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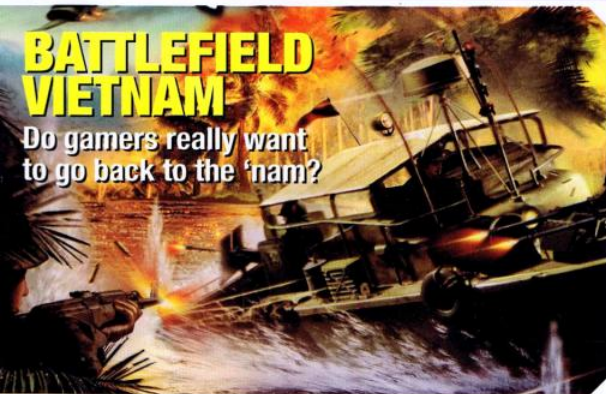
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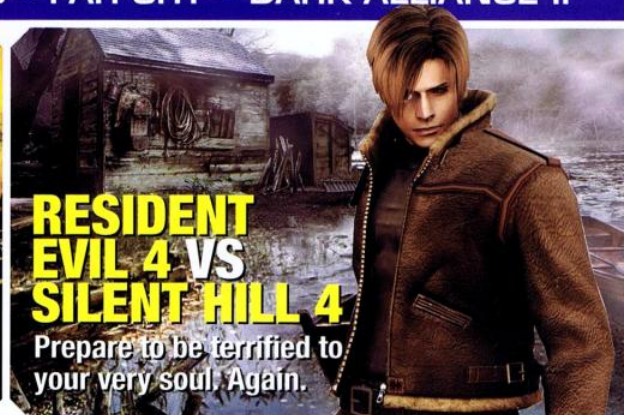
BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM

Do gamers really want
to go back to the 'nam?



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Prepare to be terrified to
your very soul. Again.



ISSUE 127
MAY '04



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GAMING

BURNOUT 3 INTERVIEW

Arcade racing perfection?

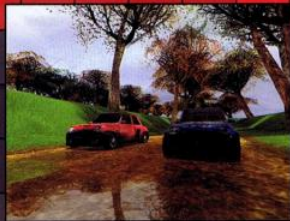
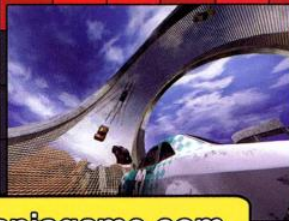
METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES

The PlayStation classic revisited

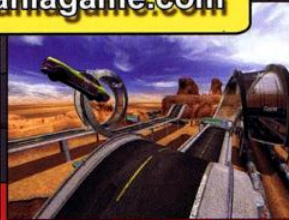
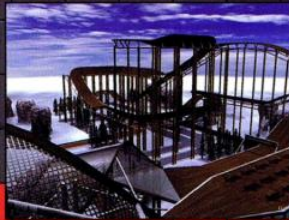
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54 METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES

Cube owners finally get a Solid Snake in their hands.



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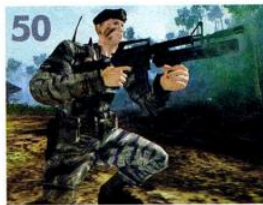
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HYPER»

ISSUE 127

MAY 2004

WRITE TO HYPER!

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ACN 002 647 645
ISSN 1320-7458



EDITORIAL

» Y'know, I've learnt many things during my tenure as deputy editor on Hyper. I've learnt that it's good to play together. I've learnt that revenge is a dish best served cold. I've learnt that swing bowling is the key to office cricket. I've learnt a little French through Japanese game commercials, such as "pants tres bien". I've helped popularise new words such as "Blau" and new ways of expressing incredulity such as the mannerism. I've learnt that "keeping it real" in the world of gaming simply means continuing to enjoy this crate-tastic pastime as a hobby as well as a job, and continuing to give it to you guys straight, without diluting the message or bowing to outside pressures.

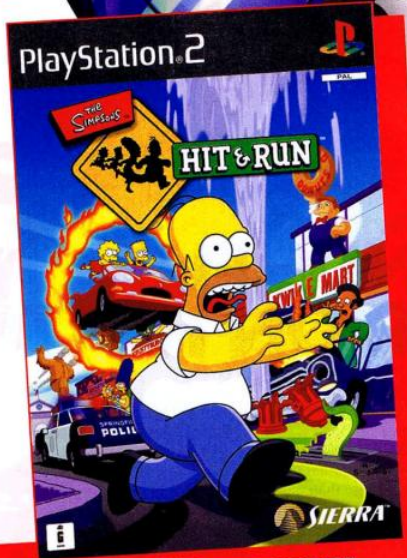
All those lessons are going to be important when it comes to keeping Hyper as informative and irreverent as ever. So whilst Eliot's tyrannical reign is over, we wouldn't be here, looking this fit and healthy, with our pecs of steel and buttocks that could crack walnuts, without his leadership. Let's all take a moment to poor some Hennessey on the curb and wish him the best of luck. Hyper won't be the same, but as the old saying goes "sunrise, sunset". In keeping with that mantra, I'd like to welcome the indomitable Daniel Wilks on board the good ship Hyper as first mate, or "the world's most dangerous deputy editor" as he likes to refer to himself. And now my reign of terror begins...

Cam Shea » Editor

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 - GameSpot



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 - Play Magazine



News

IN THE NEWS: Sony's PSP delayed ■ Xbox 2 Source Released? ■ More GTA Confirmed ■ Nintendo Patent Handheld Emulation



CASUALTIES?

HANDHELD WAR ON HOLD

And Nintendo reveal some cards...

It looks as though the hottest war of the year (not the ongoing War on Terror), will not be going ahead as planned. Earlier this year Sony announced that their hotly anticipated multimedia/handheld gaming platform, the PSP, would be available for sale in North America (and perhaps Australia) by Christmas 2004, the same time as the new Nintendo handheld, the Nintendo DS (Double Screen). Now it appears that Sony will be delaying the release of their handheld until the first quarter of 2005 to give their developers time to finish their stable of launch titles. Although Nintendo are still planning to release the DS at Christmas Sony are showing no signs that they are worried about the handheld giant's head start on the market, citing that the two units aren't in competition due to the PSP's multimedia capabilities, such as being able to play movies and music.

That said, the more information that gets leaked about the DS (or Nitro, as it's apparently known internally), the more interesting it sounds, and the more excited we get. Although we can't be sure of the veracity of our information on the subject, it's still worth going over. We already knew the DS would have two processors, but it now looks like they will be an ARM-9 CPU running at 67Mhz and an ARM-7

running at 33Mhz, along with 4MB of main system memory. Better still, the system will actually be quite capable in 3D, with some figures indicating that it will be able to handle at least 120,000 polygons a second. Not powerful next to this generation of consoles, mind you, and not as powerful as the PSP, but the DS certainly has potential. Weigh in solid 2D capabilities (including compressed video playback on 128MB carts) and GBA compatibility, and the DS could well be a great all round system.

It's the dual screens that will really set it apart from the pack though, and it's highly likely that at least one of the screens will be touch sensitive, which will certainly give developers food for thought. The screens themselves are slightly higher resolution than the GBA's, weighing in at 256x192 as opposed to 240x160. Another element that we're very excited about it is the likely inclusion of wireless play, specifically the 802.11 wireless standard. Imagine 8-16 player wireless LANs!

Of course, finding out a little more about the hardware is exciting, but we won't be sold on how "innovative" the system really is until we have it in our hands, and get the chance to play some of the launch titles. We'll have more on the DS and the PSP after E3.



DEVELOPERS

MACBOX?

Xbox 2 SDK released?

There are rumours circulating, courtesy of an unnamed source, presumably from inside Microsoft (if *The Inquirer* is to be believed) that the Xbox 2 SDK (Software Development Kit) has begun to be circulated to developers. Although this is interesting in and of itself considering the great lead time until Xbox 2 is slated for release, what is more interesting is that the

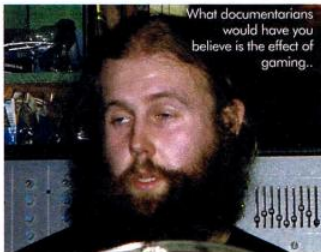
rumours say that the SDK is running on Dual Power Mac G5 computers running a modified Windows NT kernel. If this rumour proves to be true it lends weight to the other rumours that both Intel and nVidia have lost their part in the next-next gen console as the G5 utilises two IBM Power PC processors and an ATI Radeon 9800, the hardware tipped to power the Xbox 2.

DUMB

VIDEOGAMES MAKE SWEDES FAT, STUPID

Another documentary condemns gaming

One thing you can be certain of in this crazy world that is video gaming is that every few months a new group of "experts" will get together and condemn the hobby we know and love for being responsible for all of society's ills. This time around a Swedish documentary called "Deadly Game" (it's nice to see the press is unbiased) has made the claim that gaming is responsible for making kids fat and violent using such great rhetoric as "they (video game players) are rehearsing scripts of behavior that will possibly play themselves out in real life," (Michael Rich, an American Pediatrician) and "it has been proved beyond dispute that people who watch a lot of violence on television develop aggressive behavior." This



What documentarians would have you believe is the effect of gaming..

last quote, attributed to Frank Lindblad, a Swedish child psychiatrist is perhaps the most disturbing — not in the fact that it is true but because that all of the studies that have been conducted into the effects of screen violence being mirrored in real life have either proved to be negative or inconclusive.



ARGH!

THANKS MIDWAY

Midways makes a grab for controversy

In an era when every second game released seems to have some criticism leveled against it by some group or another, whether it be Haitians getting pissed off by some of the more racially based missions in *GTA: Vice City* or pretty much anything in the execrable *Postal 2*, it's good to see that a known (though not particularly respected) developer is doing everything they can to stick to family values. Midway's newest game in development, *N.A.R.C.*, a big budget remake of their moderately successful 1990 arcade game of the same name will see players taking the role of a narcotics agent tasked with the

simple task of blowing the crap out of various delinquent types. Once dead these shady characters will drop stashes of cash and drugs but where the original game only gave points for picking up these objects the planned remake will reward players for actually taking the drugs — toke on some weed to enter a bullet time like state, take some LSD to make enemies easily identifiable (they all grow big devil heads) or take some speed for a bit of a boost. It's nice to know that in these current political climes where it seems like everyone in power is looking for an excuse to regulate games that Midway is giving them a reason.

CAPTION THIS!

Come on, make us laugh. Do your best. You can do it! Just send your funny screen captions to us at captionthis@next.com.au with Caption This Part 54 in the subject line.

PART 54



teh lol



[above] Sheep - not just for sex anymore

FURRY

GONE TO THE (SHEEP) DOGS

High Tech Fabric

▶ A New Zealand company, Canesis, which bills itself as a "wool research institute" has developed a textile based keyboard that could be quite a boon for the 12,500 odd sheep farmers on our nearest neighbour. The keyboards utilise a technology pioneered in conjunction with British developer Softswitch that uses tactile pressure to change the amount of electricity running through the fabric — the harder you press the more electricity can flow. Although the keyboards would be little but a novelty if used in conjunction with home computers the design of the technology makes it perfect for weaving into seating, clothing and even hospital blankets negating the need for remote controls and the like.

WINNERS

Hyper 125

FINAL FANTASY X-2

Tim Delaney, Wardell, NSW
John Lombard, Civic Square, ACT
Canaan Cook, Port Macquarie, NSW

Emma Dolbey, Launceston, TAS
Brendan Cheung, Croydon, NSW

COUNTER-STRIKE

Charlie Fay, Gordonvale, QLD
Greg Love, Subiaco, WA
Peter Henderson, O'Connor, ACT
Caitlan Carter, Wentworthville, NSW
Klinton Breese, Parkwood, WA
Helen Commens, Windorah, QLD
B. Myers, Craigburn Farm, SA
Robert Di Ciaccio, Port Kembla, NSW
Mark Green, Warwick, QLD
Tanya Thornton, Kew, VIC

BLAU

SONY BEATS TV

Is online gaming hurting TV?

▶ A recent Nielson poll of television habits in North America discovered something interesting — the number of male viewers between the ages of 18 and 34 during the prime time (8-11pm) has dropped by an alarming (for the networks at least) 8-12%. Before you start to think that people are actually going outside and doing something active, Sony has been quick in reply to publish a study of PS2 Online subscribers that shows that the 260,000 or so online subscribers in North



America play between 5 and 11pm — right in the middle of prime time. Although there is no conclusive proof that it is indeed computer gaming that is causing the decline in primetime TV viewing, the networks have been quick to agree that gaming is the most likely cause of the drop.

NASTY

XBOX LIVE TO KILL MODDERS

Leave your mod-chips at the door

▶ Microsoft are making another advance in their war against people modding their consoles with their Xbox Live service and some of their new games (hello Ninja Gaiden!) actively scanning the storage capacity of all the machines linked to the service. Presumably the offending systems will be banned from the service. Aside from checking to see if the box has a regulation hard drive, the Xbox Live check is also going to be looking into the extent to which the hard drive is utilised by different games. Although there has been no real confirmation by the software giant as yet, there is a great deal of speculation that



Xbox 2 will forgo the often problem riddled (and piracy friendly) hard drive in favour of a large chunk of solid state flash memory, especially if the Xbox Live research shows that the HDD is being underutilised by the vast majority of gamers.

CYBER

DEAD OR ALIVE YOU'RE COMING WITH ME

Hong Kong's answer to Robocop

▶ There's a new cop in town, one with a durable alloy body, advanced processing power and sensory capabilities but unlike the hero of Paul Verhoeven's 1987 classic sci-fi action film, this robotic cop doesn't have a violent bone (gear) in its body. Unimaginatively called Robotcop, the automated crime-fighter is the third generation of robotic police officers to be employed in Hong Kong. The highly successful Robotcop campaign is aimed at



school aged children where the geared-up cop is used to educate the students about the law and the consequences of breaking it. So far the Robotcop program has been instrumental in the education of some 800,000 students since its inception in 1988. Although the robot is not cheap at around HK \$300,000 (\$53,000 Australian) the current Robotcop has proven to be a lot more cost effective than the earlier iterations of the robot.

CLEVER

NINTENDO PATENT HANDHELD EMULATION

Combating GBA piracy

▶ In a not so surprising move to stop companies from making profit from illegally obtained GBA, GBC and GB ROMs, Nintendo have taken the interesting approach of patenting hand held emulation. Patent number 6,672,963 gives the Japanese console manufacturer the copyright patent on all Gameboy related emulators. The most obvious target of this attack is the recently released super handheld device, the Tapwave Zodiac, a combined PDA, MP3 player, picture viewer and handheld console with the ability to run emulation software. What is not known at this point is whether Nintendo are going to use this patent to make a blanket ban on all emulation or whether they will use it as leverage to try and broker a deal in which the handheld device will be able to continue to use the emulation software if they pay the venerable games giant a substantial stipend.



ROCK!

MORE GTA ON THE WAY!

Can't find fault(lines)

▶ Rockstar North have confirmed the next title in the hugely successful GTA series. Yep, it's Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas, and it will be exclusive to PlayStation 2 (although who knows what "exclusive" means any more — presumably it will be for six months or more). Rockstar have even announced that they expect the game to be on sale in North America on October 19, 2004 and in Europe on October 22, 2004. Stay tuned for details and an Australian release date.

JUST ANNOUNCED! Sly 2: Band of Thieves

PS2 Developer: Sucker Punch Publisher: Sony



JUST ANNOUNCED! Jak III

PS2 Developer: Naughty Dog Publisher: Sony



OVERFLOW

Vicarious Visions have revealed that they'll be incorporating a co-op two player mode into the Xbox port of Doom III. Does that mean the PC version won't have one? Damn you id Software!

The Pro Evolution Soccer series is making its way to Xbox later this year! Thank god FIFA won't be the only option for serious Xbox football fans any longer.

EA recently announced that Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban on PS2 will feature a range of mini-games that utilise Sony's EyeToy. Better still, they even support headsets, so you'll be able to not only do the wand motion for a spell, but say it as well. Could be very lame... but we like the concept - especially the idea of putting on the sorting hat and getting assigned a house. Bring on Slytherin!

Sega have signed on to publish Sports Interactive's titles for the next five years. After parting ways with Eidos, and losing the "Championship Manager" title, it should come as no surprise that in Q4 2004, we'll see the release of "Football Manager 2005". Truly inspired.

It looks like the Sony PSX will be getting a release in Europe later this year, which hopefully means it will also come to our shores. Let's hope so, because the idea of having a PS2 with a built in HD (so you can record TV) and DVD recorder, not to mention support for mp3s and a wide selection of image formats is very alluring...

Ever dreamed of seeing The Godfather turned into a videogame? Then dream no longer, because EA have the license. Not only that but they're already thinking about doing a series of games and are even in discussion with Robert De Niro and Al Pacino to record new voice work for the games! Deep pockets, thy name is EA.

Word on the street says that Namco will be tekken the wraps off Tekken 5 at E3 in May. It's also possible the game will see release in Japan before the end of the year. Bryce must be getting excited...

In non-games news, we were saddened this month to hear that Angel has been cancelled, so after the fifth season, it's all over.

Bad Cop No Doughnut

DANIEL WILKS - THE WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS DEPUTY EDITOR



After a year of the hell that is full time freelance writing I'm back. Back in Redfern. Back near the urine soaked alleys and the

perpetual panhandlers. Back in a part of town that swears at you to give it money and then swears at you if you don't. Only a few days after I came back there was a riot. Now I don't want to take full responsibility for the act of civil disobedience but come on - you do the math. While I'm gone there is nary a peep from the denizens of Redfern - a suburb with the dubious honour of being "The Gateway to Waterloo" according to a sign near the offices - and then when I return, BAM, cops in the hospital.

I put it down to an experience I had many moons ago when the Earth was young and I first started working in Redfern as an employment agent. A few month after I started work strange things started happening; people in the few fast food outlets would give me freebies or look at me like I was the devil and they didn't want to get on my wrong side. People on the street started giving me that knowing nod that you bequeath on someone you know by reputation. These events escalated until I was eating for free nearly every day and Redfern locals started giving me a wide berth. Eventually it all came to a head when someone called me Erin. Apparently I am a dead ringer for one of the locale's more notorious leg-breakers. I left Redfern for the first time shortly after that for fear that either Erin would find out that I had been taking his free shit and more importantly that some rival leg-breaker would level their ire at me rather than at my doppelganger.

But I keep coming back. Erin has returned, albeit in a less hirsute form and the violence has returned with him. The siren's call of squalor and desperation is too strong to resist.

Redfern. I hate it here.
There's no place I'd rather be.



JUST ANNOUNCED! Ratchet & Clank 3

PS2 Developer: Insomniac Publisher: Sony



NEW SCREENS!

Killer 7

GameCube, PS2 Developer: Capcom Publisher: THQ



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PlayStation 2



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IN STORES MAY 6



BUR



Few other arcade racing games of the current era have had quite the impact that Burnout and Burnout 2 have had. In a genre that was rapidly becoming stale, Burnout came along packing insane speed, great drift mechanics, thick traffic to weave through and courses that took you from towering cities to narrow coastal highways. It was a fantastic marriage of assured game design and cutting edge technology and as far as we're concerned single handedly rejuvenated the arcade racing genre. With the third game on the horizon we thought it was the perfect time to have a chat with Alex Ward, the Director of Design at Criterion Studios about where the series is headed.

HYPER: You've recently signed a publishing agreement with EA. How does that change your day-to-day operations? Are EA giving you free reign with the direction of Burnout 3?

Alex Ward: It doesn't change anything really for us on a day-to-day development basis. We hook up with our producers, Harvey and Matt, at EA UK every other week or so and we discuss the latest builds etc. We were already in development with B3 before we signed up with the EA guys. So yes, they trust us to develop a hit game and we trust them to give us good feedback when we need it, and we trust them 100% with regards to all the stuff that they are good at. We're happiest doing the bits that we know best, the actual software development.

HYPER: Is there any chance that we'll see Burnout 3 released as part of the Need For Speed franchise?

Alex Ward: No.

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCM / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Arcade Racing /

PLAYERS: 1-6 / DEVELOPER:

Criterion / AVAILABLE: 2004 /

WOW-O-METER



WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

You know it, we know it -
Xbox Live support!

HYPER: How will the branching structure for the Race Championship and Crash Championship modes work?

Alex Ward: The first two games were both pretty linear in terms of how the player progressed through them. We've decided to do things a little differently this time around so that the player has more freedom and choice to move through the game.

Originally there was a plan to integrate both race event and crash events into one huge championship. However, we changed our mind about this as we think some people will want to jump right in there and play some Crash Mode the moment they boot up the game. So we've kept them separate.

The branching structure of the Championships allows you to choose your path through the whole experience and also to give a bit more choice as to the type of race you do next. There are also special events along the way which are not mandatory.

HYPER: There are stacks of new play modes in Burnout 3. Tell us a little about the Road Rage,

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT RACING ANYMORE, IT'S ABOUT FIGHTING...

BURNOUT 3



[top] Good to see the lens flare will never die.
[above] Slam? Surely BLAU would be better.

Burning Lap, Survival, Battle Race and Burnout Challenges modes.

Alex Ward: Road Rage is the replacement for what was called 'Pursuit' in the last game. This mode was very inspired by one of our favourite old coin-ops from yesteryear, Taito's superb "Chase HQ." The gameplay mechanic was simple and we were able to give it a makeover and add a few Burnout style twists of our own. Basically, in this mode you have to race and ram a fixed number of opponents off the road. The more you hit them the more their vehicle falls to bits. It's simple, fast and fun, and especially good in 2P Mode. However, the bit that never seemed to feel right to us was the police car. Burnout is all about risk taking and dangerous driving, so all of sudden driving a cop car just wasn't right. So we've added a few tweaks and removed the cop car.

Burning Lap events are timed lap challenges and all you have to do is complete a lap within a fixed time limit.

Survival Races are something we tried a little in the first Burnout, but it was far too tough, one crash and it was over. Testing the final build was a nightmare as it meant we had to complete the toughest race of all, the USA Marathon Reverse in Survival Mode. All I can say is that it took Paul, one of our designers, a long long time to get it done. So this time Survival Races are Races where you have a crash limit assigned and you must survive the race with as few crashes as possible.

A Battle Race is similar to a Survival Race but this time you have a set number of opponents to takedown and destroy as well as having to Survive.

Finally, Burnout Challenges are course specific challenge events along the lines of the 'Big Challenges' in SSX3.

HYPER: We loved forcing opponents into oncoming traffic in the previous games, and it sounds like this combative element is going to play a major role in the sequel. How exactly



BURNOUT 3 MAKES BURNOUT 2 LOOK REALLY SLOW



will you be able to "use your car as a weapon" and will this have implications for course design?

Alex Ward: In B3, you can ram your rivals off the road any way you like. It's not just about racing through traffic anymore, it's about FIGHTING through traffic and winning the race. This time the gloves are off and it's a down and dirty aggressive race. You



can force them into oncoming traffic, smash them into other AI racers and even ram them down the side of a cliff. Pushing, showing, kicking and screaming — that's what the new races are like. Are you scared yet? And yes, this does have implications for the course design. With the first two games, we were always 100% against having fixed objects in the course that could cause fatal collisions. It's often so frustrating in some of the other racing titles we have played. But in our game you can crash pretty well and fixed objects help give us opportunities for takedowns so they fit the game. On every track there are also opportunities for what we call 'signature takedowns', special chances to perform a takedown. For example, one of the courses features trams in the road, takedown an opponent and make him crash into the trams and that's one of the signature takedown moves.

HYPER: How will the introduction of offensive moves alter the gameplay balance? And how has the opponent AI been changed to reflect both a concern for coming first and taking out other cars?

Alex Ward: Well, this time we've changed how the boost system works. Aggressive driving gives you boost, which makes you go faster which can help win the race. The more takedowns you do the bigger your boost meter can be. So if you want to be first you have to drive aggressively. If you drive cautiously and avoid mixing it up with the pack then you simply won't take first place. It's a race and winning is everything. But just play as dirty as you can along the way.

HYPER: In the previous games there seemed to be definite traffic patterns to learn in certain sections... which reduced the long term appeal to some extent. How randomised is the traffic going to be in Burnout 3?

Alex Ward: It's a tough one as we firmly believe that learning the

game well rewards you in the long run. If the game was truly random then the play experience would not be so good. Our traffic system is pretty robust and there's a fine balance between good traffic and bad traffic. We hope you'll like it.

HYPER: Tell us about the technology behind the game. How much has been carried over from Burnout 2 and how much is new?

Alex Ward: The graphics team thought they had hit the wall with B2. They were pushing the hardware pretty hard. In fact, if you go ask Sony themselves and ask them which titles have pushed the machine the hardest, well, they'll tell you that it's Jak II and Burnout 2. Their Performance Analyzer tool doesn't lie. But after B2 was done, the team had a good look around inside and then started to tweak and tune. And then they started off improving performance in all manner of areas.

The whole graphics engine is between 50 and 100% faster this time than we did for B2. This has given us the performance to do real-time radiosity lighting and proper environment mapping effects (the type of which you've only ever seen so far on the best Xbox titles) on the vehicles which makes them absolutely real and better than ever before. Add to that more complex and much richer detailed courses and you'll notice the improvements. And all that is before we begin to mention the amazing and incredibly complex deformation and particle effects such as sparks, volumetric smoke and shattering glass. To top it all, we're pushing more polygons around than ever before.

HYPER: How much more room is there to push the performance of the Xbox and PS2? Are both versions being developed simultaneously?

Alex Ward: Yes, this time it's a parallel development so Xbox is being done right alongside the PS2 version.

HYPER: Will we see an even greater speed increase when boosting this time around?

Alex Ward: Yes, the vehicles are wilder and running much faster than ever before. B3 makes B2 look really slow.

HYPER: The Crash mode in Burnout 2 was a wonderful innovation. How are you planning on topping it for Burnout 3?

Alex Ward: I can't say too much about this right now. What I will say though is that it's bigger and better than ever. And that 'big' vehicles are returning to Burnout.

HYPER: Is there any chance we'll be able to set up our own Crash intersections — ie a Crash Editor?

Alex Ward: No. You'll just have to trust us to give you some great places to crash!

HYPER: Online play is becoming increasingly important for this generation of console games — what modes will Burnout 3 offer and what will it do better than any other online racing game?

Alex Ward: Online is a key component for us and was the starting point for us in terms of the 'aggressive driving' experience. We think players are going to really enjoy racing online with Burnout 3. All of the traffic is in there, and that's a pretty incredible feat as most other titles don't feature any traffic at all in the online modes. Currently, almost all of the single player Race and Crash Modes are playable online. That includes some of the co-operative and team based events, about which I'm not saying anything!

HYPER: Are you disappointed that you won't be able to incorporate Xbox Live functionality into the title? Is this something that could be included as a hidden option that could be unlocked at a later date if Microsoft and EA come to an agreement?

Alex Ward: I don't have anything to really say about that. That's more of a question for the EA guys.

HYPER: How has the reward system changed? Tell us about some of the trophies that will be included in the game.

Alex Ward: The game tracks a lot of your stats both online and offline and there are various rewards tied into this. I can't say too much about this as this is stuff we are implementing right this minute!

HYPER: Thanks for your time Alex. We look forward to playing the game! <<<





Resident Evil 4

“Resident Evil 4 will be so scary; it will blow your mind” or so stated Shinji Mikami, Res Evil 4 director and series creator, at last year’s E3. But what, since the game’s initial unveiling, have we seen to back this statement up?

Well, there were the initial screenshots. There was the idea that as Leon S. Kennedy (from Resident Evil 2, for those counting) you played the game infected with the T-virus. A promise of a new fully 3D engine void of pre-rendered backgrounds and a revamped control scheme was thrown into the mix ending years and years of controversy. And finally, a new video teaser was shown at E3 highlighting the game’s ubiquitous scare and scream-factor.

But even with all of that, how can we be sure this game is going to be as scary and mind blowing as Mikami-san stated? Perhaps a plethora of new screens supplied to you, from Hyper, can help answer that question, and if that isn’t enough, we’ve compiled everything we know about the game and the direction of the series into one convenient preview, all for you. Feel the love baby.

IS THAT A ZOMBIE IN YOUR POCKET?

There’s not a lot we know about the story for Resident Evil 4 right now, aside from the fact the game’s protagonist, Leon S. Kennedy, is now working for the government and has

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Survival Horror /
PLAYERS: 1 / DEVELOPER: Capcom /
AVAILABLE: TBA /

WOW-O-METER



WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

Playable code at E3!

been coopted by someone important to track down their kidnapped daughter. This spells a different approach to the game’s narrative; from what we understand you’re not fighting zombies anymore, instead you’ll find yourself fighting for your life on a very Lovecraftian feeling island swarming with savagely insane humans and monsters from the deepest recesses of your id. In footage we’ve seen, Leon will encounter giant sea creatures with hunger for the other, other white meat, grotesque Troll-like giants and worse. So far there has been no inking as to why these horrors exist on the island aside from tantalising bits of jargon from the footage we’ve been shown that include the ubiquitous “DNA” and “terrorist organisation”.



[above] No more shambling the residents of the town will follow you wherever you go

As the accompanying screens suggest, the game is also played in widescreen, another interesting tack for the series to take, and it seems as though we’ll view the title over Leon’s shoulder for much of the game. There are other viewpoints, and even an FPS-style camera is likely to be in the mix, but we’ll have to wait and see. Other additions to gameplay, based on the fully 3D engine, include a first-person free-look at the environment, something fans of the series have been screaming out for, for a long time.

There’s still no concrete evidence – either way – about the direction of the control scheme; but given the amount of negative press garnered over the years towards Capcom hanging on to their digital set-up, it’s a safe bet that changing the

“YOU’RE NOT FIGHTING ZOMBIES ANYMORE”



[left] That gun doesn't look nearly big enough for the job
[below] Nothing says horror like a chainsaw



RESIDENT EVIL 4 IS LITERALLY CRAWLING WITH DANGER

[below] Outdoor, daytime environments are but one of the new features



control scheme is something they had on the drawing board early in this game's development. But again, it's all speculation so far. What is known is that Leon will now be able to perform far more actions in real time. Instead of the old school Resident Evil door opening/load animation, Mr. Kennedy will be kicking doors down, leaping through windows and scaling ladders — all in real time. It appears as though the developers are looking to create a far more action packed Resident Evil, and speedier and more flexible movement for Leon is crucial for that goal.

LEATHERFACE, IS THAT YOU?

This isn't to say that Resident Evil 4 will be skimping on the scares, just that the approach appears to be far more visceral than the more evocative approach of the earlier

games. Instead of wandering through mansion or facility and the surrounding yards, Leon will have access to all of the (as yet unnamed — at least to the press) town and all of its buildings as well as the surrounding area, including what appears to be a rather sizeable lake. Unlike the previous games that relied more upon the generally creepy atmosphere and a few key encounters, the town in Resident Evil 4 is literally crawling with danger. It appears as though the entire township is affected by whatever contagion, curse or condition is causing them to act as semi-mindless savages. These guys are everywhere, are well armed and quite capable of working in packs. The combination of ever-present danger and the quiet desolation of the town should make for an experience not too friendly on the nerves.

Blood and guts won't take a hit, and should be represented in full force, at least keeping that aspect of the former games alive. Equally, the guy with the bag over his head and chainsaw in hand looks to be the obligatory "unstoppable monster" which is another welcomed feature from previous games, and certainly

someone who'll keep you on your toes throughout, no doubt.

Resident Evil 4 will contain a new hit location system for combat so it will be possible to effect different body parts. Shooting a crazed villager in the arm should make attacking more difficult and likewise shooting them in the leg should make them move slower. As always, head shots will still be the way to go if you're looking for a quick take down. The NPC AI also seems to be a little more advanced than the simple move forward and moan with the occasion lurch of the zombie infested previous games. One bit of footage showed one of the insane townsfolk approaching Leon slowly but suddenly jinking out of the way just before he could manage to get off a shot. Combine this with the seeming propensity to work in packs and you have the makings of some frenzied and harrowing combat.

"ALL NEW FLESH EATING ACTION!"

Another big change in Resident Evil 4, aside from the abundance of outdoor locations is the fact that it's not always dark. You read that right — it's not perpetual night/gloom in





[right] It looks as though Leon will need a bigger boat too
[main] The quiet desolation of the town is something to behold



the latest incarnation of the popular survival horror series. Not only is this a radical departure from the canon that the Resident Evil series has laid down, it should also allow the developers to create a deeper, more cohesive story and thus deeper, more satisfying scares. And of course, the lack of mindless zombies should keep things interesting and, excuse the pun, a bit livelier. The story is definitely taking a side-step from the established formula set down by Capcom in earlier iterations of the franchise so it would be great if the voice-acting can reflect the positive changes to game-design. Only time will tell. The current voice acting for Leon we've heard isn't too inspiring but chances are the voice has only been recorded for the trailers and press footage with better

voice acting to come along closer to the release of the game. We'll keep our fingers crossed that this is the case at any rate.

Although Capcom seemed fairly adamant the world would see the game released before the end of 2004, it now appears that the game has slipped to some nebulous time in 2005. This is a little disappointing for people wanting to scare seven shades of shit out of themselves for

Christmas but given the fairly epic scope of Resident Evil and the great departure it is making

from precedent, we don't begrudge them a little extra development time. These screens do paint a very nice picture for the release, albeit a bloody portrait, but that's what it's about right? Keep your eyes peeled for more gameplay updates in the coming issues. <<



[above] Bonfire of the inflammables
[below] No more waiting for the door opening animation/load



● KNOCK DOWN LADDER



● JUMP C





SILENT HILL 4: THE ROOM

☞ We recently got the chance to take a sneak peek at Konami's latest game in the Silent Hill series, and it's already looking every bit as disturbing as you'd expect. *Silent Hill 4: The Room* will introduce fans of the series to a new hero, Henry Townshend, and a whole new structure to the gameplay. Indeed, although there will be nods to the previous games for fans to pick up, *The Room* is very much an attempt to take the series somewhere new. Or perhaps we should say it's an attempt to keep the main character somewhere familiar.

MOTIVATED SELLER

The "room" that the title refers to is in fact Harry's apartment. Say what? Yep, Harry's a bit like the stereotypical videogamer — trapped in his own apartment. Unlike the stereotypical videogamer, however, there's no way for Harry to get out. Hell, he can't even get food delivered. Nooooo! It seems that Harry forgot to check the fine print when he signed the lease. He obviously missed the whole subsection about the Indian burial ground beneath the house, not to

mention that the last tenants were mass murderers who kept their victims in the fridge. Looks like Harry's not much of a stickler for the details, so really, he's got no one but himself to blame for the fact that his door has chained itself shut and he's now trapped in a possessed apartment.

