOX LIVE COMES ALIVE!

Microsoft deliver facts not fluff

>> Microsoft have finally come to the table with some hard details on their Australian Xbox LIVE service. Finally, we not only have concrete information on the pricing, but a guarantee that the service will be up and running successfully before the end of the year.

NO HIDDEN COSTS

Xbox LIVE will go through a Gamer Beta test in September, in which a few hundred selected gamers will run the service through its paces in order to help Microsoft optimise the experience and nut out any unforseen bugs. Then, in October, the service will launch with Xbox LIVE starter kits being available at retail outlets everywhere for the RRP of $99.95. This payment gets you a 12-month subscription to the service, the Xbox Live voice communicator (headset &

mic), the Live starter disk, and three Xbox Live game demos. Considering that no additional add-ons will be required (the Ethernet port and hard drive are already built in to every Xbox system), this is pretty decent value. It also proves that the voice communicator will play a pretty big part in the enjoyment of the service. Being able to trash-talk your opponents really lifts LIVE up onto that next level of multiplayer gaming, otherwise, there's no real tangible proof that you're playing human opponents, right? This feature alone will really enhance the

This is how the US starter kit looks

>> Being able to trash-talk your opponents really lifts LIVE up onto that next level

online console experience.

The only thing holding back the integration of the LIVE service is the fact that you will need a broadband connection to be able to play (e.g. ADSL or Cable), as the Xbox has no internal modem nor is there one on the cards as an optional add-on. Will this push some families into getting a broadband connection, or will many Xbox gamers out there cry themselves to sleep at night because they only have a 56k modem? Probably both. But hey, let's be realistic — not even PC gamers with a 56k connection can play many games online these days. A required broadband connection should be a no-brainer, and we wouldn't have it

any other way.

We can't wait for Xbox LIVE, and we only hope that these announcements push Sony into making some more concrete information available for their broadband adapter, hard drive and online PS2 Network. For the moment at least, we don't see why LIVE won't be the superior option for online console gaming.

BURSTFIRE!

FALLOUT FOR CONSOLES

Brotherhood of PS2 and Xbox

>> One of the most beloved PC games, Fallout, is finally getting a console conversion in the shape of Brotherhood of Steel on PS2 and Xbox. Many may remember Fallout Tactics: Brotherhood of Steel for PC a few years ago, the tactical combat spin-off from the Fallout RPG series. These console versions will also focus on the combat and tactical action as opposed to the RPG elements. Frankly, we wish Interplay had made a proper Fallout RPG for the consoles, but it seems that this is as close as we'll get. As long as the humour, character and depth of play from the earlier Fallout games is intact, then Brotherhood of Steel will be a brilliant addition to the world of console gaming.
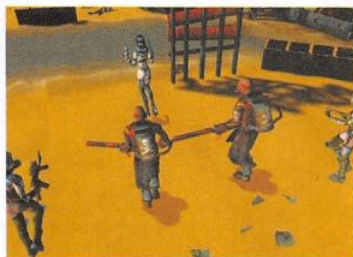
Pick up stimpack

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 42 in the Subject line.
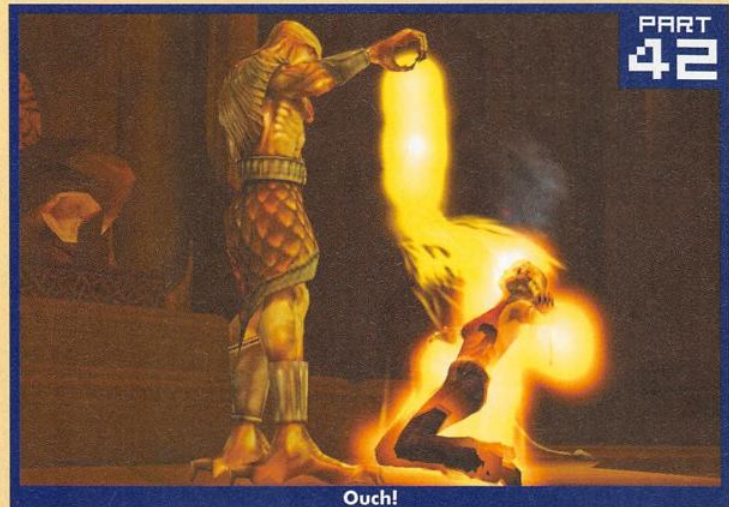
PART 42

Ouch!

CLASSIFIEDS - HELP WANTED

BOUNTY HUNTER

Recent reforms have made this position very valuable and very lucrative. Extremely dangerous. Only the strong will be considered. When you find us, you will have passed the first test. **Black Star**

JOIN CAMBRIDGE'S FINEST

LIBERTY POLICE OFFICERS

The Cardamine problem is making crime more than just a statistical blip! We need someone familiar with Hunter missiles and Mark IV lasers. Must be an expert flier; we only accept the best. 1-2245.A79

RED HESSIAN

Liberty Systems. This exciting career field is what you've been looking for! Learn the skills needed

EXPERIENCED LANE HACKER NEEDED

Work in the dangerous Straits of Magellan. We don't flinch, and nothing gets by us. We're looking for a single addition to our staff, someone who can hold up to pressure and isn't afraid to take what isn't his. 1-2245.C241

BE YOUR OWN BOSS!

Liberty Systems. There's an untapped load of boron around Pittsburgh. Or so we've heard. We're looking for someone to smuggle it through the debris field. Be in the right place at the right time.

LIBERTY NAVY OFFICER

We're looking for men and women to bust pirate rings and protect the

SEEKING EXPERT FLIERS

LIBERTY NAVY

New York System. Command a fleet of heavy fighters and sweep the Badlands of Rogues. Must be an expert flier and a skilled fighter who doesn't blink under pressure.

COWARDS NEED NOT APPLY

BECOME A BOUNTY HUNTER

New Berlin System. A beleaguered police force and rapidly multiplying crime sectors have made Bounty Hunters some of the highest paid people in the solar system. It is a job of extreme danger; your abilities must be superior.

LIBERTY POLICE OFFICER

INDEPENDENT MERCHANTS

New Tokyo System. Everybody wants something, and you can be the guy they get it from. There is big profit in crossing enemy lines. We will contact you.

LANE HACKER

New London System. If it's independence you're looking for, we offer you the chance to disrupt the flow of cargo, bust shipments and take what you want. 1-4156.K63

MOTIVATED SELF-STARTERS WANTED

BECOME AN INDEPENDENT MERCHANT! FIND OUT HOW!

Work for yourself and make big profits! Smuggle pharmaceuticals and other commodities across enemy lines, and make your own rules. If you're interested, there are ways you can

THE UNIVERSE, APPLY WITHIN.

Experience a vast, open-ended universe filled with an infinite number of adventures. You are the freelancer Edison Trent, an intergalactic jack of all trades. Your mission: whatever you want. Become a smuggler or a ruthless space thug, a naval hero or a trader. Dodge through asteroid fields while piloting elite fighters. The action is endless as you make your way through 48 known star systems. Greed, morality, compassion, anger... whatever motivates you, the dynamic universe will respond. Take the first step. The universe is waiting.

FREELANCER
The universe of possibility.

G 8+
LOW LEVEL
ANIMATED VIOLENCE

digitalANVIL

Microsoft
game studios

www.microsoft.com/games/freelancer

The master sketches us a Mario!

MIYAMOTO SPOTTED IN THE WILD!

Mario creator greets fans in London

In a very rare excursion outside of his laboratory deep inside the hidden development castle at Nintendo in Japan, Shigeru Miyamoto made his way to London in an effort to help promote the GameCube and the upcoming Zelda title, The Wind Waker.

Over one thousand fans packed into a Virgin Megastore to get a glimpse of the games designer, and hopefully get their various Nintendo merchandise autographed. This was Miyamoto's first ever public European appearance, and it seemed that he was as excited as the fanboys. Now, if we could only get him to come to Australia...

Just imagine a Triforce over his head.

English gamers... pasty.

HAVE AT YOU!

FIGHTING GAME CHAMPS

OzHadou Nationals 2 results

The OHN2 tournament was recently held in Sydney, matching Street Fighter champions up against each other in a true battle of the masters.

A total of 48 players participated in OHN2 across 4 Street Fighter games. 2 of these players were from Brisbane, 1 was from Canberra, and 6 were from Melbourne. The results are at right...

For match videos, and more info on upcoming tournaments, you can check out the action at www.ozhadou.net

The Capcom Vs SNK 2 winners

I want one in my living room.

ALMOST THERE

PS2 NETWORK CONTINUES TESTING

Busting broadband bugs

Now that the first round of technical trials of the PS2 broadband network are done, Sony Australia are digging their heels in with a second round of testing.

The PS2 network gaming infrastructure is based on software that has been developed by SCE America, in conjunction with games developers, and has since been further enhanced to incorporate a number of improvements.

This second phase of testing will involve the co-operation of Australia's largest ISPs, followed by a final round of tests by actual consumers.

Michael Ephraim, Vice President of SCE Europe and Managing Director of SCE Aust/NZ said, "The purpose of the extensive trials are to ensure that the quality and reliability of the service we will be offering to a wider public is consistent with PlayStation's 'plug and play' standards."

Marvel vs Capcom 2	Street Fighter 3: 3rd Strike
1st: Phillip Ziogas (trickster, NSW)	**1st:** Kevin Chung (Kechu, VIC)
2nd: Joey Nguyen (eKiN, NSW)	**2nd:** Benson Hung (bbbenson, NSW)
3rd: Jacky Lam (Sentinel, NSW)	**3rd:** Cody Chong (Cody, NSW)
Capcom vs SNK 2	**Street Fighter EX2+**
1st: Kevin Chung (Kechu, VIC)	**1st:** Gavin Wong (uralluckenpk, VIC)
2nd: Johnny Cheng (HumanBomb, NSW)	**2nd:** Chester Lam (IXL, NSW)
3rd: Benson Hung (bbbenson, NSW)	**3rd:** Trevor (Quiksilva, NSW)

WHAT THE...?

REDESIGNED XBOX TO DEBUT IN MAY?

E3 set to reveal all

One of Microsoft's surprise announcements at the E3 trade show in Los Angeles this May could be the announcement of a smaller, redesigned Xbox console — a response to world-wide complaints about the current Xbox's weight and size.

The rumours originated from various "well-placed" industry sources, although Microsoft declined to comment. We hope it's true, and we'll find out soon enough — late May to be exact!

>> OVERFLOW

Dave Mirra, BMX legend behind a series of Freestyle BMX games, has filed a $21 million dollar lawsuit against Acclaim stating that BMX XXX has sullied his name, and that requests by Mirra for Acclaim to stop using his name and likeness in regards to promotion of the product were ignored. The game was originally titled Dave Mirra XXX, but Mirra pulled out of the deal when he saw what kind of content would be featured. Acclaim state that his accusations are "baseless".

Microsoft's upcoming Xbox tennis game, Top Spin, will now feature Lleyton Hewitt amongst the 16 professionals set to be included in the game. Lleyton is apparently "chuffed".

Capcom have announced Onimusha 3, starring Jean Reno! Reno's character, Jacque Bran, will not only be voiced by him, but will look identical. This is all possible because the game will be set in Paris, in the year 2004!

Halo 2 has been delayed until 2004. If you were silly enough to believe it would really be out this year anyway, well...

Konami has revealed that they will be making a Metal Gear Solid game for the GameCube, and that development will be in partnership with Shigeru Miyamoto and Nintendo.

AMPED 2 HITS THE SLOPES

With Online Features!

Microsoft made Hyper HQ rather happy recently with the announcement of Amped 2. Amazingly, the sequel went into development only six months after Amped came out, so it's already looking pretty well formed. Quite a bit has been revamped this time around, with a more in-depth career mode, better sponsorship and media challenges, alternative control methods, a new tricks system, enhanced graphics (hey, they were already pretty bloody good — Ed.) and more delicious details.

The biggest kicker though, is the inclusion of Xbox Live support, which could allow for up to eight players tearing down the mountain at the same time! Hurry up and launch that online service, Microsoft!

A pic from Amped to get you amped.

WINNERS

Hyper 113

RESIDENT EVIL ZERO
Gerald Cheung, Wheelers Hill, Vic
Jared Trevean, Melton Sth, Vic
Brad Robertson, Lakehaven, NSW
Chris Matthey, Brighton, Vic
Jason Wong, Brentwood, WA

PRIDE FC
Brad Keeys, Quirindi, NSW
Steve John, Virginia, SA
Eric Noske, Ferntree Gully, Vic
Tyler Powter, Woy Woy, NSW
Charlie, Daniella, WA
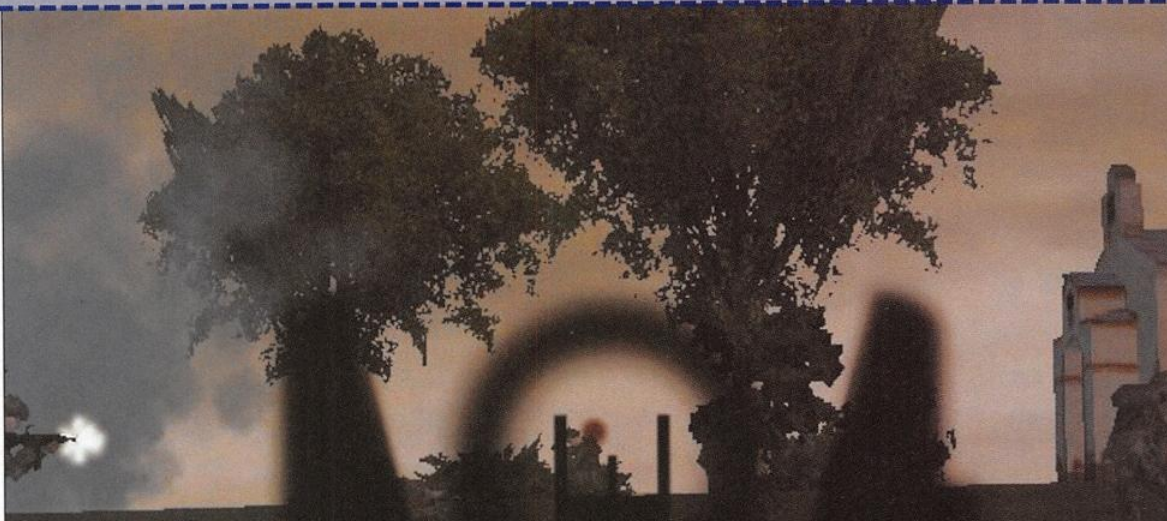
FIRST SCREENS!
OPERATION FLASHPOINT FOR XBOX
CODEMASTERS

You can count on me, sir.
I've almost got the hang of steering this thing.

FIRST EVER SCREENS!
SPLINTER CELL ON GAMECUBE
UBISOFT

Find and interrogate Grinko's driver.
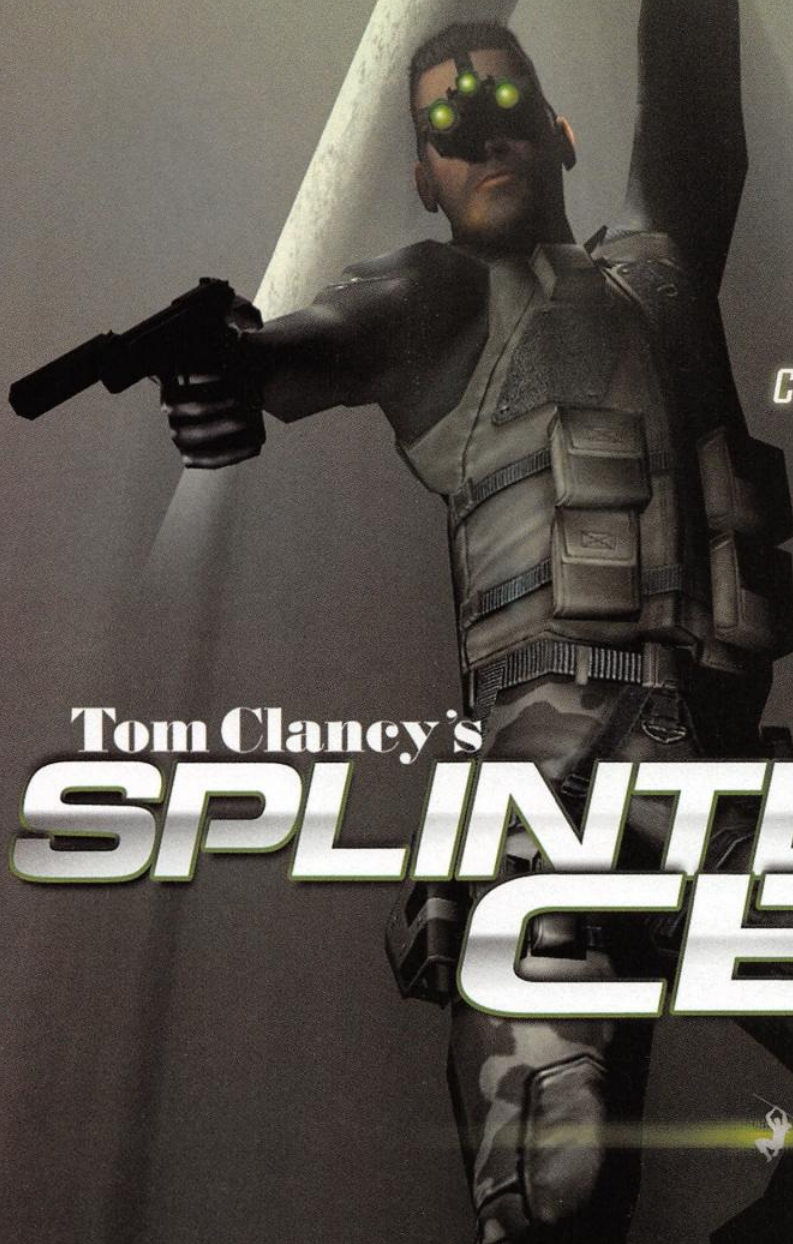
Counter-terrorism's silent solution

Tom Clancy's
SPLINTER
CELL™

Out Now On PlayStation® 2
New mission, optimised gadgets, exclusive intro and cinematics.

Goggles
with binocular vision

Modular Assault
Weapon System

Optic Cable
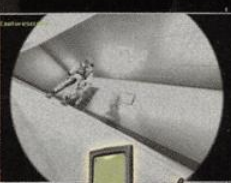
www.splintercell.com

Available

Coming soon on
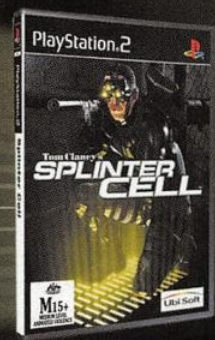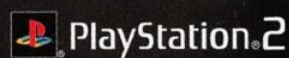
DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR
»PC/XBOX/PS2
ION STORM

An incredible lighting system, deadly new AI, four factions to tip-toe between, new fancy hi-tech gadgets (a glass cutting tool?), brand new biomods, the ability to control robots, an incredible physics engine, NPCs who'll get annoyed if you stare at them too much, the ability to play as a female agent, a brand new interface and more... Deus Ex: Invisible War is one of the most anticipated games here at Hyper HQ. Get an eyeful!
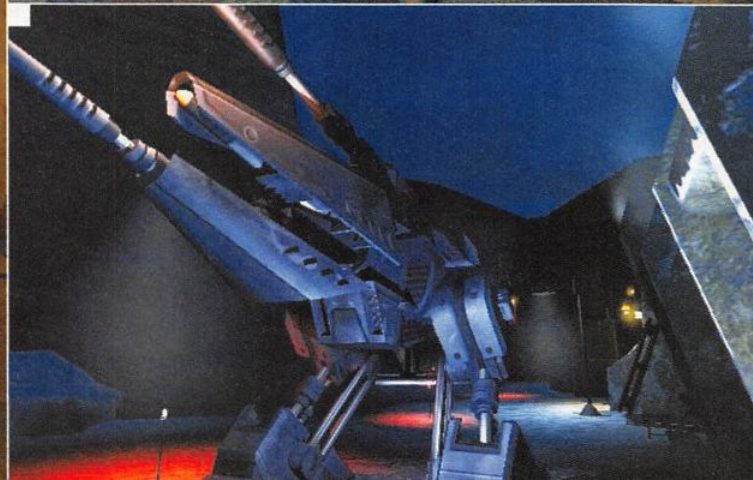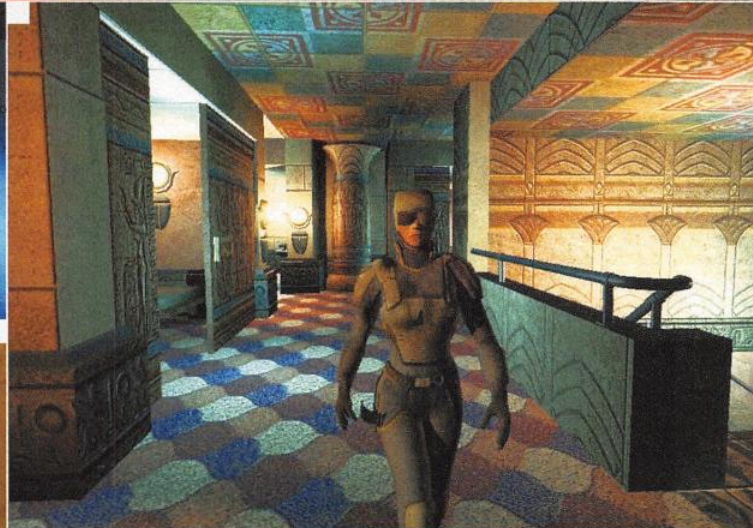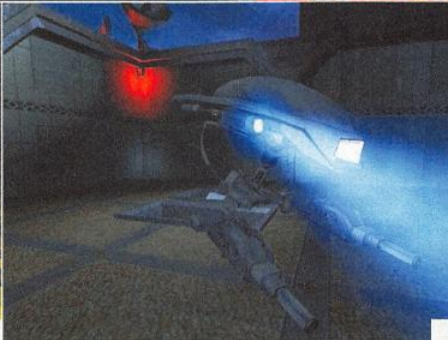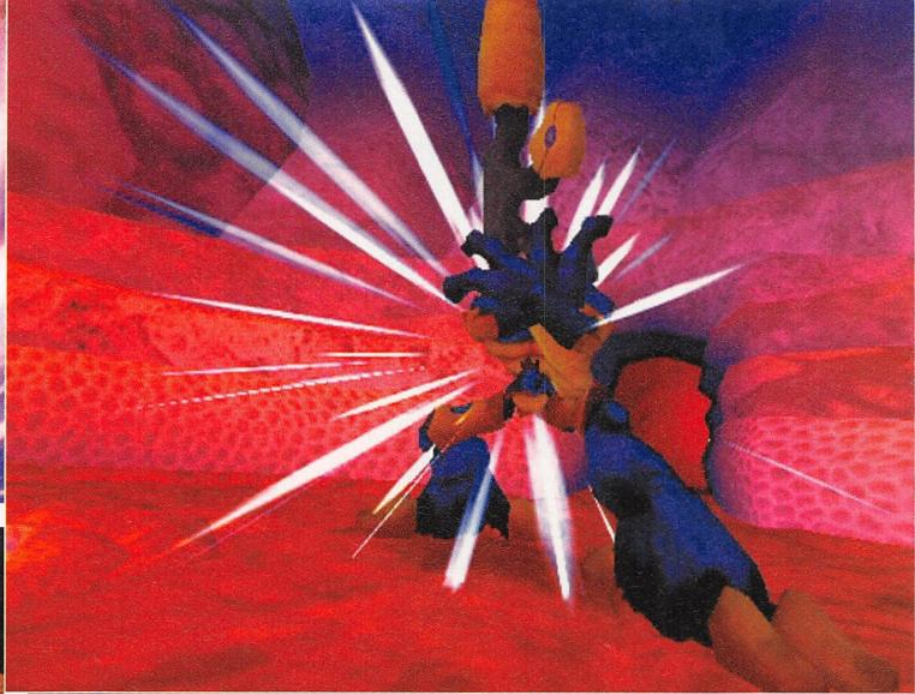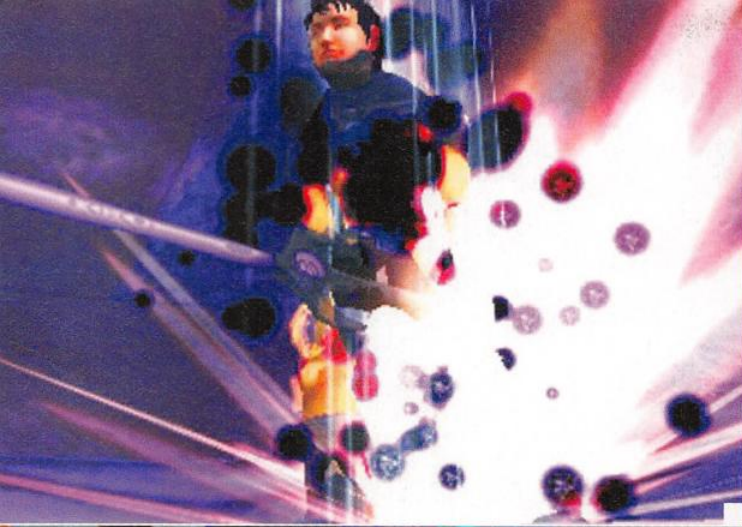
ALTER ECHO

>>**PS2** THQ

C omplete with a lip-pierced goth girl, Alter Echo is a strange-looking platformer that allows you to alter time and morph yourself into different forms. The developer, Outrage games, boast an advanced PostFX camera system, TimeDilation technology and real-time skeletal morphing, which all adds up to something, we're sure. For now, just check out the surreal screenshots.

HULK SMASH
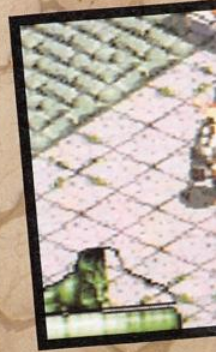
Hulk smash… box office. Hulk smash… games sales. Hulk smash… hit. Well, we're sure that's what Vivendi Universal are planning, anyway. **JOHN DEWHURST** made his way to Europe to get an exclusive hands-on experience with the gamma-ray beast that is The Hulk… the game!

HULK

>>XBOX/PS2/GCN/PC/GBA

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

WOW-O-METER
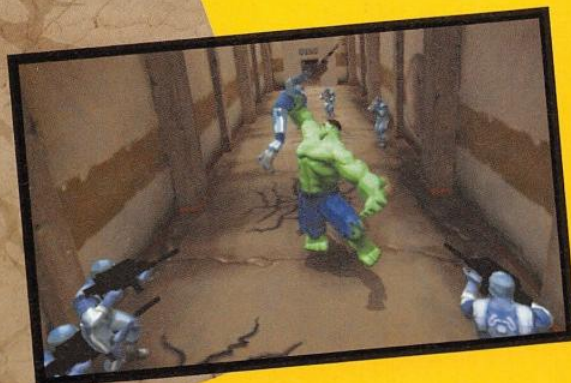
The Hulk pleads: "Don't make me Ang Lee, you won't like me when I'm Ang Lee!"
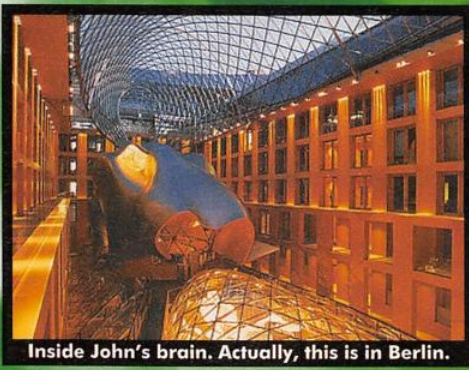
Inside John's brain. Actually, this is in Berlin.

Boy, would the Hulk love to smash this!

>> Also on show in Berlin was The Incredible Hulk on GBA. Set for release at the same time as The Hulk on the bigger platforms, The Incredible Hulk is an isometric action/destruction game like its big brother. The content of this Hulk game has no connection to the cinema release and rather takes its story, setting, and extra characters from the Hulk Marvel comics. Naturally, there's still the chance to pick up debris and toss it hither and yon. No voices from Eric Bana mind you, and the big man looks decidedly smaller on the GBA. Mini-Hulk!

THE EXECUTIONER'S TRIPODS ARE ATTACKING THE CITY. SMASH 8 TRIPODS.

Hyper has flown to Berlin, Germany. The Brandenburg Gate is where President Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev apparently looked at one another before deciding to tear down the Berlin Wall some time in the 1980s. In a large square, The Pariserplatz (where the Love Parade dance parties take place every year), there is an unassuming, though typically German convention center known as the DZ Bank. Inside, however, there lies an amazing architectural achievement, a flowing wave of glass and metal. It is in this extraordinary building that Hyper gets the first glimpse of The Hulk, the action adventure being developed by Radical Entertainment for next gen consoles and PC.

SAGA OF THE HULK
Since Batman, and more recently X-Men and the smash hit that was Spider-Man, the world has warmed to seeing comic book icons up on the big screen. Maybe it's something to do with a world full of troubles and uncertainty, a place we wish a hero could come to and set things right. The Hulk is certainly a superhero, but somewhere along the line the recipe got altered. While he might do some saving of persons, he seems intent on wrecking everything in his path. Like no one on the Hyper team (not even Cam), the alter ego of Bruce Banner is punishingly pissed off. Watch as he tears up buildings, crashes helicopters and pummels adversaries, all the while without a sniff

of irony. Behold as he launches into the air to fall granite-like on that small man and his gun. But wait, we can't see the screen...

The pile of journalists (mostly British but with some stunted English Continentals thrown in) huddle around flat screens as a cel-shaded green monstrosity hurtles through a 3D world. For the first time we are seeing The Hulk, and this is exciting. The camera pans and moves comfortably as The Hulk circles enemies on the rooftop of a tall building, searching for something to sling at them, occasionally slapping one forcefully. The guards surrounding him in full body armour flop about like rag dolls in his enormous hands.

The saga of the Hulk — a small man transformed by gamma rays into the worst example of road rage — comes to cinema screens on June 26. The live-action film is being handled by director, Ang Lee (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*), and stars Australian actor Eric Bana, Jennifer Connelly (*A Beautiful Mind*) and the well-worn Nick Nolte. As one of the big cinema attractions of 2003, the games world has been pretty curious and even skeptical about the ubiquitous video game versions that would follow this kind of film. Anyone remember *The Phantom Menace*? Paint by Numbers action gaming is still with the industry today.

Although there is no denying that developers Radical Entertainment are shooting for a popular, easily accessible, unit-moving title, The Hulk does offer action that's a little different to most

Rather than retread the movie, The Hulk features an all-new storyline taking place right after the events of the film

HULK SMASH
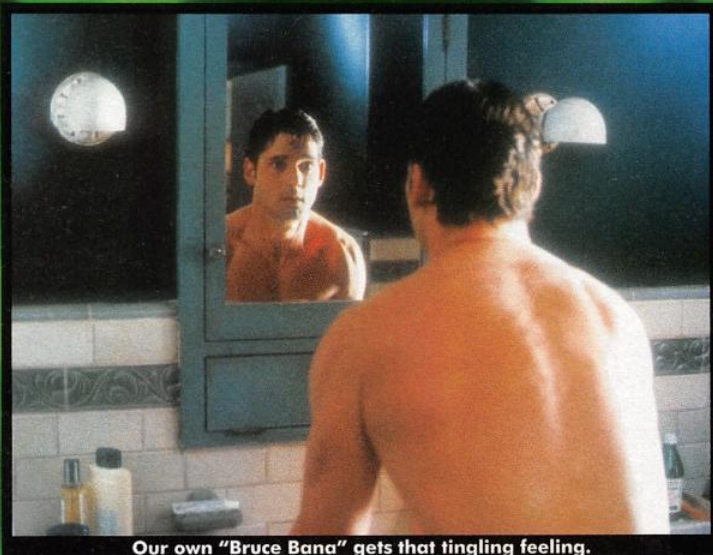
Our own "Bruce Bana" gets that tingling feeling.

Hulk tries this guard on as a glove puppet.

Lee and Connelly try to calm Eric Bana down.

Just use the door you big dolt!

Gillette, the best a man can get.

other contenders. Rather than retread the movie, (complete with abridged script but with added tedious item collection), The Hulk features an all-new storyline, taking place right after the events of the film. So we have characters from the film returning, locations revisited, and the chance to use new settings and enemies. This is Universal pushing its license to breaking point: subtly rewarding those who've already seen the film while encouraging gamers to go watch the film. Insidious but refreshing at the same time... if that's possible.

OVER-THE-TOP EXPLOITS

Details about the film tie-in are interesting but in reality don't translate to hard facts. The throng gathered here knows little to nothing about the film outside of what's been seen in the trailers, much like the rest of the world. Some teaser footage would have been nice but it wasn't forthcoming. Still, the game is gathering a crowd. A big part of the appeal is the fluid, full-force action but the attraction also has something to do with the visual style of the whole affair. Cel-shaded but not quite, it's a clear and interesting world, if not consistently bright.

The cel-shaded visual design is more natural than commonly seen in video games and is perhaps a halfway point between traditional cel-shading and more realistic animation. While certainly having a cartoon flavour, there is little of the stylised approach to bodies, clothing and movement that has caused so much skepticism for the style. There are some fantastically over-the-top exploits from The Hulk — hell, he's strong, green, huge and incredibly powerful. But his place in an otherwise fairly normal world helps to make him (and the other super-weirdos) conspicuous. The Hulk is treading that fine line between connecting with the real-life actors of the film and the art style of the comic books. This

I think your neighbour wants the music turned down...

THE HULK GAME FEATURES

>> Two types of gameplay - employ the power of brains and stealth as Bruce Banner or take control of the incredible strength and rage of the Hulk.

>> 30 massive, highly-detailed levels featuring environments both directly from the film and exclusive to the game.

>> Fully destructible and interactive environments - virtually anything can be manipulated, picked up, destroyed or used as a weapon. The Hulk can smash through walls, use semi-trucks as weapons, throw enemies through walls and more.

>> Intense boss battles - the Hulk will battle it out against gamma-enhanced super villains like Flux, Rampage and Half-Life.

>> Hollywood quality voiceover featuring members of the actual film cast, including Eric Bana as Bruce Banner.

>> Take down the Hulk's foes with more than 25 killer attacks, including super attacks like the Sonic Clap and Gamma Slam.

A Hulk fart captured on camera!

Tanks for coming, Hulk.
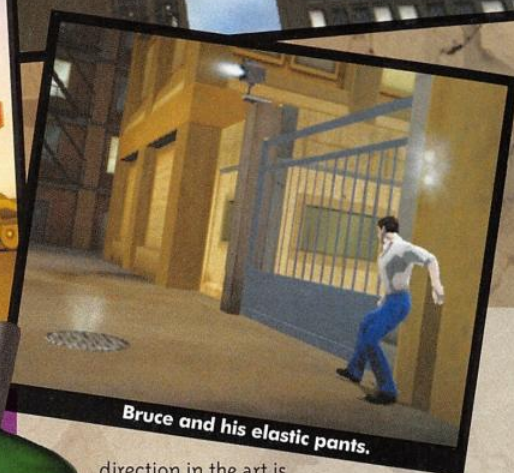
Bruce and his elastic pants.

Saturday night on Oxford Street.

direction in the art is perhaps the first hint at a refreshing approach to The Hulk as a licensed title. The first level we are shown has the Hulk wandering about, inside and around an office building pursuing a Hulk-esque enemy, Rampage. Everything seems to be destructible to some degree. The Hulk can pummel walls, break doors, smash furniture, destroy pipes and barriers. The course of the level is fixed (this is a pursuit level after all) but often Hulk must cut his own path to progress through. So only after knocking a great hole in a wall will the way become clear to another rooftop some way below his current position. In a scripted sequence, The Hulk will launch from on top of a building to a rooftop below and continue the pursuit. The actual environment, not simply a succession of corridors, seems to be well integrated into the game.

Action in The Hulk is thick and fast and the game engine never manages to get stuck on walls clumsily to break the tension. The camera always manages graceful turns and tasty framing. One of the nicest touches is the use of the camera to accent the drama. In the midst of melee, just as The Hulk delivers a punishing blow, the camera will

MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE LAB...

>> The history of the Hulk comic book is a little unconventional. Here's a run down of how the Hulk became of one Marvel's most prominent heroes.

1962: Marvel writer Stan Lee, and artist Jack Kirby (we love those guys!) create the legendary Hulk character and call their new comic "The Incredible Hulk". Interestingly, in the very first issue, the Hulk is grey-skinned not green. Bizarrely, in issue #3, the Hulk had the ability to fly, yet this ability is lost a short time later. The Incredible Hulk comic only lasts for six issues.

1964: Another comic series called Tales to Astonish features Giant Man fighting the Hulk in issue #59, which marks the return of the Hulk character. As of the next issue, Tales to Astonish #60, the Hulk becomes a permanent fixture alongside Giant Man and the Sub-Mariner.

1968: Tales to Astonish is officially renamed as The Incredible Hulk, obviously due to the character's popularity. You will never see issues #7-#101 of The Incredible Hulk, for this reason! The Incredible Hulk has a successful run until 1999, when it ends at issue #474.

1999: Marvel re-launch the Hulk as simply, "The Hulk" and it all starts over again at issue #1.

2000: As of issue #12, the title is changed back to "The Incredible Hulk" (those crazy guys at Marvel!).
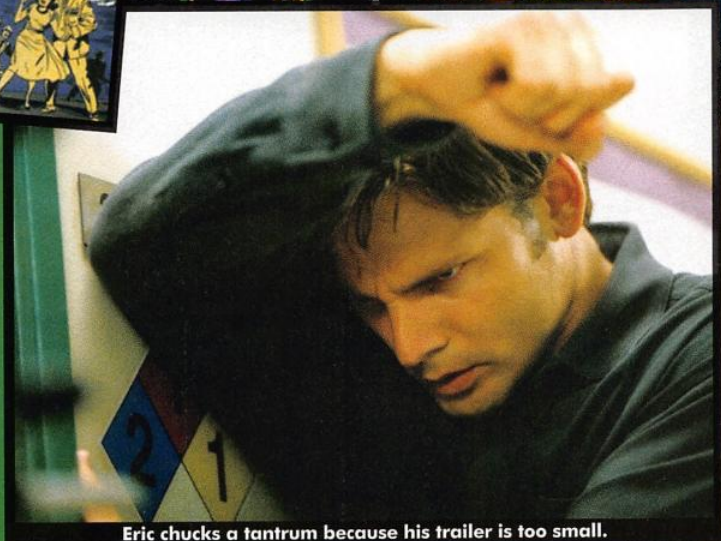
Eric chucks a tantrum because his trailer is too small.

switch round to another view, as the punch snaps some baddy minion neck. Hardly disconcerting, it's more a case of the cinematic rubbing off on the game. A small touch, this really serves to make it quite compelling.

It seems after a decade of 3D gaming we are finally seeing consistent and convincing worlds that will now leave 2D for dead — except perhaps on the GBA. After regrettable 3D action titles like Spider-Man (it was not that long ago folks), we are seeing a strong basis for superhero action. Although these features are rarely discussed in simple action games, they go a long way in making a game exciting for all gamers — not just eight year-olds. Hulk definitely looks to be one of this new breed of action titles.

BIG BANG ACTION

The Hulk features two modes of play: the high-destruction, big bang action style of the Green One in full force; and the soft shoe side where Bruce Banner is on centre stage, sneaking past guards and security cameras. The action missions outweigh the stealth missions about 5 to 1, so let's look at the main focus of The Hulk, where he gets mad and smashes large portions of the screen.

The Hulk has around 30 moves to use in attack, from various kinds of punches to grapples, to aerial moves and throws. In a polite nod to the fighting genre, it's possible to string these moves together. So Hulk could run in with a punch, grab him, give him a thump, jump and then throw him down to the ground. The Hulk also has a beam ability that he can use to destroy

enemies at a distance, something the faithful will bemoan — it's not in the comics, that's for sure. We saw no use of handguns and such by The Hulk — his fine motor skills are less than superb - but there's plenty of other things lying around for him to use against his enemies.

This is one strong boy, so he can pick up crates (Whoohoo! - Ed.), benches, pipes, poles, even cars and use them against the enemy. In some cases it is mandatory, as we saw on the rooftop, when a circling helicopter was out of reach of a big green hand, but just in reach of a ventilation shaft thrown straight into the cockpit. Lovely.

Enemies can be picked up and thrown into one another as well. At one point, The Hulk raised a burnt out car over his head and lobbed it at an incoming Tank. This offers some nice variety in play. Should you get bored with grabbing someone and pummeling them, pick up a large piece of metal to overcome.