Of course, the game isn't set entirely in Harry's house. After being trapped in his apartment for about a week, a mysterious portal opens up in his bathroom. And no, it's not a porcelain portal to the sewers below (although the insides are covered in just as much unidentifiable crap). Where it leads he doesn't know, but it has to be better than here right? Wrong! The apartment then, acts as a hub world that gives you access to various alternate realities that may help Harry work out what the hell is going on. This system should give Konami plenty of scope for interesting puzzles that deal with the ramifications of influencing each world.

It will be very interesting to see just what Konami come up with for the "room-based" gameplay, as they've hinted that you'll be spending a fair bit of time in

Harry's apartment. We're really curious about how they'll go about making the player feel trapped and claustrophobic, yet still keeping the game entertaining. What will await Harry, aside from numerous cups of tea?

Another interesting point about *The Room* will be the shifts in perspective. When you're in Harry's apartment the game will be viewed from a first person perspective, whereas stepping through a portal will switch back to the traditional third person perspective. This is the first time the series has taken players into first person and we're looking forward to seeing how well it works. We really like the idea, as the apartment will be so tiny and cramped that presenting it from the first person will make you feel as if you're not only trapped in the apartment but you're also trapped inside Harry's head. Stepping through a portal will then almost seem like lucid dreaming — floating up and outside the body and watching your avatar in utterly surreal environments.

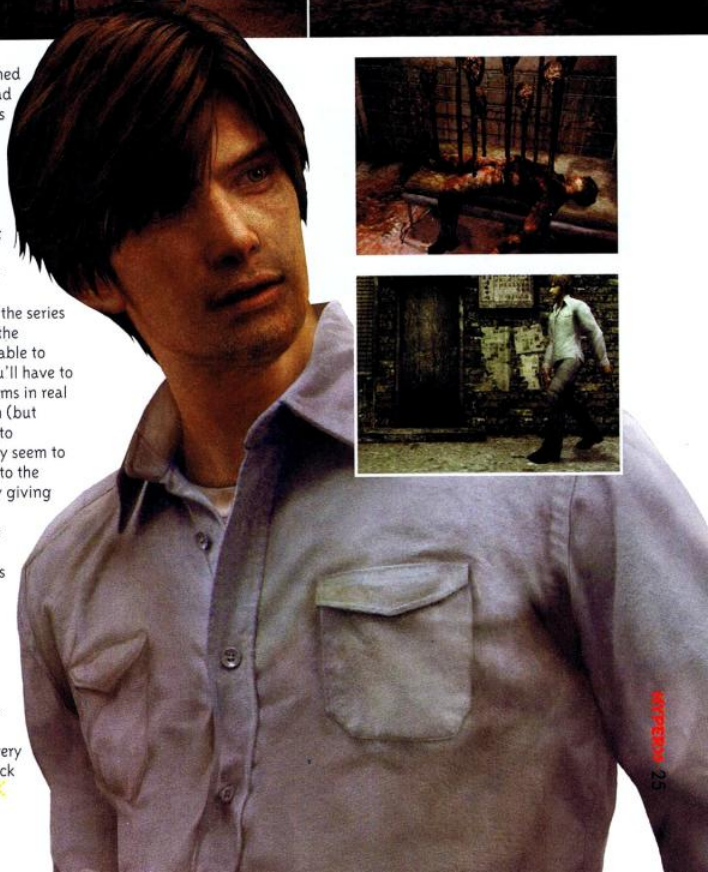
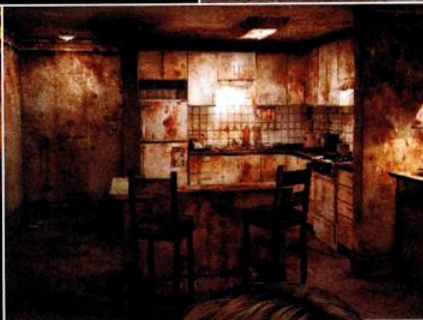
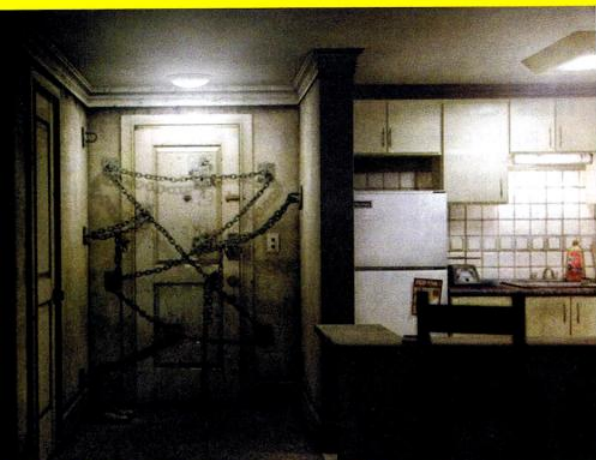
CREEPY CRAWLIES

Konami are keeping their cards close to their chest until E3, but we've

already seen some absolutely terrifying looking creatures and areas. Our two favourite creepy crawlies so far would have to be the bizarre praying mantis-like beings picking their way around, and the humanoid creatures that stride forward on human arms and have two Noh-like cherubic face masks. Very, very unsettling. Just the way we like it.

The environments in *Silent Hill 4* are looking stunning too. Not in a Charisma Carpenter kind of way mind you, more in a technically impressive but terrified to your very soul way. As the screenshots show, environments can change over time, as the other worlds seep into Harry's. Just check out the before and after shots of Harry's apartment. As you





AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: "Oooh scary" sim /
PLAYERS: 1 / DEVELOPER: KCET /
AVAILABLE: Late 2004 /

WOW-O-METER



WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE:

As always with survival horror games, a revamped control scheme wouldn't go astray.

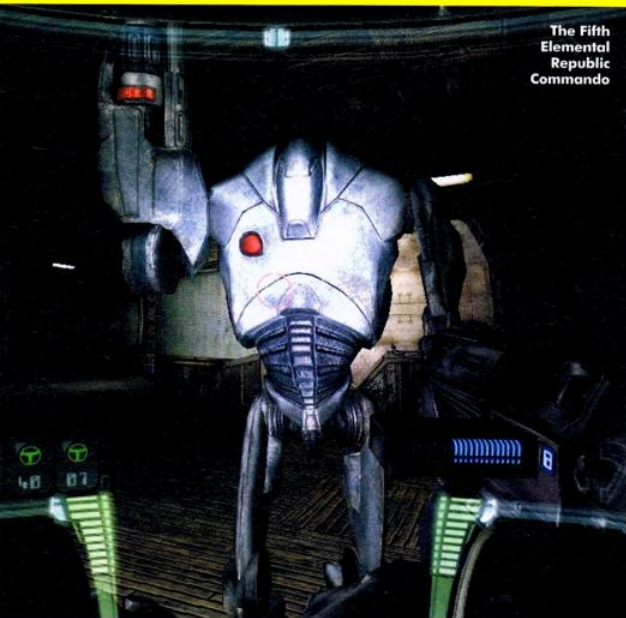
can see, Harry's pad is turned from a swanky bachelor pad (although the chains across the door might turn some girls off) into the kind of grimy hellhole that would give Mr Sheen a heart attack. Perhaps exploring the porta potty portal isn't such a bad idea after all.

It looks likely that Silent Hill 4 will also be the most action orientated game in the series so far, at least in terms of the weapons that will be available to Harry and the fact that you'll have to weapon switch and use items in real time, adding more tension (but hopefully not frustration) to proceedings. Konami really seem to be paying close attention to the pacing of the game, rarely giving you a let up in the terror.

It looks like Konami have really tried to bring a new sense of unease to the series with The Room. Sure, the character and enemy designs (from what we've seen) are classic Silent Hill, but the notion of being trapped in an enclosed space, with your only hope for survival being to travel into the unknown sounds very compelling. We'll bring back more info come E3 time. <<



THE KIND OF GRIMY HELLHOLE THAT WOULD GIVE MR SHEEN A HEART ATTACK



STAR WARS REPUBLIC COMMANDO

Republic Commando is easily one of the most promising Star Wars titles on the horizon, and in many ways it's an SWN's (Star Wars Nerd's) wet dreams come true. We're talking about a squad-based, Unreal engine-running, Halo-influenced FPS set on the front lines of the Clone Wars. Better still, unlike a certain "republican commando" who went AWOL from service in the national guard, in this game you'll actually be pulling your weight in battles that take place on Geonosis, Kashykk and even an abandoned space ship.

Part of the appeal, however, would have to come from the fact that you're not a lone lightsaber wielding Jedi but part of an elite military team, so we'll see a very different style of SW gameplay. Like Halo, you'll only be able to carry two primary weapons

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: FPS / PLAYERS: 1-16 /

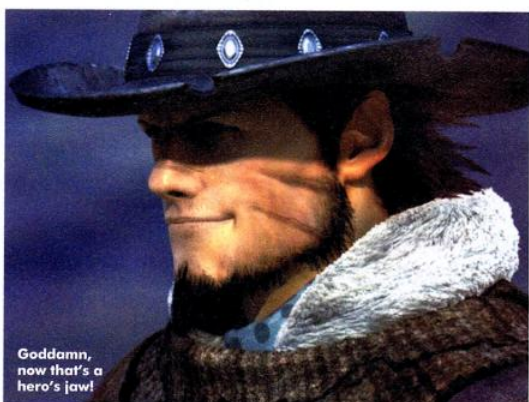
DEVELOPER: Lucasarts /

AVAILABLE: Late 2004 /

WOW-O-METER



(although your rifle can host add-ons, such as a sniper add-on) and you'll have a regenerative shield. Taking things several steps further, however, you'll be able to command your squad-mates much like in Rainbow Six 3, by using the targeting reticle and selecting from a range of context sensitive commands. We'll have plenty more on this one soon.



Goddamn, now that's a hero's jaw!

GOD OF WAR

Think Devil May Cry, set in Ancient Greece with all its mythologies on display and you have a good starting point for understanding Sony Computer Entertainment America's latest title. Combat is very much at the heart of God of War, and you'll be facing off against some classic beasts, such as harpies, minotaurs, cyclops' and medusas, with the overall goal being to find Pandora's Box and kill Ares, the God of War. To help you do this, your warrior is armed with twin swords on chains, magical attacks, juggles and a grab system geared towards finishing moves. The combat system is heavily combo based too — fill the combo meter and you'll transform into (as we like to call him) Mr Quad

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Action / PLAYERS: 1 /

DEVELOPER: SCEA / AVAILABLE:

Late 2004 /

WOW-O-METER



Damage and pretty much juice anyone in your path.

Perhaps God of War's strongest point, however, is its jaw dropping visuals. Some of the locations in the game absolutely dwarf your character, really bringing the mythological element to the fore. With some inventive puzzles thrown in, this is one to look out for.

RED DEAD REVOLVER

Question: what do Red Dead Revolver and Duke Nukem Forever have in common? Answer: Most people think they'll never come out. Yep, this is another one of those games that has been on release schedules for an eternity. In the time that this game has been on the cards, many things have changed. Developers Angel Studios have been acquired by Rockstar and renamed Rockstar San Diego, and original publisher Capcom eventually passed on the game, with Rockstar now taking on evangelising duties. Long story short, it's going to come out. And here's the best bit (whisper it) — it actually looks kinda cool.

Rockstar have given the dev team more creative freedom, at the same time as bringing in the Rockstar

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Action / PLAYERS: 1 /

DEVELOPER: Rockstar San Diego /

AVAILABLE: Mid 2004 /

WOW-O-METER



New York team to help rework some elements. Gameplay has been changed a little, to incorporate the new "Dead Eye" mode (ie bullet time) that slows the action and allows you to target specific body parts, and even lock on to several areas for devastating multi-bullet kills. Stylish arcade gameplay set in the Wild West? Sounds good to us.

DUEL MASTERS

ADING KIDS GAME

RULE THE DUEL!



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THE LAND OF THE FREE, THE HOME OF ██████████ HEIGHTENED TERROR ██████████ THREAT ASSESSMENT ██████████

IN WHICH OUR INTREPID REPORTER DANIEL WILKS IS FLOWN TO AMERICA TO SEE THE LATEST VIVENDI UNIVERSAL GAMES.

DAY THE FIRST Chapter 1: In which the author discovers the joys of United Airlines

It's a long way to the United States — it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure that out, although you could probably invent a faster mode of transport than a commercial airline if you were. In case you haven't been to America before it takes around 14 or 50 hours each way (give or take an hour depending on the wind). During those interminable hours in the air you will travel more than 12,000km over a hell of a lot of sea. One of the jobs of an airline is to keep its passengers fed and entertained so they don't become too restless or bored on the flight. Nobody told this to United Airlines, a group that shall forevermore be unfondly remembered as Luddite Air.

The first insight into the fact that the flight was going to be a bit of a nightmare came when the passengers were herded into cattle class and we were greeted by the horrifying fact that there were no in seat entertainment systems. This may sound like a petty gripe but the simple fact is that unless you're sitting right next to one of the pull down screens that films are projected on you won't be able to see a thing. Even if you are lucky enough to be able to see a screen you are met with the horrifying realisation that anything shown on the plane has to be acceptable for a

general audience — every bit of sex, violence or vulgarity that could be construed as offensive is cut. I ask you, aside from violence, sex and vulgarity, what else is there?

Add to this the ridiculous decision to stop people from cueing up for the toilet (because that's what terrorists do or something), food so bad that the mere thought of putting it in your mouth is enough to give you deep vein thrombosis and an elderly Italian couple who seemed to have synchronised their bladders so one of them would have to make a trip to the bathroom every 15 or 50 minutes (I of course was sitting in the aisle seat) for the whole 14 odd hours of the trip and you have the makings of a really great time.

Finally the plane landed and we were duly shuffled off to wait in line for an hour or so to get through customs. It's a weird thing hitting the ground in a country with a great enough time differential that you land a number of hours before you left — it can screw with your sleep patterns, especially when you're already a practicing insomniac. Eventually we get to our hotel and sign in. The rest of the day was spent spending way too much money on DVDs and drinking into the early hours of the morning.

DAY THE SECOND Chapter 2: In which our hero discovers the joys of sleep

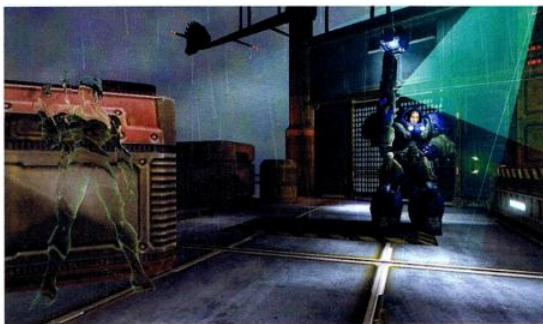
deprivation and loses a number of valuable brain cells.

After a scant few hours of sleep we were met with our first journalistic pursuit on the trip (if you don't count drinking as the number one journalistic pursuit) and paid a visit to the nearby Vivendi Universal offices to check out some of their forthcoming games. With strict instructions not to take any photographs on the way through the offices we were ushered through to the opulent games room complete with bar fridge, a copy of every magazine to even mention Vivendi in passing in the last few years and a big-arse TV and told in no uncertain terms to make ourselves comfortable and stay put until our first presenter arrived.

The first game previewed on the day was **Red Ninja**, a title that could politely be called rough at the current stage of development. In this Ninja flavoured revenge drama players take the role of Kurenai, a young woman left for dead after her father is murdered by a rival ninja clan. Although the plot may sound very standard for a revenge thriller it definitely has the potential to stand out from the pack for two main reasons. Firstly the plot has been written by an actual screenwriter/director by the name of Shinsuke Sato. The fact that the man is responsible for the script for the execrable *The Princess Blade* doesn't exactly inspire confidence however. The second point of interest is the

[below] Amos and his other brother Amos
[bottom] Daniel and some drunkard...





[top left] She's too sexy for her cloak.



sassy protagonist's weapon. Instead of wielding a sword as is standard in nearly every ninja-themed game, Kurenai wields the tetsugen, a length of sharp and sturdy wire with various detachable heads that allow it to be used as a grapple, submission weapon and ranged dart/cutting weapon. As a scantily clad kunoichi (lady ninja), Kurenai can also use her feminine whiles to distract opponents.

They say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery and if that is truly the case then the creators of *Devil May Cry* will be very flattered by *Van Helsing* when it comes out. Based on the forthcoming Steven Sommers (*The Mummy*) film of the same name, *Van Helsing* looks for all the world like the now antique PS2 title, albeit with floppier hats and smaller swords. This isn't necessarily a bad thing - from what we saw the game looks like a hoot and the addition of a grapple button should add an extra level of depth to the frenetic combat.

I can't say too much about the next game we saw without giving too much away. Suffice it to say that **Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay** was far and away the highlight of the day. If the name sounds somewhat familiar to you that would be because the game is based on the antihero of the recent cult science fiction hit *Pitch Black*. Although an official movie sequel is coming out this year, *Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay* is in fact a prequel to

the films, detailing how the gravelly voiced bad-ass came to be captured, setting up the events of the first film. Stay tuned next month for a full write up of a game that has the potential to redeem all of the shitty movie license games of the past.

The final game displayed on the day also looks the most disappointing at the current stage of development. **Men of Valor: Vietnam** is currently in development for PC and Xbox by 2015, the company responsible for *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault* on PC but seems to be lacking some of the spark from that title. Whether this is because many of the members left to form *Infinity Ward* (creators of the critically acclaimed *Call of Duty*) or the change of setting to the still quite taboo Vietnam war era is a question for the ages. The choice to cast the lead character as an African-American male is interesting to begin with but the story behind it quickly leaves a bitter taste in your mouth. The developers explained that there had initially been no plans to make the main character black but when speaking to Jimi Hendrix's daughter about scoring one of her father's songs on the soundtrack, Hendrix the younger innocently asked if the main character was African-American. From then on the race of the character was set in stone, though they never did get the rights to the Hendrix track. Be that as it may Men



ASIDE FROM VIOLENCE, SEX AND VULGARITY, WHAT ELSE IS THERE?

HYPERS



[far right] The unwelcome return of Sub Zero.

[below] Subtle feminine whiles at work.



of Valor looks as though it will serve up some fairly dependable shooting action as well as a solid co-op mode and multiplayer.

Our visit to the Vivendi offices over and still a few hours until it was time for dinner another journalist and myself decided to see a movie to kill the time. Unfortunately the only thing on was Torque. If you have never seen this film you have my blessing — if you have you deserve my pity. If you happened to like it you are deserving of the cruelest tortures hell can devise. Torque is one of those movies that relies on every character to be functionally retarded for the plot to work and the audience to be even dumber to appreciate it. Scientists have recently proven that Torque is more hazardous to your brain cells than taking a power drill to your head and filling the void with drain cleaner.

DAY THE THIRD

Chapter 3: In which the intrepid explorer falls asleep at a most inopportune time.

After a leisurely fat filled American breakfast the international cohort of wordsmiths was herded onto a bus to take us to one of the grand temples of gaming — the home of Blizzard. After around an hour or so of dull scenery we pulled into the parking lot of a nondescript building in a nondescript part of Northern California. Not even a sign

betrayed the identity of the company within. It was explained to us in all honesty that the company tried to remain anonymous to avoid stalkers. Fanboy stalkers. Although the idea that one of the obsessive fans would throw on their least food stained shirt and semen encrusted pants to leave their parent's basement for long enough to travel to the offices of Blizzard may sound a little far fetched to the more stable of us in the gaming community the image is far from comforting.

Once inside the building the identity of the offices was never in doubt. Giant Warcraft III statues and banners as well as glass cases full of awards proudly proclaimed their true name. We came to Blizzard for two reasons — to see the latest build of Starcraft: Ghost and to have a play of the closed beta of Worlds of Warcraft, as well as have a bit of a chat to the developers. First stop on the itinerary was **Starcraft: Ghost**. In case you've been living under a rock for the last couple of years, Ghost is a real time, third-person stealth/action game set in the popular Starcraft universe. Although there is still around six months left in development the code we saw was already looking very polished. Players take the role of a young Ghost operative, Nova, a Special Ops soldier trained for 20 years in the arts of killing, infiltration and psychic power. Aside from being able to creep around a-la Sam

Fisher, Nova can call in air strikes, nuclear launches and even turn invisible for short periods of time. Although PC gamers have been clamouring that Blizzard has "sold out" to Microsoft due to the game coming out on Xbox instead of PC, Starcraft: Ghost looks as though it will be yet another classic — not that Blizzard really needs another to cement its reputation as one of the greatest developers around.

After a brief sojourn to the bathroom (a journey that required a high level of navigational skill as well as a fearless heart) it was time to sit down with the developers of **Worlds of Warcraft** so they could walk us through some of the more interesting aspects of the game. Sitting down in a comfortably padded chair was a wonderful thing — a little too wonderful if you catch my drift. Much to my chagrin within five minutes of taking a seat jetlag finally kicked in and I found my way to that wonderfully disorienting state of half-sleep in which you close your eyes for a few seconds only to discover that 20 minutes has passed. Blink a few times and an hour just flies by. Before I knew it the interview was over and I wasn't sure it had even begun. Stay tuned next month to discover exactly what was said during my embarrassing slumber and for a full Worlds of Warcraft hands on report. After a few hours of play it was back on the bus to the airport. Next stop San Francisco.

Chapter 4: Of full flights and even fuller bladders.

A word of advice to budding travelers — when in a foreign airport take careful notice of where your departure gate is. Waiting at the other side of the terminal until you are called by name is not the way to go. A second note — no matter how short the flight, it is never a good idea to spend your time waiting filling up on excellent pub brewery beer. LA to San Francisco is only about an hour and a half's flight but having to sit with your legs crossed for over half of it (we were confined to our seats due to turbulence) is far from fun.

DAY THE FOURTH

Chapter 5: Our hero becomes lost but as a result finds himself.

San Francisco is a beautiful and friendly city and there's only one way to see it properly. Whilst the other international journalists were off doing a tour or the sights I stayed back and did one of my favourite things — got lost. The best way to see a new city is on foot and there's no better way to spend a day than to choose a direction and walk in it. Take any corner that takes your fancy. Get lost. I walked all day, got lost twice, ordered a new wok, watched a ballet rehearsal and found the best waffles in town. It was wonderful and just what the doctor ordered. No more falling asleep in inopportune times for me.



[top] Not pictured - something exciting.
[above] Not pictured - Daniel asleep in the background.



[above] Not pictured - Korea, the forgotten war.

Chapter 6: A gathering of minds and fanboys

That night was the real reason behind the whole trip. All of the games we had been shown so far were just gravy. The actual meat was this event — a Tribes: Vengeance press conference and LAN. Ironically this was the second time I had been flown overseas to see a game being developed in Canberra. The world is a strange place. After being guided around some of the features of the game we were taken into a back room and given the opportunity to have a play. Without giving too much away I can safely say that fans of the series won't be disappointed and for the first time in the franchise the game will actually be appealing and approachable for noobs as well. Aside from journalists the event included a number of Tribes enthusiasts who have supported the new sequel in the form of forums and fan-sites since its inception. To say there was a lot of sweaty man-flesh in the room would be an understatement but no matter how bad the smell and clammy the skin it couldn't detract from the fact that Vengeance looks set to put Tribes back on the map as one of the next big things. Again.

DAY THE FIFTH

Chapter 7: Morning interviews, long lunches and cilantro explained.

After a quick shower to wash off the effects of the previous day's drinking

and LANing it was up to the penthouse suite to interview the Vengeance crew. We talked for an hour about the development of the game, the plans they have for the franchise and the controversial single player game. After the interview was complete I sat down for what was meant to be a quick chat and lunch with the Vivendi PR rep. Four hours and too much over-priced wine later we parted ways to rest up for dinner — the last semi-official event of the trip. Meeting in the foyer we decided to go out for Thai. San Fran may be a lovely city but their Thai has nothing on ours. Dinner was proceeding well until the Americans on the trip came across an ingredient they had never heard of before and which worried a few of them an undue amount — coriander. None of them had ever heard of the wonderfully fragrant plant before. I've always wanted to be a hero and that night gave me my long overdue chance. I casually explained that coriander was the correct name for what the Americans rudely call "cilantro". Once again everything was set right with the world and dinner continued.

DAY THE SIXTH

Chapter 8: Of cinemas and sleeplessness.

My final day in San Francisco was meant to be full of excitement and sight seeing. Apathy, the natural predator of the journalist set in and I ended up spending the day in the

nearby cinemas. If any cinema operators are reading this, iced tea on tap at the candy bar is the greatest invention since the actual concept of inventions was first invented.

Chapter 9: In which our hero returns home but ponders where a day has gone.

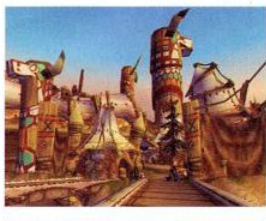
San Fran may be a beautiful city with a beautiful looking airport but it would have to be the duller place outside of purgatory to spend a couple of hours. Despite being in the middle of an international airport in the early evening on a Saturday the majority of the place was closed. No coffee to be found. No arcades. No entertainment to fill the 3 hours until my flight. Luckily there was a Mexican restaurant open so I crammed as much lovely spiciness into my gullet as I could handle so as not to have to suffer the interminably bad United Airlines food again (although I did make a bash at what turned out to be a disturbingly crunchy omelette in the wee hours of the morning).

Fourteen hours later and I was home — two days after I left San Fran. Where did that extra day go? Is it with all of the left socks that go missing? Inquiring minds want to know. <<<

ISSUE THE NEXT

Riddick — hands on
Worlds of Warcraft — hands on
Tribes: Vengeance — hands on interview

[below] Like Redfern, but with less guns.





the evolution of the MP3

» Bennett Ring

Computer files aren't exactly exciting. You don't often read about the controversy of a Word .doc, or how .txt files are changing the world in which we live. When was the last time a .jpg made it into the news? Yet there's one file type that has become a cultural icon of how technology has the potential to truly revolutionise entertainment, and how that entertainment makes its way into our homes. Yep, we're talking about everybody's favourite file format, the MP3. Well, everybody's favourite if you don't include the RIAA...

The MP3 file is an impressive bit of technology. This ubiquitous term stands for Moving Picture Experts Group, Audio Layer III, and allows music to be compressed to around a tenth of its normal size. This allows music to be digitally distributed more rapidly, and we can also cram more of it onto our expensive storage media, such as flash memory or hard drives. The story behind the MP3 file is an interesting

one, but it's the future of the format that looks even more intriguing.

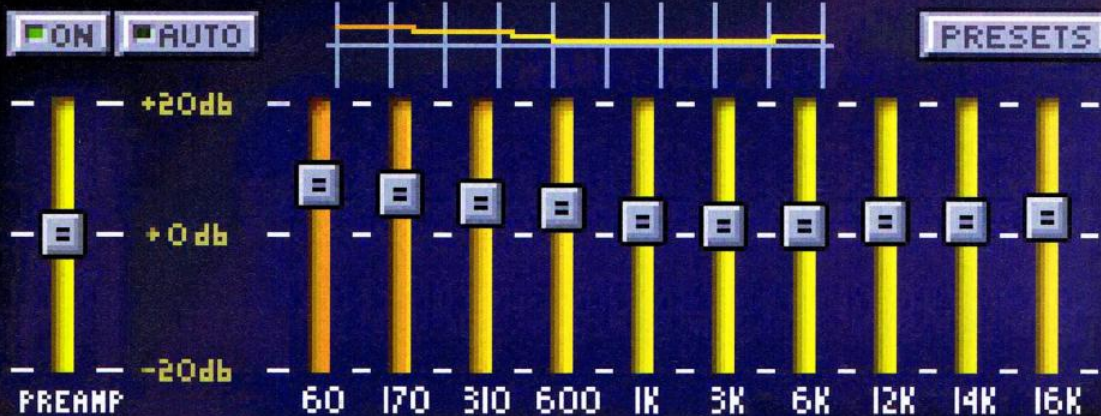
WE HAFF WAYS TO MAKE YOU SHRINK

Germans get a pretty hard time of it, especially when it comes to videogames (it's been scientifically proven that 39% of all video game baddies are German), but it was a German by the name of Karlheinz Brandenburg who we can thank for developing the theory behind MP3s. While working for the Fraunhofer Institut in the early 1980s, Karlheinz and other scientists experimented to see how far music could be compressed before the human ear would notice it. Given the mixture of Germany, music and tech, you'd expect the first song to be compressed would be a Kraftwerk banger, but it's actually Susan Vega's Tom's Diner that can proudly claim to be the world's first MP3. This song was chosen by the Fraunhofer team due to the softness of its sound, making it easy to

detect flaws as the compression increased.

After much work perfecting the technique, the Fraunhofer Institut submitted the MP3 file format to the world International Standards Organisation (ISO) in the early 90's, and it became part of the MPEG-1 specification. MP3 was originally an open source format, meaning that anyone and everyone could use the technology free of charge, kind of like the Linux of the music world. This led to a massive range of players and encoders being distributed free online, but the first mainstream player didn't hit the market until 1997 – 20 years after the first theories about music compression were being dreamt up. It just goes to show how long it can take for a theory to become a reality. Created by Advanced Multimedia Products, the player was known as the AMP MP3 Playback Engine; a pretty front end was whacked on by a couple of students in '98, and voila, the player we

WINAMP EQUALIZER



PLAYLIST

know as WinAMP was born.

While word slowly spread about the convenience of the MP3 file format, the PC continued to evolve into a true multimedia workhorse, with powerful sound cards and speakers loud enough to keep the neighbours awake through the night. The first hardware MP3 players also started to appear on the market, such as the Rio, but these were expensive gadgets that lacked storage space. There still wasn't a killer application to hook the mainstream music lover on MP3s, and as a result digital music listeners tended to be computer enthusiasts, otherwise known as geeks with pocket protectors. And then, in 1999, along came a little application by the name of Napster. Almost overnight the MP3 file became a term even the most technologically illiterate record executive would recognise.

AN INDUSTRY CAUGHT NAPPING

It's amazing to think that a 19 year old student could create a piece of software that changed an industry so profoundly in a mere 60 hours. That's how long it took Shawn Fanning to whip up the peer to peer (P2P) file sharing application known as Napster. This simple program linked together user's PCs via the Internet, allowing them to safely share music files between their PCs. The user typed in the name of a track into Napster, and the software would

then search thousands of linked PCs on desktops across the globe. Within seconds a list of machines from which to download the song would appear on screen — 100% free of charge. It was incredibly simple to use, and even the most obscure music was available.

The creator of Napster didn't explicitly tell users to upload copyrighted music to the Napster network, but that's exactly what happened. The vast majority of files being shared were illegal copies, while a tiny minority were legal demos of bands trying to break into the big time. And we're not talking about one or two illegal copies here or there — hundreds of millions of file transfers took place before the demise of Napster. There was something about the anonymity of the Internet that made Napsterites feel this form of wholesale piracy was ok, that nobody was being hurt, it was a victimless crime. In fact, depending on which statistics you believed, CD sales actually increased as a result of this free sampling of music. The theory was that people would download a track off Napster, and if they liked it, they'd probably buy the album. And let's face it, most people on the Napster networks at that time had no idea how to encode an mp3 at CD quality anyway... combine that with drop-outs midway through downloading and in the end you were better off paying for the album!

Napster became so popular

amongst students that universities had to start blocking network access to the Napster network. For example, the University of Cincinnati found that outbound network demand was up to 200% of the network's capacity as a result of Napster file sharing, while at Oregon State University network usage doubled every 90 days, starting from the launch of Napster.

ENTER THE RIAA

It didn't take long for the record industry to notice Napster, with the charge to end this sudden splurge of techno piracy spearheaded by the most powerful music organisation in the world, the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA). This organisation represents hundreds of record labels, including the biggest of the big, such as Sony, EMI and Time Warner. A couple of musical acts also spoke out against the distribution of their music via Napster, most notable being Metallica and Dr Dre.

Within three years of its release, Napster was in the can after being saddled with a hundred and one various lawsuits. But this hasn't signalled the end of online music distribution, as there are now multiple file sharing applications that have taken the place of Napster. Most popular of these is KAZAA (www.kazaa.com), but it can't compete with the range of music, not to mention the ease of use, of the old Napster network.

HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF FILE TRANSFERS TOOK PLACE BEFORE THE DEMISE OF NAPSTER

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THERE ARE SUCCESS STORIES ABOUT UNSIGNED BANDS

effort to show that music starting the wrist than anything else, in an will no longer be tolerated by the major corporations.

those bands who aren't yet under the control of a major record label, in other words, these "unknown" bands aren't getting a chance to

put their music out into the public domain via the legitimate use of P2P networks and websites. "The best thing for independent artists would be that the recording industry gets its wish, and has all its content removed from peer-to-peer networks. Then we'd have it all to ourselves. But if you think they (the RIAA) are complaining now..." Ziemann believes that we need to take a more direct approach to the issue of online music, rather than sit around and wait for the courts to sort out by the bureaucrats. "We can either wait for the courts to eventually get to this one and set things straight (which they invariably will - it only took about 40 years with radio), or we can be proactive", - and the simplest way to do that is to "erase them (the RIAA), turn them off, unplug them. Broaden your horizons and search for interesting independent music. It's always litigation free. Problem solved."

P2P PR

While it's easy for organisations such as the RIAA to dismiss ratings, there are successful stories out there about unsigned bands using digital distribution. One such band is Snowblind, an Aussie rock band who have used the internet to help spread the word about their music. However, instead of relying upon P2P networks, snowblind instead posted their music to free MP3 websites, such as www.mp3.com.au. It seems to be working, as their music is downloaded up to 40 times every single day - not bad considering this method of PR is free. The response from people downloading snowblind tracks off the site is obvious, according to Paul Ryan, one of the band members. "We have been amazed by the response of people listening to our music then shouting us quick email saying exactly how much they liked the songs. They would then go to the website

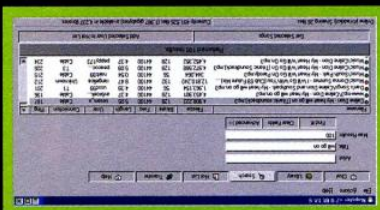
GOING TOO FAR

Most people acknowledge that illegally sharing music was fun while it lasted, but can admit that it's wasn't really the right thing to do, but the RIAA's actions are seen by many to go above and beyond simply stopping this. We had a chat with George Ziemann, one of the folk responsible for the website www.boycott-riaa.com, arguably the most visited anti RIAA site on the internet. Ziemann's biggest problem with the RIAA is that "the major labels, in their zeal to extend their retail monopoly to the digital realm, have undermined the value of any artist who was ahead of the record labels' curve (not hard to do) and has been giving away samples of their music on the web". It's not the fact that the RIAA is targeting those who illegally share copyrighted music that's the problem, it's that it's targeting the networks which enable the sharing of music for those bands who aren't yet under the control of a major record label, in other words, these "unknown" bands aren't getting a chance to

put their music out into the public domain via the legitimate use of P2P networks and websites. "The best thing for independent artists would be that the recording industry gets its wish, and has all its content removed from peer-to-peer networks. Then we'd have it all to ourselves. But if you think they (the RIAA) are complaining now..." Ziemann believes that we need to take a more direct approach to the issue of online music, rather than sit around and wait for the courts to sort out by the bureaucrats. "We can either wait for the courts to eventually get to this one and set things straight (which they invariably will - it only took about 40 years with radio), or we can be proactive", - and the simplest way to do that is to "erase them (the RIAA), turn them off, unplug them. Broaden your horizons and search for interesting independent music. It's always litigation free. Problem solved."