Enemies shout to each other (for help obviously!) and seem to work in tandem. They are lively and appear realistic. However, most play areas are fairly confined and the evidence of advance AI was not really present. It remains to be seen how smart the enemies will be. Nonetheless, enemies are plentiful and potent enough to make their thrashing satisfying.

Another level we were shown was set in a desert truck station with the military rolling in to halt the run of The Hulk. The bleached brown was a refreshing change to the dark interiors of a military/medical facility. It was here that we saw a tank bear down on the Hulk, with choppers

> ## At one point, the Hulk raised a burnt-out car over his head and lobbed it at an incoming tank.

buzzing by overhead. The level proved to be more of a challenge than some of the others. For a big guy, Hulk is pretty good at leaping up to get on top of buildings to avoid being pinned down.

Game sections are sewn together with nice cutscenes that could be right out of the film if it weren't for the subtle cel-shading to remind us of what we're watching. One memorable sequence had Bruce Banner strapped to a chair and his very Hulkness is sucked out of him - A Mad Scientist type situation. The animated video section (from the Xbox version) is very good. It's unclear how much of the game is made up of animated sequences, but if they get the balance between story and action right, The Hulk will be a perfect mix.

FRANTIC MIND-TEASERS

The second, smaller section of the game comprises the five stealth missions. Here, you take control of Bruce Banner as he trots around, trying to not be noticed by patrolling guards or surveillance cameras or passers by. The initial stage demonstrated to us showed the concept. Here Banner must sneak in to a military facility to confront his long-time friend Professor Crawford. There are patrolling guards along the way that he must avoid as well as obvious security cameras that must be negotiated.

Much of the sneaking entails line of sight problems like the plate glass window behind which a guard is standing. Banner must duck and crawl past it and around the corner. As we move into a storeroom in the facility, guards are patrolling in fairly obvious patterns through rooms and Banner must duck behind shelving or a wall to escape being noticed. Towards the end of the storeroom, there are some heavy boxes that need pushing or pulling Tomb Raider style to access tunnels.

Should Bruce Banner come up against a locked door, he is confronted with a code breaker puzzle
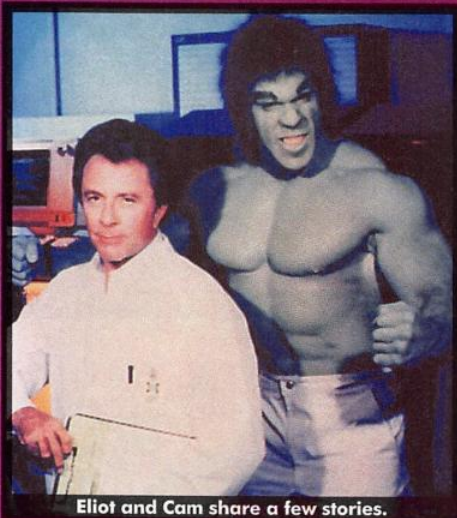
Eliot and Cam share a few stories.

THE INCREDIBLE 70'S TV SHOW

>> Some of you may remember the Incredible Hulk TV series from the 1970s. The show was produced by Kenneth Johnston who brought us the wondrous Six Million Dollar Man, so it was bound to be quality cheese. Dr. David Banner (yes, they changed his name from Bruce to David for some ungodly reason) was played by the charismatic Bill Bixby, whilst the Hulk was played by bodybuilder Lou Ferrigno (under a few coats of fetching green paint, mind you). They changed the Hulk's origin, the characters, and generally made it as unlike the comic as you could imagine, yet it was still, essentially, The Hulk. It was on this very show that the immortal line "Don't make me angry... you won't like me when I'm angry" was born. Magic.
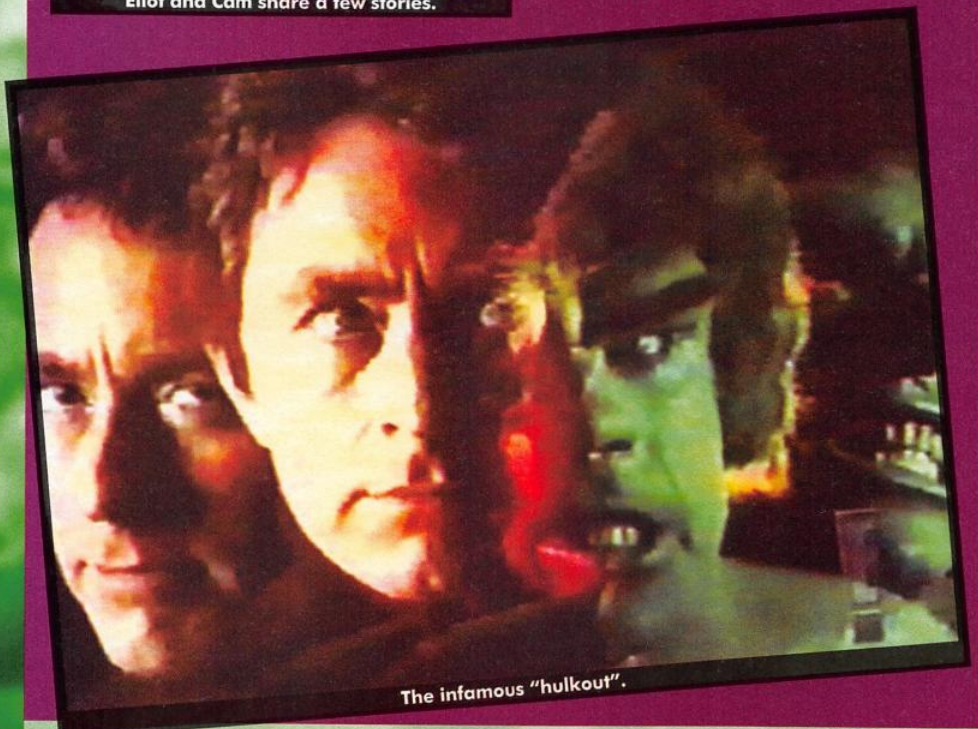
"You LOST him?"

Are your Macleans showing?

The infamous "hulkout".

Hulk has a ball.

that is timed. The one puzzle we saw involved moving numbers around to match a set sequence. With only around 10 seconds to complete, there's some frantic mind teasers on display.

The Banner missions take inspiration from a few areas. The obvious one is Tomb Raider's running, jumping, pulling things, solving puzzles, although it's not nearly as taxing as Lara's conundrums. Of the levels we saw, the Banner missions seem to be designed so that there's pretty much one way through them. The solutions are pretty obvious and the guards don't even seem that clever, with a line of sight of only about 10 metres. Perhaps the emphasis is not on realism at this point (it's certainly not in the Hulk missions) so we'll reserve judgment until we see final code. At this stage, it certainly seems these five Banner levels are on the weaker end of the spectrum in comparison to the action side of the game.

A GREAT DEAL OF CHAOS

In acknowledgment that the games industry is as serious a market as the cinema world, there has been considerable co-operation between Universal Studios and Radical Entertainment in the creation of The Hulk game. They've had access to artwork and materials from the film to make sure the game links convincingly with the film. Eric Bana too has come on board to provide the voice of Bruce Banner and The Hulk. Universal seems to have come to the party so let's hope that Radical Entertainment can complete a game that matches the expectations of the legion of Hulk fans out there, including us.

Of the four platforms that the game will appear on, the Xbox and GameCube looked a lot better than the PS2 or the PC. The Xbox seemed the furthest along in development and really stood out as being something rather special. The GameCube is running a close second. The PS2 and PC versions don't seem nearly as progressed at this stage, though all the release dates are for a simultaneous launch. Whilst differences between the different platforms are all fairly cosmetic, the Xbox version looks like it might be the star of the lot.

The focus of this game is really Hulk as the unstoppable machine. At least in the action sections shown in Berlin, Hulk can do pretty much anything, and creating a great deal of chaos seems to be the result. So the need to execute complex combos is questionable. It seems to be more an option for players to alleviate boredom rather than an integral part of play. That said, it's a hell of a lot of fun to play and watch. As always, action games live or die on the hand-to-hand combat. At this stage, The Hulk has a strong, responsive combat system, with no nagging camera or collision detection issues. If the Banner levels pick up and the game can offer some variety in play, we could be looking at a very strong licensed action game in The Hulk. The film and game will hit the streets on the same day, 26th June. We leave Berlin hopeful that The Hulk will be as strong in the cinema as it looks like being in the home. Smash? Indeed.

ONE ON ONE WITH THE BIG GREEN GUY

Well, we couldn't understand what Hulk was grunting, but Nick Torchia, Associate Producer of Hulk at Universal Interactive, was on hand to translate for us...

HYPER: Hulk has a targeting reticle — how important is targeting individual units in the game?

Nick Torchia: If there's one annoying unit that you need to take down, like a tank, then it's useful for that. There is a first person mode where you can target individual characters if you want to. I guess that isn't as important in other parts. Most attacks have a certain range, so if the Hulk is
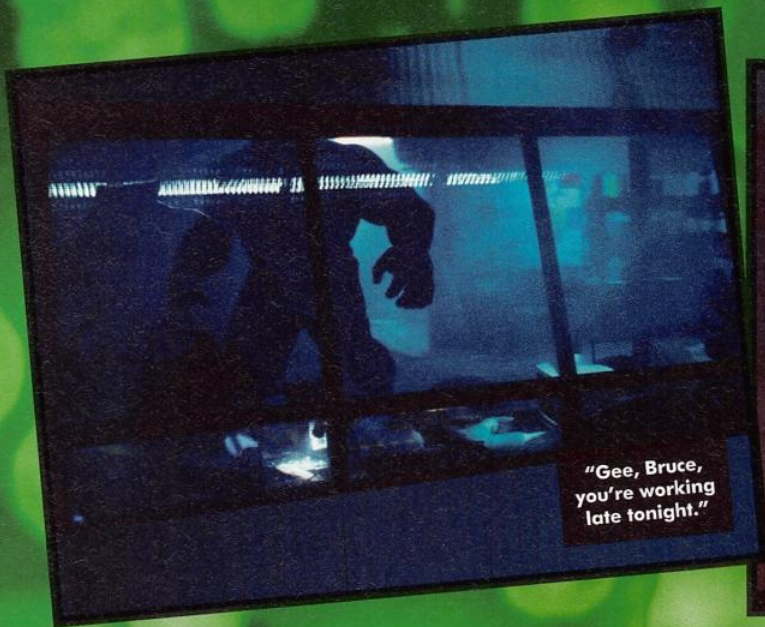
"Gee, Bruce, you're working late tonight."

When the Hulk steps on your toe...
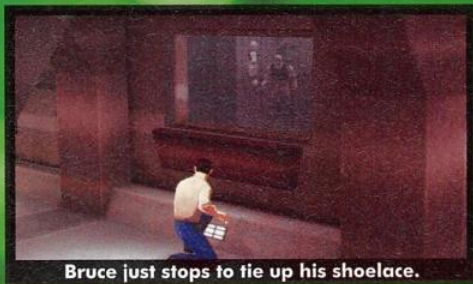
Bruce just stops to tie up his shoelace.
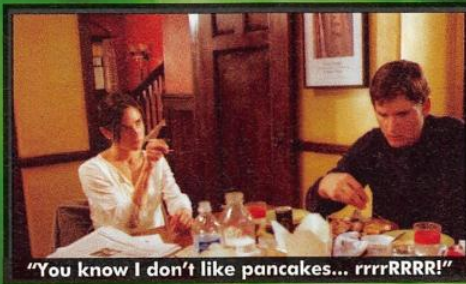
"You know I don't like pancakes... rrrrRRRR!"
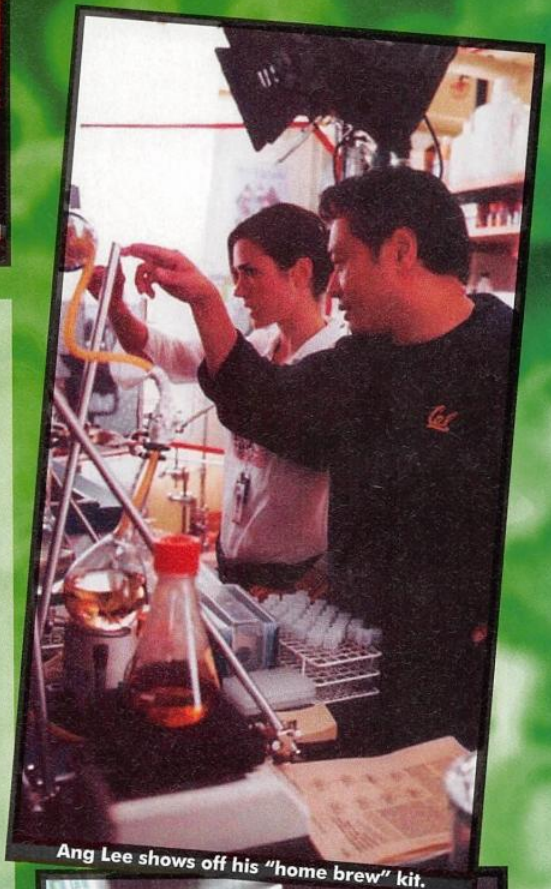
Ang Lee shows off his "home brew" kit.

It's a crate fantasy!

He doesn't even like the colour green.

surrounded by enemies and he takes a swing at them, that will do damage to a lot of them. Other attacks have range as well like the Sonic Clap.

HYPER: Can you talk a little about the Sonic Clap?
NT: This is a really cool move. It deafens enemies, basically making them freeze so that they're more vulnerable to attack. Now if you grab them you can do different combos, pick them up, combo them, throw. There's a lot of ways to take on the enemies in the game.

HYPER: How big was the influence of traditional fighting games on The Hulk?
NT: I wouldn't say that big - there's a slight combo system. This is definitely coming from an action style genre. At the same time, The Hulk has a lot of different moves that he can use with grapples and throws, the Sonic Clap and so on.

It's a satisfying experience being able to walk around smashing things

HYPER: Did you consider the option of The Hulk growing along the way, acquiring moves as he went?
NT: Not really, he has all of the same moves right from the beginning. Later on in the game, different enemies require different moves to defeat them. There are units with riot shields that are normally fairly impenetrable. Hulk needs to pick up objects to throw at them, taking out the shields, then he can attack them. Rather than have him grow and change, it's more a case of finding new ways to use his present abilities. Things get harder as you progress - that's how

we ramped up the gameplay.

HYPER: How do the Hulk and Bruce Banner missions differ?
NT: In the Banner mission, you have to keep your cool. Bruce can get into a few fist fights and continue, but if you get too much damage, become too enraged and become the Hulk, that's sort of how you die. We didn't want an instant death situation like in some other games. The idea is to allow a little hand to hand combat as Bruce Banner but to really try and sneak around. It's more covert — the commands are the same for Hulk and Bruce but with different results. There's pushing and pulling objects to get through levels, observing surveillance, that sort of thing.
It's a satisfying experience being able to walk around smashing things, being fairly invulnerable. We think people are going to like that. The change of pace is important though.

HYPER: What about the boss levels?
NT: At this stage there are five boss levels in which you run into some classic Hulk enemies, including Flux, Half-Life and Rampage.

HYPER: How close is the Hulk to completion?
NT: At this stage, we're about 80% done. Right now, we're adding a lot of things though, like improving the Artificial Intelligence. It's coming together!

HYPER: Thanks for your time.
NT: No problem. ◄◄

HARDWF

MOBILE GAMING

>> Gaming. It's a multi-billion dollar industry, and one that is maturing rapidly. With the revolution that is currently taking place with tech devices and wireless net access, not to mention the ongoing process of convergence, a whole new breed of gaming platforms are being created.

THE BLEEDING EDGE
Alongside consoles, PCs and portables like the GBA are a whole host of game capable devices. Mobile phones and PDAs have traditionally come with a couple of simplistic games, but now that they're growing ever more sophisticated, thanks to colour screens, faster processors and a real push towards multimedia capabilities, the importance of gaming is increasingly becoming a focal point, no doubt helped along by the increasing acceptance of gaming as a mainstream activity. So is gaming on handhelds

and mobile phones simply a cynical money making exercise, or is it an emerging aspect of the gaming scene that will become a legitimate art form in its own right?

And for the discerning gamer, what options are there? What advantages do some devices have over others? Will the GBA soon have stiff competition from devices that not only run sophisticated games (and possibly emulate classic old systems) but also do a number of other things?

What we've found (unsurprisingly) is that you get what you pay for. The latest generation of Pocket PCs and Palms (and to a lesser extent Series 60 phones), have the power to give you a decent gaming experience, but when compared to the cost of a GBA, are prohibitively expensive. They're also still at a stage where gaming is a secondary function, resulting in a number of

control and ease of use issues.

In other words, it's going to be a while before the GBA is threatened as the best portable gaming solution. That said, it's worth keeping an eye on this emerging aspect of new technology, so what we've decided to do for you is take a broad look at what's available in both hardware and software. We know you guys don't have a thousand plus dollars to drop on a handset (hell, neither do we — Ed.), so in addition to the top of the line models, we're also going to introduce you to a couple of phones that are more affordable. As far as gaming goes, they're hardly on the bleeding edge, but when combined with a colour screen, polyphonic ring tones, and a camera (most of the time), downloadable java games are a nice addition to goof around with. It's just a pity you have to hunt so hard to find playable ones! Fortunately, Hyper has done some of the hunting for you! <<

QUICK LOOKS

DRAGON TALE
Developer: Spark Creative

>> Dragon Tale is obviously heavily inspired by the Zelda games. Unfortunately it doesn't reach the same heights. Still, it's a good indication of the potential for this genre on mobiles. Dragon Tale runs on Mophun, a C/C++ platform developed by Synergenix, and is compatible with the Sony Ericsson T300 and T306.

Q*BERT
Developer: Centerscore

>> One of the best arcade-to-mobile ports to date. If you played Q*Bert back in the day, you'll know how fiendishly good it is. If you didn't, then this is your chance to taste it Java style!
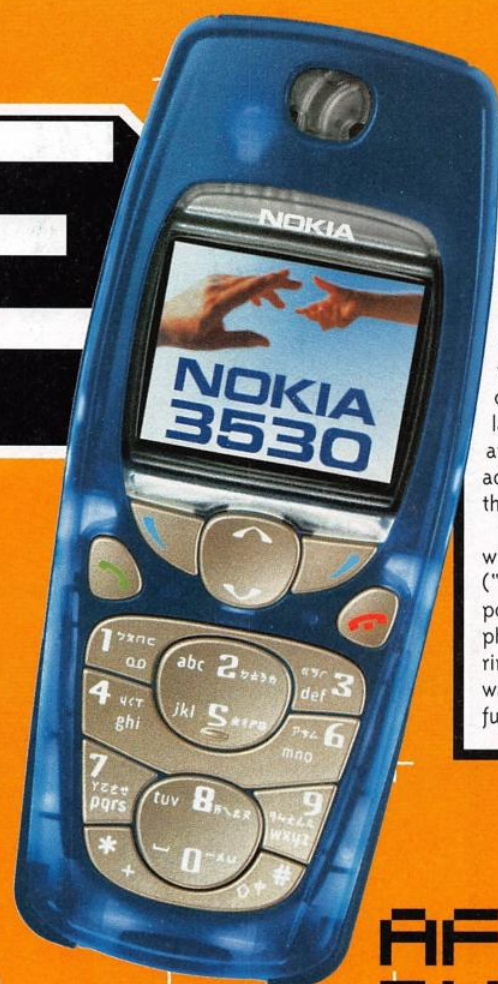
NOKIA 3530

Price: $399

>> A hugely impressive phone. With a 4096 (12-bit) colour screen, very slick looking design and solid feature set, the 3530 represents excellent value for money. The 3530 supports polyphonic ring tones, WAP 1.2.1, HSCSD and GPRS, MMS and downloadable Java games and apps. The button layout is a little kooky, but works surprisingly well, and the casing is replaceable, so you can — ahem — accessorise. The only thing missing is a camera. And the off-center speaker at the top looks a little odd.

Out of all the phones we tested, the 3530 came with the best pre-installed polyphonic ring tones ("In the groove" we could kiss you!). It's odd that polyphony is being pushed so hard, but so many phones come with such an average range of ringtones, so that was a pleasant surprise. The 3530 was also the best phone for navigating, with all its functions easy to access and straightforward to use.

AFFORDABLE PHONES

SONY ERICSSON T300

Price: $505 ($705 with camera)

>> The T300 looks a bit like the little brother of the P800. It has the same cute baby blue colouring and curves, but with a much smaller screen and feature set. The T300 has been made to provide an affordable alternative to the P800s of the world, with a 256 colour LCD screen, five-way joystick for navigation, and support for polyphonic ring tones and MMS, but it's not a true next generation phone. Pictures look pretty average in only 256 colours, and the phone has no bluetooth capabilities. That said, it won't cost much to get this phone on a plan, and the lure of a slick design and colour screen is definitely appealing. It also comes with an attachable camera, which is a nice touch that works well. Another big plus for the T300 is that it's tri-band. You want to take it overseas? Be our guest, because it'll still work! In fact, maybe we'll flee the country with all our review models... heh heh.

GUNDAM SPACE ASSAULT

Developer: Bandai

>> Another Java game, this time a fantastic side-scrolling shooter. We use the word "fantastic" in comparison to other mobile games mind you. Even so, for fans of shooters and Gundam (hey Malky!) this one is worth checking out.

BOMBJACK

Developer: Elite

>> Another classic game that works well on the latest generation of mobile handsets. Bomb Jack runs on TTPCom's Wireless Graphics Engine (WGE), another C++ API that works on ARM7, ARM9 (such as the P800), strongARM or x86 powered mobile phones. Amazingly, Elite were able to transfer the game to WGE in only three days!
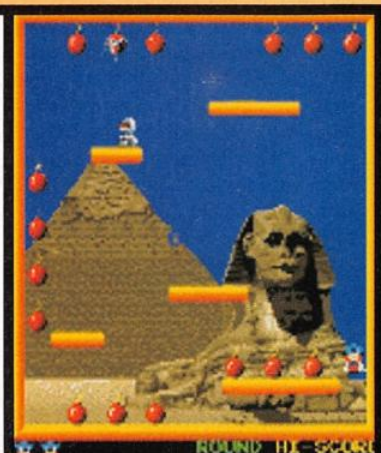
HARDWARE

BLEEDING EDGE PHONES

SONY ERICSSON P800
Price: $TBA (Approx. $1399)

>> Chances are you'll either love or hate the design of the P800, but personally we think it's great, and a nice antidote to the more serious business-style designs. And behind the cute exterior lies one of the most fully featured phones on the market.

One of the best elements of the design is the flip down number pad, enabling you to use the phone in two distinct modes — like a traditional phone or like a PDA with the included stylus. Flip it down (or take it off altogether) and you'll reveal a massive 12-bit colour 208x320 pixel touchscreen. Jotting down notes, emails or messages is a breeze thanks to the choice between a virtual keyboard and the excellent handwriting recognition software (although it's a shame that there's no predictive text input). The other design feature that we really liked was the excellent five-way jog dial on the side of the device.

The P800 is a tri-band phone with support for HSCSD 2+1 and GPRS 4+1, and runs on Symbian OS 7.0 and the UIQ platform. It comes with a fully featured internet browser that supports HTML 3.2, WAP 2.0, WML 1.x, xHTML Basic, cHTML and xHTML Mobile Profile. Basically any site designed to be viewed from a mobile device will work. It also includes a viewer for Word, Excel, Acrobat and Powerpoint files. And let's not forget support for both J2ME and PersonalJava, not to mention POP3 and IMAP4 email support, and Bluetooth v1.1.

The P800 also has a built in digital camera with three resolution options (the highest is 640x480 at 24-bit colour) and three levels of JPEG quality to save the images at. Plus, you can define the brightness and contrast levels of images and even set a 15 second timer! Rounding out the brilliant feature set is surprisingly great sound quality and support for MP3, WAV, AU, AMR and MIDI formats. Not to mention MPEG4 video playback. To top it all off, the P800 has 12MB internal memory and the retail package comes with a 16MB card. This is simply one of the best phones ever!

SPLINTER CELL
Developer: Gameloft

>> Who would have thought it? This isn't half bad! Splinter Cell on mobile phones is a side scrolling action/strategy title that manages to keep the sneak 'em up gameplay that made its console cousin such a big hit. You're still hiding in the shadows, strangling guards from behind and following mission objectives. Of course, it's even more linear than other versions, and only has six, admittedly nicely varied levels. This is still one of the best "original" games for mobile to date. It's available for a wide range of J2ME enabled phones, but obviously looks best on new, large screen phones. Even on a monochrome screen this game has stacks of personality.

GULO'S TALE
Developer: Gameloft

>> The best platformer on a mobile thus far. The gameplay consists of collecting fruit throughout multi-tiered environments, with Gulo able to use bubbles to create platforms to climb on, as well as to take out enemies. It's simple, but well conceived, and backed up by a Mayan jungle visual theme that's somewhat reminiscent in places of the art style from Yoshi's Island. Gulo's a very endearing lead character too, and it's hard not to be charmed. With only two worlds spanning thirteen levels, our main complaint is that it's a little on the short side.

Welcome back Gulo, it is I, Akhuna,

SHARP GX10

Price: $TBA

>> The Sharp GX10 is a sweet looking phone that sports a clam shell design. When shut there's a small LCD display, but flip it open and you'll find a large 16-bit colour screen, well designed number pad and D-pad. The GX10 has all the features you'd expect, such as dual-band GSM 900/1800 Mhz and GPRS 4+2, a digital camera (only 288x352 resolution though), impressive sound and support for polyphonic rings tones etc. The GX10 is the handset that will come with Vodafone's live! service, due to launch here very soon (see boxout). We were impressed by how sturdy it felt and also how easy navigating the OS was. Very nice indeed.

COMING SOON

>> At the moment, the process of downloading games to latest generation phones is a bit of a pain. Both Nokia and Vodafone, however, are about to introduce measures to simplify the transition into a multimedia rich phone experience for lay consumers. Vodafone's live! service will be an all-in-one solution. You'll sign up for the service, pay for a Sharp GX10 phone (although other phones will be available for use with the service further down the line), then have easy access to a number of features. It makes sending pictures and MMSs (called PXTs by Vodafone) nice and simple, and gives easy access to image, ringtone and game downloads... although all at a price. Games, for instance, will be priced at $3, $5 and $7 each, depending on how big they are. This is roughly in line with general prices for mobile games, but whether the quality will be there remains to be seen.

Nokia will be offering a streamlined service for game downloads. All you'll have to do is pick the game you want, send an SMS to a certain number and they'll send you the game back. It gets charged to your monthly bill and eliminates the need for browsing around online.

NOKIA 3650

Price: $999

>> We've been mucking around with a 3650 here in the office (and out at parties), and think we're in love! In terms of features, it's basically the same as the 7650, but with the addition of the Real One player. This means that you can record video footage, as well as stream movie trailers and other content over GPRS. It's an absolutely dynamite phone, and has actually replaced the 7650 as our Nokia of choice. We should mention, however, that the number pad arrangement takes some getting used to (especially if you've learnt to text message on a normal number pad), and the phone is a little thicker than it appears in screens. The build quality could be better too — the casing at the back is very plasticy. We'd prefer it to weigh slightly more but feel a little sturdier. Even so, a cutting edge phone.

EVERQUEST: HERO'S CALL

Developer: Sony Online

>> It's not out yet, but Everquest: Hero's Call is shaping up to be the RPG to get in the mobile phone arena. Sony Online's Wireless Gaming group are working to ensure that all the core things that people love about the RPG genre will survive the transition to such a different format.

You choose from a fighter or a mage, each with five attributes, and take them through 32 dungeons. Along the way you'll buy and find items for your inventory, level up, chat to NPCs, accept quests, learn over 100 spells, and revel in old school turn-based combat. It's only single player for now, but who knows what the future could hold? Hero's Call only runs on BREW (Binary Runtime Environment for Wireless) enabled phones. Unfortunately there aren't that many phones that support it, although LGE, Samsung, Motorola and Sharp do have models out.

BUST 'EM

Developer: Digital Concepts

>> Penny Arcade the game anyone? Bust 'Em is a crazy variation on the old classic Breakout... except this time around there a whole host of powerups that can destroy blocks, unleash multi-balls, and raise and lower the line that defines how much space you can move around in. Although the link with Penny Arcade is tenuous (there's Gabe art on the side of the game screen), this is a bit of a gem.

HARDWARE

INSANIQUARIUM (PALM OS)
Developer: Astraware

>> Another one from Astraware, Insaniquarium puts you in charge of a fish tank. You must create a thriving fish community by buying fish, feeding them and shooting the fish-eating monsters that periodically show up. The cycle is perpetuated by grabbing the money and diamonds that guppies drop and using it to buy more fish and food. There are a number of different creatures available to inject into the aquarium, as well as various upgrades. In addition to Challenge and Time Trial modes, Insaniquarium also has a Quest mode that sets you with challenges and rewards you with pets that can help your aquarium out in a variety of ways.

POCKET PC AND PALM GAMES

DARXIDE EMP (POCKET PC)
Developer: Frontier

>> UK Developers Frontier have taken their 32X title and revamped it for Pocket PC, and they've done a fantastic job. Yes, it's a space shooter but it looks great, plays and runs really well, has decent sound effects, and… wait for it, controls better than any other game of similar complexity on this platform. All in all, a must-have game for Pocket PC owners. Darxide is also on the way for Palm devices and Series 60 phones. Bluetooth multiplayer could be special.
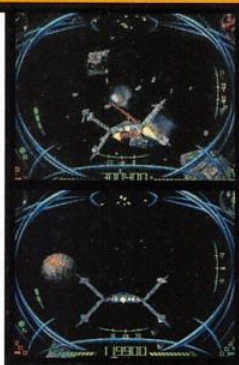
BEJEWELED (PALM OS – BUT ALSO AVAILABLE AS DIAMOND MINE FOR POCKET PC)
Developer: Astraware

>> This is quite an old game (originally released in 2001), but its simplicity belies serious addictiveness. The gamescreen is arrayed in an eight gem by eight gem grid, and you must swap adjacent gems and match up like with like. Once you have three in a row, they disappear, and the gems above fall down. What makes it cool is trying to chain together combos. Bejeweled goes to show that a simple, well-executed idea will always win in the gameplay stakes.

MOTOCROSS STUNT RACER (POCKET PC)
Developer: Digital Concepts

>> MSR is a cool isometric motocross racing game that runs on a voxel engine, and is yet another indication that the Pocket PC platform is ahead of the mobile pack, not only in terms of power, but in terms of screen real estate. There are some things that just scream out for a 320x320 display. As you can see in the screenshot, the terrain is quite convincing, but what you can't see is that it runs smoothly and actually feels good too. It gets a little samey across the 45 levels, but a great game nonetheless.

SIBERIAN STRIKE X (POCKET PC)
Developer: Gameloft

>> This one is a top down shooter in the vein of classics like Raiden. It's really good too, with relatively detailed backgrounds, and a lot going on on-screen at any one time, including some chunky powerups. Siberian Strike X has twelve levels and is also available on a variety of phones in a scaled down version.

MASTER THIEF 3D (PALM OS)
Developer: Mobile Wizardry

>> Running on the Deity3D engine, Mobile Wizardy's Master Thief is quite an accomplishment for Palm-based devices. As the title suggests, you're a thief for hire, and the gameplay revolves around infiltrating corporations and complexes, stealing items and getting out. You can sneak around or take advantage of the weaponry which ranges from a tazer to grenades. Master Thief 3D looks very competent for a Palm game, and since it is optimised for ARM processors, if you have a newish handheld, it will run like a dream. Unfortunately, as a technology demo it's impressive, but when it comes to actually playing, the controls are next to impossible.

MONSTA (PALM OS)
Developer: Industry Entertainment

>> Monsta is a cool take on the strategy genre that doesn't try to blow the user away with flashy graphics, but instead relies on puzzle-based gameplay. Viewed from an almost top down perspective, Monsta is a turn-based strategy game that spans 50 levels. In each level, your goal is to take out all the monstas or reach a doorway without getting killed or falling into a trap. It's a tile-based system and each turn you have three moves, which can be used to move or shoot in a direction, while each monster has a different range of moves and AI. Despite being a fair amount more simplistic than console turn-based titles such as FF Tactics, Monsta still manages to entertain.

winwinwin

WIN X2: WOLVERINE'S REVENGE!

FOR PS2

■ To celebrate the upcoming release of the awesome X-Men sequel, X2, in cinemas on April 30th, plus the release of the only videogame featuring the coolest mutant ever devised, we have four X2: Wolverine's Revenge packs to give away!

Thanks to Activision and 20th Century Fox, each pack includes: Wolverine's Revenge for PS2, a Wolverine's Revenge poster, a collectible X2 mini poster, and a collectible X2 watch. Snikt! To be in with a chance to win a pack, just answer this question:

>> **What is Wolverine's real name?**

Put your answer on the back of an envelope and send it to: **Clawing for Freebies, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016.** Good luck, bud.
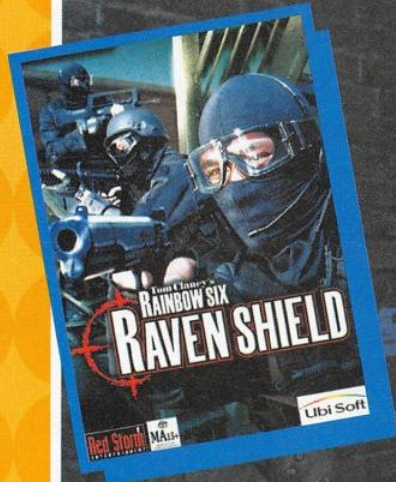
WIN RAVEN SHIELD!

FOR PC

■ In a crazy talking box, no less! "Tango down!" will blare out at you when you open your copy of Raven Shield for PC, Tom Clancy's latest stealth shooter, in this crazy exclusive packaging. We have five copies of this cool game to give away to readers who can answer this question:

>> **Name the last Tom Clancy novel.**

Put your answer on the back of an envelope and send it to: **Tom Clancy's Prizes, Hyper, 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016.** Tango down!

STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE

>>**XBOX/PC**

CATEGORY: RPG >> PLAYERS: 1 >>
PUBLISHER: LucasArts >> AVAILABLE: June >>

WOW-O-METER

Dr. Ray Muzyka, Joint CEO of BioWare and Co-Executive Producer of Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic, sent Hyper this holotransmission. It may have been wedged in pretty tight in a rusty old astromech droid, but we've managed to recover the contents for you all...

HYPER: Finally, a *Star Wars* RPG. Was it an intimidating project to accept?

Ray Muzyka (RM): Definitely - we're huge fans of the *Star Wars* universe and it is a great honour for us to work with LucasArts on *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*, the first roleplaying game ever in the *Star Wars* universe!

HYPER: How much of your past work on RPGs did you plan to rely on, and how much was built from the ground up for KotOR?

RM: We always build on our past work - we're applying design lessons from some of our past games, like Baldur's Gate, Baldur's Gate II, MDK2, and Neverwinter Nights, and some of our graphic technology in the BioWare Odyssey Engine (the graphic engine behind *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*) is building on our past 3D engines.

HYPER: Which set of movies were used more for SW reference/inspiration? The original trilogy or the prequels?

RM: Both - since both sets of movies represent the Star Wars universe, and also (in some ways) neither, as this game is set 4000 years before the movies, though everything in the game will be instantly familiar to fans who have seen any of the *Star Wars* movies. If you're asking which movies the team is more fond of, I think we'd all say Episodes IV, V and VI, thus far at least. Hopefully III will be great!

HYPER: How much content was there to create from scratch and have approved by Lucas?

RM: There isn't a lot of existing content defining the period of the Old Republic, and we're very excited to be able to help define this period of the *Star Wars* timeline in partnership with LucasArts.

HYPER: Were there alien/weapons/ship designs that were rejected? Why?

RM: No, LucasArts has been very supportive of our designs, generally only suggesting tweaks to the ideas we submitted for approvals.

HYPER: Was the concept always to create a 3rd person RPG, or were you originally tempted to do a "top down" Baldur's Gate style RPG?

RM: The concept was always to create an immersive console roleplaying game, with the 3rd person behind the shoulder perspective.

HYPER: How do you reconcile such things as Blaster combat? Shouldn't one shot from a blaster take someone down? How do you elongate combat time with such *Star Wars* weapons?

RM: We're using the Wizards of the Coast *Star Wars* rules, which define how combat with blasters, light sabers, force powers etc all works.

HYPER: Explain the way you've implemented the lightsaber combat.

RM: Every single swing of the lightsaber combat has been animated by hand with the opponent's responses in mind, so combat is incredibly cinematic and exciting to watch. Customizing your lightsaber with different crystals at your workbench allows you to make it more powerful - you can even use a double bladed lightsaber, or hold two of them (one in each hand!). In addition, you can throw your lightsaber like a boomerang if you choose to learn this skill, which is very cool to see. :)

HYPER: How many different classes will be available to the player over the course of the game? Is it possible to play through the game and NOT become a Jedi?

RM: Well, becoming a Jedi is integrated into the storyline, as you'll see. We want everyone to have the chance to role-play as a Jedi - for the first time in any *Star Wars* game, ever! The storyline is very cool, one of the best storylines we've ever done, and one of the best for console roleplaying games to date... you start with creating one character, from one of three starting classes (Scout, Scoundrel, or Soldier). Up to 9 other characters can be found in the game and you assemble your party with 3 characters at a time.

HYPER: What was the biggest challenge in creating a world thousands of years in the past, and yet still make it identifiably the *Star Wars* universe?

RM: The challenge is as you describe - to create a world 4000 years in the past, and yet have the creatures, worlds and ships all look very familiar to *Star Wars* fans. In some ways this isn't too hard, as the *Star Wars* timeline has hyperspace going back 20,000 years before the movies. While the ships,

OLD REPUBLIC
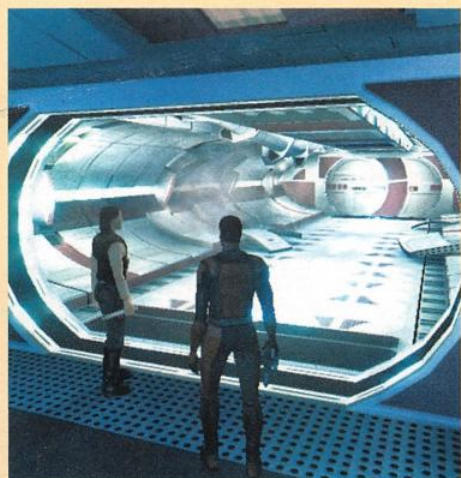
Kill them all, Chewie!

This walkway is new, probably built by the slavers, but I remember the trees. My village is not far from here.

No, you can't bring your pet dewback...!

creatures and characters in the game will all look familiar to *Star Wars* fans, they will be subtly 'older' in appearance conveying the long history of the *Star Wars* universe. Playing through the game will show fans some of the back-story of familiar environments like Tatooine, for example.

HYPER: How different is the game if you replay it as male/female or as another character class?

RM: Males and females will have different reactions from NPCs and different romance paths will also be available depending on the sex of your primary PC (note that these romances are entirely optional). Depending on the classes of your party members, you may choose more stealthy options, more forceful options, or more persuasive options in your interactions with other characters and the game world. Moreover, the choice between the dark side and the light side of the force will be a big part of the replay value - which side (good or evil) do you want to play as?

HYPER: Obviously part of the big attraction with a SW RPG, is being able to really customise your character - explain the depths to this feature over the course of the game.

RM: Absolutely everything is customisable, from your starting appearance, to the types of weapons you want your party to equip, to the armour and special items you give them, and the ability increases, skills, feats and force powers you can obtain as your party members level up. We also provide a 'quick assignment' of ability scores as you level up, for those players who don't want to spend a lot of time on leveling, but we also allow players to spend the time if they choose to do so in assigning all of the points they gain. The variety in items and abilities you can obtain in the game is quite astounding - it's probably more than in any other console RPG to date.

HYPER: Who did you get to do the voice acting? How much of the game is non-voiced?

RM: Absolutely every single NPC you can talk with (and you can talk with every NPC you meet in the game!) has full VO for their entire dialog. All of the VO is lip-synched as well, so the conversations are incredibly immersive, interesting, and cinematic. *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* is the first

REVENGE OF THE SITH

>> You won't be seeing Stormtroopers or Battledroids in Knights of the Old Republic, but you will be seeing the evil **Sith Troopers**, henchmen of the dark side. These are the strongest of all soldiers on the side of the Sith, and wear imposing fully-plated armour to make them a "faceless inhuman entity". These guys make up only a small component of the evil hordes that you'll have to face in Knights of the Old Republic.

game I'm aware of that has done this level of immersion with NPCs.