Of course, there's also an underground culture of music sharing, one that is very similar to the illegal warez scene. Instead of being available to every Mac n' Pa with an AOL account as Napster was, the underground music swapping scene is very secretive and well hidden - unless you know the right people, you're not going to get a piece of the action. And unlike the old P2P networks, if you're involved in this scene you usually have to contribute something back to the network, usually cash or content.

[above] This thing links up to the "inter-web" somehow.





[above] No, that's not Cam in the top left. What are you - Snowblind?

(www.snowblind.com.au) and check out our upcoming tour and plan to see one of our shows. So in my mind, it has only helped us to spread the word and get people to our shows." But aren't Snowblind worried that people who have downloaded their tracks for free won't be accustomed to paying for Snowblind music? "We hope it will give them a taste as to what is on the CD, and they'll then purchase the whole CD after listening to one or both of the tracks on MP3.com.au. So far this has worked!"

MAKING MONEY FROM MP3

The concept of selling music online makes a lot of sense. Massive savings can be made thanks to the lack of any physical product - no CDs to press, no jewel case covers to design, no physical deliveries to make and no retailers to add their margins. Which means more money for the record labels. As a result, there are now several services that allow you to legally obtain big name MP3s online - at a cost, of course. The biggest of these is iTunes, and this service is proving to be phenomenally successful. 30 million songs successful to be exact (as of the 6th of January). The Napster network has also been reborn as Napster 2.0, but this time around it's charging users per download and has the full permission of the copyright holders whose music is up for sale. A slight turnaround from its beginnings, to say the least. Unfortunately most of these services are currently limited to the US, but they should be hitting Australia's shores in the near future. That's not to say we're totally without choice -

Telstra Bigpond has just launched its own online music service. Check out our review to see whether or not it's worth the trouble.

Funnily enough, even though online distribution of music is vastly cheaper than the traditional store based method, these savings aren't getting passed on to the consumer. For example, iTunes is charging 99 US cents per song, while Telstra's Bigpond site charges around \$1.90 per song. Buy 10 songs, and you've paid almost twenty big ones - and approaching the price of many big name CDs (and don't get us started on the reasons why CDs are vastly overpriced)! It makes us a little sceptical about how much the recording industry really wants digital distribution to succeed. Also worrying is the fact that all of the big name companies we contacted regarding this article didn't bother to reply, even after we contacted them on several occasions. Yet with the success of the iTunes service, it doesn't seem to matter whether or not the recording industry is going to get behind online music - the consumers want it, and that's what counts.

It took twenty years for the MP3 to turn from an idea in some scientist's head into a working method for compressing music. Yet in the space of a handful of years, MP3s became one of the most talked about computing issues the world has ever seen. It's amazing to think that one file type had the ability to shake up an entire industry, and revolutionise the way we think about purchasing our entertainment. Not bad for a mere file format, is it? <<<



[above] www.mp3.com.au baby



[above] Kazaa... it's no Soulseek



[above] Boycott RIAA with the help of this site, before it takes over the world. Again.



BIGPOND MUSIC

www.bigpondmusic.com

BigPond are the first suppliers of legal copyrighted music on the Net in Australia, and we've got to hand it to them for providing a very easy to use site with a nice clean layout. Setting up a music account was merely a matter of activating the BigPond additional services within our existing BigPond DSL account. Once that was done, it was time to hit the music site to see how much we could blow out our monthly Net bill.

Popular current singles and albums were staring at us on the front page, just begging to be sucked down to our PC. A few clicks later and the Evanescence track Bring Me To Life was sitting on our hard drive, in 128kbps .wma format. Which is fine if your MP3 player supports .wma files - many don't.

Audiophiles also prefer to rip at bit rates of 192kbps and upwards, so 128kbps might be a bit tight for some... and surely these services should offer CD quality audio? However, before we could play the file on our PC, we had to download a special digital rights management license unique to that track. Which is when the major limitation of this system became apparent - once you've downloaded a song you can only play it back on the PC that was used for the download. You can also burn it to CD or copy it to 2 portable digital audio players, provided your players also have Digital Rights Management features built in, but if you want to play it on a mate's PC, or your work PC, you're outta luck. We tried to play the song back on our work PC, and these protection features worked as advertised, blocking us from doing so.

Combine this with the fact that each song is selling for a rather pricey \$1.89, and the BigPond service doesn't really compel users to abandon the CD for what should be the convenience of online music.

MASSIVE SAVINGS CAN BE MADE THANKS TO THE LACK OF ANY PHYSICAL PRODUCT

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LIST OPTS


Hardware

These days having a hot PC or an amazing TV isn't enough – you need to take your setup to the next level. And that means two words:

“home theatre”. Thus, this month we've decided to take a look at a couple of speaker systems, spanning the low to mid range pricing area.

CREATIVE MEGAWORKS THX 5.1 550

RRP \$499

 Although the Megaworks 550s are a more expensive proposition than TDK's offering, they also offer the possibility of a much more comprehensive setup. Designed by Cambridge Soundworks, the 550s come with five satellite speakers, a chunky sub and a total of 500W total system output. Not bad. They're also THX certified, which means they've been put through rigorous quality testing, so you can ensure they'll represent whatever source material you throw at it with great accuracy.

Indeed, we threw a bit of everything at these babies, and they passed with flying colours.

Whether you're watching a movie like Saving Private Ryan or listening to some sweet Chicago house, the thuds have plenty of impact and the top end is nice and crisp. The only caveat is that we still rank the Logitech Z-680s (which we checked out about a year and a half ago) as a superior system, due to the strength of its sub, the fact that it has a specialised center speaker (as opposed to an identical fifth satellite) and the built-in Dolby Digital and DTS hardware decoding, but they still retail at \$699, so there's a two hundred dollar price buffer. In terms of value for money, if you want a 5.1 setup, this is the one to go for.



TDK S-150R TREMOR SPEAKERS

RRP \$249

What we have here is the latest entry from TDK in their "Tremor" range of speakers. You may be put off by the fact that it's only a 2.1 system (that is, two satellite speakers and a sub), but this isn't a system geared towards booming three dimensional sound. As the flat-panel satellite design and slim stylish sub indicate, these speakers are for the aesthetically inclined. If you have a sleek desktop setup — a flatscreen monitor, or perhaps just a laptop, these speakers will sit perfectly alongside it.

In terms of sound quality, the TDKs perform quite admirably for their size. The flat-panel drivers were designed by UK company NXT, and TDK boast that their technology means that the satellites create a much wider sweet spot for the listener, which is certainly a good thing. Unfortunately you won't be able to crank them particularly loud, as total system

output is rated at 150W and it's not hard to push the sub to distortion levels. That said, at lower volumes the sub produces nice, tight base and the satellites fill out the rest of the sound palette well. Thus, for a den setup, where space is limited and the environment is cosy, these speakers would really fit the bill. They'd also go really well with a smallish TV... but less so as the basis of a home theatre setup! In addition to the standard RCA and stereo mini-plug inputs, there's also an optical in, so it's a dream to set up for devices that support this, such as PlayStation 2. The S-150Rs also come with a remote (unfortunately not as sleek in design as the rest of the unit) and they're also at a much lower price point than rival 5.1 or 7.1 systems, so for a space saving, cost effective solution that's also pleasing to the eye, the S-150Rs could be just the ticket.



[above] Warning - turntables and Tremors will not necessarily make you a DJ



WinWinWin

Entries close May 12th

Win True Crime for PC & huge S.W.A.T pack!

»» True Crime was a very pleasant surprise on console, packing all the gunplay, hand to hand combat, low riders and Snoop Dogg you could ever want in a virtual Los Angeles playground. Now that it's also out on PC, Activision have given us three copies of this cap busting, forty drinking PC game to give away. But that's not all... not by a long shot! Each winner will also receive a copy of the True Crime soundtrack, a copy of S.W.A.T. on DVD (starring the always cool Samuel L. Jackson and Colin Farrell), a S.W.A.T. men's T-shirt and a S.W.A.T. cap.

To be in with a chance to win one of these three packs, just answer the following question:

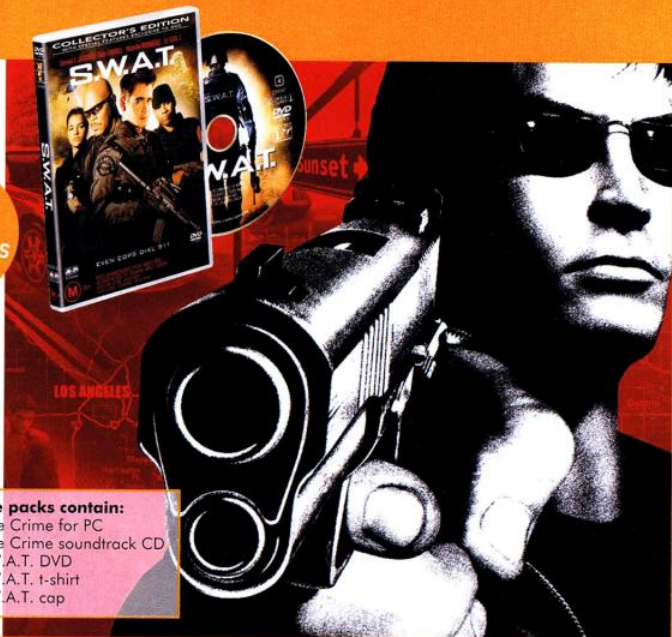
What does S.W.A.T. stand for?

Put your answer on the back of an envelope along with your name and address, and post it to: **Pimpin' Ain't Easy, Hyper, 78 Renwick Street, Redfern, NSW 2016.**

3
PRIZE PACKS
UP FOR
GRABS!

Prize packs contain:

- True Crime for PC
- True Crime soundtrack CD
- S.W.A.T. DVD
- S.W.A.T. t-shirt
- S.W.A.T. cap



Be the ultimate Duel Master!

»» Duel Masters is one of the hottest trading card games to come out of Japan in the last few years. This is dueling action at its finest - battles are fast and intense, and take place in a mysterious dimension called The Zone. Be the first to battle through your opponent's card defenses and strike the final winning blow! To celebrate the release of Duel Masters at all good Card and Hobby shops across Australia, 10 Lucky Hyper readers have the chance to win a fantastic Duel Masters prize pack courtesy of our friends at Wizards of the Coast. Each prize pack contains a Duel Masters Base Set Starter Pack and 3 Booster Packs worth over \$40!

To be in with a chance to win one of the ten packs, just answer the following question:

Name another card series that comes from Wizards of the Coast.

Put your answer on the back of an envelope along with your name and address, and post it to:

1 Challenge You To A Duel Sir, Hyper, 78 Renwick Street, Redfern, NSW 2016.

10
PRIZE PACKS
UP FOR
GRABS!



Prize packs contain:

- Duel Masters Base Set Starter Pack
- 3 Booster Packs

DUEL MASTERS is a trademark of Wizards of the Coast, Mitsui/Kids Station and Shogakukan. © 2003. Wizards/Mitsui-Kids/Shogakukan

Terms & Conditions 1) Entry is open to residents of Australia and New Zealand except employees and immediate families of Next Publishing Pty Ltd and its agencies associated with the promotion. 2) Only entries completed with these terms and conditions will be eligible. 3) Competition begins 9am March 30 and entries close at 6pm May 12. 4) In determining eligibility the judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. 5) The winner will be drawn at 9am May 13 at Next Publishing Pty Ltd, 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016. 6) Prizes must be taken as offered and are not redeemable for cash. 7) The promoter is not responsible for misdirected or lost mail. 8) The winners will be notified by mail and results published in the July issue of Hyper on sale June 2. 9) 10 winners will each receive Duel Masters Base Set Starter Pack (RRP \$19.95) and 3 booster packs (RRP \$6.95). 3 winners will each receive True Crime on PC (RRP \$99.95), the True Crime soundtrack CD (RRP \$24.95), S.W.A.T. on DVD (RRP \$39.95), a S.W.A.T. t-shirt (RRP \$29.95) and a S.W.A.T. cap (RRP \$24.95). Total value of competitions is \$1067.25. 10) The promoter is Next Publishing Pty Ltd ABN 88 002 647 645 of 78 Renwick St, Redfern NSW 2016.

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ATOMIC

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★★★★★ GAMESPY

"STUNNING...MAX PAYNE 2 IS JUST A REMARKABLE PRODUCTION."

EDITORS' CHOICE AWARD. GAMESPOT



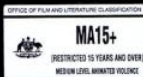
MAX PAYNE™ 2

THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

A FILM NOIR LOVE STORY


WWW.ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/MAXPAYNE2

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PlayStation 2



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42 V8 SUPERCARS 2

The most comprehensive racing game around





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Reviews

Game Theory

DANIEL STAINES



» Superficially speaking, we all know that gaming is very much a hardware dependent medium. High polygon visuals with all those fancy effects we've become accustomed to require beefy graphics processors. Consistent and flexible AI needs a reasonably speedy CPU.

You want a game with full audio speech and studio quality music? Then you'll want a reasonably robust storage medium to go along with it. This is all pretty straightforward stuff – games run on machines, ergo better machines should reasonably entail better quality games.

Following that line of reasoning, you'd expect that games made now wouldn't feature many of the regrettable design hang-ups that were once necessitated by inferior hardware. This simply isn't the case. For example, why do modern games need "extra lives" or "continues"? The concept made sense back when arcade games were still popular – limited lives forced punters to keep continuing and so kept arcades profitable – but now it's just a frustrating and superficial means of adding longevity to games that usually don't need it. If my character dies in a game, I want to get straight back into the action from where I left off.

Repetitious backtracking is simply not enjoyable, and yet the whole "lives" philosophy is essentially based on enduring this arduous activity. Here's some advice for game developers: if you can't think of a better way to make your levels harder other than making me play through them several times, then don't try and make your levels harder.

What we have with lives and continues is a tradition spawned of necessity that has become an ingrained part of game design culture. And, like a lot of traditions spawned of necessity, it has continued to persist despite being obviously redundant. But don't think for a second that it's alone. There are PLENTY of game design stupidities that have almost become law for developers unable or unwilling to break with the comforting relics of gaming's past. Save points, trial-and-error gameplay, endlessly spawning enemies, random encounters, single solution problems... these are all equally guilty of redundancy and overuse. Is it just a coincidence that Square employs most of these flaws as Final Fantasy mainstays and has done so since the beginning of the franchise?

Well, that's a question I'll let you answer for yourself. Please remember to send all hate-filled, fanboy tirades to the address provided below.

Until next month,
daniels@next.com.au

HYPER CREW TOP 5 GAMES

Cam Shea - Editor

1. Far Cry - PC
"A good way to pass the time while waiting for Half-Life 2"
2. Metal Gear Solid: Twin Snakes
3. R-Type Final - PS2
4. Midway Arcade Classics - PS2
5. Pandora Tomorrow - Xbox

Daniel Wilks - Deputy Editor

1. Final Fantasy X-2 - PS2
"So girly but in a good way"
2. Flash Penguin Game
3. Far Cry - PC
4. Battlefield Vietnam - PC
5. Whiplash - Xbox

Malcolm Campbell - Art Guy

1. Final Fantasy X-2 - PS2
"Mad Alchemist AP loops, yo."
2. R-Type Final - PS2
3. Transformers - PS2
4. Ninja Gaiden - Xbox
5. Premier Volley Challenge - Flash

Kosta Andreadis - Some Guy

1. Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles - GCN
*"What's this? A reason to spend your hard earned clams on GBA-GC link cables? *does mannerism*"*
2. XIII - PC
3. Viewtiful Joe - GCN
4. Star Wars: KOTOR - PC
5. Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga - GBA

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

| | | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|--|--|
| 0-49 | 50-59 | 60-69 | 70-79 | 80-89 | 90+ |
| These games deserve your ire, and your mannerisms... | Sometimes we score games in this range. Sometimes. | If you were stuck on a desert island this game might look okay. | Not bad at all by jove. Maybe try before you buy old boy. | Very, very good. Deserving of a rhyming couplet in its honour. | This game has a serious BLAU factor. It L.T.C. Buy it! |



V8 SUPERCARS 2

JACKSON GOTHE-SNAPE doesn't write his own bloody headers



☞ The original V8 Supercars placed you in the shoes of arrogant American Ryan McKane, in what Codemasters labeled the first 'CarPG'. Unfortunately, making the game more meaningful by adjoining races with 'story' elements sounded better in the marketing blurb than in the game. Still, the game itself was still the bashiest, crashest racer around. And now with V8 Supercars 2, the career mode returns, as does the simple pleasure of the racing, but this time with a few key improvements that ensure the TOCA legend lives on.

V8 Supercars 2, if you weren't aware, is Australia's version of TOCA Race Driver 2, the latest game in Codemasters' classic series that began on the first PlayStation. Recent versions have extended the game well beyond the original British touring car focus, to a point where now the game includes 35 different cars,

many of which enjoy the attention of their own special class. There are manufacturer series featuring Aston Martin or Seats, classic WRX versus Lancer Evo street-racing battles, open-wheelers, truck-racing, oval-based stock car racing, ice-racing and every major national racing class such as the DTM from Germany, the British touring and of course, Australia's V8s. And while the game does not offer official modeling of every one of these real-life competitions, they do feature in the career mode (if briefly) in pseudo-realistic guise. You can also create your own imitation championship with the flexible 'Simulator Mode'.

MIDDLE OF THE ROAD

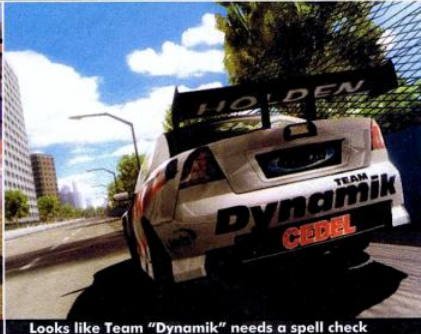
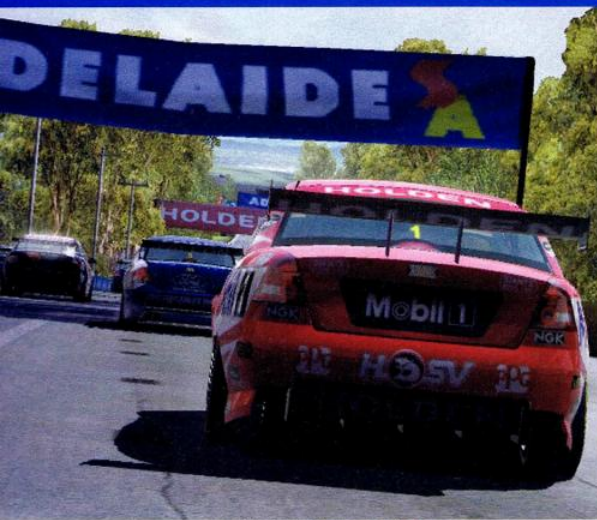
How can a game accurately model such a range of vehicles and racing varieties? Well, it doesn't necessarily aim for accuracy: the TOCA series has always sat in the middle of the

arcade-simulation spectrum, satisfying the more casual racing fan. It comes from that racing culture embracing of mandatory pit stops in short races – the purists might frown, but it's entertaining, always different and loyal in pleasing its target crowd. Back when TOCA began, the British Touring Car Championship was the most exciting competition around. Bumpers were always sure to fly, and there seemed to be an incident every second lap. Throughout each TOCA game, and now with our more recent V8

Supercars outings, this emphasis on entertainment has remained.

And with V8 Supercars Australia 2, entertainment there is. 48 tracks take some knowing, even if you're a racing game veteran. In fact, if you are a racing game veteran, it's nice to have all that circuit knowledge from every racing game you've ever played being raised again. Flying across the globe from Laguna Seca, so carefully learned in Indycar 2 from the mid-'90s, to Donington Park (Short) or Brands Hatch (Indy) – both TOCA classics – to Bathurst,

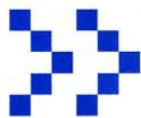




Ford or Holden? Or a Corona on the sideline?

Using barriers as steering assists is not advised

Looks like Team "Dynamik" needs a spell check



THE STRENGTH OF THE TOCA SERIES HAS ALWAYS BEEN ITS REPRESENTATION OF CIRCUIT-BASED TOURING CARS

which, after watching 161 laps a year, will be familiar to everyone, is a wholly comprehensive experience.

Such a range of tracks and vehicles means quality is not always assured though. The presence of rally racing in particular is simply absurd. It doesn't help that it seems a poorly designed Colin McRae clone, with unrealistic Sega Rally-ish courses with corners that are too easy to cut. It's even Nicky Crist giving you pace notes.

RACE OF HEARTS

The strength of the TOCA series however has always been its representation of circuit-based touring cars. With 21-car fields, the possibility (probability) of mayhem is massive, and with unpredictable AI opponent behaviour, this racing is pretty bloody excellent, particularly on the more difficult settings. The forging handling and sturdy

nature of the vehicles mean the late-breaking nudge-assisted overtake is always on option, although the AI is competent enough to hound you inside or out if your exit speed isn't up to scratch. Having said that, both the player's and the opponents' cars tend not to respond to collisions as dramatically as they should – you'll be hard pressed nudging your rivals off a corner.

It would have perhaps been nice to see more aggressive AI responses to accidents – too often the field will slow to a crawl if someone spins in front – but the regularity of cars spinning out up ahead is great: perhaps the one touch in racing games that most profoundly captures one's imagination.

Still, like the series in general, the career mode will definitely not impress the racing perfectionists. If

you know anything about the world of racing, V8 2's career includes so many inconsistencies, illogicalities and simply stupid developments that you'll laugh. And then there are the CG cutscene characters that look like they've just ingested a bag of lemons.



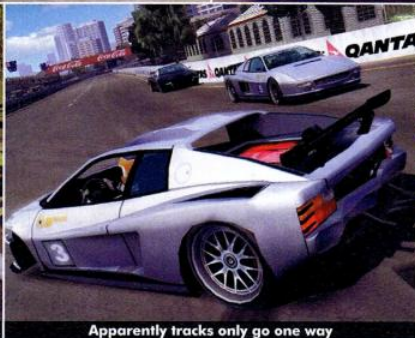
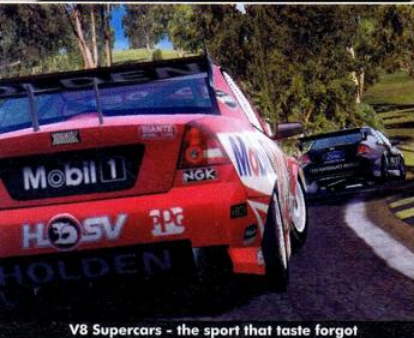
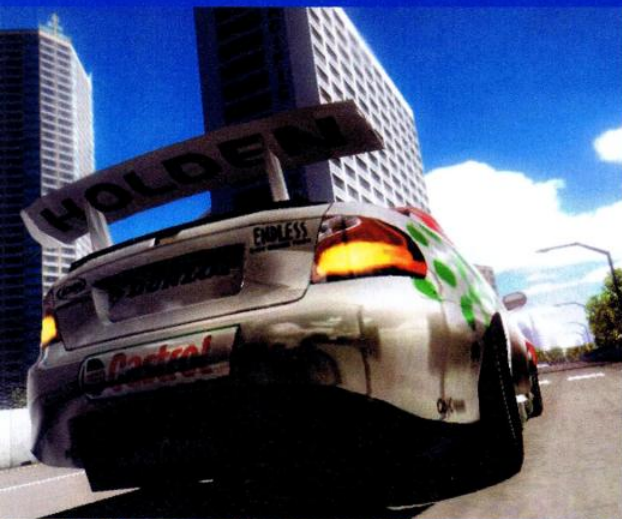
Before each championship the game calculates the time it will take to complete. Never miss Neighbours again!

The 'career' itself is a linear, seven or so season affair (although, strangely, each 'season' is made of a handful of different

championships), with progression attained simply through meeting race-specific objectives such as 'finish on the podium' or 'beat Driver X'. As such, failure doesn't really matter, and whether you're overachieving or just scraping through is irrelevant. What the career does well is hype up future challenges you'll face, like introducing you to star drivers, as

well as establishing simple rivalries. What it doesn't do is represent a believable racing career. The short race, short championship structure keeps things refreshing, but their arbitrary makeup and anonymous bulk of competitors mean you'll battle disinterest for the first few seasons. Add to this ridiculous plot developments, including a team manager that stays with you through bizarre team switches (truck racing to rallying? Puhlease!), a weird documentary-making chick and the customary hot, money-driven marketing babe, and you'll have the majority of the story. There's your manager complaining about simply paying the bills, but you're off flying through championships and restarting races without a care in the world. Sure, it's comic book and attempts nothing more, but it's still laughably transparent at times.

So what about the racing itself then? Well, the range of situations within which you'll be thrown are mostly admirably represented. By nature you won't like them all – ice racing and truck racing were my pet hates – but none of the stranger types last for longer than about 10



V8 Supercars - the sport that taste forgot

Apparently tracks only go one way

"And on your left you will see 150"

THE HISTORY OF TOCA

1997 - TOCA Touring Car Championship (PSone/PC)

■ Production car-based circuit racers were a rarity at the time of the original TOCA's release, as was convincing damage modeling. As a result this game hit with a major bang in the UK. Its impact was predictably less significant in the US. Still, if you wanted to race classic Audi A4s in near-certain drizzly conditions, then this was the game for you. German handheld developer Spellbound apparently released a GBC version in 2000. We can't remember it either.

1998/9 - TOCA 2 Touring Cars (PSone/PC)

■ A solid follow-up to the original, alongside Colin McRae Rally (released at around the same time) TOCA 2 established Codemasters as the foremost developer of non-US racing games. Still allowed you to race classic A4s in drizzle. And smash. Lots of smashing.

2000 - TOCA World Touring Cars (PSone)

■ Hark! The arrival of the world in



TOCA. Over 40 cars. Over 20 tracks. Still, seeing that World Touring Cars was the third TOCA title on PSone, it lacked the graphical wow factor and, to a degree, slipped under the radar. Enjoyed (or didn't) a recent GBA port.

2002/3 - V8 Supercars Race Driver (TOCA Race Driver) (PS2/Xbox/PC)

■ The first next-gen TOCA game, Codemasters, being the global thinkers they are, slapped some V8 signage on our version's box. Sold like hotcakes. We were a little grumpy, and expressed the opinion that the V8 Supercars label was mostly superficial. In the career mode, you played as an arrogant American, for a British team. The Australian V8s



were just one competition. It still sold like hotcakes. The Australian content was pretty skimpy, as a rival V8 game was released for PC at around the same time, which we assume owned the rights to HRT, V8 Supercars' dominant team. Still, V8 Supercars had Fords, it had Holdens, it had Bathurst. Did we mention hotcakes?

2004 - V8 Supercars 2 (TOCA Race Driver 2) (Xbox)

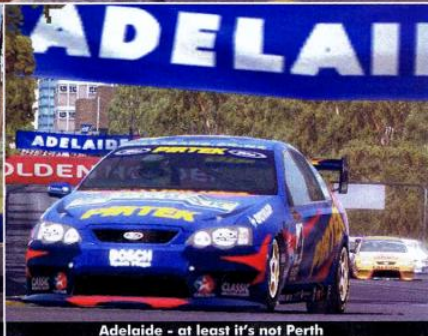
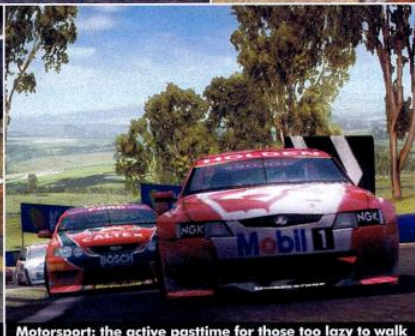
■ V8 2 is the first TOCA game not to debut on a PlayStation console. The situation looks like one of those short-term exclusivity deals, as the PS2 version is due later this year. This game ditched Ryan McKane. It's also reviewed on this page.

minutes each time they appear within the career mode. Oval racing is novel, while the smoother style of driving the open-wheelers encourage is also an appreciated change. In fact, the handling model has enough versatility to highlight the differences between vehicles and styles of racing, with enough believability and subtlety that all but the fussiest of racing fans will appreciate it.

TAKING IT EASY ON THE GRASS

There are a few flaws – venturing onto the grass isn't punished very heavily, and even getting all four wheels off coming out of a corner won't harm your acceleration much. This also means chicanes like in Donington Long can be cut through with minimal penalty. Occasions like this highlight the absence of black flags and the like, and though we've heard this problem is being solved for Xbox Live races, we remain doubtful.

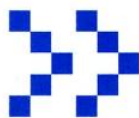
Pitting in general is also problematic. Firstly, on entry, AI cars will dangerously slow and veer into the pit lane across the main straight, making trouble for other AI cars. This is particularly evident on oval tracks. The lack of real-time pit



Once again Jackson fails his driver's test

Motorsport: the active pastime for those too lazy to walk

Adelaide - at least it's not Perth



HIT THE PIT WALL, FOR EXAMPLE, AND THE WHOLE RIGHT FRONT END WILL BEND AND CRUMPLE

stops (the screen just goes black and you choose how much damage you want repaired before being placed at the end of the pits after the appropriate time has passed) mean that the classic racing drama, that of trying to exit the pits before being overtaken, is sorely missing.

Damage is also a little bit disappointing. Don't get us wrong, we appreciate being able to deform the car now — hit the pit wall, for example, and the whole right front will bend and crumple — but the lack of extensive replay options, and the rarity of such collisions, means that its impact is minor. Debris still stays on the track, but seeing as most of the contact in V8 2 is bumping and rubbing, a subtler bumper damage system would have been more appropriate. Along with the career mode, there

is also an extensive Free Race mode. It allows you to race any series within the game — for us specifically, the one included Australian tracks, full length, with qualifying and car setups. With the addition of the previously-absent Holden Racing Team, this is the most complete Australian racing experience you'll enjoy, even if it's not super accurate. For example, there's no option in the menu to jump straight into a V8 season. Instead you'll have to 'create' the series. Bizarre...

The game looks and sounds impressive, with decent reflections, colourful tracks full of many trackside objects (including the token flag wavers) and that great bump-mapped road look that's currently 'in'. Smashes sound meaty,

and there are a good variety of engine noises across the catalogue of vehicles. In summary, you'll be pleased but not amazed.

Should you look into V8 Supercars 2? Well, if you're a casual racing fan, then yes. It will be a game that pleases the masses. It features a stack of racing, and getting through it all will take some time. The driving model is never too intimidating, and you'll all be able to recognise many of the cars and circuits. Together with Xbox Live support, and planned national tournaments, it's a game that is well-endowed in the longevity department. If you're after something a little more focused, you might be dissatisfied with the quantity over quality approach of the game. In the end though, V8 Supercars 2 is successful in its attempts to build an accessible, broad-appeal, 'serious' racer — a challenge harder than you might think. <<



Expect major national tournaments combining the 2004 V8 Supercars series with Xbox Live!

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 XBOX GCN PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Racing / PLAYERS: 1-2, up to 12 online / DEVELOPER: Codemasters / PUBLISHER: Codemasters / PRICE: \$99.95 / RATING: G / AVAILABLE: April /

HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: Huge array of cars and tracks, satisfying racing.

MINUS: Lacks in-depth simulation options.

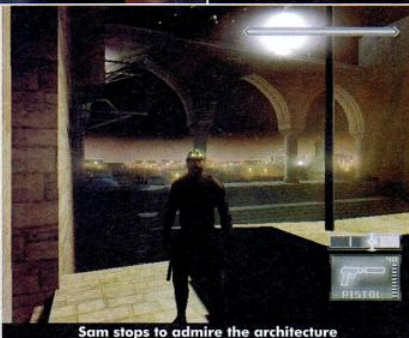
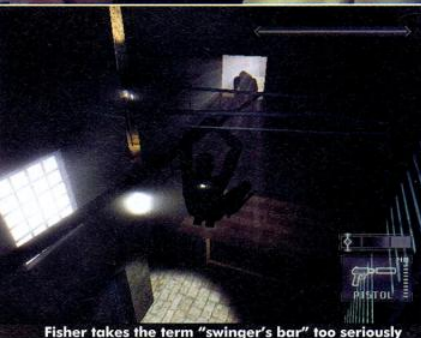
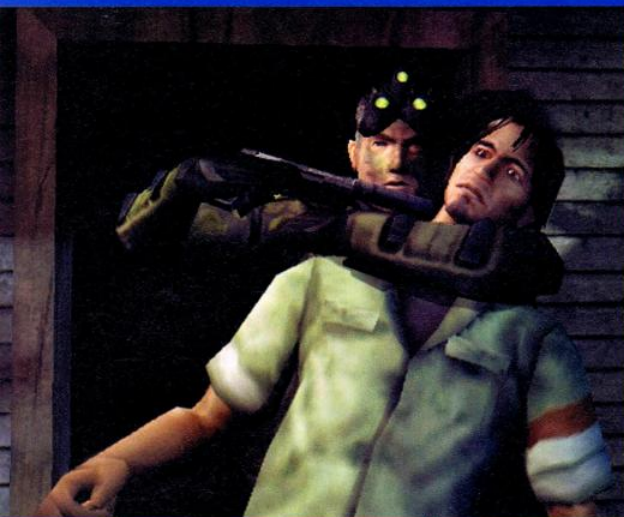
VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

86 84 89

OVERALL

88

Great game. And no Ryan McKane.



Fisher takes the term "swinger's bar" too seriously

Sam stops to admire the architecture

Urinating in East Timor can be a dangerous game

SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW

BRETT ROBINSON sees what Tomorrow will bring...

H As videogames go, Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow is a curious beast. Too familiar to qualify as a true Splinter Cell sequel, but offering so much more than even the most generous expansion pack, it truly defies classification. And so Pandora Tomorrow resides somewhere between the two extremes. How will history and, more importantly, the gaming community judge it? Only time will tell, of course, but for our money Ubi Soft has delivered yet another winner.

In Pandora Tomorrow, a militia group called Darah Dan Doa decides it's high time the independent nation of East Timor was slapped with a big fat 'Property of Indonesia' sticker. In an effort to quell the bloodshed and uphold East Timor's sovereignty, the US government dispatches Sam Fisher — Third Echelon MVP and the man voted 'most likely to assassinate an Eastern

European despot' back in high school — to the region. Fisher's initial assignment in Dili leads him to such disparate locales as Paris, Jerusalem and eventually Jakarta, where he uncovers Darah Dan Doah leader Suhadi Sadono's terrifying little life insurance policy. It's classic save-the-world stuff, to be sure, but there are plenty of unexpected twists that keep things interesting.