HYPER: How much stuff is in the game for hardcore *Star Wars* fans, that the casual gamer won't pick up on?

RM: We're making a game that will appeal to console roleplaying fans, so you don't need any specific knowledge of the *Star Wars* universe to play KotOR. On the other hand, we're staying true to the source materials for *Star Wars* that are out there, so everything in the game will ring true to *Star Wars* fans - they should really enjoy exploring the back history 4000 years before the movies.

HYPER: Just how big is the game? How many hours would it take to experience it fully?

RM: We're estimating (conservatively) that it will take 40-60 hours (or more) to play through *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*.

HYPER: During combat, if you pause, how many different kinds of commands can you set-up? Explain how the real-time combat works whilst still giving the player complete control.

RM: The game can be played in either turn-based (with auto-pause, or manual pause) or real time modes (again, with pausing being available at any time). You can pause and assign orders to your party members, then resume, or just allow your other PCs to attack using their assigned AI scripts if you so choose. For fans who really like tactical level combat, we also provide an action queue which allows up to 3 actions to be queued on multiple opponents for each of your party members. However, the game is eminently playable if all you want to do is select your actions (force powers, combat feats, using items, attacking etc) by simply hitting the A button - this means that it also should appeal to action-adventure fans as well. We've really put a lot of time and attention into the combat interface and it should allow people to play it in a variety of ways - however they want to approach the interface, it will provide a very satisfying experience.

HYPER: Just how non-linear is the game in terms of mission structure? Can you temporarily abandon the main story when you feel like it?

RM: Yes, there are lots of side quests that you can undertake, apart from the main storyline. Once you get your own ship, you can travel back to planets you have already visited and undertake additional side quests if you so choose.

Lucky we went to that lightsaber bargain sale.

A LONG TIME AGO, IN A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY...

>> The story in Knights of the Old Republic takes place a good 4,000 years before the *Star Wars* films.

A devastating war against the fallen Jedi Exar Kun had shaken the galaxy to its very core, and left the Republic's defenses crippled. Sensing this weakness, the warlike Mandalorians began a series of brutal attacks against worlds throughout the Outer Rim. In desperation, the Republic turned to the Jedi Council for aid. The learned Masters wanted to proceed with customary caution and due care before embarking on a long and destructive military campaign; however, more immediate help came in the form of two young Jedi Knights named Revan and Malak.

Ignoring the dictates of the Jedi Council, the charismatic pair recruited many to their cause, rallying the impulsive youth of the Order with cries of victory and glory. With Revan and Malak at the head of their great fleet, the Republic set forth to drive the invaders back. The Mandalorian Wars were long and bloody, and many Jedi perished in the struggle. Yet, at its end, the Republic emerged triumphant, and Revan and Malak were hailed as heroes.

But the heroes did not leave the war untouched; something about the Outer Rim worlds twisted and corrupted them. On Korriban, Revan uncovered the lost secrets of the Sith and became the heir to an ancient and evil legacy. Succumbing to the lure of the dark side, the fallen Jedi assumed the title of Darth Revan, Lord of the Sith. Malak was chosen as the Dark Lord's apprentice, and the great fleet under their control abandoned the Republic and swore fealty to their new Sith masters.

With their army of followers, Revan and Malak returned not as saviors, but as conquerors. For two years battles raged on the perimeters of Republic space. The Sith gained victory after victory, until the Jedi set a trap for Revan and succeeded in destroying the Dark Lord. But during the chaos of battle, Malak managed to escape.

Malak seized the mantle of his fallen Sith Master and proclaimed himself the new Dark Lord, swearing revenge on those who had killed Revan. And the Sith armada continued its relentless advance upon the Core Worlds...

HYPER: How much of the game is just conversation and combat? Are there object puzzles etc?

RM: Yes, there are – we recognise that this is a major part of console gaming, and while we're keeping these to a small number, there are a few and they are quite fun. We also provide a variety of minigames like swoop bike racing, turret guns on your space ship, the Ebon Hawk (like shooting Tie Fighters on the Millennium Falcon in the movies), a card game called Pazaak, and a gladiatorial arena where you can battle for glory and profit.

HYPER: Can you imagine, say, downloadable extra quests for KotOR on Xbox Live?

RM: We're looking into providing this option.

HYPER: What has been the most successful thing about the development of this game for Bioware? Will it be the blueprint for future games?

RM: This game is really, really big – there's a lot to do in it. It's also the first *Star Wars* roleplaying game, a game where you can role-play as either a dark or light side Jedi – this is the coolest aspect of

the game for me at least. We certainly hope to do more follow-up games using the engine and content that we created.

HYPER: Where is the console RPG headed? Will Bioware do more console RPGs?

RM: Yes, we're already doing another one (no details yet announced) with Microsoft as publisher...

HYPER: What are some of your favourite RPGs of all time & why?

RM: On console, I really liked Chrono Cross and Final Fantasy VII – they had very strong storylines and lots of things to do and explore. I also really liked Zelda for its strong interface and gameplay. Many of the more recent action-adventure games increasingly seem to feature roleplaying game elements - I'd go out on a limb and say that in some ways, Metal Gear Solid and even GTA3 are mixtures of RPG with action. On GBA, I liked the Zelda: Link games. On PC, I liked Betrayal at Krondor, System Shock, Ultima Underworld, the Ultima series and Wizardry.

HYPER: What's one of the coolest things you've seen in the game during its development?

RM: I'd have to answer "the team making the game at BioWare". The *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* team is really, really passionate about what they're making. They continue to add in cool new features and content and they are crafting an amazing experience. ◄◄

"DANTOOINE... THEY'RE ON DANTOOINE!"

>> Remember those fateful words from Princess Leia in *A New Hope*? Sure, the Empire decided to blow up Alderaan anyway, but have you ever wondered what really was on Dantooine? Well, in Knights of the Old Republic you can visit this legendary planet yourself. It's one of many *Star Wars* planets that fans can finally get a look at, as well as the mysterious Sith world of Korriban, the Wookiee planet Kashyyyk, a formative Tatooine and a brand new planet created for the game, Manaan, the home of the new Selkath species.

19/200

FREEDOM: THE BATTLE FOR LIBERTY ISLAND

CATEGORY: Action >> PLAYERS: 1-Multi >>
PUBLISHER: EA >> AVAILABLE: TBA >>
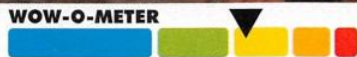
WOW-O-METER

Freedom: The Battle for Liberty Island is a new multi-platform title heading our way courtesy of the good people at IO Interactive - you may remember them as the developers behind the almost-fabulous Hitman 2. The game is based around an alternate history, one where the assassination of leading scientists set back the Manhattan Project, ultimately resulting in the Soviet Union building the atomic bomb first and proceeding to drop it on Berlin. As you might expect, this had drastic ramifications on the world stage, making the Soviet Union the dominant super power. And now, in the present day setting of the game, Soviet forces are invading the United States.

THE FOLLOWING NAMES ARE ALL MADE UP...

Indeed, Soviet forces have dropped a nuclear bomb on Washington DC — KILLING THE PRESIDENT! Now, we don't know whether George Dubya was President in this alternate world, but let's assume so! Dancing in the streets! Anyway, after this nasty atrocity (lots of civilians were also killed) Soviet troops storm into America from Mexico and Canada (Canada's always been a commie safe haven eh?), resulting in the entire country being under siege. This sounds like a job for Steven Seagull (or is it Segal?).

Well actually, rather than playing Joe Hero, you play Joe Average, an American civilian caught up in the war, who becomes a freedom fighter and leader. With your guidance, Joe can galvanise the people around him into action to form makeshift fighting units. The game is set in New York, and focuses on the struggle by the people to take back the city, as well as Joe's quest to find and rescue his brother, who was taken hostage by the invading forces.

Freedom is broken up into two distinct modes of gameplay. The first centers on base operations in New York's underground sewage system. This mode is turn-based, and allows you to select which mission to attempt above ground, while providing some strategy in maintaining access points below. The second is the third person action that you'd expect — in the city battling it out.

GAMEPLAY FREEDOM

The theme of the gameplay seems to be "urban guerilla warfare", which sounds pretty sweet to us. Also exciting is IO Interactive's stated intent on non-linear gameplay. According to IO, Freedom won't be another generic shooter — options for the player will range from entirely passive to all out attack. We hear claims like this all the time mind you, but if IO can build on their experience with Hitman 2, Freedom could deliver on its promise!

An important element of the game will be recruiting fellow New Yorkers to join Joe on the battlefield and in operations. Failed missions will result in lower charisma for Joe, which in turn decreases his ability to control his fighters. On the other hand, low casualties, rescued civilians and captured enemy installations will give Joe the power to recruit more men and strengthen the movement.

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE: Online play for the console versions!

Redfern, 6pm: Eliot runs to his car

During missions, a command system will allow you to give out orders to your troops. Let's hope IO streamline this system well, as it will be very important given the team-based nature of the gameplay. Mission objectives will range from small sabotage assignments to large scale battles — both indoors and outdoors, and in a number of different weather conditions (that will actually affect gameplay). Similarly, combat will range from fisticuffs and molotov cocktails through to machine guns and rocket propelled grenades. Some weapons even have the ability to level whole buildings, in the process opening up new routes or possibly obstructing the enemy. More on Freedom as it comes in. <<

DEVASTATION™
RESISTANCE BREEDS REVOLUTION

- 40+ real-world and futuristic weapons
- Intense FPS action on the next-gen Unreal™ Engine
- 22 single player & 14 online multiplayer levels
- Interactive, reactive environments
- AI teammates that you command

"'Devastation' will blow you away!"
—*Pulse*, G4: TV 4 Gamers

"Straight-up action"
—GameSpy

Manaccom
manac.com.au

Classification Pending

POWERED BY THE UNREAL ENGINE NEXT GENERATION

Release April!
www.DevastationGame.com

arush
play outside the box

Groove

Digitalo STUDIOS

And Kojima said, "Let there be light!"

BOKTAI

CATEGORY: TBA >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >>
PUBLISHER: TBA >> **AVAILABLE:** TBA

That crazy Hideo Kojima is at it again. This time, he's designing one of the most unique sounding GBA titles thus far. The game is called Boktai and follows the adventures of a vampire hunter named Django. But here's the kooky bit — the game cartridge itself has a built in photo sensor which can judge how much light is in your surroundings, which in turn affects things in game. As you can imagine, vampires aren't too fond of sunlight, so playing in direct sunlight will definitely help you out. The environments in the game will be brighter and your character will become stronger while the sensor picks up a lot of light. Sounds interesting hey? Little else is known about the game at this stage (including whether it will even come out here), but we'd bet that the idea is that you channel the light from outside into the strange looking gun that Django carries, allowing you to kill the vampires with the stored sunlight. That's just a guess though. Boktai is certainly looking fascinating, so we'll let you know when we find out more.

WOW-O-METER

SOUL CALIBUR II

CATEGORY: Fighting >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >>
PUBLISHER: Namco >> **AVAILABLE:** Late 2003

Namco's Soul Calibur still stands as one of the best 3D fighting games of all time, and the good news is that the effort and attention to detail that Namco lavished on the original is about to be outdone by the sequel!

As we mentioned a few issues ago, each version will have its own unique character: Spawn for Xbox; Heihachi for PS2; and Link for GameCube. For Nintendo fans this addition is particularly exciting because we'll finally be able to see a high-poly adult Link duking it out. If only Ganondorf was on the roster too!

All versions will also feature a new character named Necrid, designed for Namco by famous comic artist Todd McFarlane. Sweet eh? And all this alongside a wealth of play modes and extras. Soul Calibur II will be out in Japan by the time you read this (which means we'll be playing it! heheh), but may not see a local release until later this year, distributed locally by Electronic Arts.

WOW-O-METER
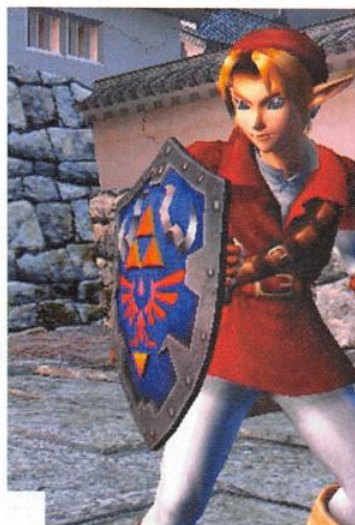
It's not called the Master Sword for nothing...

Will the sequel make a splash? Ho ho ho.

SPLASHDOWN 2

CATEGORY: Racing >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >>
PUBLISHER: THQ >> **AVAILABLE:** Mid 2003

Splashdown was a more than competent racer, but with the sequel, Rainbow Studios are really addressing the criticisms that gamers had with the original. For a start, they've ramped up their wave engine so that the racing is a little more akin to a Wave Race experience. Instead of just skimming over a slight swell, waves are much larger and currents more treacherous, so you really have to battle them and know how to use them to your advantage. This change certainly helps make things more interesting, as do the range of fantastical environments and crazy downhill runs that feature in the game.

WOW-O-METER

There are six play modes (Outdoor Career, Indoor Career, Technical Trials, Freestyle, Career of Countdown and Vs Mode) and over 40 tracks, making for quite a hefty dose of gameplay, especially considering just how different the wide open outdoor courses are from the technically demanding indoor selection.

The look of the game has also undergone considerable changes, with a much more cartoony style. Fortunately, it looks great, especially with the amazing transparent and reflection-laden waves.

>> GREGG CASSON

Lap: 1/2

Chrono	Timer	Heel	Heading	Bs	Vmg	Ts	Tws	Twa
00:00:00.00	00:02:07.88	-24	244	20.0	-9.9	18.1	24.6	119

50 | 40 | 30 | 20 | 10 | | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50

Virtual Skipper 2

http://www.virtualskipper2.com

T he interactive world of Virtual Sailing is a genre not often tapped by game developers. Obviously one can argue that the reason for this is the severe contrast that lies between the sport of yachting (specifically ocean racing) and the frantic universe in which the gaming majority choose to dwell. Fact is this has long been the sole reason, or

Take a wizz, no one will notice...

excuse served, when those interested have proposed the concept of a video game based on the sport of sailing.

A few years ago a company named Duran dared to step foot on the other side of the fence. The result, a pure online multiplayer-orientated sports/strategy title was born, simply known as Virtual Skipper.

EVERYTHING BUT THE SEA CAPTAIN

Fast forward to today. We now find ourselves in 2003 and the original Virtual Skipper has since stepped off its throne as the sailing recreation. It is only fitting that its successor is none other than Virtual Skipper 2. Prior to the development of VS2, Duran provided an online form that enabled the then online

Virtual Skipper community to suggest improvements that could be made for the next instalment. Take it from us when we say they listened.

Virtual Skipper 2 builds on the original in just about every conceivable way, yet at the same time remains true to its tested and proven strategic multiplayer roots. Strategy is, in essence, what Virtual Skipper is all about. Like any good strategy based title, Virtual Skipper closely follows a set of rules (in this case sailing) that provide the player with a set of boundaries within which they determine the best way to accomplish a said goal. The difference between Virtual Skipper and your run-of-the-mill strategy game is the rules constantly

She canna take 'ny more, capn'!
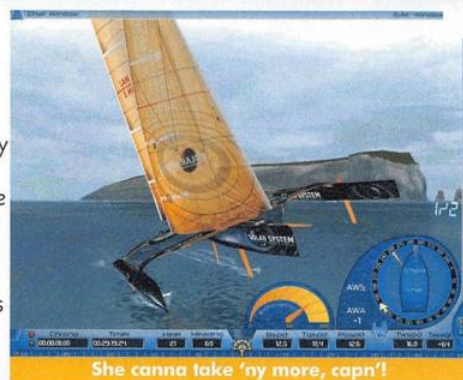
change (wind direction/strength etc.), forcing you to alter your strategy on the fly.

As previously mentioned, the Duran team have improved and added many features from the original title. You now have a total of four sails (3 headsails and a spinnaker), making sail choice an important factor in determining the outcome of a race. Where picking the wind shifts and covering your opponent used to be the key to winning, one must now consider
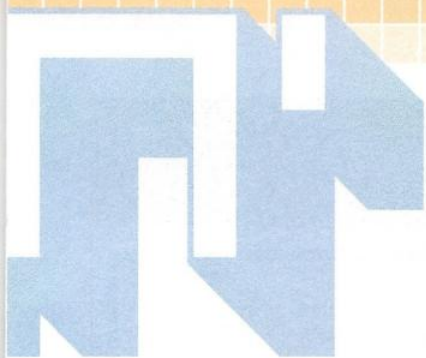
I did a fully sick grind on that wave

Is that the Jaws music I hear...?

their cloth choice as well.

The fundamental sailing technique of covering your opponent is another area that has been significantly polished for Virtual Skipper 2. For the uninformed, covering your opponent in its simplicity boils down to blocking them from wind. By positioning yourself between their sails and the wind, physics tells us they'll slow down. The somewhat 'iffy' feel from original game has been ironed out and now provides an even more entertaining, yet nasty, element to match racing. As any sailor would tell you, there is nothing more frustrating than having someone "dump" on you (dump meaning block or steal your wind, you sick minded few).

Additional features include two new classes, the Melges 24 and the Open 60 Trimaran. The latter provides a much faster option to the standard ACC (America's Cup Class) and the Offshore Racer found in Virtual Skipper. This addition comes as no surprise with the Open 60 Trimaran, considered the Formula 1 of the yachting world,

more likely to capture the attention of the less sailing inclined and hence entice more gamers to the Virtual Skipper brethren.

NOT ALL CLEAR SAILING

Apart from the serious increase in everything cool (boats, courses, wind settings, weather settings etc.), Virtual Skipper 2's visuals are slicker and more fluid than its predecessor. It really is amazing how good it looks and handles. If you are planning on hitting the virtual sea, we recommend that you at least have a Pentium III 800 with nothing less than a 64Mb graphics card. Setting the texture, shader and sea quality to high tends to avoid some otherwise frequent clipping, especially in an eight boat fleet race.

It isn't all bells and whistles for Virtual Skipper 2, however. Possibly the greatest feature from the original game, the ability to play

It's just like The Wind Waker!

online with the free demo version, is no longer present. Now, the only way you can challenge other sailors around the world is by purchasing the game from the online store — which will set you back around $70.

Apart from this rather surprising omission, we have no other gripes with Virtual Skipper 2 or its free demo version (just over 20 Megabytes in size). Being able to race up to seven CPU controlled

Everyone blow hard on the sail!

opponents in a variety of weather conditions should keep you busy until you can afford the full game which will allow you to play online (against up to seven human opponents), split screen (on the same computer) and LAN play. Virtual Skipper 2 is very much a multiplayer game that will keep even the slightest of sailing fans interested for some time. You don't even need to get your feet wet. ⪡⪡

JACKSON GOTHE-SNAPE

>>The battle for the word 'gaming' shows no sign of abating. Following the recent decision in Greece to ban all electronic games (supposedly in an attempt to end gambling), if you were caught playing online chess in an internet café, you'd cop a fine. But, Christ, the crime should be the gambling industry's invasion of the innocent gaming term.

This argument should be evident to any of those who have ever searched for online card games, as I have recently. You see, I enjoy the odd game of five-hundred – a simple, honest, pleasure, and a novel social activity. Perfect, then, for it to be the purpose in this month's hack 'n' slash through the online jungle.

I had originally intended to jump onto some instant free online 500 site based in some exotic foreign land, but clearly the game isn't as popular in the online realm as it is in my lounge room. Yet, after some time searching, I found something approaching what I was looking for: A curious Australian woman's site that appeared to offer nothing more than 500, with rankings, forums, organised matches. After a mild hurrah and an annoying large Java download, I jumped head first into a game as Spencer, middle-aged advertising copywriter: Ask Spencer, he'll know the answer…

Thankfully, those playing the game I latched onto first cared not for my professional competence. Instead, after only four hands, my 30-something female partner invited my email address over to her house. Had I discovered a hub of mature-aged internet romance? Sadly (or, happily), no. Instead, the following correspondence revolved simply around our next 500 showdown. Spencer has a match lined up for next week. Jackson continues to seek something a little more exhilarating.

This month's stopovers:
www.juliannegiffin.com

Fameometer: Google searched the web for Jackson Gothe-Snape. Results this month: 26

Links
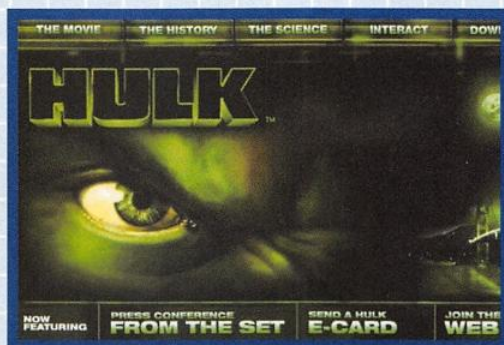
THE HULK
www.thehulk.com

>> If you're as excited by the Hulk as we are, then take a visit to the official movie site where you can watch the trailer, download some wallpapers, check out interviews, pics from the film and lots more fun stuff. The Universal Pictures film that's coming, directed by Ang Lee (Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon) features our very own Eric Bana as Dr. Bruce Banner. Start hulking out, kids.
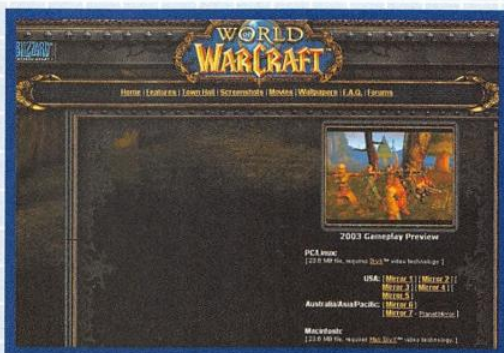
WORLD OF WARCRAFT MOVIES
www.blizzard.com/wow/movies

>> If you've been struggling to imagine what a MMORPG based in the Warcraft universe is going to play like, then check out these latest gameplay movies that Blizzard have graced us with. They've even provided Australian based mirrors to download the 26MB DIVX file from. If anything is going to get you excited to be a hulking, slobbering Orc or keen bearded archer with chainmail rash, this would be it.

SHOW US MIRACLE
www.showusmiracle.com

>> If you're as obsessed with Pro Evolution Soccer 2 as some of the Hyper staff are, then you'll no doubt recognise where that URL title comes from. It's one of the crazy banners held aloft by the spritely crowd, and you will see many a miracle if you log on.

This website is a simple collection of cool Pro Evo 2 and Winning Eleven goals, categorised for how they were scored — whether it be a volley, header, free kick, sweet striker's goal or even a comedy goal (usually involving the ball ricocheting all over the place like a pinball, or hilariously slamming someone in the face).

The videos are in a small digestible size, and if you have the know-how you can even submit your own goals for consideration. There is some seriously entertaining viewing to be had here.
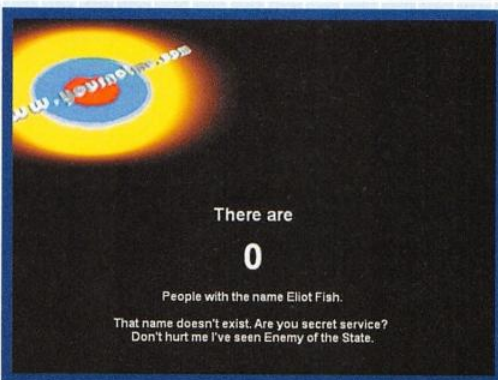
YOU'RE NOT ME
www.yournotme.com

>> Whilst the URL is grammatically incorrect (you're not me, thank you very much) this is a fun and simple page designed to simply discover if anyone in the UK has the same name as you. You might be surprised to find there's another Archie Blunder or Philip Wassop out there… or something. Of course, there was no Eliot Fish. Huzzah! If only they can now expand their database to include names from every country! Now that would be interesting…

REVIEW

>>XBOX

GAME OF THE MONTH 48

Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance

Snake is back to show us just what he can do with a **Controller-S. S** for Snake, obviously.

Review Index

GAME THEORY

DANIEL STAINES

>> Compared to their brethren in other forms of entertainment media such as books and movies, videogame characters are – for the most part at least – not very compelling. Even examples of our medium's most interesting fictional individuals such as SHODAN and Lara Croft come off as being little more than tacky clichés when placed in comparison to the intricate splendour of *Blade Runner*'s Rick Deckard or *Crime and Punishment*'s Rodion Raskolnikov. Why?

The most obvious answer is of course that most games simply don't need good characters. The action in Counter-Strike, for example, does not require us to ponder questions of character motivation to get the greatest possible enjoyment out of the game itself. But what apologies do role-playing games and immersive reality simulators have? Why was Cloud Strife an underdeveloped stereotype and JC Denton only half the character he could've been in another context? Why are so many great opportunities left unexploited?

A lot of people, I think, would likely answer that game developers aren't professional writers and therefore can't be expected to produce compelling personas of a standard usually reserved for film and literature. And, hey, that holds water until you take into account the fact that game developers are increasingly hiring professional authors to craft their characters for them. For example, Sheldon Pacotti wrote the dialogue for Deus Ex and is also a professional author otherwise. And yes – the characters he created for Ion Storm's masterpiece are significantly less interesting than the ones featured in works with no relation to gaming whatsoever.

So, the evidence seems to suggest that there is something intrinsically difficult about creating good characters for the gaming medium. What reasons could we give to explain this strange phenomenon? Well, there are a variety of answers to this question and unfortunately space does not permit an extended discussion of any of them. Thus, we will once again take up this topic next month. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me if you feel inclined to contest anything said in this issue's instalment. The new email address is below.

game_theory@iprimus.com.au

HYPER CREW TOP 5

Eliot - Editor
1. Metroid Prime – GameCube
"Everything else ceases to exist when you play this game…"
2. Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance – Xbox
3. Zelda: The Wind Waker – GameCube
4. Pro Evolution Soccer 2 – PS2
5. Super Metroid – SNES

Cam - Deputy Editor
1. Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo – GBA
"My all-time favourite puzzle game is back in GBA form."
2. Racing Evoluzione – Xbox
3. Pokémon Ruby – GBA
4. Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance – Xbox
5. War of the Monsters – PS2

Malcolm - Art Guy
1. Soccer – Grass
"Better than Pro Evo 2."
2. CM4 Beta – Mac
3. Pro Evolution Soccer 2 – PS2
4. Panzer Dragoon Orta – Xbox
5. Eternal Darkness – GameCube

Jackson – Hyperactive guy
1. Super Monkey Ball 2 – GameCube
"Heh. Monkeys."
2. CM4 Beta – PC
3. Halo – Xbox
4. Pro Evolution Soccer 2 – PS2
5. Advance Wars - GBA

THE HYPER SCORING SYSTEM
The Overall Score – what's it all about?

90 +	Excellent and worthy of a Big Rubber Stamp. Buy it!
80-89	Very good. This is a quality game, but not perfect.
70-79	Good, verging on average. Try before you buy.
60-69	Average, verging on bad. This game is badly flawed.
50-59	Bad game design and possibly not even worth renting.
0-49	These games simply suck. A total waste of money!
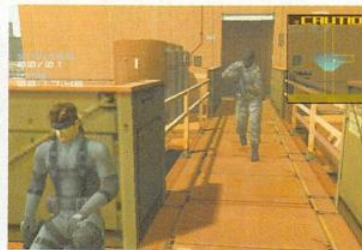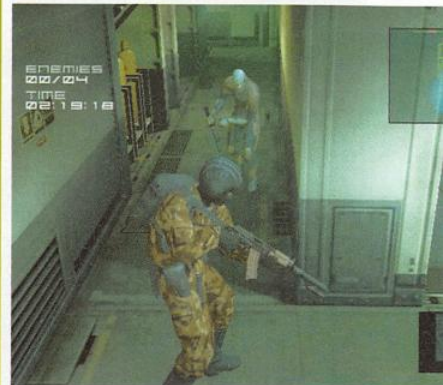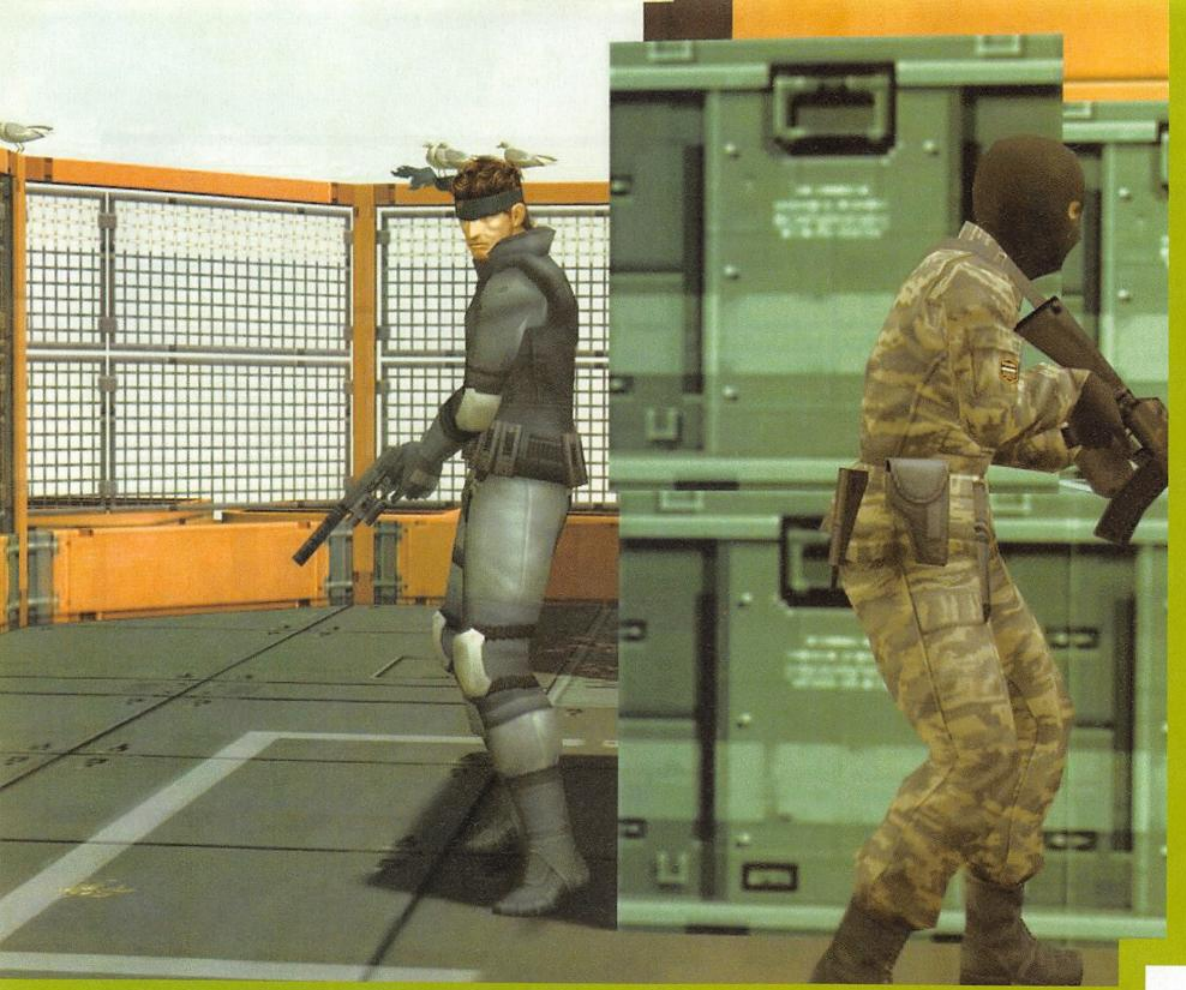
Metal Gear Solid 2: SUBSTANCE

CATEGORY: Action/Adventure >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** Konami >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** MA15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

ELIOT FISH is going to be arrested for substance abuse...

HYPER GAME OF THE MONTH

ow that the dust has settled from the impact that Metal Gear Solid 2 made on the PS2 last year, we've been able to evaluate its merits and flaws with great ease. Yes, the codec transmissions tended to ramble on a bit, the story sometimes didn't make a lot of sense, the controls were somewhat funky, and there were some frustrating missions, but it's still, quite easily, one of the coolest games you can get for your PS2.

Whilst Ubisoft's Splinter Cell may have turned quite a few heads recently, Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance has just upped the ante yet again, especially now that it's more "substantial"...

VIRTUALLY IDENTICAL

If you own an Xbox or PC, then you'll be reading this review fresh with the excitement of finally getting your hands on Konami's Solid Snake (ahem... so to speak). Thus, this review isn't really aimed at PS2 gamers who are probably wondering why a re-release packaged with VR missions and extra challenges is making it as Game of the Month... again. That's not to say that it might not be tempting to buy this if you've already played Metal Gear Solid 2 on PS2 (Hell, go sell your copy of MGS2 and buy Substance if you really feel it's necessary to get your hands on all the bonus stuff). The main deal, is that Substance is a real treat for anyone who has yet to play the main game, as they're getting both the brilliant single-player experience and all the back story missions and VR training to play afterwards — features that would have helped to extend the shelf-life of the game when it was first

released on PS2. Is this what we should have got the first time around?

You may be expecting us to start raving about how Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance takes advantage of the Xbox's graphical power, but the reality is that the game looks the same as it did when it first released. Compared to the PS2 version, Substance on Xbox is virtually identical. When you consider that the game looked remarkable in the first place, it's probably no great surprise that they couldn't really get it to look any better than it did already. Suddenly pumping the game full of bump-mapping or any of the other sexy Xbox effects would probably have just distracted and/or spoiled what is a clean and stylish looking game. The graphical style is very much intentional, and obviously
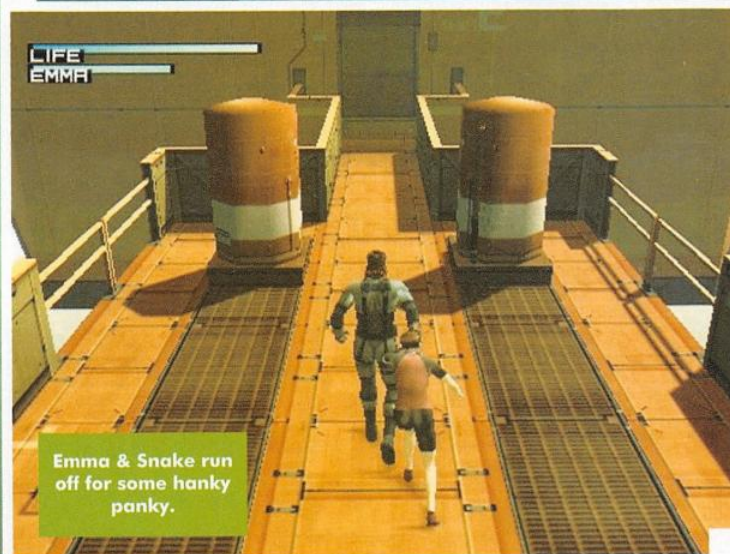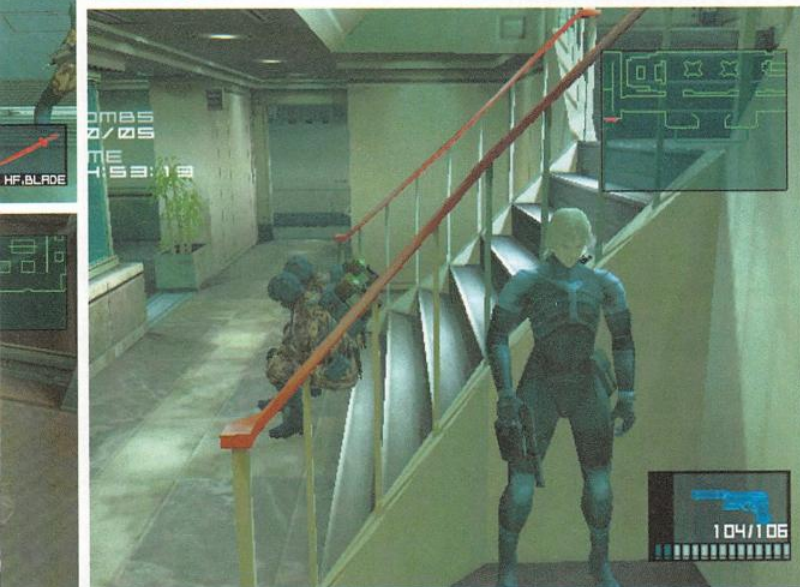
They included a crate mode, just for us.

The poor guard just fell to pieces... literally.

Emma & Snake run off for some hanky panky.

>> No matter how much you play, the controls can still be **awkward and troublesome** in a tight spot

there was no point in ruining that for the sake of utilising some unnecessary graphical features.

BIKINI BABES
Whilst the single-player game is a carbon copy of Sons of Liberty, what you're really paying for here are all the bonus modes of play. The inclusion of the VR Missions (we've been informed that Konami included about 350, although we sure haven't managed to play through them all yet) is probably the coolest feature. Remember the VR Missions that were released after the first Metal Gear Solid on PlayStation? This is the same concept, with the difference being that you can also play through half of the missions as

!!! As an added incentive for PS2 players, the PS2 version comes boxed with a bonus DVD, "Document of Metal Gear Solid 2".

Raiden, and a few other unlockable characters such as Pliskin, Ninja Raiden, Raiden X, Tuxedo Snake and even Metal Gear Solid 1 Snake.

The VR missions are split up into categories: Sneaking, Weapons, First Person and the unlockable Variety Mode. Other than VR missions, there are the Alternative missions which include Bomb Disposal Mode, Elimination, Hold Up and the unlockable Photograph Mode. If you really enjoyed using the camera on the Tanker level of Metal Gear Solid 2, then the photograph mode will be right up your alley. It really is great fun, and mostly involves getting snaps of various bikini babes if you play as Snake, whilst Raiden's are

TONY SNAKE
>> An amusing mini-game that has been included is the now infamous Snake skateboarding game. Allowing you to skate as either Snake or Raiden, this has been cooked up to play almost exactly like Tony Hawk, with a variety of runs all across the Big Shell. A nice diversion. It wasn't included in the Xbox version overseas, but Infogrames assures us it will be in the PAL Xbox verrsion. Woot!

Even Clearasil won't get rid of this big zit!

Hey Bob, can you hear a beeping?

Another guard is shattered at being caught.

Aliens prepare the anal probe...

"You won't get a spray with this!"

Raiden pleasures himself... again.

"By the power of Greyskull!"
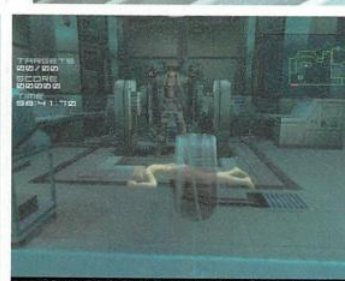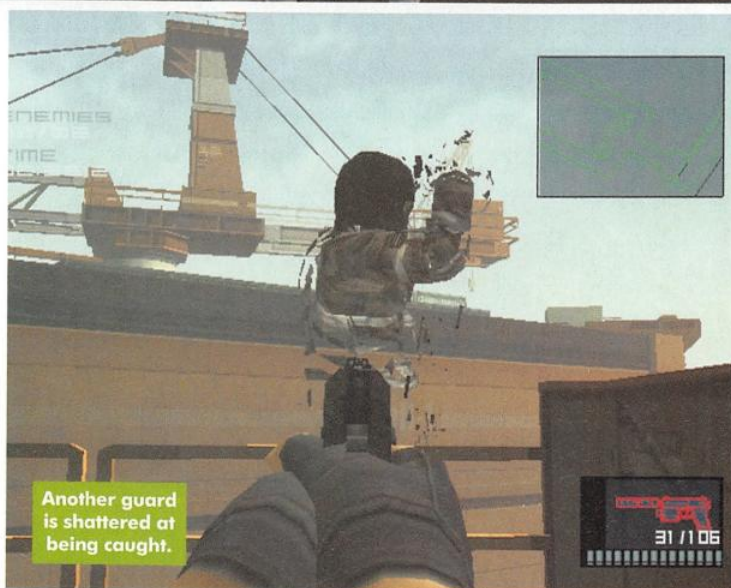
DOGGY STYLE

>> Collecting all the dog tags in the game is a seriously good challenge. What you need to do, is hold up every guard in the game, and get him to drop his dog tag. You can do this by sneaking up behind them and surprising them with your gun so that they put their hands in the air. Next, walk around in front of them, whilst still aiming your gun, and point it at their head or crotch. The guard will start shaking and their tag will fall out. If they aren't frightened, try pointing a bigger weapon at them, or fire off a round into their foot. You can also deafen guards, and frighten them, by firing off a shot right next to their ear.