THE FISH MAY BE GONE, BUT WE STILL HAVE SAM FISHER

In raw gameplay terms, there are minimal differences between the campaign of Pandora Tomorrow and that of its forebear. Splinter Cell newbies and a fair few veterans probably won't bemoan that fact, but there's bitter disappointment in store for gamers who were hoping that Pandora Tomorrow would offer a whole new bag of tricks. Fortunately, the absence of new weapons and

gadgets is offset to a degree by the cool moves Sam has learned in the months since Komabayn Nikoladze was 'deposed'. We won't spoil them all for you, but we will mention Fisher's new SWAT turn, which enables him to dash unseen between areas of concealment. Sam can also whistle now, which is perfect for luring or distracting enemy soldiers, but obviously best avoided when there are Rottweilers about. There are a couple of small touches worth noting, too, like the on-screen alarm counter and the fact that Fisher now has the ability to open doors while crouching. And that just about wraps up the game's single player component: the level design is exemplary, there are some brilliant new visual effects, and on the whole it's well worth the price of admission.

Where Pandora Tomorrow succeeds in taking the franchise to bold new heights is in the multiplayer realm.

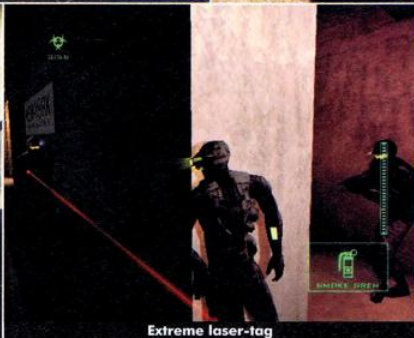
Without a doubt, Ubisoft has created one of the most original and conceptually brilliant multiplayer game designs we've come across in a very long time. Scattered throughout the custom-designed maps are automated virus dispersal pods. ShadowNet operatives are tasked with disabling, sabotaging or capturing these pods (depending on the chosen game mode), while it's the job of the Argus Corporation mercenaries to defend these pods at all costs. It's a simple concept on paper, but the choice of team has a dramatic effect on the way the game is played.

TWO ON TWO MULTIPLAYER GOODNESS

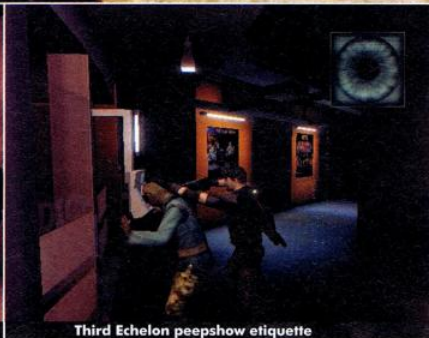
ShadowNet team members play from the traditional Splinter Cell perspective and have the same repertoire of moves as Sam Fisher. They also have the standard night vision and thermal goggles, and have



Sam Fisher's first fleeing attempt at the mannerism



Extreme laser-tag



Third Echelon peepshow etiquette



WHAT ALL THIS ADDS UP TO IS POSSIBLY THE COOLEST GAME OF CAT AND MOUSE EVER

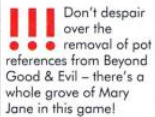
access to an array of gadgets and weapons specially designed for multiplayer. These include devices that trigger false security alarms, a gun that fires electrically-charged bullets designed to incapacitate enemies and disable electronic sensors, and spy bullets that allow the firer to eavesdrop on the voice comms of a target! Playing as a ShadowNet operative, it's all about stealth: moving silently, avoiding or disabling cameras and environmental sensors, and remaining undetected for as long as possible. By avoiding

direct confrontations, their chances of success are maximised, but when it comes to the crunch the ShadowNet boys are utterly lethal in hand-to-hand combat.

On the flip side of the coin are the Argus Corp mercs, who play from a traditional firstperson shooter viewpoint. It's the mercs' job to hunt down and kill the ShadowNet infiltrators while protecting the virus pods from harm. The Argus mercs have loads of firepower at their disposal, from the assault rifles they tote to motion- and laser-triggered mines. The mercs also pack tasers, and their helmets have integrated motion sensing and electromagnetic vision modes. The former highlights moving objects while the latter reveals the internal components of machinery, weapons and even bodies! In the mercs' favour,

environmental sensors scattered throughout the play environments lock down subsections where intruders are detected, temporarily deny access to virus pods and even relay the positions of the infiltrators to the mercs' own heads up displays!

What all this adds up



to is possibly the coolest game of cat-and-mouse ever, and we predict the online servers will be packed for months to come. By all means, buy Splinter

Cell: Pandora Tomorrow for its lengthy and involving single player campaign – you certainly won't regret it. But Pandora Tomorrow's multiplayer mode is the real reason to pick it up, and it's one of the best reasons yet for Xbox owners to invest in a broadband connection and a Live account. <<



AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Stealth Action / PLAYERS: 1-4 / DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal / PUBLISHER: Ubisoft / PRICE: \$99.95 / RATING: M15+ / AVAILABLE: Now /

HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: Amazing multiplayer, a terrific campaign.

MINUS: No new weapons or gadgets in single player.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

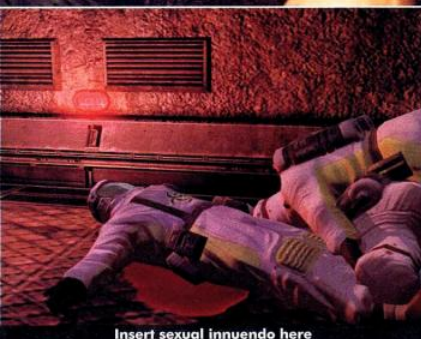
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OVERALL

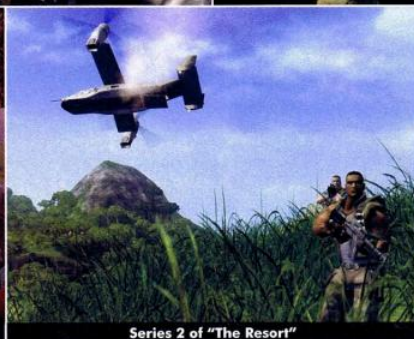
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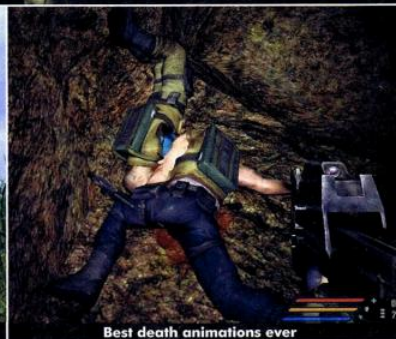
Get Xbox Live and get this game now!



Insert sexual innuendo here



Series 2 of "The Resort"



Best death animations ever

FAR CRY

CAM SHEA thinks this is a Farc(ry)ing good game!

☞ "Welcome to the jungle, we got fun and games, we got everything you want..." Immortal words, no? Although originally penned by Axl Rose (who admittedly went on to perform in tiny little lycra bike shorts — thus reducing his cool cache a great deal, and looking nowhere near as fetching as Tim on page 74), these lyrics are also very apt for Far Cry.

Far Cry, you see, has both a jungle and almost everything one could want in a modern action-focused

FPS. It's not so much that the game design is revolutionary, rather that it represents the logical culmination of a number of trends in games today, and is backed up by some fantastic tech. But before we get on to all that, perhaps some cursory explanation of the setting and storyline behind the game is in order.

DR EVIL'S SECRET LAIR

Here's the short version. You play as Jack Carver, the typically grizzled, yet unflappable leading man. He finds himself marooned on an island chain in Micronesia, where mad scientist Dr George Wilhelm Krieger has set up multi-million dollar laboratories and is conducting research into human genetic engineering. Oh, and you're also trying to rescue a journalist named Valerie, who came to the islands to uncover the Doctor's evil plans and was captured.

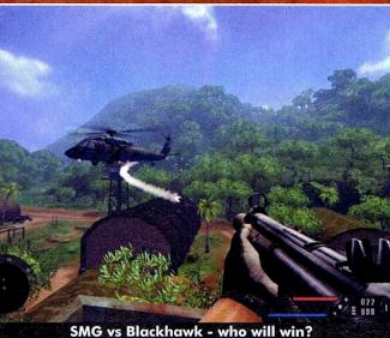
What all this means is a gorgeous tropical location absolutely swarming with soldiers (and later on some of the genetic mutants the Doctor has created) and the familiar one man against the world angle that is a staple of action videogames. Far more importantly, Crytek have taken this rather clichéd setup and done something really compelling with it, where technology and game design work hand in hand.

For instance, the CryEngine has allowed Crytek to give the player massive outdoor environments to explore, complete with a view distance of around 2km. This leads into very open-ended gameplay. For instance, you may need to get head inland up a mountain, but the level starts off in a boat way out from shore. Rather than just gunning straight in onto shore, however, you're far better off cruising about

looking for the best possible place to land. And while you're out there, you can use your binoculars to help plan your assault. By simply zooming right in on the island and panning along the beach you're able to spot where most of the enemy patrols are, and "tag" them, so that they appear on your radar. Your radar will also indicate whether they're oblivious to your presence or on alert. And whilst zoomed in on enemy soldiers you'll be able to hear their conversations thanks to the "telescopic audio".

Tagging enemies from a distance and scoping out a good entry point really take this game to a level few single player FPSs have thus far. Levels are designed to have several paths available to the player. So even once you've landed on the beach and taken out the enemy soldiers, there's still a whole lot of choice as to how to get up that

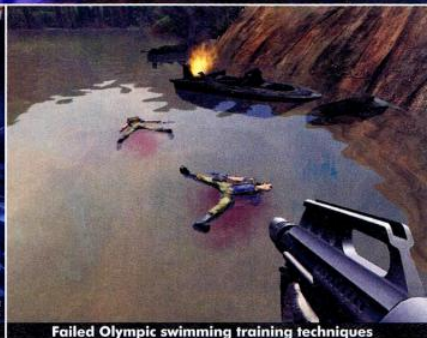




SMG vs Blackhawk - who will win?



Game over, man! Game over!



Failed Olympic swimming training techniques



LEVELS ARE DESIGNED TO HAVE SEVERAL PATHS AVAILABLE TO THE PLAYER

mountain. You might commandeer a jeep and drive up, stealth your way along a mountain path, or find a route through some caves that circumvents the guards on the mountain. It's up to you and it all adds up to a game with stacks of replayability.

GAMES OF CAT AND MOUSE

But that's only the beginning — there's still the enemy AI to talk about! Once you're spotted they'll alert each other to your presence, utilise cover when necessary and try and flank you. Take out the soldier in charge and they'll be less likely to try a coordinated assault. They also use the last spot you were sighted as their point of reference, which can lead to some amusing games of cat and mouse as you run through the foliage after being spotted and drop to a prone position, maneuvering around behind them as they search

the jungle where you were only thirty seconds ago. You can also throw rocks to try and distract them.

Much like Halo, much of the entertainment value of Far Cry comes from seeing how the enemies will react each time you play a section and experimenting with different tactics. Also like Halo, and unlike most PC games, there's no quick save, only checkpoints. This gives a little more weight to your actions and means that replaying sections is inevitable. Thankfully it's so entertaining that you won't mind too much.

There's an awful lot that's cool about Far Cry: the combination of long distance (you can zoom an awfully long way in with the sniper rifle and launch rockets that take twenty seconds to get to their destination) and up close combat; the stunningly real graphics

that handle both epic island vistas down to incredibly detailed soldiers, dense foliage and atmospheric indoor environments with ease; and the excellent physics engine (that allows you to push barrels down hills to knock people over, bounce about in jeeps and blow enemies high into the air only to see them splash into the water, then rise up to bob on the surface, while blood seeps realistically into the water. It all adds up to a compelling and realistic gameworld, with just enough of an arcade element to ensure you're always having

fun. Far Cry also ships with some great multiplayer modes (see our preview in issue 125) and an incredibly easy to use editor. In fact, we'll be using the editor ourselves and telling you guys all about it in future issues. <<<

!!! Everything about Far Cry is polished — even the FMV intro and the awesome death effects. Sweet.

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCN PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: FPS / PLAYERS: 1-Multi / DEVELOPER: Crytek Studios / PUBLISHER: Ubisoft / PRICE: \$89.95 / RATING: MA15+ / AVAILABLE: Now /

HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: Holy crap the visuals are amazing! And so is the gameplay!

MINUS: Indoor combat isn't as engaging as outdoor.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

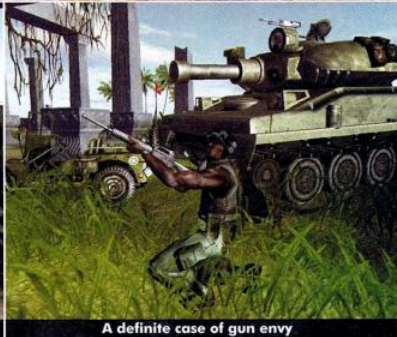
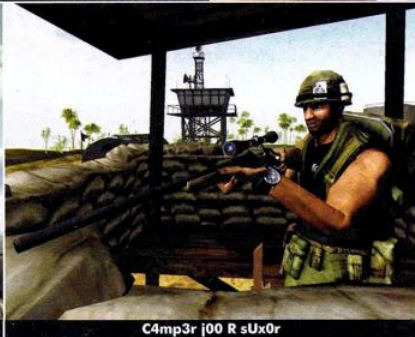
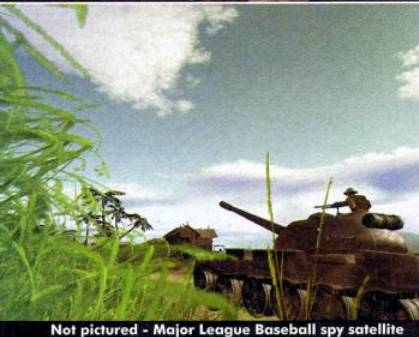
91 89 89

OVERALL

90



Far Cry is almost as playable as it is beautiful, and that's a rare thing.



Not pictured - Major League Baseball spy satellite

C4mp3r j00 R sUx0r

A definite case of gun envy

BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM

Every time **DANIEL WILKS** wakes up he thinks he's somewhere else...

When Battlefield 1942 appeared on shelves it quickly took the PC gaming world by storm, shifting massive numbers of units and spawning a staggering number of clans and fan sites. The success of the game became even greater with the release of the fan made mods Desert Combat and Eve of Destruction which moved the action to Desert Storm (or Desert Shield — better known as Desert Storm II: Electric Boogaloo) and the Vietnam War respectively. Although these mods have done great things for

Battlefield 1942 in prolonging its lifespan, Eve of Destruction is also the greatest hurdle DICE's new creation, Battlefield Vietnam must face as it delivers much of the same content as the sequel and has the added bonus of being completely free.

POLICE COPS? OR BADGE PATROL?

As the name strongly suggests, Battlefield Vietnam transposes the vehicle and infantry based capture and hold action of Battlefield 1942 to the bungled South East Asian "police action" of the 60s and early 70s. In keeping with the new setting, BF Vietnam includes an assortment of modern weaponry and vehicles. Also in keeping with the new setting, Vietnam places a great deal more emphasis on infantry combat rather than vehicular mayhem. To facilitate this change of gameplay, maps have been made far more compact with

capture points clustered much closer together making for a fast paced game of give and take.

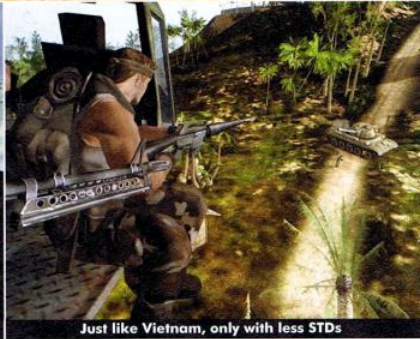
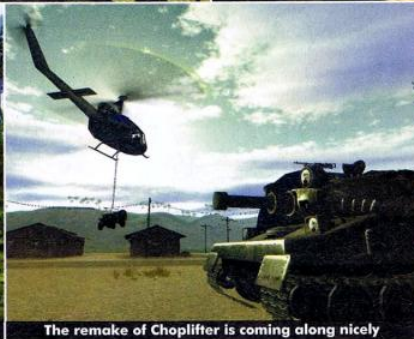
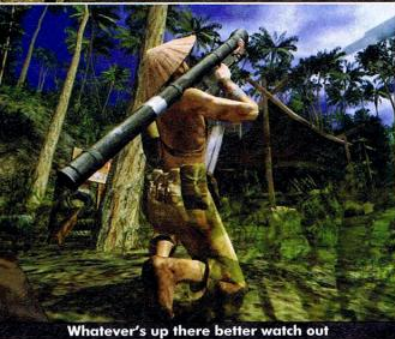
Although the emphasis is firmly placed on infantry combat, the vehicles of Battlefield Vietnam still have a major role to play. Each side has access to a number of ground and air vehicles ranging from simple four-wheel-drive vehicles through to mobile artillery and planes. The major addition vehicle wise are helicopters, mobile gun platforms and troop transports that first came into their own during the conflict. Aside from their obvious use as highly maneuverable masses of machinegun fire, helicopters can be used to quickly move troops and the larger helicopters can actually carry vehicles from one position to another, a very handy ability on the island hopping maps. Unfortunately the new weapons are less interesting and also prove to be fairly

unbalanced. Although both teams are well balanced in terms of spawn points and vehicles, the Allied team has access to the M60 — possibly the most overpowered weapon in recent memory. The M60 is far too accurate over long range and doesn't slow the player up by any significant margin — expect to see it used to excess on any public server. With any luck DICE will nerf this problem with their first patch.

HOGS OF WAR

Whilst the graphics engine is certainly an improvement over that seen in BF 1942 it is also fraught with problems. Much like the previous game, Vietnam is an absolute system hog capable of bringing even the most powerful of modern PCs to its knees (or whatever passes for a computer's knees) before maxing out settings. Ultimately this isn't too much of a problem but if your PC is less than a





Whatever's up there better watch out

The remake of Choplifter is coming along nicely

Just like Vietnam, only with less STDs



VIETNAM IS AN ABSOLUTE SYSTEM HOG CAPABLE OF BRINGING EVEN THE MOST POWERFUL OF MODERN PCS TO ITS KNEES

RETARDS

Like the original Battlefield game, Vietnam features what can loosely be called a single player game in which the player can duke it out on all the multiplayer maps with bots. To say the AI is about as smart as your average ex-junkie with serious brain damage due to copious use of bad drugs cut with rat poison would not be an exaggeration. The AI will frequently jump in a vehicle and then decide to stay put, walk in circles or, a personal favourite, jump in a flying vehicle and make their way to the nearest edge of the map and go AWOL (George Dubya style). Players have commands tagged to the various function keys but whether the AI will respond accordingly is up to the whim of the stars and the gods.

!!! The 0.31 version of Eve of Destruction has just been released. Download it now!

2GHz system with at least a Ti4600 and half a gig of RAM don't even bother looking at the box. The other major problem is much more severe – grass. It's common practice to have vegetation in games only rendered when a player is close enough to see it to save on system resources. Basically what this means is that you can see textured grass or vegetation close-up but in the distance all you will see is a flat green expanse. Unfortunately this approach totally negates one of the most useful postures in BF Vietnam. Going prone not only makes a player a smaller target, it also improves the accuracy of whatever weapon used. This sound great in practice but when a player goes prone in grass their lines of sight are occluded by the now rendered blades of grass making the posture all but useless unless you laying on a road or on top of a rock

out in the open. Whilst this is bad the fault is exacerbated by the fact that other players, unless they are standing close by will not see the rendered grass and instead will be presented with a lovely target simply laying in a field of flat green. Although it may seem like we are leveling a good deal of criticism at Battlefield Vietnam it doesn't mean that it is a bad game – far from it. Vietnam features some brilliantly designed maps and that same sense of fun found in the original. Ultimately, however, Battlefield Vietnam is just a little too similar to the original offering and even though it is quite a polished title, it doesn't seem as well balanced as the Eve of Destruction mod. Be that as it may we can guarantee that BF Vietnam servers will always be fuller than those of Eve of Destruction so if 64 player jungle fighting sounds like your cup of tea then you know what to do. <<

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: FPS / PLAYERS: 1-64 / DEVELOPER: DICE / PUBLISHER: EA / PRICE: \$89.95 / RATING: M15+ / AVAILABLE: Now /

HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: Good maps, sexy graphics.

MINUS: Retarded AI, grass, weapon balance.

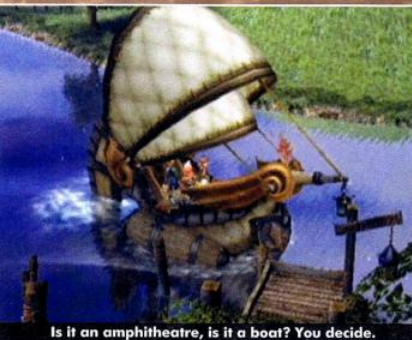
VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

89 84 86

OVERALL

85

A fun but somewhat uninspired bit of multiplayer shooting.



Is it an amphitheatre, is it a boat? You decide.



Faith +1



Insert humorous Eliot-style caption here.

FINAL FANTASY: CRYSTAL CHRONICLES

KOSTA ANDREADIS lives in a rich fantasy world...

When Nintendo opted to remain with the cartridge format for the Nintendo 64, many developers were decidedly unhappy. With the CDROM boom of the early nineties, console developers were looking to take advantage of the comparatively large amounts of data storage that optical media could provide them. More room to work with meant developers could create more cinematic gaming experiences. And with the RPG in particular, Square were able to take this approach with their Final Fantasy series by moving to Sony's PlayStation – which of course used a CD storage device. Now after a decade of absence, Final Fantasy has returned to a Nintendo console with Crystal Chronicles, a title which abandons almost all of the traits many relate with the series today – epic character driven stories, traditional RPG battles,

character development, and sweeping cinematic interludes – a title that ironically could exist, intact, on cartridge format.

GET ON THE TROLLEY AND JOIN THE CARAVAN...

Developed by SquareEnix/Nintendo subsidiary The Game Designers Studio, Crystal Chronicles for GameCube is essentially a dungeon crawling hack-and-slash action RPG, one that happens to feature a unique and consequently polarising multiplayer approach. The premise is somewhat simple (and kept that way during the game's entirety); the world is covered in miasma, a vapour that is fatal to the touch. In order to repel miasma, towns use Crystals of various sizes that provide a protective barrier from the deadly fog. The catch however, is that a Crystal's power fades after a year and must be replenished with myrrh,

which can only be collected from rare myrrh trees. As such, each town must send out year-in, year-out a caravan of young adventurers in search of myrrh – and as luck would have it for this particular town you're that adventurer. Armed with a Crystal Chalice that provides a small circular safe zone from the myrrh (i.e. the playing field) players traverse a world map to obtain myrrh, visit towns, meet fellow travelers and keep their town safe for another year.

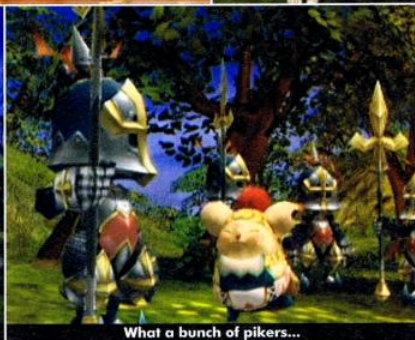
Beginning the game you must first select your character's class, sex and interestingly enough – family trade. Each of the four classes have their own speciality, there's the defensive abilities of the Clavat, the quick spell casting of the Yuke, the higher attack power of the Lilly and the agile Selkie. Dungeons are accessed via the world map where inside players follow a standard procedure: carry

the chalice (in single player-mode this is carried by a moogles), defeat enemies, collect treasure, beat the dungeon's boss and collect the myrrh. With GBA-connectivity playing a central role in the game's design commands are kept simple with the triggers used to cycle command slots (Attack, Spells, Defend, and Items) and the A button to execute. Character progression in Crystal Chronicles takes quite a different approach to the 'experience leads to a level-up' method people are used to. Instead, players collect various attribute affecting artifacts that once a level is complete are allowed to choose only one – which can range from 'strength +3' to 'gain another heart'. In multiplayer mode the player with the most bonus points for a certain level gets to choose their artifact first.

Although Crystal Chronicles can be played alone to some enjoyment,



So. Many. Shiny. Happy. People.



What a bunch of pikers...



Get in the kitchen and bake me a pie biznatch



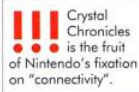
EACH NEW PARTY MEMBER ADDS EXPONENTIALLY TO THE POTENTIAL ENJOYMENT TO BE HAD WITH THIS GAME

the odd design choices work much better, and only begin to make sense, with multiple players. However, to access the multiplayer mode each player will need in their possession a GBA and a link cable. An expensive proposition no doubt but each new party member adds exponentially to the potential enjoyment to be had with this game. Players will have to band together to solve puzzles, defeat enemies, delegate tasks such as healing, as well as take turns in carrying the chalice. Instead of on-screen menus the GBAs take care of all character management in real-time, and with bonus points provided to players each given a specific task for a level (e.g. "only use focused attacks") dungeon crawling is kept fresh and competitive for the duration of the game. Players can also fuse their spells together in real-time to create more powerful versions. In fact

spells can also be fused with standard weapon based attacks (e.g. Fire + Attack = Flame Strike) making teamwork and strategy a very vocal affair.

THE WATER OF LIFE

Visually the game features similar art direction to that seen in Final Fantasy IX, in that characters sport child-like appearances, with the world and environments using a more vibrant colour palette than the norm. It may not be everyone's cup of tea but it suits the gameplay style perfectly and is also a wonder to look at with some amazing architecture, bosses and effects (one look at the water effects will make your jaw drop) - making it one of the better looking GameCube titles out there. Cut-scenes, although sparse are real-time and not pre-rendered, further



Crystal Chronicles is the fruit of Nintendo's fixation on "connectivity".

entrenching the game as Final Fantasy in name and aesthetics only. Unfortunately there is no real speech in the game apart from cryptic poems read in an almost bedtime story fashion before each dungeon, but the game does feature some impressive music and sound effects that are more reminiscent of the Zelda franchise than Final Fantasy.

In the end Crystal Chronicles' greatest strength is also its greatest weakness - the multiplayer mode is unfairly restrictive and we fail to see how it couldn't work with standard controllers. As it stands this a very different entry into the series - a Final Fantasy game that is uncharacteristically average when played alone and (once you get used to the game's many quirks) borderline brilliant when played with others. <<

AVAILABLE ON:

P52 / XBOX GCN PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Action/Adventure / PLAYERS: 1-4 / DEVELOPER: Game Designers Studio / PUBLISHER: Nintendo / PRICE: \$99.95 / RATING: GB+ / AVAILABLE: Now /

HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: Engaging cooperative quest, wonderful visual style.

MINUS: Requires GBAs and link cables to fully experience.

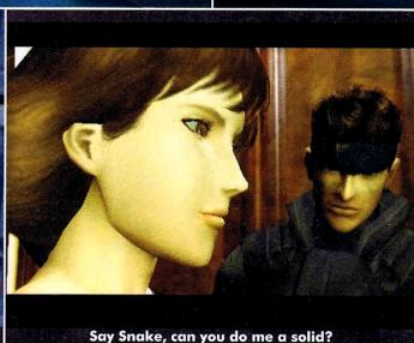
VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

90 72 80

OVERALL

80

Hopefully not the 'Final Fantasy for GameCube



Shoot him... in the ASS!

Say Snake, can you do me a solid?

Dodge this.

METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES

CAM SHEA likes it solid, he loves the snake...

GameCube owners have been getting the rough end of the stick for a while now — the console's performance in Australia has been sluggish at best, and they've missed out on quite a few "multi" platform titles, not to mention the whole arena of online play. Whether the Twin Snakes should be viewed as a victory for Nintendo fans or simply another catch-up title very much depends on your point of view.

A TALE OF TWO HANDS

On the one hand, The Twin Snakes represents a reinvention of one of the very best games of the PSone era. Six years ago, Metal Gear Solid (Hyper 65, 93%) was praised for its strong narrative and cinematic elements, for its emphasis on stealth gameplay and for its mature approach. One might argue that GameCube owners are getting the superior version of Metal Gear Solid,

just as they got the superior version of the original Resident Evil. On the other hand, PlayStation 2 owners have already had MGS 2 and with the third instalment on the way, it's not hard to imagine some Cube owners wondering why they're always left with sloppy seconds.

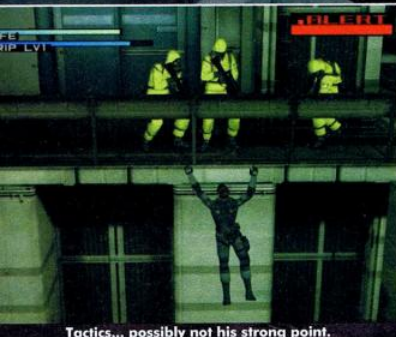
Regardless, it's obvious that Konami, in collaboration with Nintendo and Silicon Knights, have put a lot of effort into this remake. Chances are, however, that the first time you play it, you'll think "this isn't too different to the original!" After all, you'll remember the layout of the very first room, you'll remember the codec dialogue and you'll remember Snake's moves. We certainly felt that way... until we put the original PSone game on again. Wow. Games certainly have come a long way in only six or so short years. The original looks very plain in comparison, with texture warping

and pixels jumping out at you from every texture. That said, we were still enormously impressed by how little that actually mattered. The original still has style and atmosphere to spare, so the question becomes — does the remake do anything better, or take the player somewhere new?

The answer is... almost. What we have here is the story and setting of the original game with graphics and gameplay on par with Metal Gear Solid 2. Yep, a host of Snake's new moves from the sequel have been introduced into this remake of the original, such as shooting from a first person perspective, hiding in lockers, and sneaking up behind guards and "sticking them up". You can now also knock guards out with the M9 tranquiliser pistol and even dispose of their bodies (they no longer disappear) in the aforementioned lockers.

Speaking of guards, they're now a

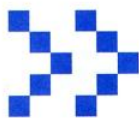
little more intelligent than they once were. They still have the same "cone of vision", but once you've alerted them, they're much more persistent in the chase and will call in reinforcements much more readily. This makes for a slightly more challenging game, and MGS veterans will find that some of their hiding techniques won't work any more. Veterans may also be annoyed that the slightly clunky control mechanics remain — you'll still get stuck to walls and the like when simply trying to navigate the environment, and compounding this, you'll still have overly limited vision at times when you need a keen awareness of your surroundings. Indeed, in some ways it's a shame that The Twin Snakes adheres so closely to the original game — all the environments and guard placements are much as we remember them, and you'll even be



Tactics... possibly not his strong point.

When I grow up I want to be an insane ninja too!

Big gun vs katana. I'll back the katana.



A HOST OF SNAKE'S NEW MOVES FROM THE SEQUEL HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED INTO THIS REMAKE

LET'S RECORD IT ALL AGAIN!

You'll notice many classic sound effects and compositions from the original Metal Gear Solid in The Twin Snakes, but one element that will sound oddly familiar yet at the same time alien will be the voice acting. You see, all the voices for Twin Snakes have been re-recorded. Many of the same actors have returned - David Hayter is still Solid Snake for example, but whether the delivery is an improvement is debatable. I remember chucking at some of the cheesier lines six years ago, and I'm still doing the same when playing through The Twin Snakes. It's also a little weird that they opted to drop Mei Ling and Natasha's accents, given that it's a part of their background as characters. That said, for a game that relies so heavily on dialogue in the cutscenes and codec conversations, the voice acting in The Twin Snakes still remains a cut above most games.

able to use the same strategies for killing the bosses. The changes to gameplay are mostly garnish, with the underlying core remaining the same.

AN ATTRACTIVE SNAKE

The visuals, however, are a different story. Twin Snakes is undoubtedly a very attractive game, and in keeping with the original, all the cutscenes are done using the in-game engine. Not only does mean much more detailed character models and smoother animations, but Konami have actually employed veteran Japanese director Ryuhei Kitamura (Versus, Azumi, Battlefield Baseball, Down to Hell) to direct the real-time cutscenes, and his amazing eye for action really shines through. The

Check out the redone "Briefing" option - the still drawn screens have been replaced by full 3D and the ability to switch between security cameras as you see Snake being briefed by Campbell and Dr Hunter.

cutscenes are now far more dynamic and cinematic, with plenty of Matrix-inspired bullet time shenanigans. Slick is most definitely the word, and with roughly another hour of cutscenes added (there's around three hours all up), this is the element that MGS fans will perhaps enjoy most about the remake.

Twin Snakes is definitely a loving remake of a classic game, and as such it comes recommended. Just bear in mind that the play mechanics are largely the same as they were in the original, so what was once innovative stealth gameplay now feels a little simplistic when compared to the likes of Splinter Cell. Even so, it's about time Nintendo loyalists and MGS virgins got a chance to find out why this series is so revered. <<

AVAILABLE ON:
PS2 / XBOX GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Sneak 'em up /
PLAYERS: 1 / DEVELOPER: Silicon
Knights / PUBLISHER: Atari /
PRICE: \$109.95 / RATING: MA15+ /
AVAILABLE: Now /

HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: Weirdest. Bosses. Ever.
Great twists and turns.

MINUS: Occasional slowdown.
Control can be cumbersome.

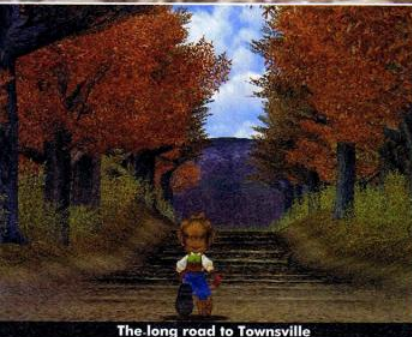
VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

87 88 80

OVERALL

83

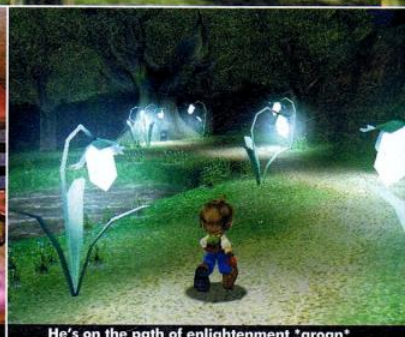
The Twin Snakes doesn't pack many surprises, but it's as compelling as ever.



The long road to Townsville



It's a tea party inside a GameCube!



He's on the path of enlightenment *groan*

HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE

STEPHEN FARRELLY starts his own Bedford Falls...