Getting dog tags will unlock secret items such as invisibility, unlimited grip strength and so on. Cool!

infinitely more difficult, requiring you to get snaps of guards and ghosts in certain gameplay situations.

It's experimenting with these extra missions that highlight just what a wonderful piece of game design Hideo Kojima has come up with. There is a lot of room for experimentation, and some very interesting results for certain unexpected happenings. Try everything, you'll be surprised what works and what gets a reaction from the game.

FLESH OUT

Each completed bonus mission will be

scored, and you can achieve a third, second and first ranking in each level. Gaining the first ranking will give you a code which you can enter on the Metal Gear Solid 2 website to see how you are ranked amongst other gamers from around the world. A very nice touch.

One aspect of Substance that will excite fans, is the inclusion of Snake Tales. In a way, the Snake Tales missions flesh out what happened to Solid Snake on the Big Shell, plus offer up some crazy Snake missions — even one set in the Metal Gear Solid 1 timeframe. All codec transmissions

have been replaced by pure blocks of text, so whilst it seems a little rushed, it's still fun getting to play as Snake on proper missions, even if you tend to re-do some of the main game's objectives. Some of it is quite wacky, however, such as the need to photograph "Gurlugon" in the Snake Tale, External Gazer, and then save the universe. We'll let you find out for yourselves exactly what we're talking about here, because it's pretty entertaining. There's also the chance to play as Pliskin in Dead Man Whispers, and fight Vamp.

All these extra missions do make up for the fact that the single-player game is fairly short. If you really know what you're doing, it doesn't take long to get through the story missions. You'll

stumble here and there, but Metal Gear Solid veterans will get through it in a matter of days. Replay value is in the form of going back to check out things you didn't have time to observe the first time through. Quite a number of cool things have been tucked away in the game for observant players. See if you can spot the babe poster in the

REVIEW

Did you spot the issue of Hyper?

Er... I was just practising a Chinese opera.
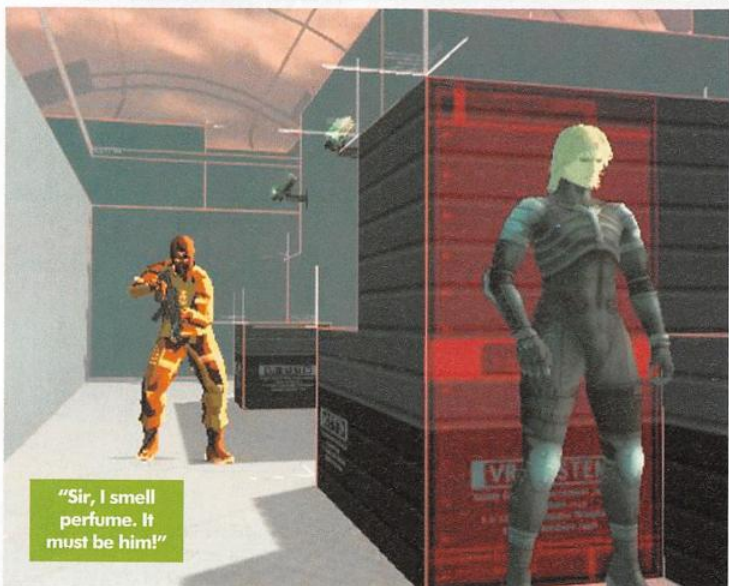
"Sir, I smell perfume. It must be him!"

ENEMIES
00/01
TIME
13:44:56
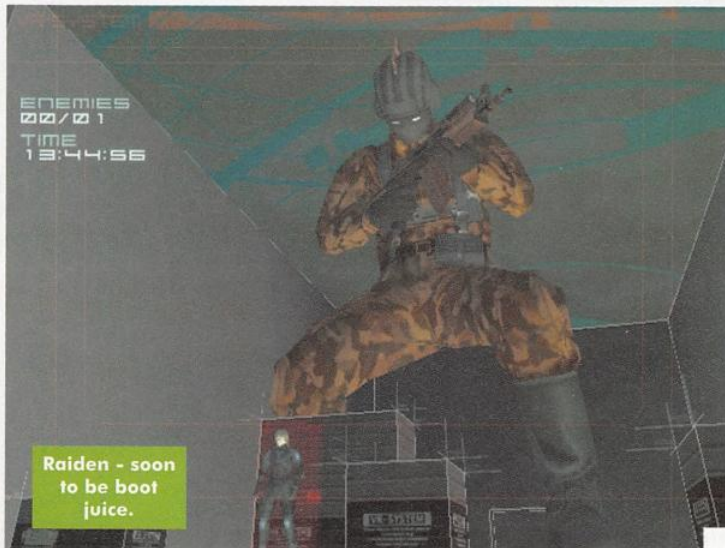
Raiden - soon to be boot juice.

All these extra missions do make up for the fact that **the single-player game is fairly short**

main area of the Engine Room on the tanker, for instance.

THE SAME FLAWS

Metal Gear Solid 2 wasn't a perfect game when it was released, and now it's been a year since release, the same flaws only stick out that much more in Substance. No matter how much you play, the controls can still be awkward and troublesome in a tight spot. It's quite necessary to aim from the first

person view for much of the game, and yet you can't switch weapons whilst in this view. It also becomes a problem when you are frantically trying to move Snake away from oncoming guards with the left analogue stick, only to accidentally click it in and switch to first-person, which stops Snake from moving altogether.

The camera can also be a pain in the bottom. Whilst it's always positioned for convenience in the third-person context, it can be very annoying to not be able to see what Snake would be seeing with his own eyes — such as a guard at the other end of a corridor (some missions do not equip you with a radar). You sometimes need to flick to first person to see if there are guards in your way, which usually delays you

!!! The PC version of Substance is a DVD-ROM only, so only those of you with DVD equipped PCs get the love.

for those few crucial seconds you need to react and get yourself out of sight. None of these kinds of problems from Metal Gear Solid 2 have been addressed in Substance. It really is a direct port of the original game, flaws and all, which is a crying shame. Copious amounts of bonus missions are certainly very cool indeed, but how about addressing some of these fundamental flaws? We really have to whack off a few percent of the overall score purely for this issue alone.

There are also other more minor quibbles, such as not being able to quit or exit from your game without actually having to turn your Xbox off. That's right, the start button will only pause. Then there are the few small collision detection problems when trying to punch and kick guards who have just got back up onto their feet. But now we're really searching for problems... the fact is that this is a great piece of interactive entertainment. It's so good, you want it to be perfect... but it's not quite. Still a classic, though. ◀◀

REVIEWED ON:

PLUS: Challenging, and there's lots to unlock.

MINUS: Minor control/camera issues.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
93	91	95

OVERALL

94

Now with added substance!

Earth Symbol

Loading..
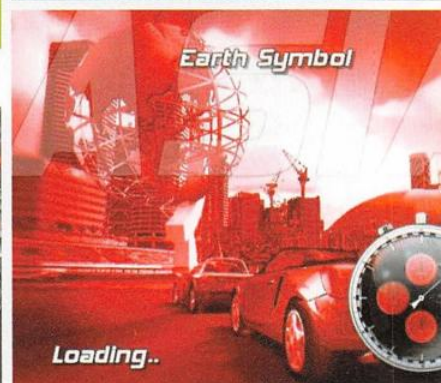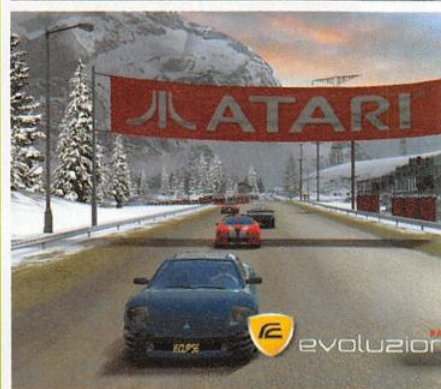
evoluzione
RACING

Racing Evoluzione

CATEGORY: Racing >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >> **PUBLISHER:** Infogrames >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

CAM SHEA thinks that the evoluzione will be televised…

acing Evoluzione puts you in the leather pants of an ambitious up and coming race car driver, out to start his own manufacturing company. Thus, "Dream Mode" begins with you and a lone mechanic in a seedy old garage. Now, one would think that the process of designing a prototype car would be quite a long and involved one, but in a ridiculous stroke of luck there are already blueprints for three prototypes on the desk in the garage. So, in essence, you're trying to start your own brand based on stolen plans. Also odd is the fact that one lone mechanic in an ill-equipped garage could put together a brand new (and very schmick looking) car in only six months. Ah, the wonders of game logic eh?

FETCHING AMATEURS

In any case, after choosing the design you find most fetching, you start out in the amateur leagues. The better your results, the more attention will be drawn to your car and the more orders will be placed for the model. This is functionally the same as most other points-based championship systems. Instead of earning 20 points for a win, you earn 20 sales of your car. The more cars you sell, the more upwardly mobile your operation.

After a few races you'll move into new premises and start hiring new staff. Indeed, it won't be long before you have a whole set of different departments and many an employee wandering around, including a stereotypical "mad scientist" type heading up R&D.

The main incentive to do well and sell stacks of cars, however, is the promise of improvements and new models. Every few championships your mechanic will announce that he just added some new dealie, or improved the performance of your car in some way. Once you've sold enough of the initial roadster you start out with, you can begin development of a sports car (again choosing from three designs), and from there it's on to super cars and finally dream cars.

Despite the promise of designing your own cars and running your own company, it's all completely superficial. You're simply choosing from a limited range of predetermined designs, and the expansion of the company requires little more than competent driving. There are no ballsy decisions to be made or risky ventures to gamble on. It's disappointing, but when viewed as a way to give a standard racing game a little more personality and story, works well.

Racing Evoluzione's championship structure seems to go on forever (there are something like 39 championships, with an average of four races in each).

Courses are based around huge areas of land, with many different routes that open and close to keep things fresh. Although courses do repeat, there are a large number all told, and the variety is admirable. Not

Lap 1/3
Best Lap
Lap
00.00.00
Track Record
00.52.29

BRIDGESTONE
START

MILESTONE

x1000rpm

Mph
000
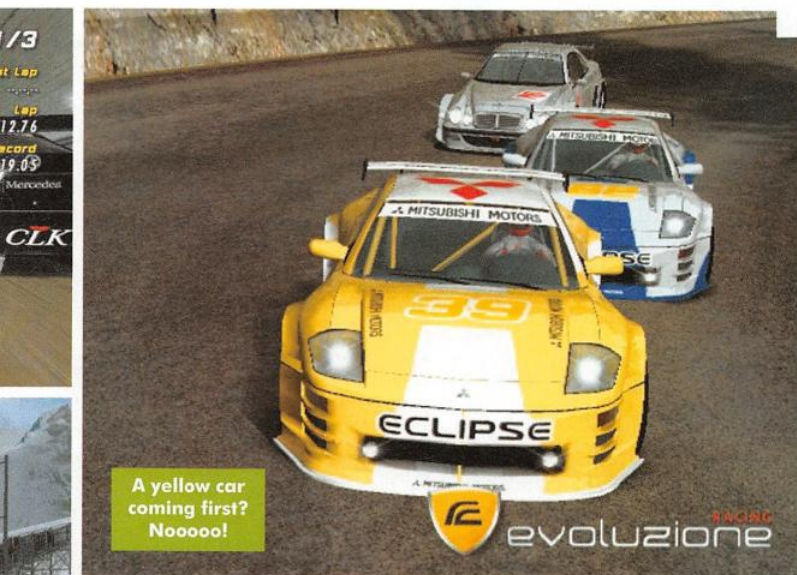
A yellow car coming first? Nooooo!

ECLIPSE
evoluzione RACING

VOICE ACTING

>> Although actual interaction with your staff is non-existent, they're always telling you what they think, and the voice acting during these exchanges is surprisingly good. Letting the aural side of things down somewhat are the lacklustre sound effects during races. In particular, the (one and only) sound for colliding with another car literally sounds like someone jumping on a sheet of metal. It's absolutely awful, and sounds like a placeholder sound that the dev team never got around to replacing. The music is pretty awful too.

Ahh the stolen plans! Muahaha!

evoluzione RACING

My yellow car theory isn't holding up.

Change Color

Can you paint on a barbarian with a sword?

Color Palette

Choose your preferred color for this car.

Accept
Back

>> It may not be until an hour or two into the game that **you start to realise just how good it is**

just in locations, whether they be cities or mountainsides, Europe or Asia, but in actual road layouts and the differences in challenge that a wide variety of courses provide. You'll have to master all styles of driving, from sharp right angled turns and hairpin after hairpin through to smooth winding freeways just perfect for a light, controlled drift at top speed.

CHEATING GAME

The racing mechanics definitely lean towards the arcade end of the spectrum. While not as flamboyant as some of the powerslide heavy arcade racers out there, with some practice you'll be fanging around the courses at serious speed. Indeed, it may not be until an hour or two into the game that you start to realise just how good it is. You've got a grip on the handling, your car has been upgraded and is

now considerably faster, and the courses just keep on coming. In many ways, this is the game that Ridge Racer 5 should have been.

It also doesn't hurt that Racing Evoluzione is one of the prettiest racers to grace a console thus far. Perhaps most impressive is the draw distance. You'll see skyscrapers and huge mountains off in the distance, then a minute later they're right alongside you. Courses are really busy too, with incidental details at every turn, and a wonderful selection of unique and often towering roadside architecture.

Another visual element used beautifully is lighting. It's quite stunning and really helps create moods during races. Coming up over the crest of a hill and into

!!! There are a few glitches in the final game, like sound effects getting stuck and replays flipping out. Fortunately, they're more amusing than annoying.

direct sunlight is wonderful, as is driving through thick woodlands with shafts of light poking their way through the trees overhead. This is a glorious game to look at, no doubt about it.

There are, however, a number of "quirks" you should know about. The AI, for one, cheats like crazy. These guys slow down for you if you're behind, but sit right on your tail if you're doing well. Although this makes for steady competition, it's really annoying having defeat snatched from the jaws of victory when you have a blistering race but get passed in a bullshit display of acceleration near the finish line.

It's also disappointing that the game fails to capitalise on such a great premise. It all boils down to race after race, with no real variation. Some extra gameplay spice would definitely have been nice. Regardless, if you treat Racing Evoluzione as a down the line arcade racer, you'll be more than satisfied. <<

REVIEWED ON:

PLUS: Visually impressive. A meaty number of courses.

MINUS: Some terrible sound effects. Nothing innovative.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY
90 70 85

OVERALL
84

Barely qualifies as an evoluzione, but a great racer.

Panzer Dragoon Orta

CATEGORY: Shoot-em-up >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** Sega >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

MALCOLM CAMPBELL has Panzers in his garden.

T he Shoot-em-up (or Shooter to anti-hyphenists), is a genre that just refuses to die. From early beginnings in Space Invaders and Galaxian through to recent incarnations such as Rez and Ikaruga, it seems the basic premise of blasting away at wave after wave of (usually) airborne alien armadas is not only still relevant, but also still a lot of fun. SEGA's contribution to the genre has been sizeable — games like Space Harrier and the original Panzer Dragoon popularising the on-rails Shooter. But it's 2003! Surely games like Panzer Dragoon Orta (PDO), that allow only limited movement in a faux 3D world, will be laughed into the bargain bin by gamers raised on Quake and its ilk? Well, make it look good and you're already halfway home...

WHY I OUGHTA...

The Panzer Dragoon series has prided itself on the one thing most Shooters find superfluous; storyline. PDO is no exception, following the journey of Orta, a pale young girl imprisoned by The Empire. When her cell gets destroyed in an attack by the Empire's Dragonmares, Orta is rescued by a mysterious dragon and whisked off to short-lived safety. On the run from the Empire, who seem to regard her as a weapon of mass destruction, and tailed by a strange riddle-talking chap named Abadd, Orta sets out to find (what else) her destiny and hopefully a few hearty meals and some sunshine. And obviously, shooting down wave after wave of aerial assailants is a pretty high priority too.

Okay, it's hardly inspiring stuff, but a great proportion of the unlockable extras are intended to help flesh out the Panzer Dragoon world for those wanting more. Besides, the real reason you'd buy PDO is to shoot stuff, right?

The basic gameplay mechanics of the Panzer Dragoon series remain intact, with a few major additions to freshen things up. Orta and her dragon still move on rails through the landscape, with limited free movement around the screen and the ability to face left, right and behind. The seminal lock-on laser targeting system from the original also remains unchanged. The X and B buttons now control Glide and Brake functions respectively, allowing Orta to move around the flanks of the often huge bosses, a necessary tactic. But the most dramatic addition to the formula is the inclusion of a Morph button. Hit Y and our trusty dragon steed will change to one of three forms. The Basic Wing is the classic Panzer Dragoon mode, allowing lots of lock-on lasers and average Glide

REVIEW

Up, up and away, in my beautiful Dragoon

PANDORA'S BOX

>> Earlier games in the Panzer Dragoon series were justly criticised for their limited "rent me for a weekend" longevity. Panzer Dragoon Orta adresses this somewhat by cramming the disc full of unlockables contained in the aptly named Pandora's Box section. Included is an encyclopaedia detailing the world and extensive back story, flight records, illustration and movie appendixes. Even better are the sub-scenarios that let you play as different characters, including a young Empire pilot-in-training and native beast rider. But best of all is the addition of the original Panzer Dragoon, complete with clunky Saturn 3D effects!

Careful! Incoming spark plugs!

Well, I can't see a bloody thing.

This one was cross-bred with a xenomorph.

>> The most dramatic addition to the formula is the **inclusion of a morph button**

and shot ability. Heavy Wing has no Glide ability and limited but powerful lasers, while the Glide Wing has no lasers and a high shot rate, enabling it to shoot down enemy missiles.

Switching between these Wings to suit the occasion forms the crux of PDO's gameplay. Pick the wrong Wing for the situation and you might not even dent that boss's health bar, or end up defenceless and cop a hammering. How do you know when to change? Unlike the simple black/white visual guide of Ikaruga, PDO relies heavily on player trial and error. Multiple replays of the game's ten levels is therefore almost mandatory, upping the replay value and lowering the annoyance threshold. Looking on the bright side, at least you get to see all the stuff you missed, and you might even get to take a different route!

PRETTY PANZERS

If there's one area where Panzer Dragoon Orta has the edge over other 360 degree dragoon-riding shoot-em-ups, it's in the graphics. PDO is a very, very pretty game. Not just in a "ooh, what dynamic lighting effects through yonder Chinese Embassy window break" way (from a technical standpoint it's hard to fault), but more in a "wow, coool" way. As we discussed in our Reverse Engineering article a few issues back, the Panzer Dragoon series has a distinct style that sets it apart. This Moebius-inspired fantasy world is even more vivid in PDO — a perfect antidote to mundane real-life city streets and back alleys rendered in perfect, boring detail. Sweeping alien landscapes complete

with huge and varied fauna give way to tight factory shafts and bizarre extra dimensional levels. The graphics are complemented by a suitably ambient, relaxed soundtrack that adds to the alien worlds vibe. All credit to Smilebit's art and music teams for a sterling job, and we'll forgive them if maybe they recycled some Gun Valkyrie textures...

The camera system can cause some problems, however. Players diligently checking their radar and rotating the view to face oncoming enemies may find the camera is also panning in the same direction, leaving poor old Orta facing the wrong way. Irritating, but forgivable.

It will be interesting to see how Panzer Dragoon Orta fares on the Xbox. Certainly, the gorgeous graphics and accessible gameplay should appeal to most, but equally PDO will be seen as "too weird" by some and "too basic" by others. Series devotees not expecting major innovations will be over the moon, naturally. <<

!!! If you go to www.sega.com you can visit the official website (including wallpapers).

PLUS: Beautiful to look at. Refined back-to-basics gameplay.

MINUS: Definitely not to everyone's tastes.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
94	92	85

OVERALL
88

A Saturn classic makes a triumphant return.
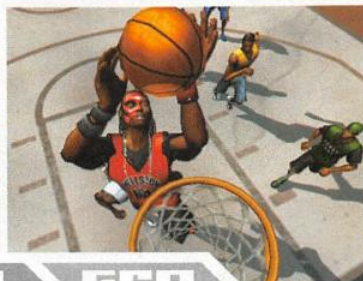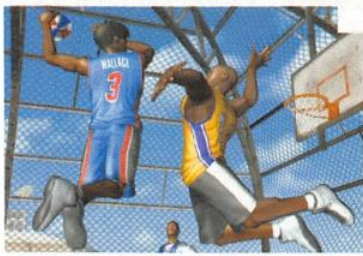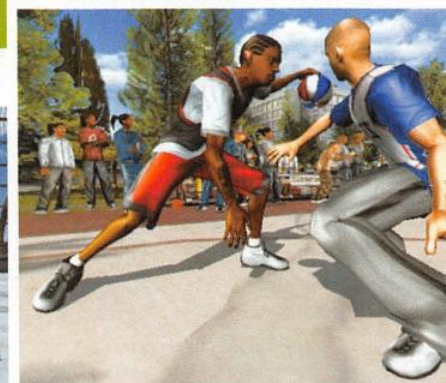
>>XBOX PS2 GCN

NBA Street Vol. 2

CATEGORY: Ballin' >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >> **PUBLISHER:** EA >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** TBA >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

CAM SHEA's got hoop dreams coach...

espite the Hyper Crew's passion for a little game we like to call soccer (by which he means football — Ed), we also have a soft spot for b-ball. After all, the official Sydney Kings bar is just up the road from us, and it gets us drunk, so it's hard not to develop an affinity with both the team and the sport. That said, the more simulation oriented basketball games tend to be a little dry for our tastes (and our gaming nights), so the NBA Street titles come as welcome relief.

Not sure what to expect from NBA Street Vol. 2? Well, think NBA Jam for this generation, complete with stacks of moves, high graphical gloss and well-balanced gameplay, and you'd be on the right track. Alternatively, you could just play the original NBA Street. Then you'd really be on the right track.

BALLIN'... NO, NOT CRYING

Right from the word go (or g-iz-o in b-ball slang), NBA Street Vol. 2 is a quality package. The presentation is superb — we especially like the way that navigating the menu is accompanied by panning through a wonderfully rendered grey city landscape. Very slick. The style of the game as a whole very much revels in a 70s funk globetrotting vibe, and unlike other games that consciously try to be cool, NBA Street actually succeeds. This aesthetic is well complemented by slightly comical, but very much identifiable player models and animations.

Street Vol. 2 also sports a decent range of play modes. The two main modes are NBA Challenge and Be A Legend. NBA Challenge takes you all over the USA in a quest to defeat all 29 NBA teams. In each region you'll play six games, followed by a showdown with a team of NBA legends. Be A Legend is the career mode of the game. Create your virtual self in the game, recruit some local ballers and work your way up, all the while gaining valuable experience points, and hopefully a mean rep. Both modes have plenty of goodies to unlock, from legend players and jerseys through to the courts themselves.

Other play modes include Street School, which is a basic tutorial system that eases the player into the moves and the rules, and Pick Up Game. Pick Up Game is the quick-play mode, and fortunately EA
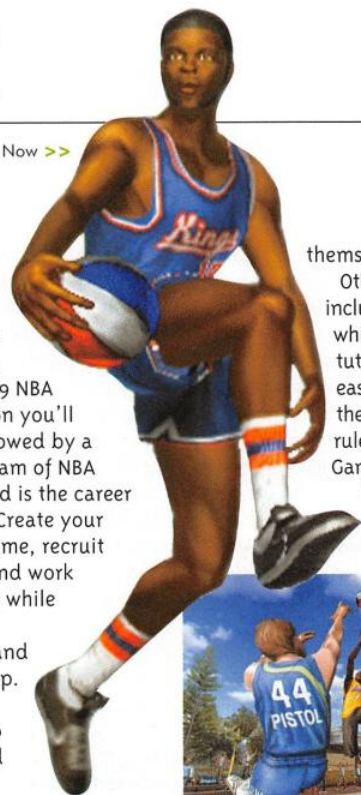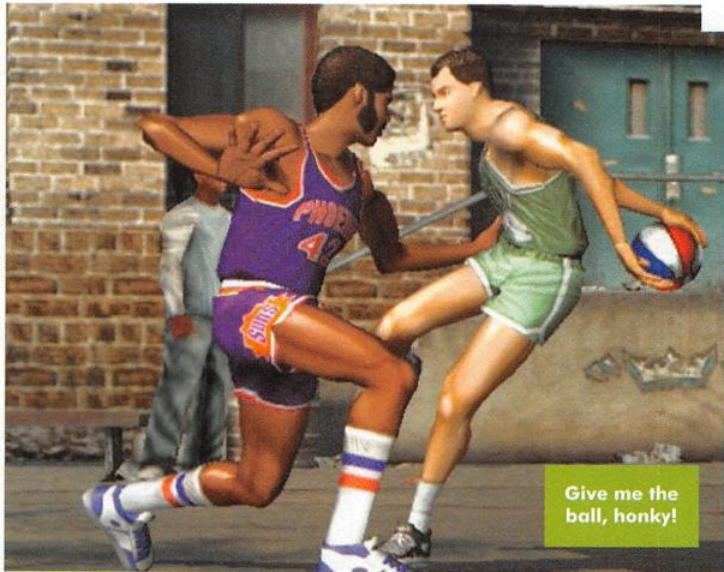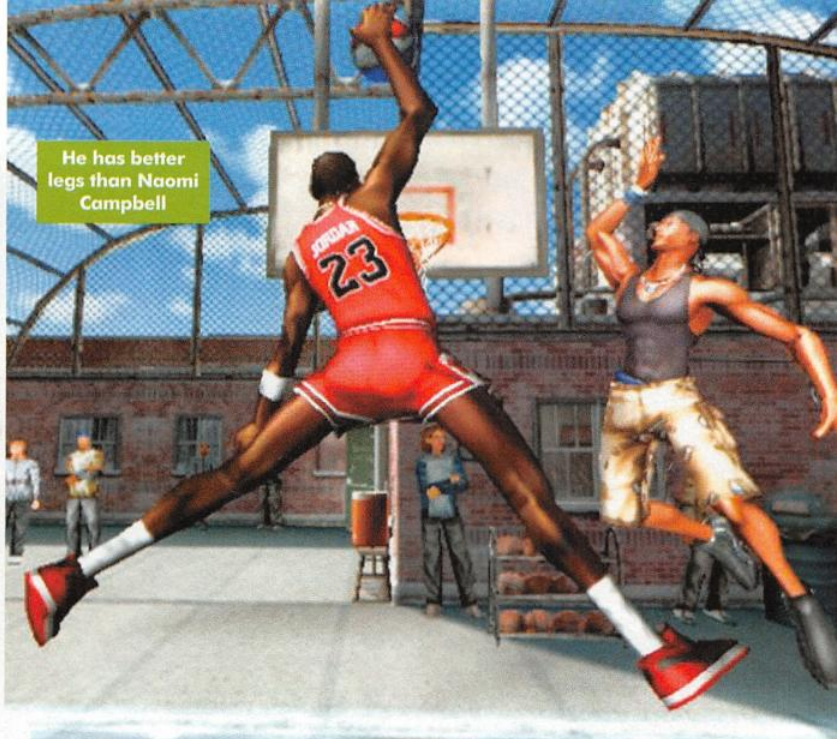
He has better legs than Naomi Campbell

Give me the ball, honky!

LEGENDS

>> Being an EA product, it's no surprise to find that NBA Street Vol. 2 has an absolutely insane lineup of real life ballers. We're talking 145 NBA stars, 25 NBA legends and 6 street legends! The NBA legends are particularly cool, and feature such luminaries as Dr J, Magic Johnson, Michael Jordan, Clyde Drexler, Darryl Dawkins, Moses Malone, Isiah Thomas, Earl Monroe, Larry Bird and Dominique Wilkins.
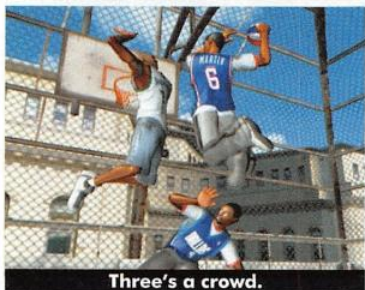
Three's a crowd.

Here comes the reverse dunk.

What the hell is he looking at?

In offense, it's not just driving the lane for a quick dunk, **it's busting freaky tricks**

have included enough options to make it worth playing. You can choose from a number of game styles, such as Old School Scoring, Dunks Only, Gamebreaker Wins, No Gamebreaker, Back to Basics, Pick Up, Trick Point Challenge and NBA Scoring. You can then adjust the rules (to a limited extent) within each, as well as set the shot clock and even set handicaps.

But how does it play? About as well as an arcade basketball game ever has. The best part is that there's actually a good balance between offense and defense, not to mention all-out showiness and strategy. In this game you really need to be on point in defense, as it's those steals and blocks that will really help you win the game. In offense, it's not just driving the lane for a quick dunk, it's busting freaky tricks, using all three of your players and building up huge combos.

COMPLETELY UNBLOCKABLE

In line with the showy nature of the game, the tricks are even cooler this time around. Off the Heezay lets you bounce the ball off a defender's head, Back 2 Papa lets you pass the ball to yourself off the backboard, and there's nothing quite as sweet as using the kick pass move to get a ball to a team-mate for an alley oop!

There are also some useful utilitarian additions such as give 'n' goes. Tap in a direction with the right analogue stick to pass to a teammate, while still retaining control of your original player. Then simply tap the pass button for a return pass. You can even use this technique to go up for an alley oop yourself.

The sweetest moves of all, however, are still the Gamebreakers.

!!! There are three versions of Michael Jordan in the game, from young to experienced!

These are earned by pulling off tricks and combos and filling the meter at the top of the screen. Not only do they look impressive and net you points, but they subtracts points from the opposition. The perfect way, in other words, to balance the scale a little if you're trailing. New to the sequel, however, is the ability to use a double Gamebreaker. When your meter fills up for the first time, you can "pocket" the Gamebreaker and build up another. When the second meter is full, you can unleash both at once for some spectacular team combo moves that are completely unblockable. Oh, and in addition to the pocket option, you can also use your Gamebreaker to cancel the opposing team's — definitely a tasty tactic for multiplayer games.

NBA Street Vol. 2 is a very hard game to dislike... which may explain why we like it so much. This is razzle dazzle, fast-paced ballin' at its very best, and another must-play multiplayer sports title. <<
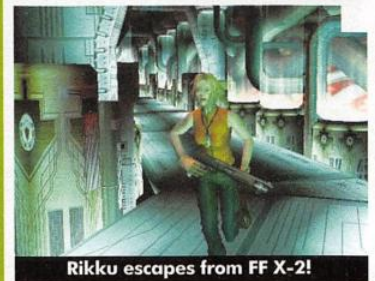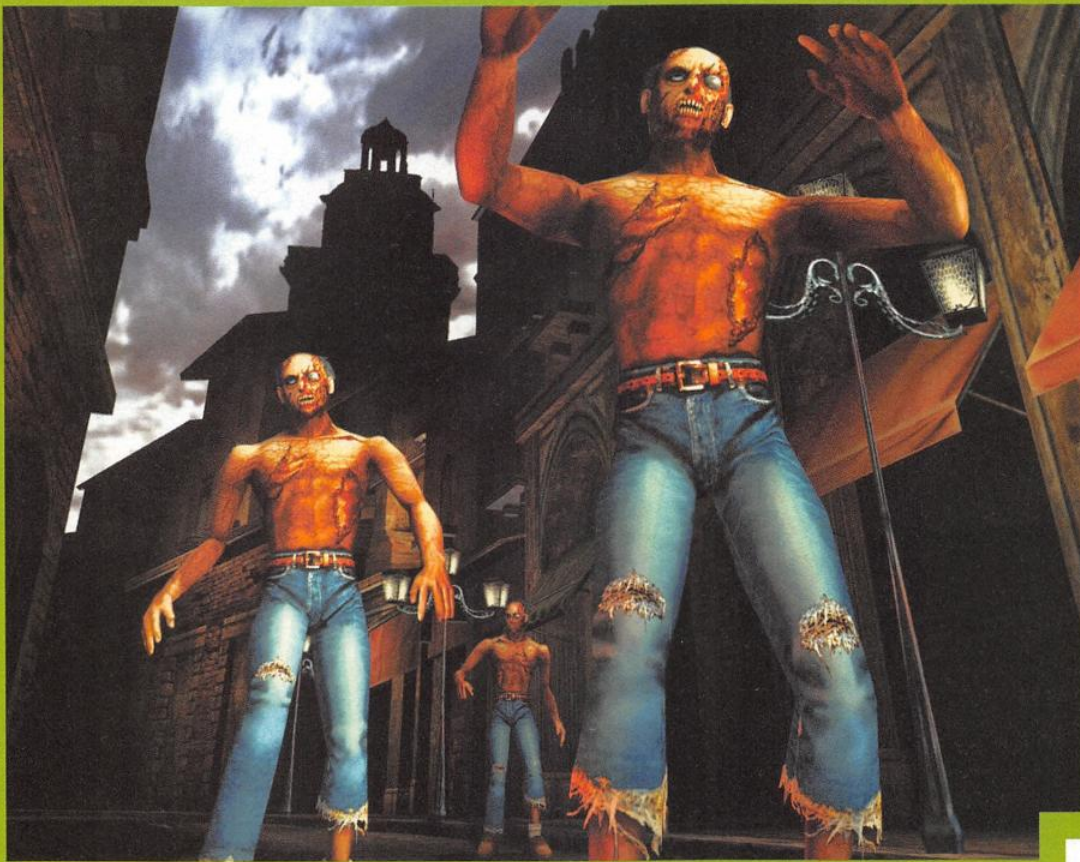
House of the Dead 3

CATEGORY: Light Gun >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >> **PUBLISHER:** Infogrames >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** MA15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

CAM SHEA sees this stuff everyday in Redfern...

B y way of introduction, we'd like to direct your attention over to page 81, where you can find Tim's thorough rundown on the House of the Dead backstory. Have a read, stay a while.

All ready to go now are we? Good. We're not going to sugar coat this for you – House of the Dead 3 (HOTD3) is fast-paced mindless fun, but it should be a lot better. Indeed, if you've seen any of the Time Crisis 3 videos floating around, then you'll know that the light gun genre still has many an innovation left. So why is it that HOTD3 feels so damn samey?

TEAR ENEMIES APART

Sure, this time around you're toting virtual shotguns, and there's definitely some enjoyable bloodletting to be had, but the only area that this franchise has really moved forward is graphically. Which is not necessarily a bad thing. There's nothing like some zombie blau-ing action to unwind after a long day, and the inclusion of frequent branching paths means that although this is a half-hour game with only five chapters, you'll still get quite a few replays out of the main mode. Beating the game also rewards you with a perfect port of the Dreamcast's HOTD2, which is a nice bonus.

And it really does look impressive. The entire game has a very next-gen gloss and sheen to it, demonstrating that Sega can get a lot out of the Xbox when inclined. That said, Wow Entertainment have still taken some shortcuts. The minimal number of wound locations on enemies is definitely a sore point. There are only a few spots that register, meaning if you shoot a zombie in the neck, it will either become a headshot or a chest shot. Why not make it really visceral and allow us to literally tear enemies apart? As it stands it just lessens the impact of the game's main focus – violence. And while we're at it, why do zombies explode into goo when they die? It just adds a tacky feel to the visuals, which is a shame given how varied and rich most of the surroundings are.

!!! The included 15 minute preview of the HOTD movie has confirmed our darkest fears. This is going to be the worst film ever. Yes, worse than *Titanic*.

NICE AND REALISTIC

HOTD3 doesn't actually come with a light gun, but fortunately Thrustmaster will be launching one alongside the game. It's called the Beretta 92FS (cos '92 was Fully Sick) and does the job commendably. It sits comfortably in the hand, has a nice and realistic weight to it and even looks quite slick... We are, however, a little mystified that Thrustmaster didn't take the initiative and make this one wireless. How sweet would that be?!

When it comes down to it, it's hard to recommend HOTD3. It's just too much cash to lay out for too little substance. Our approach would be to wait until another quality light gun game comes out, then consider getting the gun and hope that HOTD3 has come down in price. <<

PLUS: High level Blau factor! Cheesy B-grade horror value.

MINUS: Poor longevity & not a great excuse to buy the gun.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
86	78	70

OVERALL

77

More of the same old-school light gun fare.

Never scratch your back with a gun.
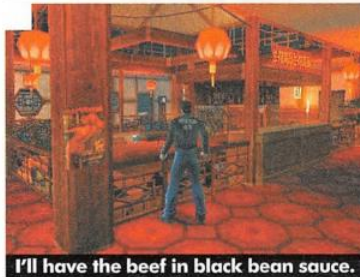
I'll have the beef in black bean sauce.

The aforementioned BLAU factor.

GCN / PS2 / >>XBOX

Dead To Rights

CATEGORY: Action >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Namco >> PRICE: $99.95 >> RATING: MA15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >>

BRETT ROBINSON isn't sick of seeing bullet time.

ack Slate is a hardened K9 division cop working in a city where murder and corruption are rife. Sent to investigate a disturbance at a construction site, Slate gets a very nasty surprise when he stumbles across his father's bullet-riddled corpse. His superiors chalk up Slate Senior's death as just another statistic, but Jack vows to hunt down and punish the person(s) responsible for his father's untimely demise. It's a clichéd scenario, to say the least, but it's all the motivation the player should need to lap up what Dead To Rights has to offer. And just what does the game offer? Non-stop, bad-guy-capping action coupled with Matrix-style shenanigans — that's what.

SOME OTHER VITAL REGION

Given the similarities between the two titles, it would seem Namco took a leaf out of the Max Payne Book of Game Design, but to an impressive degree Dead To Rights holds its own. The game excels in the diversity of its gameplay. Jack can handle a gratifying array of weapons, he can punch, kick and throw, and he can even call on his dog, Shadow, to rip

the throat out of any thug unlucky enough to fall under the player's targeting reticle. Unarmed and confronted with the business end of a weapon, Slate can turn the tables on an adversary in spectacular fashion, employing a variety of throws, snatches, and limb breaks to relieve a foe of his weapon, before dispatching the hapless bastard with a shot to the head or some other vital region.

The bad guys tend not to just stand there when Jack approaches, though, and they congregate in such numbers as to make the performance of disarm moves decidedly risky. Consequently, when that all-important self-preservation instinct kicks in, the player will appreciate Slate's ability to pop out from cover to take down adversaries.

CALLOUSLY DISPATCHED

Should the player wish to throw caution to the wind, however, Slate can literally leap into the midst of a group of enemies. During such

!!! There's a gratuitously long stripper sequence near the beginning of the game. Ewww…

manoeuvres, the game's slow motion system comes into play, and under the directions of a skilled player, Slate can take out half a dozen men before he even touches the ground!

Slate also has the ability to take an enemy hostage and use him as a human shield, and any 'shield' who outlives his usefulness can be callously dispatched, execution-style.

At times, Dead To Rights can be frustrating — particularly when the game's usually effective targeting system doesn't behave intelligently — and some of the more generic action sequences are just plain boring. The graphics, too, are nothing to write home about, but there are moments when all of the game's positive elements come together perfectly: moments when everything just flows. These moments give Dead To Rights an edge over similar titles, making it a worthy purchase for gamers with a taste for intense carnage and liberal doses of revenge. <<

REVIEWE

PLUS: Relentless action, brutal disarms and cool mini-games.

MINUS: Dated graphics, sometimes-twitchy controls.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY
76 **75** **79**

OVERALL
78

Fast-paced, but lacking originality.
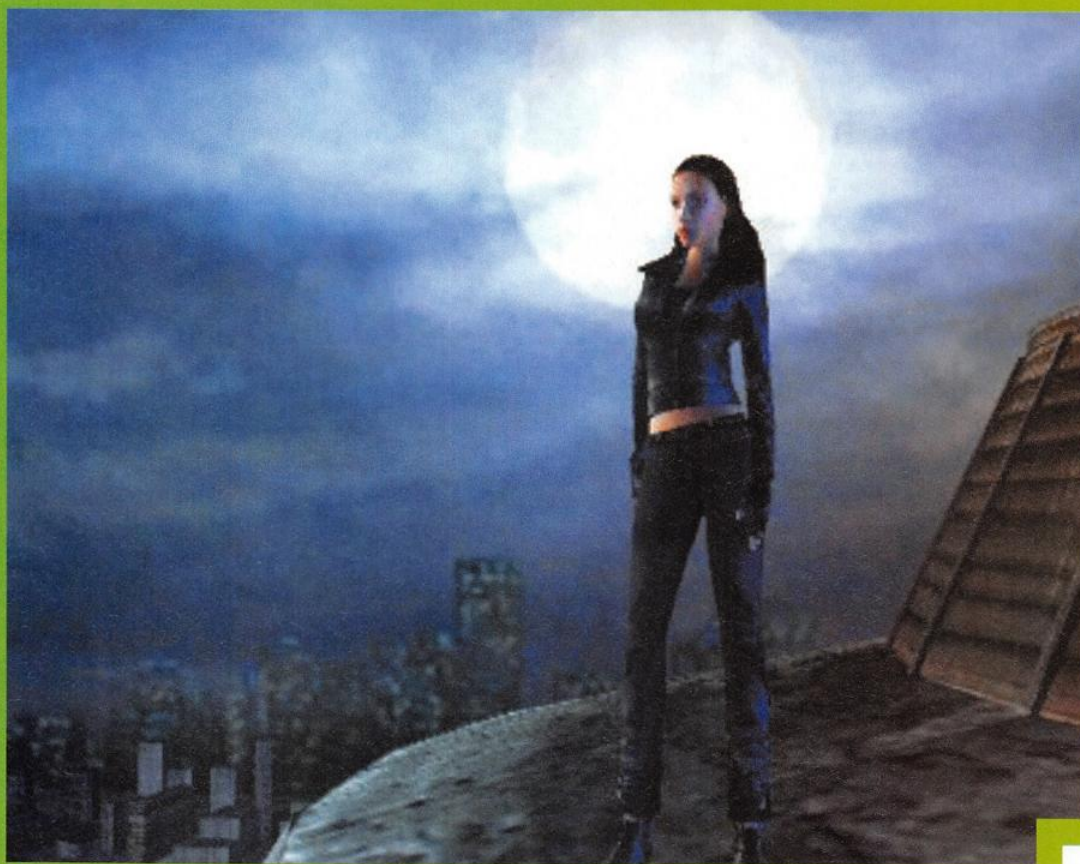
Dark Angel

CATEGORY: Action >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** Fox Interactive >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

DANIEL STAINES is certainly no angel…

Much like the television show that it's based on, all the good things about the video game adaptation of Dark Angel can be summed up in two words: 'Jessica' and 'Alba'. Even when mauled by the effects of a lazy digitisation, Jessica Alba's still pretty damn hot. She is, I'm told, quite the hot-topic among forum junkies who have nothing better to do than to discuss how much they'd like to touch certain female celebrities on the boobies. Of course, how they manage to do all this lurid typing with only one hand on the keyboard remains something of a mystery. A mystery that, for all intents and purposes, can remain unsolved for a very long time.

BRUTALLY BASH

So Dark Angel has Jessica Alba and that's good — what about the parts that aren't Jessica Alba? Well, that's easy because they're all bad.

This game is essentially Final Fight in 3D except that it isn't very fun to play and doesn't have a two-player cooperative mode. As Max, the game's girl-power protagonist, your job boils down to the simple task of making your way through the dank streets of the future and hitting everyone you see until they flash and go away. And by 'flash', I mean 'flicker' — not 'expose genitalia'. Although an application of the latter definition would at least make combat a bit more interesting.

A basic description of almost every combat encounter in the entire game runs something like: man sees Max; man calls other men and they all attempt to brutally bash Max; player pushes one button repeatedly and Max brutally bashes men; Max makes witty comment and the fight ends. It is ostensibly possible to employ a limited range of stealth manoeuvres to add a bit of spice to this

!!! www.jessica-alba.com - guess what you can find here? Go on, you know you want it!

excruciatingly bland broth, but these turn out to be essentially worthless since most enemies congeal in groups out in the open where it's much easier to go brawling rather than sneaking about in the vain hope that nobody will notice. A thinking man's game this most definitely is not.

RELENTLESSLY LINEAR

The graphics are average, with dull object and character models populating sparse environments. There are some neat Matrix style slow-down effects from time-to-time, but they are overused and lose their appeal quite quickly as a result. Oh, and Dark Angel is relentlessly linear. Every level features a set path to follow and only the slightest deviations from it are ever allowed. In all honesty, they might as well have set the game on a treadmill and just had the enemies roll in for Max to kick the crap out of, because that's what it feels like you're doing most of the time.

Jessica Alba aside, Dark Angel is a pretty dull game and unworthy of precious gaming time. <<

Max hides from the gameplay police.

Max sashays into battle.

The High Jump team in training.

Look out for that banana peel… d'oh!

REVIEWED ON:

PLUS: Jessica Alba…

MINUS: Unfortunately, pretty much everything else.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
70	65	53

OVERALL

56

Jessica Alba is hot, but this game definitely is not.

I think Guile has pulled a hamstring.

Don't let him fly away!

Ryu slips on the rubber glove...

>>XBOX

Capcom Vs SNK 2 EO

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

FRANK DRY punches a few heads in.

A s Yoda once said, "It brings great warmth to my heart to see you alive..." and that's exactly how we feel about Capcom Vs SNK 2 EO. Considering this game came out on Dreamcast, PS2 and GameCube before the Xbox, you could easily have started thinking that it would never see the light of day on the big black brick. Well, thank Lord Seafood, but fighting game fans can now enjoy the delights on their Box.

FOR DUMBARSES

Let's get something clear — Capcom Vs SNK 2 EO is a game for fighting game fanatics. Whilst it wouldn't be impossible for a newbie to buy this game and slowly learn everything that it has to offer, it really is more realistic to believe that the only people buying this game are hardcore gamers who once enjoyed Street Fighter II, King of Fighters, and so on. This is the ultimate collection of Capcom and SNK characters, complete with all the different fighting styles (and even control schemes) for endless gaming nights in which you can revel in your fighting game knowledge and prowess.

If you're wondering what the EO stands for, it means "For Dumbarses". Well actually, it means Easy Operation, which spawned from the fact that the GameCube controller was totally useless for fighting games — and thus the controls were simplified. Luckily, you can play in the original arcade mode, which is preferable considering the Xbox controller has plenty of buttons (just remember to select it when you start your match — it's annoying you can't permanently select it in the game options). Actually, depending on which Xbox controller you have, you may or may not enjoy your fighting. The standard controller has the white and black buttons set nicely against the normal buttons, mimicking a 6-button control pad, which is pretty useful. The Controller-S, however, despite being a superior controller, has the white and black buttons repositioned below, ruining the shape of the buttons, and definitely making it more of a pain in the arse to play. So beware.

!!! Soon the Xbox will have Soul Calibur 2, so there's more quality fighting on the way, bruisers.

A FEW COOL FACES

Some people may dislike the fact that very little have been done with the graphics. The game still looks like it did back on the Dreamcast, and nothing has been done to increase the resolution of the characters or redesign the ugly menus. The music will appeal to old-schoolers, but it does tend to get up your nose after a while.

It's hard to complain about the cast of characters, as there are so many. But still, there are a few cool faces missing, and a few fighters that the game could probably do without. A bonus though, is the fact that some tweaking has been done to the strength and weakness of some characters, making the game feel just that little more balance all around.

Capcom Vs SNK 2 EO will certainly provide any fighting game fan with many, many gaming hours of pure pleasure, and it's a welcome sight on the Xbox, which is still lacking decent fighting games a year into its life. <<

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
70	69	88

OVERALL

87

A treat for hardcore fighting game enthusiasts.
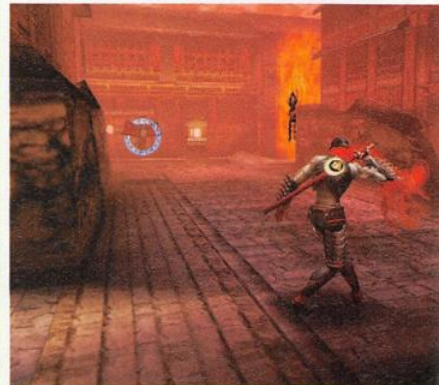
Shinobi

CATEGORY: Action >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: Sony >> PRICE: $99.95 >> RATING: M >> AVAILABLE: Now

CAM SHEA read Eiji Yoshikawa's Musashi...

Another year has come, and another raft of classic game updates await our inspection. Sunrise, sunset... and erm, sunrise again. Unlike some, however, Shinobi is just begging for a next-gen remake, because let's face it, ninjas will always be cool and should always be welcome in our homes. The question is, however, can Sega's Overworks produce the kind of ninja guest that will bring balance to a household? Or will it be the kind of ninja that waits until everyone is asleep... and then drinks all the sake?

A TRAGIC TALE

Well, they started out on the right foot. Hopping into the game (with the aforementioned right foot), the main character Hotsuma moves with lightning quick speed and it's very easy to believe he's a ruthless killing machine. He can run at speed, double jump, stealth dash (leaving a ghostly image behind), lock on to enemies and even run along walls and wall-jump. And you know you're in for a tragic tale when it turns out that all the enemies you're fighting are actually the possessed bodies of Hotsuma's dead clan members!

Another nice twist is Hotsuma's cursed sword Akujiki. It constantly thirsts for the souls of victims, and it's up to Hotsuma to keep it satiated with the red orbs that rise from fallen foes – or the sword will start to absorb his own life source. The flipside of this, however, is that the more enemies you kill quickly in a row, the stronger the sword becomes. Thus, the best tactic for dealing with mini-bosses and their lackies is to take out the weak guys first, thereby charging up the sword for an easy boss kill. And as if Hotsuma's acrobatic jumps, dashes and wall runs weren't stylish enough, when you kill four or more enemies in quick succession, the game cuts to a brief cinematic of Hotsuma pausing after the final stroke, followed by his enemies dropping to the ground in pieces. The emphasis on constant kills for Hotsuma's sword leaves you in no doubt that this game is meant to be all-out action. And the potential for fast-paced, cool combat sequences is definitely there. Unfortunately, Overworks failed to nail other game elements to quite the same degree as the combat. The level design for one is pretty average. There are way too many platforms over bottomless pits that require pinpoint accuracy to traverse... which wouldn't be so bad if levels weren't so long. As it stands, if you fall and die, it's all the way back to the start of the level. Levels also tend to be quite bland. You'll be wandering down corridors and through outdoor shrines that feel like they're just the same couple of sections repeated over and over. Sega really haven't taken Hotsuma's abilities on board properly when designing the levels.
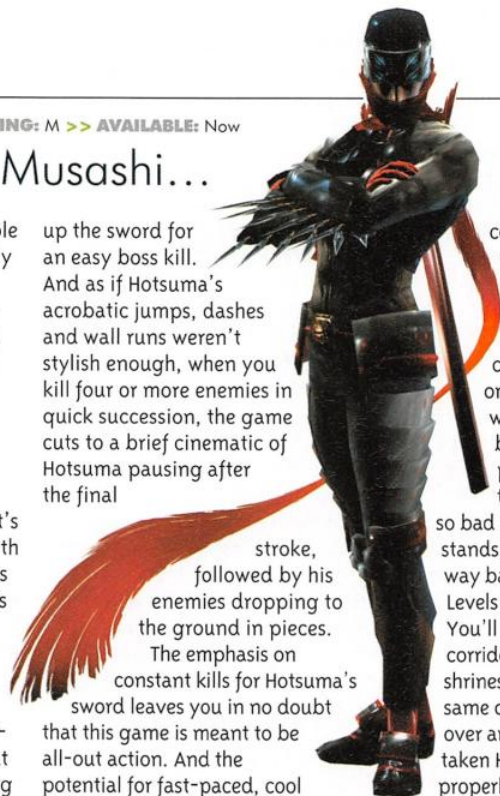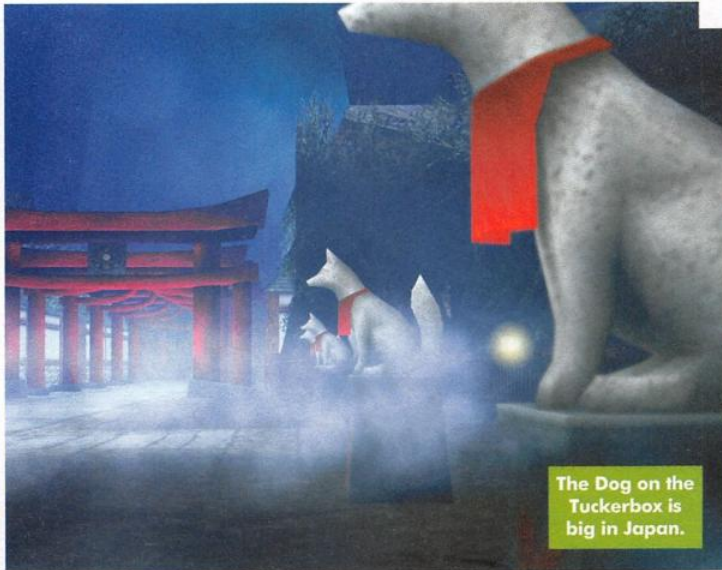
The Dog on the Tuckerbox is big in Japan.

It's okay, this scarf will break my fall.

Just like spidey, only Ninjaey.

His spider-sense is tingling...

I'm going to turn you into Sashimi!

So fast, he appears to be standing still.

Although the game moves quickly, there's **nothing exceptional about the levels.**

We want more running along walls and fighting on walls!

Alongside the often dull level design is a matching lack of character in the surroundings. Although the game moves quickly, there's nothing exceptional about the levels you're blazing through. In stark contrast, Hotsuma is a brilliantly conceived character, and is the epitome of cool design. The poses he strikes when still or after slaying numerous enemies can only be described as utterly stylish. He's well animated too, with a hypnotic narrow red cape trailing behind. And when you execute a series of fast-paced attacks – flinging throwing knives, stealth dashing behind enemies, jumping off walls and generally going berserk with Akujiki, the sight is awe inspiring. If only Hotsuma had a few

more combos to keep things lively... and a slightly better camera system to keep track of it all!

CRAZED DEMONIC HELICOPTER

In terms of combat, the difficulty ramps up very quickly. It may start out as a button masher, but it's not long before you'll need a little more tactical awareness... which can be hard to do with five or ten enemies all wanting a slice of that sweet ninja pie. Although the enemies are pretty stylish in design, a little more variety definitely wouldn't have gone astray. One of Shinobi's saving graces, however, are the frequent boss battles. There's literally one every couple of levels. One minute you'll be taking on a crazed demonic helicopter, the next

!!! Collect 40 Oboro coins during your quest to unlock good old Joe Musashi!

a giant, awe-inspiring spider. They really help break up the linear and somewhat repetitive (especially if you're replaying it for the tenth time) level design.

When it comes down to it, although Shinobi is a departure from the gameplay of the series, it's still very much an old school game. Levels are long and having to replay 10-15 minute sections over and over gets old fast, especially when you almost make it to the end but fall off a ledge or come up against several powerful enemies at once. Old school purists may love this approach, but we'd prefer it to be slightly more forgiving. Is a mid-level save point too much to ask? Either way, there's a decent amount of playtime and challenge to be found in Shinobi. Whether you'll want to take the plunge or not really depends on your gaming sensibilities. It's very much a case of yin and yang. This is a stylish rebirth for a venerable series, but it has the potential to induce controller-throwing fits of rage.«

PLUS: Super stylish action.

MINUS: Bland levels, frustrating difficulty at times.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
78	78	80

OVERALL
80

Not quite the Shinobi we were looking for.

Wild Arms 3

CATEGORY: RPG >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: UbiSoft >> PRICE: $99.95 >> RATING: TBA >> AVAILABLE: Now

BRETT ROBINSON is wild about arms. Or something.

hile most roleplaying games fall into one of two categories, futuristic or quasi-medieval, the Wild Arms series has always distinguished itself with its unique Wild West flavour. Wild Arms 3 is a Japanese-style RPG that takes the player to Filgaia, a world ravaged by a centuries-long battle between demonic forces and the planet's elemental Guardians. That battle raged a millennium ago, and vast tracts of once-verdant land were transformed into desolate wastelands as a result, but Filgaia and its inhabitants continue to reap the consequences as the deserts ceaselessly swallow up the few remaining patches of fertile ground.

A HASTY ALLIANCE

As Filgaia's people struggle to eke out an existence, nomadic 'Drifters' travel the wastelands in search of adventure. Wild Arms 3 commences with a fateful showdown between four Drifters — Virginia, Clive, Gallows and Jet — who have been drawn to a train carrying a mysterious and powerful artefact. The action freezes with the Drifters hovering, weapons drawn, over the chest containing the artefact. Selecting each character in turn, the player experiences first-hand the circumstances leading up to that critical moment, while at the same time coming to grips with Wild Arms 3's gameplay mechanics via the embedded tutorials. When the characters' prologues have been completed, a trio of hostile outlaws interrupts the proceedings. The Drifters, faced with a greater threat than each other, temporarily put aside their differences and forge a hasty alliance.

Wild Arms 3 employs a turn-based battle system similar to the Final Fantasy games, but with some important distinctions. Viginia's six-shooters, Jet's sub-machinegun, Gallows' sawn-off shotgun and Clive's high-powered sniper rifle all have their own stats, which determine — among other things — damage potential and ammunition capacity. As the characters inflict ballistic damage, dodge assaults and sustain damage, they're awarded Force Points (FP), which is the key to the game's combat system. Force Points allow the characters to cast Arcana (spells), summon Guardians and utilise their innate Force Abilities (like emptying a weapon's magazine in a single, powerful attack). Doing all these things drains the characters' supplies of Force Points to varying degrees,

and managing the acquisition and expenditure of FP is an art in itself, but despite the apparent complexities of the system, combat is a thrilling endeavour indeed.

For the most part, the player's efforts will be directed toward the exploration of ancient temples and crumbling ruins, and of course on the extermination of the creatures that inhabit them. However, the game isn't all about pillaging and gunplay; puzzles are a hallmark of the Wild Arms series, and this third iteration offers yet more fiendish conundrums for the player to solve. In the beginning, they're simple block-pushing exercises, but they eventually evolve into much more difficult problems that require the application of various tools, often in succession. As an added bonus for those
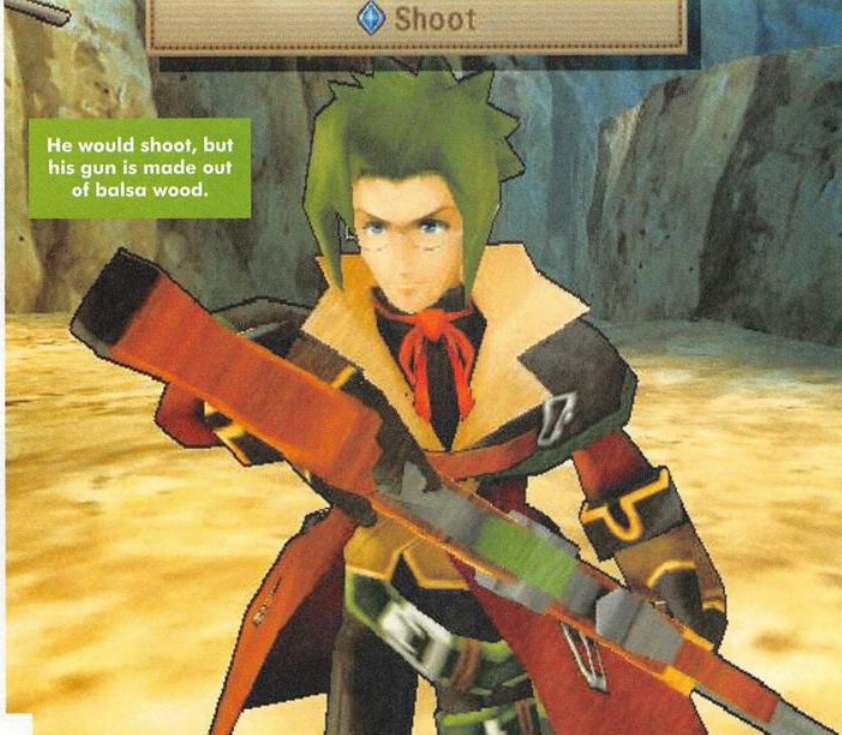
He would shoot, but his gun is made out of balsa wood.

What's Bahumut doing here?!

The Hyper pleasure cruiser.

Wasn't he in Duran Duran?

I like a woman who knows her gats.

"Graaah! You're not Yuna! Aroo!"
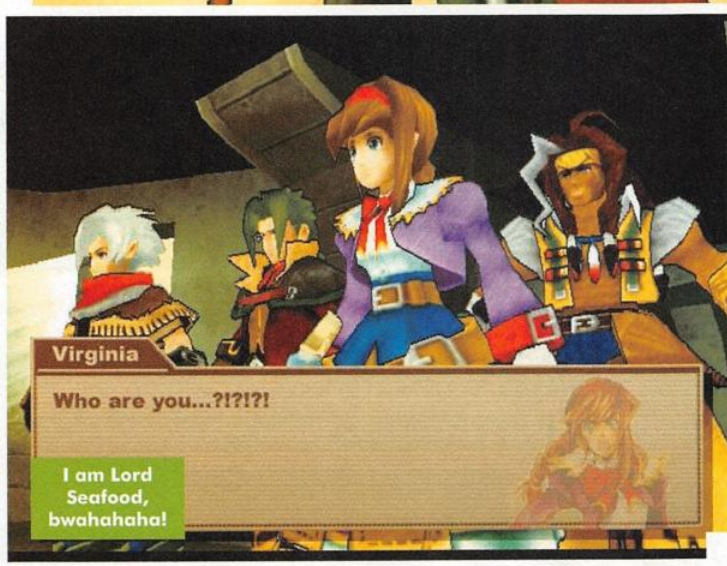
Virginia
Who are you...?!?!?!

I am Lord Seafood, bwahahaha!

The new ECN system allows the player to avoid a certain number of **random creature encounters**

undaunted by the standard puzzles, a number of hidden locations on the world map contain truly brain-bending tests of intellectual prowess.

A CUT ABOVE

Thanks to simple but incredibly intelligent design decisions, Wild Arms 3's gameplay is remarkably streamlined. Plentiful 'Gimel' coins allow the player to save any time their party isn't fighting, and act as continues if the player's party is annihilated in battle. Better yet, healing potions and the like are generally only needed during combat, as every character's health is automatically restored after a fight. The innovation doesn't stop there, though; the new ECN system allows the player to avoid a certain number of random creature encounters by

pressing the circle button. Combined, these welcome refinements allow the player to solve puzzles and achieve objectives with minimal interruptions, and their positive effects on game flow cannot be overstated.

Graphically, Wild Arms 3 is a cut above. Its environments are so sharp and detailed that some players will only realise they're three-dimensional (and not pre-rendered, static backgrounds) when they accidentally shift the camera. The superb cel-shaded characters that populate the game are also three-dimensional, and the crosshatched textures on their clothing are a great touch. Admittedly, the Guardian summon sequences aren't the most spectacular, but the Arcana — which

!!! When loading a saved game, the player is treated to an inspirational animated music video. Weird!

dynamically illuminate the combatants — more than make up for this.

The game's sound is uniformly excellent, with suitably meaty gunshots, and appropriately fwooosh-y Arcana effects. Though the Western-style soundtrack offers a limited number of tunes, they're all frightfully catchy; just ask the staff from the surrounding magazines, who could be heard sporadically whistling the battle theme within minutes of us firing up the game!

On the negative side, some players will have difficulty finding specific locations on the world map, thanks to generally vague instructions from townspeople. In addition, those accustomed to the almost overwhelming number of spells and summons of the Final Fantasy series might feel a little disappointed with this title's selection. Such minor issues shouldn't put serious roleplaying devotees off, though. Bringing some long-overdue improvements to the genre, Wild Arms 3 does things differently and does them well.

PLUS: Nicely stylised visuals, streamlined gameplay.

MINUS: What, no tumbleweed?!

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
84	85	82

OVERALL
83

One of the better PS2 RPGs.
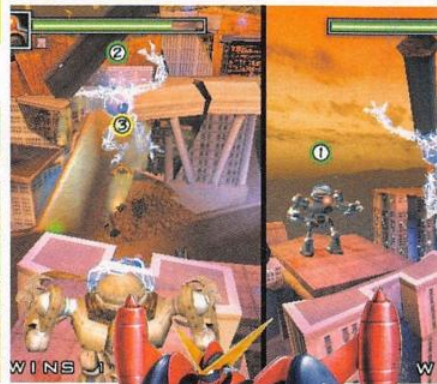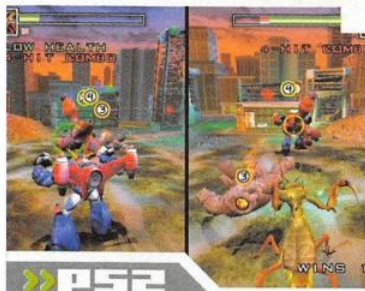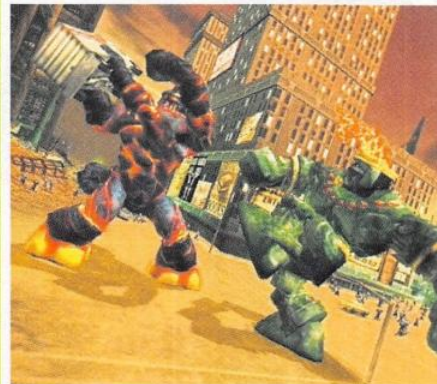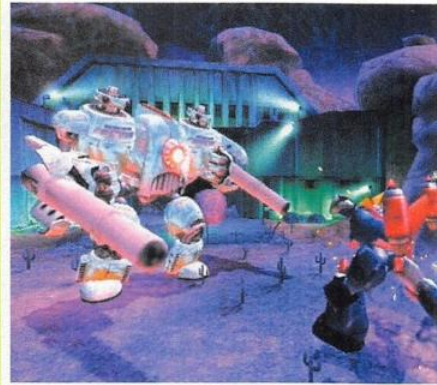
War of the Monsters

CATEGORY: Fighting >> PLAYERS: 1-2 >> PUBLISHER: SCEE >> PRICE: $99.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: April 18

JACKSON GOTHE-SNAPE just stepped on Hyper HQ...

T wisted Metal: Black was butchered by the censors for release in this country. SANE Australia's Stigmawatch campaign saw the game's comic book insanity references as offensive, and after initially getting it banned, caused Sony to belatedly release an inferior, incoherently adjusted product onto shelves.

The dismemberment of the charmingly chaotic multiplayer action/driving-fest was something of an injustice, but, with War of the Monsters, the developement team at Incog Inc. are back, and the cream will take its rightful place at the top.

US VERSUS THEM

From the outset the game is coherently presented as an unashamed celebration of 1950s B-grade movie culture. Its elaborate story set up and comic character design hints at Mars Attacks!-style parody, but an analysis would be missing the point. Instead, the simple premise of various huge creatures facing off on a terrified world under the watchful eye of saucer-shaped UFOs, is designed with one thing in mind: carnage.

The game brings together eight (plus two to be unlocked) classic beasts from timeless B-grade culture, within a range of novel, themed, urban environments. Over the course of the single-player adventure, you will encounter a range of scenarios and opponents, up to three at once in each city, and chaos will ensue.

Although each character, from the Godzilla-inspired Togera to the electrically-charged eye ball Kineticlops, only offer basic variety in its attacks — in general, two conventional, two special attacks and a throw — simple combos and level interaction cultivate diversity in battles, while still encouraging a certain tactical approach.

Most battles will be won by the beast that most competently utilises its surroundings. Life and energy powerups are generally the catalysts in pendulum swings, while stage-specific events can literally sweep away the opposition. Watching a foe scrambling towards the 100% health in Tsunopolis, you would be a fool to chase. Instead, a simple turn towards the nearby hovering UFO and a well-placed throw with a girder (or was it a radio tower...?) causes the flying disc to unleash a beam into the harbour. Within seconds, the city is drenched in a tidal wave, while the victor stands atop a skyscraper laughing at his drowned opponent below. Or perhaps you'd prefer to knock aforementioned skyscraper over, crushing your victim? It's as simple as a lobbing a tanker into the lobby.

But fear not, as calculation and cunning only make up part of the game. Many of the nuances of each level, and subtle strengths of each beast, will only become apparent hours into the game. More immediately, your interest will be maintained by the superb environment interaction, and the vibrant, detailed visuals that allow it all to unfold before your eyes.

He's had his eye on you for ages.
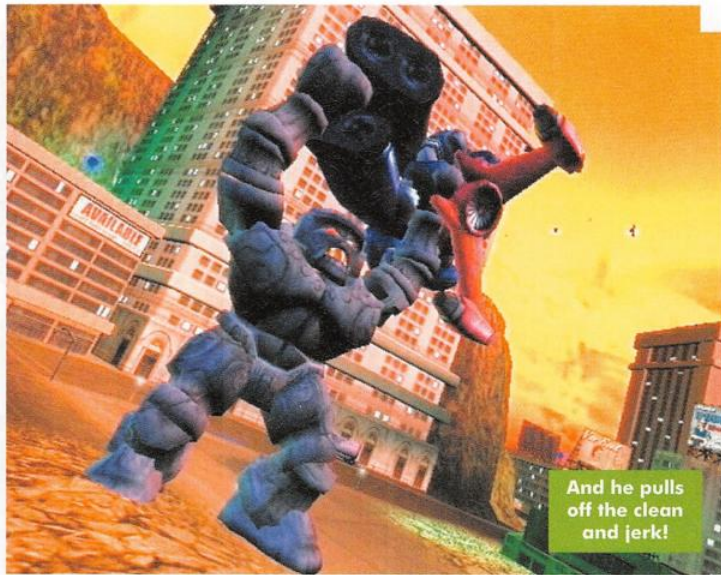
And he pulls off the clean and jerk!

Better start praying Mantis...

Ahh it was blocking our view anyway.

BLAU!

First the bus was late... now this!
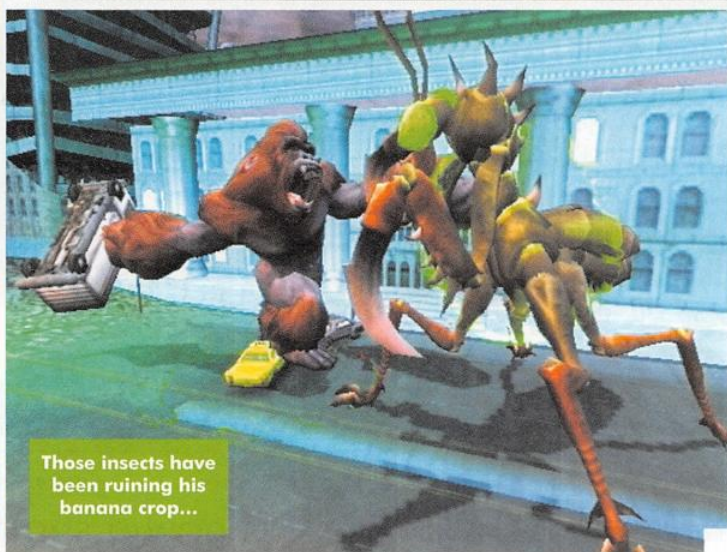
Those insects have been ruining his banana crop...

The city is drenched in a tidal wave, **while the victor stands atop a skyscraper...**

PRETTY MONSTERS

People scatter in the streets, crying for their lives. Overhead, media and police choppers vie for the best angle of the catastrophe below. The Aztec-inspired flame-topped Agamo holds the prickly Preytor aloft, before hurling the monster into a nearby office building like the insect that it is. The shell of the building collapses, and debris is strewn across the road. It's not long before the brave pedestrians have fully witnessed a pleasing array of special attack effects and explosions, while the level still continues to crumble.

Each beast appropriately bounds, scuttles or heaves around each level smoothly, and watching poor Ultra V trying to pull a 60-foot spear from his chest is cheeky charm. All is accompanied by a suitably epic orchestral score complete with flute trills, dramatic horns, booming strings and the odd piano, as well as blasts, roars, sirens and zaps that truly do justice to the on-screen devastation.

Certain heavily discerning fighting-game fans might not be impressed by the definite simplicity of the controls, but the sometimes laboured responses to button presses nonetheless force a player's considered approach to timing. Meanwhile, although the targeting and control system work naturally together, certain flaws arise, such as switching targets easily, while one must adapt to those inevitable control and camera quirks (such as

!!! Why was there no four-player mode available? That would have been perfect... Grraaah!

the splendid two-player split screen unification when human players meet). Nonetheless, Incog have managed to come up with a rare control system that allows navigation around a 3D environment in a chaotic action setting relatively easy.

The only other major flaw is a result of the game's undoubted quality. While mid-battle goodness is infinite, that trivial but essential variety of game-types and challenges is severely lacking. An unlocking system exists, but its preoccupation with costumes is a chance gone begging.

Nonetheless, War of the Monsters is a title that deserves examination (as well as, if it's not too much to ask, a sequel). Much like the original Smash Bros., its addictive multiplayer basis would benefit from a little refinement, and plenty of frills to inflate the single-player experience. This is a terrifically old-school simple-pleasure style classic videogaming experience. War away! <<

PLUS: Great presentation. Action extravaganza.

MINUS: Control quirks. Bare-boned.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
88	85	86

OVERALL

85

B-grade excellence.

REVIEW

Crap, I think they sold me a nerf gun!
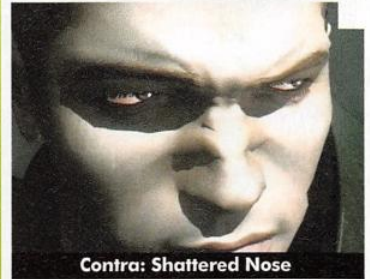
Contra: Shattered Nose

"Two stowaways on the wings, sir!"

Contra: Shattered Soldier

CATEGORY: Scrolling Shooter >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >> **PUBLISHER:** Konami >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

BRETT ROBINSON is now a shattered reviewer…

Contra: Shattered Soldier is Konami's latest (and perhaps final) crack at reigniting consumer interest in the illustrious Contra series, which was once a mainstay of the arcade and second-generation consoles. Contra III: The Alien Wars (or Super Probotector, as it is known in some territories) still remains unsurpassed in the minds of many nostalgic SNES owners and emulator buffs, so does Shattered Soldier finally topple it from its throne? The answer isn't clear-cut; Shattered Soldier delivers a few pleasing innovations, but it also has its fair share of faults.

ENDLESS RANKS

All three of the game's weapons — the machinegun, grenade launcher and flamethrower — are available from the outset, not collected along the way as they were in previous versions. The weapons have secondary fire functions that are as spectacular as they are powerful, but screen-clearing bombs are conspicuously absent and sorely missed. The game's controls, on the other hand, have changed for the better. The player's weapons can be locked at a particular firing angle, and it's now possible to shoot in all directions while remaining stationary. Both features often prove critical in defeating the game's bosses.

Speaking of bosses, the challenge in previous Contra games was to make it through seemingly endless ranks of gunners, grenadiers and fixed weapon emplacements by shooting in all directions, hopping up onto structures and generally just leaping around like a madman. The mid and end-of-level bosses were also tough, but the game's focus remained on the run 'n' gun aspect. In Contra: Shattered Soldier, all that has changed; the run 'n' gun portions of the game are now almost ridiculously easy, making them feel like little more than filler, and the emphasis has shifted to the boss encounters. Admittedly, in terms of their designs and appearances, the bosses are nothing short of amazing, but with so much of the game given over to boss battles, Shattered Soldier's already limited longterm value is left in tatters.

!!! Bosses from previous Contras make a return, including the infamous plasma-vomiting turtle.

QUICK BLAST-FEST

The game's four standard levels will take those playing the game alone approximately four hours to complete. In two-player mode, Shattered Soldier gets markedly easier, and the first time through it'll take 90 minutes to clock, tops. Once mastered, however, those same levels will offer about an hour's worth of amusement in either mode. There are two boss levels, a secret level and some multimedia bonuses to unlock, but given the extreme difficulty of actually doing so, most players probably won't bother.

Liable to alienate Contra die-hards and leave a generation of newcomers wondering why veteran gamers still rave about the franchise, Contra: Shattered Soldier won't disappoint those who want nothing more than a quick blast-fest. In the end, though, a lot of other titles offer much better replay value. As such, prospective purchasers should think long and hard before parting with their cash. <<

PLUS: Terrific boss designs and intuitive, responsive controls.

MINUS: Diluted gameplay and zero longterm value.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
73	62	75

OVERALL

71

Fun while it lasts, but really only worth a rental.

Just a little liposuction of the head.

Cam's parents drop in for tea.
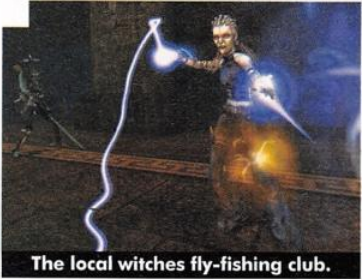
The local witches fly-fishing club.

Primal

CATEGORY: Action/Adventure >> PLAYERS: 1 >> PUBLISHER: SCEE >> PRICE: $99.95 >> RATING: MA15+ >> AVAILABLE: April >>

DANIEL STAINES tries to stay awake...

I t's disappointing to think that so much time and money has obviously been spent on the development of this game — blood, sweat and tears, no doubt — and yet the result is as misdirected and mediocre as it is. How could so much ambitious planning and access to hefty resources turn out such an unremarkable game?

BUTTON MASHING
In an attempt to be mysterious, atmospheric and thoughtful, Primal just comes across as tedious and boring. There's an obvious attempt here to replicate the same kind of artistic vision as we've seen in the brilliant ICO, but unfortunately, the team that worked on this game doesn't have the imaginative gameplay to back up the concept. It's all very run of the mill, predictable gaming, made worse by "in context" actions that take the challenge out of the puzzles and action.

You will watch with glazed eyes as protagonist Jen Tate walks from one drab location to the next in the desperate and vain hope of actually finding something interesting to do. Sadly, it is most often the case that this 'something interesting' usually ends up being more button-mashing combat or, if you're lucky, a pointless and completely transparent puzzle that is solvable within thirty seconds thanks to the action button that will do whatever is required.

!!! Primal supports progressive scan mode, as well as 60Hz.

INCONSISTENCIES
Primal features two controllable protagonists but only one of them is actually useful. The other one — a glowing eyed gargoyle named Scree — is actually completely superfluous. He looks cool, but is mostly used to offer the player

hints. He can't and won't fight, he doesn't possess any useful magic and his big powers are turning into stone and climbing up stonework walls. That second power would actually be kinda useful except that most of the walls in the game that really look like stonework aren't actually stonework at all. So, you know, the character as a whole ends up being worthless outside of situations where it's obvious you have to use him. It all just feels very gimmicky in the end.

Inconsistencies like this are precisely what make Primal such an annoying and frustrating game to play. Why can't I climb up this stonework wall? Why can I pick up this torch and not that one? Why is that ledge too high to jump off while the other one of exactly the same height is just fine to leap from?

It's a shame that you end up asking yourself so many of these types of questions whilst playing Primal, and it's an indication that somewhere in the development of this game something went wrong.

PLUS: Expensive cutscenes. Nice visual effects.

MINUS: Slowdown, bugs, dull combat and puzzles.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
80	83	59

OVERALL

60

Poor game design wastes much potential.
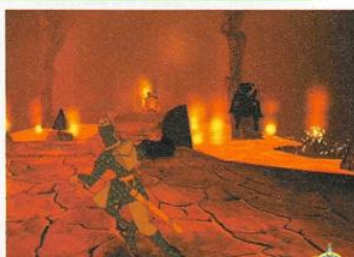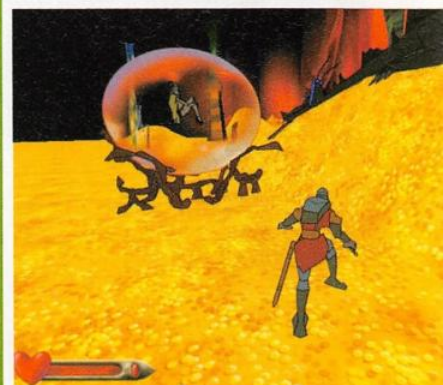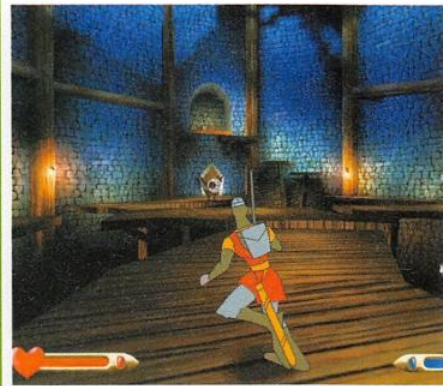
Dragon's Lair 3D

CATEGORY: Action/Platformer >> **PLAYERS:** 1 >> **PUBLISHER:** Ubi Soft >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >> **RATING:** G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >> **REQUIRED:** PII 300, 64MB RAM, 3D card

DANIEL WILKS has been pretty daring now and then.