It's funny that Natsume have never really branched beyond their farming and fishing sims. There has been the odd stable entrant here and there that doesn't require looking after crops or building up the experience points of your rod, but by and large, the meat of this development studio is the formula they have created for living and enjoying life in the sticks. The question is raised then - how many iterations of Harvest Moon should Natsume make before the series becomes barren? Fortunately, the answer is - at least one more!

I WISH SOMEONE WOULD LEAVE ME A FARM

There's not a great deal of story here, life is what you make of it, right? At least that's the consensus of the Natsume team, and the beginning of what you can make with your life in this game starts at

run-down old farm.

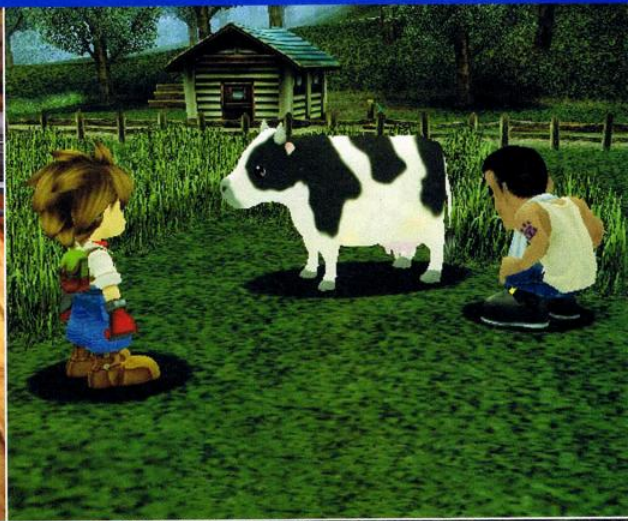
Your father has died and it was his wish, as well as his friend Takakura's wish, to convert a dilapidated farm into a thriving Mecca of cows, chickens, sheep and crops. Since he's "bought the farm" so to speak, the task has been left up to you and, with the live-in help and advice of your dad's pal, the flannel-shirted life of a farmer is just a few seasons away.

If you've never played a Harvest Moon title before, the premise might not seem all that enticing. Sure, it's just farming, but there's so much to engage with in the game, that it's easy to forget the simple nature of what's at hand. This idea lies in the game's encouragement of time management; as a farmer - with time against you - you're required to maintain a daily routine to ensure the productivity of the fundamental aspects of your farm. So, you'll need

to wake early in the morning (5am is a good start) to water your crops, then it's over to the barn to feed, brush and talk to your animals before you ask them to shake their money-makers. Milk your cow, shear your sheep and collect the eggs left by your hens, all of which can then be kept in your Food Storage device (your fridge) or can be left in Takakura's Dairy Box to be sold in town the next day. Once that's done, it's a good idea to eat, watch TV and then head out into the town to make friends, complete odd jobs, fish, and try to woo any of the young ladies floating about.

While on paper it may not seem like a lot to handle, all of this has to be done before you go to bed, which shouldn't be any later than around 10pm. If you stay up, chances are the next day your body won't be able to handle the work load, slowing you down and





Too easy. Give me a ganja-free caption challenge Malky!

You've got a turtle head poking out there mate

I'm sure that's less lame in-game than it looks



THEN IT'S OVER TO THE BARN TO FEED, BRUSH AND TALK TO YOUR ANIMALS

reducing your farm's productivity. Time ticks by very quickly as well, unlike *Animal Crossing* where game-time reflects real-time, *Harvest Moon* zips along, so managing this time effectively becomes the number one ingredient needed for ultimate success.

A COW NAMED IS K(H)OSTA

Ultimate success, however, doesn't have to be paramount. If you've used up a season of crops, take some time off from tilling, sowing, watering and picking plants to enjoy the luscious valley at your disposal. This is the beauty of the game, you can play it in whichever way you see fit, but there are repercussions for everything you decide to do, so a level of player responsibility is injected into the mix, something that should ensure a unique play experience for everyone.

Forget *Me Not Valley* is where you live, and unlike *Harvest Moon* games of old, the visual presentation in *A Wonderful Life* is actually very nice. There are no major technical feats, though it is nice to watch shadows cast on NPCs and yourself by trees in real-time. The character models are overtly cute and suit the style of game, and the trees, buildings, rolling hills and waterways all go a long way to immersing players in this virtual town.

Although the ultimate goal of the game is to live day to day managing your farm, it's also important to make and keep as many friends as possible - especially among the ladies. Eventually you'll get a blue feather to give to your girl of choice and, if you're lucky, she'll be happy to accept it, pushing you closer to

starting a family on your farm.

Beyond life goals, however, the game is very open to your own approach and it's only the lack of a little more life to interact with that creates a chink in *A Wonderful Life's* armour. It really would have been nice to have new characters moving in and out of the valley, in the same vein as

Animal Crossing, but hey, at least you can link up with *Harvest Moon: Friends of Mineral Town* on GBA, and interact with both towns, which definitely helps add to the experience.

Overall, *Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life* is an enriching gaming experience - it could be time to put on your best farming gloves. <<

!!! The town's population is a little low... if only we could take it online. Because as we all know, "it's good to farm together"...

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Farming/Life sim /
PLAYERS: 1 / DEVELOPER: Natsume /
PUBLISHER: Ubisoft /
PRICE: \$99.95 / RATING: G /
AVAILABLE: Now /

HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: A virtual life as a farmer, could you ask for more?

MINUS: A bit barren in terms of character interaction.

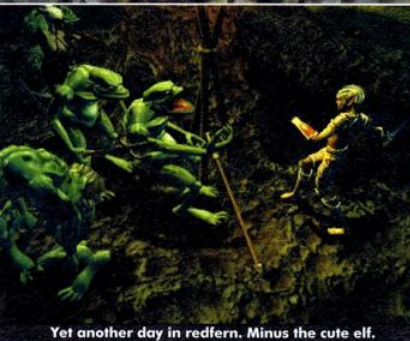
VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

83 82 90

OVERALL

88

The best iteration of *Harvest Moon* to date, and still as fun as ever.



Yet another day in redfern. Minus the cute elf.

Taking pride in one's appearance is half the battle

Hide your time. Hate, by nature, consumes itself, and in its rage this beast will leave itself vulnerable.

"Does Mannerism"

CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH

DANIEL WILKS finds EverQuest fun – for once

As the saying goes, sometimes a change is as good as a holiday. Bizarre as it may sound, the fact that this game is set in the relatively unknown (in console circles) world of Norrath is one of its strongest features. In case the name Norrath doesn't sound familiar to you here's the scoop – Norrath is the fantasy world in which Sony Online Entertainment's hugely successful MMORPG EverQuest is set. Don't worry about having to have a blisteringly fast Internet connection and a lot of patience (not to mention money) to enjoy this outing though. Norrath is action all the way. Developed by Snowblind, the company responsible for the very popular Forgotten Realms based action/RPG Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance, Champions of Norrath does away with any real pretension to being an RPG and instead concentrates solely on combat and

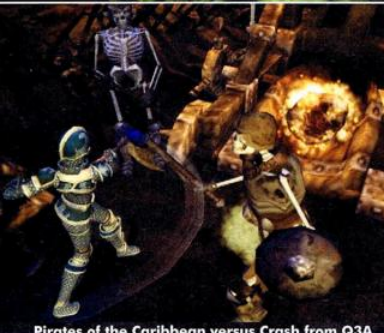
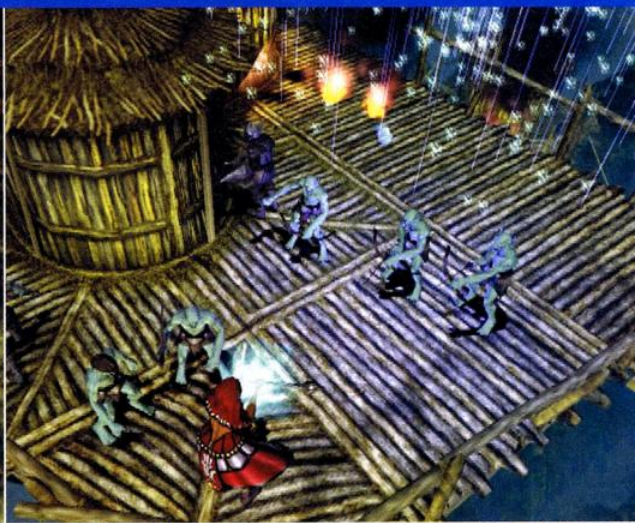
acquisition of loot with all quests simply being an excuse for the former and a chance to grab the latter. Although this may sound like a lightweight approach to the subject matter, Champions of Norrath benefits greatly from the straightforward approach. Players take the role of one of five different characters tasked by some generic fantasy elf dude (trust us, he's eminently forgettable) to battle some demon and his hordes of goblins, orcs, vampires and other things that go bump in the night. Although the plot really is just a cursory excuse to send the player into battle over a number of well designed levels, there is an occasional flash of storytelling brilliance that will surprise you.

FUNNING AROUND

The controls are beautifully streamlined with single button presses

for weapon attacks, quick spells or skills, potions, blocking and switching weapons. A "shift" style function is added to the controller allowing the player to assign other spells and abilities to all of the buttons which can later be accessed by hitting the designated "shift" and the corresponding button. Each character class has access to 10+ skills, each with 20 levels so there is a lot of room for character customisation and different approaches to combat. Although the gameplay is essentially like that of Gauntlet, with players funning around killing monsters until the end of the level and collecting stuff to keep alive, tactical complexity has been added with vastly improved enemy AI as well as customisable equipment. Whereas the vast majority of the enemies in Dark Alliance either ran straight at the player or fired their missile weapon, Norrath monsters have a far wider range of reactions to

combat including the ever faithful berserker charge, running away, raising dead comrades, flanking, attacking in packs and the like. Whilst none of the monster AI is likely to score anything more than the average house plant on an IQ test the variation in reactions keep combat fresh well after the first few hours. Aside from the obvious boost in experience, the other result of combat is booty. Whilst the majority of item drops are good for little apart from selling for a little spending money, some of the items will be of sufficient quality that you can modify them to become magical through the use of special components. Although the ability to do critical hits 5% more often may not sound like a big deal, being able to inflict massive damage that little bit more regularly can mean the difference between winning a battle and starting from your last save. Speaking of saves, Norrath features a



Pirates of the Caribbean versus Crash from Q3A



By the power of Greyskull etc etc.



Only this time, David won



THERE IS AN OCCASIONAL FLASH OF STORYTELLING BRILLIANCE THAT WILL SURPRISE YOU

REPLAY

Champions of Norrath goes that important extra step further than Dark Alliance in terms of multiplayer and replayability. Aside from having five different character classes to bash your way through the game with, Norrath also supports up to four players in multiplayer as well as the ability to jump online and play. Although playing with multiple friends is great this component does come with a few problems. Importing a single player character into a multiplayer game and then saving will trap said character in that level and there is no way of knowing who's online due to the total lack of a lobby. The only way to find a game is through trial and error or the old fashioned way – calling your friends beforehand and arranging a time.

dual save system that will automatically quick-save any game as soon as a player moves near a save point. You may think that saving so frequently may be overkill but the combat is so frenetic that you'll be thanking your lucky stars in no time. These saves points can also be used to do a full save if you're thinking about quitting out of the game.

TWEAKING INCHES

Although the Dark Alliance engine first debuted in 2001 it's still going strong with three games currently slated for release this year, Champions of Norrath, Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel and, of course, Baldur's Gate Dark Alliance II. Snowblind have obviously worked their fingers to the bone tweaking the engine to within inches of its life but the work has paid off in spades. Norrath is a gorgeous game to look

at with vibrant level design, excellent character and monster design and some great subtle textures. Unfortunately the new splendour means that the engine falls short in some other areas. At seemingly random times throughout the game players will experience moments in which the frame rate will become juddery. If it occurred only during some of the frenetic massed battles this would be understandable but it's just as likely to happen turning a corner in a cramped but otherwise empty dungeon. Players will also occasionally notice popup with vast tracks of land appearing out of nowhere. For the most part the popup is a minor annoyance but in later levels, especially the Plane of Air it becomes very noticeable and annoying. <<

!!! Apple bashing in the Ewok village - another reason to buy Norrath.

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Action / PLAYERS: 1-4 / DEVELOPER: Snowblind / PUBLISHER: Ubisoft / PRICE: \$99.95 / RATING: M15+ / AVAILABLE: Now /

HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: Frenetic action, surprising depth, challenging.

MINUS: Terrible accents, "witty" comments, framerate problems.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

87 80 89

OVERALL

86

Snowblind take the genre a step further with Champions of Norrath.



DARK ALLIANCE II

DANIEL WILKS plays Dark Alliance again - for the first time

Right from the outset it is obvious that Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II has two strikes against it - timing, and being an obvious and uninspired sequel. When the first Dark Alliance game was released on PS2 back in 2001 it caused something of a stir, bringing the popular RPG world to violent life on consoles for the first time. Justifiably the game had a number of fans and spawned a sequel. Unfortunately the developers of the first game, Snowblind went A.W.O.L. to work with Sony on the similarly themed Champions of Norrath, leaving Black Isle, themselves no stranger to the RPG genre to fill the void. Talented as the crew may be the game still comes across as a very obvious sequel - all of the components you liked from the first game are still there with a story that faithfully follows on from the first. The only major new addition is the fact that you can choose from five

characters this time around instead of three, though only one of them, the Moon Elf Necromancer, has anything new to bring to the table.

PLATINUM CHAINZ AND JEWELZ

It is no exaggeration to say that Dark Alliance II plays just like the original with little in the way of expanded tactics, moves, skills or quests. Fortunately three years down the track the combat is still compelling enough to warrant an extended play. Aside from the Necromancer character and his interesting ability to raise undead fighting companions, the only new thing that Dark Alliance II brings to the table is the ability to customise weapons, armour and jewelry using a combination of runestones and different gems. Whilst this addition is appreciated, the prohibitive cost of making a

truly great item makes the system more than a little frustrating, especially since it takes the place of any exceptional item drops.

Although three years old the Dark Alliance engine is still going strong, offering up some great looking terrain and still some of the best water effects to appear on any console. That said it's disappointing to note that there is nothing new in the look of the game. The same old animations, textures

and effects are still going strong. Although Dark Alliance II definitely suffers from a serious case of sequelitis there is one problem that will effect its popularity and sales even more - why buy a sequel to a classic when you can get Champions of Norrath, Snowblind's new game instead? <<<



AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 XBOX GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Action RPG /
PLAYERS: 1-2 / DEVELOPER: Black Isle
Studios / PUBLISHER: Vivendi Universal /
PRICE: \$99.95 / RATING: M15+ /
AVAILABLE: Now /

HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: Solid Combat, familiar, necromancy.

MINUS: Familiar, workmanlike, uninspired.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

80 80 81

OVERALL

79

A decent sequel but a pale imitator.



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DISCIPLES RISE OF THE ELVES



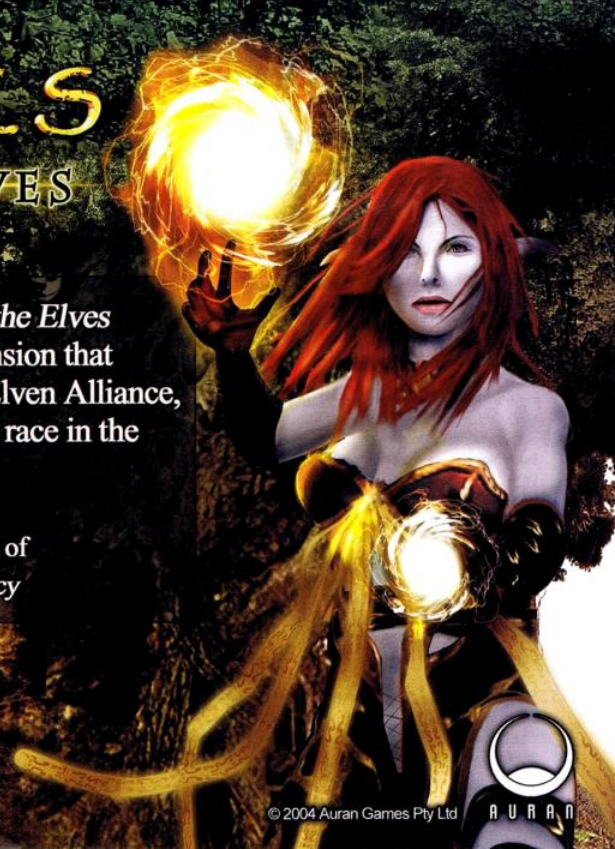
Disciples II- Rise of the Elves is a stand alone expansion that lets you explore the Elven Alliance, the first new playable race in the Disciples universe.



Includes complete version of
Disciples II: Dark Prophecy

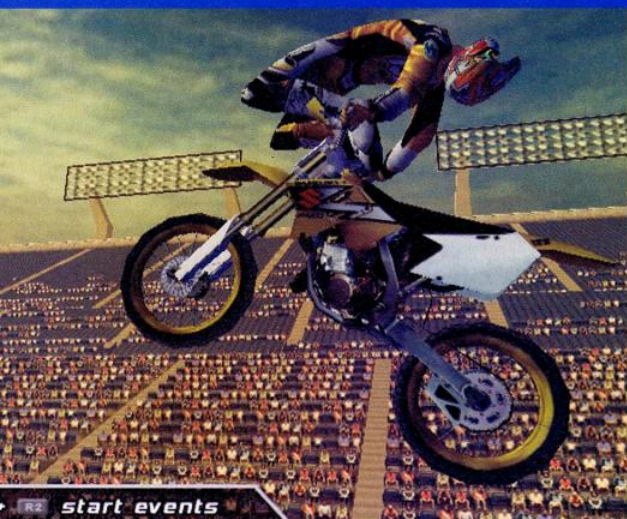
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AURAN



start events



Scuse me while I kiss the sky



3/3 Laps

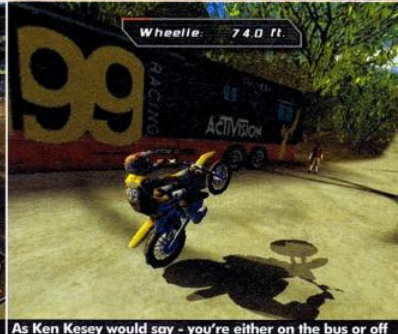
4/8 Position

1:01.89

-0:07.34

2/4 laps
8/8 positionLead -0:35.25
Current 0:45:011/3 Laps
1/8 Position0:00:00 Lap
+0:00:00 Lead

"Lining up" is integral to extreme sports



Wheeler: 74.0 ft

As Ken Kesey would say - you're either on the bus or off

MTX MOTOTRAX

JACKSON GOTHE-SNAPE graduates to a 50cc Pee Wee...

What could be cooler than getting an email from your personal digital assistant (PDA) about a new sponsorship opportunity with an uber-cool youth culture brand such as Arnette or DC Shoes? Or visiting Travis Pastrana's jump-laden, track-filled property, and him actually calling you - Johnny "Amos" Everyman - his very own friend? If your answer is nothing, then MTX Mototrax is for you. If you see yourself pulling a Superman plus bar hop off the big white ramp in the sky, then this will be your afterlife come early. But if all this preloading suspension nonsense seems about as interesting as a Guy Sebastian interview, then MTX Mototrax probably won't hold your attention for too long.

JACKSON HAS A GIRLFRIEND?

Why? Well, the girlfriend thought it was boring because it was too brown. But unlike most of her observations

(the most memorable being a suggestion that the characters in Final Fantasy should be able to change outfits - pfft, like that was ever going to happen) here she was actually onto something. This is a game about dirt. Flat dirt, piles of dirt, dirty clothes and the consumption of said dirt. And, while Left Field has tried oh-so-hard to make things look a little less, well, dirty, by surrounding the Supercross arenas in tiers of people, or by enclosing the Motocross tracks in more advertising hoardings than Parramatta Rd., it's a game that is no more than realistic in its appearance. Sharpish, smoothish and stylish, but definitely not dazzling.

It's a principle that continues into the riding. The bikes feel much heavier and, even with the more powerful variants, slower than those of games more open about their fantasy, such as THQ's MX Unleashed (review next issue - Ed). There are

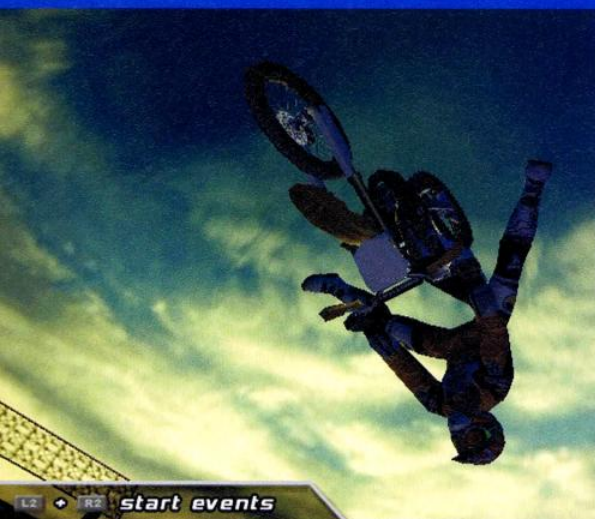
physical principles in action there or thereabouts while taking corners and getting air, but without a sharper interaction between tyre and ground, the game sits a little bit on the lumbering side. Certainly, this hugely rewards the smooth, rhythmic approach of nailing jumps and sliding around the banked corners with a genuine sensation of pace. But such fun will usually end with you flying into a barrier after understeering in your reluctance to slow down.

Having said all that, half the game is spent in the air, pulling one of the 100+ tricks. The Freestyle events are built around this aspect of riding, and points here are awarded in typical Tony Hawk style, with flips, extendable grabs and standard moves making up the collection. The trick system is laid out on the controller slightly poorly, with some moves such as backflips requiring you to start the sequence while still

on the jump. Also, without experimentation, you won't know which tricks can be held, as the tricks' buttons don't really correlate to their makeup. MTX Mototrax takes the curious approach of starting you out with only six tricks unlocked, requiring you to discover them through different challenges. This does encourage a more thorough knowledge of each, but seeing as the system lacks some structure, it would have been nice to be able to find patterns within the catalogue of tricks from the outset through the serious gamer's staple technique - mashing.

GET YOUR FACE IN THE GAME

The game's feature mode is without doubt the career. Competent and essential, it does the simple things right, offering several varieties of event - Supercross, Motocross, Freestyle and Free Ride, and linking them together with sponsorship deals



Only golf can beat this sport for fashion faux pas

Sure, he looks cool, but his bike has Spokey Dokeys

Nothing beats kicking back and relaxing while high



THIS IS A GAME ABOUT DIRT. FLAT DIRT, PILES OF DIRT, DIRTY CLOTHES AND THE CONSUMPTION OF SAID DIRT

and team swaps. Sure, these frills are transparent — your decisions have only minimal impact on the racing (say, in bike power), but it does create some degree of incentive. We would have liked to see a more complete tier-based racing league, with races run concurrently, and results and news from other classes available. This would give more meaning to each team, and your climb up the rankings — instead all you receive is a repetitive news story. As an aside on the career mode, after the glory of THUG's customisable character, MTX Mototrax

seems to take a backwards step for Activision. There are few physical options, and a lack of face importing. If the infrastructure to get your face in the game already exists, why not incorporate this in all titles?

One aspect of the Tony Hawk series that MTX does import well is its Free Ride mode. You're placed in an area such as a quarry to explore. Meeting people and finding challenges, it's classic Tony Hawk on a dirt bike, but it would have been nicer if these areas were slightly larger and more intense. Still, it makes for a nice change from the racing.

And then there's the obligatory punk rock soundtrack, which, like much of the game itself, is great for fans, while the playlist editor is great for those who aren't. Still, there are a couple of decent, classic tracks sandwiched between Slipknot and

Slipknot (instrumental). Also, the bikes make throaty bike-like noises. Choice!

When it's all said and done, and the poorly modelled bikini dais girl is holed up in the victor's motel room for the night, you will take something quite pleasing away from your experience of MTX Mototrax. Nailing the third lap in a Motocross event with a succession of half-preloaded suspension jumps you become at one with the curvature of the road. At peace with the bike. You're speaking the language of jump, singing the songs of the soil. The game's ability to create this harmony is its greatest achievement. With the pleasing career mode and rewarding if uninspired gameplay, MTX Mototrax might be, even for non-motocross fans, worth a bash. The again, it might not be. <<

!!! MTX Mototrax's neat track editor Dirt Wuxr USA sets you in a baseball stadium.

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 XBOX GCN PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Motocross / PLAYERS: 1-4 / DEVELOPER: Left Field / PUBLISHER: Activision / PRICE: \$99.95 / RATING: M15+ / AVAILABLE: Now /

HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: Solid career mode.

MINUS: Minimal broad appeal.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

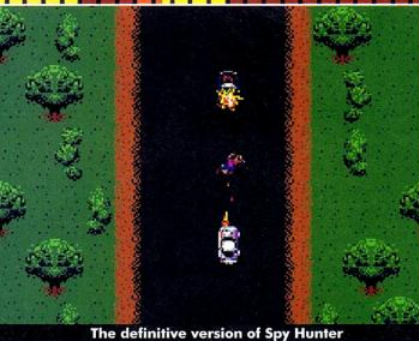
79 75 80

OVERALL

79

Features the Travis Pastrana.





The definitive version of Spy Hunter

Top down Doom?

A Boy and his many Blobs

MIDWAY ARCADE TREASURES

ED DAWSON cashes in \$10 worth of twenty-cent pieces

HThe early eighties were an interesting period for arcade games. It was a time famous for "The Great Video Game Crash" of '83-'84, when Atari and other notables had ploughed into the dirt (see our Classics section for more info!). Paradoxically, some of the greatest 2D titles are remembered from that time.

One of the market leaders at the time was a company called Williams. The original Williams arcade company eventually became Midway, owning some of the all-time arcade greats. This collection lets you play a great sample of early eighties arcade games including Gauntlet, Paperboy, Rampage, Marble Madness and Spy Hunter. Plus, you can see the evolution of game concepts, as several titles (such as Defender and Joust) have both the original game and the sequel. Also, there are sell-sheets, interviews and trivia on each game (although not all games have all of these extras).

STUFF FOR GEEKS

Probably the most interesting interview videos from this disc follow the team who made the seminal Defender and its sequel, as well as the revolutionary Robotron: 2084. The project lead and key programmer on both of these massively popular titles are the same two guys — Eugene Jarvis and Larry DeMar, who are still extremely animated and enthusiastic about their jobs, even after all this time. It's amazing to hear their perspectives on those heady days and the extraordinary difficulties they faced in bringing these golden games to life.

Eugene Jarvis also worked on the legendary Smash TV, one of the most modern titles in this collection, being full colour and sprite animated with digitized voices. Indeed, Smash TV is notable for driving the explosion into the fully sprite-animated age that spawned the likes of Double

Dragon. It's also interesting to hear how this classic game, with all its popularity and ports to the SNES was still essentially based on the gameplay from the 16 colour, outlines-on-black Robotron: 2084. This version actually looks better than the SNES title, pushing an insane amount of nice, big, good-looking sprites around the screen.

Eugene even gives insight into the industry's secrets, such as how they tried to balance the players' frustration and the sense of investment in the game to best squeeze the most money out of us! And he admits it: Boss Monsters — they're just there to kill you and take your money.

There really is a treasure chest of classics on this disc. The old promotional materials, information and interviews are absolutely fascinating if you grew up burning your pocket money on these games. Recommended. <<<

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 XBOX GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Arcade / PLAYERS: 1-4 /
DEVELOPER: Digital Eclipse /
PUBLISHER: Midway / PRICE: \$39.95 /
RATING: G8+ / AVAILABLE: Now /

HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: Picture-perfect emulation, four-player Gauntlet.

MINUS: Gauntlet II isn't on the list, some history missing.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

65 60 90

OVERALL

75

Perfect for those who remember it — otherwise, buy something modern!

NOT A SPECTATOR SPORT



LIVE

PREMIERSHIP EDITION

Out April 2004.



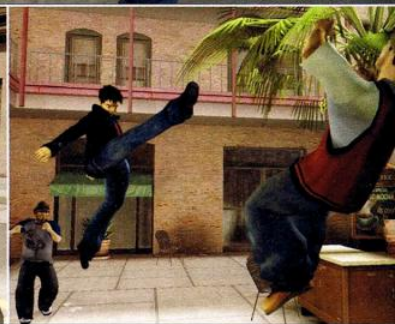
Get amongst the action with AFL Live Premiership Edition. Play for your favourite team and guide them to Grand Final victory. Can you win the Brownlow? Or kick a winning goal after the siren? Out April 2004, it's time to play hard.

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When "a man walks into a bar" jokes go right

Jet Li has a personal vendetta against motorbike couriers

Even the power of fat pants couldn't save this mook

RISE TO HONOUR

DANIEL WILKS has a Fist of Legend...

Of all the games we've had in the office this month, none of them have garnered anywhere near the number of onlookers as Rise to Honour. There's something intrinsically cool about being able to play a digital version of one of the world's greatest arse-kickers, Jet Li. Add a cursory plot about drug dealers or some such nonsense, long lost female friends who have grown up to be kung fu hotties and the occasional slow-motion John Woo style gunfight and you should have a recipe for success. Unfortunately Rise to Honour doesn't nearly equal the sum of its parts but in a case like this sometimes it's more interesting to play a noble failure than an outright success.

GO HIRE FONG SAI YUK NOW. SERIOUSLY.

Rise to Honour is essentially a PS2 movie with interactive elements - much like The Bouncer only with actual gameplay. As Jet (his

character's name is inconsequential), players bash and shoot their way from Hong Kong to San Francisco, with the occasional running away level thrown in for good measure. The fighting mechanics of the game are really quite good - all basic attacks are controlled with the right analogue stick, tapping the stick in a certain direction will launch one of a number of moves in that direction. The system can be a bit cumbersome in the frequent and annoying boss battles, but when you're faced with multiple enemies coming in from different angles it comes into its own. With some good timing you can rack up some long and great looking combos. The Ri button is a bit of a catch all button in combat as it can either be used to block, throw or jump depending on the situation. The Li button moves Jet

into a state of bullet-time-esque frenzy. Holding down Li and Ri allows the player to make counter attacks whilst blocking.

Whilst the basic fighting may be entertaining, the rest of the game, for want of better words, ranges from pedestrian to just downright awful. The shooting levels are not terrible but extremely repetitive, but

the game really falters when it comes to the gimmicky boss battles and the miscellaneous "running away" style levels. Although trial and error is a legitimate form of learning, players shouldn't have to play through one battle 20 times to learn the incredibly simple gimmick of a particular boss. The running levels are even worse, echoing the worst parts of Dragon's Lair (the original) or Shenmue. Hitting a button with split second timing does not good gaming make. <<

!!! We really wanted to like this one! And despite the score it's still worth a play.

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Fighting / PLAYERS: 1 / DEVELOPER: SCEA / PUBLISHER: Sony / PRICE: \$99.95 / RATING: M15+ / AVAILABLE: Now /

HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: Cantonese segments, Jet Li, thank FX.

MINUS: Shooting, running, bosses.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

80 74 65

OVERALL
66

A noble failure worthy of a good sequel.



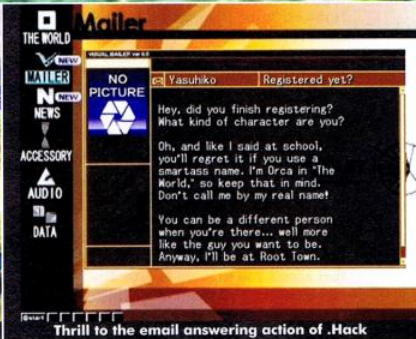
!!! For some hilariously translated info on the latest .Hack titles just hit www.hack.channel.or.jp or <http://http://babelfish.altavista.com>. Fun for all the family.



Say what you like but the character design is brilliant



If only real MMORPG players were so cooperative



Thrill to the email answering action of .Hack

.HACK PART 1: INFECTION

DANIEL WILKS is a gamer playing a game about a gamer

At those wacky Japanese. What will they come up with next? From the country that brought you high-class bondage porn (pinku eiga) and schoolgirl prostitutes (ko-gals) comes an RPG based on an anime that doesn't have even the remotest thing to do with orifices and tentacles. Instead, .Hack: Infection is about games or more precisely about a massively multiplayer online RPG called, rather unimaginationatively, "The World". Players take the role of a young boy enticed into the online world by a friend. After a tutorial mission that cleverly integrates both plot elements and all the basics the player needs to know, Orca, the skilled friend of Kite, the nominal hero winds up dead in game. Even worse, he winds up in a coma in real life - finding out exactly why is up to you.

POSTMODERN GAMING?

Much like many MMOs, the basic gameplay in "The World" involves

running around various dungeons killing monsters for loot and XP with the occasional bit of plot thrown in for good measure. All combat is played out in real time, pausing only to instruct teammates on tactics or use an item or skill. Although simple, combat remains entertaining through the sheer number of different enemies the player will face through the myriad worlds and the number of spell effects. Even though it is solidly a single player game, .Hack keeps the appearance of being a vibrant multiplayer world by having the hub cities for each server full of other players you can chat to and trade with. Although the conversations with these NPC characters are perfunctory for the most part, each of them converses like a real MMO player and has a number of phrases it will use before beginning to repeat. Some of these NPC characters can be added to the player's buddy list to be called upon

later to join the party. Each of these buddies has their own unique personality ranging from the hyperactive noob through to the jaded old school gamer and will react differently to the player depending on how you have treated them. Some of these players will also email you back in the real world with new worlds to explore or information about weird happenings in the game, further adding to the sense that it is in fact an MMO. Players can also check the in-game message boards for new areas to explore, information and basic rumours.

Although the format of the game is innovative and charming the plot unfolds at such a slow rate that some people will be put off early in and even worse, after playing through the first part of the game all you are really rewarded with is a lead in to the next installment of the series, all four of which should be out by the end of the year. <<

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: RPG / PLAYERS: 1 /
DEVELOPER: CyberConnect 2 /
PUBLISHER: Atari /
PRICE: \$99.95 / RATING: MA15+ /
AVAILABLE: Now /

HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: Great character design, novel plot, data Drain.

MINUS: Short, unsatisfying ending, low res worlds.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

78 84 83

OVERALL

77

A novel RPG idea that works a treat but comes across as too short and also a bit obtuse.



HYPER STREET FIGHTER II

It's taken us quite some time to convince Capcom to name another one of their Street Fighter games after us here at Hyper (the last time was Hyper Fighting), so we're quite glad they finally got around to seeing things our way. We won't for a second even contemplate the fact that playing Hyper Street Fighter II in 2004 is no more exciting than digging out an old cartridge and playing Street Fighter II Turbo from the early 1990s. We don't want to hear that there's virtually nothing to get excited about with this release — that it's the same old stuff all over again. No! This is Hyper Street Fighter II, goddamnit! Hyper!