There are some games that have gone down in the annals of history as classics and others that have become part of culture - very few have managed to achieve both accolades. Dragon's Lair, originally released in 1983 was the brainchild of animators Don Bluth and Gary Goldman, both renowned directors/producers of animated films such as The Secret of Nimh, Titan A.E., Anastasia and The Land Before Time, had the idea of making the first truly interactive animated movie. The result was a wonder to behold and reportedly dragged in over $3 million in the first week of release. Unfortunately, the beautiful animation and outstanding sound masked the fact that Dragon's Lair contained hardly any playability at all, limiting the players to hitting a button at the right time or moving the joystick in a set direction.

BIG AND NASTY
Despite its shortcomings, Dragon's Lair is one of the two arcade games to be displayed at the prestigious Smithsonian Institute.

Now, 20 years later, Dirk the Daring, hero of the Dragon's Lair series is back and thanks to a move to 3D he's far more daring than he ever was in the past. He's so daring in fact that you can now actually play the game instead of simply watching for a while before hitting a button. For those of you not familiar with the plot of Dragon's Lair it goes a little something like this - you play Dirk the Daring, a clumsy but generally quite heroic knight in search for the missing, pointy-breasted Princess Daphne, kidnapped by the evil wizard Mordoc and his dragon henchman Singe. Dirk must brave the evil Mordoc's castle and search through over 250 trap and monster filled rooms to find the items necessary to rescue his beloved. If you played the original Dragon's Lair, DL3D will be like a trip down memory lane - everything from the original has been lovingly recreated from the excellent cutscenes and soundtrack to the deadly trap filled rooms.

Instead of a joystick and sword button combo as used in the arcades, Dragon's Lair 3D utilises a keyboard/mouse control system similar to most other third-person PC titles and this is a very good thing as Dirk now has a huge range of combat and non-combat moves available to him. He can run, jump, climb, fight, block, roll, dodge and when he's found the right powerups, spin in deadly circles, glide, see invisible and engage in ranged combat with a crossbow. Believe us when we say he needs all of these skills to finish the game and rescue his pert love interest. Traps and levels range from the painfully obvious — "hmmm, there's some bad stuff in the room and a single lever at the far side next to the door" — to some fiendishly difficult puzzles that require quick reflexes, perfect timing and eagle eyes. Also standing in Dirk's way are a host of great looking monsters ranging from the small and rather inoffensive Giddy Goons (little purple guys with knives) to some big

!!! Lots of downloads at www.dragonslair.com - including Daphne!
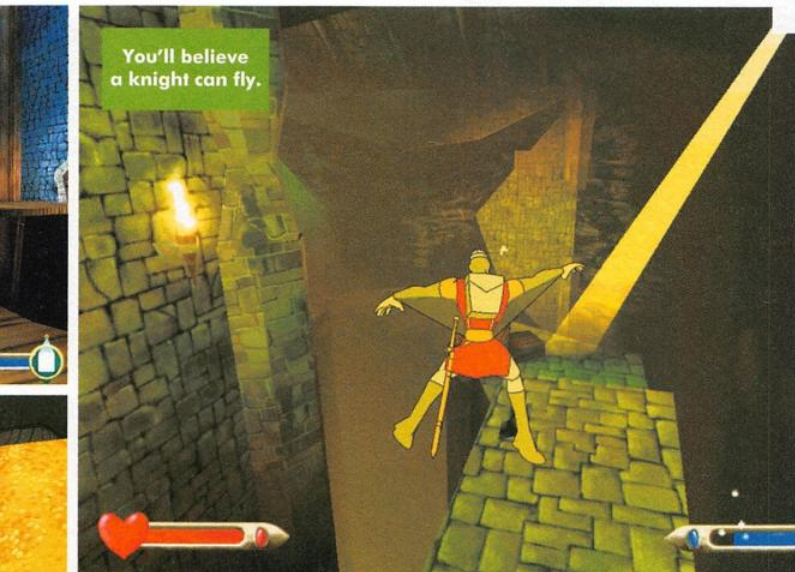
You'll believe a knight can fly.

Dirk is related to the Belmont clan.

It's too ugly to live, Dirk! Kill it!!

It's okay Dirk, they're just cartoons.

Hmm, a nice spot for a picnic!

Cue Indiana Jones theme.

and nasty boss battles. Unfortunately combat is a little too simplistic to keep it truly interesting as Dirk only has 2 attacks available to him - slash and power-slash (when you find the powerup) and blocking makes you effectively invulnerable to the front. It would have been nice to see some combos or even different attack animations just to spice things up a bit.

TRIAL AND ERROR

Whilst the move to 3D has been very successful in teaching an old dog some new tricks, Dragon's Lair 3D doesn't look destined for the cult status of its predecessor for a number of reasons. The first major problem players will discover with the title is one that plagues the vast majority of third-person titles - the camera is problematic to say the least. Many of the rooms become even more difficult due to the fact that the camera won't allow you to see where you need to go without exposing yourself to unnecessary danger. Other rooms lock the camera in a fixed perspective causing

> It would have been nice to see some combos or even **different attack animations**

players to die time and time again as they try to control Dirk through trial and error. There also seems to be some clipping problems in certain rooms - there's nothing more frustrating than making a jump for a rope you know you're perfectly lined up for and seeing it pass through Dirk's body as he plunges to his umpteenth death.

One truly successful element of the move to 3D is the overall look of the game. There aren't too many PC games utilising cel shading at the moment but they should all

take notice of Dragon's Lair 3D. Animations look great and the flat characters give a genuine feeling of playing a morning cartoon. If there are any gripes we have about the graphics it's that the backgrounds could have had a little more work, and some of the textures look a little too flat and dull. Dragon's Lair 3D won't revolutionise the gaming world but it's a great trip down memory lane, or a great introduction to gaming history for those of you who never played the original. <<

PLUS: Looks great and now you can actually play it.

MINUS: Little replay value. Some camera and clipping issues.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
84	80	74

OVERALL

73

20 years on and Dirk is more daring than ever.
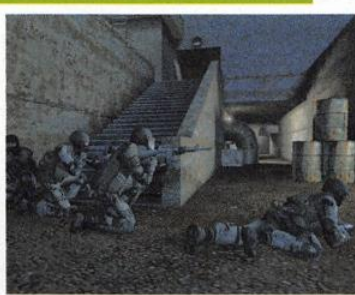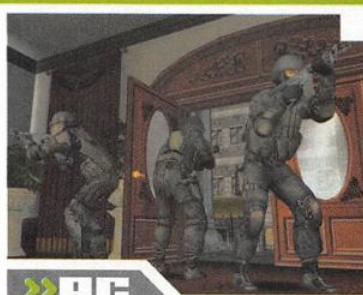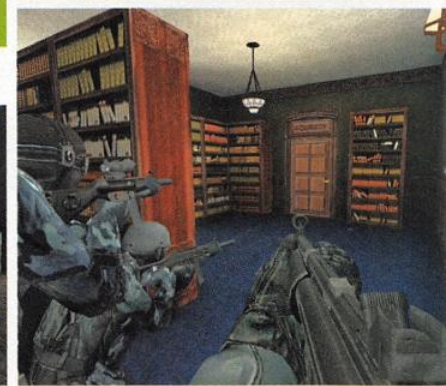
>>PC

Rainbow Six: RAVEN SHIELD

CATEGORY: Tactical Shooter >> **PLAYERS:** 1-16 >> **PUBLISHER:** UbiSoft >> **PRICE:** $89.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >> **REQUIRED:** 800, 128MB RAM, 32MB Card

Even **DANIEL STAINES** has Tom Clancy's name on him.

oy, that Tom Clancy sure hates terrorists a lot, doesn't he? I mean, don't get me wrong or anything — I despise civilian slaughtering fundamentalist crackpots as much as the next George W. Bush, but I certainly don't posses the kind of pathological loathing necessary to make a career out of it. Almost everything Tom Clancy has his name on focuses exclusively on evil terrorists and the many ways in which the square-jawed agents of the world's various Special Forces agencies can shoot them in the face. And hey, we're not complaining here. After all, if Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield is anything to go on, gunning down explosives-toting crazies and saving the world can actually be quite a lot of fun.

MAKE YOUR HEAD HURT
It's all a matter of tactics and stealth. As the field-commander of an elite counter-terrorist outfit, your job in Raven Shield is to infiltrate temporary or permanent terrorist strongholds, rescue hostages, defuse bombs and generally be a bit of an all-round hero. However, in order to complete any of the game's objectives successfully, it is first crucial to formulate a careful plan of attack and then to execute it with speed, silence and pinpoint accuracy. Failure to comply with this standard operational procedure will invariably result in you, your team or innocent civilians being killed within the blink of an eye. Make no mistake about it: this game is hardcore, man. Really freakin' hardcore. Hardcore enough to make your head hurt.

And that's precisely what makes it so damn enjoyable. Because the enemies are intelligent and the stakes are high, Raven Shield consistently forces one to ponder every move made with a seriousness commonly reserved for matters of life and death. In the field, every move you make and every order you give has to be considered within the context of its possible ramifications and this results in a gripping, sweat-soaked stealth experience that excels at making its own virtual reality seem more frighteningly realistic every moment you interact with it. I've never bitten my nails playing a game before, but that's only because I've never previously had to endure the tension of co-ordinating a tri-team assault on a terrorist compound filled with explosives and important hostages. Now I can't even scratch myself with what's left on my fingertips. And I like to scratch myself, goddamn it!
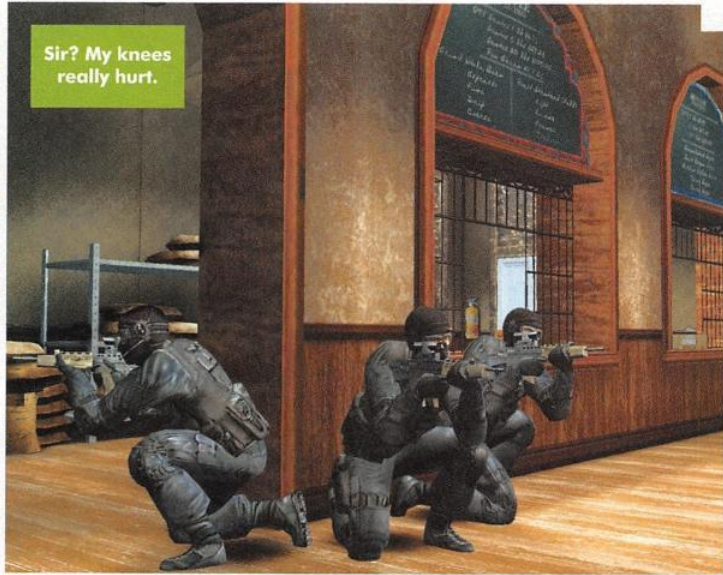
Sir? My knees really hurt.

Sir, I shot the abominable snowman!

Beautiful one day, terrorist the next.

Look out, it's the specialist Knee Squad!

That's for slacking off at your desks!

On my knees, I am invincible!

SNIPED TWO TANGOS

Now, let's talk about planning. Unless you're stupid and choose to rob the game of its fun by playing it on 'action' mode, every Campaign mission in Raven Shield is accompanied by a detailed plan of action. Before entering combat, one can choose to adopt one of Red Storm's ready-made plans or go it alone and concoct your own method of assault using the game's powerful tactical planning tools. Although Red Storm's plans are generally very good and work as well as one could expect in combat, they tend to diminish the enjoyment of engagement somewhat, simply because one can't help but feel like they're playing someone else's mission the whole time.

Thus we strongly recommend using the tools available and coming up with a few plans to call your own. Unlike previous Tom Clancy games such as Ghost Recon, the tactical planning component of Raven Shield is both powerful and flexible enough to allow all but the most convoluted stratagems to become a tangible, in-game reality. But that's not to say that

> We strongly recommend using the tools available and **coming up with a few plans** to call your own

it's somehow difficult to manage. While a tutorial would've definitely been appreciated, plotting attack, breach and recon runs usually involves little more than laying out the appropriate waypoints on the map and making sure they all run together the way you want them to. Admittedly, it can be somewhat laborious and your plans will most assuredly fail the first couple of times through, but these minor irritations are more than balanced by the sheer feeling of exhilaration you'll feel after all your ponderously detailed strategies come to fruition in a real-time combat situation. Green Team has breached with a flash-bang, Gold Team has sniped two tangos from the window and we've secured the hostages … oh, life is good.

!!! Psst! Tom Clancy's actually a terrible author with no sense of literary style at all! Don't tell anyone, though!

And that about wraps up all the nice things we have to say about Raven Shield. Happily, the bad things we have to say can all fit into the following conclusion. To begin with, the game comes with what is possibly the most annoying piracy protection program ever. Additionally, team AI — while generally superb — does sometimes suffer from fits of bizarre retardation and will begin sporadically firing at inanimate objects and even other team members. And, lastly … no, actually that's about it. Those are all the criticisms we have. Enough to stop Raven Shield from getting a Rubber Stamp, perhaps, but definitely not enough to stop it from being a truly excellent tactical shooter — because that's exactly what it is. <<

PLUS: Intense tactical action, excellent planning module.

MINUS: Terrible piracy protection program, sporadic teammate AI.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
88	90	89

OVERALL

89

Not quite classic, but an accomplished tactical shooter.

C&C: GENERALS

CATEGORY: RTS >> PLAYERS: 1-8 >> PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts >> PRICE: $99.95 >> RATING: M15+ >> AVAILABLE: Now >> REQUIRED: PIII 800, 128MB RAM, 32MB video card

JERE LAWRENCE is just an evil rusher at heart.

T hey may no longer be Westwood (instead absorbed into Electronic Arts Pacific), but it's reassuring to know that the team that brought us Red Alert 2 and Yuri's Revenge are the same ones responsible for the dramatic paradigm shift of design that is Generals. Gone is full motion video and a comprehensive single player campaign; instead Generals focuses on chess-like strategic battles of wits. Like a piece of unrefined gold, there's a very precious game inside and after you melt away the dross, you'll discover a nugget of competitive gaming bliss.

SINGLE PLAYER SIMPLICITY
Offering only 24 missions, the single player component is extremely short with just eight missions for the USA,

China and the Global Liberation Army (GLA). It's really only seven missions though as the famed dam break scene is repeated for each power. Sure it looks spectacular but it would have been nice if each side had its own unique mega-map. Worse, the missions aren't very long and are extremely easy, so expect to finish the single player campaign in 8 to 10 hours — and if you've ever played an RTS before, start at "Hard". Interestingly, the single player campaigns feel like a tutorial to prepare you for online play or Skirmish (multiplayer against AI opponents) which is where this game reaches its lofty pinnacle.

Generals' saving grace is that the majority of effort has been spent on balancing the game and refining the experience so that no one side has an

excessive advantage over another. For this reason, single player shortcomings are forgivable because skirmish mode is the pure game where skill, fast thinking and build orders rule supreme. Fully customisable, this mode allows you to battle against AI opponents of differing skills in one to eight player battles where AIs are assigned as your allies or enemies. From devising evil rush strategies to figuring out ultra efficient build trees,

skirmish mode is single player RTS gaming at its purest.

Wave goodbye to stupid harvesters because now a static supply of crates allow for faster resource collection. Once drained, each side can generate additional income either through hacking, UN drops or underground cash injections. The Construction Yard has also been replaced with the Command Centre which produces units (bulldozers for USA/China,

Weapons of mass destruction? Moi?

Nuclear
Particle Uplink Cannon
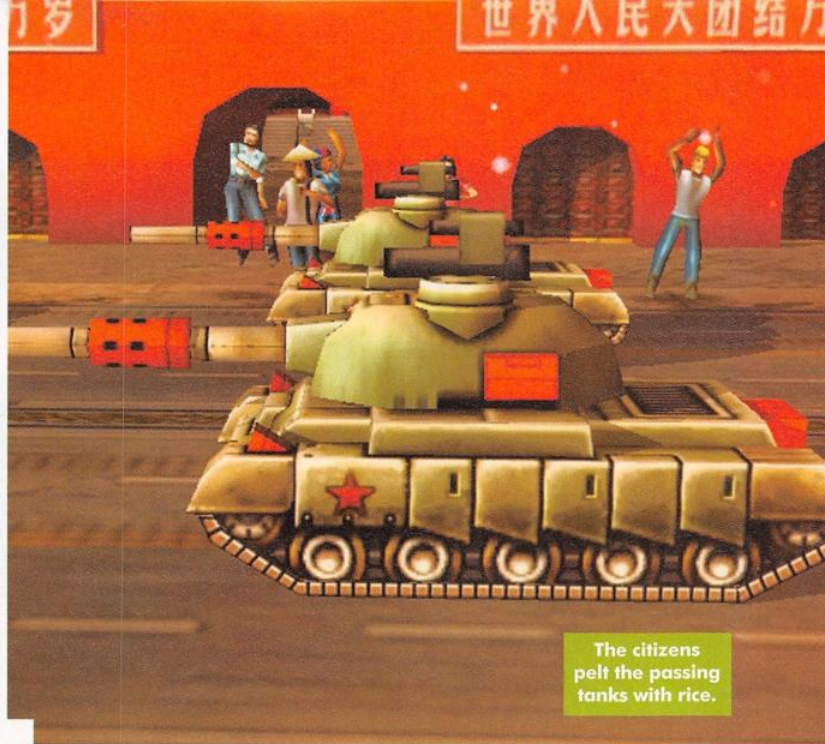
The citizens pelt the passing tanks with rice.
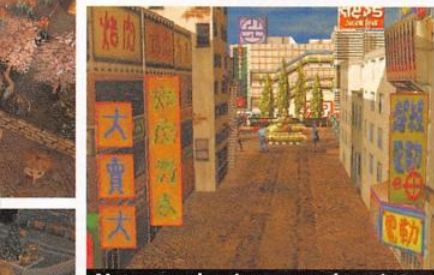
Not a popular time to go shopping...

It's like Sim City, but with death.

Didn't you read the maximum load sign?!

The only way to stop roach infestations.
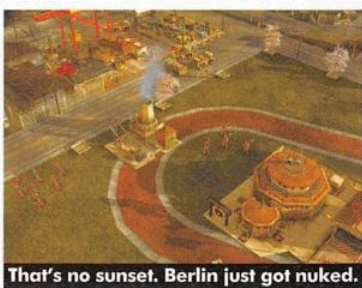
That's no sunset. Berlin just got nuked.

workers for GLA) that can erect buildings anywhere on the map. Although the destruction of a command centre isn't a good thing, as long as you have a bulldozer, you can continue to build. Experience is now calculated for every enemy unit and structure destroyed and brings a new selectable General's ability when you level up. For a price, vehicles and structures can be upgraded but sometimes sheer numbers are better than greater technology.

For a price, **vehicles and structures can be upgraded**

MULTIPLAYER IS WHERE IT'S AT
Considering that Generals offers numerous different unit types, powerful abilities and spectacularly destructive super weapons the balance achieved is both genius and further proof that the focus of Generals is online play.
Considering that a 1v1 game uses a paltry 300kbps send and 400kbps receive rate, bandwidth usage is negligent and modem users will have no problems playing online. Unfortunately though, current players only manage to connect 40% of the time and even after numerous

!!! Give it a couple of months and Generals will be swamped with new single and multiplayer levels. This is because the complete editor with its own scripting language that was used by the dev team is included on the CD and creative users are already making their own single player campaigns.

promises from EAP, it hasn't been fixed yet. But it's easy to be forgiving because when you finally connect, it's an addictive thrill to play another person elsewhere in the world.
Despite a less than stellar single player campaign, the amazing graphics, excellent skirmish mode and exceptional balance lifts Generals above the realms of mediocrity into the stratosphere of quality gaming. It could have gone higher, even to the topmost exosphere if it hadn't been released with the same network issues that were present in the beta. Still, this is the most balanced, most refined C&C of them all and if used for its skirmish or online abilities will offer many sleepless nights. Highly recommended. ◀◀

PLUS: Appealing graphics and exceptional balance.

MINUS: Single player too short and some multiplayer bugs.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
85	80	83

OVERALL
83

Poor single player makes way for golden multiplayer.

AUXILIARY ARCHERS (30/30)
HIT POINTS: 1000 / 1000
STAMINA: 1000 / 1000   KILLS: 0
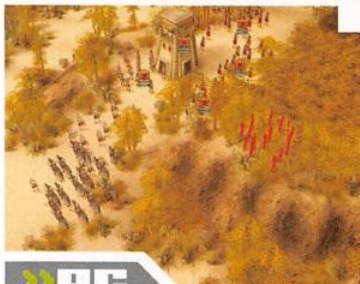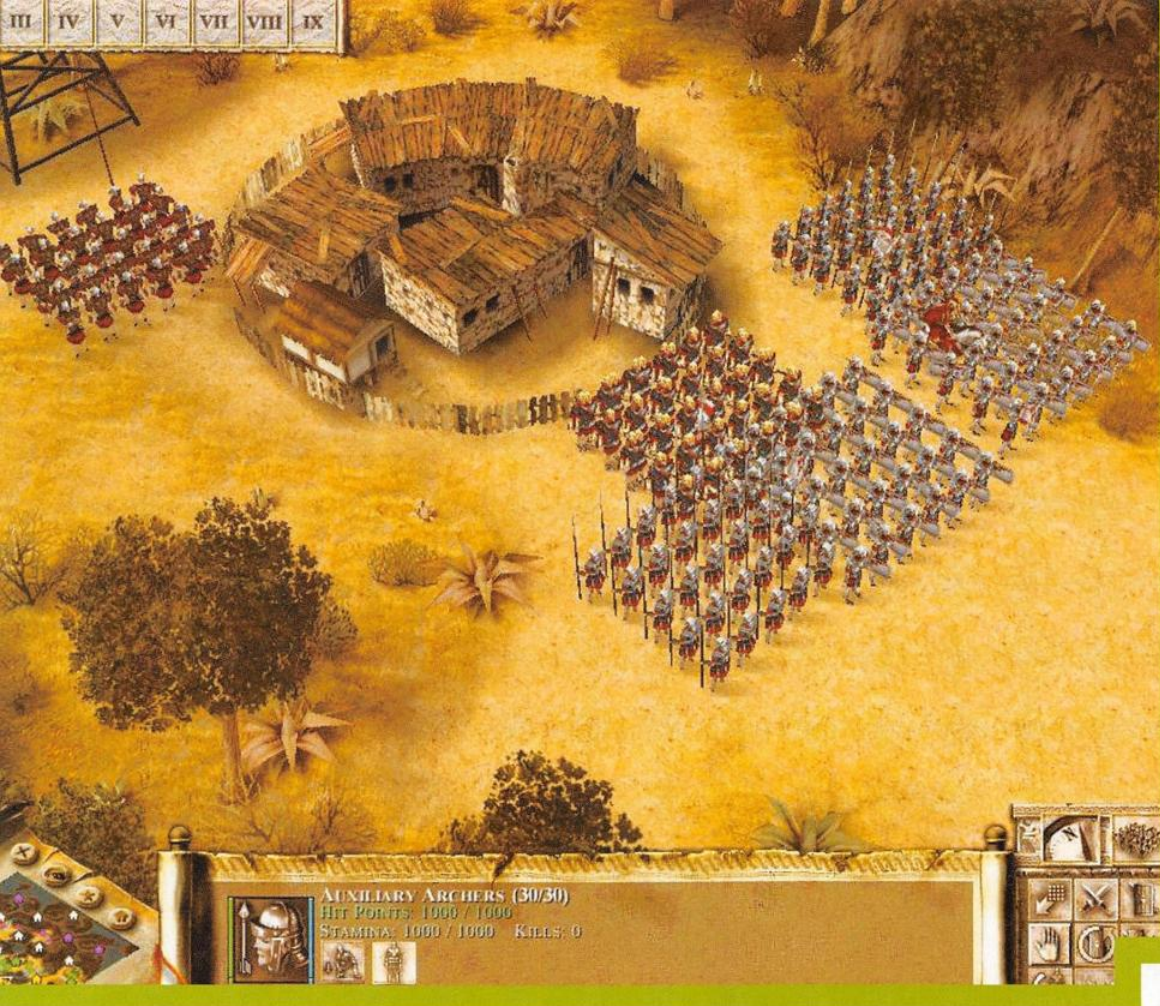
Praetorians

CATEGORY: RTS >> PLAYERS: 1-8 >> PUBLISHER: Eidos >> PRICE: $89.95 >> RATING: G >> AVAILABLE: Now >> REQUIRED: PIII 500, 256MB RAM, 32MB graphics card

Jere Lawrence finally discovers what a Praetorian is.

The real time strategy (RTS) genre has seen vast improvements over the last few years and thankfully, managed to survive the toxic RTS rehash of the mid nineties. As the genre develops it has received many creative improvements such as experience gaining units, finer balance and a greater variety of supporting classes. The latest of these next generation RTS games is Praetorians where you lead the armies of Rome in their quest for glorious conquest. Actually, Praetorians with its heavy focus on unit and formation management makes this more of a real time tactical game where a well orchestrated flanking manoeuvre by your cavalry is far more valuable than a massive base.

ALL ROADS LEAD TO ROME

Set at the beginning of the Roman Empire under the rule of Julius Caesar, Praetorians takes you through the period of 55 to 40 B.C. when the Romans embarked on their 15 year "world domination tour". Taking actual historical names and locations, custom maps are based loosely around the geography of the location rather than the true ancient battleground. What this amounts to is maps designed for gameplay and a set of fun units that will appeal to history buffs.

Similar to other RTS titles, Praetorians features 24 single-player missions; eight missions each for the three sides: Romans, Barbarians and the Egyptians. The big difference however is that there is very little base construction, instead a set number of villages on each map need to be taken over. Once captured, these allow you to create military units based on a percentage of the overall population; small villages could produce up to 5 legionnaire regiments where larger villages can produce more. Most interestingly, building units requires no in-game resources but rather the most precious resource of them all, time.

Ranging from only a few seconds for the scout units to 45 seconds for Legionnaires, the significance of build time is paramount. For example: your army has successfully conquered territories to the north but have taken losses and won't last out against another attack. Your fresh troops to the south have to reach the weakened north army in time but running them will cause their stamina to drop and sending a tired regiment into battle will just result in a humiliating defeat. These kinds of tactical exchanges are the core gameplay element of Praetorians and it can be very satisfying to achieve victory through cunning, such as using a weak retreating army to pull the enemy right into an oncoming healthy army to ambush them.

REVIEW

Hey look, it's the two towers. Ho ho.

I hate crowded days at the beach.

Who's next to get voted off the island?

Nooo, they're burning the pub down!

Let's just stand over here and wait.

Anyone know where we actually are?

One more lap, and then we do pushups.
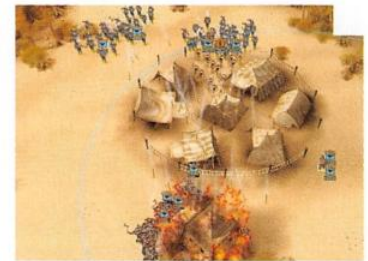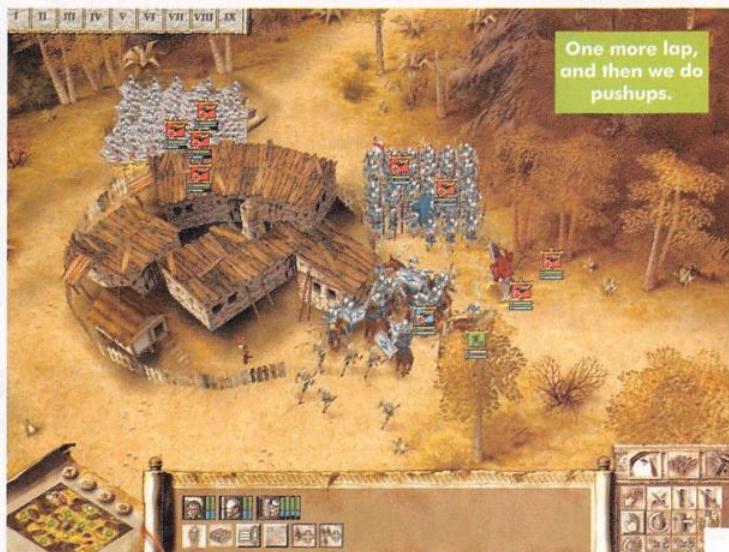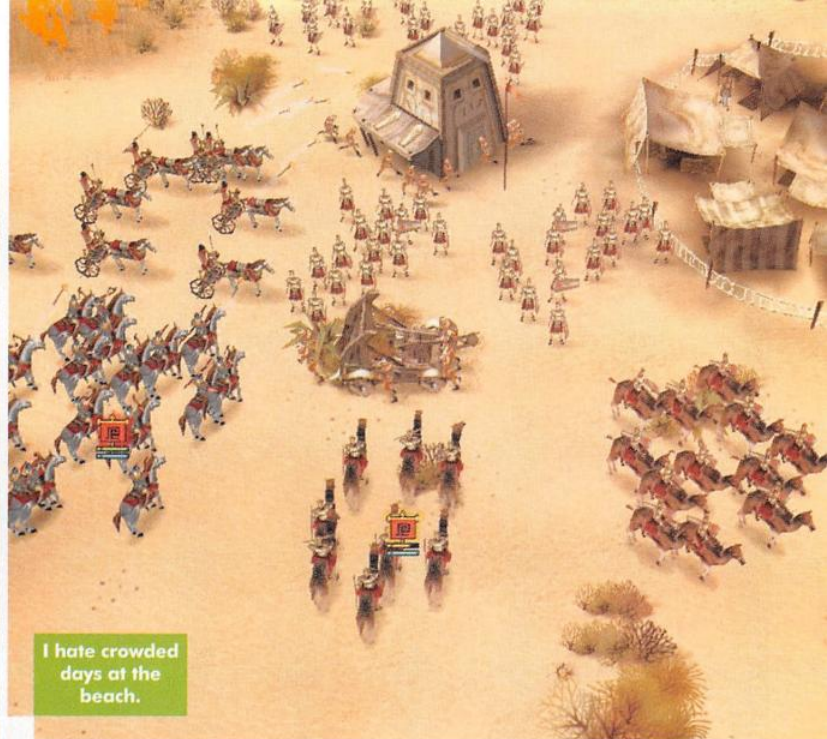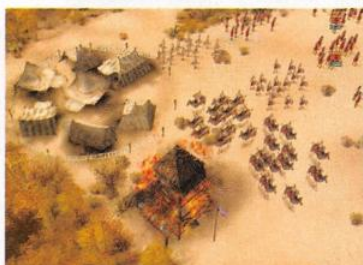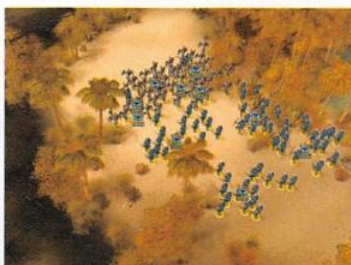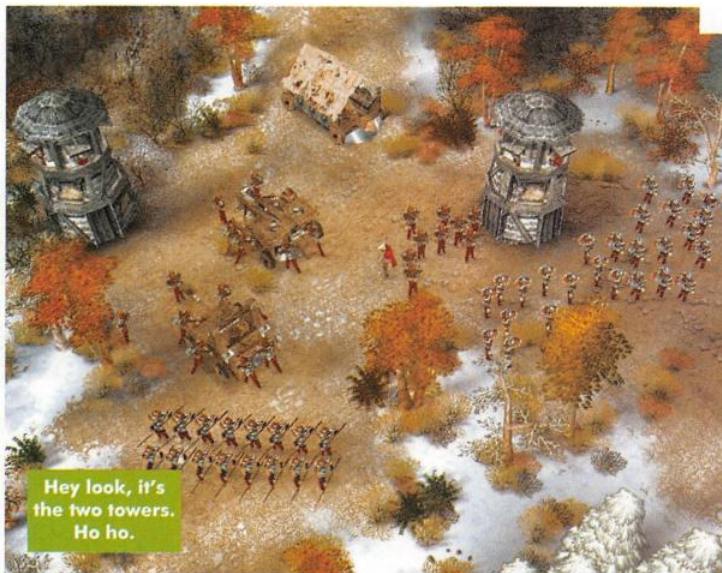
UNITS AND CONSTRUCTION

Although there is no base building, Praetorians does feature objects to build: catapults, ballistas, battering rams, ladders and a defensive tower are all available to put the game's siege engine to good use and needless to say, storming enemy castles and forts is quite satisfying. Soldiers can either be demoted to workers or recruited from a village and although objects can be built anywhere on completion, you will need to sacrifice some workers to operate it.

Each side mostly consists of workers, soldiers, archers, cavalry, physicians and scouts. The variations are subtle, with most differences being in combat style: the Romans can form the famed turtle formation where they put their shields above and around themselves to make a primitive moving tank. Barbarian soldiers use throwing axes that stun the opponent for a few seconds and the Egyptians get tougher in battle after a quick prayer.

Physicians and Commanders are an essential unit with each having an area of effect ability that heals or raises the veteran status of any units within their radii. The cavalry is for fast flanking manoeuvres, an essential tactic in this game, as not only will the CPU flank you every chance it gets but to succeed, you will need to use the tactic back.

Geography is also important, with the usual bonuses to elevated ground applying, but there is a new feature – forests. Only entered by soldiers and archers, forests will completely conceal the troops inside and it is not uncommon to have an entire pass blocked by invisible and deadly archers. Scouts will locate them but only the wolf scout is effective because the hawk scout cannot see through the forest canopy.

With its historical flavour and emphasis on tactical combat instead of who can harvest the most resources and build the biggest base, Praetorians does offer a decent change of formula. Skirmish mode is quite good but the CPU is easily rushed and yet ironically, at times the single-player campaign can be extremely hard. The use of terrain for hiding troops is well implemented but frustrating if a human opponent continues to move them to elude detection. Graphically, no complaints can be made and the sonics are equally acceptable, yet Praetorians couldn't quite convince us to keep coming back for more, mainly due to the pace and dependence on the micro-management of flanking. <<

> Barbarian soldiers use throwing axes that **stun the opponent for a few seconds**

!!! This game tickle your fancy? Then rush out and get Medieval: Total War and Stronghold. Both tops!

PLUS: As the Romans you get to kill the French.

MINUS: Pace is slow and not a lot of unit variation between sides.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
83	82	72

OVERALL

77

For military history buffs who like their action tactical.
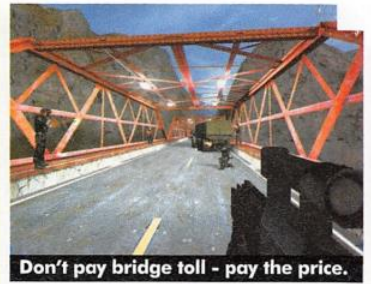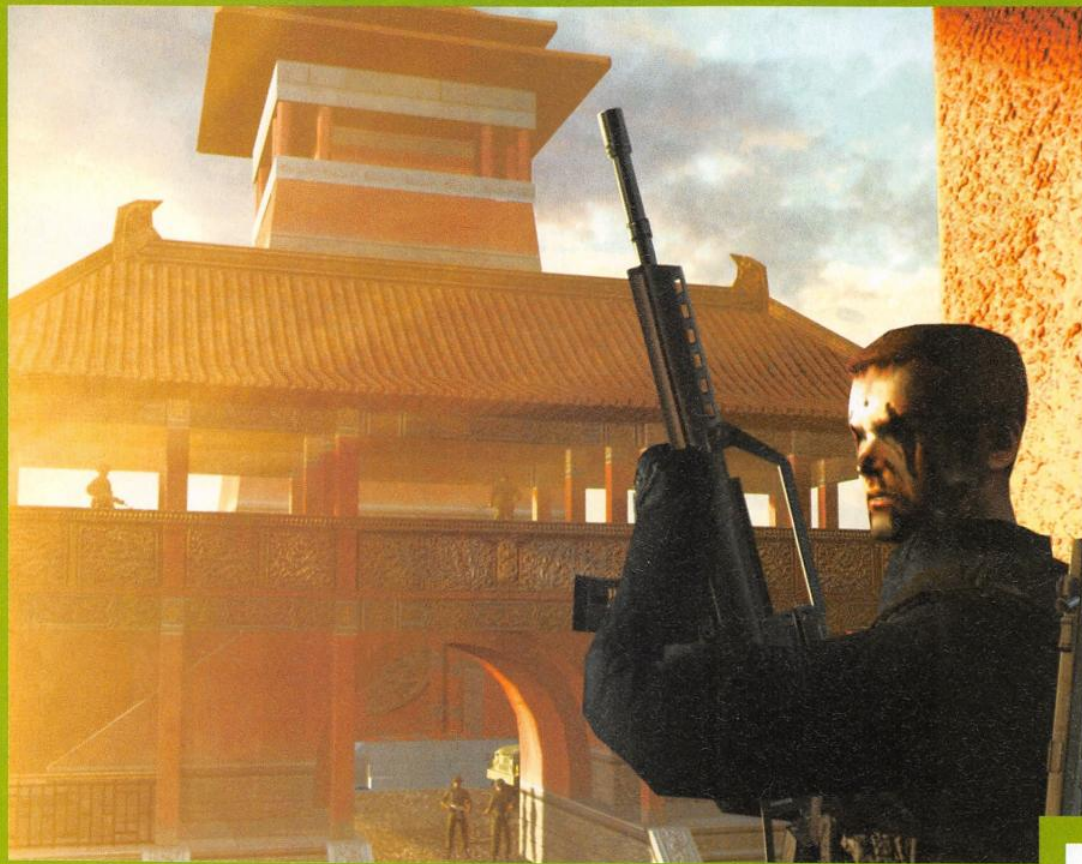
Don't pay bridge toll - pay the price.
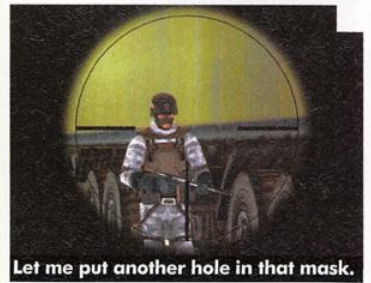
Let me put another hole in that mask.
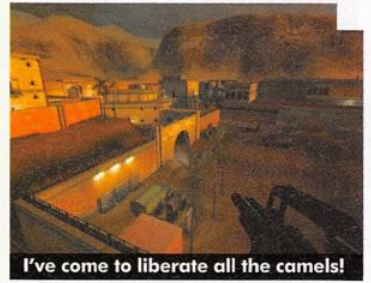
I've come to liberate all the camels!

IGI-2: COVERT STRIKE

CATEGORY: Stealth Shooter >> **PLAYERS:** 1-16 >> **PUBLISHER:** Codemasters >> **PRICE:** $89.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **REQUIRED:** PII 450, 128MB RAM, 16MB graphics card

DANIEL STAINES is as stealthy as a wallflower.

hen it was released a few years ago, the original Project IGI caused quite a bit of furore amongst gamers worldwide and in a single stroke neatly divided the world of stealth-shooters into two very distinct camps. On one side, you had the vociferous critics who decried the game's lack of in-mission saves and frustratingly hardcore stealth mechanics. Opposite them stood the apologists who held these so-called 'flaws' aloft as evidence that IGI was, in fact, nothing less than the consummate thinking man's shooter wherein every decision made had to be qualified with a hefty dose of contemplation beforehand.

PANSIES WITH A CAPITAL P

So which of these opposing schools of thought eventually won out in the end? Well, if IGI-2 is any indication, we'd be inclined to award victory to the critics because this sequel includes pretty much everything the naysayers demanded of its predecessor. There are now mid-mission saves, there is a larger leeway for tactical errors and it's even possible to survive a shoot-out with entire platoons of enemy guards. In short, IGI-2 is essentially stealth gaming for Pansies. Yes, that's right, you heard me — Pansies. With a capital 'P'.

If you think that sounds a bit harsh, then please consider the fact that — for the most part — getting caught by the guards in IGI-2 means absolutely nothing. If a guard spots you going about your sneaky business, you simply shoot him in the face with your super-accurate Silenced Pistol of Never Ending Ammo. And that's it. Provided you don't perform it in a floodlit room full of security cameras, this simple action acts as a failsafe stealth safety net for almost every situation in the game and dissipates much of the enjoyment to be had in achieving objectives the way they were obviously intended to be achieved. Why should anyone bother planning and thinking and sneaking about if getting caught is generally nothing more than a minor inconvenience solvable with a single bullet?

!!! At the official Codies site, codemasters. com you'll find IGI-2 downloads.

FEW REDEEMING FEATURES

But hey, that's assuming that you even do get caught. Because the AI in this game is so deplorably stupid, it is often possible to saunter through entire levels filled with guards just by holding down the 'go prone' key. On more than one occasion we were able to elude enemies who had spotted us at close range by simply falling to the ground and staying still. And no, we're not talking about pitch-black corridors here — we're talking about midday in the middle of a sugar white snowfield. Oh, and it doesn't really matter if guards start shooting at you anyway. David Jones, the game's retail tycoon protagonist, has lots of energy and lots of ammo. Much more than is necessary to survive, say, a protracted shootout with machine gun wielding madmen.

IGI-2 is stealth gaming stripped of everything that makes stealth gaming fun. As such, it is really little more than a fine looking but tediously slow standard shooter with few redeeming features. <<

PLUS: Looks very nice, some neat gadgets in there.

MINUS: Poor stealth mechanics, unconvincing AI.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
80	75	69

OVERALL

70

Stealth gaming for those who don't like stealth gaming.

Stop that shipment of warez, pilot!

Damn, they've got bulletproof tyres!

Oops I dropped it, my bad... BOOM!

Battlefield 1942: ROAD TO ROME

CATEGORY: Capture and hold FPS >> **PLAYERS:** 1-64 >> **PUBLISHER:** Electronic Arts >> **PRICE:** $49.95 >> **RATING:** M15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now

JERE LAWRENCE screams for reinforcements.

A big hit all over the world and awarded multiplayer game of the year by numerous respectable publications, Battlefield 1942 (BF1942) is an extremely popular game that offers an exceptional multiplayer experience along with equally enjoyable single player bot-matches.

At its core BF1942 is a simple capture and hold (C&H) game where strategic points on the map must be captured and then, to state the bleeding obvious, held. Yet BF1942 is more than just a fancy C&H experience and its rich tapestry of classes along with a plethora of vehicles (including numerous tanks, aircraft, battleships, aircraft carriers, APCs and jeeps) makes it one of the most comprehensive online WWII games there is.

THE ROAD TO ROME IS JUST TOO LONG

Unfortunately, while BF1942 is an exceptional product, the expansion, Road to Rome (RtR) isn't. The first and most prominent reason for lack of value is that where BF1942 ships with 16 maps, the expansion offers only a meagre six more. Worse, the maps shipped are contrary in design to what the user base was predominantly enjoying in BF1942.

One of the gripes that people have is that a number of maps are too large and require transport to get to where the action is. Problem is, most maps do not feature enough vehicles which results in players having to suffer downtime and either tediously walk to their destination or wait at vehicle spawn points with other users who will try and do anything (such as launch you in the air with detonation packs and kill you from the fall) so they can get the vehicle first. Sadly, RtR does nothing to address this and only compounds the problem with maps that are even larger, feature a similarly small number of vehicles and if you play online, good luck ever getting a plane.

DOESN'T DO JUSTICE

Of the six campaigns, Salerno, Anzio, Santa Croce and Baytown are downright ordinary with the only saving grace being Operation Husky and Monte Cassino which are quite fun, because the winding, narrow cliff faces reduce the size of the playfield and bring people into closer proximity for a more frenetically entertaining time.

Other inclusions worthy of note is the huge and incredibly powerful German Sturmgeschutz tank, fast twin engine bombers, engineers get bayonets, and strategically placed health crates make for less medic reliant healing. The lack of heavily mechanised maps (air campaigns, naval battles, tank fights) is a sore omission.

In a nutshell, Battlefield 1942 is still a superlative product and one of the best online games out there, but unfortunately this poor expansion doesn't do justice to the parent product. Go buy the original, get the latest patches and stick with that for now. <<

!!! Even as you read this, RtR is suffering from a seriously declining server population. For the first week after launch the GameArena server attracted its 40 player limit but now, one week later, peak time usage sits at around 12 players - not promising at all.

PLUS: Monte Cassino and Operation Husky are quite fun.

MINUS: Only six maps, four of them forgettable.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
90	90	44

OVERALL

65

A poor expansion for a fantastic game.

Robotnik has trouble creating an end of level boss

He shouldn't have stopped to pick up that dollar.

The Dukes of Hazzard make a cameo.

>>GCN

Sonic Mega Collection

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

Sonic Team has been busy lately, but not in the way you'd hope. Instead of giving us all-new games from the talented studio, Yuji Naka's team has been grinding away at filling the GameCube with Sonic history. First we got Sonic Adventure Battle 2, then the announcement of a port of Sonic Adventure one, renamed Sonic Adventure DX and here we have Sonic Mega Collection. A compilation of all of Sonic's games prior to Dreamcast and other next-generation consoles.

Mega Collection presents an emulated world of Sonic past, offering up seven Sonic games including Sonic the Hedgehog 1, 2 and 3, Sonic & Knuckles, Dr. Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine, Sonic Spinball and Sonic 3D Blast. There're a further two games to unlock as well as a whole slew of promotional and historical materials all centered around the hedgehog's battle with the Big N from glorious days past. While the overall presentation and compilation is good, you can't help but wish Sonic Team would do something a little more proactive with their time. Still, if you've never played a Sonic game of old, this is definitely worth checking out with the only deterrent being the hefty price tag.
Stephen Farrelly

>>PS2

Sword of the Samurai

CATEGORY: Samurai Sim >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >>
PUBLISHER: Genki >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >>
RATING: M >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

Not to be confused with the awful Way of the Samurai, Sword of the Samurai is the sequel to the criminally underrated Kengo: Master of Bushido. Addressing many of Kengo's flaws and introducing a number of superb new features, Sword of the Samurai employs an RPG-like character development system. The player's custom character begins the game with his or her stats at zero, out of a maximum 9999, and mirroring real life, skill increases only come with plenty of practice.

By training in dojos with other aspiring samurai, the player's character can learn new attacks, stances and parries, which can then be strung together in the game's rather comprehensive move editor. Of course there's no substitute for practical experience, and competing in tournaments against other swordsmen is an excellent way of acquiring new moves and honing abilities. Equally risky, but ultimately more rewarding, are the missions the player can eventually undertake. Many involve adventures befitting the samurai mythos — such as rescuing kidnapped geisha — but less savoury assassination assignments are also available.

Sword of the Samurai succeeds as a sim largely because it demands of the player a level of patience, commitment, concentration and precision not dissimilar to that required of real life students of the sword. As a result, a great majority of gamers will, unfortunately, find it excessively complex and repetitive. However, players with an abiding interest in the subject matter will discover that it's a truly captivating and rewarding experience.
Brett Robinson
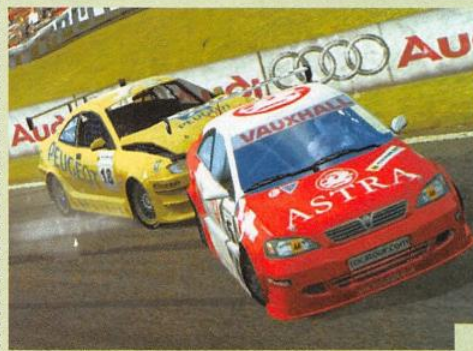
>>XBOX/PC

V8 Supercars Race Driver

CATEGORY: Racing >> **PLAYERS:** 1-multi >>
PUBLISHER: Codemasters >> **PRICE:** $99.95 >>
RATING: G >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

The TOCA franchise was built utilising the action-packed, competitive spirit of the British Touring Car Championship in the mid-1990s. Crashes were common, racing was tight, and a win hard to come by. This dedicated singular real-world focus translated coherently into the first two TOCA instalments, producing tight, compelling titles. TOCA World Touring Cars (TOCA 3) lost this focus and replaced it with quantity, as did the fourth iteration of Codemasters' now-legendary series when it arrived on the PS2 last year. Too many tracks, and alien racing competitions detach the player from the experience. Without this realism driving advancement aspirations, a game fails to be compelling, and thus, for all but the most dedicated player, its racing lacks life. These two latest TOCA's were, like Jordan's Wizards comeback, very much less special than the original two - thoroughly enjoyable yes, but definitive, no.

What more is there to say? The Xbox/PC version of V8 Supercars Race Driver has superior visuals to its PS2 cousin, bigger fields simply make for more 'racing', and the pop-up that plagued the game on PS2 is little more than a memory. Whilst the game doesn't win any awards for its physics model, and driver AI can improve, the range of cars and tracks promise longevity if so desired. Just be careful, as the V8 Supercars branding is mostly superficial — the game does contain many of the V8 cars and teams, but its quirky career mode is yankee-centric and lacks Australian authenticity. Still, the game warrants your inspection within either the Xbox or PC library of racing titles. **Jackson Gothe-Snape**

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
75	78	80	72

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
80	74	81	80

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
86	83	82	82

REVIEW

House of the Dead 3
SEGA

Doctor Curien has a lot to answer for. His is one of those tales of sorrow that have gone completely and utterly and most importantly — horrifically —wrong. In 1998, his son Daniel had an 'incurable' disease and the doctors had given up all hope on his survival. In an attempt to save his sick son, Dr Curien started experiments into genetic research, but unfortunately, although saving his son, he himself became 'sick in the head' and started creating flesh-eating zombies and monsters.

OUTBREAK OF ZOMBIE-ISM
That all took place in House of the Dead 1. Years later in 2003, another outbreak of zombie-ism occurred on a city-wide scale which led to the destruction of the world as we know it (nee: House of the Dead 2).

Now it is October 2019. The people who have survived have discovered that the source of the world's collapse stemmed from the hi-tech skyscraping 'EFI Research Facility'. A team of former AMS agents led by Thomas Rogan (HotD 2) have been dispatched to check the scene out, but have not been heard of for a couple of weeks. Now, two hardcore gun slingers — ex-agent 'G' and Thomas's daughter, Lisa, have grabbed a couple of shotties and 6 wheelbarrows full of shells and headed out to the facility to demystify the situation...

Shotties are kool and none are kooler than the 6 round pump-action shotguns used in this game. This is why the arcade version rocks harder than the Xbox port in which you can only get to grips with lightgun pistols. That
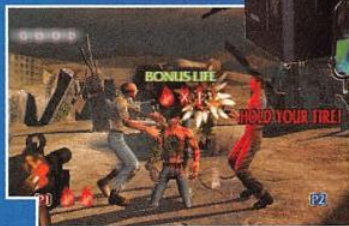
said, the arcade (usually) doesn't have the advantages of being able to play the game at 3am with all the lights turned out for added atmosphere. But nontheless, either version of HotD 3 is an epic, frightening, finger straining exercise in the destruction of some real ugly dead dudes.

SHOOT AT THE CRATES
Zombies ain't zombies. By the end of the game you will have made acquaintances with over 15 types of monsters ranging from mutant sloths and plant life to unrelenting waves of lowly civilian zombies to knife-throwing ninja types, lumbering fat rock'n'roll wrestling types, and decomposing monsters who are made of sewage. It's great to see wave upon wave of zombies coming at you... getting closer and closer... arghhh they are biting me... aghh. Or the ones that pop out of nowhere just

when you thought there was a lull in the action. Just don't forget to aim for the head. Oh, yeah — shoot at crates (we love those crates) as they sometimes have hidden lives in them.

The game is broken into 5 chapters, but at the beginning of each chapter, you are faced with branching paths to explore in the huge complex. The complex has a plant/ animal hybrid lab, a bio lab, gene research sector as well as computer and experimental growing labs. All this branching amounts to higher replay value and of course, a much-needed increase in the strength of your trigger fingers. I say fingers, as it is doubtful whether a 'normal' human being could make it through this half hour adventure on one finger alone — you may find yourself alternately using all 4 fingers.

Whilst most sound effects are above par, the voice acting is abysmal. The voice actors sound like they have just been awarded the

privilege of doing 1000 other people's tax returns. But at least it is so bad that it's actually interesting to hear how bad it is. In a way, the voices mimic the genre this game was based on — the B grade horror movie. And coincidentally enough, House of the Dead is being made into an expensive B grade horror movie as you read this.

Franchise games such as Virtua Fighter, Dance Dance Revolution, Tekken, and Time Crisis are big business in the arcade world. They also help give street cred to the console games (an old adage for console games used to be 'arcade perfect') HotD 3 is no exception, and is a great way to kill half an hour with a buddy in the two player mode. Play it now! <<

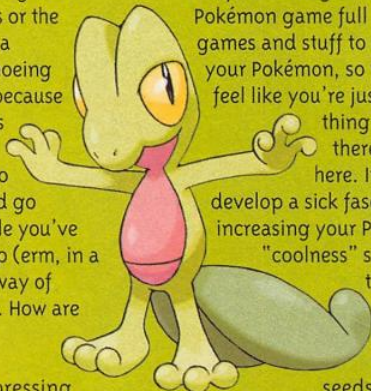**!!!** Get ready to peak, cause Time Crisis 3 and Virtua Cop 3 are soon to be released.

Tim makes some friends at his local arcade

OVERALL
8.5/10
(half a point subtracted for the voice acting)

Pokémon: Ruby & Sapphire

CATEGORY: Furry fetishists >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >> **PUBLISHER:** Nintendo >>
PRICE: $79.95 >> **RATING:** P-T (Poké-Tastic) >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

HYPER BIG RUBBER STAMP OF APPROVAL

Cam: So Mr. Fish, we've both spent the last week living and breathing the new Pokémon games; barely speaking except for the odd "pika pika" now and then, or muttering about stupid Gym Trainers or the best berries to feed a Treecko. I've been hoeing into Ruby (chosen because Lisa from DOA:XBV's birthstone is ruby, and she's a honey so I didn't think I could go too far wrong), while you've been ripping shit up (erm, in a loveable Pokémon way of course) in Sapphire. How are you enjoying it?

Eliot: Well, after pressing the A button like a zombie for about 30 minutes, I eventually got past the terminally boring first area and started seriously getting into it. It really does pick up further in. I can't believe how quickly one can get totally addicted to pushing the A button.

Cam: Well personally I was sold as soon as I arrived in "LITTLEROOT" town... Best. Town name. Ever. But yeah it was a bit boring at the start. Once you get some Gym Trainer battles under your belt, start riding around on a bike, mix some berries and enter one of your Pokémon into a beauty contest, it's all good. It's quite devious in its simplicity you might say.

Eliot: It really is very well designed. They've managed to pack this new Pokémon game full of crazy mini-games and stuff to do with/for/to your Pokémon, so you never really feel like you're just doing the same thing over and over... there's a lot of variety here. It's so easy to develop a sick fascination with increasing your Pokémon's "coolness" stat. Or maybe that's just me.

Cam: Totally. Gotta plant those seeds and mix those berries up! And there's surprising depth in battle below the cutesy exterior. Not only do you have a huge range of Pokémon to collect, level up and battle with, but there's the fact that you can only ever have four moves for each creature, so you're constantly prioritising which moves to discard and which to keep. So we could be using the same Pokémon but have completely different attacks available. And let's not forget the mad link-up trading and battle options between Ruby and Sapphire — including four player battles!

Eliot: I also like the way the menus have been improved, and things like the PokéNAV are much better. And as far as the graphics go, although the game on GBA looks very similar to the early Pokémon games, I notice they've added some nice GBA effects for certain special attacks and other visual treats like the weather effects.
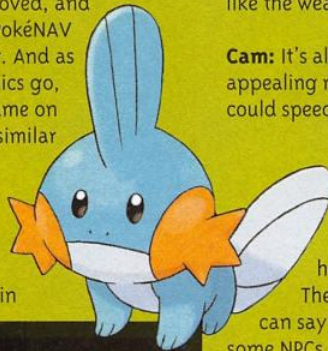
Cam: It's all pretty basic, but very appealing nonetheless. If only you could speed up the fight scenes...

Eliot: Sometimes you wonder why Pokémon is so popular, but then you play it again and see just how imaginative it is. There's not much bad you can say about it. Well, except that some NPCs look completely different in the world to how they look when you enter battle. A small girl with black hair on the map might end up being a tall skinny blonde girl with glasses on the battle screen...

Cam: And a svelte and sophisticated man about town on the map screen might look like Bryce in battle. What's up with that?

Eliot: Actually, I noticed there was an NPC named Brice...

Cam: Was he wearing karate pants and raving about Tekken? In any case, we both like the game, so should we see who is the superior trainer? HA HA! I challenge you to a duel sir!

Eliot: Have at you!
"BATTLE ENSUES"

Smack my Pokémon up.

The illegal Pokémon smuggling ring.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
81	80	89	90

Super Monkey Ball Jr

CATEGORY: Super happy smile-time family fun factory >> **PLAYERS:** 1-4 >> **PUBLISHER:** Infogrames >>
PRICE: $69.95 >> **RATING:** MG (Monkey Goodness) >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

Monkey was... irrepressible!

Disco balls in the wild.

That poor monkey is suffocating!

Super Monkey Ball. Is there anyone out there that doesn't love it? The gameplay is so simple yet so compelling, the reward structure is fantastic, the bonus games rock and it has to rank up there as one of the most abstract and just plain 'Japanese' concepts ever. Controlling a monkey in a ball through suspended platforms high in the sky in a quest to get bananas it can never eat? Okaaaay. It's like "Never Never Land Ranch: The Game", or perhaps "Super Happy Rolling Simian All-Stars"!

Now, one would assume that the 3D nature of the game would make it a tricky port to GBA, but developers, Realism, have done an outstanding job. Not only does the game accurately emulate the look of the GameCube version (obviously with a lot less gloss), but it even controls well. Realism were aware of the fact that moving from an analogue stick to digital D-pad will compromise the finesse of the controls, so they've added the ability to tweak the controls with the A and B button. Essentially, you can make your inputs more exaggerated or more refined respectively, giving the illusion of analogue control. It takes some getting used to but works well in the end.

The game has 60 challenges spread across three difficulty levels, and three unlockable mini-games — Monkey Fight, Monkey Bowling and the excellent Monkey Golf. Courses will be familiar to players of the console version, but there have been ple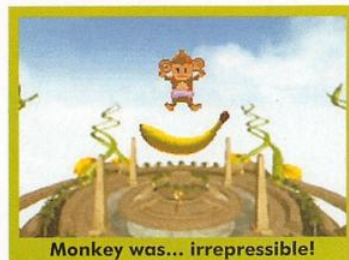nty of small changes made in the move to handheld. The biggest downsides for this title are the sometimes annoying camera mechanics, and the fact that there's really no need to play this game if you have the GameCube version. If you're a Monkey Ball virgin, however, this one is well worth a look. **Cam Shea**

FLOOR 10

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
78	78	84	83

Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance

CATEGORY: Fighting >> **PLAYERS:** 1-2 >> **PUBLISHER:** Acclaim >>
PRICE: $69.95 >> **RATING:** MA15+ >> **AVAILABLE:** Now >>

You may remember Mortal Kombat Advance. It was the unlucky recipient of 33% from this very magazine (we were in a good mood that day). Fortunately however, not only is this new Mortal Kombat GBA title a considerable amount better than its predecessor, it's a pretty good fighting game in its own right.

Controls are straightforward — punch and kick with A and B, and change stance and block with the shoulder buttons. The controls are quite responsive too, and although mashing is still very much a part of the gameplay, there's enough depth to entertain more serious players. It all looks pretty good too, with

Looks like her implants finally burst.

He keeps losing, 'cause he can't see.

decent sprite-based representations of the characters, arenas that give an illusion of space, and enough speed to keep you entertained.

Out of the 20 plus characters in the console versions, only twelve made the transition, but that's still impressive for a cartridge-based game. And to ensure that the game goes the distance, Midway have brought over the "koin" reward system too. The more you play, the more koins you earn, which can then be used to purchase all sorts of goodies. Indeed, there are 120 "koffins" to buy, each containing a prize. Obviously, the more you spend the better the reward. There's a huge amount of playtime on offer here for die-hard MK fans who want all the rewards. Plus, if you go head to head with another player via link

Welcome to Scorpion's Cooking hour!

cable you can gamble koins on the outcome, which makes playing two player a little more interesting.

It's no Alpha, but it's definitely worth a look. **Joey Tekken**

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	OVERALL
77	76	76	77

Bungee jumping without a rope

The legendary 1958 *White Wilderness* Disney documentary set in Alberta, Canada, provided the first proof that lemmings commit mass suicide with footage of a mass migration hurling themselves off a cliff to their doom. Or did it? Curiously enough, it turns out lemmings aren't quite the phrenetically suicidal little buggers that urban myth would now have you believe.

The lemmings seen in the White Wilderness 'migration sequence' were imported from their natural habitat – a dozen or so 'lemmus lemmus' from the arctic tundra of Norway – placed on a giant snow-covered turntable and then filmed from various angles as they spun, scrambling about and sliding into each other, creating the impression of an exodus. As if this wasn't humiliating enough, they were then transported to a cliff and herded off the edge by a friend of the cameraman.

It's undeniable that some lemmings do accidentally fall to their doom during periods of mass migration or drown in rough fjords (despite being good swimmers!), just as any average stadium stampede will squish a few spectators at the entrance, but lemmings are far less prone to off themselves than you or i. Those cute little claws can't tie a noose, let alone pull a trigger.

On the bright side, we gained a few wonderful games from Psygnosis, DMA Design took its first steps to becoming Rockstar North and blessing us with GTA: Vice City, and the expression "Like lemmings to the sea," became particularly popular. And now we know Disney is evil. Eeeviiiil...

OUT 17 IN 66% TIME
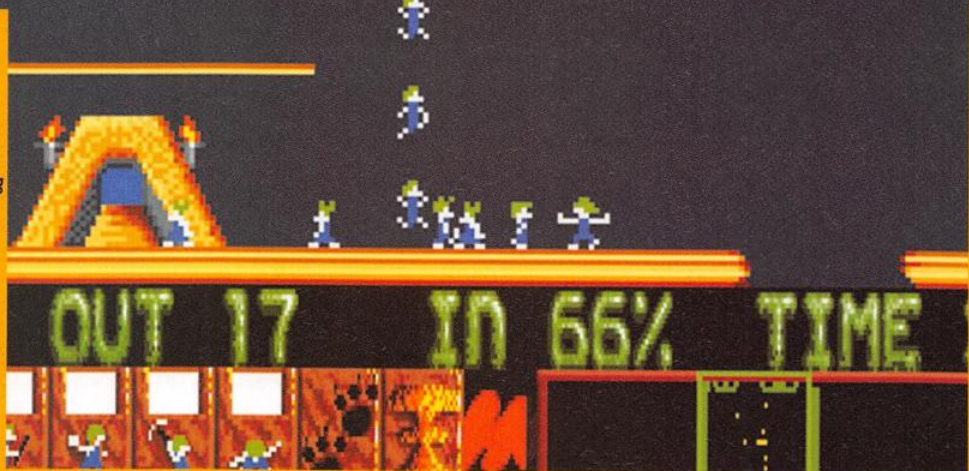
WHO BUILT THIS PINK MONSTROSITY ANYHOW?!

OUT 29 IN 16% TIME 3-56

LOATER 1 OUT 9 IN 00% TIME
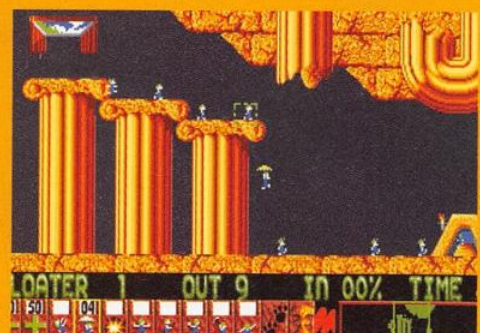
I THINK WE SHOULD SUE THE ARCHITECT

Lemmings

>>S H A K I L " S H A K " A H M E D

[TOP] MMMM... LEMMING CAKE!

THEY'LL WISH THEY WERE DEAD SOON

Once upon a time, we had this thing called gameplay. It was 'the'

thing. Before pixel counts began boggling the mind, developers focused on things like ingenious concepts and level design. Or at least DMA Design did in 1990 with Lemmings.

FROM POINT A TO POINT B

Everyone knows Lemmings. You'd plug it in, turn it on, and this 'ere giant trapdoor would open on up, and depending on your platform anything from cute green and purple balls of fluff to rampaging black and white streaks would tumble on through. Then they'd exit through this other little door to a lemming's paradise, and all would be right with the world.

And then you got to do that another hundred and twenty times or so, providing you prevented the mindless rodents from drowning, splattering, and assisted them in their blind endeavours to pass numerous obstacles along the way. With a couple of clicks you could turn a walker — all lemmings defaulted to non-stop walkers, wherein lay the premise of the game — into a climber, a floater, a basher, a bomber, a blocker, a digger, a miner or a builder. Whatever it was your lemming did, it was always done with a single-minded passion. Without your guidance, they were inevitably doomed.

The original Lemmings catered for two players as well, and it was always fun to thwart an opponent's attempts to save his lemmings with a well-placed and better-timed digger.

The concept behind Lemmings was so original and yet so simple that designers worldwide were probably kicking themselves for not thinking of it earlier. It didn't need funky graphics, and Psygnosis was even able to get Lemmings running on a Sinclair Spectrum, which should give you some idea of how un-funky the visuals were. The audio was terribly cute, with adorable sound effects including the notorious "Let's go!" screams of furry agony and the occasional (or not so occasional) pop bringing a smile to one's face even after months of playing.

Indubitably, the best feature of the game was the 'nuke' button, perfect for players frustrated by the last thirty or so Mayhem levels of the game. A five second timer would appear above the heads of the existing lemmings, and with a shriek of "Oh no!" they'd all explode, decimating half the playing field.

Following up on the success of Lemmings on Amiga, DMA Design and Psygnosis released Lemmings on practically every major platform of the time. They continued the series with Oh No! More Lemmings and Holiday Lemmings (also known as Christmas Lemmings) in 1991; essentially the same game with different levels.

It wasn't until 1993 that a real sequel arrived in their single-player Lemmings 2: The Tribes. Prettier graphics, better audio and the same marvellously addictive gameplay (with a few tweaks) marked the evolution of the series. The lemmings were now split into twelve tribes of sixty, based on stereotypes of different times and cultures, such as classic, Scottish, medieval and space age, but the main upgrade was that the original eight abilities had been expanded — now, there were over fifty! In 1994, DMA Design designed The Lemmings Chronicles, featuring fewer tribes, fewer skills, and beasties that attacked your helpless underlings. This was DMA Design's last Lemmings game, and marked the end of an era as they parted ways with Psygnosis.

LIKE LEMMINGS TO THE SEA

Like the mythical habits of the critters whose lives they toyed with, Psygnosis then decided to push into the realm of 3D, following the frenzy of better graphics, and stumbled. Lemmings 3D, developed by Clockwork Games and released in 1995 ditched the retro look and threw in four camera angles. Although it was one of the best puzzle games for the PlayStation, it didn't have the same widespread appeal as its predecessors. Lemmings Paintball (a wannabe shooter) and the Adventures of Lomax (side-scrolling platformer) in 1996 took the fur balls even further away from the classic style we all loved, and are barely worth a mention.
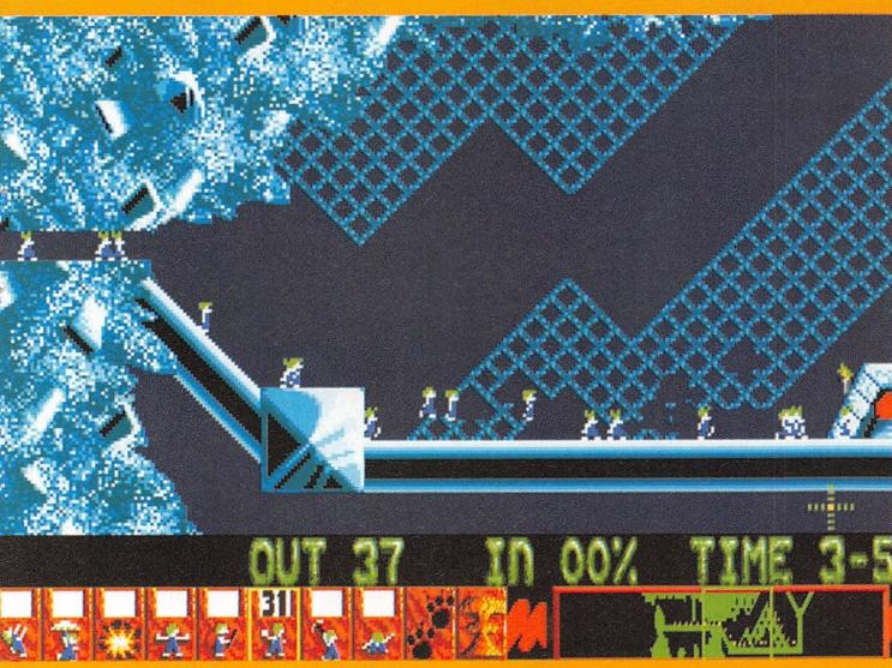
Finally, with Take 2 Interactive's Lemmings Revolution announced for 1999 as a spin on the original classic, it looked like Psygnosis (now amalgamated into Sony) was taking a step back to success. The demo was available on the Psygnosis site for a couple of weeks before it was revealed that the full game would never get released due to Sony's bad luck with PC development at the time. Within a year, however, Take 2 Interactive found another publisher in Talonsoft. Levels were flat, wrapped around a scrollable cylinder, but a few new skills and better graphics didn't make the game a big seller. The time for Lemmings seemed over, and Sony announced it would publish no more Lemmings.

DMA Design was acquired by Rockstar Games and renamed themselves Rockstar North in 2002. Nowadays they're worshipped for their Grand Theft Auto series, and as we've seen, they still have the kavorka that enamoured us to begin with.

Looking back, the Lemmings series was immortalised further by cultish fans who ported the game to platforms like the Sinclair Z88, Apple IIGS, Windows CE, PalmOS and even a variety of Texas Instruments and Hewlett Packard pocket calculators. The PalmPilot soon found its own version of Lemmings — Lemons, or Little Eager Men Of No Sense. This played exactly like Lemmings, but substituted cute balls of fluff with vaguely yellow blobs of fluff. Other clones were released such as Hamsters and Lemmis, and Clones and Pingus are currently in development by those who refuse to call it quits, replacing lemmings with — you guessed it — clones and penguins.

It looks like the original fuzzy lemmings, however, are gone for good, as are most 2D platformers of the day. Where to, one might ask? Well, to be honest, we like to think that all our hard effort paid off, and that they're somewhere safe, somewhere padded well. The little piece of paradise you could make out through the tiny exit of each level hints of a far, far better place.

We can only hope that Worms doesn't suffer the same fate when Team 17 completes the shift to the next dimension, but we'll let you know more about that another time! ‹‹

DVD Reviews

I used to be a male model...

Feel the heeealing power of Jeeesus!

Praying for your hair colour back, eh?

Angel SEASON 3

20TH CENTURY FOX, RATED M

The further in we go, the better Angel gets. Season 1 got the ball rolling, establishing Angel as more than a Buffy doppelganger, thanks in large part to a darker and more sophisticated city setting. Season 2 saw the show mature, expanding the core characters, traversing memorable story and character arcs, and crafting an even more complex vision of Angel as a character. Season 3 continues in this direction, and is definitely the bleakest and most tragic set of episodes yet.

LOVE AND LOSS

Boiling it down without spoilers, the theme of the season is love and loss. Or perhaps more accurately — love and gut wrenching abject misery. Over and over, happiness seems within reach, then is ripped away. It's merciless in its assault, and makes for very powerful viewing.

Taking a cue from Buffy, Angel has moved from only three main characters in Season 1 to a large core ensemble cast in this season. The mainstays are Angel, Cordy, Wesley, Gunn, Fred, and to a lesser extent Lorne, Angel's son, Darla, and the Groosalugg. And that's just the (somewhat) "good" guys.

This gives the writers a huge amount of scope for working within the main character group to generate conflicts, interactions and relationships — which are made all the more compelling because of the emotional attachment the viewer develops with the characters. This all adds up to fantastic and ever changing group dynamics, and some truly cool plot twists. Who would have thought that Cordy would become a champion for good? And that Wesley would... well, you'll just have to watch it.

Extras are unfortunately a little thin on the ground, with each set of three DVDs having only a smattering. There's a deleted scene (from Cordy! the sitcom), commentary on a couple of episodes, screentests for Amy Acker and Vincent Kartheiser (Fred and Connor) and a few featurettes — the behind the scenes "page to screen" being the most interesting.

If we had to sum up Angel in one sentence, we'd say that it's a greek tragedy dressed in a snappy suit. Fantastic viewing. **Cam Shea**

MOVIE: 9.5 **EXTRAS: 5**

HYPERVISION

Altered States

WARNER BROTHERS, M15+

K en Russell's 1982 mind-f**k of a science-horror film is worth checking out on DVD. It's a great story — a scientist (William Hurt), experimenting with isolation tanks and South American hallucinogenic mushrooms in the 1970s, starts noticing his intense hallucinations giving way to actual genetic restructuring of his body, with disturbingly freaky results.

Hurt makes his feature film debut with huge confidence and charisma. His Dr. Jessup is wildly intelligent and slightly unhinged, speaking - with great clarity - at a mile a minute, growing ever more excited (as we are) by the horrific bodily changes he's putting himself through. It's the sort of role Christopher Walken would make spookier; Hurt makes you care. He's well supported by Bob Balaban, Blair Brown and particularly Charles Haid

(Renko on Hill Street Blues).

The hallucination scenes are spooky and imaginative, and while some of the visual effects have dated, the scenes of Jessup's body mutating (made before morphing technology) are realistic and very disturbing. Ultimately, it's a "mad scientist" movie, a modern Frankenstein where the doctor and creature are one and the same; if you watch it late at night, alone in the dark, it should still give you the creeps.

Besides trailers, the only extra features are pages of text. **Christopher Johnson**
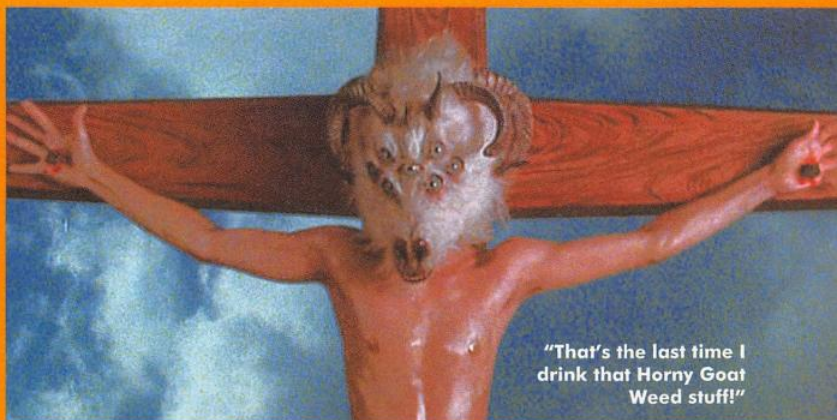
"That's the last time I drink that Horny Goat Weed stuff!"

The Hyper crew initiation ceremony ain't pretty.

MOVIE: 8   EXTRAS: 1

The Salton Sea

WARNER BROTHERS, R18+

A n American cross between *Trainspotting*, *Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* and *Red Rock West*, this straight-to-video drug noir wears its influences too loudly on its sleeve. Val Kilmer plays a methamphetamine user who's selling out dealers to a couple of cops (Doug Hutchison and Anthony LaPaglia). Warned to get lost for his own safety, he tries for one big score, from a noseless hillbilly dealer known as Pooh-Bear (Vincent D'Onofrio). But no one's motives are what they seem, and the stage is set for double-crossings aplenty…

D'Onofrio is truly entertaining as the fat freak with a plastic shnoz, Kilmer makes interesting choices as the drug-addled anti-hero, and Peter Sarsgaard, Luis Guzman, Meat Loaf and Adam Goldberg all turn up in quirky little low-life roles. But the whole thing is too derivative and laboured; trying to be quirky yet sombre, hip yet retro, it ends up being kinda good, yet pretty bad.

Meagre features include interviews revealing how overly serious everyone took the whole thing. **Christopher Johnson**

MOVIE: 5   EXTRAS: 3
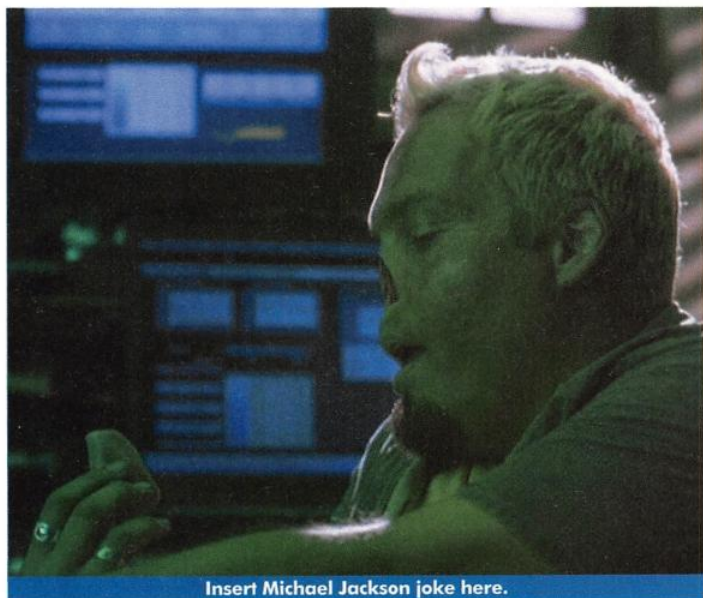
Insert Michael Jackson joke here.

"And the winner of the watermelon eating contest is... Tim Robbins!"

Arlington Road

MAGNA PACIFIC, M

F or a thriller that's essentially about the Okalahoma City bombing, *Arlington Road* (1999) is disappointingly tame. By never mentioning the Okalahoma bombing itself, and by creating a villain much less believable — and scary - than real-life Timothy McVeigh, the script ultimately shies away from the very issues it wants to confront.

Jeff Bridges plays a university professor whose signature class is on American Domestic Terrorism. He's a man in pain, mourning his wife, an FBI agent who died in a botched raid on a suspected anti-government extremist. Gradually, he begins to suspect his neighbour (Tim Robbins) of being such a terrorist…

It's got a terrific opening, a surprising ending, and excellent performances. But it's predictable and unbelievable, and refuses to delve deeply into the dark heart of its subject matter. One wonders why two such politically aware and classy actors agreed to this somewhat exploitative film.

Extras include some interesting on-set footage. **Christopher Johnson**

"Turn that Britney off NOW!"

MOVIE: 6   EXTRAS: 3

dvd

MAGNA PACIFIC, MA15+

"Give us all your Hypers. NOW."

I n *Two Hands*, Heath Ledger stars as Jimmy, a dumb kid looking to get in good with the gang that runs Kings Cross, headed by Pando (Bryan Brown). They give him a straightforward courier job, he screws it up, and suddenly doesn't have long to live. Can Jimmy find the cash to pay them back, get the girl (played by the gorgeous Rose Byrne) and stay alive? What do you think?

On its cinema release, Gregor Jordan's *Two Hands* was hailed as a gritty new breed of Australian film. Unfortunately, it's hard to see why. It's not that *Two Hands* is a terrible film, far from it. It's just that the narrative is founded on a mystifyingly weak series of events, it resorts to a shallow and stereotypical portrayal of Australian masculinity and the Kings Cross underworld, and there's nothing here that hasn't been done

Rose considers my marriage proposal.

before. Mind you, there are a couple of amusing scenes that help maintain interest in the film, such as the bullets that went through the wash and the bank heist, but overall what could have been an entertaining action/black comedy just feels a little clumsy.
Cam Shea

MOVIE: 6   EXTRAS: 5

"The I had this dream you were showing your butt to some pianist..."

Reservoir Dogs

MAGNA PACIFIC, R18+

T he year is 1991. Me and a mate. It was the title that got us in. We'd never heard of this guy Tarentino before and the only actor in it we really knew was Harvey Keitel. But as we left a screening of *Reservoir Dogs*, we instantly agreed that it was one of the best damn movies we'd ever seen.

Spawning a hundred imitations, *Dogs* is the granddaddy of the post-modern pop-culture-referencing self-conscious cool criminal flick. If you haven't seen it, you must; if you have, get this 2-disc DVD anyway, especially for the extras.

A YEARLY DOSE
Six guys pull a diamond heist. Two get killed. The remaining four gather at the rendezvous. Suspicions brew: who tipped the cops? Who's the rat? Everyone's armed. Who's gonna die?

The suits, the music, the dialogue, the guns, and the cast... Keitel, Tim Roth (a career-making performance), Buscemi, Chris Penn, old-school gangsters Ed Bunker and Lawrence Tierney, and, perhaps, most memorably, Michael Madsen and that scene...