Okay, okay... Super Happy Ultra Hyper Street Fighter II: The Family Wish Show Anniversary Edition (to use its full title) is a compilation of all the characters from all the previous versions of Street Fighter II, thrown in together so that the player can put together their dream matchups. The game features only the typical Arcade, Versus and Training modes, as well as a gallery that allows you to listen to typically bad Street Fighter music or watch the SFII intro, staff roll and movie clip. The real bonus comes in the form of the Street Fighter anime movie, which is also included. Streeties completist fanatics will dig this package, and it's about time Capcom did something like this.

D. Mannerism



MAFIA

Mafia is one of those titles that seems to divide gamers. Here at Hyper we thought the PC version was a good enough game that we could forgive many of its quirks and annoyances. The move to console, however, while obviously well intentioned (many sensible changes made to the game design in an attempt to reduce frustrations), has proven to be ill-fated.

You see, a lot of the charm and detail has been stripped out of the game in order to get it to run properly on the PS2. Or at least, that's how it feels. The gameworld now looks bland, the game feels more linear and also seems to progress at a slower pace. What was once cinematic and engaging sitting up late at night in front of a monitor, is now just an exercise in tedium on the couch. Mafia's world on PS2 is inevitably going to be compared to the likes of GTA3 — especially considering that a fair amount of the game is spent driving back and forth between locations in the city and doing "courier" style missions. However, where GTA3 was packed full of life, things to do and amazing driving physics, Mafia feels barren, murky and leaves you struggling with a sluggish framerate. At least they've upped the speed limit from 40mph to 60!

There's still a strong story here, and if you have the patience of a saint, there's plenty of meat here. That said, we get the feeling that most people will question why they should bother to persist with this loading-screen-ridden port.

Tony Montana



SPHINX AND THE CURSED MUMMY

It may sound like a cliché to say that you need to devote some time to playing Sphinx before it pays off but in this case it is absolutely true, not because the game develops extra depth the more you play (which is true) but more because the opening section of the game in which you play the demi-god Sphinx is so mind numbingly bad that you could be forgiven for giving up in disgust. Stick with it though and you will eventually find a far more interesting Zelda style game buried in the dross. As both Sphinx and the naïve soon to be King Tut (who is later turned into the mummy of the title) players must explore some very attractive and vast landscapes looking for items to restore the land to it's formers glory, blah, blah, blah...

Sure you've heard it all before but it still makes for a pleasant enough way to pass 15 or 20 odd hours. Simple to begin with, the puzzles ramp up in complexity and interest fairly quickly so adventure gamers should find something to sink their teeth into. Sphinx looks good as a whole but there is one major omission that severely detracts from the player's enjoyment of the title — voice acting or more precisely the complete lack thereof. Whilst models have talking facial animations there is not one iota of voice in the game — a terrible oversight in a humour themed game.

Daniel Wilks

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Fighting / **PLAYERS:** 1-2 / **DEVELOPER:** Capcom / **PUBLISHER:** Capcom / **PRICE:** \$79.95 / **RATING:** G / **AVAILABLE:** May /

| VISUALS | SOUND | GAMEPLAY | OVERALL |
|---------|-------|----------|---------|
| 70 | 65 | 92 | 80 |

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Gangster sim / **PLAYERS:** 1 / **DEVELOPER:** Illusion Softworks / **PUBLISHER:** GOD / **PRICE:** \$99.95 / **RATING:** M15+ / **AVAILABLE:** Now /

| VISUALS | SOUND | GAMEPLAY | OVERALL |
|---------|-------|----------|---------|
| 72 | 79 | 65 | 70 |

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

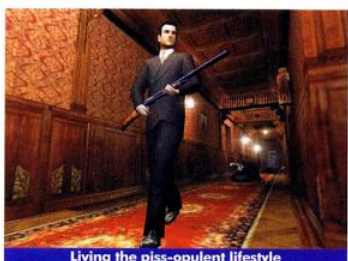
DETAILS

CATEGORY: Action/Adventure / **PLAYERS:** 1 / **DEVELOPER:** Eurocom / **PUBLISHER:** THQ / **PRICE:** \$79.95 / **RATING:** G / **AVAILABLE:** Now /

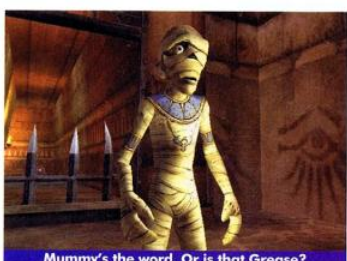
| VISUALS | SOUND | GAMEPLAY | OVERALL |
|---------|-------|----------|---------|
| 80 | 60 | 78 | 62 |



Chun Li will always be #1 in our hearts



Living the piss-opulent lifestyle



Mummy's the word. Or is that Grease?



MEGAMAN X7

☞ The seventh game in the second series of the Megaman adventures, this is the first excursion onto the PS2. It's a daring mixture of 2D and 3D platforming action, which alternates throughout each stage. The presentation is fairly inconsistent though, as the racing parts of the game look, sadly, like trash. There are certain elements of the game that really don't seem finished — the menu interface is clunky and nonsensical, along with those neglected racing zones.

There's a new character along with Zero and X, called Axl. Axl can hover and gains the ability to heal himself as you defeat the various bosses. You can also instantly switch between any two of these three during play, to apply their unique abilities.

The question is, can the aging Megaman licence compete with the fresher (and younger) 3D adventure titles like Jak 2? The answer is no. Unfortunately, the Megaman formula is getting pretty threadbare after fifteen years of repetition, despite the minor evolutions the game has had along the way. You've got your stock levels of samey platform action followed by wacky bosses who endow you with ever greater powers needed to defeat the other bosses.

Capcom have put a lot of effort into this title and serving up the best game they can, within what is basically an old and restrictive gameplay model. Megaman enthusiasts may love it, the rest of us should look elsewhere.

Ed Dawson

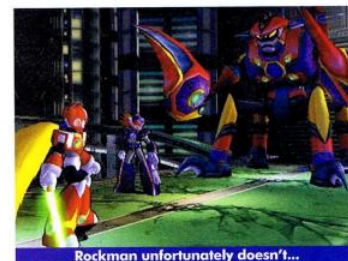
AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Platformer / PLAYERS: 1 / DEVELOPER: Capcom / PUBLISHER: THQ / PRICE: \$99.95 / RATING: G / AVAILABLE: May /

| VISUALS | SOUND | GAMEPLAY | OVERALL |
|---------|-------|----------|---------|
| 65 | 60 | 50 | 60 |



Rockman unfortunately doesn't...



TAK AND THE POWER OF JUJU

☞ If Avalanche were aiming to create the homeliest game character ever they are onto a definite winner with Tak, a butt-ugly cave dweller with a penchant for loincloths and the occasional giant chicken suit. This charming but fairly run of the mill platformer starts strongly with a very funny opening scene of a witch-doctor complaining that his chanting never works, only to look directly into the screen and talk to the player as if they were the "Juju" he had summoned and entreating them to use the "power-stick" they hold in their hands to help the titular Tak restore the people of his tribe back to human form, as all of them have been transformed into sheep by who we are assured is a very bad man. Whilst the cutscenes, levels and animations (with special mention going to the sheep carrying animation) are all top notch you can't help but feel you've done it all before in myriad other platform games. Obviously aimed at the kiddie market from the graphics and the Nickelodeon branding, Tak and the Power of Juju is one of those unfortunate titles that is a little too kiddie to appeal to the older gaming market but, due to the size of the levels and difficulty of much of the combat is far too difficult for the market it is intended for. If you're after a charming and occasionally very funny platformer then you should get a lot out of Tak but if you're looking for something that expands the boundaries of the platformer you should definitely look elsewhere.

Daniel Wilks

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Platformer / PLAYERS: 1 / DEVELOPER: Avalanche / PUBLISHER: THQ / PRICE: \$79.95 / RATING: G / AVAILABLE: Now /

| VISUALS | SOUND | GAMEPLAY | OVERALL |
|---------|-------|----------|---------|
| 89 | 80 | 75 | 78 |



Homeliest. Hero. Ever. (including Cam)



UNDERWORLD

☞ Some may think that at a \$29.95 price point that Underworld: The Eternal War is an absolute bargain but those people are wrong at best, moronically stupid at worst. Roughly based on the movie of the same name, Underworld allows players to join either the Lycans or the Vampires in their battle for supremacy. Essentially what this means is that players get to run through what is interminably dull and linear semi-isometric level after another shooting at poorly animated and incredibly stupid AI opponents. That's it. No depth. No real story. No fun whatsoever.

To make matters worse, Underworld: Eternal Bore looks for all the world like a P5one game with all that entails — dull textures, limited polygons, uninspiring effects and the like. A brief saving grace comes from the fact that the game includes some decent sound bites and video clips direct from the film but ultimately that's kind of like saying that being stabbed in the lungs is not so bad because the knife was clean instead of being smeared in excrement. There's an old saying that no matter how much you polish a turd it is still a turd, albeit a fairly shiny one. In the case of Underworld: The Infernal Snore, developers Lucky Chicken haven't so much polished the turd as much as added a few chunks of undigested corn and then sprayed it with a liberal dose of bathroom sanitiser to try and disguise the smell. We're not fooled.

Daniel Wilks

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Action / PLAYERS: 1-2 / DEVELOPER: Lucky Chicken Games / PUBLISHER: Play It / PRICE: \$29.95 / RATING: MA15+ / AVAILABLE: Unfortunately /

| VISUALS | SOUND | GAMEPLAY | OVERALL |
|---------|-------|----------|---------|
| 50 | 70 | 15 | 12 |



Not even Kate Beckinsale's arse could save this



PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME

☞ If you're old enough to remember the original Prince of Persia, you've probably now got a mortgage, 2.4 kids and an ex-wife. Don't let it get you down though, as the latest in the PoP series is here to remind you how good life used to be, back when games didn't need bucket loads of blood to keep you entertained.

At its heart this game is a simple 3D platformer, so you'll spend most of your time using the Prince's cool acrobatic skills to negotiate a wonderfully realised palace that looks as if it was built by a crazed gymnast. You'll be able to pull off moves that would make Neo envious, such as wall running, wall flips, high jumps and effortlessly stylish sword play, and your little man in puffy white pants is animated beautifully. This beauty extends to the gorgeous environments, which are vast in their scope yet still contain intricate details to help establish the Arabian mood. Throw in nods to the old school such as rotating blades of death and bone breakingly deep pits, and you have a compelling experience.

So why are we reviewing this game again, we pretend to hear you ask? Partly because the Xbox version brings even more polished visuals and the wonder of surround sound to an already immaculately presented game. The main reason is we feel this game needs a bit of pimping – it hasn't sold as well as it should have. It's one of the finest platformers we've seen in recent years. So bloody well buy it.

Bennett King

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Action / PLAYERS: 1 / DEVELOPER: Ubi Soft Montreal / PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft / PRICE: \$89.95 / RATING: M15+ / AVAILABLE: May /

| VISUALS | SOUND | GAMEPLAY | OVERALL |
|---------|-------|----------|---------|
| 93 | 90 | 91 | 93 |



That's quite a princely (ie girly) pose



RISK: THE WORLD CONQUEST GAME

☞ A tenuous relationship, that between board and video games. As much as I'd like to play advocate for our fantasmal medium, it's obvious that some things just don't work as well on a screen as they do in physical form. Add in the 'grandpa factor' – that there exists some unexplainable intrinsic satisfaction with the tangible, and it's obvious that Risk on PS2 has some major hurdles to overcome.

Risk was always about the conspiring. The scheming. The backstabbing. The stabbing. It had ten times the open cruelty of an episode of The Hot House. In Risk on PS2, the computer players – great leaders in world history – offer painfully repetitive lines, fully including accents, every so often. It is just not the same.

And that – the ability to play by yourself – is probably the greatest advantage Risk on PS2 has over the board game. Yet such an experience is but a shadow of the glory of every great 'Ukraine is strong!' late night board gaming session. If you are interested in challenging your mates, there exist a few problems with the game's design. Firstly, you can never see all of the board, making it hard to plan your next turn, let alone a dozen in advance. Turns and assigning troops take too long. It's impossible to pull a swiftie.

Never played Risk? It's essential strategy – add 40 to the score. For the rest of us, ignore.

Jackson Gothe-Snape

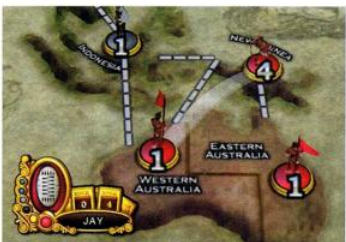
AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Err... Board game / PLAYERS: 1-6 (Online capable) / DEVELOPER: Cyberlore Studios / PUBLISHER: Atari / PRICE: \$69.95 / RATING: G / AVAILABLE: Now /

| VISUALS | SOUND | GAMEPLAY | OVERALL |
|---------|-------|----------|---------|
| 20 | 16 | 60 | 40 |



Don't turn your back on Newman



STAR CHAMBER

☞ Star Chamber is essentially an online trading card based strategy game that plays something like a cross between Master of Orion and Magic the Gathering. Once you've got your play deck, you choose a race, a home-planet and then use your cards to expand out and conquer your enemy by fulfilling one of three different victory conditions. Because these victory conditions reflect different approaches to playing the game – political, exploratory and militaristic – the potential for developing unique and complicated strategies is almost infinite.

Getting cards out into the playing area is dependent on a number of resources and feels quite similar to the Mana system in Magic. Consequently, experienced TCG gamers will be able to pick up Star Chamber almost immediately – especially if they also happen to be fans of "4x" style strategy games. On the flipside, beginners unfamiliar with the arcane world of Serra Angels and twenty-sided die will probably feel a little overwhelmed. Especially since Star Chamber is quite Spartan on the whole audio-visual side of things. This game will run on virtually any PC. But hey, since when does a hardcore strategy game need flashy graphics?

The game itself is free to download from the developer's website at www.starchamber.net and comes with a few sample decks, so why not go and check it out? It really is great fun if you've got the patience and the cash to stick with it.

Daniel Staines

AVAILABLE ON:

PS2 / XBOX / GCN / PC

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Strategy / PLAYERS: Multi / DEVELOPER: Some dudes / PUBLISHER: N/A / PRICE: Free (initially) / RATING: G / AVAILABLE: Now /

| VISUALS | SOUND | GAMEPLAY | OVERALL |
|---------|-------|----------|---------|
| 50 | 50 | 90 | 85 |



Why's there a Powerplay option but no Hyper?

雪風

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-ANIME INSIDER



Kiddy grade

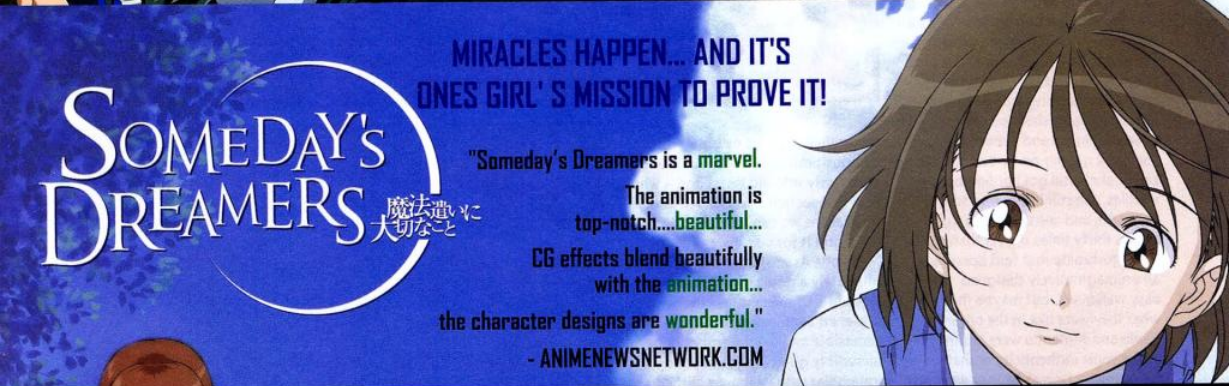
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ONES GIRL'S MISSION TO PROVE IT!

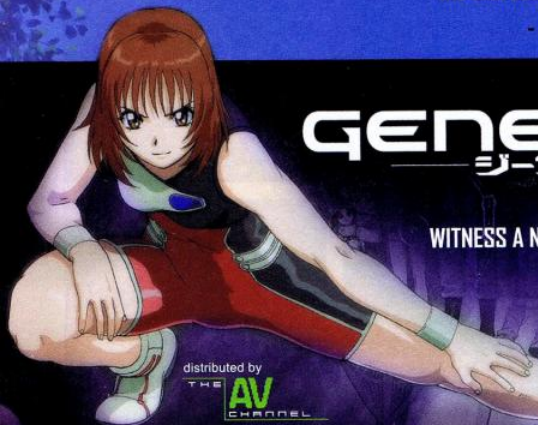
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METROID: ZERO MISSION

Hands up those of you who thought that Metroid Fusion was too short for a full-priced GBA game. Okay, well, I've got some good news and I've got some bad news for you guys. Let's start with the bad news: Metroid: Zero Mission (hereafter referred to as MZM) is short. Like, really, really short. Shorter than Fusion, that's for sure. On our first play through here at Hyper HQ, most of us managed to finish the game in less than five hours. March Stepnik almost finished it in three. He's a bit of a creepy Metroid freak, but still — five hours worth of Samus-y goodness hardly seems to justify the seventy odd bucks you'll pay to experience it. Right?

THE GOOD NEWS

Well you'd think that, but then you haven't heard the good news yet — which is this: MZM may be short, but it is most definitely sweet. Yes, Nintendo hasn't done anything that previous Metroid titles haven't already covered. Yes, fans of the franchise will more than likely find this remake of the original remarkably tame compared to the more hardcore Fusion and Prime. Yes, it's nowhere near as good as the insanely brilliant Super Metroid. These — along with the aforementioned brevity issue — are all very obvious and justified criticisms. We're not denying that for a second.

But it's still METROID, you see. It's still Samus running around in her kickass armour, shooting the crap out of Space Pirates and Zebesian wildlife. She's still got her powerball and dash boots, she's still got her bombs and missiles, she still has to find suit upgrades and she still has to fight bosses thirty times bigger than she is. It's unfortunate that said bosses are all unimaginatively designed, piss easy walkovers, but maybe that's what they were like in the original NES game and Nintendo was hoping to retain some authenticity in that department. Or maybe they were just being lazy. Whatever. I never thought the bosses were a highlight of the Metroid games anyway.

ADVANCED GAME, BOY

Although MZM is supposed to be a remake of the original Metroid, advances in technology and design have rendered it almost entirely different to its NES forefather. As such, what we've got here is essentially a new (if completely unoriginal) Metroid game for the GBA. It's got some snazzy new graphics that actually manage to outshine Fusion in many places, rearranged music that does justice to



A Gremlin may seem like a cute idea for a pet, but they grow up...



The "eyes" have it. Sorry.



More caves than The Goonies...



But with less Sloth love.

the brilliance of the original compositions, new locations blended seamlessly into old ones, and a whole new end section that is utterly cool for reasons we can't divulge because we'd ruin it for you if we did.

Despite its nostalgic charm, MZM is ultimately a game more suited to Metroid beginners rather than seasoned Samus veterans. It is short, accessible and would probably be incredibly good fun for anybody unfamiliar with its more polished predecessors. As fans of the series, we like MZM — but we're definitely not happy with it. Nintendo can do better than this and, frankly, we're getting sick of waiting for them to prove it.

Daniel Staines

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Platform / PLAYERS: 1 / DEVELOPER: Nintendo / PUBLISHER: Nintendo / PRICE: \$69.95 / RATING: G8+ / AVAILABLE: Now /

VISUALS
87

SOUND
90

GAMEPLAY
75

OVERALL
78



"Sloth, you're gonna live with me now". Best. Line. Ever.



Shooting up can be bad for you



One of One-eyed Willy's traps?

THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT

Despite the title, *The Sims: Bustin' Out* on GBA really isn't a Sims game per se. In fact, it seems to have more in common with the recent spate of simplified and accessible "life-simulators" like *Animal Crossing* and *Harvest Moon*. Instead of giving us an open-ended, "sandbox" style game where players are pretty much free to do as they please, *Bustin' Out* is a goal-driven experience focused on acquiring goodies, talking to NPCs and playing minigames. It's almost like an RPG, really.

This isn't a bad thing — we actually quite like this new direction. One of the big criticisms detractors of *The Sims* (including myself) levelled at Will Wright's masterpiece was that it often felt purposeless and devoid of any real direction. Happily, that complaint is simply not applicable in this instance. Instead of living out the consumerist dream of buying more things simply for the sake of buying more things, *Bustin' Out* gives you a sense of purpose and STILL lets you adorn your home with all the useless junk you could possibly desire.

On the downside, however, is the fact that Griptonite Games decided to



retain what is arguably the most irritating aspect of the original Sims — the "needs" or "motivation" meters. In *Bustin' Out*, your Sims aren't the lazy, stay-at-home bums they were in previous Sim titles. They've got stuff to do, people to see and places to be. Surely it shouldn't be necessary to make sure they've gone potty before leaving the house...?

Daniel Staines

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Sim / PLAYERS: 1 /
DEVELOPER: Griptonite Games /
PUBLISHER: EA / PRICE: \$69.95 /
RATING: G8+ / AVAILABLE: Now /

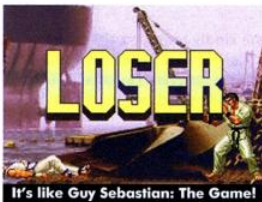
| VISUALS | SOUND | GAMEPLAY | OVERALL |
|---------|-------|----------|---------|
| 75 | 70 | 75 | 75 |



KING OF FIGHTERS EX2: HOWLING BLOOD

It's a sad fact that the Street Fighter games available for GBA are undeniably crappy. The simple truth of it is that Capcom's 2D fighter just wasn't designed for a four-button console, and the numerous failed attempts to overcome this deficiency prove this beyond all reasonable doubt. I like my Ryus and my Kens as much as the next gamer, but I'm not going to press two buttons at once to do a medium punch. I'm sorry, but that's just silly.

But *King of Fighters* — well, that works a lot better. First of all, the fighting mechanics are decidedly more simplistic than those featured in the SF games. There are essentially two attack buttons (heavy punch/heavy kick) that you will ever need to use and the fights are far more focused on slugging it out with combos instead of special moves. I mean yeah, there are plenty of special moves, but they're more something you use when you want to finish a fight. This is a good thing, because — as my RSI will happily inform you — the GBA control pad isn't particularly suited to the kind of repetitious thumb wagging required by a Hadoken battle.



In addition to the streamlined mechanics, *KoF* also features a selection of large, well-animated and colourful characters that are perfectly suited for the cramped confines of a handheld screen. They've even remembered to animate Mai's breasts with an appropriate jiggle! Sweet! Seriously, this game is simply the best fighter on GBA.

Daniel Staines

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Fighter / PLAYERS: 1-2 /
DEVELOPER: Marvellous Entertainment /
PUBLISHER: Atlus / PRICE: TBA /
RATING: M15+ / AVAILABLE: TBA /

| VISUALS | SOUND | GAMEPLAY | OVERALL |
|---------|-------|----------|---------|
| 85 | 70 | 88 | 82 |





[above] Interestingly enough, Tim Levy's name isn't an anagram of "Oral Sex".

Guns N Roses DATA EAST

>>Tim Levy

While the video game industry often invent their own iconic characters such as Mario, Pac-man, and Lara Croft, the pinball industry borrows pre-fabricated pop culture icons to build their games around. Mostly, movie titles are borrowed from Hollywood, but, if you are REALLY popular and have a huge following, you may just end up with your own pinball machine named after you. Guns N Roses, unlike my own band "the smacktards" - are really popular.

APPETITE FOR GAMEPLAY

First forming in 1985, with the name stemming from the surnames of the original members Tracii Guns and Axl Rose, Guns N Roses played their first gig in Seattle to a crowd of 13 people for \$50. By 1988, their first album 'Appetite for Destruction' hit #1 on the U.S. Charts and by 1992 were playing regularly to crowds of over 60,000 people. So like a lot of things, success can be measured by your paraphernalia, and although only 3000 GnR pinball machines have been built, fans of the band and pinball aficionados alike have

all agreed that this is an excellent or shall we say 'worthy' machine.

Starting off with the band's signature guitar riffs, you launch the ball with a mock gun in which you can choose from 1 of 4 awards. As multiball is awarded after locking 6 balls (a.k.a. - band members), it is often best to choose 'add band member' as your reward. Otherwise, 'Mystery' can also pay dividends. The highest points are awarded when you ramp or loop via the third flipper during 6 ball multiball, so it is advisable to always shoot for the 'add member'. None-the-less, there are plenty of other things to shoot for. Next to the left ramp and capture ball is a 'lock' which starts other mini games. Other things that will test your flipper shooting accuracy are bonus multipliers, extra ball, an Axl 3 ball multi-ball, mystery awards, relight kickback (left side lane), 'drop' targets, loops, capture holes, 2 ramps and of course 'super pops'. On top of all this there is a video mode which is unlocked via 'Gilby Rolls'. You control Gilby as he cruises down the highway on his motorbike and you

are kindly rewarded 5 million for knocking over pedestrians and 1 million for every car passed. The mini game ends when you stack.

GUNNERS VERSUS STREETIES

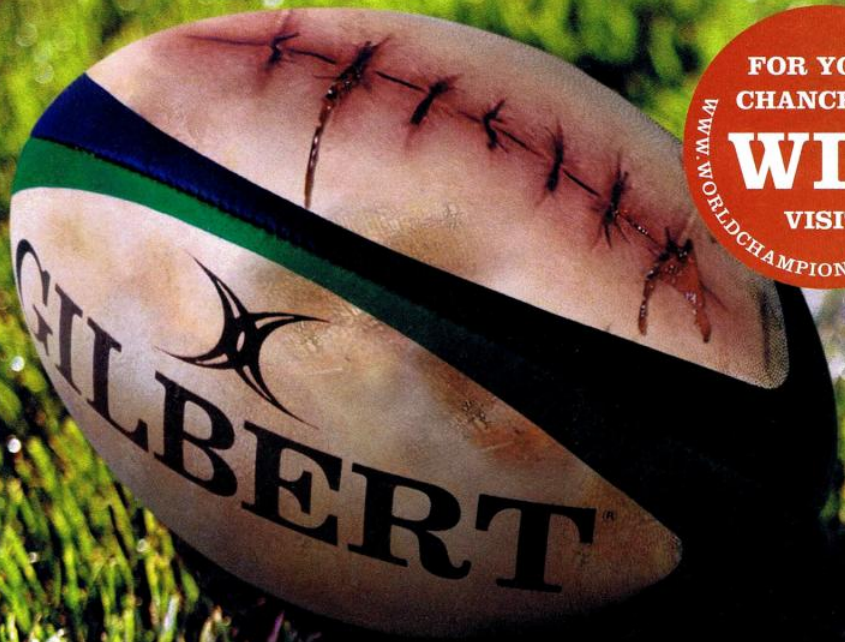
Although, in my humble opinion, Guns N Roses Pinball IS a good machine and without sounding jealous, I think that it would be good idea to release a pinball machine themed on my band 'the smacktards'. Here are a few ideas for Data East: Apart from using both of our tracks 'spoon bender' and 'break n enter' as the soundtrack, the plunger can be a mock syringe, drop targets can be little dole checks or doctor's scripts and each machine comes with 1000 cockroaches that actually live in the machine (which doubles as a microwave oven) and scurry about on the playfield causing 'sudden randomness' to the ball's trajectory. Data East, if you are still reading and would like to utilise our likeness for your next machine, the band can be contacted on smacktards@hotmail.com

SCORE: 9/10

[below] We usually find it something of a mystery when our balls are lit as well!



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[below] Apparently giant gladiator robots can experience the quickening




[above] There's nothing to say here aside from Blau!

One Must Fall: Battlegrounds

//www.omf.com

>> Daniel Wilks

 Many moons ago when the Earth was still young and I was but a lad there was a PC game unlike any other, taking what worked well on the consoles of the time and making it into a uniquely PC friendly beast. I say uniquely PC friendly because there is still nothing to match it. That game was, of course, *One Must Fall 2097*, the only *Streetfighter* fighting game ever to work on the PC. Players took the role of one of a number of pilots in futuristic gladiatorial combat. Being made of meat and having the propensity to scream and bleed these pilots fought using giant robotic death-machines, the abilities of which were tempered by the skill of the pilot chosen. Now ten years after the release of the original game the *One Must Fall* universe is back, this time in occasionally brilliant but ultimately flawed 3D featuring both a single player and online game.

INSERT EVIL LAUGHTER

In keeping with the original game, *One Must Fall: Battlegrounds* tells the "story" of futuristic gladiatorial

combat in which elite pilots smack the crap out of each other with giant robots whilst (we assume) fans look on and wager large sums of money and also offer congratulatory/conciliatory sex to their favourites. Whilst this could nominally be called a plot, in the grand tradition of fighting games the world over it is simply an excuse for the action and the occasional crappy still image of one of the pilots raising their fist and laughing. Also in keeping with old school fighting games, *One Must Fall: Battlegrounds* features simple animations, dull character designs and repetitive sound effects. Although all four limbs of the robots can be controlled independently there are few actual special attacks

and set combos available, making it easier to simply hammer the same attack over and over again rather than try for any real style. Most disappointingly there is no real sense of scale to be found anywhere in *Battlegrounds* – arenas are simple open affairs (occasionally studded with traps) with no destructible objects or the like. Simple placing one of the battles in a city and allowing the combatants to destroy buildings during their frenzied melee could make for a much more enjoyable experience.

RESIDENT EVIL: BATTLEGROUNDS?

What really sets *One Must Fall: Battlegrounds* apart is the online

component. For many years people have been talking about the potential for an online fighting game. The good news is that *Battlegrounds* supports up to 16 players duking it out online. The bad news is that people are still going to be left talking about the potential of an online fighting game after playing it. Simply put, *Battlegrounds* is too slow to fill the niche it has set for itself. Control is iffy at best, terrible at worst. Bizarrely the players are forced to utilise a control scheme reminiscent of *Resident Evil* in which they have to painstakingly turn on the spot before moving in a new direction – in a game supposedly about fast paced hand to hand combat this





poses something of a problem. The lack of any type of lock-on feature also adds to the frustration — it's all well and good to have multiple fighters running around beating seven shades of mechanised shit out of each other but when you can't actively target any of your attacks everything degenerates into a simple case of button mashing and hoping for the best. Finally there's the problem of lag. Although the outside of the box proclaims that the game supports up to 16 players online, a passage in the manual states that players with high end connections should only play games of four to six people. The reason for this is simple — any more players and the lag becomes crippling. Fortunately (unfortunately?) this is rarely a problem as although the online component of Battlegrounds is one of the game's selling points it's unlikely you'll find even a half-full server anywhere.

BETTER TO HAVE TRIED AND FAILED...

Although One Must Fall:

[above] Is that a sweet metal arse or what?

Battlegrounds is unfortunately a failure it is undoubtedly a noble one. Developers Diversions Entertainment deserve a big pat on the back for taking something that is intrinsically console biased and trying to make it PC friendly. More importantly they deserve a good deal of kudos for going out on a limb and trying something new. If nothing else, Battlegrounds is worth the \$50 asking price for novelty value alone. The single player portion is also robust enough to warrant a play. With any luck Diversions will make enough to warrant a sequel — one in which they can improve their animations, models, fighting mechanics, controls and online component. If that happens we may finally have the online fighting game we've been dreaming of all these years. <<



Links

>> Kosta Andreadis



Mind over Hiccup

<http://frogstar.com/hiccup/index.asp>

>> Drink a glass of water real fast. Have somebody sneak up and scare the crap out of you. Lie upside down for 10 minutes. Pop, lock and uprock to a dope electro beat. These are all well known cures for the hiccups, but unfortunately they're all a bunch of lies passed down the generational tree by ignorant ancestors - except for the break dancing one, which can cure anything outside of cancer. Enough about that, here's a link that will provide you, the reader, with a sure fire cure for the hiccups. And it works! What is it? Well you're going to have to find that out for yourself.



Microsoft Code Review

<http://www.kuroshin.org/story/2004/2/15/71552/7795>

>> If somebody sent you a link that contained a review of leaked Microsoft Windows 2000 source code, would you click on it? If you answered 'No', then stop reading here. Or here. If you answered 'Yes', accompanied by a sound that would normally emanate from Professor Frink, the abundance of programming references found here will certainly be for you. From the 'hilarious' comments relating to pointers that perform in 'hilarious' ways to functions written in C that use Pascal calling conventions, it's a non-stop laugh riot of logic and variable arrays.



Hamlet, the Text Adventure

<http://www.robinjohnson.f9.co.uk/adventure/hamlet.html>

>> There used to be a time where if you were asked about the literary value of the text adventures you could reply "They're pretty good, but it's not exactly Shakespeare." That time my friends - is over. Presenting Hamlet, a world famous Willy Shakes play that's now a text adventure. This is a great alternative to actually reading the play as it features pretty much all the classic settings and scenes with text written in actual understandable English - not the Crazy Willy Shakes jive that makes almost all of his plays unreadable.

For technical or commercial reasons, Broadband is not available to all areas. Not all homes can be connected to all Optus services and will depend on customer's location. *Minimum monthly price with 'yes' rewards from \$68.45 (\$39.95 for starter 300MB plan and \$28.50 line rental with 224 local calls). OptusNet Broadband: Exceeding monthly Data Allowance will see your speed limited to between 20Kbps and 28.8Kbps until the first day of the next billing month. Unused Data Allowance cannot be rolled into subsequent months. Use of the service is subject to the Customer Terms and Acceptable Use Policy. See www.optus.com.au/optusnet_sfoa for details. \$300 pro-rata early disconnection fee applies. Quoted price is only available when you preselect Optus for local and long distance calls. OptusNet Cable: Optus reserves the right to quote for non-standard installations. A \$2.20 monthly fee applies if account is not paid by direct debit. Minimum total cost is \$628.40 for 12 months (includes \$179 installation and \$30 direct debit rebate) plus current monthly line rental. OptusNet DSL: Minimum total

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Habbo Hotel

<http://www.habbohotel.com/habbo/en/>
 >> Habbo Hotel, not to be confused with Hobo Hotel in Redfern, is an online chat community where people create their own "Habbo" and visit various areas of the hotel and chat. All the standard chat room functionality is here intact, including the ability to chat privately in your very own room. Habbo Hotel, like most virtual chat programs, is an interesting if somewhat clunky alternative to the standard IRC and Instant Messaging Clients most people use to interact online.