If you haven't seen it since the cinema release, the twists and turns of the plot will surprise you all over again, the time-fractured narrative paving the way for the even more serpentine *Pulp Fiction*. It's bloody violent and highly profane, and huge amounts of fun. You may want to buy it for a yearly dose.

"No more crushing grapes!" BLAM!

The Blues Brother triplets

Now for the extras: awesome. No independent, low-budget film has yet had such a lavish DVD release. There are deleted and alternate scenes — including that scene from a much more gruesome angle — along with scene commentaries by noted film critics, short features on location scouting, action figures and the independent scene in 1992, radio out-takes with Steven Wright, masses of textual information on film noir, but best of all, supremely enjoyable long-form interviews with most of the cast, production team, and Tarentino himself, who is a true freak. All that's missing is a Tarentino full commentary.

A classic given a classic treatment.
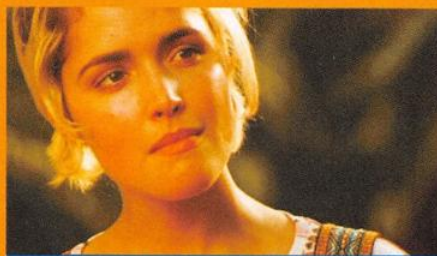**Christopher Johnson**

MOVIE: 10   EXTRAS: 9

Cradle of Fear

THE AV CHANNEL, R 18+

C radle of Fear has cult written all over it, and that seems to be the exact intent of director Alex Chandon. Catering to the grindhouse gore and fetish crown, *Cradle of Fear* is an Amicus style anthology film telling four related stories of demons, death and degradation all wrapped up in a bookend story of a Manson (Charles, not Marilyn) /Alestair Crowley wannabe and his quest for revenge. His tool for said revenge is tiny goth/fetish poster-boy, Dani Filth (Lead singer of Cradle of Filth). This is the only real flaw in the film - it's hard to believe that such a pretty little girly-man could be the ultimate evil badass.

Don't watch *Cradle of Fear* expecting to see some great acting - most of the cast are made up of well-known Brit underground identities but you will be pleasantly surprised by the quality of the direction, cinematography and writing. Hey, if that's not enough for you, each segment has at least one goth hottie showing her naughty bits. You've got to be happy with that.
Daniel Wilks

Mention The Cure, and you're in.

He has to get legless to face sex.

MOVIE: 7   EXTRAS: 2

HYPERVISION

ANIME

Hellsing

CATEGORY: ACTION
PRODUCTION: GONZO DIGIMATION

A secret establishment of holy knights called the Hellsing Organisation works from the shadows, silencing the voices of the undead so that folk like us can remain blissfully unaware of how close we come to supernatural Armageddon. It's a story we've already heard before, right? After all, the political structure of this secret organisation is awfully reminiscent of Bubblegum Crisis and Knight Hunters; and the secret super-team is lead by a warrior who looks like a cross between the Vampire Hunter D and Vash the Stampede, and who has clear psychological issues since he himself is a vampire. Heck, his name is even Arucard!

ALMOST VULGAR
The one thing preventing Hellsing from being written off is the fact that it was produced in Studio Gonzo, lead by one of the industry's favourite animators, Shoji Murahama. This is the guy who brought us such cult icons as Blue Submarine No. 6, Vandread, and the Lunar series on the Saturn.

Although the plot is unmistakably derivative, Studio Gonzo's production standards clearly elevate Hellsing to a much higher visual standard. The direction and style is very sharp and edgy, becoming creepy and almost vulgar at times, such as a brief scene where a boyfriend and girlfriend are shooting at dead bodies with their machine guns, all while she's giving him a blowjob.

There is, thankfully, a human connection in the form of a main character, Seras Victoria, who is transformed into a vampire. Unfortunately she's just too vacant and uncharismatic to carry the series. Not one of Studio Gonzo's finer works.

ANIMATION 8 PLOT: 5 OVERALL: 6

"Okay kid, now take your pants off."

"If I close my mouth it really hurts!"

GTO: Great Teacher Onizuka

CATEGORY: COMEDY/DRAMA
PRODUCTION: SME VISUAL WORKS

E ikichi Onizuka is a God among any man who counts watching anime as a pastime. At the age of 22, this former delinquent and bikie-gang leader is fighting tooth and nail to turn a new leaf and live a more wholesome lifestyle. He's not smart. He knows it. He's very honest about his failings like that. He's constantly haunted by his past, but he uses his experiences to apply his street-smart sense of justice to the ills of the world. He wants to be a highschool teacher. Why? Because he likes schoolgirl panties, and he'd like to marry a 16 year-old by the time he's 40. Give the man a medal.

PRETTIEST GIRL IN CLASS
Based on Tohru Fujisawa's popular manga (which spawned an equally popular live action show in Japan), GTO follows the exploits of this bleach blonde dunderhead as he fumbles his way through one disaster after another, from students who photoshop him into S&M posters around the school, to others who blackmail him by getting the prettiest girl in class to seduce him.

There are so many layers to uncover when appreciating an anime series like GTO. At face value, it's great for its situation comedy, yet much of the humour is critical of itself as a genre and of its target audience. As a contemporary drama, it also serves as a form of social commentary — and the humour and simplicity with which these issues are approached makes it so much easier to swallow. GTO is the most enjoyable and intelligent comedy since the Irresponsible Captain Tylor. Not to be missed.
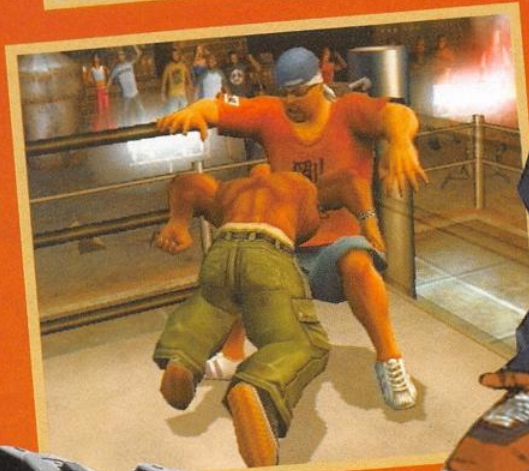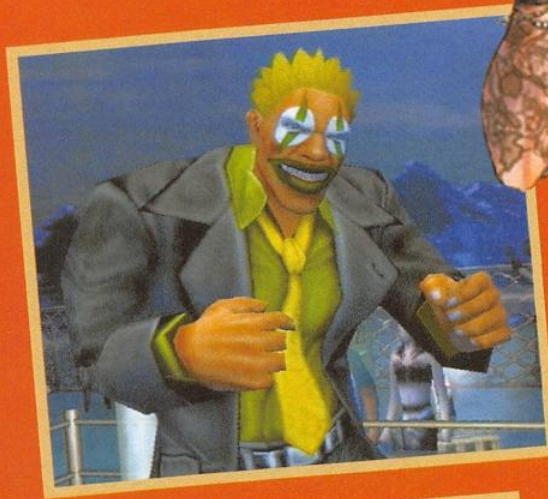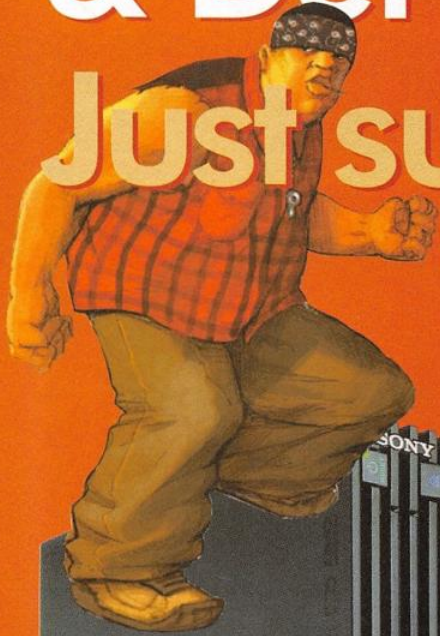
The poloneck from HELL.

>presses pause<

ANIMATION 7 PLOT: 9 OVERALL: 10

Win a PlayStation®2 & Def Jam Vendetta!
Just subscribe!

Def Jam VENDETTA

Subscribing to Hyper is cheaper than buying the magazine at the shops and you get it delivered straight to your door. Get your 12 issues of Hyper cheaper and maybe even win this fantastic prize!

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Just Subscribe!

How many consoles have Hyper given away to subscribers over the last nine years? Hundreds! And we just keep on giving… because we love you. Sniff! This month Hyper and Electronic Arts want to reward you with your very own **PlayStation 2 console**, and a copy of the cool **Def Jam Vendetta**. Def Jam Vendetta is the latest fighting game from EA Sports BIG, featuring **actual Hip-Hop artists** such as **Redman**, **Ludacris**, **Ghostface Killah**, **Capone** and more. It's the bizniz, as they say, tally ho, eh what? Surely you want to win it! Nine runners-up will also get a copy of the game! To be in with a chance to win this **incredible package**, just subscribe! It's easy, cheap and guarantees you a Hyper magazine every month! Awesome!

DEF JAM VENDETTA
First prize includes:
1 x PlayStation 2 console
1 x Def Jam Vendetta game

Nine runners-up:
1 x Def Jam Vendetta game

SUBSCRIPTION WINNERS
Hyper 112 - Xbox system, Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance game, t-shirt & comic
Paul Kinsella, Bondi, NSW.

Runners-up
(Mortal Kombat t-shirt and comic)

Amy & Lee O'Neill, Dubbo, NSW
Nicole Clavant, Ferntree Gully, VIC
Daniel Pigott, North Albury, NSW
Sam Downes, Cleveland, QLD
Jardi Leslie, Nedlands, WA
Tim Walsh, The Gap, QLD
Chris Genimahaliotis, St Georges, SA
Joel Vouzakis, East Ryde, NSW
Scott Dunk, Waroona, WA
Samuel Judd, Dareton, NSW

ONLY $50 FOR 12 ISSUES! DO THE MATH!

SAVE TIME SUBSCRIBE ONLINE
http://publishing.next.com.au/subs

✂ Please cut along dotted line

HOW TO SUBSCRIBE

1 Call us tollfree on **1300 36 1146** Monday to Friday 9am-5pm EST

2 Fax a copy of the completed form, with credit card details, to: **02 9699 0334**

3 Cut or copy the form and post it with a cheque or money order, or your credit card details, to: **Hyper Subscriptions Reply Paid 634, 78 Renwick St. Redfern, NSW 2016**

4 check out our website at **http://publishing.next. com.au/subs**

At time of payment your subscription coupon becomes a tax invoice. Please keep a copy of the coupon for tax invoice purposes.

Please tick
☐ **I'd like to send a gift subscription**
☐ **12 issues @ $50 (incl. GST)**

Enclosed is a cheque/money order made payable to Next Publishing Pty. Ltd. for $ ....
Or charge my credit card for $ ....
Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Bankcard ☐
Card Number ....
Expiry Date ....
Signature...

Please allow 4–6 weeks for delivery of first issue. Offer expires 14/5/2003. Overseas pricing available on application. Email: subs@next.com.au

Please print
My Full Name ....
My Address...
Suburb............................... Postcode ....
My Telephone Number ....
My Email Address ....

Please send a **HYPER»** magazine subscription to
Full Name...
Address ....
Suburb............................... Postcode ....
Telephone...

TAX INVOICE Next Publishing Pty Ltd.
78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016 ABN 88 002 647 645

HYPER» »HY0115

SUBSCRIPTIONS

»HYPER 91

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

Q. WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PS2 GAME TO DATE AND WHY?

Final Fantasy X? Grand Theft Auto III? Pro Evolution Soccer 2? Hell, it might even be Army Men! What we wanted to know from you this month, is which PlayStation 2 game has brought you more joy than any other. What are the games that made you laugh, cry, cheer and run over to hug your little black rectangle? These ones…

>>>>>>>>>>
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 is…

❓ **"What is your favourite Xbox game to date, and why?"**

Responses will be printed in Hyper 117.

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.

I GOT SOLID
My favourite PS2 game to date is by far Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty, Nintendo fans and all other jealous, left-wing bastards be damned. I first discovered Metal Gear while sifting through Google in search of anal enjoyment products… ahem, I mean some cool illegal mods… oh, now I've done it. Anyway, though I never played a Metal Gear game until I got Solid… look maybe I'll just skip this part.

MGS2 was hyped to such a degree that it really couldn't have lived up to the expectations of more cynical gamers given the deadline it had and the lack of understanding people had for Kojima's wishes to blur the line between cinema and games. I find it quite amusing that the majority of gripes which people had about MGS2 were things that we generally accepted in the first game: long cut scenes, an 'unbelievable' plot (yeah, for those who lack imagination), and a limited amount of play time overall. But if you finished this game and your mouth isn't watering at the prospect of MGS3, then perhaps action just isn't the genre for you.

My second favourite PS2 game (Devil May Cry) is relatively bare of cut-scenes in comparison, and left me feeling a little shortchanged in terms of Dante's personality and character -

though interestingly, this also really made me eager to play the sequel!

By the way, big thumbs up to Splinter Cell on Xbox, for giving the same quality in its gameplay that MGS2 had in storytelling. Keep it real.
Leontus Te Awamutu

A NICE CHANGE
Hyper,

I love simulations. I like the idea of experiencing things I normally wouldn't have a chance to do be it racing, real time war strategy or sports sims. By far the coolest sim I've played so far is on the PS2 and

isn't the best game on PS2 or even the most popular. It is just plain fun and I name KENGO: MASTER OF BUSHIDO as my fave PS2 game.

Experiencing the training and working through the schools at an almost meandering pace was very original and also a nice change from most other games out there. The graphics hold up very well and using wooden swords to get to the real fights meant that you really packed death when you got to a real blade fight. The only thing that could make it better would be a grand prix mode where you use your characters in an F1 car to

Pro Evolution Soccer 2 – gaming nirvana!

race to the local soccer grounds for a game of footy while controlling your army through a siege on the sporting complex through an isometric view.

Thanks,
Phracta

ANOTHER CONVERT

I used to think I could go through the rest of my life, purely with my collection of Final Fantasy games from PSX, along with the gorgeous adventure that was FFX on PS2, but I've had a revelation thanks to you Hyper crew!

After reading incessantly about Pro Evo 2 in your mag, I thought I'd give it the nod over FIFA this year, and I can't believe I never knew about it earlier. The depth to this game never ceases to amaze me, and the more I squish out of it, the more it delivers. Is there a better player than Maradona, or should I say Madorna? I know I bought the right console, when I found out you couldn't play Pro Evo 2 on anything else. Thanks guys, you rock!

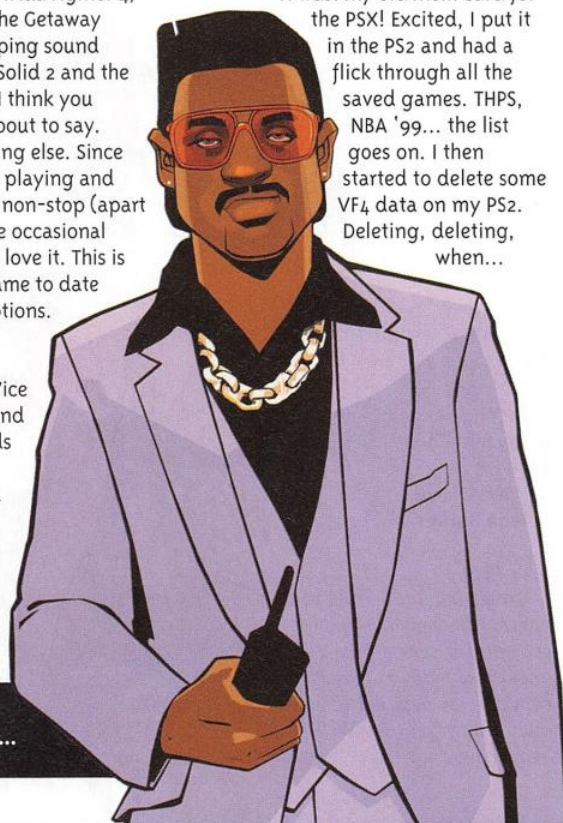**Shelly Hain**

Final Fantasy X – the best PS2 game ever?

I BEGAN CRYING

Hello Hyper,

Since receiving my PlayStation 2 for Christmas just a few months ago, I couldn't be happier with my choice of console.

To date, I own Virtua Fighter 4, Auto Modellista, The Getaway (*insert loud snapping sound here*) Metal Gear Solid 2 and the famous Vice City. I think you know what I am about to say. GTA: VC is something else. Since Xmas, I have been playing and playing this game non-stop (apart from MGS2 and the occasional multiplayer) and I love it. This is my favorite PS2 game to date without any exceptions. A total overhaul compared to the legendary GTA3, Vice City has kept me and many of my friends glued to the TV screen for months.

I would like to share a story with you and my fellow readers that most people @ the Hyper

Forums know. It was a Saturday night, and what better way to kill a few hours than with Tommy Vercetti? I set up my PS2, and was about to play when I saw something. Right there - behind my cupboard. Was it? It was! My old Mem card for the PSX! Excited, I put it in the PS2 and had a flick through all the saved games. THPS, NBA '99... the list goes on. I then started to delete some VF4 data on my PS2. Deleting, deleting, when...

Lance Vance, stealing hearts...

"ARGH!!!" I screamed so loud my dad had a heart attack. I was deleting my VC file! I ran to the PS2 and yanked the Mem card out. But it was too late. I stood there, shocked. "The print works... the print works..." I was dazed. Then, with tears in my eyes, I threw the Mem card at the TV and ran into the night, howling like a wolf. The other wolves heard me and injected me with their poison. I am now half dog.

Okay, so I didn't become man-dog, but I began crying. A little off topic, yet entertaining [true] story.

LONG LIVE TOMMY VERCETTI!!
JayJay

ICO LOVE

My favourite PS2 game? I would say Tony Hawk 4, but then Neversoft shouldn't be rewarded for simply pushing out a variation on same old. Many of you may feel that GTA3 or Vice City should receive the honours, but I seem to be one of the only people out there who believes that although those titles were great, they were overrated (give us a non-linear main narrative structure!). And FFX? Boooring. In the end, there are only really two titles that have truly excited me during the lifetime of the PS2. The first is the out and out arcade pleasure of Burnout 2 –

such intensity in a racing game! It never lets up, and with the addition of the Crash mode, is an incredibly well rounded bundle of gaming joy. The other game, and overall winner for me, would have to be ICO. I never thought that a console game could communicate so much through aesthetics and animations alone. ICO transcends language and ends up being an almost mystical experience. Anyone out there who hasn't tried it — do so. ICO is the new breed of adventure/platform game.

MazZer

NO, NOT YET

Hey Hyper,

There are a bunch of games I could choose to answer this question, but I can't help feeling that my favourite PS2 game hasn't arrived yet. I'm still waiting for a number of games that could take the crown for me... Enter The Matrix, Silent Hill 3, StarCraft: Ghost. I'm hoping one of these will make me feel that warm fuzzy. Well, I guess you don't think this is much of an answer. Er, in that case, I'll let you put down Deus Ex: The Conspiracy as my favourite PS2 game, alright? Is Deus Ex 2 going to be on PS2 too? If it isn't, I'll sneak into Ion Storm and let off an EMP grenade.

JC Denton

MAIL

DROOLWORTHY

A question to the Hyper crew and all readers: Define a Gamer.

I have been playing games on consoles such as N64, PSX, GameCube and PS2 since they came out. Before N64 I even dabbled in SNES. Only now though do I consider myself a gamer. Only now do I buy gaming magazines. Only now do I rush out and spend ridiculous amounts of money on games. Only now do I enjoy them. Why? The vastly improved graphics.

I don't want a challenge. I don't want excessive blood and gore. I don't want a racing game, a snowboarding game, or any kind of sport game at all. I don't want a heart-pounding mind-wrenching horror-shooter like Resident Evil. I enjoy RPGs for the submersion in fantasy. The multi-tracked thinking. The thought in battle, rather than the thumb-bruising button-mashing. Most of all, I want the best visuals there can be.

To me, looks of a game are everything. Zelda(64), Mario Sunshine, Tales of Phantasia (SNES, but still a lovely game, for the age.), FFVIII-X. If the game includes a healthy scattering of CGI scenes, I'm already drooling onto the cover.
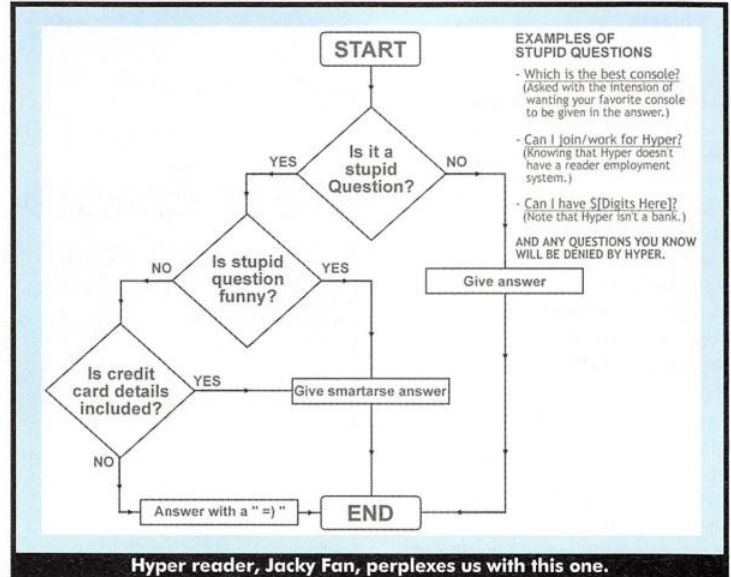
I'm interested in your thoughts though. I feel that, in this age, games are regressing in regards to their looks (Robotech: Battlecry, DBZ, Killer 7, Zelda:WW). People often exclaim, quite angrily, that the game play is the important thing. Not the look. But it's not to me. And people can't seem to understand this.

I've been told that loving a game for its visuals, for its characters is not sufficient to be a 'gamer'. I think, with the amount of moolah I spend on my game collection, I have every right to hold the title of 'gamer'.

Von

Dear Von,

Don't worry – we all love games and find them appealing for a variety of reasons. For some, the soundtrack could make or break their enjoyment, so it's not at all silly to find that graphics are very important to your love of the games you play. There's no doubt that a great deal of importance is placed upon the visuals of today's games, which is why tech-specs of consoles are so important

now. Did we care about what was inside an Atari 2600 back in the early 80s? Nope. But we care now... and there's a reason – graphics play a much larger role in the influence of one particular title over another. Enjoy your gaming, and be proud.*

EXAMPLES OF STUPID QUESTIONS

- Which is the best console? (Asked with the intension of wanting your favorite console to be given in the answer.)
- Can I join/work for Hyper? (Knowing that Hyper doesn't have a reader employment system.)
- Can I have $[Digits Here]? (Note that Hyper isn't a bank.)

AND ANY QUESTIONS YOU KNOW WILL BE DENIED BY HYPER.

Hyper reader, Jacky Fan, perplexes us with this one.

CAPTION THIS!

PART 40 WINNER

This month's winner is **M. Rimmer** of Albany. This was just about the only caption not mentioning bodily functions, such as poo.

"I'll be right with you pizza boy, I'm just looking for some loose change!"

CAPTION THIS MY ARSE

Hail Lord Seafood!

I don't mean to sound ungrateful but having won "Caption This" twice now (both times involving monkeys, go figure?), I'm just wondering if it's time my favourite gaming magazine offered a suitably dodgy gaming-related prize for us winners? You guys must surely have a crate in the corner of the office full of "Daikatana" t-shirts that no one wanted... T.T.C. - 0:15 ;-)

Getting our names in our gaming bible just isn't enough!

Yours Greedily,
Pete Barker

Dear Pete,

Greedy indeed! Getting your name in the magazine not enough? For shame! You know how many hundreds of captions you beat out to get awarded the winner? Well, okay maybe not

hundreds... but lots. Maybe we should award a special No Prize, just like Marvel comics used to do. There you go Pete, winner of the first official Hyper No Prize! Now push off and write us some funnier captions.*

Reader, Ari Gibson, continues to delight us.

ART BY: MrCivic

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
The Wind Waker

Hyper reader, Mr Civic, has nailed the new Link in stylin' fashion.

FOR AGATA...

Salutations, Hyper.

I'm just writing to say how depressed I am at the fact that Agata Budinska has left. The depression is reminiscent of the time long ago when Narayan left N64 Gamer, or that time about 3 months ago when my girlfriend broke up with me (thank the sweet Lord Seafood we got back together a month later), or that time I accidentally shot my mother. That was my last bullet too...

So to honour Agata, I have written a poem to her, entitled "Just As Good":

Hyper will never feel the same,
Nor smell the same or read the same.
And neither will my favourite game,
Since Agata has left for good.

This is driving me quite insane,
No I am not sane, I've lost my brain.
And for so long has my mind been slain,
*Since Agata has left for good.*

Within my hair is one blonde streak,
Inspired by hers, I look such a freak.
Her hair looks better, much more sleek,
Since I'll never be as good.

This stanza will be the final one,
The poem's done, it was kinda fun.
I hope when Agata raises a son,
He'll be just as good.

There we go. I'm almost in tears right now (hopefully my friends won't read this) so I'll finish off quickly. Is there any chance of Agata coming back, and if so, when? She's inspired me in so many areas of work and play, that gaming will never feel the same without her.
Signing off,
Luc666

Dear Luc666,
Hey wait a second... Didn't Agata file a restraining order against you? Anyway, I think Jackson is doing a delightful job with Back of the Net.
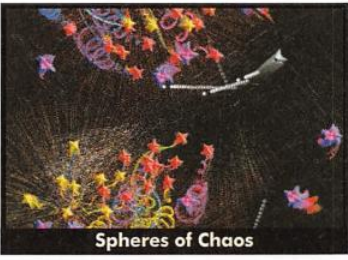
Spheres of Chaos

EVERYTHING EXPLODES

Sup Hyper,

I've just been shifting through my entire Hyper collection twice over in search of one little link in Trawlin'. It was for this trippy asteroid game thing where everything explodes in hypnotic waves of colour, but I'm afraid I'll never experience the greatness if I don't find this URL. If you know the game I'm referring to could you print us the link? What you guys really need is a Trawlin' archive on Hyperactive, I noticed you don't have any link section at all! Despicable! Help me out cos I've really been racking my brain over this. It's quite the pain in the arse when there's over a hundred possible issues that it could have been printed in and I have no idea where to start, and now all my mags are out of chronological order again. Sigh.
GOATSE

Dear GOATSE,
We believe the game you are remembering is none other than "Spheres of Chaos", an incredibly psychedelic Asteroids game. Here is the link to the official page:
www.chaotica.u-net.com/chaos.htm

THE GETAWAY...
IT SUCKS, REALLY

I have been a loyal Hyper buyer for a very long time now, and think it's a great magazine. When I got your last issue I saw that you had a review for 'The Getaway'. I quickly flipped to the page with the review and looked at the score out of 100. I couldn't believe

ARE SEQUELS A WASTE?

Why do people want sequels to videogames? To have the same feeling of bliss when playing the original and then some more. Naturally this seemed to be the path to the perfect game, but now after seeing the reviews for Devil May Cry 2 and Unreal II — two sequels that had so much hype and glory from the screenshots and previews — they have not manged to live up to our expectations. Could it be that the public is too harsh for our criteria in judging a video game? No. The public has the right to have an excellent game and the role of a videogame company is to satisfy the needs and wants of the market and consumer.

Now what? We should abandon our wants for sequels (unless there is evidence that it's good) and go for games with original concepts, characters and plot. Or maybe we should quit buying games and stick to what we have (but that would put Hyper out of business and no one wants that to happen — especially me). That's my two cents and I hope that the games industry will give me change for this matter.
Vonifictuous

Dear Vonifictuous,
It seems that, in many cases, sequels sell very well regardless of their quality. Many casual gamers will buy a sequel blind because they believe if the original game was good enough to have spawned a follow-up, then the sequel is a sure-fire bet. Sadly, in many cases, they're not. We're all for more original gaming concepts!
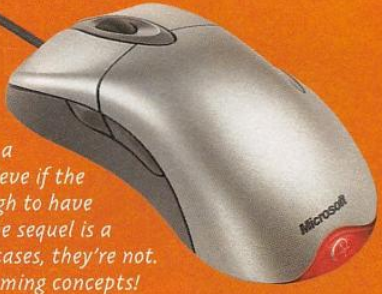
You've won a Microsoft® IntelliMouse® Explorer for PC! Best. Mouse. Ever.

The IntelliMouse® Explorer is an ergonomic optical mouse with five re-programmable buttons and an excellent feel for serious gaming!

Mouse valued at $99.95.
http://www.microsoft.com/hardware

what I saw. 59 F**KING PERCENT?!? What the hell is wrong with you? First of all, you gave visuals 83, where as Grand Theft Auto: Vice City got 92. Anyone who has played both of these games would know that The Getaway graphics are not only far superior to GTA: VC, but definitely one of the best looking games around. The system for The Getaway is great, being the most realistic game I've ever played — in a good way. There's no magic health icons or powerups lying around, or never-ending pockets for a billion guns. Are they in the real world? No. Unlike some other games where if you are badly hurt & still strut around without a scratch, this game shows the character's damage in the way he walks. I got this game for Christmas & it was my favourite game of all time. I admit that once you've finished this game there's not really much to do afterwards (except finding secret cars in 'free roam' mode), but the missions are brilliant. I'm not gonna keep going with all the good points of this game or this email would take up your whole magazine. I still love your mags & will still get them in the future, but since I love this game I had to tell you what I thought of your review. My
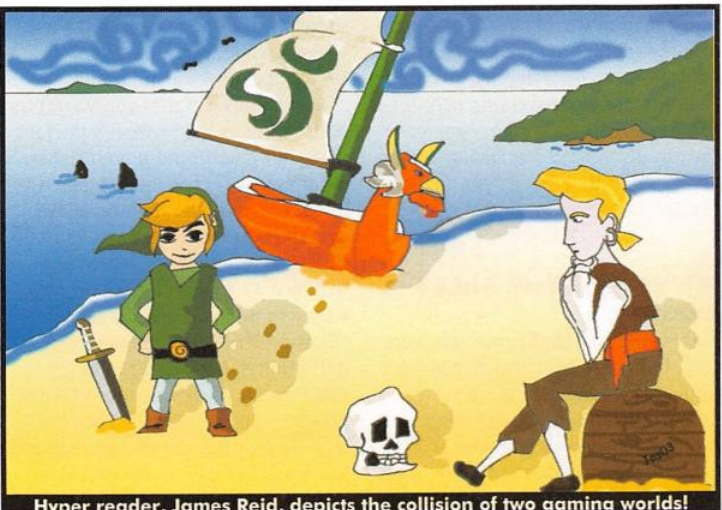
Hyper reader, James Reid, depicts the collision of two gaming worlds!

una Singing ~FFX-2~

What can I do for you?

Braidy Newman is hanging out for FF X-2 no doubt.

Ari Gibson snuck in another...

score/the real score=93/100.
C ya,
Jak

Dear Jak,
You're welcome to your opinion, and we're glad you found some enjoyment in the game. Please note that the visuals score does not simply rate the texture detail or number of polygons in a character and so on. The visuals score also takes into account things such as: style, flair, how well the visuals serve the gameplay and so on. We still rate Vice City far above the Getaway. Faaaar above.

WE'VE GOT THE BALLS

Morning Hyper,
I've always thought you guys were cool, but I didn't realise just how cool until I saw one of your quotes immortilised on the case of GTA3. Now that I've finished kissing your arses, I have something important to tell you.
When my friends and I first started reading your mag, we knew we'd found a winner. Never before had we seen a magazine that could tell us more than polygon counts, hardware effects and system requirements. Now there is a magazine with funny captions, witty comments and enough brains to have found something wrong with even the most eye-sparkling, razzle-dazzle, everybody-go-buy-this game.
But it's not just that you've got the balls to tell us the truth, it's the fact that your humorous humour (where's my thesaurus?) has really made an impact on our lives. Before, all we ever did was recite the same old boring jokes that even a deaf guy had heard a million times. But now, we try to think up good ideas for "Caption This", puzzle over the definition of BLAU and reminisce about our favourite captions (Team Attack!... team? team?). Even the way we play our games has changed. Just the other day on RollerCoaster Tycoon I named an Exotic Seafood

stall "Lord Seafood's Fish hut".
Finally, I've got a question for you... Will GTA3, Vice City and MGS2 Substance be released on GameCube? If not I'll just have to buy a PS2 or (God forbid) an Xbox.
Keep up the good work Hyper, coz if you don't my friends' heads will explode!
Falcon

Dear Falcon,
Nothing like reading a bit of arse kissing, thanks.
There is a version of Metal Gear Solid in development by Konami in collaboration with Nintendo, for the GameCube. We believe it's a brand new Metal Gear Solid title, and may even launch with a GBA companion game for some funky link-up. It has not been officially announced, though it appears to be officially confirmed, if that makes sense.

DESPOTIC PARENTS

Dear Hyper
For the last years of my life I have been consoleless (except for a PSone which my parents have continually the controllers locked away). My despotic parents believe that the influence of computer games will desecrate my knowledge of most things. I plead with thee o omnipotent Hyper, answer this email and prove to my parents that games are wonderous things.
Bruva G

Dear Bruva G's parents,
See how poorly written your son's letter is? See how he barely grasps the English language? The problem is, you're not letting him play enough video games. RPGs taught me how to read and write, I swear.

FEEDING THEIR FEARS?

To Hyper,
What is the deal with your captions? Can't you guys create humour without relating to drugs or sex? It is a very amateurish approach to attempting to get laughs.
Judging by the age group of the kids you sell this magazine to, I would estimate your user-base to be around the 8-22 year-old bracket. Therefore captions like "shut your fokking face uncle fokker" are hardly appropriate, as the picture that was captioned had nothing to do with either WW1 aeroplanes or aviation in general!! In the same magazine the caption "we shouldn't have had that cone of the

enders" Smart stuff guys.
Nobody needs to guess that you blokes are fairly reliant on marijuana, which is quite disturbing considering the power you have with this magazine.
It is obvious your humour is aimed at the lowest common denominator and for parents who are finding excuses for their children to not play games, your magazine is a shining example of what not to do and is feeding their fears.
I trust you will have no issues printing this letter in your letters section as it is a valid viewpoint, I also welcome your view on the topic.
Thank you.
Jimmy Holster

Dear Jimmy,
The Hyper "age bracket" is probably more like 16-30, (though I think we can be enjoyed by all ages), so we've always had slightly risqué content, and that's the way we will stay.
As for captions being appropriate, Roy Fokker is a character from Robotech, which is why we used that caption for the Robotech game review (& it was a snippet of the South Park song, Uncle Fokker, by the way).
Cone was a pun on Zone – maybe not a great caption that one, but hey, I have my bad days – and really, it's meant to just be for laughs. We're not "fairly reliant on marijuana" as you suggest, but we ARE fairly reliant on making jokes and having a laugh. Maybe you should try laughing – it's good for you. Really!

The Official Australian Games Chart

Compiled by Inform in association with IEAA

TOP 10 — PlayStation 2 Games Over $50
W/E 9 March 2003 RETAIL SALES

#		Title	Genre
1	◆	GTA: Vice City	Adventure
2	◆	The Getaway	Adventure
3	◆	The Sims	Strategy
4	◆	Mortl Kombt:Deadly Alliance	Action
5	◆	Kingdom Hearts	Adventure
6	◆	Grand Theft Auto 3	Adventure
7	◆	Sly Raccoon	Adventure
8	✪	Burnout 2	Racing
9	✪	Red Faction 2	Action
10	▼	Drgonbll Z:Budokai Fighters	Action

TOP 10 — PlayStation Games Over $40
W/E 9 March 2003 RETAIL SALES

#		Title	Genre
1	◆	H Potter Chamber Of Secret	Adventure
2	▲	Digimon Rumble Arena	Action
3	▼	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	Sports
4	▲	Lilo & Stitch Trouble Pardse	Adventure
5	▲	FIFA 2003	Sports
6	◆	Space Chase Pack	Compilation
7	▼	Stuart Little 2	Adventure
8	✪	Jinx	Adventure
9	✪	Tomb Raider 3&4 Cllctors Pk	Adventure
10	✪	Final Fantasy Anthology	RPG

TOP 10 — Game Cube Games Over $40
W/E 9 March 2003 RETAIL SALES

#		Title	Genre
1	✪	Resident Evil Zero	Adventure
2	✪	LOTR: Two Towers	RPG
3	▼	Super Smash Bros: Melee	Action
4	▼	Super Mario Sunshine	Adventure
5	▼	Mortl Kombt:Deadly Alliance	Action
6	▼	Starfox Adventures	Adventure
7	▼	Mario Party 4	Family
8	✪	Rayman 3 Hoodlum Havoc	Adventure
9	✪	Crash Band: Wrath Of Cortex	Adventure
10	✪	Spyro: Enter The Dragonfly	Adventure

TOP 10 — Xbox Games Over $40
W/E 9 March 2003 RETAIL SALES

#		Title	Genre
1	▲	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Adventure
2	▼	Mortl Kombt:Deadly Alliance	Action
3	✪	LOTR Two Towers	RPG
4	▲	Tom Clancys Ghost Recon	Strategy
5	▼	Medal Of Honor: Frontline	Action
6	▲	LOTR: Fellowship	Adventure
7	✪	Halo - Combat Evolved	Action
8	▼	Dead To Rights	Adventure
9	✪	Project Gotham Racing	Racing
10	▼	Tiger Woods PGA US Tour 03	Sports

TOP 10 — PC Games Over $30
W/E 9 March 2003 RETAIL SALES

#		Title	Genre
1	✪	Master Of Orion 3	Strategy
2	▼	C & C Generals	Strategy
3	▼	The Sims Deluxe	Strategy
4	◆	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Adventure
5	▼	The Sims Unleashed	Strategy
6	▼	Sim City 4000	Strategy
7	▼	Age Of Mythology	Strategy
8	◆	WarCraft 3	Strategy
9	✪	IGI 2: Covert Strike	Action
10	✪	The Sims Vacation	Strategy

TOP 10 — Game Boy Advance Games Over $40
W/E 9 March 2003 RETAIL SALES

#		Title	Genre
1	◆	Dragonball Z: Legacy Goku	Action
2	◆	Zelda:Link to Past/4 Swords	RPG
3	▲	Game Watch Gallery Advance	Compilation
4	▲	Mario Kart Super Circuit	Racing
5	▼	Harry P Chamber Of Secrets	Adventure
6	▲	Super Mario World Advncd 2	Adventure
7	▼	Yoshis Island: SMA 3	Adventure
8	✪	Medabot: Rokusho	RPG
9	▼	Metroid Fusion	Action
10	▼	OTR: Two Towers	RPG

TOP 10 — All Full Priced Games
W/E 9 March 2003 RETAIL SALES

#		Title	Platform
1	◆	GTA: Vice City	PlayStation 2
2	◆	The Getaway	PlayStation 2
3	✪	Master Of Orion 3	PC/MAC
4	▼	C & C Generals	PC/MAC
5	▲	The Sims Deluxe	PC/MAC
6	▼	The Sims	PlayStation 2
7	▼	Mrtal Kmbat:Deadly Alliance	PlayStation 2
8	◆	Kingdom Hearts	PlayStation 2
9	✪	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	PC/MAC
10	✪	The Sims Unleashed	PC/MAC

MARKET WATCH — All Games by Platform
Mar 02 vs Feb 03 RETAIL SALES

Platform	Share	Growth
PC	37%	-36%
PS2	32%	-40%
PSX	14%	-45%
Xbox	10%	-50%
GBA	4%	-59%
G Cube	4%	-36%

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40
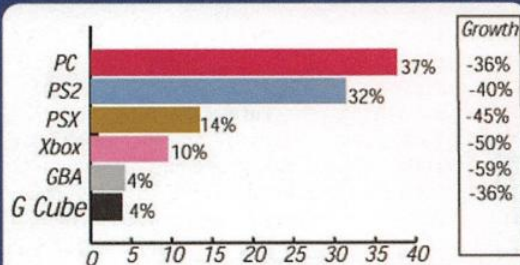
✪ New Entry
◆ Non Mover
▲ Up from last week
▼ Down from last week

DRIVEN BY PURE LUST
FRIGHTENINGLY BEAUTIFUL
MEN DROP AT HER FEET

XBOX

NINTENDO GAMECUBE.

PC
CD

PlayStation 2

BLOODRAYNE.COM
BloodRAYNE™