Pure Restoration

<http://www.purerestoration.com/>
 >> Here's a site that sets out to purify those out there that see the internet as a gateway into a wonderful world of green meadows, sunshine, blue skies and hardcore nudity. According to this site, to view the internet in such a way is slowly eating away at the purity of ones soul. Headed by a guy called Joe Dallas, this site aims to purify and restore your being — but your bank account will take a severe beating. "Your credit card statement will show a \$1,395 charge for "PR DFW" and all materials are provided via the web, e-mail, or when you get here."



Powers of Ten

<http://micro.magnet.fsu.edu/primer/java/scienceopticsu/powersof10/>
 >> View the Milky Way from 10 million light years away then move closer and closer to earth, a tree, a leaf and then cells, DNA and finally subatomic protons. For those of us that aren't up to scratch in all the latest physics and science mumbo jumbo this site will make very little sense but it does feature colourful images and pretty cool effects. In fact look at the shnoz on the picture of famed scientist Robert Hooke in the top left corner of the page, I bet he was a shoe in with the ladies. Not.

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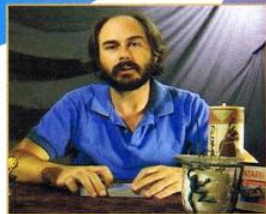
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Once Upon ATARI

» MAURICE BRANSCOMBE



Known as both one of the best, and in the same breath, one of the worst game designers of the Atari era; **Howard Scott Warshaw** talks about E.T., Yar's Revenge, the evil weed and Atari's inevitable self-destruction...

» Few stories from the videogame industry's history are as legendary or as memorable as Howard Scott Warshaw's. From his start as an underpaid recruit at a blossoming young company called Atari, Howard would go on to sell more than three million cartridges, and earn more than a million dollars in less than four years. Along the way he would write one of the greatest games of the era, and would also quite infamously write one of the worst. Steven Spielberg called him a "certifiable genius", and others have called him the man who single handedly toppled the billion dollar videogames industry. With those credentials, who could be better to tell the behind-the-scenes story of Atari's golden era?

HAVE YOU PLAYED ATARI TODAY?

After attaining a Master's degree in computer engineering Howard Warshaw moved to California to accept a job at Hewlett Packard, but in 1981 decided to leave after he managed to score a job interview at Atari.

"I went and was interviewed, and I ended up begging, literally, for a job there" recalls Warshaw. "They didn't want to hire me at first because they thought I was too straight to work there, little did they know how wrong they were. I took a twenty percent cut in pay to go there... and as it turned out, I became one of the icons of game development there in terms of someone who is both a productive

developer and a real nut job to interact with."

For Howard, being a productive developer at Atari meant he spent virtually all his time for many years in a 10'x10' fluorescent lit box with no windows, either developing games, or thinking about developing games.

"Game development was my entire world" remembers Howard, "I sacrificed years of my life to do that. Totally made years disappear in my life in which I did nothing but work at Atari... Some people couldn't handle it and literally went crazy - even by Atari standards. For me it was heaven though."

Although wits, and even sanity, were stretched in Atari's game development dungeon, Howard and other Atari employees managed to keep their creative juices flowing through various herbal remedies.

"It was important to keep the level of creative stimulus high in the environment" he recalls. "In point of fact, there were many ways in which we kept things 'high' in that environment"

By "keeping things high" Howard is of course not referring to putting their development kits on the top shelf, we're talking drugs here. In fact, the "evil weed" makes numerous appearances in many of Warshaw's fantastic tales, which involve Atari staff hospitalizing themselves on sprinkler systems, insulting French company executives and feigning suicide among many others. As Howard explains:

"The weirdest moment was

possibly when Tod (Frye, programmer of the VCS version of Pac-Man) jumped off a fourth floor balcony... Many of us were in a room getting wasted, or rather "brainstorming", when we noticed Tod was standing on the railing - then he jumped and freaked us out - but we laughed anyway... There was a patio on the third floor that we couldn't see. We all ran out to see the "splat", but we saw Tod standing on this patio instead."

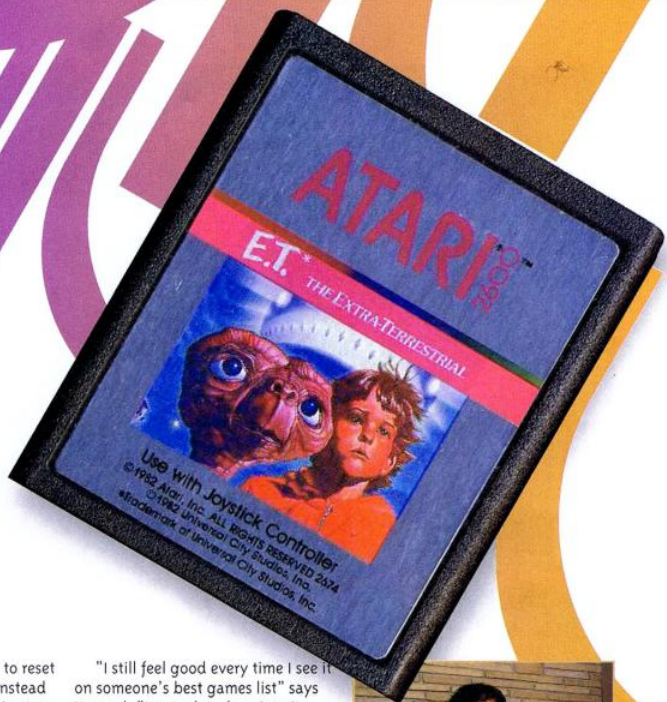
If you've ever wondered where some of the whacked-out ideas behind many of Atari's early games came from then wonder no more. According to Howard "brainstorming" sessions like the one described were all part of the creative process.

"Many of the ideas for gameplay and some game settings came out of what you might call joint-development-efforts" recalls Howard. "And it wasn't just pot either, but it was mostly pot"

"Not everyone there smoked the weed, but most did and we would ask people about it in interviews. That caught many people by surprise" says Howard. "It wasn't that they were required to do drugs, but we did need to find out if they could handle being in an environment where they were prevalent. If you couldn't work around pot, then you couldn't work at Atari."

THEREIN LIES THE REVENGE

Although Yar's Revenge is often



overshadowed by Howard's more controversial work, the importance of this, his first ever Atari game, really shouldn't be understated. The game's premise, which has the distinct air of something that was dreamed up during one of Howard's "joint-development" sessions, is to control a giant space-travelling fly named Yar, from the Razzak solar system (which Howard craftily named after Atari's then-CEO Ray Kassar, only backwards). Yar is hell-bent on bringing about the destruction of "Qotile", the nasty sod who belligerently destroyed his home planet mere nanoseconds beforehand (and therein lies the "revenge"). It plays a little like Space Invaders meets Arkanoid, only without the bouncing ball, if that description could ever do the game justice. Nevertheless, upon its release the game offered utterly compelling, edge-of-your-seat, just-one-more-go gameplay that made it one of the Atari VCS cartridges that every 2600 owner had to have a copy of. Even more than twenty years later it still has the kind of gameplay that makes it worth playing for so much more than just nostalgia value.

"My goal with Yar's was to make a game that I wanted to play" says Warshaw. "But Yar's was not only to meant be a great action game, I wanted Yar's to be ground breaking in many ways..."

And ground breaking it was, successfully establishing many firsts that would later go on to become industry standards. Yar's was the

first game to allow the player to reset the game from their joystick instead of from the console (quite a big step for the early '80s). It was the first game to feature a full-screen explosion, the first game Atari knowingly let an "easter egg" be programmed into the code, and it was also the first game that Atari allowed to have the programmer's name on the game.

Despite the game's innovative nature however, Howard recalls that there was a time when Yar's Revenge may have never seen the light of day.

"The director of our department at the time had some kind of vendetta against Yar's, no one could really understand it" remembers Howard, "He kept demanding testing for it. Each time it would do very well, and he would just ask for more testing".

"[Eventually] they went to a big play test, that's where over 100 people come in to play the game and rate it against another game they also get to play. And what game do they decide to test it against? F**king Missile Command! The hottest game at the time - and guess what?" Howard continues excitedly "It beat Missile Command. Yar's actually tested higher than Missile Command!"

After leaping its final development hurdle in spectacular style Yar's Revenge became one of the VCS's greatest success stories, and ended up selling more than a million copies and becoming Atari's best selling original game of the post Space Invaders era.

"I still feel good every time I see it on someone's best games list" says Howard. "I put a lot of me into it, and I still get a lot out of it"

HOWARD WARSHAW, PHONE HOME

In 1982, Howard had just completed his second Atari 2600 game, an adventure based on Steven Spielberg's Raiders of the Lost Ark, when he was once again hand chosen by Spielberg to create the videogame version of his latest blockbuster, E.T. The Extra Terrestrial. Little did Howard know at the time, but E.T. would years later go on to become the most notorious entry in his entire career. According to gaming legend, Atari decided to rush the production of E.T. to meet the 1982 Christmas buying season, leaving Howard five weeks to design and code E.T. in its entirety. Many consider the resulting game to not only be the worst videogame ever produced, but also blame it for Atari's financial strife in the mid-eighties, and consequently hold it solely responsible for the infamous 1984 videogame industry crash. Most amazingly however, the game is said to have sold so poorly that millions of un-sellable cartridges were trucked out into the middle of the New Mexico desert and unceremoniously dumped in a landfill. According to Howard much of the story we know and believe is actually true, although some parts may have succumbed to sensationalism and fantasy.

"I stood up in a department



CARLA MENINSKY
game engineer



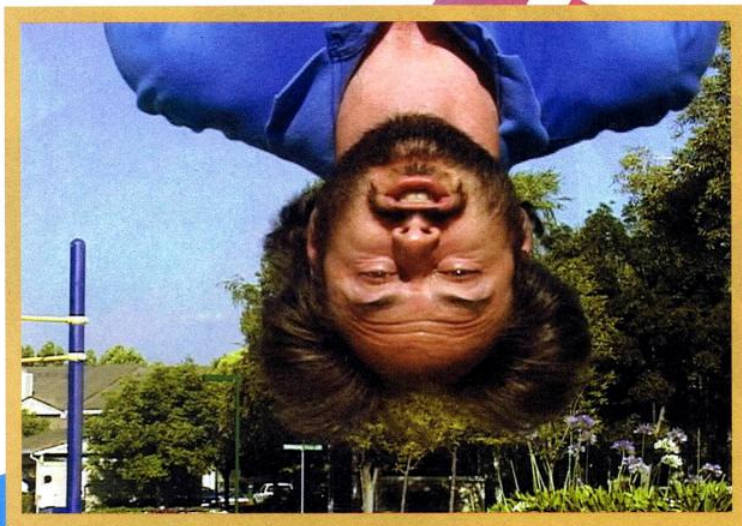
NOLAN BUSHNELL
atari co-founder



ROB ZOYBEL
"star trek"

[above] These guys make working at Atari sound almost as exciting as working at Hyper!

NOT EVERYONE THERE SMOKED THE WEED, BUT MOST DID



[above] Cookie Monster has a bad case of the munchies
[left] For more of Howard's antics go to www.scottw.com



CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

Among Howard's fondest Atari memories are his numerous meetings with big time Hollywood filmmaker Steven Spielberg. During one particular meeting Howard recalls mentioning to Spielberg that he thought that he was himself a being from outer space.

"I had a theory that [Steven] was an alien!" remembers Howard, "He wanted to hear it so I told him my theory, which is that when aliens meet us, it won't be by showing up in a ship... They are probably smart enough to send a recon team ahead to prepare us for the news of their arrival. Spielberg is naturally part of this advance team, whose job is to prepare Earth for meeting the aliens. How do they do it?" continues Howard excitedly, "With movies! He makes some films in which aliens are cute friendly creatures we should love, then the rest of his team makes sure these movies are seen world wide in every language"

"Spielberg loved this theory, so much so that he had a games magazine call me up to get the story and I got quote of the month for explaining specifically how Steven Spielberg is an alien"

Sounds like that Atari wad was some goodoo stuff...

meeting when they announced I was doing E.T. in five weeks and offered it to anyone who wanted it" recalls Howard, "No one volunteered."

Admitting that he "likes a challenge", Howard accepted the almost impossible task of coding the entire thing in what is almost certainly the tightest timeframe in the industry's history. Howard starting working on the project immediately, but before the game could go into full-scale development, he had one last person to convince that he could actually pull it all off.

"It was all very cloak and dagger" describes Howard of his meetings with Steven Spielberg, "I was getting calls from Ray Kassar telling me I had two days to prep a design and then be at the airport where a Lear jet would take me away to meet Spielberg. I worked up the game you know as E.T. in that time."

Once the meeting had begun however, Howard once again encountered resistance to his design ideas, although this time it was from none other than Spielberg himself.

"When I presented it to Steven his initial reaction was "why not something like Pac-man?" recalls Howard, "I couldn't believe it. I thought, jeez Steven, couldn't your next movie be a little more like Close Encounters?"

After explaining that a revolutionary film such as E.T. deserved to have something more than a mere Pac-Man clone, Spielberg "got it", and Howard set

about turning his design into a reality. Five weeks later copies of E.T. were rolling off Atari's production lines and onto store shelves.

"No one had ever done a game in less than 4-5 months before. It was a great challenge to meet and I met it." Howard continues, "What E.T. was to me was very different from what it was to others. It was my Mt. Everest, and I climbed it, although I may have gotten some bad frostbite along the way"

MOUNTAIN OF BURIED CARTS

While E.T. was certainly never a great 2600 game, it was occasionally buggy, and almost impossible to comprehend without having thoroughly read the instruction manual first, it was still far removed from the industry-topping pariah that it is so often made out to be today. As Howard Warshaw says;

"Personally, I like the idea that I might have single handedly toppled a billion dollar industry, but I doubt the veracity of it"

In contrast to many opinions it was also a very good seller, with more than a million copies (a lot by early 1980s standards) finding their way into homes around the globe. Atari's main indiscretion (apart from demanding a game be made in five weeks of course) is that they vastly overestimated demand, reportedly manufacturing close to three million excess cartridges, the final resting place of which has been intriguing gamers for as long as the E.T. story has been around. According to

Howard however, one of the most enduring and fascinating stories of Atari's early years may be no more than a modern-day myth.

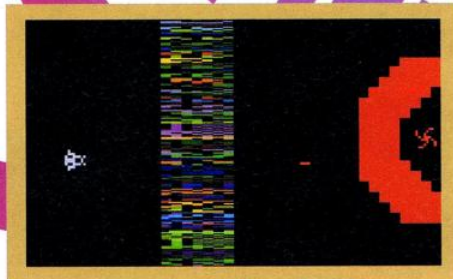
"I don't buy it" begins Warshaw, "First off, Atari was a failing company at the time. They were desperate for cash. Do you have any idea how expensive it would be to bury millions of carts in the desert? I mean trucking it out, pouring concrete in the desert. That would cost a lot of money"

"Second, why not reuse the plastic cases and some of the boards and roms? There is a lot of money to be saved by cannibalizing the inventory. Why would a failing company spend way more money than they possibly had, in an effort to waste even more money by throwing away usable resources?"

"Third, if this would have been going on, I would have heard about it. I was pretty "king tied into the Atari grapevine... Someone would have said, "Hey Howard, they're burying a shit-load of E.T.'s out in the desert". I would have grabbed a photographer (I had plenty of money then) flown us both out to the site, and gotten some pictures of me standing on top of the mountain of buried carts. How could I not do that? As sad and unromantic as it is to say, I'm sorry people, but the E.T. Tomb story just doesn't hold any sand".

THE GOLDEN GOOSE

In 1984, Atari was all but finished. Warner Communications, who had owned the company since 1976, had



[top left] ET phoned in his performance
[left] Yarr... tis a fine game me matey



taken the company from popular arcade game manufacturer to world conquering home videogame icon in six short years, yet only two years later the billion dollar industry had dried up.

"[Warner] were handed a golden goose" says Howard, "A product that was already on the way to greatness. They were happy to take all the credit for the meteoric rise of the VCS (although that was already set up before they took over), but when fortunes started to reverse they took no responsibility for it, nor did they have the first idea what to do about it"

That same year Howard would leave Atari, and the entire videogame development world behind. Although at the time Atari was firing much of its valued staff Howard was never asked to go, and instead left on his own terms.

"I was at Atari when it blossomed to 10,000 employees, and I was still there when it was down to 200 employees" says Howard, "I left shortly after the Tramiels (Jack Tramiel, founder of Commodore computers) took over the consumer games division. It was clear to me that the place would never be the same"

In 1996 however, just as Atari was once again going down with its ship, this time the Jaguar, and this time for good (well, until it was reborn as a publisher), Warshaw decided it was time to once again return to his days at the company. His latest creation was no videogame however, but a film series titled Once Upon Atari,

which documented the true story of what it was like to work and live for Atari in the early eighties. Taking almost seven years to complete, each episode of Once Upon Atari focuses on a different facet of the company's history, ranging from game development and those crazy behind-the-scenes stories right through to hardcore technical information on the Atari VCS itself. The films also contain numerous candid interviews with Howard's fellow Atari employees including Tod Frye (Pac-Man), Rob Fulop (Missile Command, Demon Attack), Carla Meninsky (Dodge 'Em, Star Raiders), and even Atari founder Nolan Bushnell. Amazingly, Howard even has a feature-length Hollywood movie based on Once Upon Atari in the works.

"I have signed an option agreement with a Hollywood production company" announces Howard, "[and] the main character in the story is going to be...Howard Scott Warshaw! I don't know who will play me yet... I have it narrowed down to Johnny Depp, or maybe Salma Hayek" says Howard with his typical sense of humour.

ONE MORE GO

Despite all that Howard Warshaw has going for him outside of the games industry at the moment, he still admits to having a desire to once again program videogames for his much-loved Atari VCS.

"I still have a design that I think is a great game. I know that this game

is Yar's Revenge 2" admits Howard, "It's the story of the training ground where Yar gains the skills needed to defeat Qotiles. It's still possible that this game might be done. I may team up with some programmers who are into 2600 these days and make that game"

In fact even if Warshaw never makes Yar's Revenge 2, he already has one last Atari 2600 game to release upon the world. Before leaving Atari Howard worked on an original game titled Saboteur, an espionage-themed shoot 'em up, which involved several different types of shooting gameplay rolled into one.

"[Saboteur] was never released by Atari as they fell apart before we finished it" says Howard, "but people have bootlegged it, and it has been reviewed as one of the best games ever on the VCS!"

Howard plans to finally release what may be his final Atari 2600 game in 2004, complete with a VCS compatible cartridge, vintage styled packaging and an authentic instruction manual, at this year's annual PhillyClassic convention, a show that has become sort of like the retro gamer's E3.

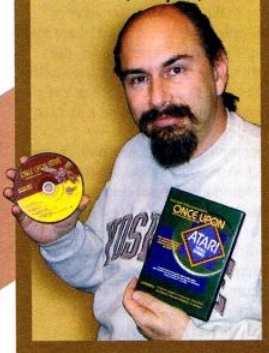
"When I think of the fact that a game I did that they never got around to releasing may still never go out and be enjoyed by players all over... I literally get chills. My games - my shooters in particular - were meant to be enjoyed by serious gamers. Anything I can do to enable that, you bet I'll do!" <<<

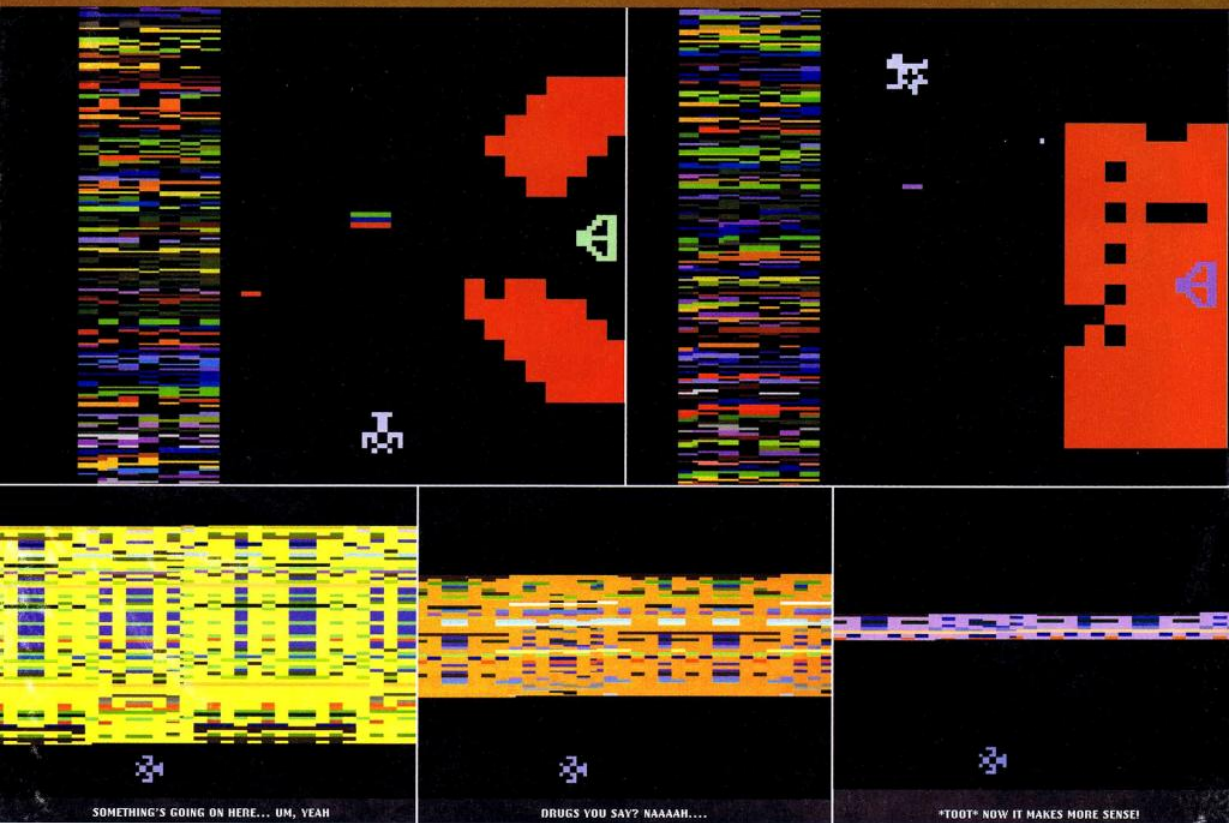
Win the Once Upon Atari DVD!

>>> Howard has been kind enough to send us a signed copy of his fascinating DVD (which can be ordered at his website: www.scottw.com). To be in the running just answer the following question:

How much did Atari pay for the ET license?

Put your answer on the back of an envelope and send it to: **Atari Antics, 78 Renwick St, Redfern, 2016.**





YAR'S REVENGE

MAURICE BRANSCOMBE checks out the coolest game since Missile Command

On a system where every second game falls somewhere within the "space-shoot 'em up" genre, if a new shooter is to stand out, it has to have something special, and Yar's does.

PULSING, SCINTILLATING... Unlike so many games other games these days, in Yar's Revenge you don't take on wave after wave of multiple enemies. Instead, there's a single antagonist per screen, the Qotile, a heavily guarded alien being who has a sweet tooth for the Yar's home planet. The method by which you defeat your foe is fairly uncomplicated; break a path through his fortress-like shield, all the while avoiding his Yar-seeking destroyer missiles, and finally fire a blast from your almighty Zorlon cannon (a "pulsing, scintillating fireball" as described by the game's documentation), into the Qotile's fleshy underbelly. To make your mission that much more difficult however, the Qotile will intermittently

transform into a buzzsaw-like swirl, that shoots around the screen in an effort to thwart your vengeance.

Apart from the Qotile and its shield, the "Neutral zone", a writhing bar of moving colour in the middle of the playfield is by far the most dazzling object on the screen. From within the neutral zone Yar is safe from the homing missiles, but as a trade off he's unable to shoot, and is also still vulnerable to the Qotile's swirl attack.

This simple combination of "destroy the castle" style gameplay and Space Invaders-style shooting makes for one of the most engaging and diabolically addictive games of the Atari 2600 era (which is "ahem" the current era — Ed). Yar's isn't just a triumph of gameplay, but also manages to include many innovative features, including resetting from the joystick and a craftily hidden Easter egg that displays the game's creator's initials (HSWWSH) on the high score screen. Yar's even comes packed with a comic book, which explains the

game's entire reefer inspired backstory in vivid colour; yet another first for the gaming industry.

Sonically and visually, Yar's may seem starkly simplistic if viewed by jaded gamers from the future, but it's hard not to appreciate its subtle charm. The game is colourful, sprites are well designed, and effects such as the neutral zone and the cataclysmic screen-filling explosion that occurs after you land a direct hit on the Qotile with your Zorlon cannon, are without question among the most spectacular on the system. The single gripe that could possibly be levelled at the game is that there is quite a bit of screen "flicker" during gameplay, but that's a common ailment among many VCS titles, and is entirely forgivable.

Yar's is undoubtedly one of the Atari 2600's finest moments to date, with gameplay that will certainly stand the test of time. For the shoot 'em up fanatic, Yar's Revenge should be considered required playing. <<

AVAILABLE ON:

ATARI 2600

DETAILS

CATEGORY: Shooter / PLAYERS: 1-2 / DEVELOPER: Howard Scott Warshaw / PUBLISHER: Atari / PRICE: N/A / RATING: FS (For Stoners) / AVAILABLE: 1981 /

HYPER VERDICT

PLUS: Simple, addictive and innovative.

MINUS: Very little.

VISUALS SOUND GAMEPLAY

88 67 89

OVERALL

89

A superbly playable example of what can be done with 4K and a great idea.

TDK

tremor

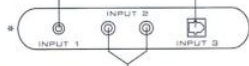


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You could make a penis envy joke but she'd probably just kill you

Firefly THE COMPLETE SERIES (IMPORT)

FOX HOME ENTERTAINMENT, M 15+

Anyone who has watched television in the last 10 years will be familiar with the name Joss Whedon, the creative genius behind the highly acclaimed series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and its spin-off series, *Angel*. What they may not be familiar with is his most recent opus, the science fiction western series, *Firefly*. This is a shame on so many levels as this is without a doubt Whedon's most mature and well-realised work to date. Set some 500 years in the future the galaxy is slowly getting back to its feet after a devastating civil war in which the Confederation of Planets conquered all of the Independent colonies, forever bringing them into the fold.

Whilst this may not sound like too much of a bad thing the Confederation, like all galaxy spanning empires is unconcerned with the plight of the individual, leading to planet-wide poverty, corruption and worse.

Plying their trade in this grim frontier world are the crew of the *Serenity*, a lovable and reliable old *Firefly* class freighter (parallels with the *Millennium Falcon* are inevitable). Lead by the indefatigable Captain Malcolm Reynolds, a survivor of the final battle of the civil war, the nine crew make their way between the planets as mercenaries, thieves, couriers and sometime killers over 14 episodes that play more like tight mini-movies rather than episodes of

a TV series. Probably the most remarkable thing about *Firefly* is that all nine of the major characters carry equal weight and are all equally human. From the stoic Captain who has lost all hope and only clings to the fleeting concept of freedom, through to his glib but insecure pilot Wash to Book, the mysterious preacher who knows far too much about crime to be entirely healthy to River, the empathic genius woman/child all of the characters are incredibly involving and compelling. It's obvious that Whedon had grand plans for the character arcs and due to Fox's premature cancellation of the show it's doubtful we will ever see them come to fruition.

Be that as it may, *Firefly* is a

necessary purchase for any lover of great storytelling. The boxed set includes all 11 aired episodes as well as three never seen before. The package is rounded off with a nice selection of extra features including audio commentaries for eight episodes, a collection of deleted scenes, a gag reel and a very funny Easter egg with Adam Baldwin (the forgotten Baldwin) singing "The Hero of Canton". No matter how good the other features are they pale in comparison to a retrospective making of featurette in which you can sense the love the cast and crew feel for each other. In a perfect world all TV would be as good as *Firefly*.

Daniel Wilks

MOVIE: 10 / EXTRAS: 8



Wash and Zoe - a very Whedon romance



The League of Gentlemen SEASON 3

ROADSHOW, M 15+

» The *League of Gentlemen* has to be one of the most subversive and wickedly black comedies ever screened. Chances are you'll never come across a more despicable and utterly unredeemable set of characters... or a show that leaves you feeling so hollow after watching it. But that's the genius of *League* — it's abhorrent but compelling at the same time. And more than anything else, it's a breath of fresh air next to traditional skit comedies and sitcoms.

League explores the seedy underbelly of Royston Vasey, a fictional town in the north of England, and it seems every character has something to hide or some demented viewpoint. What makes it such a cult favourite is that essentially every major character is played by three of the

members of the League — Reece Shearsmith, Steve Pemberton and Mark Gatiss, and they manage to stamp each character with a distinct personality.

This season sees *The League* try something a little different. They've left behind some of their most popular characters (no more "we'll have no trouble here" from Tubbs and Edward, or meat from Briss the butcher), to be replaced by new characters, and this has helped to keep the content fresh. All six episodes also take place along the same timeline, culminating in the same scene as seen from different perspectives by the each episode's end.

As in previous seasons there are only six episodes, but there's "local gossip" for each, as well as a second DVD full of extras.

Cam Shea

MOVIE: 8 / EXTRAS: 7



Is that Bennett in the middle?



Beyond Reanimator

MAGNA PACIFIC, MA 15+

» Brian Yuzna, now there's a name that few people have heard or would recognise. It's a pity because the man is one of the most talented and constantly surprising directors working in the field of horror today. He's also one of the few people who can make watchable films based on the works of H.P. Lovecraft. The problem with many Lovecraft films is that the creators try to emulate the subtlety of the author's horrors. Yuzna takes the opposite approach, crafting films loosely based around Lovecraftian characters or plots and delving deep into the realms of gore, wildly creative special effects and monsters, all the while with tongue firmly planted in cheek, resulting in

the same sense of supernatural wonder but without the stiffness that pervaded the author's works.

The third *Reanimator* film, *Beyond Reanimator* sees mad scientist Herbert West (brilliant character actor Jeffrey Combs) in a maximum security prison after his last experiment with bringing the dead back to life went slightly awry. During his time of confinement the not so good doctor believes he may have discovered a way to bring the dead back to sanity as well as life, stopping them from going on deadly rampages (as seen in the previous two films). Of course things go bad resulting in a blackly funny zombie bloodbath. It's not a subtle film but it is a whole heap of fun.

Daniel Wilks

MOVIE: 7 / EXTRAS: 5



Pauly Shore is Dead

TBA, M 15+

» There are some things you never think you'll say in your life. For some people that phrase may be "I Do", for others it might be something far more eclectic like, "No Mr President, I don't think sodomizing that goat would be a politically advantageous move". For me I never thought I would say "Pauly Shore is a comic genius", but his most recent cinematic outing has made me a liar. He is a comic genius — it's just taken him 15 years of crap movies to realise this. Written, directed by and starring Shore, *Pauly Shore is Dead* is a fly on the wall mockumentary style feature (a-la *Spinal Tap*) following the exploits of a down and out Pauly and his eventual

personal redemption. After his sitcom is cancelled after one episode, Shore is at a loss for what to do with his life. He's not famous anymore, not popular and he's beginning to realize he's not even particularly talented. Pauly's guardian angel, the ghost of shock-comic Sam Kinnison advises him to go the way of great comics such as himself and John Belushi and die before his time, making him a dead genius rather than a live loser. Rather than actually do the deed, Shore fakes his own death but the result is the same — all of his previous detractors are now praising him as a dead genius who went before his time.

Daniel Wilks

MOVIE: 9 / EXTRAS: 3



What the hell is wrong with Japanese people?

The girl definitely just smiled!



Oh, great. I finally found you!

Battle Royale

SHOCK, R 18+

Fearing that it would trigger another round of school shootings due to its brutal kill or be killed approach to the subject matter, the United States has never given *Battle Royale* an official release. This reactionary thinking is the exact reason why people are only now getting the chance to see Japanese uber-director, Kinji Fukasaku's final film.

Often mistakenly thought to be set in the future, *Battle Royale* tells the tale of a Japan in which the aging population has grown fearful and resentful of the carefree, rebellious, delinquent or just downright lazy youth. To combat the problem the beleaguered government passes the BR act in which a randomly chosen class is sent to an island and given strict instructions to kill each other

off until there is only one survivor. Although the film can be viewed on a purely visceral level — there are many incredibly well executed and gory deaths — doing so will be missing the point entirely. Rather than casual exploitation, *Battle Royale* is a bitingly clever and cleverly pointed satire on the cannibalistic nature of Japanese schooling and the country's unwillingness to let go of past war-torn glories. If nothing else, *Battle Royale* is a fine example of why Japanese New Wave cinema is so exciting and proves conclusively that you don't have to be young to be hip — director Fukasaku was 70 when he made the film.

Daniel Wilks

MOVIE: 9 / EXTRAS: 8



Looks like lunch time in Hyper HQ

Shanghai Knights

BUENA VISTA, M 15+

To my mind, combining Jackie Chan and Owen Wilson in the one movie can only lead to good things. Jackie's responsible for some of the most entertaining martial arts films on the planet, and despite his age (50) has not lost his skills or his boyish grin. And Owen... what can we say. This man has serious charisma, and even though his style of delivery seems to be the same in every film, it's just so likeable that it's hard to care.

The combination certainly worked in *Shanghai Noon*, and it does again in *Knights*... to a lesser extent. Unfortunately, *Shanghai Knights* has all the hallmarks of a quick and nasty sequel. The plot is nonsensical (not that it really matters), the

ending in the first film is disregarded (ie goodbye girlfriends, hello new - and less interesting, love interests) and several scenes are essentially rehashed. Even the fight scenes vary dramatically in quality, from the cool use of revolving doors at the hotel and the "Singin' in the Rain" homage, through to the massive disappointment that was the final fight scene between Jackie and Donnie Yen. *Knights* is still worth a look, just don't expect a buddy film as endearing as the original. Oh, and keep an eye out for the utterly conspicuous stunt doubles - they're unexpected comedy gold!

Cam Shea

MOVIE: 6 / EXTRAS: 3

The Greatest MOVIES YOU'VE NEVER SEEN



Unfortunately, Michael Beck (Swan) went on to star in Xanadu

PART 1:

The Warriors

PARAMOUNT, R 18+

Although it may seem kitschy by today's standards, Walter Hill's seminal action film, *The Warriors* was the 70s film equivalent of GTA 3 (Rockstar ARE making a game based on this license by the way!), being blamed for scores of riots, murders and incidents of gang violence up and down the United States. A true example of style over substance, *The Warriors* tells the simple story of the titular gang having to make their way through the streets of New York to their home turf of Coney Island with every gang in the city on their tail after they are wrongly accused of murdering

Cyrus, a gangland visionary and messiah. Although shot on a shoestring budget in a handful of locations, *The Warriors* is a juggernaut of an action film with a pace that never lets up until the very end. Although the human characters of the film are quite light, the star of the show is New York itself (herself?) — like a true warrior's journey from classic literature *The Warriors* are simultaneously opposed and aided by the whims of the terrain itself. Do yourself a favour and find a copy of *The Warriors* and then ask yourself, "Can you dig it?"

Daniel Wilks

MOVIE: 8 / EXTRAS: 1

Grave of the Fireflies

PRODUCTION COMPANY: SHINCHOSHIA
GENRE: DRAMA

Based on the autobiographical account of Akiyuki Nosaka, *Grave of the Fireflies* is a wartime tale about 14-year old Seita and his 4-year old sister, Setsuko, who are orphaned in a napalm attack during the Second World War and are forced to survive on their own. Without food, money or shelter, Seita and Setsuko face a world that is unable to support them. Their survival, then, rests in their ingenuity and whatever they can scrounge for themselves.

But in the 1940s, in a land that's been plundered by war and its people barely able to look after themselves, much less look out for a boy and his young sister, what chance do Seita and Setsuko have? What follows is one of the most heartbreaking tales ever told, all but guaranteed to reduce any grown man to tears. For ten years, word of this powerful work from Studio Ghibli veteran Yoshifumi Kondo (Kiki's Delivery Service, Porco Rosso) has slowly spread through word of mouth, and it is now considered

throughout the more seasoned anime community to be a title that no anime library should be without.

If anything, this film is a smack in the face for anyone still clinging to the good versus evil, black and white characterisation of war. There are no winners – only losers. *Grave of the Fireflies* is visceral, absorbing and as real as can be. You will experience death as seen through the eyes of a 14-year old boy; and after the credits role and your mind comes back to reality, you'll realise just how lucky we all are.

ANIMATION: 7 / PLOT: 9
OVERALL: 10



[above] War is hell, but it's not so bad with a jaunty hat



The Big O

PRODUCTION COMPANY: BANDAI VISUAL
GENRE: MECHA

After the long-running Gundam, the genre-defining Macross, and life-changing epics like Neon Genesis Evangelion and Escaflowne, what possible chance is there for a new mecha-inspired anime to knock anyone's socks off? If *The Big O* is anything to go by, it's possible for it to be done with style – with a striking artistic vision that combines high-powered steampunk with trench coats and double-breasted suits right out of the 1960s.

The Big O is a giant Megadeus robot, built for a special purpose before a wind of amnesia swept across the land and robbed the inhabitants of Paradigm City of any recollection of the past. It's now used by Roger Smith, a veritable Bruce Wayne who wages a personal crusade against crime. With its immense size and piston-action forearms that ram its enormous fists through any opposing mecha, the Big O is a formidable steel juggernaut not too dissimilar to the classic Giant Robo.

Like Giant Robo, Big O isn't the

main star of the show. He's more like the ace up Roger Smith's sleeve, showing up every now and then to save everyone's arse. Like so many other successful anime, *The Big O* keeps the attention of its audience with a mildly fascinating backstory, which of course is slowly revealed each episode.

The Big O is a subtle series and therefore not as immediately satisfying as Evangelion. However, with a workable combination of attitude, flair and giant robots, it's a series that stands firmly on its own.

ANIMATION: 8 / PLOT: 7
OVERALL: 8



[above] Domo arigato Mr Roboto





2
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HYPER»

»HY0127

Q. Which game has the best soundtrack?

Does a game soundtrack need to be fully orchestrated or packed with licensed tracks to qualify as memorable? Not according to the passionate responses we received this month. Whether it's 8-bit MIDI or coming out of a 7.1 system, it's the music that matters... Now, over to the readers!



HYPER FORUM

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

? "Who is the greatest fighting game character of all time, and why?"

Responses will be printed in Hyper #129



MAIL THE HYPER FORUM:

78 Renwick St. Redfern, NSW 2016 Australia
 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.

JET SETTING TUNES

This topic in particular is a most difficult one to answer. Does one begin with the soundtrack that stirred the player's emotions most or the music that contributed to a game's atmosphere the most significantly? Due to the many uses of music in games I do not believe there to be a definitive answer to this question. As such I would have to recommend three entirely different titles for entirely different reasons.

To begin one can not overlook Jet Set Radio and its sequel for their undeniable style setting soundtracks. They meld so perfectly with the visuals and theme of the game to create what is truly an original and groundbreaking product.

Secondly the Homeworld series must get credit for the brilliant orchestral soundtracks that not only create emotional attachment to little spaceships but also emphasises the scale and grandeur of the events taking place.

Finally what I consider my strangest choice: Super Smash Brothers Melee. This game for a Nintendo fan has a broad selection of classic tunes from the true Nintendo classic series like Zelda, Mario, Metroid, DK, F-Zero and even the ancient Game and Watch. The nostalgia that this entails is phenomenal and is highly regarded by this fan.

Although this is by no means a definitive list it shows three entirely different genres with suitably different soundtracks that transcend far beyond mere background music to enhance the game experience greatly.

dave8pie

MOOGLE SYMPHONY

For me, there can only really be one game which qualifies for the title of "greatest game soundtrack", and that's Final Fantasy VI on the SNES.

Widely regarded amongst long-time fans of the series as the pinnacle of FF music, Nobuo Uematsu created a beautiful and emotional soundtrack that complimented the jaundiced tone and melancholy plot of the game. From the stormy Opening Theme, with its dark organ chords, and the haunting Terra's Theme with it's lush pan pipes and percussion, to the insanity of Kefka's Theme and the spooky Mystery Train, which, appropriately enough for a ghost train, is a funeral dirge; each music track of this soundtrack is musical genius, with just the SNES Sony SPC 700 8-bit sound processor, composed a soundtrack with genuine warmth and feeling (although sadly the soundtrack on the recent PSX remake suffered somewhat as a result of emulation problems, compared to the SNES original).

And don't get me started on the opera theme. The Aria Di Mezzo Carrettere, which also appears sans vocals as Celes' Theme, is probably the greatest piece of music that Uematsu has ever written, a fan-favourite, which demands the orchestral treatment.

Of course, a brilliant soundtrack couldn't be complete without a brilliant final boss theme now could it? Dancing Mad; a powerful work in its own right, is an 18 minute long ride into chaos and despair on organ and synth, recounting thematically a slow descent into hell while battling against the Three Goddesses of Balance until, finally,

with the first couple of chords of the Opening, as Kefka looms out of the clouds in all his demonic-angel glory, it descends into a blazing medley of drums and synth.

After a while, the tempo slows back into the dark organ (normally when Kefka is getting ready to cast his super spell Fallen One), but it's only a reprieve, as his insane cackling erupts and the blazing synth returns until the madman is no more. (where do you think Uematsu-san got ideas for his seminal One-Winged Angel later on in FFVII?) I'll love this soundtrack forever!

Finally, if you can find them, get the Japanese arranged CD albums FFVI Piano Collections and FFVI The Grand Finale, as they feature superior orchestral arrangements of some of the best pieces of the game!

Marcus Cracknell

BOW DOWN BEFORE GOD

All of you, bow down to Nobuo Uematsu, the God of Videogame music! For surely everyone knows that the greatest game soundtracks of all belong to the Final Fantasy series. I have four original Final Fantasy soundtracks, imported rather expensively from Japan, and I listen to them almost religiously. For music with hardly any words, there's some serious storytelling going on there! So which one is my favorite? It's just so hard to choose... FFX has outstandingly brilliant sound quality, and the melancholy "To Zanarkand" (the opening piano theme to FFX, for those plebeians who don't know) is probably the most hauntingly beautiful piece of music ever written.

Or perhaps my favorite could be

FFVII... Although the midi sound quality is fairly poor in comparison, the music is so varied and just oozes atmosphere and powerful emotion. ("sniff" Oh Aerith... why did you have to leave us?!) Oh, and One Winged Angel kicks some serious buttocks. And of course, there's FFVI, which gives me a warm fuzzy feeling whenever I listen to it, bringing back fond memories of all the good times I had playing that game. And that, of course, brings us to "Dancing Mad", the 17 minute long, orchestral, pipe-organ jamming, choir-chanting final boss theme that represents the single greatest achievement in video game music ("They managed to put all that in a SNES game?! Waaaaay!") And they even included Kefka's 16-bit diabolical laughter. Good times.

Faris

NO SHADOW KICK

I gotta say that without a shadow of a doubt my favourite gaming soundtrack would have to be the Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time. From the moment you switch the game on and the start up screen begins the music captivates you,

hearing the ocarina in the background as we watch Link ride Epona through Hyrule field will be one of the most soothing tunes you will ever hear in a game. But what's better is that the music is even better once you get into the game. I will never forget the captivation I felt when I first left Kokiri forest and watched the camera pan across Hyrule and then hearing the music begin for that, easily one of the greatest gaming moments I have experienced. Each tune for each area of Hyrule that you visit captures the feel of the region and the land so perfectly, it gives the game its beautiful aura and enhances the feel of the game in a way that is truly... well, magical. From the Spanish influenced music as you creep through Gerudo valley, to upbeat and high spirited tune of Saria's song there is not one part of the Ocarina of Time music that I am not a fan of. I know that Nintendo actually released the soundtrack on CD for sale but I can't seem to find it unfortunately, so I just play the game time and time again because the great music never gets old.

da_sinistai

I'LL CALL YOU STITCH FACE

What game has the best soundtrack ever? Well, in my mind, it's a three way tie, between Jet Set Radio Future, Halo, and Soul Calibur II. When I read the topic, Jet Set Radio Future immediately came to mind, mainly because I have the entire game's soundtrack downloaded onto my mp3 player ...

However, after much thought, I just couldn't bear to not include the other two. Soul Calibur II's epic music heightened the tension and set the mood fittingly for each of the stages, whereas Halo's soundtrack was always appropriate for the level of action, silent in the slow parts of a level, and rising to incredible heights during a large scale battle.

However, special mention must also go out to The Legend of Zelda theme, still the catchiest and overall best instrumental from a game ever.

Stapleface.

SCOTTY CROSS

TOO FREAKING EASY. My choice would easily have to be Chrono Cross, the sequel to Chrono Trigger. This game was never released in

Australia, which I think is a big mistake on Square's part because it remains my all-time favourite RPG and one reason is because of its utterly compelling sound-track. Throughout the game you will hear different songs and you'll always find yourself humming along to it. Its use of many instruments like Spanish guitars, pianos and others make all of the songs incredibly catchy and an absolute treat to listen to. To any RPG fan I say this - Mod your PSX and get Chrono Cross... You won't be disappointed.

Peace Out

Scotty Not Too Hotty

CASTLE-TECH

Well for me it would have to be the Castlevania series in particular Super Castlevania 4 and Symphony of the Night... The mix of techno mixed with classical with some haunting tunes really give the game that extra bit to listen to... Even the fact that the games themselves are excellent in gameplay and level design (bar the N64 ones) just give the whole game that edge not seen in other games...

bulkerking

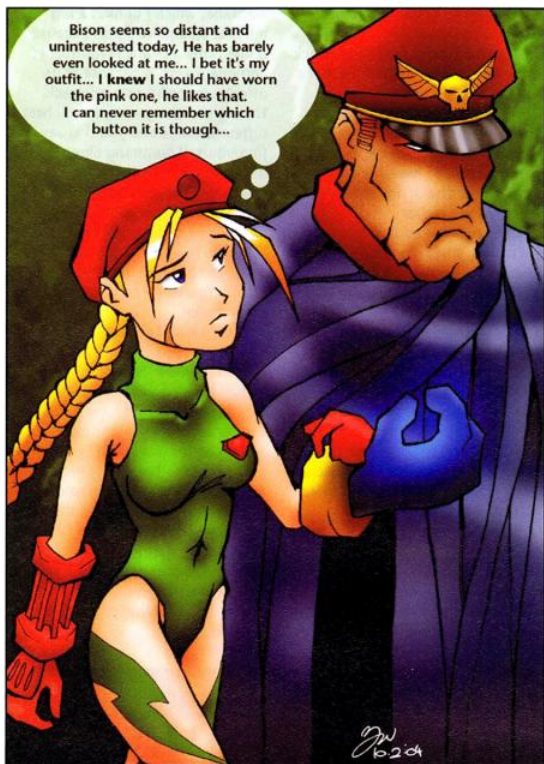
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[above] Mark Withington astounds us with his romantic soul

REVOLUTIONARY

Dear Hyper

I began my gaming life during the 8-bit revolution. And I can not tell you how glad I was when I first saw an Aussie (unbiased) game mag. I collected the first thirty or so issues of Hyper (I still have the first), then my life became miserable and I could no longer afford to keep buying them. At the end of last year I saw the tenth birthday issue and promptly began collecting it again. Most of all I wanted to see the how the mag had evolved with the times. The first notable change was the dimensions of the publication, but when I looked inside I was delighted to see that the mag has kept its style and it serious, but entertaining view on gaming in general. New features such as a monthly article on gaming history were also a pleasant surprise. But most amazing was the legions of sensible gamers that the mag attracts. Three cheers for Hyper. Please take the time to answer my questions.

1. How have you guys been able to keep up the standards that you set when the mag began? (Was there any shaky periods?)
2. How many Hyper staff members were able to collect all 120 stars on Super Mario 64?
3. How come I finished just about any game I played that was made in the past few years, but I can't finish the ancient table top "Gallaga" game down at the Pub?
- (a) Because games are rarely challenging any more and focus too much on presentation?
- (b) Because "Gallaga" goes on forever?
- (c) Am I just too drunk?
4. I missed the Feb 04 issue #124, how/where can I order it?
7. What DID happen to the "long term" rating in reviews? (Did game publishers make you stop it?)

Anyway keep on shining.

Jose

P.S. I too am upset to hear about Carmen Sandiego, Tidal waves of crap remakes and licensed games shit me to tears. Someone competent should remake, Chakan the forever man, Gallaga, Zombies ate my neighbours and any Terminator game.

Dear Jose (if that is your real name), in answer to your questions:

- 1) Malky
- 2) Mark G and Malky.
- 3) (d) Malky
- 4) Malky
- 7) To answer your question with a question - where the hell did questions 5 and 6 go?

PIXELS OF SHAME

Dear Hyper,

I'm 17 years old and I've been gaming since I was 4. Since then I've owned a NES, SNES, PSX, PS2, PC, and most recently a GameCube. While it may not be the longest history of gaming experience, it's been enough for me to notice a few puzzling changes over the years.

In the era of PSX and N64, most of my friends owned at least one console, and we were able to enjoy games such as Tekken 3, Metal Gear Solid, and Super Smash Bros. together. However, since the release of the current generation of game systems, I've noticed that many of the same people have lost interest in console gaming and now only play PC games. The only explanation I can think of for this is that consoles are too "kiddy" for people my age. And it's not just the gamers that have taken up this attitude - I know one 16-year-old guy who really wants to play FFX but his dad won't let him get a console because he's "too old" for them.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but isn't this completely false? Some of the greatest games ever made have been console-exclusive - the Zelda games, Soul Calibur, Goldeneye, and the list goes on. Many of the more recent outstanding titles have been targeted at mature audiences, such as Devil May Cry with its dark and atmospheric environments and Xenogears with its mature and complex narrative. So what I'd like to know is - where does this idea that consoles are for kids come from? Is it a remnant of the time when the only graphics they could support were little multicoloured pixels, or is it because PC games are generally more violent and therefore the PC is the "only" plausible gaming platform for mature gamers?

As objective game journalists I'd really like to know what your opinion is on this matter, because when I sit down to play Wind Waker on my Gamecube, I can't help feeling that a lot of gamers out there are really missing something.

Thanks,
The 13thMan

Dear "The 13thMan", if that is your real name, Hyper's objective view is that anyone who rules out any system because it is too kiddy needs to drink a nice tall glass of shut the hell up. All formats are good.

LAZY MO'FO

Dear Hyper,

For too many issues have I read the letters section and thought

CAPTION THIS!

PART 52 WINNER

This month's winner **Gavin Stevenson** only narrowly edged out some great entries... but his "Bush bash" won in the end...



George Bush finally locates Saddam's elusive "Rocket Dwarves of Mass Destruction".

about sending something in, before consoling my acute case of laziness with food or reruns of old American sitcoms that should have been banned by any self-respecting Australian citizen the day they premiered. For too many issues have I managed to get up, go to the computer to type up a witty letter, outlining important issues of debate in the gaming world, find I have nothing interesting (or witty) to write and instead playing an hour of Quake II, mercilessly slaughtering innocent evil bad guys.

Well, today I have managed to drag myself to the computer to type up the long-awaited letter. I have a couple of questions to be answered, if you can possibly be bothered answering instead of playing whatever new and wonderful game has been deemed worthy to consume your endless lunch-breaks.

1. Do you have any ideas or advice for the budding young would-be magazine journalist wishing to break into the gritty, grimy underworld that is game reviewing? Or do I just hang around Redfern at some ungodly hour of the night pretending to be delivering pizzas to some kindly old fart whom I mistakenly thought lived in your offices? Either way, if it works...

2. Please, please, please could you bring back the cover CD? I know you either a) Would have to raise the magazine price, b) Can't be bothered putting one together, c) Are unwilling to satiate our desire for the goo, or d) Enjoy rampant misery that is rife through all the readers of Hyper who still long for the CD but cannot stomach the incessant groveling that is required to get it. I can offer one incentive for the CD, and that is the ceasing of all nagging and wailing from every Hyper reader out there for the CD and the goo. Of course, this last demand is not negotiable, if you do not give us the CD we will riot! All Hyper readers take a stand and demand the CD! We will have justice! VICTORY OR DEATH... Mmmpphhh... MMMPPHHH...

Eleriah
P.S: It's okay, I'm all better now. The nice men in white coats at the institute have tanked me up with drugs and not reprimanded too severely me for using the most cliché letter ending in history...

Dear "Eleriah", if that is your real name, the best way to get into games journalism is to be persistent and keep sending samples of your work to editors and the like. Eventually they'll either want to give you a go or send someone over to break your legs. Or you could just offer them sexual

favours - it's all good. As for the cover CD, it's doubtful it will make a comeback aside from on special occasions. Finally, in response to your P.S. you are most assuredly wrong - the ultimate cliché ending would be if you woke up and realised it was all a dream.

PHANTASY MAN

Hey Hyper blokes,

Just gotta say, great mag, my Dad introduced it to me and I have been subscribed for a year now (since issue 113 i think) and I would just like to absorb some of your time and ask you some questions. (these questions will be focused on Phantasy Star Online on GC)

1. Do you know when Phantasy Star Online Episode III: C.A.R.D. Revolution is coming out in Australia?
2. Do you have any idea when the GC modem is coming out in Australia? (although I already have one, which I got from Japan. I want to know so I can inform my fellow PS0 fans)
3. Do you know when the GC keyboard is coming out here?

Thanks, looking forward to the answers

Ziggy

BAD MR BEARDY

Greetings and salutations to the Hyper crew,

I am sure this won't be the first letter you will receive about this topic, but I am just really pissed off at Lucasarts right now. As you may or may not know, Sam and Max: Freelance Police has been officially cancelled by Lucasarts only a few months before its scheduled release date. How could this have happened?!!

And I'm not referring to just this cancellation, I'm talking about what has happened in general with Lucasarts. Didn't they use to release a lot of great games? I know that the name Lucasarts always meant prestige to me, especially in the genre of adventure game. These days, they seem to have forgotten all this, as they continually pump out Star Wars titles. According to Lucasarts own website, in 2002, every title they released was, you guessed it, a Star Wars game! Wool More Star Wars. Great, bleed the franchise just that little bit more dry.

Now don't get me wrong, I don't mind the occasional Star Wars game, I got lots of fun out of Jedi Knight 2 and Jedi Academy. It just saddens me to see that the once great Lucasarts has fallen into the trap of mediocrity. Any gamer who knows their adventure games, will DEFINITELY

LETTER OF THE MONTH

CRAZY NINTENDO

Dear Hyper,

This letter is probably too long so cut it down if you want.

The other day I was browsing the Hyperactive forums and I came across a topic titled "ns to be released after ps2 and xbox2" so I clicked on it. I just expected the usual unofficial delay rumour but what I got was URL's and information that Nintendo had decided to make peripherals and console expansions for the GameCube to continue its life longer. As soon as I read it I got extremely angry and it just made me realize, how stupid can one single company be?

Sure they can make the best games you can get, but marketing decisions... No way! It starts with the SNES... Firstly they started talking about the CD expansion thing with Sony then a disagreement came and so Sony packed up, left and went along and made their own console, which will probably lead Nintendo to its eventual death. So they went with Phillips (from what I can remember)... Complete failure and I wasn't surprised. Then the N64 came along and it was absolutely great though the PlayStation sold more units the N64 was still great and was only trailing behind. Then, Nintendo even after the SNES expansion, they went along and made the N64DD... Thank God it wasn't released here.

Now we come to this generation of video games. 3 more stupid decisions.

1. Release the Gamecube after PS2 and XBOX
2. Not include a DVD Player
3. Not include a CD Player

Those last 2 pretty much was the signal that the PS2 and XBOX will appear to be far more superior and the first one is for all the stupid, uninform gamers, usually the ones who listen to Electronics Boutique, go and buy the first thing that comes out that appears to be revolutionary but really, far better is coming.

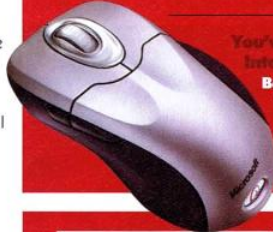
With the recent announcement of the "revolutionary" product, The Nintendo DS. My head nearly popped. Come on! How are you meant to concentrate with two screens and how big will the thing be with 2 GBA size screens!? I don't think so...

Now back to the start part, the Gamecube, MORE PERIPHERALS AND SYSTEM EXPANSIONS!!!!!! Didn't Nintendo learn with the Nintendo 64 DD and the SNES Mega CD (I think that's what it's called)????!! If I can make better decisions than Nintendo, I'm wondering who the hell they have making marketing decisions!

Anyway thanks for reading and I don't mind if you don't publish this as long as someone reads it and understands. Actually who am I kidding!? Please publish!

Patrick M.

Dear "Patrick M", if that is your real name, you bring up an interesting and perplexing point. We like to take the idealist's approach to the subject and suggest that Nintendo is kicking it old school, relying entirely on the strength of their games to sell their console. Unfortunately, as is obvious in the marketplace, this approach has gone down like a lead balloon.



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know Sam and Max, LOOM, Day of the Tentacle, and the Monkey Island series. These were all (in their own ways) landmark adventure games that helped define the genre for years to come. A lot of gamers preferred these Lucasarts games, because they had the policy that you couldn't die in them, which made them a little easier and a bit more fun than other titles by Sierra (who also made great games) and others.

So, skip ahead to today, and what do we have? Lucasarts announces

a sequel to Sam and Max. Everyone is interested. More and more press is built around this title, and it receives a lot of positive critical praise.

Lucasarts cancels production, claiming, "After careful evaluation of current market place realities and underlying economic considerations, we've decided that



this was not the appropriate time to launch a graphic adventure on the PC." Thus the genre takes one

step closer to becoming extinct.

How is the situation surrounding adventure games going to improve, if the company that once lead the genre has no confidence in its own games or developers? By releasing quality titles, as I'm sure Sam and Max 2 would have been, the situation is only going to get better.

I send this message to Lucasarts. Take a step back, and really have a good look at what you are doing. Since when did the fans and gamers themselves become unimportant? The entire community wanted this game, yet it isn't the appropriate time to release an adventure game? I'm sorry,

but that just makes no sense. And if you can't make decisions that make sense, perhaps you shouldn't be making those decisions. Think about it.

Angrily and sadly,
Michael Connolly

Dear "Michael Connolly", if that is your real name - we understand your position and empathise fully. There was no call for Lucasarts to pull the game from development other than fear of losing money. The same fate befell Full Throttle 2. I say we band together and go to Lucasarts and let them taste the backs of our hands. Who's with me?

FAREWELL TO THE FISH...

THE FISH IS DEAD...

To The Editor,

I'm sorry to hear the news that you have stepped down as editor of Hyper Magazine. I have been reading Hyper since issue 99, an issue I picked up just for the GTA3 review, but I was soon taken in by the excellent content, witty reviews & excellent humour that you, Cam & Malcolm and the rest of the Hyper writers brought to the magazine, and I've been a happy subscriber ever since. Though you leave Hyper in the capable hands of Cam, you will be missed. Now some routine questions:

1. Now that Futurama has come to an end what were your favorite ep's

2. Is there gonna be DVD's of Ren & Stimpy & if you've ever heard of it TeknoMan.

3. Evangelion live action movie, with SFX from WETA workshop, sweet!

That's it good luck with your band, Big Heavy Stuff, and your CD "Dear Friends & Enemies" and whatever else you get up to in the future. Peace out,

The person currently know as "Red"

Dear "The Person Currently Known As 'Red'", if that is your real name, Eliot will surely be missed but his reign of iron fistted torment shall endure no more. In answer to your questions:

1. Slurm
2. We have no idea but google is your friend
3. Could you rephrase the question in the form of a question?

LONG LIVE THE FISH

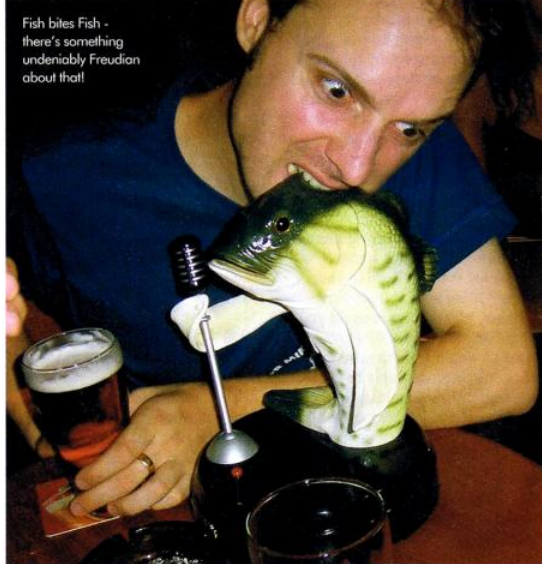
Nooooo! Don't go Elliot! Think about the blau, the crates! Oh well, I guess it's what you want. Anyway, best wishes and good luck for the future. Great job on the mag too. :D

Bye. :-;

P.S I'm looking forward to seeing what Cam does with the mag. Good luck Cam.

Margo

Dear "Margo, if that is your real name, rest assured that the blau will live on. As to what Cam will do with Hyper - it'll be the great mag it was before, only with much fatter pants.



Fish bites Fish - there's something undeniably Freudian about that!

ROCK PIGS

Welcome Cam! it's good to play together! Shea. The new Ed. eh? Has Eliot taken off to greener pastures? Or is he locked up in the basement, wasting away along with those old copies of Zzap. (God how I wish I'd kept mine.) In my best Hanson voice: "please explain".? Seriously though, looking forward to that biting sarcastic wit that you all display each issue in spades. Here's a little somethin'

OD3 to HYP3R

Roses are Red
Violets are Blue
All our Base are belong to you.

P.S. Thankyou Jackson for pointing to that website www.bash.org Absolutely LMAO.

Dear anonymous "poet", Eliot has

left to pursue his other career of being a hard drinking, hotel room trashing, groupie canoeing rock pig with his band Big Heavy Stuff

FISH FANCIER

Sorry to hear Eliot's leaving, but perhaps this gives him the chance to finally come clean. That was him sporting that rather lovely strap on in the article on virtual sex way back in issue 1 wasn't it? Come on mate, it cant hurt revealing the truth now can it? cheers anyway,
matt

Dear "matt", if that is your real name - in answer to your question, no, it is not Eliot. It must be devastating to discover that the man of your dreams is in fact an imposter but some how you'll just have to learn how to cope.



Not pictured - Steve trying to do a mannerism

The Official Australian Games Chart

Compiled by GfK in association with the IEAA

TOP 10

PlayStation 2 Games Over \$50

W/E 29 FEB 2004
RETAIL SALES

- | | | | |
|----|---|----------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | ◆ | Final Fantasy X-2 | RPG |
| 2 | ◆ | Need For Speed:Underground | Racing |
| 3 | ▲ | GTA: Vice City Ptm | Adventure |
| 4 | ○ | Bond:Everything Or Nothing | Action |
| 5 | ▼ | Mafia | Action |
| 6 | ▲ | Simpson's Hit & Run | Adventure |
| 7 | ▼ | Sonic Heroes | Adventure |
| 8 | ▼ | Crash Nitro Kart | Racing |
| 9 | ▼ | Cricket 2004 | Sports |
| 10 | ▼ | Rugby League | Sports |

TOP 10

PlayStation Games Over \$30

W/E 29 FEB 2004
RETAIL SALES

- | | | | |
|----|---|-------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | ▲ | Simpson's Wrestling | Sports |
| 2 | ▼ | YuGiOh Forbidden Memories | Strategy |
| 3 | ◆ | H Potter Chamber Of Secrets | Adventure |
| 4 | ◆ | Grand Theft Auto Collectrs Ed | Adventure |
| 5 | ○ | Action Triple Pack | Action |
| 6 | ▲ | Medal Of Honor 2 Pack | Action |
| 7 | ▼ | Beyblade Let It Rip | Adventure |
| 8 | ▼ | Disney Triple Pack | Adventure |
| 9 | ▼ | FIFA 2004 | Sports |
| 10 | ▼ | Dragonball Z: Ult Battle 22 | Action |

TOP 10

Game Cube Games Over \$50

W/E 29 FEB 2004
RETAIL SALES

- | | | | |
|----|---|------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | ◆ | Mario Kart Double Dash | Racing |
| 2 | ▲ | Prince Of Persia: Sands Time | Adventure |
| 3 | ▲ | Bond: Everything Or Nothing | Action |
| 4 | ▼ | Simpson's Hit & Run | Adventure |
| 5 | ▼ | Mario Party 5 | Family |
| 6 | ▼ | Crash Nitro Kart | Racing |
| 7 | ◆ | Sonic Heroes | Adventure |
| 8 | ◆ | Need For Speed:Underground | Racing |
| 9 | ○ | Dragonball Z: Budokai | Action |
| 10 | ○ | Star Wars Rebel Strike | Action |

TOP 10

Xbox Games Over \$50

W/E 29 FEB 2004
RETAIL SALES

- | | | | |
|----|---|------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | ◆ | GTA Twin Pack | Adventure |
| 2 | ○ | Bond: Everything Or Nothing | Action |
| 3 | ▲ | Elder Scrolls3:Mrowind GOTY | RPG |
| 4 | ▼ | Need For Speed:Underground | Racing |
| 5 | ▼ | Baldurs Gate Dark Alliance 2 | RPG |
| 6 | ◆ | Rainbow Six 3 | Action |
| 7 | ▼ | Prince Of Persia:Sands Time | Adventure |
| 8 | ▼ | Sonic Heroes | Adventure |
| 9 | ▲ | Top Spin | Sports |
| 10 | ▼ | Simpson's Hit & Run | Adventure |

TOP 10

PC Games Over \$20

W/E 29 FEB 2004
RETAIL SALES

- | | | | |
|----|---|------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | ◆ | The Sims Deluxe | Strategy |
| 2 | ◆ | The Sims Superstar | Strategy |
| 3 | ▲ | The Sims Unleashed | Strategy |
| 4 | ▲ | Call Of Duty | Action |
| 5 | ▼ | The Sims Makin' Magic | Strategy |
| 6 | ○ | Sim City 4 Deluxe | Strategy |
| 7 | ▲ | Need For Speed:Underground | Racing |
| 8 | ○ | Nemo Underwater World Fun | Adventure |
| 9 | ▲ | The Sims Vacation | Strategy |
| 10 | ▼ | Newwintr Nghts Hrdes Undrdrk | RPG |

TOP 10

Game Boy Advance Games Over \$30

W/E 29 FEB 2004
RETAIL SALES

- | | | | |
|----|---|----------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | ◆ | Yu-Gi-Oh: The Sacred Cards | RPG |
| 2 | ▲ | Pokmon Ruby | RPG |
| 3 | ◆ | Pokmon Sapphire | RPG |
| 4 | ▼ | Crash Nitro Kart | Racing |
| 5 | ▲ | Finding Nemo | Adventure |
| 6 | ▼ | Simpson's Road Rage | Racing |
| 7 | ▼ | Lion King | Adventure |
| 8 | ○ | Dragonball Z:Legacy Goku 2 | Action |
| 9 | ▼ | Fire Emblem | RPG |
| 10 | ○ | Super Mario Advance 4:SMB3 | Adventure |

TOP 10

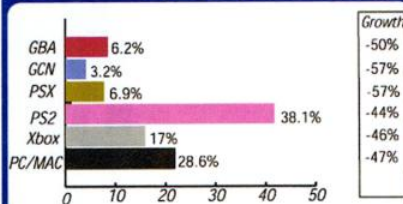
All Full Priced Games

W/E 29 FEB 2004
RETAIL SALES

- | | | | |
|----|---|-----------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | ◆ | Final Fantasy X-2 | PlayStation 2 |
| 2 | ◆ | GTA Twin Pack | Xbox |
| 3 | ◆ | Need For Speed:Underground | PlayStation 2 |
| 4 | ▲ | GTA: Vice City Ptm | PlayStation 2 |
| 5 | ○ | Bond: Everything Or Nothing | PlayStation 2 |
| 6 | ▼ | Mafia | PlayStation 2 |
| 7 | ▼ | The Sims Deluxe | PC/MAC |
| 8 | ▲ | Simpson's Hit & Run | PlayStation 2 |
| 9 | ○ | Bond: Everything Or Nothing | Xbox |
| 10 | ▼ | Sonic Heroes | PlayStation 2 |

MARKET WATCH All Games by Platform

FEB 04 1/4 JAN 04
RETAIL SALES



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



Charts can be viewed at www.informbd.com.au as part of Inform's comprehensive database of online market intelligence, updated weekly



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Next Issue:



100 BULLETS

We go to Texas and get the scoop.

PLUS: A look at the state of consoles in Australia, our game pad rundown, and more interviews, previews and reviews than you can handle! You know you want it.

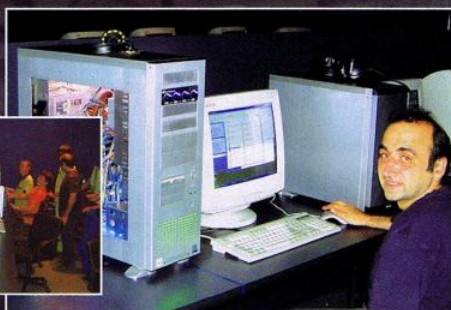
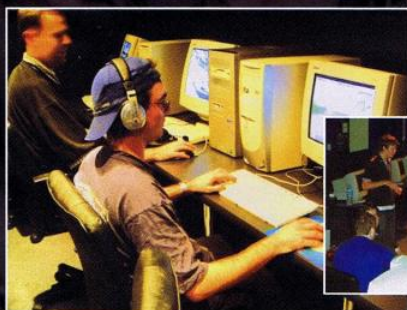
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